

The Law, Book 2

Exodus

The Book of Exodus (from Greek, meaning "the road out," or "going out") records the 150-year period between the death of Joseph and the Exodus from Egypt¹. The Book of Exodus begins with the Hebrew conjunction *waw*, meaning "Now," providing a literary bridge indicating that Exodus is a continuation of the account of Genesis.

During this time, the pharaoh who loved Joseph died, and a subsequent pharaoh ("which knew not Joseph") assumed the throne and made slaves of Jacob's descendants. Even under the conditions of a cruel bondage, God blessed the children of Israel and they multiplied so greatly in numbers that the Egyptians came to view them as a threat. In this setting Moses was born of an Israelite woman, reared and educated in the palace as Pharaoh's favored grandson, killed a cruel Egyptian who was abusing an Israelite slave and fled to Canaan.

Then follows the record of his return to Egypt, the leading of the children of Israel out of Egypt through the Red Sea, his receiving of the law at Sinai, the organization of the Hebrew nation, and preparation for the journey to the Promised Land. The book closes with the completion and sanctification of the Tabernacle.

NOTE: Frances Siewert, in her "Amplified Bible, Introduction to Exodus," observed that "Transforming the enslaved Israelites into an independent nation under Moses represents one of the greatest miracles in Old Testament times."

A. Author. Like the other four books of the Pentateuch, the human author was almost certainly Moses. Moses is believed by traditional scholars to have written Genesis from previous records, written on stone or clay tablets, and/or by direct inspiration of the Spirit of God; beginning with Exodus, however, he wrote as an eyewitness. One might say that in the last four books of the Pentateuch he wrote, in great detail, not only the story of the children of Israel during the exodus and the sojourn in the wilderness, to reach the Promised Land; but also his own story.

B. Place and Date. Exodus was probably written during the year-long stay at Sinai, about 1,500 BC.

¹ This Hebrew book got its Greek name when the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek at Alexandria, about 300 BC.

Part I
Exodus

C. Occasion. Like the other books of the Pentateuch, Exodus was written upon God's command to do so. By the time the Israelites reached Sinai, Moses was in close communion with the Holy Spirit. Like Abraham before him, he was able to hear and recognize God's voice; and Moses was even able to know God's personality².

D. Theme. The theme of Exodus is redemption. Although the book is literal history of the people of Israel, it is also symbolic of our deliverance from the bondage of sin, of forgiveness when we repent and cry out for it, and of God's provision for all our needs as we walk out the journey of our lives toward the Promised Land of Heaven.

E. Highlights. Like Genesis, the book of Exodus is a fascinating story, rich with action and drama. Selected highlights include the following:

1. From Prosperity to Slavery. (1:1-14)

The children of Israel prosper and multiply greatly. After the generation of Jacob's children dies, a subsequent pharaoh "which knew not Joseph" is threatened by their great numbers, and he reduces the status of the Israelites to that of slaves. Yet, to Pharaoh's horror, the people continue to multiply until they outnumber the Egyptians ("...and the land was filled with them").

NOTE: Pharaoh observed that the Israelites had become so numerous that they not only outnumbered the Egyptians, but were "mightier than we." His fear was two-fold: that, in time of war, the Israelites might turn against the Egyptians; but, in so doing they would escape into freedom ("get them up out of the land"). A generation before the Exodus, he feared losing their priceless contribution to the Egyptian economy. This helps us to better understand Pharaoh's later determination not to give up the Israelites when Moses returned to free them and take them to Canaan.

2. Conspiracy of the Midwives. (1:15-22)

Fearing the growing numbers of the Israelites, Pharaoh commands the midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, to kill all boy babies at birth, but to let the girl babies live. The midwives don't cooperate, because they fear offending God with the sin of murder.

NOTE: Two midwives could not possibly have served the needs of the multitudes of Israelite women. There were probably hundreds of Israelite midwives; these two were apparently the leaders of the rest (comparable to the later position of Moses and Aaron in their dealings with Pharaoh).

3. The Birth of Moses. (2:1-10)

² See in this regard Psalm 103:7.

Part I
Exodus

Under threat of Pharaoh's "kill the boy babies" decree, Moses is born and, while yet a nursing baby, he is hidden for three months. When Moses' mother could no longer hide him, she placed him in a floating basket among the reeds in the edge of the river. Discovered by Pharaoh's daughter, he is adopted by her as Pharaoh's grandson, and his mother is hired to nurse him. *NOTE: His big sister, Miriam, should be in Heaven's Hall of Fame for conceiving of, and brokering, this amazing deal!*

4. Moses Kills an Egyptian Overseer and Flees to Midian. (2:11-15)

Having grown up in the palace as Pharaoh's grandson, Moses yet retains the knowledge that he is an Israelite. Seeing an Egyptian beating an Israelite slave, Moses kills the Egyptian and buries him in the sand. The Israelites talk of it, word reaches Pharaoh, and Moses flees to Midian to escape from Pharaoh³.

5. Moses Finds a Wife and Pharaoh Dies. (2:16-25)

Resting by a well in Midian, Moses defends seven sisters from mean men who won't allow them to water their sheep; continuing his gallantry, he draws the water for the sisters⁴. These are the seven daughters of Jethro, a priest of Midian. As a result of his heroism in defending and assisting the seven daughters of Jethro he is taken into the home of their father, and is given one of them, Zipporah, as his wife. She bears a son, and Moses names him Gershom, meaning "a stranger [foreigner] here" (which Moses is.)

Meanwhile, in Egypt, Pharaoh dies, the Israelites continue to suffer in cruel bondage, and God looks upon them with compassion.

6. Moses and the Burning Bush. (Chapter 3)

Moses keeps the flock of his father-in-law, Jethrow, in the Sinai wilderness. God ("the angel of the YHWH") appears in the flame of a bush that is burning, but not consumed. Moses turns aside to see this amazing thing and the LORD tells him to come no nearer, and to take off his sandals "for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." The LORD calls Moses to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian slavery, and lead them

³ The location of Midian is somewhat uncertain, but the consensus of opinion is that it was the land southeast of Canaan, east of the Gulf of Aqaba, and south of Edom (which is today Jordan). The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through his second wife, Keturah, and their 4th son, Midian.

⁴ Notice how many important meetings took place by wells. Examples include Abraham's servant's finding Rebekah, Jacob's meeting Rachel, Moses' meeting Zipporah, and Jesus' encounter with the woman of Samaria. This was because wells were places where people necessarily came together in that part of the World, for they were the source of life-sustaining water.

Part I
Exodus

to the Promised Land, "a land flowing with milk and honey." Moses, however, tries to decline the calling.

The LORD tells Moses that he will succeed because "...I will be with thee." As a sign, He tells Moses that, as a sign, when he has brought the people out of Egypt, he will "serve [worship] God upon this mountain [Mt. Sinai]." Moses then asks, when he tells the people that God has sent him to lead them out of Egypt, and they ask him the name of the God who has sent him, what name shall he give them. And God answers him saying, "...say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Moreover, the LORD instructs Moses to tell the Israelites that "the LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me..."

The Lord goes on to tell Moses that he is to go, with the elders of Israel, to ask Pharaoh permission to go into the wilderness a three-day journey to worship. Pharaoh will refuse, the LORD says, and He will then smite Egypt with his wonders, after which Pharaoh will allow them to leave. Further, the LORD says, the Israelites will not leave empty-handed; instead they will take from the Egyptians silver, gold, jewels and expensive garments.

NOTES:

a. To my knowledge, in this small chapter of 22 verses there is more revelation concerning the identity of God than in any other chapter of the Bible.

b. This is the first occurrence of the expression "land of milk and honey," which is used 19 times in the Bible (all in the OT). It was a valid metaphor at the time of the Exodus, for Canaan was lush and productive, with forests, grasslands, vineyards, date and fig groves, and well watered, fertile farm land.

When Mark Twain visited the area in the 19th Century he laughed, calling it instead a land of swamps and deserts, for by then the land had been ravaged for more than 2,000 years by conquerors, who had cut down the forests, groves, and vineyards, leaving it largely an eroded desert wasteland, green only in a few well-watered places such as parts of Galilee, and the Jordan valley. Since 1947 the Jews have been restoring much of the land

c. Careless reading of 2:23-25 could sound like God had forgotten the children of Israel and his covenant with them, until He heard their cries (v 24), remembered a matter that had slipped his mind, and that He had decided to do something about it. No! It simply means that He, faithful always to his promises, knew the situation in Egypt, was watching over what

He had set in motion many years before, and knew that it was time to send Moses to set them free. The Hebrew word for “remembered” is “zawkar,” and here I think it could validly be paraphrased, “was faithful to.”



God said, Moses, Moses...put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Ex 3:4-5

7. Moses Continues to Beg Off. (4:1-9)

Moses complains, saying that the Israelites in Egypt will not believe that the LORD has spoken to him, so the LORD gives Moses a nerve-wracking lesson in miracles, involving snakes and leprosy. He tells Moses to cast his rod onto the ground and, when Moses innocently obeys, the rod becomes a snake! Moses runs away from it! Then the LORD tells Moses to pick up

Part I
Exodus

the snake by the tail (the worst way to pick up a venomous snake, for it can turn and strike). Moses obeys without hesitation, and when he grabs the tail of the snake it becomes a rod again!

Next the Lord tells Moses to put his hand into his robe, against his skin, and when he brings his hand out, it is white with Leprosy! We can only imagine what terror this strikes in the heart of Moses, and he can't run away from it! The Lord tells Moses to put his hand again into his bosom and he does; and when he brings it back out, his hand is healed and normal again. He is getting a crash course in trusting God, and doing amazingly well.

Thus it shall be, says the LORD, when you deal with Pharaoh; if he does not believe after the first miracles, there shall be more, and worse. This is preparation for miracles that Moses and Aaron will perform in Egypt. It is also a lesson in trust, and Moses is still a slow learner; and we must remember that participating in such miracles is still new to Moses.

8. Failing to Trust God, Moses Is Given a Spokesman. (4:10-17)

Moses asks God to find someone else, and argues that he has a speech impediment ("I am slow of speech"); God is not pleased, and, ever the master of rhetorical questions, asks Moses who has made men's mouths, and who makes the speechless, the deaf, the seeing or the blind? By implication, He is saying that if He makes them, why cannot He heal them? Then, in an amazingly act of grace, he tells Moses that He will be with Moses in Egypt, and give him the words to say. In an equally amazing moment of stubborn distrust, Moses rejects the LORD's gracious assurance, and asks Him to send someone else to help him!

So God condescends and assigns his brother Aaron to be his spokesman. *NOTE: A great deal of revelation is contained in these eight verses, some by implication only--and we must read carefully, or we will miss some. Here again we see the enormity of the grace of God, as He accepts the unbelief of Moses and presents him with an alternative that Moses can live with. We also see, in almost a hidden way, that God makes us as we may be, and can heal us.*

It seems clear to me that he even make the deaf, mute and blind that way, because He uses these handicaps and, in the economy of God, against the backdrop of eternity with Him, such handicaps now are not as important as they seem to us. This is suggested in one verse (v 11), and this definitely is worth pondering.

9. Moses Accepts His Calling. (4:18-23)

Part I
Exodus

Moses explains to Jethro, his father-in-law, that he must leave, receives a final briefing from the LORD (YHWH), and heads for Egypt with Zipporah, his wife, and their sons, and with the rod of God in his hand. He also learns that he is no longer a fugitive from Egyptian justice, which must have comforted him.

The Lord tells Moses that when he performs all of the miracles that He, the LORD, will harden Pharaoh's heart "that he shall not let the people go⁵." And the Lord further instructs Moses to say to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the LORD, Israel [the nation] is my son, even my firstborn...", and Moses is to go on and say that if Pharaoh will not let Israel go, then "I [the LORD] will slay thy son, even thy firstborn."

NOTE: Here the LORD tells Moses that his conflict with Pharaoh will end with the final plague (death of the first-born), without mentioning that there will be nine (unsuccessful) plagues, which will occur before it.

10. The Strange Matter of the Neglected Circumcision. (4:24-26)

It appears that Zipporah had resisted having one of her sons circumcised. Being, after all, the daughter of a pagan priest, she had apparently been unreceptive to this requirement of the Abrahamic Covenant, which must have been, to her, both repulsive and irrational. But God took the matter very seriously, and she was required to circumcise the boy to save his life⁶. She did not do it with a glad heart, and she blamed it all on Moses ("...a bloody husband art thou to me!").

NOTE: Some really important things in this brief passage are left unsaid. On its face, this is a strange passage; in its context, however, it probably means simply that Moses was taking his family into demonic enemy territory, and God wanted them all to be under the protection of the covenant. God had warned Abraham that "the uncircumcised man-child...his soul shall be cut off from his people [for] he hath broken my covenant, " and God cannot break his word⁷.

⁵ Critics argue that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that Pharaoh could not let the Israelites go, so it was God's fault and not Pharaoh's. But, as we shall see, God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart was just to provide the setting for God's series of great miracles. The final (and fatal) hardening of Pharaoh's heart will be done by Pharaoh himself, because of pride (8:15, 32 and 9:34).

⁶ Some commentators believe that it was Moses who would have died had the boy not been circumcised. The wording of Gen 17:14, however, suggests that the danger to be avoided was the death of one of his sons--not the death of Moses. It is not known how many sons Moses had at this point--only that he had more than one ("sons"--v20).

⁷ Genesis 17:14.

Part I
Exodus

Why Moses had neglected to circumcise this one boy is uncertain; but Zipporah may have talked him out of it--she obviously had strong feelings about it. Perhaps he was her first-born and/or her favorite. We can only wonder.

11. Moses, Aaron and the Elders of Israel. (4:27-31)

The LORD speaks to Aaron, Moses' brother whom Moses has not seen for 40 years, and tells him to meet Moses; they meet "in the mount of God [Mt. Sinai]." They meet there and Moses tells Aaron all that has happened since they had parted in Egypt. Then they gather the elders of the Israelites and explain God's plan for bringing His people out of Egypt. When Moses and Aaron perform the miracles with the rod and the leprosy, the people believe and agree to leave, and they worship God.

NOTE: *Two extremely important events take place in these five verses, but are not expressed; they are included only by clear implication: (a) in v 28 Aaron leaves Egypt and travels to Sinai; and, (b) in v 29 Moses and Aaron return together to Egypt.*

12. Moses and Aaron Confront Pharaoh for the First Time. (Chapter 5)

Moses and Aaron appear before Pharaoh, and the liberation project gets off to a very bad start. They explain to Pharaoh their mission, and he responds just as God had said he would. Threatened by the growing numbers of the Israelites, and offended at the presumption of Moses and Aaron, Pharaoh makes the labor of the Israelites even harder. He ceases to provide straw for making bricks, and the Israelites are forced to pull up stubble and gather it for themselves as a substitute⁸. The people resent Moses for making their lives harder; and Moses, in turn, complains to God.

NOTES:

a. It seems strange that in their first meeting with Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron ask only that they be allowed to take the enslaved Israelites eastward for three days, when the actual intention was to take them away permanently, in order to settle in Canaan. Perhaps Moses was hoping only for a good head start.

b. It appears from the passage that not only Moses and Aaron had direct access to Pharaoh, but also the elders of the children of Israel had such access to Pharaoh, in order to represent the people before him.

⁸ The Israelite slaves were making bricks for storage buildings in Goshen. In wonderful confirmation of this change in the brick-making process, archeologists have found (in excavations of 1883 and 1908) that the lower courses of bricks in the storage buildings at Pithom in Goshen were made with good straw, the courses above it were made with uprooted stubble, and the upper courses were made with no straw at all.

Part I
Exodus

13. God Reveals Himself as YAHWEH (or JEHOVAH). (6:1-13)

Here God identifies Himself as “God Almighty” (in Hebrew, *El Shaddai*, more of a title than a name, meaning “God who sees, and is the almighty provider”). And then, for the very first time in human history, God reveals Himself verbally to His people by his unique name, YAHWEH (or JEHOVAH). He tells Moses and Aaron that He has revealed Himself by name to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the past, but never by this most-important name. This doesn't seem to be significant in terms of the ongoing drama, compared with the confrontations with Pharaoh and the miracles; however, their God was saying to them in this way that He could do anything, that He is the unique, self-existent One, and that He would protect and provide for the people. He commands Moses and Aaron to declare his absolute sovereignty and power to the people.

14. The Hereditary Credentials of Moses and Aaron. (6:14-30)

In verses 14-27 of Chapter 6, God goes to considerable lengths to establish the hereditary identification of Moses and Aaron as offspring of Levi, apparently because this was important in having the people accept their authority as leaders.

In verses 28-30 the LORD repeats his commandment for Moses and Aaron to present his demands to Pharaoh; and again Moses questions the wisdom of it.

NOTE: *Amram, father of Moses and Aaron, married his aunt (his father's sister), Jochabed; this means that the **mother** of Moses and Aaron was also **their great aunt**⁹!*

15. The Battle of the Rods and Snakes. (7:10-13)

The Lord sends Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh to perform the miracle of turning Aaron's rod into a snake. They do it, and Pharaoh is not impressed; he calls in his magicians and they do the same thing, creating a number of snakes¹⁰. It appeared that the magicians had even more power than Moses and Aaron, and they must have been thinking, "Oh dear--this is not going as

⁹ It was later forbidden to marry one's aunt, as the father of Moses did here; likewise, it was later forbidden to marry a half-sister, as Abraham had done in marrying Sarah (Leviticus 18:6-18).

¹⁰ Thanks to the apostle Paul we know the magicians' names, Jannes and Jambres; they are identified in his second letter to Timothy (II Tim 3:8), and nowhere else in the Bible. Although they are not named in the Exodus account, they are so identified by ancient Jewish tradition, a tradition obviously familiar to Paul, himself an ancient Jewish scholar..

Part I
Exodus

I thought it would¹¹!" But God, of course, was way ahead of all of them; Moses' snake simply eats all the magician's snakes, and God wins again. It would appear that Pharaoh's magicians had to go out and buy new walking sticks.

***NOTE:** The miracles God performed in the effort to free the Israelites all had to do with the false nature gods of Egypt. In each case, God demonstrated his power with a dual purpose: (1) to coerce Pharaoh to release the people; and (2) to demonstrate His power over their pagan gods¹².*

16. The First Plague: The Battle of the Bloody Waters. (7:14-25)

God knows that Pharaoh will be walking by the Nile in the early morning, and sends Moses and Aaron out to the river to wait for him. Directed by God, and after lecturing Pharaoh about letting the people go, Moses smites the water with his staff and it turns to blood¹³. This creates a huge problem, and in several ways. The Nile was worshipped as a god, for it was the source of life for Egypt, providing not only water for the people, but also fish for food, and water for growing crops¹⁴. The miracle causes the fish to die, and creates an extremely foul-smelling mess. Blood is a tissue, and decomposes very quickly producing an unpleasant odor; the dead fish make it much worse. Then Aaron is directed to perform the same miracle over all streams, ponds and reservoirs in Egypt--even their stored water--and it all turns to blood. Finally Pharaoh's magicians do the same thing (at least in a limited way), and Pharaoh's heart is hardened. The people dig frantically for new water sources, but Egypt is without water for seven days¹⁵.

17. The Second Plague: Knee-Deep in Frogs. (8:1-15)

¹¹ A fundamental fact of spiritual life is that Satan has some very real supernatural power; but the good news is that his power is **limited**. His power is great enough to deceive the uninformed, but it melts into feeble impotence in the face of the limitless power of our God.

¹² Although, at the time of the Exodus, Egypt was thoroughly pagan, worshipping nature gods (the Nile, snakes, frogs, Moon, Sun, etc), the great Egyptian archeologist, Flinders Petrie, discovered evidence that Egypt was originally monotheistic (see in this regard Halley's Bible Handbook, p 110). This evidence is in perfect harmony with the scriptural account of Noah's descendants and the re-population of Africa.

¹³ Critical (liberal) scholars, who reject all things supernatural, explain this miracle by saying that early in the morning, as the Sun first appears, it is red, and can make a body of water look red. This is true, and is due to the prismatic effect of the Earth's atmosphere; but it can't explain the death of the fish and the horrible smell of dead fish and decomposing blood.

¹⁴ All the plagues had (at least) double meaning: the coercive power of the problems themselves, plus demonstration of the power of God over the Egyptian nature gods.

¹⁵ This period of seven days is interesting, for seven days is about as long as a person can live without water. The time varies, of course, with individuals, water content of food, heat, humidity, and activity; but, in general terms, people without water will begin to die in eight days. This would be particularly true in the hot, dry climate of Egypt. Seven is also the Bible's number of completion.

Part I
Exodus

The Nile and all the other bodies of water are normal again, and The Lord instructs Moses to again speak to Pharaoh about releasing the people; the threat this time is to plague him and all Egypt with being overrun with frogs. Pharaoh is apparently un-moved, and it is Aaron who is directed to perform the miracle this time. He stretches forth his rod over the Nile and frogs supernaturally swarm out of all bodies of water to cover Egypt. Pharaoh is not impressed at first, because his magicians, to some degree, do the same thing; but Pharaoh, overwhelmed with frogs, **finally** promises to let the people go, if the Lord will stop the frogs from multiplying. Moses prays, and although the Lord stops the plague, all Egypt is knee-deep in frogs that died, making another terrible, stinking mess. Once the frog mess is cleaned up, however, Pharaoh changes his mind. Here Pharaoh hardened his own heart (verse 15).

NOTE: Here, for the first time, Pharaoh admits that God has more power than his magicians; they are apparently unable to stop the plague of frogs, for he asks Moses to "entreat the LORD" to stop it¹⁶.

18. The Third Plague: Lice (Or Was It gnats?). (8:16-19)

Without warning Pharaoh this time, the Lord instructs Moses to have Aaron smite the dust with the rod and the dust becomes plaguing swarms of lice (or some other biting insect)¹⁷. For the first time, the magicians fail to perform the same miracle, and they acknowledge the supremacy of God; but Pharaoh refuses to give in.

19. The Fourth Plague: Flies (and Pharaoh Begins to Crack). (8:20-32)

Again, God tells Moses to meet Pharaoh at the Nile, early in the morning. It appears that Pharaoh was accustomed to going early to the river, perhaps to worship, for the Nile was worshipped as the giver and sustainer of life. This time, Moses threatens Pharaoh with swarms of flies; furthermore, he prophesies that the plague will not affect the land of Goshen where the Israelites are. The flies appear, Pharaoh bargains with Moses, and finally agrees to let the Israelites go, only not "very far away." Moses prays and

¹⁶ It really frustrates me to know that pagans like Pharaoh knew how to pronounce "YHWH," but we don't. It will be one of the first questions I ask in Heaven!

¹⁷ The exact type of insect is unknown; the Hebrew word is pronounced "kane" and means insects that attach themselves to the skin. For this reason the KJV translators chose to render it "lice," but it could conceivably have been biting gnats or mosquitoes.

Part I
Exodus

the plague is removed ("there remained not one"); but, as soon as the flies are removed, Pharaoh hardens his heart and breaks his promise¹⁸.

NOTES:

a. The Hebrew text does not say "flies" (notice that the words "of flies" are consistently in italics). What is clear is that the plague consisted of some sort of flying insect, implied by use of the word "swarms," by the fact that there was no place that they could not invade, and that the houses would be "full of swarms"; swarms of crawling insects (such as ants) can invade a house, but cannot "fill" a house as flying insects can. This, combined with the fact that they brought corruption (pollution, spoilage of food, sickness) strongly suggests flies, especially blowflies that feed on manure and carrion, and spread disease.

b. Here again, Pharaoh hardens his own hear (v 32).

20. The Fifth Plague: Death of the Livestock. (9:1-7)

The Lord sends Moses to warn Pharaoh that if he doesn't let the Israelites go there will be a fatal plague on Egyptian livestock (including the camels). Again, to strengthen the illustration of God's power, the plague will not harm the livestock of the Israelites. Pharaoh's heart is hardened and he is not moved. On the next day, as prophesied by Moses, the plague kills all of the Egyptian livestock; but the livestock of the Israelites are unharmed. This time, Pharaoh doesn't even make a false promise--he just digs in and refuses. By this time, Pharaoh may have descended into an irrational depression, for the Hebrew word for "hardened" in v 7 means "to make heavy, weighty or hard."

21. The Sixth Plague: Blisters and Boils. (9:8-12)

The Lord sends Moses and Aaron back to Pharaoh; this time he is to act without any demands--to just do it. Moses is told to throw ashes up in the air ("sprinkle it toward the heaven") before Pharaoh. The Lord specifies a certain ash: "handfuls of ashes of the furnace." The furnace is not identified, but was probably the place of human sacrifices to the pagan god whom the Egyptians trusted to protect them from plagues. If so, it was another deliberate demonstration of God's power over the false Egyptian gods, for the dust apparently became micro-organisms which immediately spread over Egypt causing grievous boils and ulcers ("blains," i.e. draining, inflamed, pustules) on all people and the remaining livestock. The Egyptian

¹⁸ To make the lifting of the plague even more miraculous, not even one of the millions of flies failed to disappear ("there remained not one"). There were not, as in the case of the frogs, heaps of dead ones to be cleaned up--not even one dead fly.

Part I
Exodus

magicians made no attempt to duplicate the miracle because **they were too miserable with their own boils and ulcers**. Pharaoh, who is by this time completely irrational, is unmoved, and apparently refuses even to discuss the matter.

22. The Seventh Plague: The Mother of All Hailstorms. (9:13-35)

The Lord sends Moses for another early-morning meeting with Pharaoh to tell him that, since the pestilence didn't convince him, then there will be a lethal hailstorm¹⁹. This storm will be so bad that the Lord gives the Egyptians a 24-hour warning ("tomorrow, about this time"), and advises them to get themselves and their livestock under roof in order to survive. The next day, Moses stretches forth his rod to the sky and there erupts the worst thunderstorm in all of Egyptian history. There is so much electrical activity in the air that lightning runs along the ground; hailstones fall that are so large that they not only kill people, livestock and crops, but also the palm trees²⁰. None, however, falls in Goshen. Pharaoh begs Moses to call off the storm and promises to let the Israelites go, and Moses does so, but isn't fooled. As Moses predicts, the storm stops, but Pharaoh hardens his heart and "digs in." By now his heart is so hardened that he is irrational; and again he breaks his promise and refuses to let the people go.

23. The Eighth Plague: Locusts Devour What the Hail Left. (10:1-20)

The Lord sends Moses back to see Pharaoh. Moses warns Pharaoh that if he doesn't yield, locusts will come the next day and eat whatever the hail storm left of plant life in Egypt. This time there is no negotiation--just a declaration of the coming plague--and then Moses walks out. After Moses leaves, Pharaoh's advisors beg him to give in; so he summons Moses and Aaron to tell them that the Hebrew men may leave to worship, but that women, children and livestock must remain²¹. No deal. Moses stretches forth his rod over Egypt, and an east wind brings locusts to cover the land. The immature crops, and the shredded remnants of trees and other plants which had survived the hail, are devoured until "there remained not any

¹⁹ Here, in v 16, it is revealed that God caused all this trouble with Pharaoh and the plagues to come about, so as to demonstrate His power to all the World ("...for this cause have I raised thee up..."). See, in this regard, John 9:1-3.

²⁰ Hail is still a threat to be reckoned with. In tobacco-growing states, such as Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina, farmers buy hail insurance, for hail can ruin an otherwise perfect crop.

²¹ Although the word "servants" is used here, these men were Pharaoh's advisors; many, if not most, such highly placed advisors were actually slaves, thus "servants." The wording of vv 10 & 11 is difficult; it is actually a threat that if Moses tries to leave with the women, children and livestock, he will need God's protection, for Pharaoh will attack and punish him.

Part I
Exodus

green thing." Pharaoh sends urgently for Moses and Aaron and begs them to remove the plague; Moses prays, and the locusts are removed by a west wind until not even one remains; they are all blown into the Red Sea. With the crisis resolved, however, Pharaoh again changes his mind.

NOTE: this time the Lord reveals (in 10:1-2) his two-fold purpose in performing these miracles:

- a. to demonstrate His absolute power to Pharaoh; and*
- b. to demonstrate His power to Moses, so that he could record the miracles for all posterity (which purpose is still being fulfilled in Orthodox Jewish homes at Passover, and as we read these verses today).*

24. The Ninth Plague: Darkness. (10:21-29)

The Lord tells Moses to stretch out his hand toward heaven to produce supernatural darkness for three days; no warning is given to Pharaoh about this. Moses obeys, and the darkness is so complete that it can be "felt"; the Egyptians can see nothing, find nothing, and accomplish nothing, but to wait in terror and chaos. In the homes of the Israelites, however, there is supernatural light and they can see perfectly²². Pharaoh sends for Moses (he obviously knew who was responsible for this new disaster) and partially surrenders: this time he agrees to let all the people go, but not the livestock (like some of us, Pharaoh still thought he could bargain with God). Pharaoh throws Moses out with a threat, and Moses prophesies that Pharaoh shall see Moses' face no more.

25. The 10th and Final Plague: Death of the Firstborn. (Chapter 11)

There is difficulty in reconciling Chapter 11 with the last verse of Chapter 10, for Moses seems to leave Pharaoh, speak to the Hebrew people, and then return to Pharaoh for his last warning; but this is in apparent contradiction of 10:29, where Moses states plainly that he will see Pharaoh no more. It may be that in verses 1-3 the Lord has **already** spoken this message to Moses, who has sent the required message to the Hebrew people, and that Moses warns Pharaoh for the last time, without having left his presence. It also may mean that Moses had left Pharaoh's immediate presence (throne room), but was speaking to the palace staff in verses 4-8; in this case, "he went out from Pharaoh" would simply mean that he left the palace.

²² This is beautifully symbolic of what happens in the new birth: before it, we are in spiritual darkness and the things of God are incomprehensible; after the new birth, spiritual things are revealed and make sense. John Newton expressed this in "Amazing Grace" ("I once was blind, but now I see"). See in this regard I Corinthians 2:14.

Part I
Exodus

At any rate, Moses speaks the words of the Lord that, about midnight, the first-born of Egypt will die, from the livestock, to the servants, to the nobles, even to Pharaoh's child. The Israelites, however, will be spared; he prophesies that in protecting the Israelites, a dog won't even "move his tongue" against man or beast²³. Moses prophesies that Pharaoh's people will not only allow them to leave, but will drive the Israelites out of Egypt. With this he stomps out of the palace "in a great anger."

***NOTE:** The great Bible commentator, Matthew Henry (1662-1714), interprets the passage the way I do. The NIV Bible resolves this problem by changing the present tense in 11:1 ("the Lord said") to the past participle ("the Lord **had** said"), without even the courtesy of a footnote or italics. Although it resolves an apparent problem, it is not true to the Hebrew text (this was not a problem for the NIV translators, who abandoned word-for-word translation in favor of dynamic equivalency [see the NIV's Introduction]). Every other version (ancient and modern) that I have seen renders this as the AV (KJV) does.*

26. The Birth of the Hebrew Calendar. (12:1-2)

Ancient cultures had been devising ways to keep track of passing time, probably since pre-flood (antediluvian) times, based primarily on Moon cycles and the apparent movement of the Sun. In preparation for the Exodus, however, God will institute the observance of the Passover, which will require doing certain things on certain days in certain months; and later, at Sinai, He will establish Sabbath rest and other scheduled feasts. To make it possible for His people to obey, they will need an actual calendar, with the year divided into months, weeks and days; and this is what He gives them in preparation for the Exodus²⁴. There was no preparation period, for the people to get used to the idea; the first month began that day ("This shall be...the beginning of months."). The 1st month was to be called "Abib"²⁵.

***NOTE:** The matter of time and eternity is difficult to comprehend; in fact, it is an infinite concept, beyond the ability of our finite minds to comprehend; but we must try, within our human limitations, to understand it.*

²³ This curious metaphor probably means that dogs won't even bark at the Israelites or their livestock; it may mean that they will be so protected that dogs won't even lick them.

²⁴ The English word "calendar" derives from the Latin "calere" ("to call"), for its original purpose was to enable the priests to call (remind) the people to designated feasts and other religious observances.

²⁵ "Abib" was the month of the barley harvest, and means "ear of corn [or grain]." The name of this first month was changed, to "Nisan" ("beginning/opening") during the 70 years of Babylonian captivity, because of the influence of the Accadian/Babylonian language, much of which was adopted by the Hebrew people during those years.

Part I
Exodus

It seems that God lives outside the limitations of the finite world of time and space. He is all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient), and everywhere present (omnipresent). For Him there is no past, present or future; rather, he seems to live in one enormous present. Therefore he already knows what will happen in what we call the future, and can tell his prophets things that will happen before they, in a human sense, take place. Jesus, the unique God-Man, was both fully human and fully divine. Thus, in his divinity, He could say to the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was, I am" and drive them to the edge of madness.

For us, time began with the Creation; a system for keeping track of time in days, weeks and months, began with Exodus 12; earthly time keeping may end with the angel's declaration in Revelation 10:6 ("there should be time no longer"; or, the angel may have meant that End Times events were coming to a close and that there would be no more delays.

At any event, we redeemed believers step out of the limitations of time and space when we die, and we step into the presence of God in eternity. For us, beyond that point, like our Divine LORD, time and space limitations will no longer exist.

27. Preparation for the Passover. (12:3-28)

Precise instructions are given to Moses and Aaron for selection and preparation of a Passover lamb for each family, its killing, and the application of the blood to the doors of the homes. Thus protected, the LORD (YHWH) will "pass over" the homes of the Israelites who obey, while He visits death on all Egyptian homes; thus the origin of the word "Passover"²⁶. This is beautifully symbolic of the future Messiah, the Lamb of God, whose sacrificed blood would protect the children of God from spiritual death, and deliver them out of the Kingdom of Darkness, into the ultimate Promised Land²⁷. The people have two weeks to prepare for the midnight appearance of the final plague, and for the hasty flight that would follow.

28. The Final Plague: Death Strikes and Pharaoh Breaks. (12:29-32)

On the evening of the 14th day the people eat the meal and prepare to leave. At midnight, as the Lord had warned, death strikes all over the land. Except for the Israelites who obey God's instructions (and it appears that

²⁶ The word "Passover" in Hebrew means, literally, to skip over and bypass; in the Bible (both OT and NT) it has two meanings: (a) the historic event of being passed over by death, and the annual feast in observance of the event; and (b) the lamb that is sacrificed.

²⁷ Many passages of Scripture reveal this; see especially John 1:29-36 and I Cor 5:7-8.

Part I
Exodus

they all obeyed), the first-born of every family, and of all livestock, dies. The terrible cries of grief are heard across the land, and the people know why it is happening. Pharaoh, finally broken (temporarily), sends for Moses and Aaron in the middle of the night and tells them to leave, and take everything with them²⁸. As a final acknowledgement of the supremacy of the Hebrew God, he asks them to bless him before they go²⁹.

NOTE: There is controversy as to which Pharaoh this was, and there are two primary candidates. Inscriptions have been found indicating that neither was succeeded by his first-born, but in the case of one of them (Merneptah), the inscription also says that the death of his first-born was "unusual." He sounds like the one.

29. The Israelites Leave Egypt--Rich. (12:33-36)

The Egyptian people urge the Israelites to leave (they had wanted them gone for some time--only Pharaoh's stubbornness had prevented it). They are so glad to get rid of them that they give the Israelites whatever they ask, of gold, silver and fine garments, and the Israelites leave, not only free, but also wealthy. They had been away from Haran for 430 years. The prophetic vision (or dream) in which God spoke to Abram in Hebron (Genesis 15:1-16), that his people would sojourn for 400 (more) years, that Egypt would enslave them and be punished for it, and that they would leave Egypt in the 4th generation with riches, was precisely fulfilled in the Exodus.

*NOTE: At first glance, Ex 12:40 seems to say that the Israelites were in Egypt 430 years. A careful reading of v 40, however, reveals that the figure 430 years refers to the **total sojourn among strangers** (in Canaan and in Egypt), after leaving Haran, and not the length of time spent in Egypt (See in this regard Gal 3:16,17). The children of Abraham had already been away from their home in Haran for 30 years at the time of his dream in Gen 15:12-16, in which God spoke of 400 future years, during which they would be afflicted by foreigners (note that v 13 there speaks of a [foreign] "land," but v 14 speaks specifically of "that nation" [Egypt] which will enslave them). All evidence indicates that they had sojourned in Canaan and the*

²⁸ It appears that Pharaoh sent messengers to speak to Moses and Aaron, for Moses had prophesied in 10:29 that Pharaoh would see his face no more. It would be unthinkable that a king would perform such an errand himself.

²⁹ Those, like Pharaoh, who are enemies of God and His Church, are also enemies of themselves, and most eventually realize this. There are always those who criticize, ridicule and persecute us Christians; and often, when they are in real trouble, it is to us that they will come, asking us to pray for them (see Acts 8:18-24).

Part I
Exodus

surrounding area for 215 years, and had been in Egypt for 215 years, for a total of 430 years, just as God had said in Gen 15:12-16.

30. The Multitude Departs, with Final Passover Instructions. (12:37-51)

The 70 souls that Joseph brought into Egypt 215 years earlier have grown to approximately 2,000,000 Israelites, plus a "mixed multitude" of Egyptians and others, mostly servants³⁰. As they leave, the Lord gives Moses and Aaron additional guidance for future celebrations of the Passover.

NOTE: *In v 46 there is a significant prophecy concerning the Messiah to come: not one of his bones will be broken (see in this regard Psalm 34:20 and Jn 19:31-36).*

31. Sanctification of the First-Born. (13:1-13)

The Lord establishes the law of sanctification of the first-born. The first-born sons of the people are to be sanctified (set apart for service to the Lord). The first-born of the ceremonially clean livestock are to be sanctified (set apart), sacrificed and eaten. An unclean animal (such as the ass) may be redeemed by a lamb, which is sacrificed in its place; then, the unclean animal can be used to plow, carry, etc.. If this redemption of the unclean animal is not done, it is to be killed by breaking its neck, for it cannot be eaten. Here, again, is beautiful symbolism of the future atoning death of Jesus, the Lamb of God, so that unclean man might live.

NOTE: *In verses 14-16, the commandment for Israelite heads of families to teach their children the story of the Passover in 12:24-27 is repeated, with an interesting addition: as a reminder, they shall wear passages of the Law "for a token upon thine hand and for frontlets between thine eyes." The Hebrew word rendered "frontlets," is "towphaphah" meaning "prayer case." Some orthodox Jews wear them today.*

32. Taking "the Scenic Route" to Canaan. (13:17-14:4)

Carrying the body of Joseph with them, Moses and the people leave for the Promised Land. The shortest, most direct route to Canaan would have been to follow the coast, on the trade route between Egypt and Syria. This would have meant immediate battle, however, for that route was guarded, and the Lord knew that the people were not yet ready for war. So He led them into the wilderness; today we might call this "taking the scenic route." It appears that at first the people walked day and night, without stopping to sleep, until they made camp "by the sea".

³⁰ For an explanation of the estimated number of Israelites who departed from Egypt in the Exodus, see the **NOTE** and footnote following the study guide to Genesis 46:1-7.

Part I
Exodus

NOTE: Discoveries in recent years strongly indicate that their encampment "by the sea" was at the Gulf of Aqaba, opposite Saudi Arabia. Also, it appears likely that Moses led the people all the way from Goshen to their encampment at the Red Sea (Gulf of Aqaba), approximately 200-250 miles, without stopping to sleep. This seems impossible; however, if God could later make their clothing grow as they grew, and last for 40 years, why could He not sustain them as they traveled "by day and night" without stopping? It seems that God wanted their confrontation with Pharaoh's chariots at the sea, where He could deliver His people from an apparently hopeless situation, divide the sea to allow the Israelites to cross, drown the pursuing army, and demonstrate His omnipotence to the Egyptians (and to the Israelites).

33. Pharaoh Pursues and the People Panic. (14:5-14)

Learning of the departure of the Israelites, Pharaoh pursues, leading his cavalry and charioteers, his very best troops. It was a fearsome army, and the sight and sound of it must have been terrifying³¹. The people panic, and complain to Moses with what would become a familiar refrain: "Why did you bring us out here to die? We were better off as slaves in Egypt!" Moses urges the people to trust God; but they can only see Pharaoh's unstoppable blitzkrieg bearing down on them. In a brief 12 words he commands the Israelites to "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD"; and he assures them that the Egyptian army which they now see, they will soon see no more.

NOTE: The expression, "with an high hand" (v 8) it means "defiant," "arrogant" or "autocratic," referring to shaking the fist in the air (or, today, some other gesture with the hand). Today we have shortened this expression to "high-handed."

34. Crossing the Red Sea. (14:15-22)

"The angel of God" moves, from the position ahead of the people to a position behind their camp, and the pillar of cloud does the same; the Egyptians are halted, plunged into darkness, but the Israelites can see. (Is this Christ? Almost certainly--we will see this later in the Rock that produces water.) In obedience to God, Moses stretches forth his hand over

³¹ Even for disciplined foot soldiers, a cavalry attack was unstoppable; and these fugitives were not disciplined soldiers. In that day chariots were "the weapon of decision," comparable to tanks today, and were even more terrifying than charging cavalry. In their own strength the Hebrews, shaking in their sandals, had no chance.

the sea and it parts; then a strong, hot east wind off the desert dries the mud and the Israelites cross over on dry land.

***NOTE:** The sea parted and became “a wall” on either side of them; a strong, hot, east wind off the desert blew all night. Humanistic, critical scholars insist that there was no miracle here, for, they say, the people were only crossing over a marsh (“reed sea”--not Red Sea), and a hot east wind dried the mud³². Of course, this doesn't explain the drowning of the Egyptian host, horses and all, in ankle-deep muck; but here is an interesting point: they are probably half-right. The power of GOD divided the sea waters, creating high walls of sea water on either side of the pathway for the Israelites; but that still left deep mud and silt on the sea floor. The powerful, hot, dry, wind that blew all night, while the Egyptians were unable to see, apparently dried the mud so that there was good footing, i.e. “dry land” (v 21) for the Israelites to walk over.*

35. Pharaoh's Final Mistake: He Self-Destructs. (14:23-31)

When God allows the Egyptians to see what has happened, they plunge in to pursue, led by Pharaoh. As the Israelites watch from the far shore, and the first Egyptians are nearly across, the wheels fall off the chariots. The

³² See in this regard Isaiah 51:10-15.



And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and the LORD...made the sea dry land

Exodus 14:21

Part I
Exodus

Egyptians realize that the Lord is protecting the children of Israel, they panic, and turn to flee; but they don't make it. The Lord tells Moses to stretch forth his hand over the sea, he does it, and the water crashes in. As the Israelites watch, the Egyptians are drowned, horses and all³³. The Israelites rejoice, believe, and fear the Lord and Moses (for now).

NOTE: *Verses 24 & 27 reveal that the crossing was done in the night, and the drowning of the Egyptians took place at first light the next morning; in this way, the Egyptians could see the Israelites on the far shore, safe and sound, and plunged in after them. In the same way, the Israelites could watch the utter destruction of the Egyptians.*

36. The Songs of Moses and Miriam. (15:1-21)

Safely on the far shore, with Egyptian bodies and equipment washing up on the beach, the children of Israel rejoice. Moses sings a song of praise. Then his sister Miriam leads all the women in a dance of praise, and sings her song.

NOTE: *In v14 the word "Palestina" occurs in the Bible for the first time; it (or "Palestine") occurs only 4 times: here in v 14, twice in Isaiah (14:29, 31) and once in Joel 3:4. In every case, it refers only to the coastal area, Philistia (today called the Gaza Strip), not the entire Promised Land. Later, the Romans will use "Palestina" to refer to all of Palestine.*

37. Bitter Water, Sweet Water, and a Name of God. (15:22-27)

Moses moves the people onward for three days before they find water, and when they do, the water is bitter; the place is called "Marah" (bitter), and the people murmur and complain. God tells Moses to throw a certain tree (surely a small one--perhaps a supernatural one--into the water; and when he does, the water becomes drinkable. Moses prophesies to the people about trusting God, and in the process he reveals one of the descriptive names of God: "Yahweh [Jehovah] Rapha," (the LORD that healeth thee).

Admonished and well-watered, the Israelites move on to Elim, where there is shade and plenty of water, and they encamp there³⁴.

38. Manna from Heaven. (16:1-21)

³³ From the wording of the passage it is not certain that the entire Egyptian host was already in the sea crossing when the water returned. Some may have survived, being still on the western shore; but if there were any still alive there, the sea was again an un-crossable barrier between them and the Israelites, Pharaoh was dead, and they were no longer a threat to the people of God.

³⁴ This place name may mean "trees" or "palm trees"; also, it may mean "gods" (in Hebrew, the plural of *el*, i.e. *el-im*). Pagan people in such places often worshipped bodies and sources of water, as they also worshipped trees.

Part I
Exodus

By the middle of the second month the people murmur again, and long for "the fleshpots of Egypt" (they had been traveling for a month), so God appears to the people in the pillar of cloud; we can assume that they were impressed (temporarily). That evening the Lord sends quail swarming the camp to give them meat; in the morning, supernatural bread (manna) falls from the sky³⁵. This manna will become their basic food in the wilderness³⁶. They are to gather it every morning, 1/10th of a bushel (a little less than one gallon) per person, prepare it and eat it all day; they are not to try to keep some of it for the next day, for it will rot. Some of the people disobeyed, of course, kept some of the manna for the next day, and it spoiled.

***NOTE:** This is symbolic of our need to trust God to meet our needs daily, in an ongoing way; remember that Jesus taught us to pray "Give us **this** day, our **daily** bread," not "give us this day enough bread to last the rest of our lives" (see Matthew 6:11 and Lk 11:3).*

39. The First Establishment of a Sabbath. (16:22-31)

With Pharaoh's pursuit no longer a threat, it is no longer necessary to travel without stopping. The Lord establishes the first Sabbath, a weekly day of rest, and tells the people to gather a two-day supply of manna on the 6th day of each week; the extra day's supply is to be eaten on the day of rest³⁷. When they obey they find that the extra manna doesn't rot, but is perfectly fresh on the 7th day. Some of them, of course, go out on the 7th day to gather anyway; but no manna falls on the 7th day.

40. The Pot of Manna. (16:32-36)

Moses tells Aaron to fill a pot with manna to be kept indefinitely as a reminder of the Lord's providing for the people's needs in the desert. This manna will not rot, and will eventually be kept in the Ark of the Covenant. Here is a demonstration of the fact that Aaron will become the first High Priest; it is he, not Moses, who must gather the pot of manna and who "laid it up before the Testimony" as a sacred object³⁸.

³⁵ This is the first time God gave them quail for meat; He will do it only one more time, a year later. This was not their only source of meat, for they had vast herds of livestock.

³⁶ Manna was a supernatural substance, never provided by God before nor since the 40 years of the Exodus. The Hebrew word means, "What is this?" and seems an appropriate name. The Israelites wondered what it was, and we still wonder today.

³⁷ There is a fairly common misconception that "sabbath" means "seventh," for Sabbath-keepers call Saturday their Sabbath, the seventh day. The Hebrew word, however, means "rest," or "cease from work."

³⁸ There was as yet no Tabernacle, with its Holy of Holies, and no Ark of the Covenant, and no Ten Commandments written in stone tablets. Either this commandment was for the future, or there was already some tent or other consecrated place as a center of worship. The pot was made of gold (Hebr 9:4).

41. Water from the Rock. (17:1-7)

The Israelites encamp in Rephidim and there is no water; the people not only complain, but are ready to stone Moses. Instructed by the Lord, Moses calls the elders together, before the people, strikes a great rock with his awesome rod, and water flows from it.



...thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so...

Exodus 17:6

NOTES:

a. Skeptical scholars "explain" this miracle by saying that the rock there is porous limestone, that it catches dew which accumulates in small pockets and, when struck, the surface is crushed and water oozes out. This, of course, cannot explain how several million people, and their livestock, could be watered by licking the moisture on the surface of a rock. No--"the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed" creating an instant river³⁹. (See Ps 78:15-20. Note here the plural, "rocks"; this happened twice, and in different places. See Num+ 20:7-11.)

*b. There is very great symbolism here, and in the second such occasion. In I Cor 10:1-4 we are told, concerning the rock from which the people drank in the desert, "...and that rock was Christ." In Is 53, that great prophetic revelation of the suffering Messiah, we are told in v 4 that Christ would be "smitten of God" (not by man). As in the case of the water flowing from the natural rock in the desert, from the smitten Christ will flow rivers of living water, rescuing the helpless and bringing life from death. And, as revealed in the second such event (Num 20:8), to receive life we need only to **speak** to the Rock (He has already been smitten for us), calling upon Him for the life-giving water that only He can supply. If you enjoy such symbolism, this is an exciting concept to pursue.*

42. Then Came Amalek: The First Wilderness Battle. (17:8-16)

The tribal nation of Amalek, descended from Esau's grandson, attacks the Israelites in Rephidim. Moses stands on a commanding hilltop, holding his rod up, and Joshua leads the warriors of Israel against the Amalekites. As long as Moses holds his arms up, Israel prevails; but when he tires and lets his arms come down, Amalek prevails. So Aaron & Hur hold up his arm, place a large rock for him to sit on, and Israel wins the day⁴⁰. The Lord tells

³⁹ Archeologists have found a large, split rock in that locale, at the head of a deep and wide dry stream bed; this gully does not extend uphill beyond the great rock, but begins suddenly below the rock. It could be the rock that Moses struck, and created a temporary river. The work of Jim and Penny Caldwell can be found at www.jimandpenny.com.

⁴⁰ According to Josephus, Hur was the husband of Miriam, Moses' sister (Antiquities 3.2.4). This event is rich with symbolism. The rod represents the authority of God; as long as it is paramount, evil will

Part I
Exodus

Moses to write a record of the battle and promises to remove Amalek from the Earth. To celebrate the victory Moses builds an altar and names it "YAHWEH (JEHOVAH) Nisi" which means "The Lord Our Banner," i.e., the one to whom we look in the confusion of battle, to maintain our positions and know where to go; thus another descriptive name of God is revealed.

NOTE: God tells Moses to "Write this...in a book"--He did not tell him to memorize it so that it could be repeated orally for 1,200 years and finally be written, filled with errors, myths and exaggerations, as the critical scholars often proclaim and teach as fact today.

43. Good Advice from a Pagan Priest: Moses Gets Help. (Chapter 18)

It appears that, Moses' wife Zipporah and her two sons had stayed with her father while Moses went down to Egypt to bring the Israelites out⁴¹. Now Jethro, Moses' father in law and a priest of Midian, brings them to Moses. Observing the burden on Moses of giving individuals advice and settling disputes for such a multitude, Jethro wisely advises him to divide the people into groups and appoint subordinate leaders to do the work of advising and judging among the people. This way, only the problems that the subordinate leaders couldn't resolve would be brought to Moses. He accepts this good advice and much of this burden is lifted from him.

NOTES:

a. Jethro knew the name of YAHWEH and acknowledged His supremacy (vv 10-12); it appears that, somewhere in the course of all this, he was converted from paganism. He also presented burnt animal sacrifices and ate with Moses, Aaron and the elders of Israel" before God."

b. It is interesting to wonder what Jethro thought when he met Moses that day. The last time he had seen Moses he was a sheep herded with a speech impediment in Jethro's service; now he is the leader of the millions of liberated Israelites, in effect the king of a mighty nation..

44. The Israelites Arrive at Sinai and Moses Communes with the LORD. (19:1-9)

The Israelites arrive at Sinai and encamp before the mount; they have been away from Egypt for three months. The LORD calls Moses up to meet Him in the mount, Moses ascends onto the base of the mountain, and the LORD

ultimately be overcome; the rock represents Christ (resting in Him we obtain the endurance for the ongoing battles in this life); and the vital assistance of Aaron & Hur reminds us that we need each other.

⁴¹ The wording of Ex 4:20 combined with that of 18:5 seem to make it clear that Moses had left his wife and sons with his father-in-law when he went back to free the Israelites and lead them out of Egypt.

Part I
Exodus

speaks to Moses out of the mountain, telling him what to say to the children of Israel.

In verses 4-6 the LORD eloquently summarizes what He has miraculously done to liberate the people and bring them to Sinai, followed by a concise summary of the fundamental rules of the relationship between Himself and the rebellious Israelites. It is an unimaginably loving offer of an unspeakably priceless gift: to be the treasured, protected, children of the omnipotent, creator GOD! He will cause them to be a peculiar treasure unto Himself--a kingdom of priests and a holy nation⁴²! And yet it is also a tragic echo from the heart of the all-knowing GOD, for it all depends on the sad qualifier, "if"; and He of course knows, as He speaks, that the rebellious Israelites will not be faithful.

Moses gathers the elders of the people, tells them what the LORD has said, and the elders reply that they will obey. Moses then returns to the presence of the LORD, and the LORD tells Moses that He is appearing "in a thick cloud," so that the people will hear what He says to Moses. Moses then reports to the LORD what the elders have said.

45. Moses and the People Prepare to See and Hear the Glory of God.
(19:10-25)

God gives the people three days to prepare themselves to see His glory and hear His voice on Mt. Sinai, and survive it, and to give Moses credibility. Moses descends to the plain and tells the people how to prepare, washing their clothes and sanctifying themselves.

On the 3rd day, with the people near the foot of the mountain, in clean clothes and at a safe distance, the glory of God descends on the mountain in fire and smoke, thunder and lightning, causing the mountain to shake. The trumpet of God plays loudly, and then God speaks in an audible voice and calls Moses up to the top of the mountain. He again warns Moses to see to it that no person or animal will touch even the edge of the holy mountain; if they do, He says, they will die. Moses descends from the mountain, returns to the camp and tells the people how to prepare.

On the morning of the third day there is thunder and lightning on the mountain and a thick cloud descends upon it. Again a loud trumpet sounds--and more and more loudly--and the people tremble. The Lord descends upon the mount, smoke rises up from the mountain and the mountain quakes; and Moses goes up onto the mountain. Again the LORD tells

⁴² See in this regard

Part I
Exodus

Moses not to let the people, or even the priests, approach the mountain. He tells Moses that he and Aaron will come up onto the top of the mountain; He then sends Moses back down to prepare. Moses descends and speaks to the people.

45. The Ten Commandments. (20:1-17)

With the people kept back at a safe distance, Moses and Aaron ascend to the great cloud, which covers the top of the mountain, and God gives them the 10 Commandments orally (not yet in tables of stone--that will occur in Exodus 31:18):

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. This is, obviously, the keystone commandment. Without it, the other nine are meaningless, except as excellent advice. Notice that God felt no need to elaborate on this one--it is self-explanatory and impossible to misunderstand.

2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. This commandment was particularly important because everything in the background of the Israelites was contaminated by the pagan practice of keeping statues representing pagan gods, in the home and in communal places of worship, honoring and trusting them.. Even Rachel, beloved wife of the patriarch Jacob, stole some small statues of pagan gods from her father (who obviously trusted in them and didn't want to lose them); and then she lied in order to keep them (Genesis 31:19-35).

Further expanding on the Second Commandment, God pronounces a curse upon those practicing idolatry, even to the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who practice it! Like the First Commandment, the Second is foundational and, in fact, a continuation of the First. All of the other eight commandments rest upon the first two.

3. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD (YHWH) thy God (Elohim) in vain. To take the name of the Name of the LORD our God in vain is to speak or write it in a trivial, or less than respectful way.

This commandment is probably the one most frequently broken, and perhaps most frequently broken by decent people who are not aware of the fact that they are doing it. It has become commonplace--almost reflexive--when alarmed or surprised, to say "Oh my God"! Or, when angry, it has become likewise natural for many to say something like, "By God, I will not tolerate that"! In sending text messages "Oh my God" has been reduced to "omg" (or worse). Perhaps, in the minds of most offenders the "g" in "God" is not capitalized; still it is an offense to God. It is not only a violation of the majesty of the LORD our God, it trivializes his Most Holy Name. If

Part I
Exodus

we slip in a moment of anger or excitement and take his name in vain, we should repent on the spot and ask forgiveness. If it has become habitual, we should repent, ask forgiveness, and pray for freedom from the habit.

No matter how the name of God is misused, He is offended; and we should seek not to offend Him⁴³.

4. Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. A foreshadow of the 4th Commandment appeared with the giving of manna to the Israelites in the desert (Genesis 16:23-26). There the LORD established the seven day week, and instituted the seventh day as a day of rest ("the rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the LORD"). No manna was to be gathered on that day; instead, double the daily portion was to be gathered, with half kept over for the weekly sabbath.

Here it is established as a general commandment--one day out of seven set aside for rest for man and beast, a day to remember and reflect on the goodness and provision of God. The meaning of the Hebrew word *shabbath*, rendered as "sabbath," means simply "intermission, or rest."

5. Honor thy father and thy mother. See *NOTE a.* below.

6. Thou Shalt Not Kill. See *NOTE b.* below and Matthew 19:18.

7. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Adultery means a married person having sexual intercourse with someone other than his or her spouse. David and Bathsheba committed adultery, and paid a heavy price for it, even after repenting⁴⁴. A similar act, fornication, is sexual intercourse between two unmarried people; it is a sin, but is not the subject of a commandment. It was a common practice under the Old Covenant, but seems not to have been clarified as a sin until the dawning of the New Covenant⁴⁵.

8. Thou shalt not steal. This commandment is simple and straightforward, needing little no commentary.

9. Thou shalt not bear false witness. This commandment forbids lying in making statements, either as defamatory gossip or in a public hearing or court of law. "Thy neighbor" in this commandment refers to any innocent person with whom we have to do. i.e., someone whom we know, or one of whom we are expected to have knowledge. It doesn't mean only the next door neighbors. This is elaborated in 23:1, Proverbs 19:5 and 9, and 24:28.

⁴³ See also in this regard Proverbs 30:9.

⁴⁴ See in this regard II Samuel 12 and Hebrews 13:4.

⁴⁵ Fornication is mentioned only 5 times in the Old Testament, seeming to be references to spiritual sin (idolatry). Fornication(s) and fornicator(s) occur 39 times in the New Testament, almost always in a sexual sense (in some cases it is difficult to know in which sense the words are used, especially in Revelation).

Part I
Exodus

10. Thou shalt not covet. In verse 17 the passage is elaborated to say that we must not covet our neighbor's possessions, his wife, or anything else that belongs to him. Again, as in the Ninth Commandment, "neighbor" means an acquaintance, or anyone with whom we have to do; it does not restrict the proscription to those who live nearby.

NOTES:

a. There is something greatly significant about the 5th Commandment, "...Honor thy father and mother...." To begin with, it is the first commandment of God in the Bible containing a promise ("...that thy days may be long..."). This is mightily emphasized in the following chapter, 21:15-17, and in Proverbs 20:20, where disrespect for, or assault upon, a parent was established under the Old Covenant as a capital offense (death, both physically and spiritually). Under the New Covenant it is elaborated, and harmonized with the concept of grace, in Ephesians 5:21-6:4, and Colossians 3:18-21.

There is something extremely important about a right relationship of children with their parents, for the family unit is the building stone of the people of God. It seems that, as the building stone of the family of God, an intact and well-ordered family is the key to the integrity and health of the entire structure. Children are insecure, confused and likely to lead a destructive life when parents allow them to live with no rules or boundaries.

Likewise, in the modern Naval service, this truth is paraphrased as "a tight [well-ordered and disciplined] ship is a happy ship." Marines, sailors, soldiers, and airmen are insecure, have no respect for their superiors, and are trouble-bound, in "a ship that is loose"; the opposite is true in a "tight ship." As a Marine I have seen this proved many times, both on land and at sea.

b. Verse 13 is misunderstood by some to mean that all killing is forbidden. This idea, of course, is contrary to all the rest of the Bible, in which there are numerous examples of killing that are not only justifiable, but were sometimes commanded by God. The obvious meaning here is "Thou shalt do no murder." And, in case there is any lingering doubt about this, it is made clear in the exchange between Jesus and the rich young ruler (Matt 19:18), where Jesus quotes the commandment as "Thou shalt do no

Part I
Exodus

murder." *The underlying Greek in the statement of Jesus is very precise, meaning only murder--not killing in general*⁴⁶.

c. In the Roman Catholic presentation of the Ten Commandments there is no mention of the making of "graven images" to worship, except for some pagan examples, included in the First Commandment. What Catholics for more than 1,000 years, and Protestants today, call the Second Commandment is simply not there anymore in Catholic Bibles.

This seems to be in reaction to the common practice of keeping statues of the saints, in churches, Catholic buildings and in private homes, especially images of the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus. The Catholic practice of bowing before such "graven images" and praying, especially before statues and paintings of the Blessed Virgin, is viewed by many Protestants as the worship of her and the other saints. The Catholic position is that they practice the veneration of the saints, but do not worship them. The common Catholic practice of praying to the saints as intercessors, however, clouds their position.

To make the number of commandments add up to ten, Catholic Bibles and source materials divide the 10th Commandment into two, with the Ninth Commandment forbidding the coveting of the neighbor's wife, and the Tenth Commandment forbidding the coveting of his other possessions⁴⁷.

46. A Simple Altar. (20:18-26)

The people, terrified by the sights and sounds on the mountain, move farther back. Again Moses enters the cloud, and God repeats the warning that the people make no idols. There is to be built a simple altar for the offering of sacrifices. It is to be made of heaped up earth or, if built of stones, it is to be made of natural stones--not hewn or shaped stones. Why the altar is to be kept simple is not made clear; perhaps the reason is that it will be temporary. Interestingly, the LORD also directs that the altar be not high enough to require steps for the priests and Levites to climb up to it. The reason for having no steps for them to climb is given: that they may not expose their nakedness as they climb up and down the steps.

⁴⁶ For the precise meaning of murder, as expressed by Jesus in citing this commandment to the rich young ruler who went away sad, see the study guide to Matthew 19:13-22.

⁴⁷ St. Jerome's Latin Vulgate Bible, the first ever complete Bible (with both Old and New Testaments), translated by Jerome in the late 3rd Century, on command of Pope Damasus I and declared the official Roman Catholic Bible in the 15th Century, contains the Ten Commandments as found in the Authorized Version (KJV) and other Protestant versions of the Bible today.

Part I
Exodus

NOTE: *The matter of nakedness and modesty first appears in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve lose their innocence and make an effort to cover themselves. It next appears after the Great Flood, in the strange matter of Ham and his drunken father, Noah. The nakedness issue, thus far introduced only as a peripheral matter, will be dealt with extensively in Leviticus 18 and 20. But why? What is so important about nakedness? It seems that, as God selected the Israelites (and, later, the Church) to be his special people, they were to be the standard of righteousness for the pagan world around them. He would establish, among his people, the sanctity of sex and the unique intimacy of the marriage relationship. These concepts were unknown--in fact bizarre--to the Egyptians they had just left, and to the Canaanites they were about to encounter⁴⁸.*

God, of course, knew that His boundaries on nakedness and sexual behavior would be necessary for the health and happiness of His people. And, like everything else in his creation, genitals are perfectly designed for what God intends them; but, let's face it, they are definitely not pretty.

A Note for the Reader. Chapters 21 through 31 of Exodus contain laws given to Moses over a 40-day period, covering every phase of life⁴⁹. These laws are in great detail, covering all phases of the life that the Israelites are entering into; and they are interesting in a number of ways.

To us they can seem over-structured, tedious and tiresome. It seems to me, however, that they are in such great detail because the people have not lived heretofore in a structured society, they are contaminated by the Egyptian paganism in which they have lived, and they need such rules to keep them from sinning. Under the New Covenant, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide us; but they did not have this inner guidance and sense of right and wrong.

These laws are also interesting because they reveal the fundamentally sinful nature of man, and the fundamentally loving, patient, nature of God in dealing with man. They are interesting because they reveal the love of God for his sinful children and his desire that they live righteous, peaceful lives, rightly relating to one another and to those pagans around them, whom they will unavoidably encounter.

⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that in paganism the very opposite of God's requirements is true; nakedness is not only a common feature of pagan worship but, in many cases, is required.

⁴⁹ The same will be true of Leviticus and the other two Books of the Law.

Part I
Exodus

And, theologically, they are intended to reveal the sinful nature of unredeemed man, and the perfect holiness and majesty of God.

Highlights from these rules in Exodus follow.

47. "I Love My Master". (21:1-6)

A Hebrew bondservant or slave is to be freed in the 7th year. If, however, the servant does not want to leave, and chooses to serve his master permanently, this is to be declared publicly and one ear was pierced as a sign of his permanent servitude. One factor in such a choice was that some servants had wives and children belonging to the master, and they didn't want to leave them; in some cases, the slave simply loved his master and wanted to serve him all his life.

48. Murder and Honoring Father and Mother. (21:12-17)

If a man strike a man and kill him, then the murderer shall be put to death. But if a man makes no preparation to kill a hostile enemy, but falls into the enemy's hands, then God will give the innocent man a place of safety to which he can flee until the matter can be judged⁵⁰. On the other hand, if an evil man lures an innocent man into a trap and murders him, then he is to be taken away from God's altar and killed⁵¹.

A child could not treat a parent with disrespect; one who would curse or strike his father or mother is to be put to death. Today, this law seems extreme; but God knew that order in the home is fundamental to order in the camp. Consider the fact that the general disorder and breakdown in the American family today, with children cursing, assaulting, and killing parents and grandparents, is reflected in the general collapse of order and civility in our culture.

This passage also forbids kidnapping, either to sell into slavery or to keep as a slave.

49. Protecting the Unborn. (21:22-23)

If a man injures a pregnant woman and causes her to miscarry, the offender is fined; if the woman dies, he is to be put to death.

50. "Eye for Eye, Tooth for Tooth." (21:24-36)

For offenses of personal injury or property damage, specific penalties are laid down. These laws are simple, practical, and provide for precise,

⁵⁰ In the Promised Land, this concept will be perfected in the establishment of designated sanctuary cities.

⁵¹ This is the first appearance of the practice of clinging to God's altar to avoid being killed (although it is not explained here). It seems to be based upon the fact that the altar of God is a holy place, not to be contaminated with violence.

Part I
Exodus

unambiguous remedies; the principle behind them is **personal responsibility**.

NOTE: The first 15 verses of Chapt 22 are a continuation of the laws in verses 24-36 of Chapt 21. They also deal with personal responsibility for one's actions and for the actions of an owner's livestock.

51. Seduction of a Virgin. (22:16-17)

If a man seduces a virgin he has to marry her, paying a dowry to her father; if the girl's parents do not consent to the marriage, the offending man still has to pay the dowry. This law undoubtedly discouraged such behavior.

NOTE: according to a parallel passage, Deut 22:28-29, this law also included rape, and in such a marriage the man could never divorce her.

52. "Thou Shalt Not Suffer a Witch to Live." (22:18)

There was no ambiguity about witchcraft. In the eight simple words of this verse, God clearly expressed the seriousness of witchcraft, and pronounced the penalty. Witchcraft involved rebellion against God and the use of satanic power to control others and cause God's people to rebel against Him. Summary execution of witches protected God's people from this fatal error; the law is repeated twice, and expanded upon (Lev 20:27 and Deut 18:10-12).

53. Likewise with Bestiality. (22:19)

Anyone perverted enough to use an animal sexually was to die. Period. No questions asked. **Only Satan could even have such a sick idea;** toleration of such behavior would cause others to become infected with it. God deals with this disgusting matter in 11 simple words.

NOTE: One may wonder why God would find it necessary to lay down laws against such abnormal behavior. The reason is at least twofold: (a) unredeemed man's limitless capacity for depravity; and (b) God's knowledge that the people in the Promised Land were already practicing these things, along with all other forms of depravity, and His people would soon be exposed to them. Even the very land was defiled by the things the Canaanites did; apparently, even places can be contaminated with evil (see in this regard Lev 18:22-27).

54. God's Tender Heart for the Helpless. (22:21-27; 23:6,9-11)

One of the wonderful things about the Law is that, all through the inflexible hardness of the law, with its severe penalties, can be found revelations of God's tender heart and His compassion for the weak, the orphan, the friendless, defenseless, and poor.

Part I
Exodus

NOTES:

a. In verses 14-19, without preamble or much explanation, the LORD establishes three annual feasts, when all of the (adult) males shall appear before the LORD God. They are the feast of Unleavened Bread, in the first month of the year to remember the deliverance from Egypt; the feast of the (Spring) Harvest (Pentecost, or First fruits) 50 days later⁵²; and the feast of Ingathering or the Harvest (Tabernacles), at the end of the growing season.

b. In verses 20-33 The LORD says that He will send "an Angel" to guide the Israelites, and he will keep them on the right path and bring them to the Promised Land. Then, in the next verse, He says some interesting, and somewhat mysterious things. He warns them not to provoke the Angel, because he will not pardon their transgressions, because "my name (YHWH) is in him." He is surely speaking of "The" [not 'an'] Angel of the LORD, i.e., the pre-incarnate Christ, because ordinary angels bring revelations; they do not have the power to forgive. This verse surely speaks of the guiding, protecting presence of the LORD Himself. We will see this played out in the wilderness wanderings, when He involves Himself personally in their needs and their rebelling.

He goes on to speak of the guiding Angel, tells the Israelites of the final occupation of the Promised Land, and certain things they are not to do.

55. The Fiery Presence of God on Mt. Sinai. (Chapter 24)

Moses writes all that God has told him up to this point, makes sacrifices, reads it all to the people and they promise to obey it all. God appears "like devouring fire" on the top of Sinai, tells Moses to put Aaron and Hur in charge of the people, and calls Moses into His presence (Joshua apparently goes part of the way with him--see 32:17). The people see the fiery display of the power of God for six days. Moses stays there, receiving instructions, for 40 days⁵³.

NOTE: *At the foot of Mt. Sinai Moses read to the people all that God had told him. The people agreed to obey it all (they didn't, of course, but the New Covenant would someday provide the remedy for their faithlessness). Moses then sprinkles the blood of the covenant on the people, a*

⁵² "Pentecost" is from the Greek *Pentekostos*, meaning "fiftieth"; it comes 50 days after the feast of unleavened Bread.

⁵³ Not far from what seems to be the real site of the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea is what fits the description of Mt. Sinai; its top is blackened, as by fire. This can be seen in photos taken by the Caldwells (www.jimandpenny.com) before the Saudis sealed off the area.

Part I
Exodus

foreshadowing of the day when the blood of Jesus would seal the New Covenant, making redemption available to all who would receive it.

56. Materials for the Tabernacle and Its Furnishings. (25:1-9)

The Lord expresses His desire to dwell among the Israelites, and instructs Moses to collect from the people materials necessary for the Tabernacle, its furnishings and its priests. The materials are to be offered willingly.

NOTE: *Reading and thinking about the intricate details in the making of the priest's garments, and in the making and handling of the Tabernacle in Exodus here, and the preparations for setting it up, taking it down, and moving it in Numbers 4, can be tedious, if not overwhelming. The overarching message in all of this is the magnificence and perfect holiness of the LORD, contrasted with the imperfection and sinfulness of man.*

Within the details, however, there is tremendous symbolism. Some scholars specialize in the study of symbolism (symbolology); but an overdose of it can be tiresome for most of us. However, a knowledge of the meaning of fundamental symbolism is necessary in understanding the Bible, especially the Old Testament. Some of these are:

1. *Gold. The holiest objects in the Tabernacle (and later in the Temple) were made of gold, or made of acacia (shittim) wood, covered in gold. Gold is, in a traditional sense, the rarest and most precious of metals and is an inert metal (it needs no polishing, for it does not tarnish)⁵⁴. It symbolizes the purity and unchanging nature of God;*

2. *Colors:*

a. *Blue represents divinity or Heaven (thus the cloth that covered the Ark of the Covenant, in direct contact with it, was the veil of the Tabernacle; on that was a sheet of badger skins; and over all of that was a cloth of blue.*

b. *Purple represents royalty.*

c. *Scarlet represents blood, therefore sacrificial redemption (i.e. the Blood of the Lamb), and forgiveness.*

d. *White represents purity.*

Learn these fundamental symbols and keep them in mind, and it will help you to see things in a verse or passage that you might otherwise miss.

57. Specifications for the Ark of the Covenant. (25:10-22)

The Lord gives Moses detailed specifications for making the most important piece of the furnishings of the Tabernacle, and by far the most

⁵⁴ For more on gold and silver and the purity required by GOD, see "Gold and Silver, Pure and Beaten" in Part IV (Selected Topical Summaries).

Part I
Exodus

sacred physical object of the Israelites' spiritual lives: the Ark of the Covenant. The basic box of the Ark was to be made of acacia (shittim) wood and covered, inside and out, with pure gold. The mercy seat (lid), with two cherubs on it, was to be made of pure gold; we are not told whether the Mercy Seat and its two cherubs were to be made of solid gold, or were made of acacia wood covered with gold.

NOTES:

a. The instructions for making the Ark of the Covenant and its materials and dimensions are clear, except for three things:

1. The walls and floor of the Ark are to be made of acacia wood (Hebr, "shittah"), covered inside and outside with beaten pure gold; but we are not told the thickness of the acacia wood creating the basic box, nor are we told the thickness of its beaten gold covering. It seems to a safe assumption that Israelite carpenters would know the necessary thickness of the boards, and that Israelite metalsmiths would know the right thickness to make the gold covering. Considering the dimensions of the Ark (approximately 47 inches long, 27 inches wide and 27 inches deep), and considering the weight in gold that the sides and top were to bear, a reasonable estimate would be 1 to 1 1/2 inches for the floor and walls and perhaps 2 inches for the top (Mercy Seat), with its golden cherubim.

2. Concerning the Mercy Seat, we are told only that it is to be made of "pure gold," and that it is to be the same length and width as the rest of the Ark; there is no mention in the text of acacia (shittim) wood in the Mercy Seat. A scholar as careful and well-qualified as Merrill Unger was convinced that the Mercy Seat was made of acacia wood, covered with beaten gold⁵⁵. It seems reasonable to assume that, since the LORD apparently trusted the thickness of the boards in the rest of the Ark to the knowledge of the carpenters, He would do the same concerning the Mercy Seat; but we can only wonder.

Considerations concerning the presence or absence of an acacia wood core for the Mercy Seat and its covering cherubs include the great weight of solid gold. Gold also lacks the structural integrity of acacia wood, needed for bearing its own weight, plus the weight of the large, golden cherubs above it. So, while only God knows the answers, these are reasonable assumptions concerning the core of the Mercy Seat, walls and floor of the Ark. On the other hand, the fact that the Mercy Seat, between the covering

⁵⁵ Unger's Bible Dictionary, 6, "The ark," p 1064

Part I
Exodus

cherubs, was to be the place of the actual presence of GOD would argue for solid gold.

3. Concerning the Cherubim, we are only told that they were to be made of "beaten [pure] gold." They were to face each other and their wings were to spread over the Mercy Seat and touch one another in the center. In this way they would have formed an imperfect arch, causing the end walls of the Ark to carry much of the weight. Were they sculpted from solid gold, or were they carved from acacia wood and covered with beaten gold? Since the entire Ark was to be carried by four Levites, the weight of solid gold cherubim would argue for the wooden core. Only God knows the answers, and we can only wonder.

b. The Ark of the Covenant disappeared at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's first siege of Jerusalem; consistent Hebrew tradition holds that King Josiah had the foresight to have it hidden before the fall of Jerusalem. There are interesting theories and traditions about its location, but it has never been found. In verse 5 is the first of many appearances of shittim wood in the Bible, all in the OT; it is the wood of the acacia tree (Hebrew, "shittah"). Acacia grows abundantly in dry regions of the middle east and Africa. Its wood is hard, has beautiful grain, and is rich with aromatic resins, which give it a pleasant aroma and make it resistant to insects and decay. It is ideal for the wooden components of the Tabernacle, table, altars and the Ark of the Covenant. The tree was the source of the name of the last camping place in the Exodus, on the east side of the Jordan River (Nu 25:1; Josh 3:1). It must have been favored with a large forest of Acacia trees.

58. Likewise for the Table, Altar and Other Things. (25:23-40)

The Lord likewise gives Moses instructions for making the table, altars, bowls, candlesticks, tongs and other utensils. The lamp stand ("minorah"), and its bowls and tongs, are to be made of pure gold. Note that all of this, including the Ark, table, and other furnishings for the Tabernacle, are to be portable.

59. Curtains Were to Be of Purple, Blue and Scarlet. (26:1,31,36; 27:16)

Dimensions, materials and colors prescribed for the Tabernacle and its furnishings are in great detail, and are rich with symbolism. The curtains for the two door coverings and the veil before the Most Holy Place are to be woven of pure white linen, with threads of purple, blue and scarlet. The white linen represents purity or holiness, the purple royalty, the blue divinity

Part I
Exodus

or Heaven, and the red represents the blood of sacrifice (ultimately, the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God)⁵⁶.

NOTE: the total amount of gold and silver involved in the making of all this was enormous, and would be difficult to calculate.

60. A Priesthood and Robes for the Priests. (Chapter 28)

In Chapter 28, the Lord establishes the Aaronic priesthood, with Aaron, Moses' brother as High Priest, and Aaron's four sons as priests; and He describes in great detail the robes that they are to wear when ministering in their priestly roles. Most of the chapter consists of instructions for the robe of the High Priest. The breastplate is to include mysterious objects called "Urim and Thummim." Even as long ago as the time of Josephus (1st Century AD), the knowledge of exactly what they were was lost; but they seem to have had to do with the High Priest's ability to know, in some way, the will of God⁵⁷.

61. The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons. (29:1-9)

Moses is instructed to bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the Tabernacle, wash them, dress them in their priestly robes, consecrate them, and anoint them with oil⁵⁸.

NOTE: From this point on, until the building of the first Temple by Solomon, the place where God will meet with the people will be at the door of the Tabernacle (see 29:42-44).

62. The Consecration of the Altar of Sacrifice. (29:10-18)

A bullock is to be sacrificed and Moses is to put its blood on the horns of the altar of sacrifice, pour the rest of its blood at the base of the altar, and burn certain parts of the bullock on the altar; the rest is to be burned "without the camp." Then a ram is to be killed, its blood sprinkled on the altar, and the ram burned as a burnt offering. Thus the altar was ready for all future burnt offerings to the Lord.

63. The Blood Applied to Aaron and His Sons. (29:19-21)

A ram is to be slain and its blood applied first to Aaron, and then to his sons. First, Moses is to put some of the blood on the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot, and then to

⁵⁶ There is disagreement among scholars as to the meaning of these colors, as is the case with other symbolism in the Bible; but these, it seems to me, are fairly obvious.

⁵⁷ Even the meaning of the words in Hebrew is not known with certainty, but the probable meanings in English are "light" (Urim) and "Perfection" (Thummim).

⁵⁸ Throughout the Bible, oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

Part I
Exodus

sprinkle the blood over the altar. Then Moses is to sprinkle the blood, with anointing oil, on them and their garments⁵⁹.

64. The Altar of Incense. (30:1-10)

Moses is commanded to make an altar for burning incense, to be placed outside the veil covering the Most Holy Place. It is to be made of shittim wood and covered with gold. An incense offering is to be burned on it twice daily, morning and evening.

*NOTE: this altar for incense was to be carried with wooden poles, covered with gold, just like the Ark of the Covenant; it was **not** to be just picked up and carried when it was time to move the Tabernacle.*

65. A Tax for Maintaining the Tabernacle. (30:11-16)

God establishes a tax ("ransom") for the maintaining of the Tabernacle. Every man, age 20 and older, is to give 1/2 shekel annually; the rich will give no more, and the poor no less. Such amounts are difficult to translate into current values, but this was probably equal in today's value to about 75 cents per year. What seems significant about it to me is that it was an amount anyone could afford--no financial heroics, no competition in sacrificial giving, no "give like you've never given before"--yet it was plenty to support the operation of the tabernacle and sustain the spiritual life of God's people. Very significantly, and very interestingly, this maintaining of the Tabernacle made it possible for the people to stay rightly related to the LORD.

66. A Brass Laver, Holy Anointing Ointment, and Perfume. (30:17-38)

God commands the making of a large brass bowl, to be placed between the Court of the congregation and the Holy Place. Water is to be kept in it for the washing of the priests' hands and feet before they minister in the Tabernacle, "that they die not." He also commands the making of a holy ointment of spices and olive oil; Aaron, his sons and all parts of the Tabernacle are to be anointed with it. He also commands the making of a

⁵⁹ Why put blood on such strange places? Probably to symbolize that the priests were consecrated to hear the Lord (ear), perform His work (hand), and walk (foot) in His ways. Blood for touching and sprinkling was kept in a bowl on the altar, aside from the fire.



And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand.

Exodus 32:15

Part I
Exodus

holy perfume. The composition of the ointment and the perfume are to be unique, and they are never to be made or used for any other purpose. Anyone who makes perfume like it, even to enjoy its sweet aroma, will be "cut off" from the people of God.

67. The Man to Build All This. (31:1-17)

God designates Bezaleel, son of Uri, and Hur's grandson, His chosen vessel for the building of the Tabernacle and all the furnishings, including the Ark of the Covenant. God has "filled him with the Spirit" and given him the knowledge and wisdom to make all these things; He also gives Bezaleel a man called Aholiab and other selected men to help him.

The LORD then reminds Moses about the vital necessity of honoring and keeping the weekly sabbath, and commands him to remind the people.

68. The Tables of the Ten Commandments. (31:18)

When it is time to end the communing with Moses on Sinai, the LORD gives Moses the Ten Commandments, etched in two tables (tablets) of stone with his own finger⁶⁰.

69. The First Great Apostasy. (32:1-14)

While Moses is on the mountain with God for 40 days, the people get restless, give up on Moses, and they ask Aaron to make idols for them ("...make us gods..."). Unbelievably, Aaron does so, making of their earrings a golden calf⁶¹. The apostate people declare that the golden calf is the god which had brought them up out of Egypt⁶²! Aaron, thoroughly confused, trying to compromise and please the people, builds an altar before the idol and calls for a feast to honor YHWH! Aaron is completely compromised, but seems to be trying to play both ends against the middle. The people apparently don't care what name Aaron uses; they bring sacrifices, and the orgiastic party begins.

⁶⁰ In Luke 11:20 Jesus, in referring to his casting out of demons, says that if He does it by "the finger of God" the Kingdom is come upon you. In Matthew's account of the same event, Jesus is recorded as saying that if He does this "by the Spirit of God..." Thus we see that, in this sense, the "finger of God" and "the Spirit of God" are the same.

⁶¹ One may wonder why they wanted to worship a calf--it would seem so cuddly, so sweet, so harmless. But the calf that pagans worshipped was always a yearling--a bull calf, with big horns, and exaggerated genitals. They were worshipping youth, strength and, above all, sexual vigor and reproductive power. Paganism is always nature worship, which is worship of fertility, which is, ultimately, phallic worship.

⁶² This unbelievably dishonest, self-serving declaration of blasphemy is the very same, word for word, as will be Jeroboam's declaration when he creates the rebellious northern kingdom of Israel 600 years later (I Kings 12:28).

Part I
Exodus

Meanwhile, on Sinai, the LORD sees what the people are doing and tells Moses. The LORD is furious, and is prepared to consume the apostate people; He proposes to obliterate them, and start anew with faithful Moses. Moses reasons with the LORD, and reminds Him of what the Egyptians will think, and of his oath to Abraham and his descendants; and the LORD decides to let the Israelites live and give them another chance.

***NOTE:** The people are really confused. In verse 4, they speak of the golden calf as a plural. Maybe they had already had too much to drink, for in v 8 the LORD clearly speaks of "a molten calf"*

70. Moses Explodes. (32:15-20)

Moses (with Joshua) returns from the mountain, taking with him Joshua, who has been waiting in the lower part of the mountain for Moses; he has heard the noise, but doesn't know the cause. Moses, with Joshua, descends to the base of the mountain to find the people in a wild orgy of pagan abandon.

Although God had prepared him for what he would find, Moses explodes with anger and shatters the stone tablets⁶³. He then destroys the golden calf, grinds it to powder, suspends it in water, and makes the people drink it⁶⁴.

71. Aaron's Flimsy Excuse. (32:21-24)

Aaron tries to blame the spectacular backsliding on the people, and makes the absurd claim that all he did was to throw the people's gold in the furnace and, somehow, a golden calf miraculously created itself. Moses now knows, if he didn't before, that although Aaron would make a fine High Priest, he is a lousy leader.

72. Cleansing the Camp. (32:25-29)

The sons of Levi declare themselves faithful to the Lord, and Moses sends them through the camp with swords to slay all those men who persist in their rebellion against God. Three thousand men are slain, and order returns to the camp.

73. The Ultimate Intercession. (32:30-35)

Moses returns to the mountain to intercede for the people. In the ultimate intercession, Moses asks God not to utterly destroy the people, and offers to have his own name taken from God's Book in return for the forgiveness of

⁶³ It is interesting to note in v 15 that the stone tablets were engraved on both sides, front and back, because artists' representations almost always show them as inscribed only on the front surfaces.

⁶⁴ According to M.R. DeHann, M.D. ("The Chemistry of the Blood"), gold, when ground into a powder and suspended in water, is blood red. Here there is the symbolism of blood, cleansing the people of their sin.

Part I
Exodus

the people⁶⁵. God replies that Moses is to go ahead and lead the people to the Promised Land, but states that the people will suffer the consequences of their rebellion. Here we see the law of sowing and reaping; although God will always forgive us our sins when we repent, yet very real consequences may remain for us to live with.

74. "A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey". (33:1-11)

God promises Moses that He will send an angel before him to drive out the inhabitants of the Promised Land, which He calls "a land flowing with milk and honey," but says that He will not dwell in the midst of the people. The Tabernacle is to be kept outside the camp, because God is so grieved with the rebellious people that, if constantly in their midst, He might consume them in anger. Thenceforth the pillar of cloud and fire would be outside the door of the Tabernacle, outside the camp; there, God would meet with Moses⁶⁶.

***NOTE:** In v 11 we see indications of Moses' unique relationship with God, and of the godly commitment of Joshua⁶⁷.*

75. "Show Me Thy Glory". (33:12-23)

Moses again intercedes for the rebellious people, and God reassures Moses that He will continue to go with him, and that Moses will be given rest⁶⁸. Moses, emboldened, asks God to allow him see Him; God answers that Moses could not survive it, but graciously protects Moses and allows him a partial view. No other mortal has ever been allowed even this partial view of God.

76. Moses Experiences the Presence of God. (34:1-17)

God tells Moses to hew out two more stone tablets and meet Him again the next morning, to replace the two that Moses has shattered in anger. This time Moses is to come alone to the top of the mountain; all others, including the livestock, are to be far away and out of sight, for they could not survive this appearance of God. God descends in the cloud of glory, **proclaims His name**, and reminds Moses that no covenants are to be made with the

⁶⁵ This selfless attitude is also found in Paul's declaration concerning unredeemed ethnic Jews (Romans 9:1-5).

⁶⁶ See in this regard Numbers 7:89.

⁶⁷ Verse 11 does not mean that Moses spoke with God (literally) "face to face" for no man could do that and live (see v 20). It means that Moses actually conversed, personally, with God; at that time, no one else enjoyed such a relationship with God.

⁶⁸ This promise was to Moses personally. In the Elizabethan English of the King James Version, "thee," "thou," and "thine" are in the 2nd person singular, meaning "you personally." Unfortunately, none of the modern versions makes this distinction, so they often fail to convey accurately the meaning of a passage.

Part I
Exodus

Canaanites, nor are the Israelites to intermarry with them; rather, the pagan altars and shrines are to be destroyed.

NOTE: *the "name" of God in its primary sense means His qualities, His character, and all that He represents--not "the right word" (vv 5-7,14). Note especially v 14 in which He tells us plainly that His name is Jealous; would we ever pray "in the name of Jealous"? Yet there are cultic Christian groups which teach that we cannot pray, and God cannot be pleased, unless we use the right word(s) with which to address Him; but there is danger in this legalistic teaching, for it borders on witchcraft, in which a spirit must be called by its right name in order to control it, else the spirit may turn on the witch. **God is not legalistic**, and Jesus fought religious legalism during all of His earthly ministry. God "looketh upon the heart"; what He wants from us is a surrendered heart, not "the right words." Never forget this.*

77. Another 40-Day Period with God Changes Moses. (34:18-35)

During this second time that Moses is with the Lord on Mt. Sinai for 40 days, he is again on a complete fast (he didn't even drink water). Moses was facing 40 years of trials and temptations to come in the desert. This is an interesting parallel to the fact that Jesus fasted completely for 40 days before facing Satan's trials. During the following 40 days God writes the Ten Commandments on a second pair of stone tablets (these two were hewn by Moses) and speaks again to Moses about the feasts and the weekly Sabbath. When Moses descends from the mountain the second time, after 80 days in the presence of God, the glory of God shines so brightly from his face that the people can't stand it; he must put a veil over his face before he can speak to the people. Moses is at first not aware of his own glorified condition.

NOTE: *During the first 40-day period on Sinai Moses also fasted completely, although this is not recorded in Exodus (see Deut 9:9-18). This is impossible without a miracle, for no one can live that long without water. Joshua apparently joined Moses in the first 40-day fast (Ex 24:13-18; 32:15-17). Besides Moses and Joshua, Elijah is the only other OT person recorded as having fasted 40 days (I Kings 19:7,8). Moses is the only person in the Bible recorded as having done this twice, and it appears from Deut 9:18 that he did this without interruption. If this is true, then Moses fasted completely for 80 days.*

From the gospel accounts (Matt 4, Mk 1, Lk 4), it is uncertain whether Jesus was fasting in the desert 40 days to prepare, and was then tempted in

Part I
Exodus

the desert for 40 additional days; but the probability is that the entire process involved one 40-day fast, with the temptations occurring at the end of the 40 day period.

78. Dedication of the Tabernacle and the Priesthood. (40:1-33)

Chapters 35-39 describe the construction of the Tabernacle and all its furnishings. In the final chapter of Exodus, one year after the departure from Egypt, the Tabernacle is assembled and anointed, along with each of its furnishings. Aaron and his sons are washed ceremonially, clothed in the priestly garments, and anointed. The tablets with the Ten Commandments are placed by Moses into the Ark of the Covenant, and "so Moses finished the work⁶⁹."

79. The Tabernacle Is Finished. (40:34-38)

When the Tabernacle is finished, the glory of the Lord descends on it and creates such an invisible barrier that Moses cannot enter the tent⁷⁰. Henceforth the Israelites' guide will be the Glory of God, as a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. When the presence of God moves, they will move; when the presence of God stops, they will stop, which is an excellent rule for us today. The record of the Book of Exodus ends here, with the story interrupted, and with Moses and the people ready to resume the march.

The following book, Leviticus, details the Law for every aspect of the lives of the children of Israel. The story of the trip to the Promised Land, interrupted here by the giving of the Law, will resume with the Book of Numbers.

⁶⁹ Verse 20 appears to be the origin of the expression, "took and" before verbs in the past tense, commonly used in the South, especially in the Appalachian Mountains, where fragments of Elizabethan English still survive.

⁷⁰ This interesting phenomenon occurred again, about 500 years later, when Solomon dedicated the first Temple in Jerusalem (II Chron 5:11-14).