

EXODUS

FOR BEGINNERS

GOD CREATES A NATION



MIKE MAZZALONGO

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THE "FOR BEGINNERS" SERIES

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Research Commentaries:

- Commentary on Exodus - D.A. Garrett
- Truth for Today Commentaries – Exodus - Coy D. Roper

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1. Introduction

The Golden Thread

One of the resource books that I used for this study, "Commentary on Exodus" by D.A. Garret, summarizes perfectly the difference between the books of Genesis and Exodus but also the essential purpose of the book we are about to study – the book of Exodus. Here's the passage in question:

"Exodus is the true beginning of the story of Israel. Genesis is essential to the story, but it is a prologue, describing the lives of individual patriarchs rather than the history of a people. With Exodus we begin the story of the national entity called Israel."

In other words, in Genesis the scene is set for the story that the Bible has been written to tell:

1. How and by whom the natural world came into being.
2. The details explain mankind's creation, purpose, fall into sin and the consequences of this sinful state.
3. Genesis also records God's promise of an eventual Savior and His selection of one man, Abram/Abraham, through whom He would send this Savior.
4. The book finishes by focusing on the growth of this one man's family into a clan of twelve families each led by the descendants of this one individual, Abraham, chosen by God.

The book of Genesis covers a period of approximately 2,200 years. It provides information beginning with the creation of the world and continues to the arrival of Jacob and his family in Egypt to join Joseph, his lost son, who had become second in command to the king of Egypt.

During this period the world began to be populated, not once, but twice on account of the great flood in Noah's day:

- Nations were formed
- Cities were built
- Wars were fought
- Inventions, innovations, and languages were developed creating a rich history of peoples and events studied today by archeologists and historians.

The Bible, however, is only interested in these histories in so far as they intersect from time to time with the history of the progress of this one family begun by Abraham, the man specifically chosen by God for a special purpose. It's as if the history of the world is a gray backdrop in the Bible and the story of Abraham and his descendants is a bright, golden thread that stretches from Genesis all the way through to Revelation. No matter what is happening in the world, great or small, that golden thread is visible from its beginning with Abraham all through every chapter of history until it finds its natural completion and end point in Jesus Christ. We see its beginning in Genesis with the formation of twelve families who through various circumstances find themselves sojourning (living temporarily) in Egypt because of the famine.

In Exodus we will follow that golden thread as we see that clan of families transformed into a nation and observe as that nation:

- Comes to know the true God, the "I AM," the Jehovah God, who will now be their only God.

- We will observe His power to break Egypt with plagues in order to free the Jewish people.
- Exodus contains the giving of the formal law and observances that will bind the nation to God and will inform every part of their lives.
- It is in this book that their sacrificial system, method of worship, priesthood and place of worship are given.

In other words, everything that makes these people distinct and separate as the people of God is introduced, initiated, and explained in the book of Exodus.

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

A. Exodus is part of the Pentateuch which is the term used for the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) in the Old Testament. Pentateuch is made up of two Greek words: *Penta* = five and *Teuchos* = scroll.

The Jews refer to the Old Testament as the Hebrew Bible and the first five books as the Torah, or the five books of Moses, or the Books of the Law. Moses has traditionally been considered the author of this book even though the book itself does not mention its author, however:

1. The author was intimately familiar with the events that took place in the book.
2. The author had access to information only Moses could have known (i.e. the interactions with God).
3. The author was present and a witness to the miraculous events (good and bad) that took place at that time.

Conservative scholars name Moses as the one who compiled and recorded oral traditions, genealogies (Exodus 6:14-25) and personal eyewitness accounts into one orderly record of the

Jewish people's departure from Egypt, wanderings in the wilderness and interactions with God.

"Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"
- John 7:19

Jesus Himself attests to this.

⁴⁶ For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"
- John 5:46-47

B. Moses wrote this book somewhere between 1445-1400 B.C. – a traditional date that allows for Moses' life in context of Biblical history and aligns with the dates of other Old Testament characters and events. Some modern critical scholars deny that Moses wrote this book and that it was written during the Jewish exile in Babylon in the sixth century B.C. and completed after the Jews were freed to return to Jerusalem. This theory does not explain why Jesus Himself attributes the writing of the Law/Torah to Moses as we have read in John 5:46-47 and John 7:19.

EGYPT

(Word referred to the original name of the city of Memphis – Mansion of the Spirit of PTAM).

A. Geography – Egypt - Country in northeast Africa



The Nile River made human habitation in Egypt possible. The river itself flowed from its source in the south, Lake Victoria (in modern day Uganda/Tanzania), and flowed northward to eventually empty into the Mediterranean Sea. There is debate whether the Nile or Amazon is the longest river in the world – the difference may only be by 40 miles.

With its annual floods the Nile not only provided drinking water but cast up soil in its banks to provide fertile ground for the planting of crops – this fertile strip adjacent to the river was called the Blackland and the desert beyond it was called the Redland.

The Nile River valley *was* Egypt since everything else was wasteland and not habitable. A large part of the ancient kingdom south of the rich delta region near the Mediterranean Sea was hundreds of miles long but only five miles wide – where the people could live.

The main cities, farming, wealth, and population were located in the northern delta region called Lower Egypt and the southern

strip called Upper Egypt (since the Nile flowed from the south to the north the southern region was "upriver").

Note the location of:

1. Memphis was the capitol during the old kingdom.
2. Thebes was the capitol during the new kingdom.
3. Goshen is the land where the Jews were settled by Joseph.

Egypt's geography largely protected it from enemy attack:

- To the east was a harsh desert and the Red Sea.
- To the west was the vast Sahara Desert.
- To the north was the great Mediterranean Sea.
- To the south were the natural waterfalls in the Nile which made a naval attack very difficult.

The greatest weakness was an overland route in the northern corridor which connected the delta region with the land of the Canaanites and later the Israelites. Their greatest strength was the abundance of food they grew and exported to other countries.

They also had an abundance of gold and precious stones which showed up in the beautiful artwork they produced. Egypt ruled by Pharaohs lasted 3,000 years. It was the first world power. Its history can be divided into 11 major eras and in briefly reviewing these we can also see where the Jewish people come into contact with Egypt.

Scholars put the date of the Exodus at 1447 B.C. However, there is great debate over the exact date, the particular ruler of Egypt at the time and the exact route the Jews followed in their 40 years in the wilderness. This is due to the fact that neither the Bible nor the historical records available for that time (3,500 years ago)

provide us with exact information, so we need to be humble when declaring the exact dates and details which we include after study and review, for which God nor the people in question did not leave a record.

What we do know for sure are the events and the sequence, as well as the characters involved because God has preserved these as that golden thread that spans human history and reveals the story of how He eventually saved mankind from the consequences of sin.

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE OF EXODUS

Exodus is first and foremost a historical record that traces the period of time and events that take the descendants of Jacob and his family from Egypt where they fled to for safety from the famine taking place in the land of Canaan, which was their home, back through a long journey in the wilderness to the place where they had come from, some 400 years earlier, but this time to re-enter their former dwellings as conquerors receiving from God the land promised to their forefather, Abraham.

Exodus is the history of that return journey and the transformation that God worked as He literally created a new and distinct nation out of a people with no leader, no purpose and no power having developed as a slave population while living in Egypt. Exodus is a more foundational book as far as the Jewish religion is concerned since it has a more central place in Jewish history than Genesis.

For example, according to Deuteronomy 6:20-25 when an Israelite child asked his parents why they were under so many religious rules and regulations, the answer was to be, "we were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but YHWH brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand..."

For the people of Israel their founding event was not the call of Abraham recorded in Genesis, but the events contained in the book of Exodus. Their history as a distinct people of God, along with the religious practices that guided and confirmed this, are all found in Exodus, not Genesis. Exodus provides the explanation for the claim that the Jews were the chosen people of God.

MAIN CHARACTERS

1. The Jews

Genesis provides the back story of who the Jews were and how they came to be in Egypt. Exodus introduces them in the first seven verses and simply adds that from a small beginning they grew into a large and powerful population that threatened the native Egyptian population. No leaders are mentioned among them. No one spoke on their behalf as a group. They were still an association of clans led by family elders.

2. God/YHWH

In Genesis we see God's power in creating the universe and in His dealings and appearances to individuals. In Exodus we begin to see other aspects of His being. For example, He is:

A. The One and Universal God

In Exodus 3:15 God refers to Himself as the "I AM." This sets Him apart from every other "god."

B. The God of Wrath

From the plagues on Egypt to the thunder and lightning of Mount Sinai, God demonstrated His ability to punish and intimidate His enemies as well as His disobedient people.

C. The God of Mercy

Mercy is His primary characteristic and not wrath.

This is shown by:

1. His compassion in response to human suffering (the Egyptian slavery of the Jews).
2. He endures patiently the repeated provocations of the Jews when they complained, were ungrateful and rebelled.
3. He forgave and restored them after their grave sin with the golden calf.

D. The God Who is Wholly Other

He is completely holy and unlike man. Moses had to remove his sandals to enter the holy space of the burning bush, and God only interacted with the people through Moses, His sanctified servant.

E. The God of Israel

The Jews became a special people through divine intervention, a sign that God can interact with humans without destroying them.

F. The God of Moral Law

The people of God are bound to His laws which are holy, righteous, moral and specific. The point here is that no other "god" revealed himself in such a personal and dynamic way. He was above man not because man had placed Him among the deities which is what happened with the pagan gods of the Egyptians. He was above man by virtue of what He revealed about Himself - being a God of love, He was naturally above man which was the natural place for Him to be.

3. Moses – The Man of God

The book of Exodus seeks to glorify God, but it also establishes Moses as the founder of the nation of Israel:

- Moses is a new Adam, a new Noah, and a new Jacob.

He is a man who is molded by God for greatness despite his personal flaws and mistakes:

- He recklessly kills an Egyptian in trying to assert himself as a leader and savior of his people.
- He lives in self-imposed exile under-employed as a shepherd in the wilderness.
- He refuses to speak as God's representative so that God has to provide Aaron, his older brother, to carry out this task.
- He flashes a bad temper when he violently throws down and breaks the tablets upon which the commandments were written by God, upon seeing the people worshipping the golden calf.

However, God patiently brings him to spiritual maturity – even greatness because, despite his failings, Moses never abandons his faithful service to God. Even after he is told he will not enter the Promised Land because of his disobedience in striking the rock twice instead of speaking to draw water (Numbers 20:11) he continues to faithfully serve God as best he can.

Moses is the great, as well as relatable role model for weak and sinful people who sincerely aspire to please God and serve Him in important and dynamic ways.

4. Egypt – The Symbol of Worldly Power

Egypt represents every worldly power that God's people have had to deal with in every era. It is the type for every worldly kingdom in opposition to the kingdom of God from the beginning to the final day of this ongoing conflict when Jesus comes to destroy it once for all time. Worldly Powers/kingdom who:

- Worship gods of wood and stone
- Concentrate power in the hands of few – Pharaoh
- Oppress the righteous – slavery, murder, hatred, separation
- A fixation on material prosperity as a major factor in decision making
- The legitimizing of the occult, the influence of dark power
- Openly oppose or minimize the presence, knowledge of and operation of the Kingdom of God
- Represent and facilitate apostasy

Egypt, just as every world power since (except in certain ways and for certain times, America) featured these symbols of worldly kingdoms which were all on display in their dealings with the Jewish people.

Exodus reveals for the first time the features of the King of the heavenly kingdom, as well as the power and ability to subdue and destroy even the mightiest of earthly kingdoms.

Therefore, from the beginning of the Bible with the Egyptians and throughout the Bible with the Assyrians or the Babylonians, to the end of the Bible in Revelation where God's kingdom defeats the greatest of the earthly kingdoms (Rome) – the story is the same:

God's kingdom on earth (today, the church) will never be defeated by an earthly kingdom – and will continue this winning streak until Jesus returns to finish the struggle with His judgment and final removal of the heavens and earth along with all earthly kingdoms leaving only one kingdom to exist in which the saints will rejoice.

Exodus is the story of the formation of an early stage of this kingdom (the nation of Israel) and the defeat of one of the first of these earthly kingdoms, Egypt.

2. General Outline

Moses Before the Call

EXODUS 1:1-3:9

We've noted in our previous chapter that Genesis provides approximately 2,000 years of history in general and in this we find the beginning of the "Golden Thread," the Bible's main focus which is the story of God's people.

In Genesis we are introduced to individuals (Patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) along with their families all the way down to Jacob's son Joseph, and how he as Vizer (Prime Minister of Egypt) saved his family's life by bringing them to settle in Egypt and providing them with food during a period of prolonged famine. Genesis ends with Jacob and his extended family of 70 people living freely and comfortably in the fertile land of Goshen in northern Egypt.

Exodus begins by filling the reader in on what has taken place since that time and introducing two individuals around whom most of the events in Exodus will take place. Also, it is in Exodus that God will go from speaking directly to individuals, to speaking to the people through certain individuals, to speaking to a nation through a set of laws and regulations that reveal His will which will be available to all the people at all times.

OUTLINES

Exodus can be divided and outlined in several different ways. Here are samples taken from another resource book used in prepping this study:

TRUTH FOR TODAY COMMENTARY – EXODUS: COY D. ROPER

1. Two-Part Outline:

1. The Deliverance – Chapters 1-18
2. The Covenant – Chapters 19-40
 1. The covenant and commandments (19-24)
 2. The building of the tabernacle (25-40)

2. Relationship Outline (Warren Wiersbe):

1. Redemption – The Lord delivers His people (1-18)
2. Covenant – The Lord claims His people (19-24)
3. Worship – The Lord dwells with His people (25-40)

3. Experience of the People Outline:

1. God's people delivered (1:1 – 13:16)
2. God's people led (13:17-18:27)
3. God's people made into a covenant nation (19-24)
4. God's people given instructions RE-tabernacle (25-31)
5. God's people in sin: The golden calf (32-34)
6. God's people constructing the tabernacle (35-40)

The advantage of these outlines is that they give us a snapshot of what the book is about and the flow of information concerning main topics. The downside is that they are not always practical to follow as class outlines because there is more information to cover

than time for a typical Bible study class. For example, with the Two-Part Outline there is not enough time to cover 15 chapters in a single session.

For a fixed number of sessions (13 max) like this class we need an outline that summarizes well the material at hand, but also gives us time to adequately study the contents of the book so that we can better understand Exodus and come away from our study with new information about this second book of the Pentateuch.

4. The Expanded Outline:

1. Introduction
 1. Summary of Genesis
 2. Author and date of the book of Genesis
 3. Geography and history of Egypt
 4. Purpose of Exodus
2. Deliverance 1 – (1:1-6:27)
 1. Israel enslaved – (1:1-22)
 2. The deliverance: Moses – (2:1-4:26)
 3. Initial failure – (4:27-5:23)
 4. Moses and Aaron Genealogy – (6:1-27)
3. Deliverance 2 – (6:28-12:36)
 1. God's promise of success – (6:28-7:7)
 2. The miracle of the staff – (7:8-13)
 3. Deliverance by means of ten plagues – (7:14-12:36)
4. The Exodus – (12:37-18:27)
 1. Departure from Egypt – (12:37-15:21)
 2. Journey to Sinai – (15:22-18:27)
5. The Covenant Between God and Israel – (19:1-40:38)
 1. The covenant made – (19:1-25)
 2. The people react, ratify, and receive the law and covenant – (20:1-24:18)
 3. Plans for the tabernacle – (40:1-38)
 4. Apostasy and restoration – (35:1-39:43)
 5. Building of the tabernacle – (40:1-38)

This expanded outline covers all the material in summary form but provides enough information, so the reader is familiar with the general story before he even reads it and studies the details.

With this outline you always know where you are in relation to the big picture or main story. This is the outline we will follow for our study of Exodus, which in the Greek translation meant "departure" or "way out." In Hebrew it meant "names" or the "book of names," meaning that God knew and had not forgotten the names or identity of His people enslaved in Egypt.

INTRODUCTION

We've already completed this in our first lesson:

A. Summary of Genesis

Joseph who has become second in command in Egypt has received his father Jacob, along with his brothers and families (70 people in all) into Egypt to protect them from a severe famine. This is the final happy scene in Genesis.

B. Author and Date of Exodus

Using existing records, oral histories, and his own witness of the times, Moses wrote all of the books of the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) between 1447-1400 B.C.

C. Geography and History of Egypt

We spent considerable time reviewing this when we covered these two subjects for review purposes. Suffice it to say the following:

1. Egypt is completely dependent on the Nile River which flows the length of its country.

2. Most of its population lives near its shores and fertile delta valley that supplies its food and water.
3. Egypt is an ancient civilization having been established 3,000 years before Christ.
4. It was considered a world power several times throughout its history.
5. Its most significant period is recorded in the Bible as the nation where the Jewish people were forced into slave labor. Subsequently, the nation was completely ruined by plagues sent by God through Moses in order to force the release of the Jewish people from bondage.
6. It appears further along in the Bible playing a major role in the local wars and geopolitics of the times, but never again obtained its former influence or power.

D. Purpose of the Book of Exodus

Exodus explains in detail how God transformed a large group of people, loosely held together by family and tribal ties into a single nation held together by their faith in the One true and living God. Exodus provides the manner in which God instructed the Jewish nation to both express and nurture that faith until the promises it contained were fulfilled.

Now that our outline has been laid out and we've had a brief review of the first section of that outline (the Introduction), it's time we look into part two of our outline, entitled – Deliverance 1.

A. Israel Enslaved – Exodus 1:1-22

¹ Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household: ² Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; ³ Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; ⁴ Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. ⁵ All the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt. ⁶ Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. ⁷ But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.
- Exodus 1:1-7

The Jews arrived and lived as free men in a part of Egypt which was abundant in food and water, as well as grazing land for their animals (land of Goshen – Delta valley – north). God blesses them and as a result, they not only grow in numbers and wealth, but also rival the native Egyptian population as they spread out and lived in all parts of Egypt.

- God is fulfilling His promise to Abraham and Isaac, that their descendants will be as numerous as the stars – Genesis 26:4.
- They are experiencing rapid population growth.

⁸ Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹ He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. ¹⁰ Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join

themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land."

- Exodus 1:8-10

The term "did not know Joseph" doesn't mean that he never heard or was not aware of this part of Egyptian history – it means he did not recognize or honor the Jews out of respect for what Joseph had done. The sentiment among the Egyptians was, "That was then, and this is now, where the size and strength of the Jews, not to mention the liability they present should they align with our country's enemies, must be dealt with immediately."

¹¹ So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹² But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. ¹³ The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; ¹⁴ and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.

¹⁵ Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other was named Puah; ¹⁶ and he said, "When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birthstool, if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live."

¹⁷ But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live. ¹⁸ So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?" ¹⁹ The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can get to them." ²⁰ So God was good to the

midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. ²¹ Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them. ²² Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive."

- Exodus 1:11-22

The Pharaoh tried to solve the "Israelite problem" using tactics that would weaken and limit their growth.

- At first, he oppressed them by constricting them to serve in a kind of slave army of workers charged with building projects.
- This was hard work which took them away from their farms, herds, and families.
- This didn't work since they continued to grow in population and strength.

He then doubled down by going to the root of the problem (too many births of healthy babies) and instructed the Hebrew midwives to destroy any male babies at birth.

- This plan also failed as the midwives refused to carry out this type of abortion claiming that Jewish women were so strong that they had their babies quickly before the midwives would arrive and interfere with the births.
- God blessed these midwives with babies of their own.

Having failed twice with these indirect plots to undermine the growth of the Jewish population, the Egyptian monarch enacted a radical program authorizing any Egyptian to kill any Jewish

newborn male by drowning him in the Nile River but sparing the newborn females.

B. The Deliverer: Moses – 2:1-4:26

1. Moses' Early Life – 2:1-14

¹ Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. ² The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months. ³ But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. ⁴ His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him.

⁵ The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it to her. ⁶ When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." ⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?"

⁸ Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go ahead." So, the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹ Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages." So, the woman took the child and nursed him. ¹⁰ The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."
- Exodus 2:1-10

I want you to notice both the Providence of God here as well as His faithfulness to His promises:

1. At first the Egyptians oppressed Israel and the more they oppressed them, the more they multiplied and prospered.
2. Next, the Pharaoh tried to abort the babies, but more babies were born – even the midwives who couldn't themselves conceive were enabled to have babies (adding insult to injury).
3. Finally, the Pharaoh required that all Hebrew male babies be thrown into the river. The ultimate result of this strategy was that the child who was to become the deliverer of the Jewish people (Moses) was rescued from the river by Pharaoh's daughter and raised in the court of Pharaoh, himself!

The theme of this episode is that nothing works when man (any man, even kings) oppose God. No one can defeat God or God's plan. Moses lived 120 years and his life can be divided into three 40-year sections:

- A. **As Royalty** in the court of Pharaoh in Egypt.
- B. **As a Shepherd** in the wilderness of Midian.
- C. **As the Leader** of the Israelites.

The name, Moses, given to him by the Egyptian princess who found him means, "drawn out of the water." The princess knew he was a Jewish castaway and had him nursed by a Jewish woman who was his real mother. This helps explain why Moses, although recognized as royalty by Egyptians, was aware of his Jewish heritage and genealogy from the tribe of Levi, whose descendants would eventually provide the priests and servants of the temple.

The Bible glosses over the details of his life as the adopted son of the princess and moves directly to the second phase of his life as a shepherd in Midian.

¹¹ Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. ¹² So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹³ He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, "Why are you striking your companion?" ¹⁴ But he said, "Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and said, "Surely the matter has become known."
- Exodus 2:11-14

This is Moses' first attempt at leading his people based on human wisdom, strength, and tactics (revolution), however, two things happen that thwart this initial effort:

1. His own people reject and mock him.
2. He is afraid for his life because of the killing of an Egyptian and runs away.

This ends the description of events during the first 40 years of his life and his attempt at becoming the leader of his people.

2. Moses in Median – 2:15-22

This next period in Moses' life is briefly summarized in a few verses where he escapes to the land of Midian:

- Meets the daughters of his future father-in-law, Ruel, after saving them from aggressive local shepherds.
- He eventually marries into the family, has children, and settles into the quiet life of a shepherd. These are all the details given concerning his time there.

In the meantime, the narrative switches back to the land and people that Moses left behind.

²³ Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God.

²⁴ So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵ God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.
- Exodus 2:23-25

This now indicates that the time has come for God to deliver His people and sets the scene for the calling of the deliverer.

3. Moses - The Call - 3:1-9

Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

- Exodus 3:1

Note that Moses' father-in-law is called Jethro which is an alternate name for the same man referred to as Ruel in Exodus 2:18. He was a priest, not through the tribe of Levi appointed by God (i.e. Aaron), but a religious leader worshipping the God of

Abraham since the Midianites were descendants of Abraham through his wife Keturah, whom he took after the death of Sarah.

- The Midianites were descendants of the children Abraham had with Keturah – Genesis 25:1-6.
- This explains where their belief in the God of Abraham came from.

Moses sees the burning bush as he was pasturing his flock near Mt. Horeb – the mountain of God, which is later referred to as Mt. Sinai, the place where God will give Moses the law and appear to Him in the future.

² The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. ³ So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."

- Exodus 3:2-3

Here, God appears and communicates to Moses from a bush that burned with fire but was not consumed. This type of event is known as a "theophany," which is an appearance of God in some form. The text says that the "angel of the Lord" appeared from the burning bush. He is mentioned several times in the Old Testament but is in fact the Lord Himself since He describes Himself as such in verse six. In essence He is the Lord Jesus appearing in angelic form before He appeared as a man (Jesus).

The burning bush is the first miracle recorded in the book of Exodus, however, there are not many miracles in the Old Testament considering there are 39 books. Miracles, when they do take place, tend to be grouped together in clusters at certain points in the history of Israel. For example:

- At the Exodus which we will see shortly.
- During the conquest of Canaan.
- During the prophetic ministries of Elijah and Elisha.

Miracles occurred at times of crisis for Israel, at times that its national survival was threatened.

⁴ When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

- Exodus 3:4-6

God calls Moses, twice to assure that the call was real, and Moses answered immediately without hesitation.

- This demonstrated that Moses' heart was ready to hear what God had to say.
- Despite his circumstances, Moses' faith was strong and seeking God's will.

The Lord confirms that this appearance is real and that Moses is standing before the true and living God by commanding him to remove his sandals.

- This confirmed that this was not a dream or hallucination.

- Also demonstrated that the physical space he occupied was now holy and sacred because God also occupied it.
- The removal of his sandals was his way of expressing his faith in the reality of this event.

Moses sees the miraculous proof of God's presence in the burning bush and now hears the voice of God identifying Himself.

- I AM – the way He usually begins.
- The God worshipped by your fathers all the way back to Abraham where the "golden thread" of their history began.

Moses then acknowledges that he is in the presence of God by hiding his own face.

- The typical human reaction to being in the presence of angels or the Divine Being is fear as well as recognition of our own unworthiness and sinfulness.
- From Adam to Moses to Isaiah to Peter – men are completely overwhelmed and awestruck when in the presence of God, many afraid that they won't survive the experience.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CALL

⁷ The Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. ⁸ So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the

Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.⁹ Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.

- Exodus 3:7-9

God reveals to Moses why He has appeared to him before He actually calls Moses into service. He is there in connection with the Jewish people:

- He is aware of both their sufferings as well as their cry for help.
- He will deliver them from the power of enslavement of Egyptians.
- He will bring them to a prosperous land that He will give them.
- He specifies exactly what land this will be by naming its current occupants.
- He respects the initial idea that He has heard the cry (prayers) of His people concerning their suffering.

Therefore, before calling and sending Moses to fulfill His commission, God identifies both the problem (the suffering of the Israelites) and the solution (bringing them to their own prosperous land presently occupied by other nations).

3.

Deliverance - 1

Moses Answers the Call

EXODUS 3:10-5:23

In our previous chapter we read about the plight of the oppressed Israelites in Egypt and Moses, a Jewish baby cast into the Nile River, but rescued and eventually taken into the royal court by an Egyptian princess.

We also learn of Moses, as a young man, attempting to lead his people but ending up fleeing Egypt to escape the consequences of his killing a fellow Egyptian while trying to defend a Jewish kinsman.

This brings Moses into the employ and family, through marriage, of Jethro, a priest of the most high God, in the country of Midian. The Midianite people are related to the Jews since their heritage, like Moses, also begins with Abraham, but down through Keturah, Abraham's wife after Sarah died. Moses' life is fairly uneventful for

forty years as he tends sheep and raises a family in the safety and obscurity of Midian.

All of this changes as one day the Lord calls to him amidst the miraculous scene of a bush that was burning with fire, but not destroyed – a sign of God's eternal presence among temporal mankind. From the burning bush God relates the suffering and pleas for deliverance from Moses' people, the Israelites, in Egypt and calls upon Moses to lead them to the promised land.

THE DELIVERER: MOSES (CONTINUED) – EXODUS 3:10-4:26

Despite the miracle before his eyes and the previous attempt to free his people, Moses is reluctant to believe that God is calling him to lead his people. His attitude is, "Surely, not me Lord! Send someone more qualified, gifted, and suitable."

1. Round 1 (of 4) – Exodus 3:10-12 – Moses' Attempt to Reject His Call

¹⁰ Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" ¹² And He said, "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."
- Exodus 3:10-12

God outlines the plan – Go to Pharaoh and tell him that God wants His people to leave Egypt. Moses responds that he's in no position to go to the king and make demands. He has no standing to call on the king. God tells him that he won't be alone, the Lord will be with

him. Also, he will know that it was God with him because after the people come out of the country, they will worship God at the very place where he received his original call.

2. Round 2 – Exodus 3:13-22

In this second encounter Moses complains that if he attempts to lead the people, why would they choose to follow him? They will question his authority. The underlying point here again is that Moses has no stature among the people so who would follow him? At this stage, God equips him with the only authority he'll need - that he is being sent by the true and living God, not one of the pagan deities of the area and era.

- He tells Moses His name and identity.
- "I AM WHO I AM" is the One sending him.
- He is the Lord, the God worshipped by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- This same God who made promises to the patriarchs has heard your prayers.
- He tells Moses to gather the elders of the people and say to them that He is aware of their suffering in Egypt and will lead them to their promised land.

God then instructs Moses to go to the Pharaoh with the elders and tell him that the Lord has instructed them to ask this ruler to release the Israelites to go on a three-day journey so they can sacrifice to the Lord. He warns them that at first Pharaoh will refuse and will only relent when forced, which the Lord will do miraculously. God even describes what will happen when they leave – the Israelites will be given gold, silver, and clothing by the

Egyptians as they depart. In other words, they will plunder the Egyptians without even lifting a finger against them!

3. Round 3 – Exodus 4:1-9

¹ Then Moses said, "What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'" ² The Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" And he said, "A staff." ³ Then He said, "Throw it on the ground." So, he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. ⁴ But the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand and grasp it by its tail"— so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— ⁵ "that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." ⁶ The Lord furthermore said to him, "Now put your hand into your bosom." So, he put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. ⁷ Then He said, "Put your hand into your bosom again." So, he put his hand into his bosom again, and when he took it out of his bosom, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. ⁸ "If they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign. ⁹ But if they will not believe even these two signs or heed what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."

- Exodus 4:1-9

Moses now circles back to an old argument stating that even if he gets before Pharaoh and his leaders - what will he do if they just don't believe he's been sent by the Lord?

At this point God provides him with three signs he can produce to prove what he claims is true:

1. The transformation of his staff into a snake and back into a staff at his bidding.
2. The changing of his healthy flesh to leprosy and back again at will.
3. The converting of the water of the Nile River to blood.

The signs were powerful enough to convince the Jews that Moses was a prophet sent from God and substantial enough to convince the Pharaoh (who was considered a god by the Egyptians) that Moses had formidable power only possessed by the gods and someone he needed to listen to.

4. Round 4 – Exodus 4:10-17

¹⁰ Then Moses said to the Lord, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." ¹¹ The Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? ¹² Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say." ¹³ But he said, "Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever You will." ¹⁴ Then the anger of the Lord burned against Moses, and He said, "Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. ¹⁵ You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I

will teach you what you are to do. ¹⁶ Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you, and you will be as God to him. ¹⁷ You shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs."

- Exodus 4:10-17

This time Moses tries to excuse and plead his way out twice.

1. The first time by pleading lack of eloquent speech.

- The idea being that he didn't have the skill to speak to men of high position (even though he had been brought up and educated at the royal court as the son of a princess).
- He emphasizes that he has always had problems of one kind or another.

The Lord responds that He controls the speech of all men, and it will be Him speaking through Moses and not Moses himself.

2. The second effort made in this round sees Moses out of excuses, simply pleading with God to send somebody else – anyone but me!

God's answer is to fortify Moses with human help in the person of his older brother, Aaron. The Lord assures Moses:

- Aaron will gladly follow him.
- God will speak to Moses, Moses will relay to Aaron, and Aaron will speak Moses' words to the people.
- Aside from one occasion later on, Aaron will submit to Moses and his instructions as if these were coming from God. Moses was like a prophet in the eyes of Aaron.

There are no more objections from Moses and as he prepares to go, God reminds him to bring his shepherd's staff, which he will use to perform miracles before Pharaoh and the Israelites.

5. Moses Prepares for His Departure – Exodus 4:18-23

At this point Moses prepares his family, receives a blessing and assurances from his father-in-law, Jethro, that it is safe to return and make his way back to Egypt. Providing a donkey suggests transport for his wife and youngest son on a long journey.

Along the way God speaks again to Moses and lays out, in a brief summary, the details of what will happen when he faces Pharaoh:

1. Moses will perform miracles.
2. God will harden Pharaoh's heart in refusing to release the people (we will discuss this and its meaning later).
3. Moses will warn Pharaoh, but in the end only the killing of every firstborn child and animal in Egypt will move the Pharaoh to release the people.

6. Bridegroom of Blood – Exodus 4:24-26

Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the Lord met him and sought to put him to death.

- Exodus 4:24

This is an obscure passage that does not seem to fit or relate to anything in the passage. It also uses an unusual expression, "bridegroom of blood." To begin with, note that only three persons are mentioned:

1. The Lord (angel of the Lord)
2. Zipporah – Moses' Midianite wife, mother of his two sons, daughter of Jethro the priest of the Most High God.
3. Moses' son
(Gershom – oldest/Eliezer – youngest – Exodus 18:3-4).

The subject in question is probably the youngest son since Moses was circumcised and had probably circumcised his first-born but for some reason had not yet done so with the younger. Moses gathered his family and began the journey back to Egypt to mobilize his people, gather the elders and make his request to Pharaoh to release the Israelites. While at a lodging place on route, the Lord (probably in appearance as an angel) appeared to Zipporah and her uncircumcised child, him refers to the uncircumcised son, not Moses (some translations say Moses or his son in the margin). God had said that all males had to be circumcised or they were cut off from the people.

But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."
- Genesis 17:14

This judgment was literally falling on Moses' child, the man sent by God to liberate the Jewish people. His own son was outside of the covenant and about to be killed as opposed to being discovered later on and compromising his father's leadership. Similar to David's illegitimate son with Bathsheba being taken in death by God, avoiding the prospect that this child become heir to David's throne and compromise its legitimacy and spiritual nature.

²⁵ Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, "You

are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me." ²⁶ So He let him alone. At that time, she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood"—because of the circumcision.
- Exodus 4:25-26

Zipporah circumcises the child and touches the child's feet with the foreskin (not Moses who has not been mentioned at all in this passage). The touching of the child's feet would be the completion of this ritual as the Midianites practiced it signifying that the entire body has been sanctified and thus saved from destruction. Here is a helpful reconstruction of the scene provided by Garret's Commentary:

“We might, therefore, suggest the following reconstruction of the story behind this text. Moses and Zipporah set out for Egypt. Along the way, their son suddenly became deathly ill. Zipporah recognized that the boy needed to be circumcised, and she did the act with a flint knife (flint can be more finely sharpened than can bronze and is therefore better for performing surgery). After the removal of the foreskin, she ritually touched the boy's feet (or genitals) with her hand or the flint while saying, 'You are *hatan damim* to me' (a member of my community by virtue of the blood circumcision). These formulaic words concluded the circumcision ceremony. The act formalized the inclusion of the boy in the community. After that, the boy recovered. Zipporah had turned aside the wrath of God." P. 230

C. Initial Failure – Exodus 4:27-6:13

²⁷ Now the Lord said to Aaron, "Go to meet Moses in the wilderness." So, he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. ²⁸ Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which He had sent him, and all the signs that He had commanded him to do. ²⁹ Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel; ³⁰ and Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people. ³¹ So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped.
- Exodus 4:27-31

Note that Aaron is called by God also (no details given), however he enthusiastically greets his brother and takes in, without doubt or hesitation, all that Moses shares with him. Aaron takes on his role immediately in that he does the speaking to the Jewish leaders and performed the signs – both of which were first given to Moses by God. This initial meeting resulted in the faith of the people in the persons (Moses and Aaron) and the message that they proclaimed (freedom from Egyptian slavery). The witness of their faith was the humble (bowed down) worship they offered to God based on the message they received.

1. First Meeting with Pharaoh – Exodus 5:1-5

Moses and Aaron have momentum – the people believe the miracles and the message and bless the mission to go before the Pharaoh to demand, in the name of God, their immediate release.

¹ And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.'" ² But Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and besides, I will not let Israel go." ³ Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." ⁴ But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get back to your labors!" ⁵ Again Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are now many, and you would have them cease from their labors!"

- Exodus 5:1-5

One thing we need to know about the Pharaoh is that he too considered himself to be a god as well as the "so called God of these Jewish slaves" who now had the temerity to not only challenge his exalted position as leader and king of mighty Egypt, but also suggest that their God might be a greater divine force than himself!

Moses only asks for three days to organize a corporate worship of the Jewish people; this was a fairly reasonable request:

- The Egyptians had numerous feasts throughout the year to honor various gods which also required them to be away from their work.
- Having the feast away from the city in the desert would not be an offense against the Egyptian population who despised the Jews and their religion.

- Moses didn't ask to leave for good (this time), only three days for the journey and time for worship.
- The worship had been commanded by their God and Egyptians knew the seriousness of this because they also had worship obligations that would bring curses on them if they disobeyed.

EXODUS 5:6-23

We are familiar with the Pharaoh's arrogant response. He dismisses their request as a cover for laziness and increases the degree of difficulty of their task by no longer providing straw for the making of bricks while still maintaining the same production quota:

- Bricks were made with mud and mixed with straw, which was kneaded by foot and then placed in forms to dry in the sun.
- To force the Jews to collect their own straw while demanding the same quota was the Pharaoh's way of breaking the spirit of the people because their sheer number and strength posed a threat to him, his rule and nation.

The passage describes the loss of faith in Moses and Aaron's plan and the consequences for the people. Even pleas by the Israelites' foreman are rejected by the Pharaoh as lazy excuses to avoid doing their jobs.

In the end, the Jewish leaders return and blame Moses and Aaron for giving the king an excuse to annihilate their people. The first attempt to deliver the people is an abject failure. At this point Moses returns to God in prayer acknowledging that this whole idea was a failure from the start since their meeting with the

Pharaoh resulted in worse conditions for the people and not better. In his prayer you can almost hear Moses say, "I told you this would not work!" in accusing God Himself of failure.

LESSONS

In every chapter, no matter the topic or scene, we can draw practical lessons that can apply to our lives and situations today. Here are four lessons from this section:

Lesson #1

When dealing with God you have to interact with Him by faith not reason.

With humans or human organizations, you use logic, persuasion, reason, or clarity of thought and speech among other things to make a point, to understand, to cooperate, or succeed in a joint effort of getting things done or getting what you want or need.

God, however, who speaks stars into existence, defeats armies with a single angel, Who begins a baby's life through His Holy Spirit, or raises the dead with a simple command, does not deal with man using the tools that humans use to interact with each other. Our relationship with Him is based on faith, not reason.

All things are possible for those who believe.

- Mark 9:23

This failure Moses experienced has more to do with teaching one how to properly relate to God, and less about how to convince the Pharaoh. God had even told Moses that He would fail in this first attempt (Ex. 4:21) and Moses' reaction simply demonstrated that he didn't really believe this would happen.

Many times, when things go wrong, or you have fear or discouragement and think you're not understanding God - don't examine your plan or your prayer, examine your faith and see if you're living, working, and serving by faith – not reason or logic.

Lesson #2

Never doubt God's word.

He will do what He promises.

The lesson that Moses had to learn was that God could actually do the impossible or what seemed impossible. Just learning that lesson took almost 40 years in the desert.

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

- I Corinthians 10:11

Paul explains to the church that the past events are recorded so we will have concrete examples of how God operates, and one key lesson taught over and over again is that God's word is sure. For example:

- If He says there is a heaven, there is a heaven.
- If He says sins are forgiven, they are forgiven.
- If He warns of punishment, be careful because there will be punishment.

Like Moses, much of our Christian lives are spent learning to believe and trust that what God says He will do for you personally – He will do! We can't experience the peace that surpasses understanding that Paul talks about in Philippians 4:7 unless we begin taking God at His word.

Lesson #3

If God sends, He will provide.

This point is especially important to understand if you are involved in serving the Lord in ministry. If you feel called to a ministry of some kind in the church (preaching, teaching, service, worship, benevolence, leadership, etc.), know this – if God gives you a task, you can be sure He will provide what you need to finish that task to His glory. Sometimes He provides in unusual ways or ways you are not used to, or He provides just on time, but if He calls and sends you, He will provide everything you need to accomplish His will.

Lesson #4

It won't be easy.

Just because you believe and you are faithful, and you are sincerely doing your best to serve the Lord, there will always be trouble, injustice, mistakes, and disagreements.

Moses was well equipped with Aaron as his spokesman, miracles ready at hand, the Jewish leaders behind him and look what happened – the Pharaoh wasn't impressed, literally threw him out of the palace and unjustly punished the people and they blamed Moses for their troubles!

- You try to organize something for the congregation with much personal time and effort – but nobody comes.
- You volunteer to help a family in need and find out that you've been accused of not minding your own business.
- You are always ready to serve, to help, to visit, to give and then your mother dies, and no one calls, no cards, no visits from those you've visited in the past.

Why do I even try?!

At those critical moments when Satan has managed to make your service to God seem worthless, thankless, unnoticed, and unappreciated, remember this Christian truism: God never said that it would be easy, but He did promise that in the end it would be worth it.

² In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way where I am going."

- John 14:2-4

4.

The Genealogy of Moses and Aaron

EXODUS 6:1-22

In our last chapter Moses and Aaron return to Egypt, with Aaron performing miracles and speaking Moses' words to the Jews as they succeed in uniting the people behind them. They then go before the Pharaoh with their request to allow the people a three-day break to go worship their God in the desert.

We know that the monarch flatly refuses them, accusing the people of laziness and as punishment forces them to supply their own straw for their brick making while producing the same quota. This creates division among the Israelites who blame Moses for provoking this crisis which threatens their very lives. Moses, in turn, blames this seeming failure on God.

This is where we pick up the golden thread – at the seeming destruction of the Israelites by the hand of the cruel Pharaoh.

II. DELIVERANCE 1 – EXODUS 1:1-6:27

D. Moses and Aaron Genealogy – Exodus 6:1-27

1. God Reassures Moses and Aaron – Exodus 6:1-13

After their humiliating defeat before Pharaoh and the Jewish people, God renews His promises and issues even more challenging instructions.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for under compulsion he will let them go, and under compulsion he will drive them out of his land."

- Exodus 6:1

Once Moses has spoken to God recounting what the Pharaoh has done to him and the people, and how this is all God's fault, God responds with what He will now do to Pharaoh.

- God will use compulsion (a mighty hand - NRSV) to compel him to let the people go.
- The Pharaoh (anxious to see them leave) would also force the people once held captive to now leave the nation.

Here God is summarizing what will happen in the future so they will know it will be through God's will and power that the people will be released.

Their first experience and failure with the Egyptian ruler convinced them that he was absolutely determined to keep the Israelites captive in Egypt – no doubt about this.

² God spoke further to Moses and said to him, "I am the Lord; ³ and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord, I did not make Myself known to them. ⁴ I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. ⁵ Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.
- Exodus 6:2-5

God provides a history lesson based on His name so that first and foremost, Moses will understand who he represents and who will be responsible for the things that are about to happen.

1. He had been known as God Almighty (*EL SHADDAY*) to Moses' ancestors and more specifically as the Lord (*YAHWEH*) to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
2. He was not one of the Egyptian deities or some new divine being but the God of the golden thread which He describes next.
3. He is the one who appeared to the patriarchs and made a covenant (promise) to give them a land of their own.
4. Even though these men knew that it was the same God that appeared and renewed the covenant with each of them in successive generations, they did not know Him to the extent that Moses and this generation would come to know Him.

5. To further connect the past and present, God tells Moses that the reason for His appearance now is the promise He made centuries before.
6. God reveals the "big picture" to Moses. What is about to happen is not a singular event but rather part of this thread that stretches back to Abraham and will ultimately lead to God's people entering and possessing their promised land.

Of course, we know today that the thread was to stretch further into the future, however, for Moses, just the thought that what was taking place now connected the past promise of God to a future fulfillment, and he was at the center of it, was a lot to take in.

⁶ Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. ⁷ Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸ I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the Lord.'"

- Exodus 6:6-8

In these verses God gives Moses a summary of what he is to say to the Jews as God's spokesman, a role and communication model that was new. Up to this point God had only interacted with individuals (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) revealing His will, making promises, establishing covenants. This provided knowledge of Him to specific families and clans.

With Moses, God was raising up a national leader, a single man who would speak to an entire people on behalf of God and to other national leaders (like the Pharaoh) on behalf of His people. This was a new form of communication.

In verses 6-8 Moses is given his first major pronouncement to make on behalf of God. It contained three parts:

Part 1 – vs. 6

- Introduce to the people on whose behalf you are speaking. You are not conveying the words, commands and promises of Moses, but those of the Lord – *YAHWEH*.
- This is the same Lord that spoke to your forefathers and revealed Himself through appearances and signs.
- Moses was to announce the plan for His people:
 - Free the people from bondage.
 - Do this with a display of power.

Part 2 – vs. 7

- Tell the people that the Lord was to take them as His people and be their God thus establishing an exclusive relationship with them.
 - Remember that many of them may have still remembered the promises of old, after 400 years in Egypt they had been thoroughly indoctrinated in the belief and worship of the pagan deities of Egypt.
- One feature of this relationship will be that not only will God know them, but they in turn will know their God – He will not be a mystery to them.

- One of the first things they will know (because they will actually see for themselves) is the power that He has and will use on their behalf.
 - This power will be used and seen as God will use it to free them from Egyptian bondage.

Part 3 – vs. 8

- God will fulfill the promise made to Abraham and renewed to Isaac and Jacob – that He would give them a land to possess.
- Moses' role would be to lead them to this promised land.

We see that in these few verses, an outline and summary of Israel's experiences recorded in five of the early books of the Old Testament is continued:

1. God delivers Israel from Egypt – Exodus 1-18
2. God makes Israel His people – Exodus 19 – Leviticus
3. God gives Israel the Promised Land – Numbers – Joshua

So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses on account of their despondency and cruel bondage.

- Exodus 6:9

Instead of being encouraged with Moses' message of rescue and hope, the people refused to listen or to respond. They were despondent (Hebrew – small spirit) because the Pharaoh's strategy of breaking their spirit with harsh labor and no hope of recovery was working.

The Pharaoh seemed to have won his first encounter with the God of Israel.

Verses 10-13

¹⁰ Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹¹ "Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the sons of Israel go out of his land."

- Exodus 6:10-11

God gives Moses a renewed charge to go to the Pharaoh and demand that he release the Jews and this time with no explanation that it's for a time of worship.

But Moses spoke before the Lord, saying, "Behold, the sons of Israel have not listened to me; how then will Pharaoh listen to me, for I am unskilled in speech?"

- Exodus 6:12

Moses seems to forget his conversations with the Lord at the burning bush and reverts back to his previous excuses that he is not a good speaker. The actions of Pharaoh seem to have made his spirit small as well. If the Israelites have rejected me, how can I hope to win over the Pharaoh?

Then the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron and gave them a charge to the sons of Israel and to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

- Exodus 6:13

God responds by renewing His charge to both Moses and Aaron along with instructions as to what they will say to the Israelites and the Pharaoh. In His charge, God encouraged His two servants

and again clarifies the mission – the release of the Israelites from Egyptian captivity.

- Sometimes when we fail at something we focus on the failure itself, our own personal weakness, the reasons for giving up, and the difficulties associated with the task.
- Here we see that in renewing their charge that God doesn't deal with any of these issues, He simply clarifies the mission so their focus will be on the mission itself (obtaining the release of the people and not any of the obstacles in the way of that).

2. The Genealogy – Exodus 6:14-27

The genealogies maintain the historical record of those people associated with the Bible's "Golden Thread" story line. In Genesis the genealogy narrows the line of mankind in general to the specific line of Abraham – then narrows it still more to Jacob in order to focus on the seed through whom God would bless the world. (Roper – P. 102)

In Exodus 1:1-5 the thread identifies the men who were heads of the families of Israel at the time when they first arrived in Egypt.

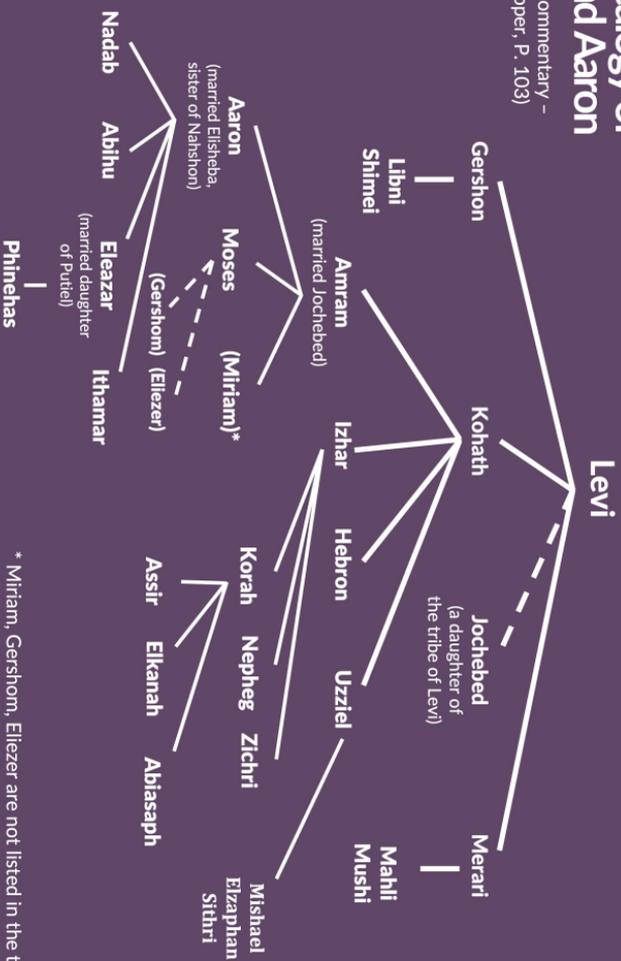
- This answers the question, "Who were the people delivered by the Lord from the Egyptian bondage?"
- The answer is: The descendants of these people.

In Exodus 6 we have another genealogy that answers a different question, "Of the descendants of the people mentioned in Chapter 1, who were the deliverers of the people – who were their ancestors?"

The answer is: Moses and Aaron, descendants of Levi.

The Genealogy of Moses and Aaron

Truth for Today Commentary - Exodus (Coy D. Roper, P. 103)



* Miriam, Gershom, Eleazer are not listed in the text.

WHY A GENEALOGY NOW?

It would seem a strange place, in the middle of the action, to place a genealogy. Note that this genealogy is placed between two key parts of the story:

1. Moses' first attempt to get Pharaoh to release the people (4:27-6:19), which ended in failure.
2. We read further on (6:28-12:51) that this second attempt is successful.

In between these two attempts a genealogy is placed, which focuses attention on those Israelites who will become the priestly line. Since Levi was the father of the priestly tribe, the genealogy features him. Since Aaron was to be the first High Priest, the genealogy highlights him and his family rather than Moses. Also, Amram (Moses and Aaron's father) married Jochebed who was his father's sister (aunt). Unions like these were permitted at the time but eventually forbidden by the law given by God to Moses.

Aaron, therefore, was the first High Priest succeeded by Elazar and in the next generation by Phineas and his descendants to whom the Lord gave a "covenant of perpetual priesthood" (Numbers 25:13).

On that note, the promise and description of Aaron's ultimate role in this mission: he will become the first human spiritual leader of the people of the golden thread. We already know Moses' role is to lead them out of bondage into the land of promise.

With the confirmation of both their roles (which they haven't yet fulfilled) the story of the first attempt at deliverance of the Israelites is concluded.

In our next chapter we'll begin the action as the Lord sends both Aaron and Moses back to the Egyptian monarch for a second attempt at freeing the people of Israel.

LESSONS

Lesson #1

God knows how to encourage His servants.

Warren Wiersbe, a prolific Christian author and teacher, noted that Moses became discouraged but did what all Christian leaders ought to do – bring their problems to the Lord. Moses did this and God encouraged him in ways that only God can encourage:

- God reminded Moses of the promises that only He could make and keep.
- Reminded Moses who He was (God) and what He had done in the past (made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give them the land of Canaan).
- Reminded Moses of His name – Jehovah. He was the true and living God.
- Finally, God assured Moses that his mission would eventually be successful.

It's one thing if our parents or friends encourage us saying things like:

- Don't quit
- You can do it
- How do you know if you don't try?
- I believe in you
- I'll help you

All good and sincere things but there are no guarantees of the outcome, you might still fail. When God encouraged Moses, He assured him with things that were true and sure:

- God would be with him
- In the end the king would release the people
- He was going to lead the people to the Promised Land

God doesn't simply provide encouragement, He gives assurances that what He promises, He will deliver.

Whether it's a promise that the Pharaoh would relent and allow Moses to lead the people out of Egypt, or His promise that no matter how weak and sinful you see yourself, or Satan has convinced you that you are – God promises that all your sins are forgiven in baptism, and you will be with Him in heaven after you die. This is not an encouragement, it's a promise from God (Mark 16:6; Acts 2:38).

Lesson #2

Many times our trials come about simply to teach us something about God, not ourselves.

Most big lessons dealing with difficulties and trials end up teaching us to grow in certain virtues like patience, trust, or perseverance.

However, sometimes it's not about us but about God – What He's like, how He acts.

- Job is a good example. After all that suffering, he learned that he didn't know God like He thought He did.

- Each time Moses went to God with his problems he would come away with new knowledge about God's character, power, eternal nature, patience, and plans for the future.

I remember falling ill quite suddenly over two years ago. One minute I was eating and laughing with the brothers at the men's breakfast and the next minute I was nearly passed out on my couch in the office, nauseous and dizzy. That began a journey of illness, doctors, tests, and physical decline that continued for over a year.

In a feverish moment of prayer one night when I was especially in pain and discouraged, I had a wonderful moment of clarity about God that brought me great peace in the middle of the noisy battle of my illness. The thought came to me that He Does Not Change. He is always the same, will always be the same.

He never changes.

I knew this intellectually (the changeless God) but after undergoing all the changes in my body and mind due to my illness, I grasped for a precious moment the divine attribute of His never changing nature and being.

This more informed knowledge of Him brought me peace and calmed my fears about the rapid deterioration of my own body. The illness that changed me, enabled me to see Him more clearly and thus assured me that He doesn't change – and all without a word being spoken.

- He is truly the portion of our cup.
- Knowledge of Him is eternal life.

5.

Deliverance - 2

God Promises Success

EXODUS 6:28-7:7

In Deliverance 1, God equipped Moses with several signs to support a request of the Pharaoh to allow the Jewish people a leave of three days to worship God. Moses and Aaron convinced the leaders of the Jewish people that they had been sent by God and thus received their approval to go before Pharaoh on their behalf. When they did, stating that if Pharaoh wouldn't release them for three days that God would punish them with pestilence or sword (Exodus 5:3), they found, to their dismay, that the Pharaoh not only refused their request but accused them of distracting the Jews from their labors. In response, he greatly increased the difficulty of the Israelites' work.

The Pharaoh had previously provided the straw to use in the making of the mud bricks, but from now on decreed that they would have to gather this material themselves. This caused concern and anger towards Moses by the Jewish people since he came promising deliverance, but instead made their condition worse than before. Moses returned to God in prayer blaming Him for their failure, but God instructs Moses to return to Pharaoh with

Aaron to renew their request but this time not only for three days, but permanently.

Before the next scene begins God summarizes what will take place and the end result as a way of building the faith and courage of Moses and Aaron. He also explains how they will work together in confronting the Pharaoh. Note that even though his first attempt had failed, Moses had remained in Egypt.

²⁸ Now it came about on the day when the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, ²⁹ that the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "I am the Lord; speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I speak to you." ³⁰ But Moses said before the Lord, "Behold, I am unskilled in speech; how then will Pharaoh listen to me?" ¹ Then the Lord said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. ² You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land.

- Exodus 6:28-7:2

Some time has passed since the first audience with Pharaoh and once again God speaks to Moses and repeats His instructions to go back to the Egyptian leader. Moses once again uses the excuse he gave the first time God called him (he wasn't a good speaker). God patiently explains how He will accommodate his weaknesses in accomplishing His will.

God will give instructions to Moses. Moses will relay these messages to Aaron who will receive them as if he were receiving them from God Himself (no doubts or suggestions, no changes or hesitation – Aaron didn't need to be convinced). The Pharaoh will be the recipient of a message from God delivered by Moses through Aaron.

³ "But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴ When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. ⁵ The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."

- Exodus 7:3-5

Much has been made theologically concerning this expression, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" in verse three of this passage and similar expressions we will read as we go through these episodes with Moses continually demanding that the Pharaoh release the Jews and the Pharaoh refusing as the Lord hardens his heart.

The most common conclusion is that God negated or overrode this man's free will in order to make His point. After all, if he would have given in to Moses' demands on the first visit – there would be no glory to God here, just a footnote in history that during the reign of so and so Pharaoh, the Israelites left Egypt on their way to Canaan.

In the end, there cannot be the amazing story of the Exodus without the miraculous plagues and there would be no miraculous plagues without the incredible stubbornness or hard-heartedness of the Pharaoh. The problem here is that if God has done this, He has forced a man against his will to do what is wrong and bring ruin to his country, as well as death to countless people. Some explain this away as the unknowable sovereignty of God (we can't always understand the mind of the Supreme Being).

Starting with this mindset and using other scriptures, the doctrine of Unconditional Election was formed, a teaching which proposes that God chooses some for salvation and others for condemnation based on His own purposes and desires. In this case He chose the

Pharaoh for condemnation and destruction and used him as a prop in order to glorify Himself and elevate the Jewish people as the special people of God.

We (as New Testament Christians) neither interpret this verse in this manner nor do we draw the same conclusions from this and other verses that refer to God's sovereignty (II Timothy 1:9; John 6:37; Galatians 1:15) or teachings about the "elect" for that matter.

Let us stay in Exodus and examine chapter 7:3-4. First of all, God was preparing Moses to face a man who, because he considered himself to be a god, would naturally be unresponsive and stubborn – so Moses was not to be discouraged (as he had been after he was rejected the first time, having presented a perfectly reasonable (three days off to worship God), and logical (avoid God's punishment) request.

The expression "harden Pharaoh's heart" appears repeatedly throughout the narrative of the ten plagues (9:12, 10:1, 20, 27, 11:10, 14:4, 8, 17) but what does it mean?

Does it mean that God hardened the Pharaoh's heart against his will? As if the king was ready to give in after the second plague but God intervened and made him refuse to give in even when he really wanted to?

Sometimes a Biblical expression suggests a conclusion that seems logical or seems to fit but clearly contradicts the plain teaching of scripture in many other passages.

In Luke 14:26 Jesus says that in order to be His disciple one must, "hate his father and mother..."

If we simply took that passage at face value, becoming Christians would require a serious rejection of our parents. However, we have many other passages that tell us that we should, "Honor your

father and mother," Exodus 20:12 or "Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." Ephesians 6:1.

However, in context we come to understand that Jesus is explaining to His would-be disciples the high cost of following Him by making a comparison. If following Him means that they will have to go against their parent's will, they must be willing to choose Him over them because in such a case, this would be the cost.

Back to Pharaoh and the expression, "hardened his heart." When we examine other scriptures in Exodus connected to this expression (7:13, 14, 22, 23; 8:15; 19:32; 9:7, 34-35) we find out that the Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

What, then, is actually happening here? Is the Pharaoh doing this or is God doing it? The answer is that both are doing something, but it isn't God overriding Pharaoh's will.

We need to realize that while God exists outside of time and is eternal, He knows the beginning and the end of all things. In other words, He knows the final results of the choices we make, but does not force our choices or overrule our choices and decisions.

We have absolute free will, meaning that despite sin, we can still come to know God through the creation, through conscience, as well as through the revelation of scripture.

In addition to knowing God, our free will also permits us to reject God if we choose. And, as I said earlier, God is aware of our choices and their eventual outcome. He does not, however, force us to choose differently, but encourages us to choose rightly through the influence of the Bible, the church, and other means.

What happened to the Pharaoh is explained in greater detail by Paul in Romans 1:18-32.

²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. ²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

²⁸ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.

- Romans 1:22-25, 28

In this passage the Apostle explains that the basic knowledge of the true God is attainable outwardly through the witness of the creation, and inwardly through a person's conscience. He then explains that men are free to follow the knowledge of the true God or the way of destructive, sinful behavior – denying the witness of the creation and their inward conscience. He says this two times.

Here is where Pharaoh comes in. For those who choose the downward path, God lets them go and removes any obstacles in their journey to destruction. Why? So that there will be no doubt as to their will and no doubt as to their guilt when the judgment comes.

If we put these ideas together, we see that God knew how the Pharaoh would respond to Him - defiance and disrespect. Even when in His mercy, God demonstrated His greater power through signs and miraculous plagues that appeared and disappeared at His will. In the end, God gave him over to the sinful, prideful, stubbornness of his heart, or as Moses wrote, God hardened his heart.

In other words, God knew what Pharaoh would choose and allowed him to do so, thus hardening his heart. So that through his sinful pride and stubbornness He would demonstrate the Divine power that was at work in releasing the Israelite people from Egyptian slavery. God didn't prevent the Pharaoh from believing and in so doing hardened his heart. He permitted his rebellion which had this effect.

Not only would the Jews and the Pharaoh be aware of the power of the God of the golden thread, verse five says that all of Egypt would be made aware of the God of the Jews.

⁶ So Moses and Aaron did it; as the Lord commanded them, thus they did. ⁷ Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.
- Exodus 7:6-7

This section closes with a parenthetical statement to end the summary with the notation that Moses and Aaron did all that the Lord would, in time, command them to do in the future and notes their ages at the beginning of their service to God – Moses was 80 and Aaron was 83.

LESSONS

Lesson #1

God can still turn you over to sin if that's what you want.

This feature of God's dealing with man is still in operation today, it is not limited to Old Testament characters.

Look at the differences between Saul and David, the first two kings of the Jewish nation.

King Saul began giving in to his impulsive and impatient nature not far into his reign (i.e. didn't wait for Samuel to offer the sacrifice, but offered it himself, which was not allowed – I Samuel 13). God rightfully punished Saul by taking the kingdom away from him (meaning his successor would not come from his own family).

If we continue reading about Saul's life, we don't see a humble repentance and effort to be more obedient. However, God still allowed Saul to reign a total of 40 years (I Samuel 13:1).

Saul hardened his heart and judgement against God, and this was made obvious by carrying on his efforts to destroy David when he learned that David would reign in his place and not his own son Jonathan. God permitted him to do so but Saul paid dearly for his sinfulness as he descended into madness by the end of his life and reign.

When we read about David's life, the episode with Bathsheba, the wife of one of his military commanders (Uriah - II Samuel 11:1-12; 25) really stands out.

We are familiar with David's conduct which included adultery, murder, and a cover up to hide his crimes. God also called David out and punished him for his sins (his baby with Bathsheba died and there was continual upheaval in his family thereafter). But David did not harden his heart against God by disregarding God's commands and further reveling in sexual sin or other worldly debaucheries.

On the contrary, he humbled himself and mourned over his bad behavior and all that it cost him. He even wrote a beautiful psalm to commemorate the entire experience.

1 How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered!

² How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no deceit!

³ When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away
Through my groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.

⁵ I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I did not hide;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord";
And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.

⁶ Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found;
Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.

⁷ You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble;
You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go;

I will counsel you with My eye upon you.

⁹ Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding,
Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check,
Otherwise they will not come near to you.

¹⁰ Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
But he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness shall surround him.

¹¹ Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones;
And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.

- Psalm 32:1-11

Note the three phases of David's experience:

1. Suffering because of his guilt.
2. Relief and joy at being forgiven.
3. Resolution to teach others about and through his own experience.

The Pharaoh and Saul are good examples of what happens to people who come face to face with God but refuse to acknowledge or submit to Him. The experience of resisting Him has the effect of hardening hearts, or another way of saying this - resisting Him affects us by lessening our ability to believe in all spiritual things.

David, on the other hand, is an example of what true repentance can do:

1. It softens our hearts before God enabling us to obey more easily in the future.
2. It opens our eyes to see the goodness of God more clearly.
3. It enables us to receive the grace of God for our sins.

David committed adultery and murder yet was able to continually praise and serve God for the rest of his life. We have received absolute free will from God which means we can choose to believe Him or choose to disbelieve or resist Him. These stories of Pharaoh, Saul, and David illustrate the working and consequences of our free will choices.

Choosing to resist, reject and disbelieve God has a hardening effect on our hearts and a searing effect on our consciences – that's why there are very few death-bed conversions. Someone who has chosen to resist God in life, also resists Him in death. On the other hand, choosing to let God in, choosing to believe and consequently to obey Him has a unique effect on our absolute free will. With time, the believer comes to the point that he wants his will to be in concert with God's will.

Absolute free will is the only thing that actually belongs to us and at some point in a believer's life he offers to God the one thing that is his to give – his free will.

Very much like Jesus, our faith ultimately leads us to say, "Not my will, Father, but let Your will be done."

In the end, our absolute free will has been given to us so that we can offer it to God, and when we do it produces:

- Sincere and maximum love for God.
- True spiritual discernment and knowledge.
- Joy, peace and rest in Christ our Lord and Savior.

Lesson #2

With God, it's never too late to be useful.

Aaron came from relative obscurity in the late portion of his life to become the first High Priest of the Jewish nation. Moses had experienced two lifetimes (one as the son of an Egyptian princess; one as a shepherd in Median) when God sent him off on what seemed an impossible mission as he entered the last third of his life.

In 2005, when I was 60 years old, a period where most people start thinking about retirement, we put the BibleTalk.tv ministry on YouTube for the first time as an experiment. Since we started, over 22 million people from all over the world have viewed our materials and many have passed them on to others.

The lesson here is that God is not limited by how we are limited. Your faith and obedience is what He needs to create a work, a ministry or a service to others in His name. Just remember that what limits you, does not limit Him.

6. **Deliverance - 2**

The Miracle Staff and 10 Plagues - Part 1

EXODUS 7:8-10:29

Moses and Aaron have already faced Pharaoh once and their appeal to let the people off for three days to worship their God was not only rejected but the Pharaoh loaded a heavier burden of work on the Israelites claiming their desire to have time off for a religious festival was a sign of laziness and they had too much idle time on their hands. The truth, however, was that the Pharaoh dreaded the potential power of such a large number of foreigners in his country and the only way to undermine their influence was to keep them occupied with forced labor that served to build up the state. Their mud bricks built the city of Rameses (Exodus 1:1) from which they eventually departed on their journey when miraculously liberated (Exodus 12:37).

In Exodus 7:8-13, God renews His call for Moses and Aaron to once again go to the Pharaoh and make their request but this time they will begin to reveal the power of the God they serve who is actually the One making the demand.

I. THE MIRACLE OF THE STAFF – EXODUS 7:8-13

God once again rouses Moses and Aaron in order to send them to the Pharaoh, but this time with a difference.

¹⁰ So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did what the Lord had commanded them. Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a serpent! ¹¹ Then Pharaoh called in his own wise men and sorcerers, and these Egyptian magicians did the same thing with their magic. ¹² They threw down their staffs, which also became serpents! But then Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. ¹³ Pharaoh's heart, however, remained hard. He still refused to listen, just as the Lord had predicted.
- Exodus 7:10-13

We assume that the same request is made, and Aaron performs the miracle with the staff to confirm that this message is from God. To Moses and Aaron's surprise the Pharaoh duplicates the appearance of the miracle through his magicians. For Pharaoh, who considers himself a god and his magicians as part of his divine authority – Moses is no more than the Jewish version of himself with Aaron a magician in service to Moses. This is a contest to see who has more "power". Pharaoh said, "Work a miracle" (show me your power). When Aaron's snake eats up the snakes produced by the Egyptians, the Pharaoh is non-plussed and dismisses them thinking the challenge was a draw.

The passage says his heart was hardened or in the Hebrew – "strong," which could mean proud. In other words, the attitude that says, "No slave is going to come into my palace and make demands on me. Don't these people know who I am?"

II. THE TEN PLAGUES – EXODUS 7:14-12:36

God knew in advance how the Pharaoh would react but Moses and Aaron didn't and needed to get an idea of how stubborn and proud he was, so the second interaction with him opened their eyes. It is at this point that God will inflict great punishment on the Pharaoh and damage on the nation of Egypt in order to pressure the king

to release the Jews. There are a total of ten plagues recorded as a result of Moses and Aaron's visits to the Pharaoh until he releases them. Each miracle/plague has certain similar features that can be used as headings in a chart you will find in your workbooks. Here are the headings:

PLAGUE	INTENSITY	GODS OF EGYPT	NOTES	RESPONSE
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1. Water to Blood – Exodus 7:14-25

¹⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go. ¹⁵ Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he is going out to the water, and station yourself to meet him on the bank of the Nile; and you shall take in your hand the staff that was turned into a serpent. ¹⁶ You shall say to him, "The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened until now." ¹⁷ Thus says the Lord, "By this you shall know that I am the Lord: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned to blood. ¹⁸ The fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul, and the Egyptians will find difficulty in drinking water from the Nile."'" ¹⁹ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, "Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, that they may become blood; and there will be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone."'" ²⁰ So Moses and Aaron did even as the Lord had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that was in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and

in the sight of his servants, and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood. ²¹ The fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt. ²² But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had said. ²³ Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this. ²⁴ So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink of the water of the Nile. ²⁵ Seven days passed after the Lord had struck the Nile.

- Exodus 7:14-25

Note that this plague was not accompanied with a request to release the people but rather because the Pharaoh has not listened to God's instructions so far:

¹⁶ You shall say to him, "The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened until now."

PLAGUE	INTENSITY	GODS OF EGYPT	NOTES	RESPONSE
1. Water turned to blood Exodus 7:14-25	Warning real but limited Symbolic of future disaster	Khnum - Guardian of Nile's source Hapi - Spirit of the Nile / Flooding	Duplicated by magicians Occurred in Goshen where Jews lived.	Pharaoh shrugs off event

The final verses indicate that this plague lasted seven days.

2. Frogs Over the Land – Exodus 8:1-15

¹ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. ² But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite your whole territory with frogs. ³ The Nile will swarm with frogs, which will come up and go into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed, and into the houses of your servants and on your people, and into your ovens and into your kneading bowls. ⁴ So the frogs will come up on you and your people and all your servants.'"" ⁵ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the streams and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.'" ⁶ So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. ⁷ The magicians did the same with their secret arts, making frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

- Exodus 8:1-7

PLAGUE	INTENSITY	GODS OF EGYPT	NOTES	RESPONSE
2. Frogs Exodus 8:1-15	Emotional disgust for Egyptians	Heqet - Frog headed goddess, birth / fertility	Duplicated by magicians Occurred in Goshen where Jews lived.	Pharaoh disturbed and lies to get relief

We note the disbelief of the Pharaoh in that he casually lies to Moses in order to get rid of the frogs which demonstrates that he still disregards Moses' God as inferior to himself.

3. Lice/Mosquitos – Exodus 8:16-19

¹⁶ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become gnats through all the land of Egypt.'"

¹⁷ They did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff, and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats through all the land of Egypt. ¹⁸ The magicians tried with their secret arts to bring forth gnats, but they could not; so, there were gnats on man and beast. ¹⁹ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

- Exodus 8:16-19

PLAGUE	INTENSITY	GODS OF EGYPT	NOTES	RESPONSE
3. Lice/ Mosquitos Exodus 8:16-19	Emotional and physical discomfort for Egyptians	Seb - Earth god of Egypt God of the dead and the earth in which the dead are buried.	Not duplicated by magicians Occurs in Goshen Attributed to the finger of God	Pharaoh refuses to listen to advice

Note that this time the magicians themselves are convinced and tell the Pharaoh that this is what they believe, but Pharaoh refuses to listen to his own counselors' advice as far this is concerned.

4. Flies – Exodus 8:20-22

²⁰ Now the Lord said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh, as he comes out to the water, and say to him, "Thus says the Lord, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

²¹ For if you do not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and on your servants and on your people and into your houses; and the houses of the Egyptians will be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they dwell. ²² But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of flies will be there, in order that you may know that I, the Lord, am in the midst of the land.

- Exodus 8:20-22

PLAGUE	INTENSITY	GODS OF EGYPT	NOTES	RESPONSE
4. Flies Exodus 8:20-32	Continued emotional and physical discomfort for the Egyptians	Vatchit - Fly god of Egypt Guards all life in delta region Female goddess Lady of marshes where the papyrus grows and many insects live.	God separates Israelites and Egyptians Plagues no longer affect Israelites	Pharaoh deceitfully negotiates

We note that God now begins to make a distinction between His people and the Egyptians which make the miraculous plagues truly a judgment upon the Pharaoh and his people. It's personal now – Moses' God vs. Pharaoh and his gods.

5. Livestock – Exodus 9:1-17

PLAGUE	INTENSITY	GODS OF EGYPT	NOTES	RESPONSE
5. Livestock Exodus 9:1-17	Economic loss Physical affliction	Mnevis, Amon, Hathor Egyptian gods associated with fertility of bulls and cows	Affects property Death of livestock	Pharaoh hardens heart but wants to see if Jews are unscathed

⁶ So the Lord did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the sons of Israel, not one died. ⁷ Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not even one of the livestock of Israel dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.
- Exodus 9:6-7

Even when Pharaoh has proof that only his people are targeted, confirming what Moses and Aaron as well as his own priests and magicians are telling him, he remains defiant.

6. Boils and Skin Ulcers – Exodus 9:8-12

⁸ Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Take for yourselves handfuls of soot from a kiln, and let Moses throw it toward the sky in the sight of Pharaoh. ⁹ It will become fine dust over all the land of Egypt and will become boils breaking out with sores on man and beast through all the land of Egypt." ¹⁰ So they took soot from a kiln and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses threw it toward the sky, and it became boils breaking out with sores on man and beast. ¹¹ The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians as well as on all the

Egyptians. ¹² And the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses.

- Exodus 9:8-12

PLAGUE	INTENSITY	GODS OF EGYPT	NOTES	RESPONSE
6. Boils / Skin Ulcers Exodus 9:8-12	Physical affliction and disfigurement	Sekhmet - goddess of epidemics / healing Imhotep - god of healing	Magicians are afflicted and not allowed at the royal court	Pharaoh is unyielding

The fact that the magicians who often acted as counselors to the king were not allowed at court meant that Pharaoh was now becoming isolated.

7. Hail – Exodus 9:13-35

¹³ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, "Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. ¹⁴ For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth. ¹⁵ For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. ¹⁶ But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth. ¹⁷ Still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go.
- Exodus 9:13-17

God tells the Pharaoh that He could have destroyed the Egyptian land, animals, people and himself, but instead let them live so they could witness His power and His presence. To prove that this statement is true, He sends a horrific hailstorm that causes incredible damage.

PLAGUE	INTENSITY	GODS OF EGYPT	NOTES	RESPONSE
7. Hail Exodus 9:13-35	Economic loss	Nut - Sky goddess	Historical uniqueness for such a storm in Egyptian climate	Some officials heed warnings
	Loss in labor force	Osiris - god of agriculture		Pharaoh repents but then changes his mind
	Loss of crops	Shu - god of atmosphere		
	Loss of livestock			

8. Locusts – Exodus 10:1-20

PLAGUE	INTENSITY	GODS OF EGYPT	NOTES	RESPONSE
8. Locusts Exodus 10:1-20	Economic loss	Seth - deity of storms and disorder	At pleading of officials, Pharaoh agrees to negotiate.	Pharaoh confesses his sin and asks for relief but once provided
	Physical affliction			changes his mind again.
	Remaining crops destroyed			

This was a second wave of destruction which threatened the Egyptian food supply and ultimate destruction of the nation if there was not a change in the Pharaoh's response – however, like many godless leaders since, the Pharaoh's pride (hard heart) was ready to sacrifice his people in the service of his own vision and ego.

9. Darkness – Exodus 10:21-29

PLAGUE	INTENSITY	GODS OF EGYPT	NOTES	RESPONSE
9. Darkness Exodus 10:21-29	Token symbol of death	Ra (Re) - Sun God Most worshipped of all the gods other than the Pharaoh himself	Dark in Egypt at midday Light, however, available in Goshen, home of the Jews.	Pharaoh makes a concession but he refuses to yield. Furiously dismisses Moses

Ra was one of the oldest deities in Egyptian history. He was eventually merged with the god Horus becoming the morning sun; later merged with the god Ahun becoming the evening sun. Ra was associated with primal life-giving energy – to control or have the power to block out the sun, at will, was to demonstrate a power beyond what the Egyptians knew or could even imagine.

At this sign the Pharaoh tries to negotiate with Moses concerning who could leave and who would stay behind, but Moses repeats God's demand to release all the Israelites and their possessions – at this the Pharaoh threatens Moses with death if he returns.

²⁸ Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!" ²⁹ Moses said, "You are right; I shall never see your face again!"
- Exodus 10:28-29

We will save the last plague for the next chapter because it will involve the first step in creating a nation, which will be a feast commemorating the Israelites' freedom from slavery.

EGYPTIAN GODS



7.

Deliverance - 2

The Miracle Staff and 10 Plagues - Part 2

EXODUS 11:1-12:36

In the previous chapter we reviewed the nine plagues that God sent upon Egypt not only as a demonstration of His power, but also to accomplish other objectives:

A. Each plague was a judgment on Egypt's pagan gods in whom this nation trusted. God, therefore, demonstrated His superiority by manipulating at will the domain that each of these Egyptian nature gods were supposed to control. If you look at your charts you will note that:

1. Polluting the Nile River by changing it to flow with blood instead of water delegitimized the gods Knum and Hapi who were supposed to guard the source of the river and acted as its overall protective spirit.
2. Polluting the air with lice and mosquitos rendered the god Seb, who supposedly ruled over the earth and its atmosphere, powerless.
3. Sending nation-crushing hail that killed both man and beast showed that Nut, the sky goddess, and Shu, the god

of the atmosphere, had no power to control these when the God of the Israelites decided to act, control and even create weather for His own will and purpose.

B. Through all these demonstrations of God's power and domination of each of Egypt's pagan gods, Pharaoh (the supposed god/king) was the one person who refused to acknowledge God's presence, power, and preeminence.

- He at first dismissed the plagues as a better form of magic than what his own magicians could conjure up even though they recognized and told their king that these were signs indeed done by the finger of God.
- He transitioned from dismissing, to deceiving, to bargaining with Moses/God. In the end he threatened Moses with death should another plague come to pass.

This brings us to the 10th and final plague where God will strike the highest profile god in Egypt, the Pharaoh himself, considered the most important god in the pantheon of Egyptian deities – the god as king, ruler and protector of the nation.

The 10th Plague - Death of the firstborn male child and cattle – Exodus 11:1-12:36

PLAGUE	INTENSITY	GODS OF EGYPT	NOTES	RESPONSE
10. Death of Firstborn Exodus 11:1-13:16	Real death visited upon every Egyptian first born person and animal	A judgment on all Egyptian gods including and especially the Pharaoh himself	A true death-blow to the nation. Every family except the Jews affected	Pharaoh releases the Jews on Moses' terms. The people willingly give gifts to the departing Jews

A. Wealth Transfer

¹ Now the Lord said to Moses, "One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out from here completely. ² Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold." ³ The Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Furthermore, the man Moses himself was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, both in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.
- Exodus 11:1-3

This passage seems like a break in the action, but necessary information is included here that will help clarify future events. For example:

1. The manner that they will leave won't be based on negotiations with the Pharaoh as was the case in the aftermath of previous plagues:

- Only the men go
- The people go but leave your animals
- You can go but not too far

This time, God says, the Pharaoh will drive them (force them) out of the country. God prepares them for this unexpected event ahead of time as there will be no doubt, hesitation or debate among themselves when the time comes.

2. How they will finance their journey and have a stake in rebuilding their entire lives in the new land. They were slaves who did not profit from their work. They had places to live and few

animals in addition to household furnishings which they were to leave behind. In this passage, we learn of the how and why they were able to leave with a secure amount of money to start up in another location.

- a. How? – God tells them to ask their neighbors for gold or silver articles that they could take with them on their journey. Simple as that – just ask.
- b. Why? –The passage also gives clues as to why the Egyptians would simply give these valuable objects away to slaves who would not bring these things back or pay for them.
 1. God made the Jews favorable in the eyes of the Egyptians. Perhaps they understood that there was a connection between the trouble in the land and the continued enslavement of these Jews.
 2. Their plight and their leader, Moses, were held in high esteem by the common people, as well as the Pharaoh's advisors – they were motivated to give.

This transfer of portable wealth (unlike land, produce, or animals) was completed in the time period between the 9th plague (darkness) and the 10th plague (death of the firstborn).

B. Moses Announces the 10th Plague

⁴ Moses said, "Thus says the Lord, 'About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, ⁵ and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well.

⁶ Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before, and such as shall never be again. ⁷ But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.' ⁸ All these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, 'Go out, you and all the people who follow you,' and after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

- Exodus 11:4-8

The action picks up as Moses, once again before the Pharaoh, announces the Lord's final blow against the nation. The firstborn male of every family from Pharaoh's family down to the most humble citizen, as well as the first born of the livestock (cattle) will all die at once on one particular night.

Realize that this was to happen to all firstborn males, regardless of age – in my family it would mean the following persons who are all firstborns: myself, Paul, Mauricio, Evan, Christian, Emile, Daxton, and Titus for a total of eight family members out of 22. This would be eight dead in a single family in one night!

Now imagine if this loss occurred in every family in the nation, including all the mayors, governors, and federal leaders. Add to this the financial loss caused by the death of cattle.

At the time, this plague hadn't happened yet, but Moses reveals to the Pharaoh what will be the final result of the plague:

1. It will demonstrate once and for all the might and superiority of the God of the Israelites because the plague will fall on the Egyptians, but not the Jews. It will also prove that the God that Moses represents favors the Jews (who have nothing, not even their freedom) over the

Egyptians and their Pharaoh who have a history, were a world power, possessed a great wealth and a well-developed religion with temples, priests, and rituals. The true God did not value or accept any of these things.

2. The plague would also force the Egyptians to accept this reality and as a result, beg them to leave.

At their previous meeting it was the Pharaoh that threatened Moses in anger. This time it is Moses who leaves in hot anger.

This is only speculation on my part, but his anger may have been caused by the fact that he knew God was able to bring about the 10th plague and suspected the Pharaoh would resist – the idea that all of this suffering and destruction would be caused by the stubbornness and pride of one man and his foolishness in trying to resist God's will provoked a righteous indignation in Moses who was a humble person.

C. Exodus 11:9-10 - Postscript

⁹ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt." ¹⁰ Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.

- Exodus 11:9-10

God's word to Moses is like a comfort of sorts. He assures Moses that the Pharaoh is the one responsible for the plagues, however, through the king's hard-heartedness God has been able to demonstrate to all the nations the supreme power of the God of the Israelites.

The final statement in verse 10 summarizes the events surrounding the first nine plagues and sets the stage for the tenth and final plague. It also states once again that God permitted the Pharaoh to follow the dictates of his own heart. Each time he refused to submit, his heart was naturally hardened, and God permitted it to be so.

D. Exodus 12:1-36 - The Passover

¹ Now the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ² "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you.

- Exodus 12:1-2

In the creation of a nation there is a "birth" event and the birth event for the Jewish people was their freedom from Egyptian slavery. There was no future for them in Egypt:

1. The Egyptians saw them as vermin and tried to eliminate them on several occasions – by killing the male children and now by working them to death. The Jews presented a dilemma to the Egyptians; they represented a profitable and free work force – through slave labor. However, they were so numerous that they also posed a threat to the security of the nation should they mobilize and rise up or join forces with outside attackers to overthrow the king.
2. They were despised by the Egyptian people so there was no encouragement to assimilate into Egyptian culture. They were destined to be perpetually separated from the mainstream and relegated to the slave class and work.

Therefore, God begins by giving them a calendar and a birthday (the Passover feast) and it is the first time they are referred to as, "the congregation of Israel," an organized community of His

people. Every time they looked at their calendar in the future, they were reminded not only of the birth of the nation, but also the manner of their birth – not war or diplomacy, but the mighty hand of God freeing them from slavery in a miraculous way.

Of course, both the Christian and Muslim religions have calendars that center on their leaders – Christianity, the birth of Christ (B.C./A.D.); Islam, whose calendar is dated on the flight of Muhammed (A.D. 622).

JEWISH CALENDAR

NUMBER OF MONTHS		HEBREW NAME	MODERN EQUIVALENT	FEASTS	AGRICULTURE
Sacred sequence 1	Civil sequence 7	Abib (Nisan)	March – April	Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits	Spring (later) rains; barley and flax harvest begins
2	8	Ziv (Iyyar)	April – May		Barley harvest; dry season begins
3	9	Sivan	May – June	Weeks (Pentecost)	Wheat harvest
4	10	Tammuz	June – July		Tending vines
5	11	Ab	July – August		Ripening of grapes, figs and olives
6	12	Elul	August – Sept.		Processing grapes, figs and olives
7	1	Ethanim (Tishri)	Sept. – Oct.	Trumpets, Day of Atonement Tabernacles (Booths)	Autumn (early) rains begin; plowing
8	2	Bul (Marcheshvan)	October – Nov.		Sowing of wheat and barley
9	3	Kislev	Nov. – Dec.	Hanukkah (Dedication)	Winter rains begin; snow in some areas
10	4	Tebeth	Dec. – Jan.		
11	5	Shebat	Jan. – Feb.		
12	6	Adar	Feb – Mar.	Purim	Almond trees bloom; citrus fruit harvest
		Second Adar (Adar Sheni)	Month added every three years so that the lunar calendar corresponds to the solar years.		

The Jews had a calendar, which was largely an agricultural calendar. Note the civil sequence on the right column where the first month of the civil calendar begins in the fall and if you follow the months, you see that it follows the various agricultural events from plowing and sowing to the various times for harvest.

The "sacred" sequence begins when God frees them from Egypt and commemorates this birth of a nation with an initial feast called Passover. God said to them when they were in the start of the seventh agricultural month (in the spring) during the barley and flax harvest that they were to change their calendars. From now on what was normally the seventh month would now become the first month of the year for them because it would be the time that they were reborn as the congregation of God.

The Jews had a secular calendar used by other nations focusing mainly on the annual agriculture cycle. They also had a sacred calendar begun at the time of their Exodus from Egypt, which listed the times of their religious observances that God would eventually give them.

The first of these was to be the Passover feast essentially commemorating the 10th plague which led to their release from Egyptian captivity and enslavement.

³ Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. ⁴ Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. ⁵ Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶ You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole

assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. ⁷ Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸ They shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹ Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails. ¹⁰ And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. ¹¹ Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the Lord's Passover. ¹² For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the Lord. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

- Exodus 12:3-13

These are the instructions concerning the first ever Passover feast:

- On the tenth day of the first month of the sacred calendar (Nisan) they were to procure an unblemished lamb (male / 1-year-old).
- On the 14th of the month, they were to conduct the first Passover meal.
- Moses goes on to explain the elements, procedure and reasons for the Passover meal and its protective significance in relation to the 10th plague. The Angel of

Death would Pass-over the houses whose door frames were covered with the blood of the sacrificial lamb (a preview of the manner that God would free all slaves of sin in the future through what was called vicarious atonement).

EXODUS 12:14-20

In the next section he explains other observances that they will keep in the future that will accompany the Passover meal when they celebrate it as a yearly commemoration and not as a guard and act of faith concerning the 10th plague.

- Feast of Unleavened Bread – (Calendar note: the feast of "First Fruit" will be initiated later – Exodus 13)
- Jews would come to understand that leaven represented evil and its effect.
 - Before 14th – all leaven removed from the house
 - On 14th – day of worship/eat Passover meal
 - From 14th-21st – eat only unleavened bread
 - On 21st – day of worship
 - Perpetual observance each year

EXODUS 12:21-28

Moses recounts how the Jews followed his instructions concerning the Passover meal with the elders being the first to make preparations. Moses also explains how to use this sacred meal to teach future generations about how God freed the people from slavery by the power of the 10th plague. The children would learn how only the first born of the Egyptians were taken, but the Israelites who obeyed God were saved and freed.

EXODUS 12:29-36 – THE 10TH PLAGUE

²⁹ Now it came about at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle. ³⁰ Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead. ³¹ Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, "Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the Lord, as you have said. ³² Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also." ³³ The Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, "We will all be dead." ³⁴ So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders. ³⁵ Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; ³⁶ and the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus, they plundered the Egyptians.
- Exodus 12:29-36

Just as Moses had warned on the first moment of the next day (midnight), every firstborn male of every family from the highest (Pharaoh) to the lowest (prisoner in the dungeon) was killed – it affected every household in the nation. In addition to this loss there was also the economic loss of the first born cattle. Note the response of the Pharaoh to Moses who was summoned in the middle of the night.

- Take all your people
- Take all your flocks and herds
- Leave immediately to worship your God
- Bless me also

The Pharaoh finally gives in (not to also believe and serve the true God) that Moses' God is more powerful than himself and his gods and still negotiating asks for a blessing – a consolation prize for coming in second. More likely it was a request that the plagues would stop – a request based more on pragmatism than faith. This attitude is reflected in the Egyptian people as well:

Instead of rising up and attacking the people responsible for devastating their country, like their king, they beg the Jews to leave immediately and provide them with abundant gifts of gold and silver for their journey, out of fear that more plagues would come and kill them all.

The Jews leave quickly in the night with only the basic necessities and no more than they could carry along with dough (unleavened) because they were in a rush to go. The last verse in the section refers to the gold and silver they were given which, it seems, also impoverished the Egyptian population (plundered). The word plunder means to take by force usually in a time of chaos or war.

One commentator suggests that the Egyptians were benefactors of the free forced labor provided by the Jewish people in their country. This money, therefore, was compensation for the wages they should have been given for their work (immediate reparations from those who profited from the forced labor, given directly to the ones who had actually provided it, on the day they were set free).

LESSONS

Lesson #1

God judges and punishes in real time.

We have this idea that God's judgment and actual punishment of a person or nation happened in real time (here on earth) only in the Old Testament, but not in the New Testament, where judgment and punishment will only take place at the end of the world when Jesus returns. Of course, the New Testament teaches that there will be a final judgment and consequences when Jesus comes

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.

- Hebrews 9:27

But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you."

- Acts 24:25

This, however, doesn't mean that God reserves His judgment about matters only for the end of time. When we pray, we ask God to act on our behalf in real time – to change something, to stop or start something, to provide something we need that will change our lives. What makes us think that in New Testament times God can't exercise judgment and punishment in real time in the same way that He provides blessings in real time? For example:

- King Herod was immediately struck down and died for not giving God glory (Acts 12:22-23).

- Ananias and his wife Sapphira were both instantly struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-9).

The plagues were a historical miracle, but God is not limited, He also works in real time today to bless our lives and our ministries. However, He also frustrates the plans of evil men or women and can strike down those whom He chooses whenever He chooses.

Here is the point – God can bring judgment down on individuals or nations in real time, not only at the end of the world. Here are two lessons based on this reality.

A. Heed the Warning

Do not be excessively wicked and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time?
- Ecclesiastes 7:17

The fools of this world try to cheat death in return for attention or money. Be careful not to gamble with the life God gave you, He can always take it back. The evil, unbelieving, and ruthless people who think that their power and their ruthlessness are their protection will one day answer for their sins. However, there are times and people (like the Pharaoh) that God judges and punishes in their prime, just to show them and the world who is God and who isn't.

B. Pray for Big, As Well As Little Things

And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
- Matthew 19:26

We pray for better health, success for our kids, the winning of a soul, safety in travel, that we will sell our house and find another one at a good price, as well as a thousand other little things and

we know that God hears and can answer these prayers. I am saying that we should also pray that He will stop wars, frustrate the plans of evil and godless governments, movements, and ideologies – in other words pray for **big** things.

Nothing is impossible means... nothing is impossible!

8.

The Exodus

EXODUS 12:37-15:21

We left our study of Exodus at the point where the 10th plague (the death of every first born in each family and among cattle) was completed and both the Pharaoh and the people of Egypt urged the Israelites to leave. Their fear was that this killing of their people would continue until the nation was wiped out (Exodus 12:33). Having requested and received gifts of gold and silver from the Egyptians, the Israelites packed what few possessions they could carry and left hurriedly.

I. Departure from Egypt – Exodus 12:37-15:21

³⁷ Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children. ³⁸ A mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock. ³⁹ They baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into cakes of unleavened bread. For it had not become leavened, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves. ⁴⁰ Now the

time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. ⁴¹ And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.

- Exodus 12:37-41

Moses describes the haste of their leaving and other preliminary details of their departure and journey – a journey to a place no one knew. There were 600,000 men with children, along with their wives. The total number of people may have numbered two million people. They had little time to prepare since on the evening before, they had celebrated the Passover meal and now were compelled to leave. We are also given the time they lived in Egypt (430 years) which explains how they grew from 70 people when they first settled (Genesis 46:27) and also confirms God's prediction to Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved for 400 years (Genesis 15:13).

When you think about it, the Jews were slaves in Egypt longer than the United States has been a sovereign nation.

A. The 10th Plague Memorialized - Exodus 12:42-51

I mentioned in the previous chapter that the "birth event" of this new nation was the miraculous way their freedom was obtained. God gave them the observances (blood of a lamb on the doorframe) and special meal (Passover meal of lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs) that they would have to commemorate the night on which the Angel of Death passed over their homes but struck dead the firstborn in all of the Egyptian homes.

In this passage God gives Moses direct instructions as to the yearly observances of this meal in the future. We will see this scene – God directly instructing Moses repeatedly, throughout Exodus.

B. As far as the Passover Meal is Concerned:

No foreigners were to eat it unless they and their slaves were circumcised first. It was to be a family meal eaten at a home, not outdoors (not a public celebration) and no bone of the animal was to be broken (this looking all the way forward to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross where John says in His torture and death, not one of the Lord's bones were broken – John 19:36). It was to be eaten/celebrated each year and every Israelite was to participate, as well as those foreigners who were circumcised living among them – slave or free.

The passage ends by summarizing that the people obeyed these instructions and God began leading the people to freedom.

C. Consecration of the Firstborn – Exodus 13:1-16

The Passover meal to be celebrated on the 14th day of the first month according to their sacred calendar was the first element instituted to create from these people a distinct nation – they had their own calendar and a yearly feast commemorating the time of their formation as a nation by God Himself.

With time, God would add many more feasts, observances and laws that would eventually give these people a religion, a culture, a law and a purpose closely aligned with God's ultimate plan to send His Son incarnated as a Jewish man to complete the divine plan to save all of mankind. One of the observances was the consecration of the firstborn, which was closely associated with the meaning and purpose of the Passover meal.

¹ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me."

- Exodus 13:1-2

Moses introduces the practice of offering every firstborn (male - vs. 15) and animal as holy unto God.

EXODUS 13:3-10

Before giving details connected with this consecration of the firstborn, God gives Moses another ordinance to commemorate in conjunction with the feast of the Passover and that is the feast of unleavened bread.

Once in the Promised Land, in the month of Abib (the first month of the religious calendar – later referred to as the month of Nisan – after Babylonian captivity) they were to observe the feast of unleavened bread where each year they would remove all forms of leaven from their homes and eat only unleavened bread.

I previously mentioned that before the 14th of the month (Abib) all leaven was removed, and on the 14th the Passover meal was eaten and then from the 14th – 21st was the week of unleavened bread where only this type of bread was to be eaten and no leaven was to be found in the land.

The week was capped with a day of celebration and worship on the 21st of the month. The purpose of this ordinance was to remember and teach each generation how God brought the nation out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. It was the answer to the question, "Where do our people come from and how did we get here?"

Once these instructions are given (and another feast added to the sacred calendar) God finishes giving Moses the details concerning the offering of the first-born male child and animal.

11 "Now when the Lord brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you, 12 you shall devote to the Lord the first

offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the Lord. ¹³ But every first offspring of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. ¹⁴ And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' then you shall say to him, 'With a powerful hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. ¹⁵ It came about, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the Lord killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the Lord the males, the first offspring of every womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.' ¹⁶ So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt."
- Exodus 13:11-16

The command to "devote" or set aside and sacrifice to God every first-born male and first-born male animal is connected to the Passover. Since God spared every Jewish first-born male child and animal on Passover night, they now belong to Him.

In addition to the Passover meal and week of unleavened bread, God adds a third powerful reminder of the Jewish experience in being freed from Egyptian slavery – the death of every first-born male child, and cattle in the land – which they were miraculously spared.

As a reminder of this they are to offer the first-born male animal in sacrifice and a sacrifice where no part of the animal is eaten by the one offering it (Numbers 18:17-18), which meant it was a complete offering with no use or value retained by the one sacrificing it. A first-born child was "redeemed" or bought back.

The price for redeeming the child was 5 shekels of silver paid to the priest when the child was a month old.

If an animal was "unclean" and could not be sacrificed, such as a donkey (vs. 13), you could kill it by breaking its neck (offering in death without spilling blood) or substitute a lamb to sacrifice in its place. God gives the initial commands here for things they are to do once they arrive at the Promised Land but will add details and further instructions along the way.

As the people are poised to leave, God gives Moses three ordinances – Passover, Unleavened Bread, sacrifice of the first-born – for the people to keep once they arrive at the Promised Land. These will serve as teaching opportunities to remember who saved them, how they were saved and at what cost they were saved.

D. God Leads the People – Exodus 13:17-22

Once the instructions about ordinances are given, Moses describes their departure and how it was guided.

¹⁷ Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." ¹⁸ Hence God led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in martial array from the land of Egypt. ¹⁹ Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones from here with you." ²⁰ Then they set out from Succoth and camped in Etham on the edge of the wilderness. ²¹ The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a

pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. ²² He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

- Exodus 13:17-22

The shortest route was the northern way following the Mediterranean coastline and down into the land of the Canaanites. This would have necessitated war with the people of that region, an armed conflict the Jews were not trained or equipped to fight. God, therefore, takes them on a longer, safer route, which will ultimately put them in danger from the Egyptians once again.

Notice that they secure Joseph's bones (Jacob's son who became leader in Egypt during the great famine). Moses remembers Joseph's request 400 years before, that he wanted his bones buried in the Promised Land, so the Jews exhume his mummified remains and take them along the journey. God's presence is actually seen as a cloud and a pillar of fire to guide their journey, whether they traveled by day or night.

II. ISRAEL'S FINAL DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT – EXODUS 14:1-15:21

Everything is set for the journey to the Promised Land, but Pharaoh, after recovering from the shock of losing his own first-born son and the death of many in his nation, realizes that he has allowed the freedom of at least 600,000 able-bodied slaves and the free labor they provided the state, reverts back to his normal, hard-hearted, and disbelieving self – and God allows him to embrace this stubborn refusal to accept that the God of the Jews is Lord with power over both the creation and mankind, and not himself.

Refusing to acknowledge what all the signs and wonders point to, the Pharaoh gathers the mighty Egyptian army and leaves to

pursue, overtake, capture or kill the Jewish slaves, he now regrets that he has let go.

¹ Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea. ³ For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, 'They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.' ⁴ Thus I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord." And they did so.
- Exodus 14:1-4

As He has done in the past, God tells Moses what he should do in positioning the people and what He was about to do (He does so in cryptic fashion, however). They started in the north seeking the shortest overland route, but God directs Moses to take the people south and camp right beside the Red Sea. He predicts that the Pharaoh will see this as a sign of confusion, that the people are lost and Moses is leading them aimlessly.

God assures Moses that all of this is done as part of His plan to prove once and for all who is the true and living God with power.

A. The Pharaoh Pursues Israel

⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?"
⁶ So he made his chariot ready and took his people with him; ⁷ and he took six hundred select chariots, and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all

of them. ⁸ The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly. ⁹ Then the Egyptians chased after them with all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon. ¹⁰ As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord. ¹¹ Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

- Exodus 14:5-12

The king with the best of his army (chariots were the equivalent of modern-day tanks) which he led with 600 "select" chariots (3-man crew – driver/shield bearer/warrior), in addition to lesser equipped chariots and a company of foot soldiers. This lethal force caught up to the Israelites, who were now pinned in between the Egyptians and the sea. Here we witness a familiar scene as the people, facing danger, blame Moses for their predicament.

Their charge against him has three components – vs. 11-12

1. You are reckless. Bringing us out here in the wilderness to die. We were in enough trouble in Egypt, you've made things worse by bringing us out here.
2. We told you it wouldn't work. Why didn't you just leave us alone when we asked you?

3. We were better off in Egypt. It was hard work, but at least we weren't lost in the wilderness with the army poised to attack us.

The Pharaoh has made his move, Moses has followed God's instructions and the people have voiced their fear – now it's time for God to act and He does so in a most spectacular way.

B. The Sea is Divided – Exodus 14:13-31

¹³ But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.

¹⁴ The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent."

- Exodus 14:13-14

Moses believes the Lord and encourages the people more or less saying, "Stand back and watch what the Lord will do to your enemies." He's thinking that God will simply wipe them out using the Angel of Death or something since he doesn't see another option.

¹⁵ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. ¹⁶ As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land. ¹⁷ As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. ¹⁸ Then the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen."

- Exodus 14:15-18

God's plan for rescue is quite different, however. His rescue (parting the sea to have the Jews walk across on the dry riverbed) and destroying the Egyptian army did two things:

1. Provided a dramatic, divine rescue. It was not of themselves, but God who acted in a miraculous way to save them.
2. It was the final proof to the Egyptian people, as well as other nations, that the God of the Israelites was greater than, and more powerful than any of the gods of Egypt, including the Pharaoh/god, whose power was in his army.

EXODUS 14:19-29

The passage from verses 19-29 describes their crossing and the destruction of the Pharaoh and his military:

1. The cloud and pillar moved behind the people to provide cover from the attacking army while they crossed – vs. 19-20.
2. Moses raised his staff, and a wind parted the sea and allowed the people to cross on dry land – vs. 21-22.
3. The Pharaoh and his army pursued them onto the divided seabed, but they became confused and frightened (probably realizing what they had foolishly rushed into) and tried to return to the safety of the shore, but their chariots were in disarray – vs. 23-25.
4. The Lord commanded Moses to stretch out his staff once again, killing the Pharaoh and his army - vs. 26-29.

³⁰ Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ When Israel saw the great power which the Lord had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses.

- Exodus 14:30-31

This time all the people were together and witnessed for themselves the great miracle and rescue God performed on their behalf as the dead Egyptians wash up on the shore. The final verse says that they not only feared the Lord (who wouldn't after that display?) but they also believed in Him and Moses as their God-appointed leader.

C. The Song of Moses, Israel, and Miriam – Exodus 15:1-21

This song/poem was composed and sung to commemorate the rescue of the Israelites from the Egyptian army by the powerful hand of God. It was known in the Jewish liturgy as " Shirat Ha Yam," meaning, "the song of the sea," and was included in early morning Jewish synagogue services.

Scholars believe it may be "...the oldest piece of sustained poetry in the Hebrew Bible" (N.M. Sarna, Exodus, JPS Torah Commentary).

- It is a song of praise to God for who He is and what He has done repeating various works and characteristics.
- It also emphasizes the results of what He has done for Israel (brought to holy habitation) and other nations (made them afraid).
- It concludes with a summary statement (vs. 19) and a joyful response from Miriam (who is Moses' sister) and the women who are singing this song.

SUMMARY

This joyful scene closes the episode and events of Israel's freedom from slavery, the observances God gives to commemorate the miracles performed to obtain that freedom along with a mighty act by God to rescue His people from sure death or a return to slavery – this celebrated in a joyful "song of the sea" that became embedded in daily Jewish worship when the synagogue system began during the Babylonian captivity some 700 years into the future.

The people are free and safe, ready to begin their journey to the Promised Land.

LESSONS

Lesson #1

**Leaders rarely get the credit,
but always get the blame.**

Notice how the people were so fast to blame Moses for their predicament when trapped between the army and the sea. You don't hear anyone praising him when the Jews were spared the plagues or thanking him for facing down the Pharaoh at the risk of his own life. My point here is that this phenomenon is common to all leaders. If you cannot deal with criticism, even unfair criticism, don't aspire to be a leader.

Lesson #2

God often does the unexpected, so pray for his help

and guidance, but don't tell Him how you want things done.

Moses was confident God could and would rescue the people – just burn up or wipe out the Egyptian army so they could move on. But God had His plan, which would require a show of faith from the Israelites – they had to walk between the wall of water first. In dividing the sea God rescued them, destroyed the elite Egyptian army, but also created faith in the hearts of the Israelites.

With this miracle God also established a spiritual precedent for every sinner who, in the future, would be rescued from the second death by expressing his faith in Jesus Christ as he passed through the waters of baptism on to the shores of forgiveness and salvation (Mark 16:16).

God is a multitasker – He does things that affect you now for the problem at hand, but also for things in the past and future – you do the praying, let Him do the answering in His way and in His time.

9. The Exodus

Journey to Sinai

EXODUS 15:22-18:27

We left off at the account of Moses parting the sea to allow the people to cross on a dry sea bottom with a wall of water on both sides of the Israelites (Exodus 14:22). Once across, Moses raised his staff and the water covered and drowned the Pharaoh and his army who were pursuing the Israelites and chose to cross on the pathway that God had miraculously opened up for Moses and His chosen people. We finished by reading the song written by Moses and the response by his sister Miriam to celebrate God's great victory over Pharaoh and his army.

This moment of rejoicing was not long lived as the people were now faced with a trek in the wilderness to reach the land promised to them by God through Moses.

¹⁵ God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.

¹⁶ Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I am indeed concerned about you and what has been

done to you in Egypt. ¹⁷ So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey."

- Exodus 3:15-17

I. JOURNEY TO SINAI – EXODUS 15:22-18:27

A. The Lord Provides Water – Exodus 15:22-27

In this first passage, after the dramatic events that enabled them to be free from Egyptian slavery, we witness the beginning of God's dealing with the people. So far, His focus and miracles have been directed at the Pharaoh and his nation, and the Jews have been witnesses and benefactors of God's dealings with the Egyptians. In this section we have a summary of how God will deal with His chosen people and how He expected them to respond to Him.

²² Then Moses led 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.

²³ When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore, it was named Marah. ²⁴ So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" ²⁵ Then he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them. ²⁶ And He said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the

Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your healer." ²⁷ Then they came to Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped there beside the waters.

- Exodus 15:22-27

The first order of business was to find water for themselves and their animals. When they have traveled three days to a place where there should be water, they find that the water is bitter (Marah = Bitter = Salty).

Here is where we see a familiar pattern begin:

- The people immediately grumble and complain and direct their frustrations toward Moses, asking / demanding that he find a solution.
- Moses, to his credit, does not defend himself, or argue back with the people. He immediately cries out to God for help – something the people should have done.
- Moses had no power; he was only God's spokesman delivering messages from God to the people.
- The people overestimated Moses' power and authority. Their faith should have been in God, not Moses.

God answers Moses' prayer for help in one of two ways:

1. Practical knowledge

He teaches him a primitive way to desalinate water. The word "tree" (vs. 25) can mean a tree, brambles, or cut pieces. It turns out that wood charcoal from the Acacia trees (which were plentiful in that area) was useful in desalinating water thereby making it fit for drinking.

2. Miracle

God could have miraculously transformed the bitter water into potable drinking water with Moses putting a tree/wood in the water as a symbolic gesture – just like the raising of his staff to divide the sea was symbolic and not the cause of the sea separating.

We are not sure which was the cause for the purifying of the water, however the point to remember for the people here was that they needed to make their needs as well as their fears known to God, not Moses. God was their leader and as He says in verse 26, their healer. Moses notes at the end of verse 25 that God summarizes the nature of the relationship He will have with His people from this time forward. In simple terms: If they obey Him, He will take care of them and protect them from physical illness and harm – He will be their healer.

As a practical demonstration of this promise, God through Moses leads them to a pleasant oasis in the wilderness with plenty of water, shade and fruit.

B. The Lord Provides Manna – Exodus 16:1-21

¹ Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. ² The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ The sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."
- Exodus 16:1-3

They left Egypt in a hurry without provisions for a long journey. They've been traveling about a month and are running low on supplies, not wanting to eat their breeding stock, which they will need when they arrive and settle in the Promised Land.

The familiar pattern of complaining against Moses begins, but this time suggesting that he, somehow, brought them into the wilderness to starve them to death. This demonstrates how quickly people can turn on their leaders when things go wrong.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.

- Exodus 16:4

Note that God again responds to Moses by summarizing what He will do (provide meat and bread miraculously) and the primary reason He will do this:

- Not only to provide daily food in a geographical area where there is no food available or to be grown (wilderness).
- He will also provide food in this way in order to test if the people will be obedient to Him.

EXODUS 16:5-21

In the following verses Moses records the Lord's instructions concerning the gathering of the manna, as well as Moses' exhortations to the people about their attitude:

1. The people were to gather each morning what they would need of the manna (manna means: what is it?) for the day according to the size of their family.

- 1 Omer (2 quarts) per person.
- If they collected more in order to stock up, the extra amount would spoil the next day.
- On the sixth day of the week (Friday) they were to collect enough for two days and in this case the extra collected would not spoil.

2. The Lord also covered their camp with quail in the evening for them to collect and cook/roast as a portion of meat.

3. Moses reiterates that their grumbling about food should not be directed at him or Aaron, but to God, and he also reminds them that God hears their grumblings and will answer them not with punishment, but with kindness by providing quail in the evening and bread (manna) each morning.

4. The manna looked like frost on the ground which appeared like coriander seed and tasted like a honey wafer, white in color.

- It could be ground up in order to bake into cakes or boiled to form noodles.
- It was designed to satisfy hunger, which it did each day for those who gathered it.
- Whatever was left uncollected on the ground melted away with the heat of the sun, however no matter how much was needed and collected, there was always enough – even on the day the people had to collect enough for two days.

C. The Sabbath Given and Observed - Exodus 16:22-30

²² Now on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, ²³ then he said to them, "This is what the Lord meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning."

²⁴ So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm in it. ²⁵ Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. ²⁶ Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the sabbath, there will be none."

- Exodus 16:22-26

The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt and as such worked seven days a week with no day off for worship of any kind. This is the first time that Sabbath (to cease or rest) is mentioned in the Bible in this context. The observance of the Sabbath is introduced in conjunction with the gathering of food in order to survive. In order to set the day aside as a special (holy) day God would provide enough manna on Friday so that two-days' worth could be collected and stored without spoilage.

Furthermore, there would be none available on the 7th day for gathering. This ordinance was established before the various commands for worship were given so at this point the purpose of the Sabbath was to introduce a day of rest from work.

²⁷ It came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none.

²⁸ Then the Lord said to Moses, "How long do you

refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions? ²⁹ See, the Lord has given you the sabbath; therefore, He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."

³⁰ So the people rested on the seventh day.

- Exodus 16:27-30

Of course, as they were used to doing, many of the people went out to search for manna on the Sabbath and found none. Perhaps they were lacking in faith, curious or wanted to hoard.

God speaks to the people through Moses explaining that the reason they were to collect two days' worth on Friday and bake or boil it on that day was because none would be available on the Sabbath day, because God wanted His people to rest and stay home on the Sabbath. None of the religions of that time featured a command from pagan gods to their worshippers to take a day of rest each week. The Israelites were unique in this regard.

In giving this command in conjunction with the way He provided food for His people – one day at a time and two days' worth on Friday to allow for a day of rest on a Saturday (Sabbath), God was teaching His people to depend on Him for their needs – even their most basic ones, food, and rest.

EXODUS 16:31-36

Moses summarizes the episode by explaining the features of manna and that this miracle should be commemorated by placing some in a jar, which would eventually be placed in the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark would also hold the tablets of the commandments and rest in the Holy of Holies situated in the tabernacle.

He concludes by confirming that the Jews eventually accepted and followed these instructions about manna and the Sabbath day throughout their 40 years in the desert and stopped eating manna only when they arrived at the border of the Promised Land (an omer / 10th of an ephah = about 1 cup).

D. Water from a Rock - Exodus 17:1-7

If we look at the map, we note that God is leading Moses and the people to a specific place, Mt. Sinai, where He will give them a witness of His presence and power, as well as a key element of their identity as His people and that will be their moral code embodied in the 10 Commandments.

In the meantime, two other events take place that Moses records - one of which involves the people's constant need for water and how this need reveals this young nation's lack of faith.

¹ Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. ² Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" ³ But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" ⁴ So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." ⁵ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile and go. ⁶ Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the

rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us, or not?"
- Exodus 17:1-7

This was the fourth time the people quarreled with Moses:

1. They blame him, when instead of releasing them at Moses' insistence, the Pharaoh increased their workload (had to gather their own straw for brick making).
2. They complained when they were trapped between the sea and the Egyptian army.
3. They blamed Moses and complained when they arrived at Marah and found the water bitter and undrinkable.
4. They grumbled against Moses when in the Wilderness of Sin, they were running low on food and didn't know how they would be fed.

Of course, each time God, through Moses, would provide for them or make good on His promises and this time was no different. However, this time God wanted an additional witness to His response since the people doubted Moses and his assigned leadership from God. Disputing with Moses was tantamount to testing God Himself.

On this occasion God instructs Moses to bring the elders of the people with him to witness this miracle so they could report back to the people what God had done and they had seen with their own eyes, and not simply accept a report from Moses or Aaron. When everyone was in place, Moses struck the rock with his staff (the

same staff with which he parted the sea) and the water flowed from the rock as source – enough to provide for all the people. Moses named the place Massah, meaning test, and Meribah, meaning quarrel. In essence the quarrel with Moses had been to settle the issue if God was really with them or not. Despite the miracle of the water from the rock, this question would be asked and answered in a variety of ways as their 40 years in the desert would show.

E. Amalek and Jethro – Exodus 17:8-18:27

Before the people arrive at Mt. Sinai and experience the important events which would be transformative in nature, two unrelated stories are inserted in Moses' narrative concerning the people's journey in the wilderness.

1. War with Amalek – Exodus 17:8-16

⁸ Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim. ⁹ So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow, I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." ¹⁰ Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus, his hands were steady until the sun set. ¹³ So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. ¹⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of

Amalek from under heaven." ¹⁵ Moses built an altar and named it The Lord is My Banner; ¹⁶ and he said, "The Lord has sworn; the Lord will have war against Amalek from generation to generation."

- Exodus 17:8-16

The Amalekites dwelt in that region but were not protecting their homeland – they saw an opportunity to attack and plunder a largely defenseless people with no formal military component (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). Moses instructs Joshua (mentioned here for the first time) to muster a military component in order to fight the Amalekite army and defend the people. This is the first military action of the young nation. Moses, in an effort to motivate his unexperienced army, goes to a hill overlooking the battle and holds up his hands with his staff as a sign of prayer and encouragement. So long as his hands stay up, the Israelites are winning the battle, but when Moses tires and his arms lower, the tide of battle turns. He has brought Aaron and Hur (Josephus claims Hur was Miriam's husband, Moses' brother-in-law) and these two sit Moses down and help him keep his arms aloft until the victory is won.

Because of their treachery, God instructs Moses that there would be continual war with the Amalekite nation until they were completely wiped out.

2. Jethro's Counsel – Exodus 18:1-27

This section explains how the system of government changed from a benevolent dictatorship with Moses, guided by God and represented by Aaron, was in charge of everything – to a more decentralized form of leadership with Moses still the leader chosen and guided by God, but the everyday work of meting out justice and settling disputes spread out among the various elders and chiefs of the different clans/families. Jethro, Moses' father-in-

law, brings Moses his wife and sons to where they are camped. He was a believer and a priest of the true God and recognized as such.

¹¹ Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people." ¹² Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law before God.

- Exodus 18:11-12

While there, he observes Moses dealing with all the responsibilities of leadership by himself and warns that God's leader will wear himself out since the load is too heavy for just one man to carry. He encourages Moses to be the people's representative before God and God's spokesman to the people. He then counsels him to teach the people in the knowledge, laws, statutes and will of God, and depending on their skill and virtue, assign various men to be leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. They would handle everyday judgements and disputes and bring to Moses only the important and difficult cases that came before them.

We read that Moses accepts Jethro's advice and with that done, Jethro, priest of the true God, returns home to Midian where Moses, his son-in-law had spent 40 years of his life when he had first run away from Egypt. In the next section, Moses and the Israelites will come into the presence of God at Mt. Sinai.

LESSONS

Lesson #1

The people are God's people; the church is God's church.

Moses was the chosen leader called upon to do a specific task, but the people belonged to God – He was responsible for feeding them and caring for them, not Moses. In the same way today, the church belongs to God, not the elders or deacons or the preachers. Yes, they have a job to do, but God is the One that will make the church stand or fall, not the preachers or other servants. Let us remember that in times of crisis so we don't become discouraged; and keep that in mind in times of growth and plenty so we don't fall victim to pride.

Lesson #2

If you aspire to leadership, be ready for criticism both deserved and unfair.

Don't be surprised if people will not only criticize your performance but will also suggest you have evil motives (the most painful cut of all). The only response that works is to stand firm and faithfully continue in your ministry.

Lesson #3

In your prayers to God remember that God provides to satisfy your needs, not your wishes.

God provided, in miraculous ways, the needs of the people for water and food, not their wishes for the wine, meats and delicacies they had enjoyed in Egypt. Some people miss the hand of God working in their lives because it may not be working according to their own personal desires.

Lesson #4

Good leaders take advice.

Moses, chosen by God, witness of miracles and having successfully led two million people out of Egyptian slavery – was humble enough to follow the advice of one who had not achieved or experienced any of these things. Today's performance coaches tell us that the most successful leaders in any area of human endeavor are not just people who can take advice, they are people who seek advice from others and have the humility to follow it, if they believe it has merit.

10.

The Covenant Between God and His People

Given and Received

EXODUS 19:1-24:18

Until this point the book of Exodus has been a narrative detailing the freeing of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery by the mighty miracles at the hand of God and the first portion of their journey which will bring them to Mt. Sinai in the Southern Sinai Peninsula. So far, God has established a sacred calendar where the first month includes an observance that will commemorate the manner and result of God's miraculous intervention on their behalf – Passover.

This observance will also mark their historical transformation from a dozen tribal clans descended from one man now enslaved in a foreign power, to a free nation chosen by God for His divine purpose. At Sinai God's plan is to further reveal Himself to them and give them the laws and observances that will establish a covenant between Himself as their God and the Jewish nation as His chosen people. The details of this covenant will be found in the law and ordinances God will give Moses to hand down to the people.

The purpose of these will be twofold:

1. They will define and form the character of the people into a holy nation representing the true and living God in a world of disbelief and pagan sinfulness. Living by the commandments and incorporating the various laws and ordinances will transform their thinking and behavior to reflect the will of God and the character of God to the nations around them.

"I am the Lord, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, and I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations,"
- Isaiah 42:6

2. The religion that God gave them in the form of rituals, sacrifice and places of worship (the tabernacle in the desert and the temple in Jerusalem) as well as the dedicated priesthood as spiritual leaders and teachers... All of this was given as an ongoing preview of the plan of salvation that God would one day fulfill that would affect, not only the Jews, but would create a "people of God" made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
- Romans 1:16

We could summarize by saying that the Jewish nation was created by God to be a historical, cultural, and religious stage upon which the savior, sent by God, would make His appearance and carry out His ministry, which would be to die for the sins of all mankind and resurrect in order to confirm God's word as true.

Exodus, therefore, is Moses' record of God's initial steps in forming a nation out of Abraham's descendants and the details concerning the initial covenant made with the people, as well as the transfer of information about:

- The commandments
- The laws and ordinances (rules of conduct)
- The manner of worship, sacrifice, and giving
- The priestly order and tasks
- The design, materials, and construction of the portable place of worship and presence of God – tabernacle.
- Details concerning holy days and feasts.

Of course, this information is not only found in the book of Exodus, many of the details mentioned here are repeated and expanded in the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy with each book giving special attention to particular topics:

Exodus:

- Departure from Egypt
- Covenant and law
- Tabernacle

Leviticus:

- Sacrificial system
- Role of priests

Numbers:

- Genealogies
- Various laws concerning land
- Wars, History

Deuteronomy:

- Summary of Israel's wilderness wanderings
- Review of laws and ordinances
- Moses' prophecies and blessings

We begin, therefore, with the initial covenant made between God and the Israelites.

I. COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND ISRAEL – EXODUS 19:1-25

First of all, a covenant is a binding agreement between two parties (or more). In Hebrew the word covenant is derived from the root word "to cut." This means that in the Bible a covenant was a weighty matter and was often sealed in blood (i.e. God's covenant with Abraham sealed by circumcision).

In a covenant both parties are bound with promises made (i.e. marriage). In God's covenant with Israel God promised to make the Jewish nation His own chosen people (who would fulfill His plan of bringing the Messiah to earth) and the people promised to obey His laws and ordinances which led to great blessings. If they failed to do so, God would curse and punish them, but He would not abandon them completely. For example, despite their total failure to keep His laws, God kept a small remnant of them (Tribe of Judah) alive in order to fulfill His larger plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Upon their arrival Moses sets out to meet with God.

Moses Meets God on Mt. Sinai – Exodus 19:1-6

¹ In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ² When they set out from

Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain.

- Exodus 19:1-2

Moses gives us a timeline for their arrival at Mt. Sinai from the miraculous crossing at the Red Sea – three months have gone by.

Moses went up to God and the Lord called to him from the mountain,

- Exodus 3a

This point will mark the first of seven occasions that Moses will be called by God to meet with Him on Mt. Sinai, thus signifying the importance of this location, which is located in modern day Egypt, part of the Sinai Mountain range.

1. Exodus 19:3-7 – Trip 1 –
Meet with God concerning the covenant.
2. Exodus 19:8-15 – Trip 2 –
Moses brings the people's answer to God.
3. Exodus 19:20-25 – Trip 3 –
God prepares the people to receive the law.
4. Exodus 20:21-23:33 – Trip 4 –
God provides more detail to the law.
5. Exodus 24:9-11 – Trip 5 – God meets with the leaders of Israel.
6. Exodus 24:12-31:18 – Trip 6 –
God provides instructions for the tabernacle (remained 40 days and nights (people fall away)).
7. Exodus 34:1-35 – Trip 7 –
God renews the covenant, provides a second set of commandments (Moses again remains 40 days and nights).

(Truth for Today Commentary Exodus – P.307 – Roper)

^{3b} saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: ⁴ 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. ⁵ Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

- Exodus 3b-6

Now, this first trip is significant because it is here that several precedents occur.

1. God reviews and confirms that He is the same God who freed the Israelites from Egyptian slavery by His powerful miracles. People at that time believed that the pagan gods they worshipped were fixed to one place, if you went to another land/country there would be different gods in charge. God tells Moses to remind the people that it is still He that cared for them and safely/powerfully (on eagle's wings) brought them to this place. No need for fear.

2. He now officially speaks to the people through Moses and makes them an offer they can accept or refuse – respecting their God-given, unique human trait of free will. Note that Pharaoh, who was only a man, violated their free will by forced enslavement maintained by military power. God the creator of the universe considers and makes allowance for the people's ability to choose for themselves what they will do.

3. God proposes a special relationship between Himself and these people – a covenant relationship where He will be their only God and they will become His special people. Special in that He will make them:

- A. His chosen people (my own possession)
 - B. A kingdom of priests where each person can minister to and for God.
 - C. A holy nation – a people set apart for a divine purpose.
4. He also sets the conditions of this covenant or promise – He will do all of these things if they obey His laws and ordinances and stay true to the covenant (be His people, His holy nation, His kingdom of priests).

⁷ So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words which the Lord had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. ⁹ The Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever." Then Moses told the words of the people to the Lord.

- Exodus 19:7-9

This is a high point in the relationship between God and the people. Moses speaks God's words to the people, and they both understand and choose to accept God's answer in enthusiasm and unity, "all the people answered together...we will do!" Moses returns to the mountain with the people's answer and God describes how He will communicate with the people and what the result will be. He will appear in a thick cloud and allow the people to hear Him speaking to Moses. This, He says, will confirm in their minds that Moses is the legitimate leader and spokesman for God.

EXODUS 19:10-17

Moses returns to the people with instructions to prepare themselves (personal cleansing, washing of clothing, abstain from sex) and God will come down from Mt. Sinai. No person or animal can touch the mountain under pain of death. At the sound of a trumpet in three days the people were to come to the mountain to meet God.

EXODUS 19:18-25

On the third day God appears in fire, smoke, and the shaking of the mountain, as well as the sound of a loud trumpet. Moses speaks with Him and God answers with thunder. God calls Moses back up the mountain and instructs him again that no one, not even the priests dare go on or up the mountain under pain of death. God then sends Moses back to warn the people but this time Aaron, Moses' spokesman, is asked to return with Moses to the mountain to meet with God.

Now that God has both the consent and the attention (awe) of the people concerning the covenant, He begins to give the details of the law and ordinances that the people are to obey. Based on God's previous instructions to Moses about His appearance before the people, I believe that the people actually heard God relay these instructions to Moses and Aaron.

II. THE PEOPLE REACT, RATIFY AND RECEIVE THE LAW AND COVENANT – EXODUS 20:1-24:18

Then God spoke all these words, saying,
- Exodus 20:1

Just as God promised, He begins to speak, relaying the details of the terms of the covenant with the people. The basic covenant is

that God will take these people as His chosen nation and bless them with health, prosperity, and protection from other nations if they will obey Him – and the following commands, ordinances, and religious observances are the details of what He requires them to obey.

God begins with the bedrock commands that will regulate their conduct and relationship with God – first four commandments; then the commands that will direct their conduct and relationship with other humans – last six commandments.

² "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³ "You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. ⁷ "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. ⁸ "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. ¹² "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you. ¹³ "You

shall not murder. ¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵ "You shall not steal. ¹⁶ "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. ¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."
- Exodus 20:2-17



If you would like more detailed information concerning the Ten Commandments, see the BibleTalk.tv series "Understanding and Obeying the Ten Commandments" by scanning the QR code with your phone or visiting the link below; the book is also available for purchase on Amazon.

<https://bibletalk.tv/the-ten-commandments>

So, the people have heard God's voice giving the basic law/commandments that He will require of His people. Moses then describes how the people reacted to this amazing phenomenon.

¹⁸ All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. ¹⁹ Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die." ²⁰ Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin." ²¹ So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.
- Exodus 20:18-21

The people's basic reaction is fear and respect for the power demonstrated by God, as well as respect and deference for Moses who is interacting with God but not dying (as they would have if they came near). They ask that Moses be the one to speak God's word to them because when God speaks it fills them with fear. Moses explains that God's purpose was not to terrify them but to test them to see if they would respect and be motivated to obey Him which would in turn guarantee His presence.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'You yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven.'
- Exodus 20:22

God reaffirms that He has spoken directly to the people to emphasize that not only did the Ten Commandments come directly from God, given to the people, but the following instructions, now given to the intermediary, Moses, also come from a divine source.

III. THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT – EXODUS 20:23-24:18

A. Laws of the Book of the Covenant – Exodus 20:23-23:33

The next section of the book of Exodus (20:23-23:33) is often referred to as "The Book of the Covenant." The information here expanded upon and further explained the Ten Commandments, their meaning, application in various situations, and proper observation in accordance with God's will and purpose. These were also called the "covenant code." We don't have time to read and explain each of these but here is a list of the topics included, which were the essence of Jewish moral law and practice, studied and debated by later generations of teachers (Rabbis).

1. Laws related to worship – 20:23-26
2. Laws related to slavery – 21:1-11
3. Laws related to personal injury – 21:12-27
4. Laws regarding oxen – 21:28-36
5. Crimes against property – 22:1-17
6. Crimes related to idolatry – 22:18-20
7. Laws requiring compassion – 22:21-27
8. Laws honoring God – 22:28-31
9. Laws demanding justice – 23:1-9
10. Laws related to keeping the Sabbath – 23:10-13
11. The annual feasts – 23:14-17
12. Laws concerning sacrifice – 23:18-19
13. Epilogue: Entering the Promised Land – 23:20-33

These laws and instructions were not meant to be a burden, but rather God's guidance for sinful people so they could know how to live a holy life pleasing to God and thus keep their part of the covenant with God. In return, God would honor His part of the covenant by blessing His chosen people.

In Exodus 23:25-31 the Lord provides greater details concerning these blessings.

²⁵ But you shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from your midst. ²⁶ There shall be no one miscarrying or barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. ²⁷ I will send My terror ahead of you and throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. ²⁸ I will send hornets ahead of you so that they will drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you. ²⁹ I will not drive them out

before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate, and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. ³⁰ I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land. ³¹ I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River Euphrates; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you.

- Exodus 23:25-31

B. The Ratification of the Covenant

- Exodus 24:1-11

The invitation to enter into a covenant with God has been made by God and accepted by the people – (Exodus 19:1-8). The terms of the covenant have been given (decatalogue – 10 commandments) and explained in detail (book of the covenant), this is the responsibility of the people (Exodus 20-23) and the blessings on the people, if they obey, have been described (Exodus 23:25-31) and this is God's responsibility.

What's left is to ratify – to approve and formally confirm or sanction the agreement (close the deal).

¹ Then He said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall worship at a distance.

² Moses alone, however, shall come near to the Lord, but they shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him."

- Exodus 24:1-2

God calls on Moses, Aaron, and his two oldest sons, as well as the leaders of the people (70 elders) to come upon the mountain. However, only Moses is to come near the Lord leaving the others

behind on the mountain and the people on the ground away from the mountain under pain of death. The ratification process is completed in 7 steps:

1. Moses recites the Law and the people reaffirm their pledge to obey – 24:3
2. The words of the Law are written down giving the covenant permanency – 24:4a
3. A memorial altar is built – 24:4b
4. Sacrifices are made and the altar is sprinkled with blood – 24:5-6
5. The book of the covenant was read and once again affirmed by the people – 24:7
6. The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the people signifying the sealing of the covenant – 24:8
7. The leaders of Israel (Moses, Aaron and sons, 70 elders) shared a meal before the Lord on the mountain. This was a covenant meal signifying peace and solidarity among those in the covenant. – 24:9-11

C. Moses Receives the Law – Exodus 24:12-18

Now the Lord said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction."
- Exodus 24:12

Moses is called to go up to the mountain top in order to meet with God, in order to receive the commandments written in stone by God.

EXODUS 24:13-17

At first, he is enveloped in a cloud which was a symbol of God's presence on the mountain. Next, he is called further up and the top of the mountain appears as a consuming fire to the people below.

Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

- Exodus 24:18

We note that before he left, Moses appointed Hur and Aaron to judge matters until he returned. He possibly knew that the journey would be longer, as it turned out to be 40 days and nights.

11. The Covenant Between God and Israel

God Gives Moses the Plans for the Tabernacle - Part 1

EXODUS 25:1-31:18

So far in the book of Exodus Moses has described:

1. Israel's release from Egyptian bondage made possible by the miraculous hand of God.
2. The covenant God has made with Israel that includes the blessings promised by God and the Law and ordinances that the people are to obey as their part of the covenant.
3. We've also seen the ratification of their covenant as Moses and other leaders have met with God on Mt. Sinai to confirm the covenant or promise or mutual agreement that:
 - God has chosen the Israelites to be His special people selected to carry out His plan to bless the world (salvation) and as His people enjoy both earthly blessings (safety, health, prosperity) as well as spiritual blessings (they would know and serve the only true God who would dwell among them).

- In return for these blessings, they would live holy or separate lives as God's people defined by the Law (Ten Commandments) and the Book of the Covenant (ordinances and observances that defined the Law and helped define its application in daily living as well as one's worship to God).

This covenant relationship was to be the basis upon which Jewish life was to be lived. The covenant molded the Israelites into a unique mindset and style of living unlike any other nation around them at that time and for centuries forward until they brought forth the promised Messiah.

Until this point God has appeared and has manifested Himself through theophanies (dark cloud / column of fire / lightning / thunder / a voice) and most of these connected to Mt. Sinai. So long as the people were camped there, this is where God would interact with the leaders and the people.

The Israelites, however, would not remain there for long and would soon depart and so God would provide them with another place to meet. Not only a place to meet, but also a place to offer worship (part of the covenant) as well as a place to offer various types of praise and prayer and in His foreknowledge, a place where sins (failure to keep the terms of the covenant by the people) could be atoned for and forgiven by a merciful God.

This new place to meet would be movable and transportable in order to meet the needs of a people who would spend many years wandering from place to place in the wilderness.

And so, in chapter 25 we find Moses on Mt. Sinai with God who will give him the instructions necessary to put together the "Tent of Meeting" or "Tabernacle" which would become the physical center of the Israelite camp, as well as the spiritual center of their religious life as they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.

I. THE COMMISSION – EXODUS 25:1-9

¹ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution. ³ This is the contribution which you are to raise from them: gold, silver and bronze, ⁴ blue, purple and scarlet material, fine linen, goat hair, ⁵ rams' skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, ⁶ oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, ⁷ onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece.
- Exodus 25:1-7

God begins by telling Moses to organize a special collection among the people:

- A. A freewill offering - In other words, not a tithe or tax obligation of any kind. A contribution based only on each person's love, gratitude, and respect for God.
- B. The offering was to be made up of valuable gifts. It asked that people offer the best of what they had (i.e. maybe the only gold one had was a treasured ring from a deceased parent). The offering cost you something whether rich or poor.
- C. The valuable things were to be used for practical purposes. They were not to be used to make a work of art or magnificent robes for Moses and the 70 elders. The gold was to cover a box (ark) or poles to carry the box or candlesticks. Practical objects.

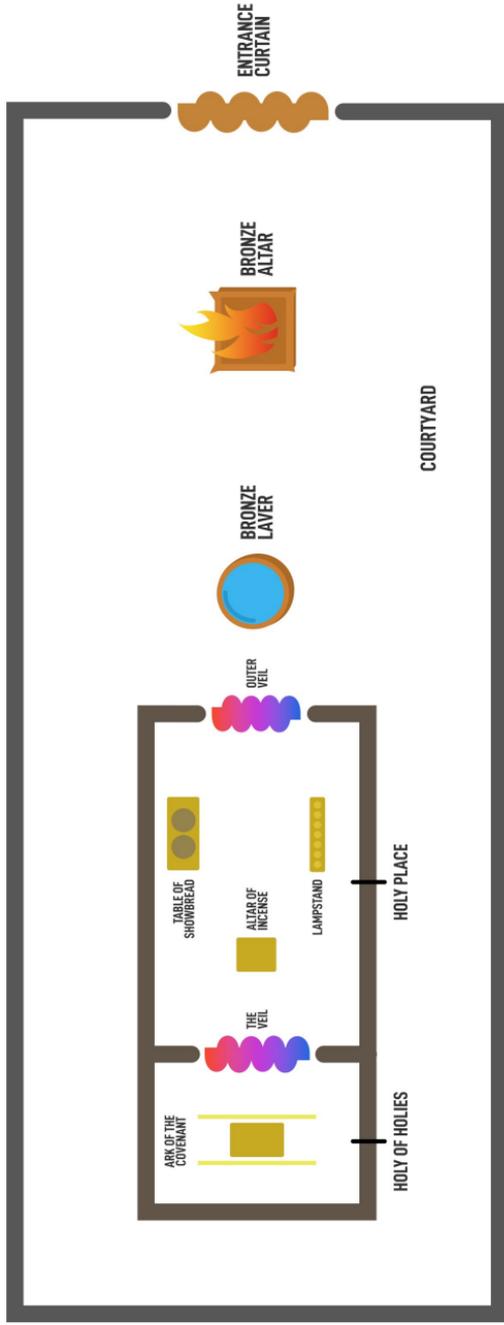
⁸ Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. ⁹ According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the

pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.
- Exodus 25:8-9

It is in these verses that God summarizes the purpose for the collection of these various items:

1. God wants them to build a sanctuary (a holy place) where He will dwell among His chosen people. Obviously, God does not live/reside in any structure made by man just as He does not live at the top of a mountain (Sinai). However, He meets with man as He had done with Adam, Abraham, Jacob, and Moses. Because of their covenant relationship, God promises to be present in a particular place to interact with His chosen people – the Tent of Meeting/Tabernacle. His Omnipresent nature enables Him to make this promise but not be limited by it either.
2. In the final verse, He tells Moses that He will personally instruct Him as to the pattern or plan of the tabernacle itself, as well as its furnishings. Various scholars suggest that God either gave Moses a vision of the completed work, a plan, or written instructions, which Moses wrote down. My own thought is that God provided both a vision and written plan for Moses to use with the workmen in building the tent and its furnishings.

TABERNACLE COMPLEX



II. THE PLAN FOR THE TABERNACLE – EXODUS 25:10-31:11

We don't have time to read and examine each object as well as its significance, too deeply, in this short introduction study, but we can review the list of items God instructs Moses to make in the order they were given. God began His instructions for building the tabernacle by describing the furniture which was to be placed within the tent. He begins by describing that which was most holy and located in the Most Holy Place – the ark of the covenant with the mercy seat and then he moves outward to the furnishings of the holy place followed by the requirements for the tent itself.

Here is the list in order given:

1. The Ark of the Covenant – Exodus 25:10-22



The Ark or "chest" was a box 45" long, 27" wide and 27" high, made of acacia (mimosa or thorn tree) wood. Deep brown, hard, water resistant – used mainly for furniture (i.e. dining room tables and chairs). The box/chest covered with gold had gold rings on either side so that the gold covered poles, also made of acacia wood, were permanently slipped into the loops/rings for the

purpose of transporting the Ark. This would allow carrying without touching the Ark itself.

On top of the ark, serving as a lid was the Mercy Seat. This term in the Hebrew language simply meant "covering." The word had a double meaning.

- A. The covering or lid for the Ark itself.
- B. The "covering" of Israel's sins, when the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the Ark's covering on the Day of Atonement.

Later on, God would give the Jews this holy day and observance to keep each year called, in English, the Day of Atonement – in Hebrew – Yom Kippur – meaning: Day of Covering. The lid or covering also had two angels facing each other and looking down at the Mercy Seat (lid). They were to be made of gold and fashioned as a single piece. Their wings were spread upward and covering the Mercy Seat. Verse 22 explains the reason for the Ark's special place in the inner room of the Tabernacle.

There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.

- Exodus 25:22

God's earthly throne was to be above the golden angels, which sat upon the seat/lid of the Ark of the Covenant which at first contained the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments inscribed by God Himself, and a jar of manna – the miraculous bread that fed Israel for 40 years in the desert, and eventually Aaron's budding rod.

2. The Table of Showbread – Exodus 25:23-30



The remaining verses in chapter 25 describe two of the three items placed in the Holy Place, which was separated from the Holy of Holies by an ornate curtain.

Like the Ark, this table was made so that it would be carried from place to place with gold rings and poles. It was approximately 36" long by 18" wide and 27" tall and like the Ark, made of acacia wood and covered with gold. There are also vessels mentioned in verse 29 (dishes, pans, jars, and bowls) made of gold used in connection with the table. We learn later (II Kings 25:14-17) that these were carried off as spoils of war by Nebuchadnezzar when the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem in 597 BC – some 800 years into the future.

The table was used to carry the "bread of presence" or "showbread" – 12 loaves perpetually on the table. New bread replaced the old each Sabbath and only the priests were allowed to eat the old loaves. The bread probably represented the 12 tribes and signified the people's constant presence before God, and that even if there were 12 tribes, they were one people who belonged to God.

3. The Golden Lampstand



This object was also made of gold. It had a single shaft in the middle with six branches extending from it, each holding a single lamp, thereby forming a total of seven lamps. The Hebrew word for lampstand is "menorah" and the menorah became a universal symbol for the Jewish religion. The lamp only provided light within the tabernacle. Symbolically, the Jewish lamps represented perfection, the oil a picture of God's spirit, and the light, the truth that God's presence brings. The menorah certainly was identified with the Jewish people and the menorah's function as a light represented the light that God's people were to provide to a dark and unbelieving world. A famous depiction on the Arch of Titus in Rome is of the menorah from the temple in Jerusalem, carried off and displayed in a parade marking the Roman army's victory and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

There is a third object located here (Altar of Incense), but it is only described in chapter 30.

4. Curtains, Boards, Sockets, Veil, and Screen

- Exodus 26:1-37

This chapter shift the focus from the furnishing of the tabernacle to the coverings, framework, and veils (one veil separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place – inside the tabernacle and the other veil covered the entrance to the Holy Place from the outside). The tabernacle was designed to be assembled for usage and then disassembled and packed for transport and reassembled at another location. This is why it was largely made of panels, poles, hooks, loops, various cloth, animal skin covering and veils for doors, etc.

In his description, Moses begins with the object at the center of the tabernacle (the Ark) and moves his way out from this piece of furniture to the furnishings and space next to this central place, then to the tent that holds all of these objects, followed by the exterior courtyard and the objects located there, and finally concluding with the materials and manner that the exterior walls, that enclose the tabernacle area, are set up and the material used to create the enclosure of the tabernacle complex.

One thing to note is that the closer one is to the center (Ark), the more precious the materials used (gold) and the further away, the less precious (silver, bronze, etc.).

The "tent" portion of the tabernacle area is established by interlocking panels (2' x 20') that created the two sides and back of the enclosed area. Some scholars believe that these panels were like trellis frames, which would be lighter to carry and enabled the priests to see the beautiful designs stitched into the coverings that were placed over the trellis – like frames. Once the three-sided frame was set up, it was covered with two coverings:

A. A linen cloth of blue, purple, and scarlet with cherubim (angelic figures) stitched into the fabric about 42' x 6' made into two large

sheets held together by golden clasps. These would be placed over the trellised panels, which would cover the top and three sides, but not the front – another veil was made for this.

B. A second covering of goat's skin, good to guard against extreme weather, larger than the linen cloth, held together with bronze clasps (further from the Ark) covered all four sides (front flap folded back for entrance).

Moses describes other coverings:

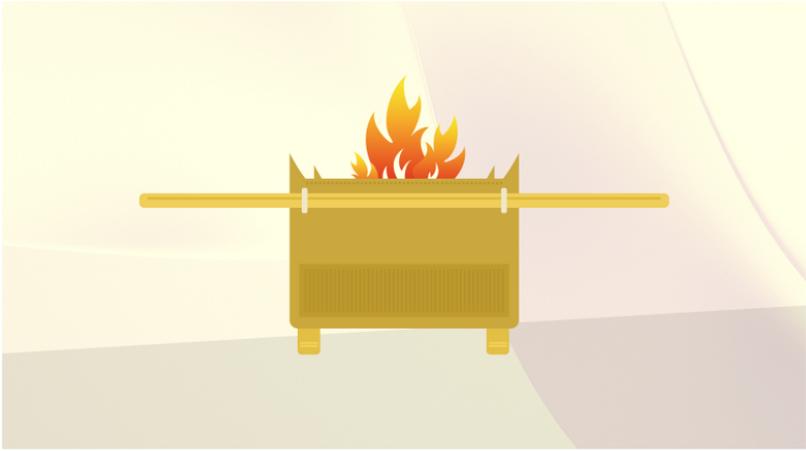
C. Ram skins dyed red were used for their good resistance to water, dew, rain, etc.

D. Porpoise skins is an uncertain translation, probably referring to the "sea cow" or the dugong, which were found in the Red Sea. This material was probably used to make "tent bags" or wrappers in order to transport the curtains and other objects necessary to set up the "tent" structure of the tabernacle complex from location to location.

E. The veil or inner curtain. This veil was used to divide the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place where the Ark was situated. It was strung across the width of the tent, hung on four pillars of acacia wood covered with gold. Like the first covering it was made of similar linen cloth, blue, purple, and scarlet, with images of angels stitched on it. This veil would be lifted only once per year when the high priest would enter to offer sacrifice for himself and the people for their sin.

F. The second veil was used as a front door to allow entry into the tent and also as a screen to prevent unauthorized people (non-priests/Levites) from seeing the objects and rites being performed. This veil was made of the same cloth and design as the inner veil and hung from hooks attached to five pillars of acacia wood covered with gold.

5. The Bronze Altar – Exodus 27:1-8



As you go outside from the tent enclosure, you find the Bronze Altar, or the Altar of Burnt Offering. It was a hollow box made of acacia wood and covered with bronze. It measured 7.5 feet squared and was 4.5 feet high. There were horn-like figures on each corner (shaped like cow or bull horns), which may have been used to secure animals in a certain position with ropes.

The priests also sprinkled blood on these horns when making a sacrifice. There later arose a custom in Israel that a person could take refuge by taking hold of the horns of this altar (1 Kings 1:49). Also, instructions about producing utensils that will be used in the sacrifice of animals by fire (pails, shovels, basins, forks, and hooks, etc.). This object also had loops and poles so that it would be carried from place to place. Instructions and details about the types of sacrifice, the manner, times, and reasons to offer them are found in the book of Leviticus.

6. The Court of the Tabernacle – Exodus 27:18-19

The courtyard that enclosed the Tabernacle was in a rectangular shape of 150' x 75'. The "fence" That marked the courtyard was

made of pillars set into sockets spaced 7.5 feet apart and connected with linen cloth. A veil made of the same materials and design as the ones in the tent, was used in the entrance way of the fence which was 7.5 feet high. There was also a bronze laver in the courtyard between the tent and the altar where the priests were to wash their hands and feet before offering a sacrifice on the altar or entering the tent - this was to be done under the pain of death. The information about this basin of water is only given later in chapter 30.

7. The Oil for the Lamp (Menorah) - Exodus 27:20-21

This oil was required to be available at all times since God required that the lamp stand with seven lamps be kept burning day and night. Only a certain kind of oil (clear oil of beaten olives) could sustain this requirement. From a practical perspective this was necessary since the menorah was the only source of light inside the tent for both day and night. This instruction, to keep the light burning continuously, became tremendously important to the Jews, in that God made this command that was to be kept throughout all their generations.

SUMMARY / LESSON

There is more information about the Tabernacle, which I will complete next time (priestly garments, anointing oil, and incense), but before we finish, I'd like to point out a similarity between the Tabernacle and its function for the Jews and a similar function we have as Christians today. One of the basic functions of the Tabernacle, its equipment and the priest who served there was to act as intermediaries between God and the people who wanted to give something to God in the form of sacrifice.

Since people were unholy and because of this could not come before God themselves, they used the priests that God purified so they could come before Him on behalf of the people to offer thanks, ask for forgiveness, or offer praise - all done through the sacrifice of various animals.

In the New Testament, those who believe in Jesus are made clean and purified so they can now come before God in person, cleansed from sin.

⁷ but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- I John 1:7-9

We now can offer our own sacrifices to God, and not sacrifices of dead animals, but living sacrifices such as:

- The sacrifice of praise from our hearts and lips
– Hebrews 13:15
- A sacrifice of good works – Hebrews 13:16
- A sacrifice of souls we've evangelized – Romans 15:13
- The sacrifice of ourselves as we live to obey, serve and glorify Christ consciously each day of our lives
– Romans 12:1-2

The Tabernacle and all of its objects and furnishings were designed and given by God to represent and teach us larger truths

and deeper spiritual revelations that were only revealed and made knowable with the coming of and belief in Christ.

If you believe in Jesus and know His words, then you will be able to unlock all of the mysteries of the religion and practices given to the Jews, because they were ultimately given and practiced for our edification who believe in the Christ, Jesus, and obtain the purity that leads to eternal life through Him.

12.

The Covenant Between God and Israel

God Gives Moses the Plans for the Tabernacle - Part 2

EXODUS 25:1-31:18

So far in our study of the Tabernacle described in Exodus 25-31, we have briefly looked at the plans for the following parts of the Tabernacle complex, which includes the tent, courtyard, fencing, and holy objects as follows:

1. The Ark of the Covenant – Holy of Holies
2. The Table of Showbread – Holy Place
3. The Golden Lampstand – Holy Place
4. Curtains, boards, sockets, veil, and screens – Holy Place
5. The Bronze Altar for burnt offerings – Courtyard
6. The Court of the Tabernacle – Courtyard
7. The oil for the Golden Lampstand – Courtyard

In this lesson I want to complete the description of the remaining elements and other details given to Moses by God concerning the Tabernacle.

I. THE GARMENTS OF THE PRIESTS – EXODUS 28:1-43

A. The Priests Identified – Exodus 28:1-5

¹ "Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me—Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. ² You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. ³ You shall speak to all the skillful persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister as priest to Me. ⁴ These are the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban and a sash, and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, that he may minister as priest to Me. ⁵ They shall take the gold and the blue and the purple and the scarlet material and the fine linen.

- Exodus 28:1-5

At this point, God pauses in His description and plans for the Tabernacle itself and begins giving instructions to Moses concerning the ones who would actually be serving in the religious duties at the Tabernacle. Before this time others performed the priestly functions – mainly offering animal sacrifices.

These things were usually carried out by family heads (i.e. Abraham built altars and offered sacrifices – Genesis 12:8; 13; 18).

There is also the example of Jacob offering (Genesis 35:7) sacrifice on an altar he built to commemorate God appearing to him at Bethel. The practice had long been established, but until now there was no uniform sacrificial system in place, nor was there any priestly class appointed by God.

Since the nature and practice of the newly formed nation's religion would involve a systematic and orderly practice of animals, food, wine, and incense being sacrificed, mainly by fire – there needed to be both a place (the Tabernacle) and people (the priests and Levites) to carry out this work and maintain its location.

Thus far, God has instructed Moses in the building and assembling of the tabernacle but here, in chapter 28, the Lord specifies who would serve as priests (Aaron and his four sons) and then describes the garments these would wear in the performance of their duties.



God first describes what Aaron, who would serve as High Priest, would wear while serving in this role:

1. An Ephod with the onyx stones – Exodus 28:6-14

2. The Breastpiece which carried the Urim and Thummim – Exodus 28:15-30
3. The Robe – Exodus 28:31-35
4. The Turban, gold, plate, tunic, and sash – Exodus 28:26-39

These items were only worn by the High Priest. The chapter ends by describing the garments worn by both the High Priest, as well as all others who served as priests.

5. Tunics, Exodus 28:40-43 sashes, caps, and linen breeches (pants that were secured around the waist and went down to below the knees or to the ankles).

With His selection of Aaron, God consecrated only one family to serve as priests. We learn that not long after they were confirmed as priests, two of the sons (Nadab and Abihu) were put to death by God for having burned "strange" or unauthorized incense on the altar. The other two sons, however, served faithfully.

- Ithamar is mentioned later (Exodus 38:21) in connection with the actual building of the tabernacle (Eli the priest is his descendant).
- Eleazar became the High Priest after Aaron died (Numbers 20:24-25). Zadok is his descendant.

Note that while the tribe of Levi became the tribe from which the priests came, not all Levites were priests. Only those from the family of Aaron could qualify to serve as priests and the High Priest was chosen from that family. Later on, the men of the Levitical tribe distinguished themselves at a critical moment in their service to God (Exodus 33:26-28) and as a reward were set aside as a priestly tribe and commissioned to be the exclusive

helpers to the priests (similar to deacons today). As a result, all the priests were Levites, but had to be descendants from Aaron's family lineage and all those who served at the Tabernacle and later the Temple were from the tribe of Levi, but from the different families. Teachers (Rabbis, Pharisees) were from various tribes since they were not involved in the sacrificial system or rituals.

B. Construction of Priests and Offerings

- Exodus 29:1-43

1. The Priestly Garments - Exodus 29:1-9

¹ "Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them to minister as priests to Me: take one young bull and two rams without blemish, ² and unleavened bread and unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil; you shall make them of fine wheat flour. ³ You shall put them in one basket and present them in the basket along with the bull and the two rams. ⁴ Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water. ⁵ You shall take the garments and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod and the ephod and the breastpiece and gird him with the skillfully woven band of the ephod; ⁶ and you shall set the turban on his head and put the holy crown on the turban. ⁷ Then you shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him. ⁸ You shall bring his sons and put tunics on them. ⁹ You shall gird them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and bind caps on them, and they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute. So you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.

- Exodus 29:1-9

Once Aaron and his sons are chosen to serve as priests, God instructs Moses in the ritual to perform in order to "sanctify" or set apart these individuals for the particular work or service God has intended for them. In this case it was to confirm that Aaron, his sons, and their descendants would always serve as priests to the nation of Israel. In this passage we see that the high priest wears the tunic, robe, the ephod, with the breast piece attached, and finally the turban with the gold plate with the words, "Holy to the Lord" engraved on it. This order of dress was to be repeated by Aaron and followed by every High Priest that came after him.



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Note also that Aaron's sons, as well as every priest who would come after them wore much simpler garb.

- Tunics
- Sashes which were used like belts to pull their clothing tightly on to their bodies
- Caps on their heads

Serving "perpetually" as priests meant that so long as the Law remained in force, no one from any tribe other than Levi, and no

one from any family other than Aaron's would be allowed to serve as priest or High Priest. Perpetual (in this context does not mean forever, but rather, as long as the conditions permit).

2. The Consecration Ceremony – Exodus 29:10-37

The ordination followed this procedure:

A. The presentation of the offerings that accompanied the ordination. 1 Young bull; 2 rams; unleavened bread and cake and unleavened wafers in a basket – Exodus 29:1-3. These were presented to the Lord represented by Moses, and this done when the Tabernacle was completed.

B. Wash the priests with water – most likely in the laver situated in the courtyard for that purpose – Exodus 29:4

C. Moses was to dress Aaron with the High Priest's special garments explained earlier – Exodus 29:5-6

D. Aaron was to be anointed with oil poured on his head. A ritual used to denote that a person was being chosen or set apart for a special role or task (i.e. prophet, king, priest) – Exodus 29:7

E. Aaron's sons are dressed for their service – Exodus 29:8-9

F. Offering and consumption of the sacrifices which were sacrificed in the following order:

1) The bull as a Sin Offering – Exodus 29:10-14

This offering was done to atone for or take away the sins of the priests being ordained. This established the core idea that sin causes death, and a life must be offered to remove sin to atone for or redeem for it. Before Aaron would offer sacrifices to atone for the sins of the people, a sacrifice had to be made to atone for himself since even if he was the High Priest – he was still a sinner.

2) Offering of the first ram – Exodus 29:15-18

As was done with the bull, Aaron and his sons laid hands on the animal, it was killed, and blood was sprinkled around the altar. Then the animal was cut up and washed and then completely offered on the altar. Nothing was kept of the animal, so the sacrifice was to signify thanksgiving and gratitude to God.

3) Offering of the second ram – Exodus 29:19-34

This ram is called the "Ram of Ordination" because its blood was used not only to make atonement, but primarily to ordain Aaron and his sons. This was signified by first dabbing the blood of this ram on the lobe of the priest's right ear, thumb, and big toe. This signified the dedication of the entire person to God. After this was done, the ceremony continued by sprinkling the animal's blood around the altar and then part of the animal along with part of the unleavened bread were burnt on the altar as a burnt offering. The remaining pieces of this second ram and the left-over bread were to be eaten by the priests at the door of the Tabernacle. Whatever was left would be burned.

4) This offering of sacrifices and consumption of food was to be repeated each day for seven days, after which, not only the priests were ordained for ministry in the tabernacle, but the altar where the sacrifices were made was consecrated – Exodus 29:35.

3. Types of Sacrifice

We often read in the Old Testament that certain types of sacrifices were made or required, however no explanations are given, so here are a few definitions to help us sort these out.

A. The Sin Offering or Guilt Offering (Leviticus 4-6)

- Sin offering to atone for sins against God.

- Guilt offering addressed sins against others, also included paying for damages.
- The meat belonged to the priests for food.

B. Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1)

- This sacrifice represented complete surrender to God.
- An unblemished male animal bears the worshipper's sins and dies in his place.
- The animal was completely burned up and there was no meat left for eating.

C. The Grain or Meal Offering (Leviticus 2)

- These were given to God in thankfulness. Fine flour, unleavened cakes or roasted grain were used.
- The priest would throw a symbolic handful at the altar and keep the rest for personal use.

D. Fellowship or Peace Offering (Leviticus 2; 7:11-21)

- This offering symbolized fellowship and peace with God through shed blood (sacrifice).
- After some meat was ceremonially waved and given to the priests, worshippers and their guests could share the feast as a meal taken with God.
- The "thank offering" and the "vow offering" and the "freewill offering" were all different types of peace offerings.

E. Wave Offering and Heave Offering

- These refer to a type of ritual action where the sacrifice was first "waved" in some manner before being placed on the altar.
- The movement of waving the sacrifice towards the altar and then away from it, signified presenting a gift to God and receiving it back in some manner.
- A Heave Offering was a sacrifice completely dedicated to God.

4. Daily Offerings – Exodus 29:38-42

- It is in this passage that God instructs Moses that each morning and night a one-year-old lamb is to be offered as a burnt sacrifice (completely burned up with no leftovers for food).
- They were also to add a portion of fine flour, oil, and wine so that the total sacrifice would represent parts of a complete meal.
- This instruction was carried out even to the time of Jesus.

5. The Results of This Consecration of the Priests and the Tabernacle – Exodus 29:43-46

⁴³ I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory. ⁴⁴ I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me. ⁴⁵ I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. ⁴⁶ They shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God.
- Exodus 29:43-46

The purpose for the complex and demanding rituals was to keep Israel mindful that this was no ordinary place, but the place where God met with the ones who served as their mediator with God, the priests. This place and what God had given them through their anointed priesthood (sacrificial system) assured the people that He would be with them in the future.

II. THE ALTAR OF INCENSE – EXODUS 30:1-38

Chapter 30 concludes the Lord's instructions to Moses concerning the building of the Tabernacle complex and objects found in it, the garments worn by the priests, their consecration, and some of their duties. Four things remain:

1. The Altar of Incense – Exodus 30:1-10



An 18" square table, 3' high with horns on each corner and rings with poles for carrying and a molding around its top – made of acacia wood and all covered in gold. It was placed in front of the veil that led into the Holy of Holies where the Ark was located.

Each morning and evening a priest was to burn fine incense (made especially for this purpose) on this altar, so that there was always a fragrant aroma there 24/7. No other "strange" or unauthorized incense was to be used for this twice daily ritual. (This is why Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, were killed – they offered unauthorized or "strange fire" on the altar of incense).

No burnt meal or drink offerings were to be made on this altar except on the once yearly Day of Atonement when the High Priest would sprinkle the blood of the sin atonement (which was sacrificed on the altar in the courtyard) on the horns of the altar of incense, before going into the Holy of Holies to do the same on the Ark of the Covenant. The cloud produced by burning the incense would represent the presence of God with His people, located in the Holy of Holies.

2. Required Tax – Exodus 30:11-16

The emphasis here is how the Tabernacle and its work would be funded – ½ shekel paid by each adult 20 years and over (according to census records). This tax was seen as a form of personal dedication to the Lord for those who were not priests. Just as the priests were purified and the objects in the Tabernacle were consecrated, the people were devoted to the Lord by the offering of this tax to sustain the priests and the Tabernacle.

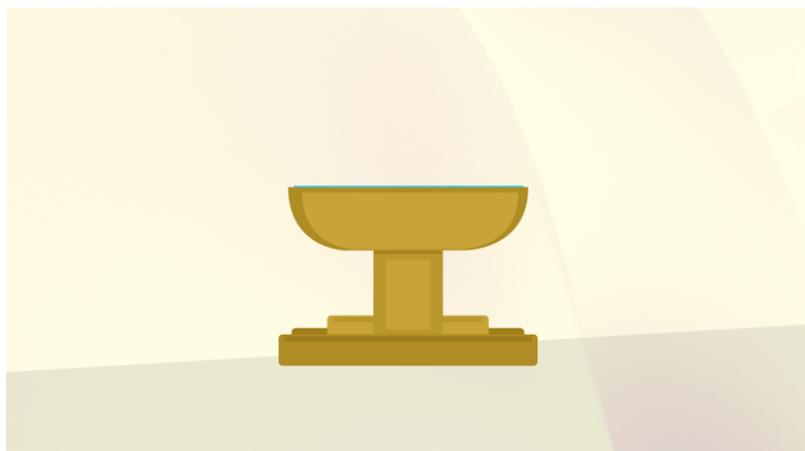
3. The Bronze Laver – Exodus 30:17-21

¹⁷ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁸ "You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it.

¹⁹ Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it; ²⁰ when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, so that they will not die; or

when they approach the altar to minister, by offering up in smoke a fire sacrifice to the Lord. ²¹ So they shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they will not die; and it shall be a perpetual statute for them, for Aaron and his descendants throughout their generations."

- Exodus 30:17-21



The laver was to be used for ritual washing of the priests' hands and feet every time they were to enter the Holy Place in order to minister there or entered the Tabernacle courtyard to offer sacrifice on the bronze altar. God wanted the Tabernacle to be considered a holy place because of His presence there. This was reinforced by the command that to neglect to wash would result in death.

4. The Anointing Oil – Exodus 30:22-33

God provided instructions for the production and use of the special type of anointing oil which was only to be used by the

priests in connection with their ministry at the Tabernacle. God deemed it to be holy and whatever it anointed became holy (separate unto God and for His purpose (vs. 29). This is why personal use was forbidden.

5. The Incense – Exodus 30:34-38

The instructions for making and using the incense were similar to the ones for the anointing oil.

- A detailed recipe given
- The required ingredients were rare and expensive
- The incense itself was to be regarded as holy
- No one was to produce or use it for personal use
- Breaking this rule was punishable by death

This incense was primarily used on the altar of incense located in front of the veil that hid the Holy of Holies from view and separated it from the Holy Place.

III. SUMMARY AND FINAL INSTRUCTIONS – EXODUS 31:1-18

Once the commandments and the plans for the Tabernacle are given to Moses, God also appoints and empowers with wisdom and ability two craftsmen who will direct the construction of this Tabernacle.

Bezalel and Oholiab

Next, God reviews briefly all of the items He has previously described to Moses in chapters 25-30. He then reviews, once again, the importance of keeping the Sabbath day holy, otherwise all the commands concerning the Tabernacle and the spiritual exercises performed there by the priests on behalf of the people

would be of no use. Most of the instructions given to Moses had to do with the building of the Tabernacle, its furnishings, the garments for the priests, and details concerning their service before God on behalf of the people.

The command to keep the Sabbath, however, did not require the use of the Tabernacle, or the service of a priest or a sacrifice of some sort – it was strictly something between the individual and God – and the Lord reinforces it one last time before Moses leaves the mountain, in order to bring the plans for the Tabernacle – the place where God will meet with the Israelites, the people chosen to be in the covenant with God.

LESSON

I think that there is really only one practical lesson that stands out from this section filled with commands and regulations:

Christians need to understand and accept the fact that there is a real difference between what is holy and what is unholy.

God went to great lengths to teach His people this lesson: The food laws (clean and unclean); the regulations concerning their worship (Holy things and people were special and treated differently); certain days were ordinary, but others were holy (Sabbath, Day of Atonement). All of this pointed back to God, who was holy and who wanted His people to be holy.

These guidelines helped the people develop the virtue of "piety" – a pious person has and shows respect for things, actions, and people that are holy. A pious person has respect for God, as well as the people, and the things of God.

Today we're seeing in the world the democratization of everything- corporate presidents dress the same as the intern in the mail room. We treat presidents and those who have achieved great things, because of skill or courage, the same way as we treat the guy who has never held down a job – we pay no respect to anyone.

That's fine for society where everyone is human, and no one is perfect. But it can't work like that in the church because here God is among us!

- His presence – through the Holy Spirit within each person
- His Word – through the Bible
- His Practices – baptism and communion
- His Command – that we love each other
- His Body – the church (we are the people of God today!)
- His Ministries – preachers, teachers, elders, and deacons (anointed servants)
- His People – the Saints in Christ

His presence demands piety and respect. And that means that our words, our dress, our attitude is different when we are here – where God is, where God's things are done (i.e. worship), where God's holy people gather.

We need to make an effort to separate what is holy from what is unholy if we wish to draw near to our Holy God.

13.

Aaron's Sin

Apostasy, Restoration, Completion and Consecration

EXODUS 32:1-40:38

It is interesting to note that the essential purpose for this Tabernacle, the priestly family, the Levites, and the sacrificial system was to be clearly demonstrated by Aaron, Moses' brother who had been chosen by God to serve as the first High Priest.

God made a covenant with the Israelites. He would provide them with land, security and prosperity if they would obey and worship Him. The problem, of course, was that even though God was willing and able to keep His covenant promises – the Israelites were not. This was made painfully clear as the people and their High Priest, Aaron, fell into sin as soon as the commandments, plan for the Tabernacle and sacrificial system were given to Moses by God on Mt. Sinai.

Knowing that the Israelites would not be able to keep their part of the covenant promise, God designed and gave them a system to deal with sin so they could actually remain in the covenant despite their weakness and disposition as human beings to disobey God and sin against Him.

Aaron's story occurs between the giving of the instructions for the building of the Tabernacle and the actual building and consecration of it, to highlight this most important point.

I. THE APOSTASY – EXODUS 32:1-35

A. Aaron – The First High Priest – Summary

Aaron was a great servant of God and the first man chosen to serve the nation as a whole in the capacity of High Priest with his sons as priests. Like his younger brother, Moses, he would not live to enter the Promised Land (Moses – Number 20:10-13; Aaron – Numbers 20:23-26). Aaron was much loved by the people as they wept and mourned him for 30 days when he died (Numbers 20:27-29).

B. Aaron's Failure – Exodus 32:1-6

Let's set the scene that led to Aaron's great failure. The people have been miraculously delivered from Egyptian bondage and are now camped at Mt. Sinai in the Sinai wilderness. God has miraculously led them (pillar of fire, cloud of smoke); miraculously fed them (water from a rock, quail, and manna). He has also communicated with the people through signs and awesome wonders and has spoken to the people concerning His instructions and Laws. The people have been given general instructions about their worship, place of worship and that Aaron and his sons will serve as priests. There is now great activity in the camp as the people begin to collect the elements that will be necessary to actually build the Tabernacle.

During this time God calls Moses to come up to Mt. Sinai where He will be given the tablets upon which God will inscribe the Ten Commandments and Moses will also receive detailed plans for building the Tabernacle and instructions concerning the sacrificial system. Moses has been gone 40 days, a period of time the people

find too long. It is during his critical absence that Aaron fails in his leadership and priestly roles.

¹ Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." ² Aaron said to them, "Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." ³ Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." ⁵ Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord." ⁶ So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.
- Exodus 32:1-6

Note carefully what happens here: The people, having nothing to do, become restless. All this talk of God and worship, but nothing happening while Moses was gone – they wanted a religious festival, a religious activity much like they had in Egypt and wanted Aaron (the priest) to provide one.

Of course, the Tabernacle and all the elements and system of worship had not yet been given to the people – Moses had been receiving these from God on the mountain for the last 40 days. But the people wanted to celebrate now – they saw no reason to wait for Moses or instructions from God about what they wanted to do

- and anyways they had Aaron - wasn't he supposed to be their priest?

So, Aaron, who was raised in Egypt, knowing Egyptian ways about religion and festivals, tries to pacify a seeming revolt by giving into their demands:

- Remember, however, that he's the spokesman, but Moses is the leader.
- God speaks and instructs Moses, not Aaron.
- Aaron may not have known how to hurry along the completion of the work but knew who the divinely appointed leader was - and he knew enough about God's ways to know that he (and the people) should wait!

Instead, he collects gold from the people and creates a statue of a calf (better word is young bull) that represented *Apis* - a familiar image representing fertility, prosperity and strength. Note, in verse 4 that the people say, "This is your God, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt." The people were acknowledging that it was God who saved them, but in their ignorance and spiritual immaturity they broke the second commandment and assigned the Lord's identity to one of their Egyptian deities (*Apis*) and its image of a young ox. In the next verse, Aaron carried along by the enthusiasm of the moment built an altar (upon, which he, as a priest, would have offered sacrifices) and declared the next day to be the festival they had asked for - he was just doing his job!

Now, as far as pagan gods were concerned, this was a creative masterpiece, in no way meant to offend God - it was man's idea of what God wanted. The intention was to quiet the people and give them a legitimate and satisfying worship experience. Of course, things go wrong quickly - the people revert back to their pagan

ways learned in Egypt where they often mixed immoral sexual activities along with their religious practices. The situation degenerates as the people go from idolatry to excess in indecent conduct and eventually to rebellion.

C. Moses' Intervention – Exodus 32:7-29

⁷ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. ⁸ They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!" ⁹ The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people.

¹⁰ Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation."

- Exodus 32:7-10

The scene switches back to the mountain where God informs Moses that the people have reverted back to their idolatrous ways learned in Egypt and condemns them as obstinate (stiff-necked= like animals refusing to wear a yoke or bridal = humans who refuse to yield or to obey God). As a result, God threatens to destroy them all and start the plan over again, this time with Moses taking the role of Abraham – after all, time is of no concern to God, He's never in a hurry.

In Exodus 32:11-18 we see Moses interceding with God on behalf of the people, arguing that to do so would cause the pagan nations to doubt God's ability to fulfill His promise to the patriarchs. God relented, meaning He changed His course of action in response to Moses' prayer. God can and has changed His mind and will change

His course of action based on prayer – that's why we pray! For example:

1. Hezekiah is healed after being told he was going to die. After his prayer, God gave him fourteen additional years – II Kings 20:1-11.
2. God was going to totally destroy Sodom and Gomorrah – but relented and saved Lot's family after Abraham appealed to Him – Genesis 16:1.

And so, in the same way God does not destroy the people for their sins but sends Moses back to camp to stop the fast destruction of order among the people.

¹⁹ It came about, as soon as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰ He took the calf which they had made and burned it with fire, and ground it to powder, and scattered it over the surface of the water and made the sons of Israel drink it.

²¹ Then Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you, that you have brought such great sin upon them?" ²² Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil. ²³ For they said to me, 'Make a god for us who will go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' ²⁴ I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off.' So, they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."
- Exodus 32:19-24

Moses returns, shatters the tablets with the Ten Commandments, in his anger, destroys the idol and confronts his brother. Note how Aaron, this great man, given great honor and responsibility, responds to his great failure – to begin with, he doesn't even have the courage to own up to his sin! His excuses are weak and multiply his sins:

1. They forced me to do this. You know how they are! He is manipulative in suggesting Moses would have done the same, would not have resisted either.
2. It's not my fault, I just threw the gold in the fire and out popped the statue. A bald-faced lie – verse 4 says that Aaron took a graving tool and fashioned it into a molten calf.
3. You were gone and I had to do something! Shifting blame – it was really Moses' fault.

EXODUS 32:25-29

Because of his weakness, failure, and sins we read further on about the consequences of this episode in Aaron's life:

1. The people committed a great sin in violating the covenant they so enthusiastically agreed to, barely a month before this incident – and true to the covenant's terms they were punished for it.
2. Three thousand men lost their lives that day as a counter measure was begun by Moses to stop the spread of the religious rebellion which grew out of the disorder brought about by the pagan worship practiced in the camp. Moses called on faithful men to step up and the tribe of Levi stepped forward to answer the call. They put down the rebellion and were rewarded by God in that

future priests and servants of the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, would exclusively come from their tribe (Levi – Levites – Levitical).

3. In addition to these consequences, Aaron's own reputation and standing before God, before Moses and the people was seriously compromised.

He was the one chosen to be a minister unto God on behalf of the people but had disgraced himself with this terrible and very public failure. Of course, we know that Aaron's story does not end here, and we will pick up again further on, but first we need to switch the scene back to Moses, as he struggles to re-organize the people in order to carry out the plans given to him by God on Mt. Sinai.

D. Restoration – Exodus 32:30-35

Once order has been restored, Moses returns to God and confesses the sin of the people and accepts the fact that if God were to condemn them, He should include Moses as well (probably accepting his responsibility of blame as the people's leader – i.e. the buck stops here).

God reassures Moses that He knows who is guilty of sin and His punishment of removing them from His Book of Life will take place eventually. So far, He has punished them in three ways for this sin:

1. Moses made the people drink water corrupted with the ashes of the burned idol, as a symbol of their combined guilt – Exodus 32:20.
2. The Levites had killed 3,000 of the people's leaders who had fomented the start of a rebellion among the people – Exodus 32:28.

3. God sent an unspecified plague on the people of which we have no details – Exodus 32:35.

II. THE JOURNEY RESUMES – EXODUS 33:1-35:3

Once God has punished the people, He instructs Moses to resume the journey to the land He has originally promised them, however, He threatens not to go with them because they are so stubborn, He might destroy them on the way, and upon hearing this the people show remorse (Exodus 33:1-6).

A. Moses Intercedes – Exodus 33:7-23

Previously Moses would speak with God in a special tent outside the camp. God's presence in the tent was signified by a pillar of cloud. Moses meets with the Lord to ask Him once again to relent and accompany the people on their journey – realizing that without Him, to go forward would be futile and arguing that without His presence among them they would be like every other nation – they would lose their distinctiveness.

Once again, God relents and agrees to remain among them, at which point Moses asks for and receives special viewing of God as He passes by him and Moses sees His back, but not His face. In explaining this passage, one commentator wrote, "In vivid pictorial language, the passage says that man may see only where God has passed by and so know Him by His past doing and acts."
P. 549 – Cole

B. Moses Receives Renewed Instructions – Exodus 34:1-35:3

At this point God gives Moses a new set of tablets with the commandments and renews His intention to remain with His people, but to perform mighty works among them as well. He also renews the covenant with them and adds other conditions and

warnings about mixing with pagan nations which would lead the Israelites into idolatry. He finishes by giving Moses instructions concerning various feasts, the Sabbath and offering of sacrifices. Moses then returns to the people to relay these instructions and the text says that as a result of his time with God, his face was shining – so much that he would cover it when he spoke to the people.

C. The Tabernacle is Built – Exodus 35:4-40:11



For detailed information about the Tabernacle, please watch the BibleTalk.tv series **The Tabernacle** by Robert G. Chilton Jr. bibletalk.tv/tabernacle

In the last chapters of Exodus Moses provides the details concerning the actual Tabernacle. It is a repeat of the instructions already given except now these plans are being used to construct and assemble the Tabernacle for the purpose it was created – to worship God and deal with the sins of the people. Ironically, the very first person to have his sins cleansed will be Aaron, the High Priest.

So, we pick up Aaron's story as we fast forward to the completion of the Tabernacle in chapter 40.

AARON'S CONSECRATION – EXODUS 40:12-38

After all is built and set into place, the following instructions were given to Moses.

¹² Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water. ¹³ You shall put the holy garments on Aaron and

anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister as a priest to Me. ¹⁴ You shall bring his sons and put tunics on them; ¹⁵ and you shall anoint them even as you have anointed their father, that they may minister as priests to Me; and their anointing will qualify them for a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations."

¹⁶ Thus Moses did; according to all that the Lord had commanded him, so he did.

- Exodus 40:12-16

Here is this man, Aaron, this miserable failure, who fell sort of doing the very thing he was chosen to do (serve as a minister to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people) became the one who led them into sin and nearly caused their destruction. This same man will eventually offer sacrifice for his own sins and then begin his task of offering sacrifices to God on behalf of the people.

After Aaron is prepared to serve, Moses summarizes the assembling of the Tabernacle complex and finishes the book of Exodus by describing how God communicated with the people.

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; ³⁷ but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. ³⁸ For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.

- Exodus 40:34-38

LESSONS

This completes our study of the book of Exodus, but before we finish, I'd like to draw a few lessons from Aaron's experience of failure – then the series will be yours.

Lesson #1

Even great people fall.

Aaron was chosen by God, given power and position but this didn't guarantee a life without failure. God can use us to serve Him, not because we're great, but because He is great! A-types, overachievers, those who have succeeded in many areas need to understand that they too can fail and fail very badly. When they do, they need to realize that God can still use them, even after they have failed, because His love is greater than any of our past successes or failures.

Lesson #2

Our failures are never forgotten, but they are forgiven.

Poor Aaron, his failure is forever recorded in the Bible for all to see. But Aaron would go on with his life and ministry because God forgave him his stumble. Some people think that so long as they can remember their own or somebody else's mistakes, there's no real forgiveness.

Aaron's story reminds us that we need to focus more on God's forgiveness instead of our failures if we wish to regain our confidence for the future as well as the ability and desire to forgive others. People who don't forgive themselves have a hard time forgiving others – even if they want to. If you dwell mainly on your or someone else's failures, you will never succeed at forgiveness and receive the healing that comes with it.

Lesson #3

Failure lays the groundwork for improvement.

Aaron learned a hard lesson from the episode with the golden calf. It was a lesson that prepared him for the rigorous ministry of the priesthood. His failure improved his capacity for understanding and compassion. Despite the splendor of the Tabernacle and the divine mysteries of the sacrificial system, aside from the beauty and commanding presence of the High Priest's garments, Aaron never lost sight of the fact that, like the people he represented, he too was only a frail human being in need of God's mercy. This lesson had been indelibly stamped on his heart through failure, and he was a more effective minister and compassionate man because of it.

From start to finish the Bible tells and re-tells the story of man's continued failure at keeping God's commands. It also recounts God's continued effort at forgiving and restoring a failed humanity. This should give us confidence to approach Him the next time we think we've failed too badly to ask for forgiveness.

Whether it's for the first time in repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38) or the 50th time a sinful Christian offers a sincere prayer for pardon (I John 1:7-9), God is always faithful to forgive and have mercy on us – for every failure.

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