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# Exodus

## I. The Liberation of Israel. 1:1-18:27.

### *A. Introduction. Exo 1:1-7.*

#### **Exodus 1:1**

*Now these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt; every man and his household came with Jacob.*

These few verses serve to connect Exodus with the narrative of Genesis. After listing those who came down into Egypt with Jacob, the passage quickly moves over many intervening years and resumes the thread of the story in verse 7.

### *B. Bondage in Egypt. 1:8-22.*

The period after Joseph died brought a complete change in the condition of the Israelites. From being the favored people of the Semitic Hyksos rulers, they became the feared bondslaves of a new dynasty of native Egyptian kings. Oppressed by their Egyptian masters, the Israelites reached a state of absolute helplessness and despair, when God, in faithfulness to his covenant, redeemed them with mighty power.

#### **Exodus 1:8-10**

*Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.*

**A new King.** The Hyskos invaders controlled Egypt from about 1720 B.C. until

1570. They were driven from the land by Amosis I, the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty, perhaps the most brilliant age in Egyptian history. After the expulsion of the hated foreign kings, the enmity of the Egyptians was turned against all who had been associated with them, particularly the Hebrews, who were related to the Hyksos both by race and by position. Through the generations that followed, the condition of the Hebrews steadily declined, until we reach the times described here, just before the redemption. 9. **More and mightier.** *Too numerous and too strong* (American Trans). 10. **Let us deal wisely.** *Take precautions against them* (American Trans.); or, (*handle them carefully*) (Moffatt). There was a very real danger that the Hebrews, dwelling in Goshen, on the northeast border of the land, might join any invaders that might attack Egypt.

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**Exodus 1:11-14**

*Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.*

**Pithom and Raamses.** These cities are now located with a considerable degree of assurance at Tell er-Retabeh and at Tanis, both in the Delta region. Tanis is also known in Scripture as Zoan (Num 13:22), and was called Avaris by the Hyksos. Rameses-Tanis, which had been the Hyksos capital, was abandoned after their expulsion. In the Nineteenth Dynasty (1310 BC - 1200 BC) it was restored, and again became the capital of Egypt. In the providence of God, the only times in the long history of Egypt when the capital was so near the border of the land were the times when Israel was to enter and to depart. 12. **They were grieved.** Better, *in dread* (RSV) or *apprehensive* (American Trans.). To the Egyptians there was an element of awe as well as loathing in the increase of the Hebrews, not only because of the danger mentioned in verse 10, but also because of the evidence of God's blessing in their greatly increased numbers.

**Exodus 1:15-21**

*And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah:*

**Hebrew midwives.** This may mean "Hebrew women" or "midwives of the Hebrew women," i.e., Egyptian women in charge of midwifery for the Hebrews. In either case they were probably the chief midwives, not the only ones. 16. **Stools.** *Birth stools* (ASV; lit., *stones* ). These were two stones, bricks, or low stools upon which it was the custom for the women to kneel or sit during delivery. **Daughter.** Daughters were spared, since they could be taken and married to Egyptians, thus losing their national identity. This distinction was often made in OT times, not only by the Hebrews but

by other nations as well. 19. The explanation given Pharaoh was only partly true. It is evident from God's rewarding blessing upon the midwives that they themselves took no precautions to prevent the preservation of males.

## **Exodus 1:22**

*And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.*

**Every son that is born.** The LXX, the Targums, and the RSV add the obvious explanatory words, "to the Hebrews."

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## *C. Preparation of the Deliverer. 2:1-4:31.*

In the fullness of time, when the oppressor was doing his utmost to destroy Israel, God prepared the means of salvation.

### 1) The Birth and Preservation of Moses. 2:1-25.

The exact date of Moses' birth, and the identification of the Pharaoh and his daughter are debatable, but the evidence of God's faithfulness is unmistakable. Upon the ground that there are vague parallels to this narrative in other ancient stories, the IB calls it "a legendary account." Upon this basis almost anything could be called unhistorical.

#### **Exodus 2:1-2**

*And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.*

Verse 1-2. **Man of the house of Levi.** According to Ex 6:20, this was Amram, who married his father's sister, Jochebed. 2. **Goodly.** Heb 11:23 attributes this act of Moses' parents to their faith - "because they saw he was a proper child." They took the robust, handsome appearance of the baby as evidence that God had given him for a great purpose.

#### **Exodus 2:3-8**

*And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.*

**Bulrushes.** Probably the papyrus reeds so plentiful in the Nile. **Slime and ... pitch.** Bitumen and pitch, or asphalt. **By the river's brink.** Very likely the child was placed where the mother knew that the king's daughter was accustomed to bathe (KD). The whole act, including placing the sister to watch, makes it evident that this was not simply abandoning the child to the mercy of the river in a faint hope that he would be rescued. 5. The bathing may have been an act of worship and the rescue may have been an act of piety rather than of mere pity (Alleman and Flack, *op. cit.*).

## **Exodus 2:9**

*And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy*

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*wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.*

There was divine irony in this situation in which the destined deliverer was not only preserved but supported by those whom he would one day defeat.

## **Exodus 2:10**

*And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.*

**Moses.** The Hebrew means *drawn out* , or *drawn forth* . Many critics believe that the Hebrew for Moses ( *Msheh* ) is derived from the Egyptian ( *mesi* , ) meaning "to bear." In the process of being born, a child is drawn forth; in this instance the child was called Moses because he was drawn from the water. Some scholars, however, doubt that there is any connection with Egyptian ( *mesi* ).

## **Exodus 2:11-14**

*And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.*

**Looked on.** "Contemplated with sympathy" ( *Cambridge Bible* ). 12. By this act Moses irrevocably cast in his lot with his brethren (cf. Heb 11:24-26). 14. Moses had presented himself to his people as their champion, but they were not ready for the redemption, and neither was he. "It was by the staff and not by the sword-by the meekness and not by the wrath of Moses that God was to accomplish the great work of deliverance" (JFB). Acts 7:25 expresses the pathetic thought, "He supposed his brethren would have understood."

**Exodus 2:15**

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

**This thing.** It was not so much the murder as the rebellion implicit in it that aroused the anger of Pharaoh (cf. Heb 11:27). **Midian.** The Midianites were a group of tribes descended from Keturah and Abraham (Gen 25:1-4). Although their home seems to have been on the east side of the Gulf of Aqaba, they were a nomadic people and wandered up into Palestine and down into the Negeb and the Sinai Peninsula. According to Ex 3:1, those Moses met must have been dwelling in the vicinity of Mount Sinai. The attempt to confine the Midianites to one area and locate Mount Sinai east of Aqaba (T. Meek, *Hebrew Origins; et al .*) does not agree with Scripture and seems

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quite unfounded.

## **Exodus 2:16-21**

*Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.*

**Priest of Midian.** The Scripture does not indicate what god he served. It may indeed have been Jehovah, as some claim, but the words of Jethro in Ex 18:11 sound more like the testimony of a convert. There is absolutely no reason to suppose, as some writers have done, that Moses learned of Jehovah from the Midianites (cf. Meek, *et al* .). 17. Compassion for the oppressed was a part of Moses' character. 18. **Reuel.** The name means *friend of God* . He is also called Jethro (3:1; 4:18). in Num 10:29 the AV translators inconsistently followed the LXX and transliterated the name *Raquel* .

## **Exodus 2:22**

*And she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.*

**Gershom.** The name means *a stranger here* . A second son, Eliezer, *God is my help* , is named in Ex 18:3.

## **Exodus 2:23-25**

*And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.*

**Process of time.** *Course of those many days* (ASV, RSV). According to Acts 7:30, the period was forty years, or one generation. If we take the thirteenth century date for the Exodus, then the king who died would have been Seti I (1319-1301), or possibly Rameses I, the founder of the Nineteenth Dynasty. The new king would have been Rameses II, one of the greatest of all Pharaohs (1301-1234). 24,25. God had waited long and been silent, but he had never forgotten nor abandoned his people. **He heard ... remembered ... looked** and ( *knew their condition* ) (RSV).

2) The Call and Commission of Moses. 3:1-4:31.

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Trying to redeem Israel in his own way and at his own time, Moses failed. But in God's time he was called upon to deliver in God's way and by God's power.

### **Exodus 3:1-6**

*Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.*

Verse 1-6. **Horeb.** Horeb is called **the mountain of God** by anticipation. In the OT Horeb and Sinai are used as equivalent terms, although the former name may refer to the range of mountains and Sinai to a particular peak. It is impossible to know with certainty which of the many peaks, the highest rising to some 8,000 feet, is the place where Moses met God. The tradition, at least 1800 years old, that locates the mount as Jebel Musa, "Mount of Moses," must have some sort of foundation, and the peak called **Horeb** is surely in the vicinity of that "mount." The monastery of St. Catherine is supposed to be on the exact spot of the burning bush! (Cf. further on Ex 19:1)

2. As Israel was not consumed in her furnace of affliction so the thorn bush aflame was not consumed, for God was there. **Angel of the Lord.** This was not just *an* angel, but a manifestation of Jehovah himself (v. 4; cf. Gen 16:7; 22:11; 31:11-13; 48:15-16).

### **Exodus 3:7-10**

*And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;*

**I have ... seen ... heard ... know .... am come down to deliver.** Not Moses but God

was to be the Redeemer.

**Milk and honey.** A proverbial expression for great fertility and abundance. **The place of the Canaanites.** God had waited more than four hundred years for a sign of repentance. Now the iniquity of the Amorite nations was full (cf. Gen 15:16).

### **Exodus 3:11-13**

*And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?*

**Who am I.** The confident, impulsive Moses had learned humility; now he had to learn faith. Each of Moses' difficulties was met by assurances from God. **Who am I** was not important, for **I will be with thee.**

### **Exodus 3:14**

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**Exodus 3:14**

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

**I am that I am.** Other translations of this difficult phrase include: I AM WHO I AM (RSV); *I will be what I will be* (Moffatt; Luther); *I am the existing One* (Catholic Commentary); *I cause to be what comes to pass* (Meek, *op. cit.* , p. 107; and Wm. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* , p. 260). The name expresses "not abstract existence, but active manifestation of existence ... not what God will be in Himself ... but what He will approve Himself to others.... He will be to Moses and His people what He will be - something which is undefined, but which as His full nature is more completely unfolded, by the lessons of history and the teachings of the prophets, will prove to be more than words can express" ( *Cambridge Bible* ). A similar thought is expressed by Keil and Delitzsch: "The question (v. 13) ... presupposed that the name expressed the nature and operations of God and that God would manifest in deeds the nature expressed in the name ... (He) designated Himself by this name as the absolute God...acting with unfettered ability and self-dependence." Commenting on the name Jehovah in Gen 2:4, the same scholars say: "He is the personal God in His historical manifestation in which the fullness of the Divine Being unfolds itself to the world ... the God of the history of salvation. This is not shown in the etymology of the name but in the historical expansion." God, then, revealed himself to Moses not as the Creator-God of power-Elohim, but as the personal God of Salvation, and all that "I am" contains shall be manifested through the ages to come, culminating in him whose "I am" lights the pages of the NT.

**Exodus 3:15-17**

*And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and*

*the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.*

**My memorial.** *By this I am to be remembered* (RSV). 16,17. **I have surely visited.** The time for the fulfillment of Joseph's promise had come (Gen 50:25).

### **Exodus 3:18-21**

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

**Met with us.** Literally, ( *lighted upon us* ) in a sudden, unexpected way. **Three days' journey.** Probably a current expression for a considerable distance. "God knew the hard heart of Pharaoh, and therefore directed that no more should be asked at first than he must (either) grant or display the hardness of his heart .... It was an act of mercy to Pharaoh, therefore, that the entire departure of the Israelites was not demanded at the very first audience of Moses ... for, had this been demanded, it would have been far more difficult for him to bend his heart

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in obedience to the divine will, than when the request presented was as trifling as it was reasonable. And if he had rendered obedience to the will of God in the smaller, God would have given him strength to be faithful in the greater" (KD). 19. **No, not by a mighty hand.** *Unless compelled by a mighty hand* (RSV).

### **Exodus 3:22**

*But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.*

**Borrow.** The command was not to **borrow** but to ask (ASV, RSV), a request which, under the circumstances, was a demand. Thus the Israelites received a recompense for their years of toil by 'spoiling' the Egyptians.

### **Exodus 4:1-9**

*And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.*

**They will not believe me.** Moses' third difficulty, like the others, was centered in himself. The signs provided by God would not only be a testimony to Israel and Egypt of God's presence with his messenger, but they would also assure and strengthen the faith of Moses. 2-4. The sign. The shepherd's rod, surrendered to God, became a sign of power and victory over the enemy. 6,7 The second sign. The defiled, leprous hand of Moses symbolized Israel's own afflicted state, her need of God's cleansing power. 9. The third sign, **River.** Literally, the *Nile*. As the Nile, the life-stream of Egypt, was in the power of God's messengers, so also were Pharaoh and all his people in Moses' hand.

## Exodus 4:10-17

*And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.*

Moses' final difficulty. God makes no mistakes. He had formed Moses; He knew what he was capable of doing.

12. **I will be with thy mouth.** "Moses' stammering as God's faithful servant will be adequate enough" (IB). 13. **Send, I pray, some other person** (RSV). This last statement of Moses is not as direct a refusal as the RSV translation makes it appear, but it indicates what was behind all the objections. In the weakness of the flesh, Moses simply did not want to go back to Egypt. God stooped to this weakness and provided Aaron as Moses' "prophet." As the story progresses, however, it seems that Moses, with growing courage, more and more took his proper place as leader.

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## Exodus 4:18-20

*And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.*

Moses' return to Egypt. 18. Since Moses was in the service of Jethro, he had to ask permission to leave. He could not tell his father-in-law the incredible story of the revelation and commission of God, but simply said he wished to go back to see how his brethren were. 20. **The rod of God in his hand.** Poor though his outward appearance may have been, he had in his hand the staff before which the pride and might of Pharaoh and all Egypt would bow.

## Exodus 4:21-23

*And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.*

This is the substance and culmination of God's dealings with Pharaoh. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart was the divine judgment upon one who had already hardened his own heart against the Lord.

## Exodus 4:24-31

*And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.*

This passage, which is dismissed by many modern commentators as a curious relic of

folklore and superstition, is in fact an illustration of a spiritual law that runs throughout Scripture and history: He who would proclaim God's will to others must himself be obedient to the express will of God. The sign of circumcision, decreed by God (Gen 17:9-14) had been neglected by Moses until God forcibly reminded him of the obligation by this stroke. **You are my bridegroom in blood by this circumcision** (v. 26; Moffat). This act of Zipporah, evidently repugnant to her and delayed until it almost cost her husband's life, may have decided Moses to leave her and the children in Midian. Nothing was to hinder his service for the Lord.

*D. The Mission of Moses to Pharaoh. 5:1-7:7.*

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## *D. The Mission of Moses to Pharaoh. 5:1-7:7.*

Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh to make known God's will. Their request was harshly refused, and the tribulation of Israel was increased by command of the king. Thus the Israelites were brought to their lowest state of helpless despair and suffering in order that the grace and power of God alone might be manifest in their redemption. The genealogies of Moses and Aaron are inserted in this passage to make clear their relationship to Israel as God's accredited leaders.

### 1) Moses' First Appearance Before Pharaoh. 5:1-23.

#### **Exodus 5:1**

*And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.*

Verse 1. **Hold a feast.** This might better be translated, ( *make a pilgrimage* ). The Hebrew ( *hag* ), "feast," was accompanied by a pilgrimage (cf. Ex 23:14-17). "The demand presented to Pharaoh on the part of the God of the Israelites ... appears so natural and reasonable that Pharaoh could not have refused their request if there had been a single trace of the fear of God in his heart" (KD).

#### **Exodus 5:2-5**

*And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.*

**Who is the Lord?** Pharaoh's sneering question was soon to be thoroughly and terribly answered. 4. Pharaoh considered Moses merely a crafty leader trying to get better working conditions for the Israelites. **Mind your own business** (American Trans.). 5. **People of the land.** That is, common workpeople.

## **Exodus 5:6-15**

*And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying,*

**Taskmasters ... officers.** Egyptian taskmasters dealt with Israelite officers, ( *shotterim* ), perhaps scribes or timekeepers. 7. The use of chopped straw mixed with the clay increased more than three times the breaking strength of the brick, and Egyptian bricks were usually made this way (cf. BA, xiii, 2). 14. When the impossible task was not performed, the punishment fell most severely on the Hebrew officers.

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**Exodus 5:16-21**

*There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people.*

**The fault is in thine own people.** "Thou sinnest against thine own people" (LXX). The exact translation and meaning of this text is uncertain, but the Hebrews were undoubtedly defending themselves by placing the blame for their failure where it belonged. 19. **In evil case.** The mission of the officers failed to get any relief for the people. 20. **They met Moses.** Literally, they *stationed themselves* to meet them. 21. **Savour to be abhorred.** "They call upon God to judge whilst by their very complaining they show that they have no confidence in God and His power to save" (KD).

**Exodus 5:22-23**

*And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me?*

**Why.** How incomprehensible it must have seemed to Moses that God, who had sent him to deliver Israel, had led him, instead, to be the cause of greater suffering.

**2) The Renewed Promise and Command of Jehovah. 6:1-13.**

Critics take this as a parallel account, not a sequel, to the account in Ex 3-6. Their assumption is quite uncalled for; the promise is affirmed quite differently, and the need for further assurance on the part of Moses is abundantly evident.

## Exodus 6:1-3

*Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.*

Verse 1-3. **With a strong hand.** *He will be forced* (Moffatt), compelled by God's mighty power. 3. **God Almighty.** Hebrew ( *'El Shaddai* ). The derivation and meaning of *Shaddai* . is uncertain. Probably the translation **God Almighty** is as near as any to the thought contained in the name. It is possible that the name "Jehovah" was not known to the patriarchs, but that is not necessarily the significance of the statement here. God had not

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revealed himself in his character of "Jehovah" to Abraham as he was now about to do to Israel. As Jehovah, God was now going to redeem the people of Israel (v. 6), adopt them as his people (v. 7), and bring them into the promised Land (v. 8). By this they would learn the nature of the God who said, **I am Jehovah** (v. 2, ASV).

## Exodus 6:4-9

*And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.*

The redemption of Israel was based upon the covenant with the fathers and was its fulfillment. **Land of their pilgrimage.** *The land in which they settled as immigrants* (Moffatt). 6. **Redeem.** The Hebrew word means "to reclaim, to vindicate the rights." 7. **Ye shall know** . One of the great reasons for the Lord's presenting the extraordinary demonstrations of his might, which were to come, was that he might sharply imprint upon the mind and conscience of Israel the fact that he, Jehovah, was God. 9. **Anguish of spirit** . Their suffering was too great to be relieved by mere words.

## Exodus 6:10-13

*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

Moses was charged again to present to Pharaoh the request of the God of Israel. Before the carrying out of this charge is described, the genealogy of Moses and Aaron is given. **Uncircumcised lips** (v. 12). Lips covered as with a foreskin, so that they open and close with difficulty (cf. Ex 4:10).

3) Genealogy of Moses and Aaron. 6:14-27.

**Exodus 6:14-30**

*These be the heads of their fathers' houses: The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel; Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi: these be the families of Reuben.*

**Fathers' houses** . The "house" or "family" descended from a single ancestor. "House" may denote a whole tribe, but usually it indicates the main subdivision or clan. Thus **Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi** were the ancestors, **heads** of the four main clans of the tribe of Reuben. 18. **Amram** the son of Kohath was an earlier ancestor of Amram the father of Moses (v. 20). 27. **Moses and Aaron** . As the elder brother (cf. Ex 7:7), Aaron appears first in the genealogy (v. 26); but as the appointed leader, Moses takes precedence when the narrative

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appears first in the genealogy (v. 26); but as the appointed leader, Moses takes precedence when the narrative resumes.

#### 4) Moses Sent Back to Pharaoh. 6:28-7:7.

The narrative now resumes as the Lord gives specific directions to Moses concerning his mission.

### **Exodus 7:1-8**

*And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.*

**Made thee a god** . Better, ( *made thee as God* ) (ASV, RSV). Moses was given divine authority and power over Pharaoh, while Aaron was commissioned to serve as Moses' prophet or spokesman. This was to be no repetition of the first encounter with Pharaoh. 3. **Harden** . *Make obstinate* (American); or ( *make stubborn* ) (Moffatt). This is not the usual word for hardening; it is found also in Ps 95:8. 4. **Mine armies, and my people** . Better, ( *my people in their hosts* ) (Moffat). 5. **Egyptians shall know** . The second great reason for God's display of mighty power. Israel was to know (Ex 6:7) by redemption, Egypt by judgment, that **I am Jehovah** . 6. This verse summarizes, and introduces the next major section.

#### *E. God's Wonders in the Land of Egypt. 7:8-11:10.*

The plagues by which God manifested himself to Israel and Egypt are called by various terms in the Bible ( *maggepa* ), "a severe blow" (Ex 9:14), used in 1 Sam 4:17 for a great defeat in war; ( *nega`* ) "a heavy touch or stroke" (Ex 11:1), used in Leviticus, chapters 13 and 14, for the stroke of leprosy; ( *negep* ) (Ex 12:13), cognate with ( *maggepa* ), "a severe blow," used only of the tenth plague, and usually of a calamity inflicted by God in judgment (Josh 22:17). By these awe-inspiring strokes

from the hand of God, the people were to be made aware that "I am Jehovah."

The first nine plagues clearly fall into three groups of three each. Numbers one and two, four and five, seven and eight were announced to Pharaoh, beforehand, but three, six, and nine came without warning. The first three fell upon both Israel and Egypt, for both nations had lessons to learn. The last two groups fell upon the Egyptians only, that they might know that God who was caring for Israel was God also in Egypt (Ex 8:22) and greater than all other gods (9:14). The plagues were progressively more severe, the last three almost destroying the land (10:7). The tenth plague is discussed in the next division of the text. It is thus set apart from the others because it was not only the culmination of the judgment and the basis of the redemption, but also because it was a direct visitation from God, not a judgment through secondary causes. The first nine plagues were ( *natural* ) wonders, in the sense that they were intensifications of distresses such as were already known in the ordinary course of history. Their severity, and even more, their appearance and disappearance at the word of Moses marked them as miraculous. They had their effect upon the Egyptians not only physically and mentally, but also spiritually. Each plague was directed against some phenomenon of nature worshiped by the Egyptians as in some way related to the gods.

1) Divine Commission of Moses and Aaron Attested. 7:8-13.

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## 1) Divine Commission of Moses and Aaron Attested. 7:8-13.

**Exodus 7:9-12**

*When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.*

**Prove yourselves by working a miracle (RSV). 11. Wise men ... sorcerers ... magicians .** These were not common tricksters, but the highly educated, priestly leaders of Egypt, men of vast influence and skill. Whether they performed their feat by some sort of trick with trained reptiles, or by a Satanically empowered "lying wonder" cannot be determined. In either case the supremacy of Jehovah was demonstrated when their serpents were swallowed up.

**Exodus 7:13-14**

*And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.*

**Hardened .** Made strong, firm. Three words are used for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart: ( *hazaq* ), "to be or make strong" (Ex 7:13,22; 8:19); ( *kabed* ), "to be or make heavy, slow to move" (7:14; 8:15,32); and ( *qasha* ), "to harden" (only in 7:3). The usual translations obscure the fact that it is always clearly stated when it was God who did the hardening (9:12; 10:1,20,27, *et al* .) and when it was Pharaoh who hardened his own heart. God hardens only "those who begin by hardening themselves .... the means by which God hardens a man is not necessarily by any extraordinary intervention on His part; it may be by the ordinary experiences of life, operating through the principles and character of human nature which are of His appointment" ( *Cambridge Bible* ).

## 2) The First Plague-The Nile Turned to Blood. 7:14-25.

### **Exodus 7:15-18**

*Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand.*

**He goeth out unto the water** . An act of devotion? If the purpose of Pharaoh's visit was to worship, he would find his very god made loathsome by a greater power. 17. **In this thou shalt know** . Pharaoh was now to have the answer to his scornful, "Who is Jehovah?" (Ex 5:2). **Turned to blood** . Each year, toward the end of June, when the waters of the Nile begin to rise, they are colored a dark red by the silt carried down from the

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headwaters. This continues for three months, until the waters begin to abate, but the water, meanwhile, is wholesome and drinkable. The miracle of 7:17-21 involved three elements by which it differed from the accustomed phenomenon: the water was changed by the smiting of Moses' rod; the water became undrinkable; and the condition lasted just seven days (v. 25).

## **Exodus 7:19-24**

*And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone.*

**Streams** . The Nile and its arms. **Rivers** (lit., *their Niles* ). Nile canals, irrigation ditches. **Ponds** . Standing lakes formed by the flooding rivers. **Pools** (lit., *every gathering* ). Cisterns and reservoirs. **Vessels**. Not a drop was taken up in these vessels that was not contaminated. The listing of all the sources of water makes it evident how completely Egypt was smitten by the plague. 22,23. **Magicians ... did so** . By some means the magicians changed the appearance of some water into that of blood, and Pharaoh's heart **remained hardened** (American), or, ( *did not heed even this* ) (Moffatt).

## **Exodus 7:25**

*And seven days were fulfilled, after that the LORD had smitten the river.*

**Seven days** . It has been thought that the first plague may have taken place near the time of the Nile inundation in June. Since the final plague occurred in the spring, it seems that the judgments on Egypt were spread out over most of a year.

### 3) The Second Plague-Frogs. 8:1-15.

#### **Exodus 8:1**

*And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.*

There have always been frogs filling the marshes along the Nile. At the word of Moses, however, they appeared in such numbers and so invaded every conceivable place that they became an unbearable nuisance.

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**Exodus 8:7-16**

*And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.*

**Magicians did so** . Though they did in some way produce more frogs, they were utterly helpless to remove any.

8. Pharaoh was so discomposed by this repulsive situation that he was ready to promise anything. He had already been forced to acknowledge the God whom he had disdained. 9. **Glory over me** . *You may have the honor of saying* (Moffatt). 15.

**Respite** (lit., *open space* ). "As soon as he 'got air' he hardened his heart" (KD).

#### 4) The Third Plague-Lice. 8:16-19.

Lice (ASV, AV), gnats (RSV), sand fleas (ERV), and mosquitoes (Moffatt) have all been suggested as the instruments of this plague. Although the exact meaning of the Hebrew word is not known, mosquitoes, which are well known in Egypt, seem to be peculiarly fitting. It is to be noticed that this again was the intensification of a natural experience. The plagues were also intensifying from an inconvenience to a painful affliction.

**Exodus 8:17-20**

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

**Dust of the earth** . "Just as the fertilizing water of Egypt had twice become a plague, so through the power of Jehovah, the soil so richly blessed became a plague to the

king and his people" (KD) 19. **The finger of God** . The helpless magicians acknowledged that this was supernatural. They did not attribute it to Jehovah, but confessed that it was beyond their mortal powers. The fact that they had duplicated somewhat the earlier plagues, makes their capitulation more striking. Since there is no time limit expressed for this plague, we may assume that it continued for some time.

## 5) The Fourth Plague-Swarms of Flies. 8:20-32.

The second triad of plagues distinguished between Israel and the Egyptians. The confession of the magicians that "a god" had brought these disasters, was now to be enforced and the fact made clear that it was the God, Jehovah, that was the cause.

### **Exodus 8:21-25**

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**Exodus 8:21-25**

*Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are.*

**Flies** . The word denotes some particularly irritating kind of insect, whether flies or gnats. The Hebrew word for "swarm" means *a mixture* and may signify the increase of all kinds of verminous scourges. 22. **Sever** . *Set apart* (ASV, RSV). By the fact that Israel would be protected from all the future plagues, it would be made clear whose God was in power. 23. **Division** (lit., ( *redemption* )). The separation was a deliverance for Israel. 24. **Corrupted** . *Destroyed* (ASV marg.); ( *ruined* ) (RSV). The plagues were still increasing in severity; they were now not simply a nuisance, but a danger. The people suffered, the work was hindered, and the whole economy was dislocated.

**Exodus 8:26-32**

*And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?*

**Abomination of the Egyptians** . Whether Moses referred to the manner of sacrifice or to the victim, held by the Egyptians to be sacred, the people of Egypt would have regarded the act "as a manifestation of contempt for themselves and their gods" ( *Calvin's Commentaries* ). 28. For the second time Pharaoh gave his permission for the Israelites to leave; but the removal of the plague, in spite of the warning of Moses (v. 29), banished his fear, and he denied the pledge.

## 6) The Fifth Plague-Murrain. 9:1-7.

**Exodus 9:3-7**

*Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain.*

**Camels** . This mention of camels had been called anachronistic; but there were camel caravans constantly coming into Egypt, and certainly some Egyptians must have had a vested interest in them. **Murrain** . *Severe plague* (RSV); ( *deadly pest* ) (Moffatt). What specific disease this was is not known, but it must have been a severe and deadly epidemic that attacked all kinds of livestock. 6. **All the cattle** . As often in Hebrew, the term **all** designates a great number. We say in English, "Everybody is sick," meaning only that sick folk are encountered everywhere. This plague was to come upon those cattle that were in the fields (v. 3).

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## 7) The Sixth Plague-Boils. 9:8-12.

Like the third plague this was not announced but simply came as Moses acted.

### **Exodus 9:8-13**

*And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh.*

**Ashes** . Literally, ( *soot from the kiln* ), The kiln was a symbol of the commercial and artistic wealth of Egypt. As disaster had come from the natural resources of the river and the land, so now industry provided the source of new trouble. 9. **Boil breaking forth into sores** (RSV). An inflamed painful boil or abscess, breaking into a running sore, exceedingly painful and wretched but not fatal. 10. **Stood before Pharaoh** . He took his place before the king so that there might be no question of the source of this new plague. 11. The magicians not only could not duplicate the plague, but they themselves were in helpless misery. 12. As the last triad of judgment was about to come, God hardened Pharaoh's heart lest out of sheer human weakness he should surrender before God had accomplished all His will.

## 8) The Seventh Plague-Hail. 9:13-35.

### **Exodus 9:14-16**

*For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.*

**All my plagues upon thine heart** . These last plagues would not fall simply as

warnings and sufferings, as the others had done. They would "not only strike the head and the arms, but penetrate the very heart and inflict a mortal wound" (Calvin). 15. **Cut off from the earth** . Never again did Egypt rise to the height of power and glory reached in this dynasty. 16. **For this cause ... made thee to stand** (ASV). Pharaoh was to experience the power and might of Jehovah, and in his experiences the whole world would learn about the Lord. "As both the rebellion of the natural man against the word and will of God and the hostility of the world power to the Lord and His people were concentrated in Pharaoh ... (this) should be typical for all times and circumstances of the kingdom of God in conflict with the world" (KD).

## **Exodus 9:17-22**

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*As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?*

**Exaltest thou thyself** . "A peculiar word found only here ... raisest up thyself as a mound or obstacle against my people" ( *Cambridge Bible* ). 19. Opportunity was now given to those Egyptians who had come to believe in the word of Jehovah to distinguish themselves from those who had not.

### **Exodus 9:23-30**

*And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.*

Hail, thunder, and lightning are not unknown in Egypt, but the terrible fury of such a storm as this had never been known before in Egypt's long history. 27. How often a great natural disaster causes even the most ungodly man to cry out in fear and helplessness! Such confessions are not the result of real heart conviction of sin but arise only from the terror of the circumstances. 29,30. Moses would again manifest Jehovah's supreme control, but he had no illusions concerning the steadfastness of Pharaoh's repentance. It was the terrible storm, not Jehovah, that Pharaoh feared.

### **Exodus 9:31-35**

*And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled.*

**Flax and ... barley** . Since these ripen in February, the season of year for this plague is fixed. 32. **Wheat and ... spelt** (ASV). Spelt is an inferior kind of wheat; ( *rye* ) (AV) was not known in ancient Egypt. These grains ripen about a month after the flax and barley.

## 9) The Eighth Plague-Locusts. 10:1-20.

### **Exodus 10:2-7**

*And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the LORD.*

**What things I have wrought** . *How I have mocked* (ASV marg.). *How I have made sport* (RSV). God was

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not amusing himself, but there was divine irony in the fact that the antagonism of Pharaoh was simply leading to the greater manifestation of the glory of Jehovah. 4-6. That locusts were known and feared for their devastation only made this warning more fearful. Such locust plagues as the Egyptians suffered before would be nothing in comparison with this. 7. **Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined ?** (RSV) Only Pharaoh seemed unaware of the extent of the damage, or insensible to it.

## **Exodus 10:8-12**

*And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God: but who are they that shall go?*

**Who are they** (lit., *who and who* ). Who, exactly, shall go? 10. Pharaoh's answer to the demand that the whole nation depart was at first cynical: "May the Lord be with you if ever I let you go." He hoped, suggests the IB, "that the divine protection on the journey" might be "as non-existent as his permit to go." Then he accused them, "You have some evil purpose" (RSV). 11. Go then, ye men, for that is what you actually desire. If you are honest, you know that only men are required to sacrifice. **Driven out** . The prolonged interview concluded with this burst of Pharaoh's anger.

## **Exodus 10:13-20**

*And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.*

"The fact that the wind blew a day and a night before bringing the locusts, showed that they came from a great distance, and therefore proved to the Egyptians that the omnipotence of Jehovah reached far beyond the borders of Egypt and ruled over every land" (KD). 16. The shock of this visitation again brought Pharaoh to his knees,

confessing sin and begging for the removal of the plague. 17. **This death** . The locusts had all but completely destroyed what was left of the vegetation of Egypt.

## 10) The Ninth Plague-Darkness. 10:21-29.

The ninth plague followed the eight with no introduction, request, or warning.

### **Exodus 10:21-23**

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the*

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*land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt.*

**Darkness which may be felt** . Most scholars agree that the darkness was probably caused by the ( *hamsin* ), the fierce sandstorm so dreaded in the East. The hot dry wind, like the blast of a furnace, fills the air with sand and dust, so that the sun is blotted out. The heat, the dust, and the static electricity make conditions almost unbearable physically. Added to this is the effect on mind and spirit of the thick and oppressive darkness. This plague concluded the manifestation of God's wonders and was a forbidding prelude to the final act of judgment. 23. **Light in their dwellings** . Miraculous and instructive was the sharp demarcation between Israel and Egypt.

### **Exodus 10:24-29**

*And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.*

Pharaoh almost capitulated. **Only let your flocks ... be stayed** . Placed in deposit, as it were, as a guarantee of their return. 25. **Give us also sacrifices** . That is, you must give us the means of sacrificing, and therefore (v. 26) we must take all our cattle. 28. To let the whole nation go, with no assurance at all that they would return, was too much for Pharaoh. He terminated not only this interview but also all further interviews with Moses by a threat of death. 29. God had already informed Moses (v. Ex 11:1) that this was to be the last appeal to Pharaoh, and so Moses responded, **Thou hast spoken well** . Before the prophet departed, however, there was one last message he had to give (11:4-8).

### 11) Announcement of the Last Plague, 11:1-10.

The critical approach to Scripture has made a great deal of unnecessary confusion in determining the proper sequence here. It seems clear that Ex 11:1-3 refers to

instructions given previously to Moses, while 11:4-8 is the parting warning to Pharaoh, following 10:29.

## **Exodus 11:1-8**

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.*

Verse 1-8. **Trust you out** . The Egyptians would be so anxious for the Israelites to leave that, far from hindering them, they would urge them to go. 2. **Ask** . Cf. Ex 3:22. 4. **About midnight** . Not midnight of the day in which he was speaking, but midnight of the day appointed by God (cf. 12:6). 5. **All the firstborn** . "The first-born represented the whole race of which it was the strength and bloom" (KD). 7. Not even the barking of an unfriendly dog would hinder Israel's departure. 8. **Get thee out** . Moses' assurance was God's promise (v. 1).

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**Exodus 11:9-10**

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.*

**Pharaoh shall not hearken** . Had Pharaoh listened, even at this extremity, he would still have found a door of hope open; but he would not listen (cf. Matt 23:37).

*F. The Passover, and the Departure of Israel. 12:1-15:21.*

1) The Consecration of Israel. 12:1-28.

"The deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt was at hand; also their adoption as the nation of Jehovah (Ex 6:6-7). But for this a divine consecration was necessary that their outward severance from the land of Egypt might be accompanied by an inward severance from everything of an Egyptian or heathen source. This consecration was to be imparted by the Passover" (KD).

**Exodus 12:1-2**

*And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,*

Verse 1-2. **In the land of Egypt** . The ordinance first given in Egypt would be repeated at Sinai (Lev 23) and on the plains of Moab (Deut 16). 2. **This month**. The Hebrew name of the month is *Abib* , meaning "green ears." It corresponds to March-April of our calendar. During the Exile the name *Nisan* , meaning "beginning, opening," came to be used instead. **Beginning of months**. Israel's beginning as the people of Jehovah was to be marked thus on their calendar. The civil year began, as it still does, in the autumn, with the Feast of Trumpets (Lev 23:24; Num 29:1), now

called Rosh Hashanah, *Head of the Year* , or New Year. The religious or spiritual year was to begin with the month of Passover, the first month of Israel's new life as a redeemed people.

### **Exodus 12:3-5**

*Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house:*

**Lamb.** *A single head* , either lamb or goat (cf. v. 5). 4. This was to be a family observance, unless the family was

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too small. According to rabbinical exegesis, **too little** meant fewer than ten. (Targum Jonathan). **According to his eating.** They were to compute how much each would eat and thus determine whether to unite with other families. 5. **Of the first year.** Hebrew, ( *son of a year* ). Rabbis have interpreted this as meaning "as of the first year," i.e., from eight days old. Modern commentators generally take it as meaning a year old. **From the sheep, or from the goats.** Later custom restricted the Passover to lambs.

## Exodus 12:6-7

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

**The whole assembly of the congregation** , i.e., all at the same time. **In the evening.** Hebrew, ( *between the evenings* ). From very early days opinions have differed as to the exact time of sacrifice. Abn Ezra, the Samaritans, and the Karaites construed it as the time between sunset and complete darkness. The Pharisees held to the traditional explanation that it was from the beginning of lengthening shadows to sunset, approximately 3:00 to 5:00 P.M., and with this the Talmud agrees (Pesahim 61a). This was the usual practice, according to Josephus ( *Wars of the Jews* , VI. 9,3). Deut 16:6 simply says, "at sunset." 7. The blood was to be sprinkled "on side and lintel, where it might be looked to, not on the threshold to be trodden underfoot" (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown). By this act both the house and those dwelling in it were to be expiated (by the use of blood and hyssop; cf. Lev 14:4-7; Num 19:1ff.) and consecrated unto God.

## Exodus 12:8-10

*And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.*

**Roast.** The whole animal was to be spitted and roasted over a fire. "Through the unity and integrity of the lamb given them to eat, the participants were to be joined into an undivided unity and fellowship with the Lord who provided them with the meal" (KD). **Unleavened bread** . A memorial of the haste with which they were to leave (v. 34), but also a symbol of their purification and freedom from the world's leaven. **Bitter herbs** . The Mishnah (Pesahim Ex 2:6) mentions lettuce, endive, chicory, snakeroot, peppermint, and dandelion as satisfactory for bitter herbs. This was "to call to mind the bitterness of life experienced by Israel in Egypt, and this bitterness was to be overpowered by the sweet flesh of the lamb" (KD). 9. **Sodden** . *Boiled* (ASV, RSV). **With the purtenance** . The inner parts.

## **Exodus 12:11-14**

*And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and*

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*ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's passover.*

**In haste** . In trepidation, mingled hurry and alarm. **Loins girded** . Their long flowing garments were to be bound up so as not to impede progress. **The Lord's passover** . A passover (Heb. ( *pesah* ), LXX ( *pascha* ), and thus English "paschal") to Jehovah; appointed by and kept for him. The etymology of the word is uncertain, but the meaning is made plain by Ex 12:13. God would "leap over," in his judgment, those who had evidenced their faith in him and taken refuge under the blood. 12. **Againt all the gods** . The Egyptian gods were to be exposed as impotent to defend, and worthless. Moreover, the gods were worshiped in the forms of many of the animals and in the person of Pharaoh himself, and in these representatives the gods themselves were to be smitten.

## **Exodus 12:15-20**

*Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.*

Regulations for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Although these instructions may have been given after the Exodus (cf. v. 17, "have I brought"), the close connection both in meaning and in time between this feast and the Passover explains the inclusion of the regulations here. The unleavened cakes were symbolical of the new life as cleansed from the leaven of a sinful nature.... For this reason the Israelites were to put away all the leaven of the

Egyptian nature, the leaven of malice and wickedness, and by eating pure and holy bread and meeting for the worship of God to show that they were walking in newness of life.... To eat leavened bread at this feast would have been a denial of the divine act by which Israel was introduced into the new life of fellowship with Jehovah" (KD).

Verse 15-17. **First day** . Fifteenth day of Abib. **Soul shall be cut off** , i.e., outlawed or exiled from the community. 16. **Convocation**. *Assembly* (RSV); ( *sacred gathering* ) (Moffatt). Necessary work might be done; the day was not as strictly kept as the Sabbath. 17. **Armies**. Better, ( *hosts* ) (ASV).

Verse 18-20. **On the fourteenth**. Unleavened bread was to be eaten on Passover on the fourteenth; the Feast of Unleavened Bread started on the fifteenth. 19. **Stranger**. *Sojourner* (ASV, RSV); ( *resident alien* ) (Moffatt). One may dwell in the midst of God's people all of one's life and never be an integral part of the company (cf. v. 43).

## Exodus 12:21-28

*Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover.*

Instructions given the elders. The regulations for the Passover, given to Moses by God, were passed on to the representatives of the people. 21. **Draw out** , i.e., out of the folds. 22. **Hyssop** . Though the identity of this plant is

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disputed, the general opinion is that it was a species of origanum, either majoram or wild thyme. **Bason** . The vessel in which the blood was caught when the animal was slain. Since the leafy sprig of hyssop was used to sprinkle the blood of a sacrifice for purification, it came to be used figuratively for the purifying itself (cf. Ps 51:7).

23. **The destroyer** . *Destroying angel* (Moffatt). 28. By this act of obedience and faith, the people of Israel made it manifest that they had put their trust in Jehovah; and thus the act became their redemption.

## 2) The Tenth Plague-God's Judgment on Egypt. 12:29-36.

Was this plague, like the others, a heightened and supernaturally directed natural epidemic, or was it more? The repeated stress on its being the work of the Lord (Ex 12:12-13,23,27,29) seems to indicate that it was a direct act of God himself.

### **Exodus 12:29-33**

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

**The firstborn** . It is usually agreed that this means the eldest son who was not yet himself a father. Otherwise, the first-born of each generation would have died, including, probably, Pharaoh himself. 31. **He called for Moses** . Pharaoh in terror and grief ignored his own threat (Ex 10:28). 32. The capitulation was complete. **Bless me** . As you leave, pray for me and this stricken people.

### **Exodus 12:34-36**

*And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs*

*being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.*

**Before it was leavened** . This gives us the natural occasion for the spiritually significant Feast of Unleavened Bread. **Kneadingtroughs** . Literally, ( *boards* ), i.e., shallow wooden bowls. In this case each family carried its kneading bowl bound up in the ( *simla* ), a large square outer garment, often used as a bag for carrying (cf. Ruth 3:15). 36. **Lent unto them** . The Hebrew word for **lent** means "granted, let them have." It does not mean "lend" in the usual sense any more than the Hebrew word in Ex 12:35 means to "borrow" (cf. 3:22; 11:2).

3) The Exodus from Egypt, 12:37-15:21.

a) The Departure. 12:37-42.

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## a) The Departure. 12:37-42.

The exact line of march for the departure from Egypt is still in dispute, but most authorities agree on the identifications made in connection with the following verses. Having assembled the people at Succoth, Moses and Aaron had now to lead them past the barrier of marshes, lakes, and sea that is now the site of the Suez Canal. The way was further determined by the fact that God was to deliver one final blow to Egyptian pride and might.

**Exodus 12:37-39**

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

**Succoth** . This is identified as Tell el-Maskhutah, ten miles east of Pithom. This means that after Moses left Pharaoh at Rameses, he came south to the very center of Goshen, there to assemble Israel for the march. **Six hundred thousand** . How to determine the exact number of those involved in the Exodus has long been a problem. It has been pointed out, for instance, that a host of 600,000 men could have overwhelmed Pharaoh's far smaller army by sheer numbers. The question is not whether God could have multiplied the seventy of Jacob's day to over two million, but whether he did. One solution is that the word ( *'elep* ), translated **thousand** , could be translated *clan* or *family* , as it is elsewhere (e.g., Judg 6:15). In that case the total number might well be fifty or sixty thousand individuals. Of one thing we can be sure: God redeemed a great host out of Egypt, miraculously cared for them through forty years in the wilderness, and brought them into the Promised Land. That we do not know the exact number of those involved does not diminish the miracle.

38. **Mixed multitude** . Egyptians and probably other nationalities who had married Hebrews, were seeking escape from bondage or were persuaded that there was some advantage to be gained by being on the side of so powerful a deity as Jehovah.

**Exodus 12:40-42**

*Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.*

**Four hundred and thirty years** . Gen 15:13 and Acts 7:6 give the round number, four hundred. Since we do not know the exact date of the entrance of Israel into Egypt, we can only conjecture the date of departure, but a date near 1300 BC seems most reasonable (cf. Introd.). Some conclude that the date was about 1440 on the basis of 1 Kings 6:1. 41. **Selfsame day** . Cf. Ex 12:17. This was The Day to Israel for generations to come, until a greater Day or a greater Salvation should come. 42. **A night to be much observed unto the Lord** . Various translations of this phrase have been offered: *a preservation night of the Lord to bring them out* (KD); *a night of watching was it for Jehovah to bring them out* (Cambridge Bible); *this same night is a night of watching kept to the Lord by all the people of Israel throughout their generations* (RSV). Perhaps both the ideas expressed in the several translations are implied: the night on which Jehovah watched over his own was to be a watch night for the people of Israel throughout their generations, as a memorial.

## b) Further Regulations for Passover. 12:43-51.

Such a passage as this is held by critics to be quite out of place here, yet, in fact, it seems most appropriate. It

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Such a passage as this is held by critics to be quite out of place here, yet, in fact, it seems most appropriate. It defined, at the very point of action, the exacting requirements that would make the ordinance spiritually significant as well as true to fact in the generations to come.

## **Exodus 12:43-51**

*And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof:*

**Stranger.... foreigner ... hired servant** . Only one who was identified with the people of God could have part in this ordinance. This was designed to repel not the foreigner but the unbeliever. Should the alien desire to identify himself in faith with Israel, he was as welcome as one "born in the land" (v. 48). 46. "In this meal Israel was to preserve and celebrate its unity and fellowship with the Lord" (KD). For this reason the ceremonial unity was not to be broken either by the inclusion of outsiders or by the dividing up of the meal itself. So also the unity of Christ is to be jealously guarded (cf. 1 Cor 1-3). 49. **One law** . Neither natural descent nor association was sufficient. **No uncircumcised person shall eat of it** (v. 48).

c) Sanctification of the First-born. 13:1-16.

## **Exodus 13:1**

*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

"If the Israelites completed their communion with Jehovah in the Passover, and celebrated the commencement of their divine standing in the feast of unleavened bread, they gave uninterrupted effect to their divine sonship in the sanctification of

the firstborn" (KD). As Egypt was smitten by God in the persons of its first-born, so Israel was consecrated to God in its first-born.

## **Exodus 13:2**

*Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.*

**Whatsoever openeth** , i.e., first opens.

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## Exodus 13:3-10

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

The law already given Moses (Ex 12:15-20) was now proclaimed to the people. 7. **Thy quarters. Borders** (ASV). 8. Dedication of the first-born was to be explained generation by generation, as was the Passover (12:26-27). 9. **It shall be for a sign** . As other races wore signs, even cuttings and tattoos, to remind them of their god, so this feast was to bring before Israel the remembrance of the redemption of Jehovah. "It was not by mnemonic slips upon the hand and forehead that a law was so placed in the mouth as to be talked of continually, but by the reception of it into the heart and its continued fulfillment" (KD).

## Exodus 13:11-15

*And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee,*

The law of the first-born (cf. Ex 22:29; Deut 15:21-22). 12. **Thou shalt set apart** (lit., *cause to pass over* unto the Lord). This is not the usual word for to **set apart** , but the word used to describe the heathen practice of sacrificing children to their gods (2 Kings 16:3; Ezek 20:31). It may be that the Lord purposely used this word to mark the distinction between this dedication and that of the heathen. 13. The ass was not a sacrificial animal, and so a lamb was to be substituted for it. The first-born of men were to be redeemed by silver, as the people were told later (Num 3:47; 18:16). The obligation for service having been transferred to the Levites as representatives, the people were asked only to acknowledge God's claim upon them. 15. In this way all that Israel was and all she possessed were continually to be presented to the Lord who

had redeemed her.

## **Exodus 13:16-17**

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

**Frontlets** . Hebrew ( *totapot* ), the NT "phylacteries." Later Jews literally carried out this exhortation by tying on their foreheads and arms bands to which were attached small leather boxes containing Scripture verses written on parchment. It was God's purpose that the feast and the consecration, not little boxes, should serve as reminders for hand and heart.

d) Passage Through the Red Sea. 13:17-14:31.

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The description of the journey, started in Ex 12:37, is now continued. There was a good road directly to Palestine, going up the seacoast past Gaza, but this would have taken them past Egyptian fortresses at intervals, and would have required them to do battle, for which they were unprepared both physically and psychologically. God in wise kindness led them up another way.

## **Exodus 13:18-22**

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

**Wilderness of the Red sea** . Hebrew, *Sea of Suph, Reed Sea* . The mistaken translation, **Red sea** , has given a totally erroneous view of the route of Israel. This is a quite different term from that which designates what we call the Red Sea or the Gulf of Suez. The Reed or Marsh Sea is mentioned in Egyptian writings of the thirteenth century B.C. as being near Rameses. Either Lake Timsah or the southern extension of the present Lake Menzaleh fits the description. These lakes are part of the chain once uniting the Gulf of Suez with the Mediterranean, and are now a part of the Canal. Lake Timsah is nearer Succoth. **Harnessed** . The precise meaning is uncertain. The ASV reads *armed* , and the RSV, *equipped for battle* . 19. The faith of Joseph was justified (Gen 50:25). 20. **Etham** . The location is unknown. 21,22. These were not two pillars but one, of cloud by day and of fire by night. The Scripture discountenances attempts to explain these guides by natural means (cf. *Cambridge Bible* ). The pillar was a real sign of the real presence of Jehovah with his people.

## **Exodus 14:1-31**

*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

The passage through the Red Sea. "The fact of the passage of the Red Sea can be

questioned only by an extreme and baseless scepticism" ( *Cambridge Bible* ).

Verse 2-4. **Turn** . *Turn back* (ASV); *wheel around* (Moffatt). **Pi-hahiroth** and **Migdol** are mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions but are not yet identified with certainty. **Baal-zephon** . A Phoenician letter mentions "Baal-zephon and all the gods of Tahpanhes." Tahpanhes is Daphne, the modern Tel Dafneh, located near the southern extremity of lake Menzaleh, half way between Succoth and Rameses. This explains the words "turn back." Instead of going directly east from Succoth, the Hebrews had turned north again and were now encamped by the marshy lake. This apparent uncertainty in their line of march must have encouraged Pharaoh to believe that the Israelites could find no way across the water barrier and were thus trapped, "wandering aimlessly" (American Trans.). 4. **Honoured upon Pharaoh...that the Egyptians may know** . The fact that there was one final lesson to be given Egypt explains why God led in this seemingly aimless fashion.

Verse 5-11. **Whatever have we done** (Moffatt). The departure of Israel was described to Pharaoh as a flight, not a pilgrimage to a place of sacrifice. 7. **Captains** . The exact meaning is unknown; some kind of superior

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officer. 8. **With an high hand** . "The high hand of Jehovah with the might which it displayed" (KD). 9. **Horsemen** . This is called anachronistic by some, as the Egyptians had no cavalry this early; but the word can just as well mean horsemen in chariots. This possibility is admitted in connection with Ex 15:1 by those who deny it here (cf. *Cambridge Bible* ).

Verse 12-20. **Let us alone** . Humanly speaking, they were faced with certain destruction. How characteristic of human nature is the cry, "Let us alone." We would rather lie supine in sinful bondage than, with the courage of faith, make the effort to follow God into newness of life. 13. **Stand still** . Better, *stand firm* (cf. 1 Cor 15:58 - "Be ye steadfast"). 14. You have only to stand still (cf. Isa 30:15; Ps 46:10). 15. Not a reproof but an admonition to act, "Go forward!" 19,20. Miraculously protected in the rear from the Egyptians by a thick cloud, they were at the same time given a floodlight from the Lord so that they might cross over.

Verse 21-31. The natural force used by God to perform this miracle was the east wind, whether in connection with a strong ebb tide, as some suppose, or not. It is sufficient for us to know that God, at precisely the right moment, caused the ford to be laid bare so that his people might cross; and at exactly the right time brought the waters back, so that the enemy was destroyed. 24. **Troubled** . *Threw them into a panic* (Moffatt). **Morning watch** , between 2:00 and 6:00 A.M. 25. **Took off their chariot wheels** . *Clogging, binding* (RSV, following LXX, Syriac, and Samaritan versions, rather than the Hebrew). The chariot wheels sank into the sand, which became more marshy by the moment. 27,28. The waters that had threatened the Israelites in their passage, and, except for God's restraining hand, would have destroyed them, now overwhelmed the Egyptians. "From this manifestation of Jehovah's omnipotence, the Israelites were to discern not only the merciful Deliverer but also the holy Judge of the ungodly, that they might grow in the fear of God as well as in the faith which they had already shown" (KD). 31. **Believed in** . More than just ( *believe* ) (AV), it implies "laying firm hold morally on a person or thing" ( *Cambridge Bible* ).

## e) The Song of Moses. 15:1-21.

**Exodus 15:1-12**

*Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the*

*LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*

Although critics recognize this hymn of praise as "one of the finest products of Hebrew poetry" ( *Cambridge Bible* ), they usually relegate it to the time of the monarchy. They assume that such great poetry could not have been written as early as Moses! Scripture links this triumphal paean with the song of a greater redemption, as on the shores of the eternal sea, at the final and glorious triumph over all enemies, the redeemed sing "the song of Moses ... and the song of the Lamb" (Rev 15:3).

Verse 1-12. **The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.** "Thus briefly but completely is the ruin of the Pharaoh's army described" ( *Cambridge Bible* ). 2. **I will prepare him an habitation.** The AV follows the Targum. The clause is better rendered *I will praise* (ASV, RSV) or *thank him* . 3. **Jehovah is his name.** A taunt to Pharaoh, who had asked, "Who is Jehovah?" 7. **Hast overthrown.** The Hebrew is more forceful - "to break in pieces and throw in ruins upon the earth" ( *Cambridge Bible* ). 9. **The enemy said, I will.** How often the proud purpose of man is thwarted by the power of God (cf. Isa 14:13-14). **Destroy.** Literally, ( *disposses, root*

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*out* ). 10. "One breath of God was sufficient to sink the proud foe in the waves of the sea" (KD; cf. Ps 46:6). 11. **Fearful in praises.** *Terrible in glorious deeds* (RSV); *awe-inspiring in renown* (American).

### **Exodus 15:13-19**

*Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.*

**Holy habitation.** As a shepherd leads his flock to the fold, so God was leading Israel to His habitation, the Promised Land. 14. **Palestina.** Hebrew, *Philistia* . Ironically, the name of the Holy Land most frequently used by us is taken from the name of the bitter enemies of Israel and God. 16. **Fear and dread.** Until forty years had passed and Israel had entered the land, the fear of the Lord was upon the Canaanites (cf. Josh 5:1; 2:9-10). 17. **The Sanctuary ... which thy hands have established.** This is the goal, not yet the accomplished fact.

### **Exodus 15:20-21**

*And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.*

Although Miriam was a sister to both, she is ranked with Aaron, not with Moses. **Timbrel.** A tambourine. Dancing was, and still is in the East, the language of religion. 21. **Answered.** They sang antiphonally, perhaps the verses of the song of Moses (vv. 1-19).

*G. Israel in the Wilderness. 15:22-18:27.*

Released from the bondage of Egypt, Israel was now led by the Lord to Mount Sinai. At this stage God's people were a disorganized, quarrelsome, faithless multitude. They had to be molded into a nation, capable of serving him. To this end, everything, including the march to Sinai, was to contribute to their training. The traditional line of march, down the western edge of the peninsula, is still the one most widely accepted by Bible scholars, and the reasonable one. Though the exact places mentioned in Scripture cannot be identified with certainty, the general locations are fairly well established. (For various other routes proposed, cf. Rand McNally *Bible Atlas* ).

## **Exodus 15:22-24**

*So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.*

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**Wilderness of Shur.** East of the Suez, in the northwest section of the peninsula. **Shur** means ( *wall* ) in Hebrew. In Num 33:8 the area is called "the wilderness of Etham," which is the same name in Egyptian. Possibly it was named for the line of fortifications erected there. **Three days.** In three days the water they carried with them would have been exhausted, even though they had probably gone no more than fifteen miles. 23. **Marah.** This is reasonably identified with Ain Hawarah, still a small spring of brackish, unpalatable water. 24. **Murmured.** This was the almost automatic reaction of Israel, as it has been the reaction of multitudes of God's people since, to any and every difficulty.

### **Exodus 15:25-27**

*And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,*

The search for a natural explanation of this miracle, for some sort of tree that makes bad water good, is quite useless. By this test of Jehovah and proof of his care and power, an ordinance was established for all time-that for the obedient, God would prove to be Jehovah *Rop'eka* , "Jehovah that healeth thee." 27. **Elim.** About six miles from Ain Hawarah is a beautiful large oasis with plentiful water, Wadi Gharandel, which corresponds to the description of Elim.

### **Exodus 16:1-6**

*And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt.*

**Wilderness of Sin** . According to Num 33:10-12, the people of Israel traveled along

the seashore, possibly by the regular route to the Sinai mines. They turned in to the Wilderness of Sin at Dophkah. If Dophkah can be identified with Serabit el-Khadem, then the Wilderness of Sin is the plain along the edge of the plateau, called Debbet er-Ramleh. The geographical directions are too slight to give much certainty. 2. The circumstances and God's provision again combined to prove the faith and obedience of Israel.

## **Exodus 16:7-13**

*And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us?*

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**The glory of the Lord.** The eye of faith sees the glory of the Lord in the bread and flesh that he provides. **What are we.** *We do not count; why grumble against us ?* (Moffatt) 10. **Behold, the glory.** The unmistakable evidence of God's presence in the fiery pillar authenticated the words of Moses and prepared the people for the more veiled glory of the miracle to come.

### **Exodus 16:14-30**

*And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.*

**Small round thing.** *Fine flake-like thing* (RSV). 15. **It is manna.** From ( *manhu'* ), "What is it?" The name **manna** may have arisen from the question, or the similarity in sound may have related the two words. 16. **Omer.** About two quarts. 23. **Seethe.** Boil. **Sabbath.** This indicates that although the Sabbath was already known, it was not observed in any special way.

### **Exodus 16:31-32**

*And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.*

**Manna.** There is a species of tamarisk that grows in the Peninsula from which there exudes, perhaps from the puncture of an insect, during summer nights, a liquid which forms small white grains. The Arabs gather this, boil it down, and use it like honey. It has a sweet, aromatic taste. It will keep a long time in a cool place but melts in the sun; it cannot be ground or made into cakes. This resembles but also distinctly differs from the manna of the Bible. The Scripture, not only in its description of the manna, but in its record of marvelous provision for forty years (v. 35) makes it clear that the manna was not a natural phenomenon but a special provision of the hand of the Lord.

**Coriander.** A small, grayish-white seed, with a pleasant spicy flavor, used widely as a spice for cooking.

## **Exodus 16:33-36**

*And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.*

**Before the Lord ... before the Testimony.** That is, before the tables of the Law in the ark. This direction must have been given later, perhaps as the time for the end of the manna drew near. 35. This need not be taken as

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meaning that the Israelites ate nothing but manna for forty years. During the stay at Sinai, they may very well have sowed and harvested crops, and they could also have obtained food from time to time from traders.

## **Exodus 17:1-7**

*And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink.*

Water from the rock at Rephidim. From the plateau of the Wilderness of Sin, a series of valleys leads directly to Mount Sinai. One of these, the Wadi Refayid, some claim is the valley of Rephidim.

Verse 2-5. **Did chide.** *Found fault* (RSV). **Tempt.** Subject to trial. It was unbelief that led them to question the faithfulness of God (v. 7).

Verse 6-7. **Horeb** is used in Scripture as a term interchangeable with Sinai. It may have a wider reference, to the range of which Sinai is one peak. At Rephidim, then, Israel was close to her immediate journey's end. **Smite the rock.** A natural explanation of this miracle has been offered in that certain rock formations in this area are simply a thin limestone crust which a blow from a rod would break and permit water to come out. The Apostle Paul tells us that "the Rock was Christ" (1 Cor 10:4). Whatever means God may have used, the important fact is that it was made manifest to the Israelites that their help came from the Lord. 7. **Massah.** *Proving* (AV, ( *tempted* ), from the verb used in Ex 17:2. **Meribah.** *Strife* , translated "chide" in verse 2.

## **Exodus 17:8-10**

***Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.***

Amalek was a tribe, or group of fierce, rapacious nomads, much like the Bedouins of today. Though descended from Esau (Gen 36:12), they were not a part of the nation of Edom. According to Deut 25:18, they had attacked Israel from the rear, making a cowardly assault upon the "faint and weary" stragglers. This explains the severe judgment of Ex 17:14. 9. This is the first appearance of Joshua, destined to be Moses' great successor. 10. **Hur.** Jewish tradition makes him Miriam's husband (Jos *Antiq* . III. 2,4).

**Exodus 17:11-14**

***And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.***

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Commentators, ancient and modern, almost unanimously consider this act of Moses an act of prayer. As such, it expressed an attitude of dependence upon God that determined the outcome of the battle, and it served to demonstrate the reality of this dependence to all the people. "The battle which Israel fought with this foe possessed a typical significance in relation to all the future history of Israel. It (Israel) could not conquer by the sword alone, but could only gain the victory by the power of God, coming down from on high and obtained through prayer" (KD). 13. **Discomfited.** *Mowed down* (RSV); disabled, prostrated.

## Exodus 17:15-16

*And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi:*

**Jehovah-nissi.** *Jehovah my banner* . 16. **The Lord hath sworn.** Literally, *a hand upon, or to, the throne of Jehovah* . Some authorities read ( *nes* ), "banner," instead of ( *kes* ), "throne," and translate, *a hand upon the banner of the Lord* (RSV); or, *We pledge loyalty to the Eternal's banner* (Moffatt). The AV, ASV rendering hardly suits the context. This should be an oath sworn by Moses, and, as such, an admonition to the people of Israel to pledge themselves to fulfill God's purpose (v. 14).

## Exodus 18:1-6

*When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father in law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt;*

The visit of Jethro and the appointment of judges. 2. **After he had sent her back.** Cf. Ex 4:24-26. 3. Cf. 2:22. 5. **Mount of God.** The sequence of this passage has been questioned because it is not until chapter 19 that Israel is said to have arrived at Sinai. However, since even at Rephidim they could have been said to be at the mountain of

God - Horeb (17:6), there seems to be no real problem in the order of the narrative here.

## **Exodus 18:7-14**

*And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent.*

**Did obeisance.** *Bowed down* (Moffatt). The usual Eastern etiquette. 11. Jethro, in KD is called "the first fruits of the heathen who would hereafter seek the living God." This testimony of Jethro and the subsequent act of worship seem to indicate a conversion experience, and invalidate the theory that it was from Jethro and the Midianites that Moses learned of Jehovah.

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## Exodus 18:15-23

*And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to inquire of God:*

**Inquire of God.** The decisions of Moses and the ordinances upon which they were based came ultimately from Jehovah. 18. **Wear yourselves out** (RSV). 21. **Rulers of thousands.** It is best to take this as meaning "thousands" of families rather than individuals, thus following the natural tribal divisions. Driver finds this plan impractical because a man would be subject to four different judges ( *Cambridge Bible* ). But it is assumed that these different categories would function as higher and lower courts. The majority of problems would be solved, as in our own system, by the lowest court, "the rulers of tens."

## Exodus 18:24-27

*So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said.*

**Moses hearkened.** Moses has been criticized for this act. However, Jethro conditioned his advice with, "and God command thee so"; and it may be assumed that Moses did inquire of the Lord. Furthermore, there is no record of God's having rebuked Moses. In Deut 1:15 Moses explains how the judges were chosen from leaders, wise and well known, of the various tribes.

## II. Israel at Sinai. 19:1-40:38.

The year of sojourn at Sinai accomplished two things: (1) Israel was given the Law of God and instructed in God's ways; and (2) the multitude that had escaped from Egypt was unified into the beginnings of a nation. This period is of the utmost importance for understanding the will and purpose of God as it is revealed in the rest of the OT.

This is the heart of what is so frequently referred to throughout Scripture as "the Law." The record of the sojourn at Sinai and the Law given there occupies not only the remainder of Exodus but also the book of Leviticus and the first chapters of Numbers.

The Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis, promulgated in the nineteenth century, that denied even the existence of a Tabernacle, made of these laws simply the reflection of the customs of later centuries. The past half century has seen a reversal of this thinking, so that now practically all scholars are willing to admit that the framework and core of the Law are Mosaic. Critics still insist that the Law, as we now have it, has been modified from the original and edited considerably by later ages. While it is not impossible that later judgements and ordinances are included, those who hold the Law to be a revelation from God accept it in its present form as substantially that which Moses received. Even the critics who theoretically deny this, find it difficult to decide just which of the ordinances are the later ones.

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## *A. Establishment of the Covenant at Sinai. 19:1-24:11.*

The history of the arrival at Sinai and God's presentation of his covenant is followed by the so-called Book of the Covenant (chs. 20-23), in which the basic code is set forth. Then follows the account of the ratification of the covenant by sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood.

### 1) Arrival at Sinai and Preparation for the Covenant. 19:1-25.

#### **Exodus 19:1-2**

*In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.*

Verse 1-2. **The same day.** Jewish tradition holds that this was the day of Pentecost, and that the purpose of the Feast of Pentecost was to celebrate the giving of the Law. However, the expression is too general to indicate any particular day. **Wilderness of Sinai.** The southern range of mountains, situated in the wedge of the triangular peninsula, has three summits. The Arabs call the central summit Jebel Musa, the one to the south, Jebel Hum, and the third, Jebel Serbol. Each of these mounts has been claimed as the Sinai of Scripture, but since the fourth century A.D., at least, Jebel Musa has been most widely and consistently held. The ( *desert* ) or **wilderness of Sinai** must be a plain near the mountain (v. 2) large enough for Israel to encamp on it. Such a place has been found in er-Raha, to the north of Jebel Musa, or in Wadi es-Sebayeh, to the east. The former is about four hundred acres in extent, quite ample for any number of Hebrews. From er-Raha the Wadi ed-Deir, "Convent Valley," leads to a saddle between Jebel Musa and Jebel ed-Deir, where the famous monastery of St. Catherine is located. The monastery was built by Justinian in 527 AD on a site already occupied by a small church identifying the spot where it was believed God had appeared to Moses in the burning bush. The Wadi es-Sebayeh is a long narrow

valley, not so commodious as er-Raha, but with easier access to the mountain. It is difficult, if not impossible, to decide which of these peaks and valleys best fits the description given in Scripture.

### **Exodus 19:3-4**

*And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;*

**House of Jacob.** The name of Jacob recalls the depths from which God had raised them. 4. **On eagles' wings.**

An allusion to the griffin-vulture, a large majestic bird abundant in Palestine.

### **Exodus 19:5-7**

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*Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:*

The covenant was based upon the accomplished fact of the redemption from Egypt, a redemption which Israel had received by faith. "The theocracy established by the conclusion of the covenant was only the means adopted by Jehovah for making His chosen people a royal body of priests; and the maintenance of the covenant was the indispensable subjective condition upon which their attainment of this divinely appointed destiny and glory depended" (KD). We are also to remember that the Law did not disannul the covenant with Abraham (Gal 3:17). "The covenant of law raised itself on the ground of the previous covenant of grace and sought to carry this out to its legitimate consequence and proper fruits" (Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture*, II, 143). **Peculiar treasure.** *My own prized possession* (Moffatt). 6.

**Priests ... holy nation.** "As the priest is a mediator between God and man, so Israel is called to be the vehicle of the knowledge and salvation of God to the nations of the earth.... He chose Israel as His possession, to make it a holy nation, if it hearkened to His voice and kept His covenant" (KD).

## **Exodus 19:8-15**

*And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.*

**All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.** The people of Israel unquestionably did not realize all the implications of their vow. Neither does a Christian understand all that is entailed when he presents himself "a living sacrifice" unto God. In both cases there is a response by faith to the express will of God the Redeemer. 9. **Believe thee for ever.** The appearance of the Lord would impress the people and at the same time undergird the authority of Moses. 13. **Touch it.** Rather, ( *touch him* ); a transgressor was not to be followed onto the mountain, but shot or stoned from a distance.

**Trumpet.** Rather, ( *ram's horn* ) (Moffatt); this is not the same word as is used in verses 16,19.

## **Exodus 19:16-20**

*And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.*

The vain attempt to determine what kind of phenomenon is described here - earthquake, volcano, or storm - misses the point that whatever these were, they were simply a manifestation of the presence of the Lord. This was not a natural disturbance that convinced a superstitious people that God was near; it was God himself making his presence known.

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## Exodus 19:21-25

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.*

**Go down, charge.** This is not a confusion of two accounts, but a re-emphasis of the command already given in Ex 19:12. 22. **Priests.** Not the Levitical priests, who were not yet appointed, but those who had hitherto discharged the duties of the priestly office according to natural right and custom" (KD).

## 2) The Ten Commandments. 20:1-20.

### Exodus 20:1

*And God spake all these words, saying,*

The Law was not given as a means of salvation. It was given to a people already saved (Ex 19:4; 20:2) in order to instruct them in the will of the Lord so that they might fulfill God's purpose for them as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (19:6). The revelation was given "not to give but to guide life" (P. Fairbairn, *The Revelation of Law in Scripture* , p. 274).

The division of the Law into Moral, Social or Civil, and Ceremonial or Religious Laws, while convenient, is misleading. The Law is one, and the whole Law is spiritual, whether dealing with crops or criminals or worship. Calvin's commentary treats all subsequent laws under one or the other of the Ten Commandments. This is eminently justifiable and an excellent illustration of the unity and spirit of the Law. "What is called the ceremonial law, therefore, was in its more immediate and primary

aspect an exhibition by means of symbolic rites and institutions of the righteousness enjoined in the Decalogue, and a discipline through which the heart might be wrought into some conformation to the righteousness itself" (Fairbairn, *Typology* , II,157).

The Decalogue, or *Ten Words* (Deut 4:13) was given directly to all Israel by an audible and terrible voice, the voice of Jehovah, sounding like a trumpet over the multitude (Ex 19:16; 20:18). Overwhelmed by the experience, the people begged that God would speak no more directly, but through Moses. The rest of the Law was then given to Moses as a mediator, but the heart of the Law had already been delivered. The Commandments are repeated, with slight but immaterial variations in Deut 5:6-18. This provides critics with materials for an argument as to the relative age and authenticity of the two records. An attempt has also been made to find a "ritual decalogue" in Ex 34, but it has not been widely accepted. Although some deny that Moses had anything to do with the Commandments or that they were known to David, Elijah, or even Jeremiah, most modern scholars have come to accept the Biblical statement and believe that the Commandments go back to the days of Moses.

There are different ways of dividing the Commandments. The Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches follow Augustine in making verses 2-6 the first commandment, and then dividing verse 17, on covetousness, into two. Modern Judaism makes verse 2 the first commandment and verses 3-6 the second. The earliest division, which can be traced back at least as far as Josephus, in the first century A.D., takes Ex 20:3 as the first command and

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20:4-6 as the second. This division was supported unanimously by the early church, and is held today by the Eastern Orthodox and most Protestant churches.

## **Exodus 20:2**

*I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

It is important to notice that the basis of God's commandments and the ground of the people's obligation was the fact that Jehovah was their Lord and God who had redeemed them. These injunctions are given to a saved people to teach them how to walk in God's way, but we observe that "nearly all the commandments are couched in the negative form of prohibition, because they presuppose the existence of sin and evil desires in the human heart" (KD).

## **Exodus 20:3-7**

*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

The First Commandment. This is more than just a proclamation of monotheism. It prohibits worshiping or honoring anything before God, in thought or word or deed, "that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col 1:18). 4-6. The Second Commandment. This prohibits the creation and use of graven images as objects of worship. But more essentially, it is a reminder that God is a Spirit, not to be conceived of as made in man's image or in that of any other created being. **Visiting the iniquity** (v. 5). The results of sin are seen to affect three or four generations, but God's mercy extends unto thousands. "He does not say He will be faithful or just toward the keepers of His law, but merciful" (Calvin). **Them that love me** (v. 6). "The fountain and origin of true righteousness is expressed, for the external observation of the law would be of no avail unless it flowed from hence" (Calvin). 7.

The Third Commandment. This prohibits the use of God's name "in the service of unbelief and lying" (KD). To substantiate our falsehood by an appeal to God will bring certain judgment. Here also may be found force for the injunction to Christians to "walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye were called" (Eph 4:1), i.e., bear not the name of Christ in vain.

"The first commandment then guards the unity of God, the second His spirituality, and the third His deity or essence. In the first we are forbidden to make God one of many when He is the only One; in the second to liken Him to a corruptible image when He is the incorruptible Spirit; in the third to identify Him in any way with the creature when He is the Creator" (James Murphy, *Commentary on Exodus, in loc .*).

## **Exodus 20:8-11**

*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

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The Fourth Commandment. The word **sabbath** means, not rest or relaxation, but cessation from labor. The reason for the Sabbath is given objectively here as found in the fact that God ceased from the work of creation on the seventh day. Subjectively, in Deut 5:14-15, there is a reason given in the fact that men need rest. Also the Israelites were reminded thereby that God had redeemed them from the bondage of Egypt to enjoy his rest. The keeping of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath is not abrogated in the NT, but the Sabbath of the New Creation is most naturally to be celebrated on that day when Christ, having ceased from his finished work, rose from the dead. The apostolic church celebrated both the first and the seventh days, but they soon discontinued the old Hebrew observance.

### **Exodus 20:12**

*Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*

The Fifth Commandment. This command marks a division between the commandments that deal with man's relation to God and those that relate to his fellow man. A man is obligated to honor his parents as he does God, and to assume responsibility for them as he does for his fellow men. **That thy days may be long** . This may be understood as referring both to Israel's sojourn in the land of promise, and also to the life of the individual. Not only in Israel, but in all nations and individual lives, the destruction of the home marks the beginning of the end.

### **Exodus 20:13**

*Thou shalt not kill.*

The Sixth Commandment. The sanctity of human life is upheld, and murder, for any reason, is forbidden. But this command is wrongly quoted in opposition to capital

punishment administered by the state. The judicial taking of life in punishment for crime is authorized in Ex 21, as well as in Rom 13. On the other hand, it is seldom stressed that this command is applicable to whatever would degrade man and deprive him of the full and rich life it is God's will that he should enjoy.

## **Exodus 20:14-26**

*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

The Seventh Commandment. While this is directed specifically to maintain the purity and sanctity of marriage, it is also applied by Jesus to all sexual immorality of thought as well as deed (Matt 5:27-28). 15. The Eighth Commandment. The rights of private property are to be respected. 16. The Ninth Commandment. "Not only is

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lying prohibited, but false and unfounded evidence in general" (KD). 17. The Tenth Commandment. Covetousness is "the inordinate desire of unpossessed good" (G. A. Chadwick, *Exodus in Expositor's Bible* ). "The most inward of all the commandments, forbidding not an external act, but a hidden mental state, a state, however, which is the root of nearly every sin against a neighbor" ( *Cambridge Bible* ). It is basically the sin of Adam and Eve, to desire that which it is not God's will that we have. 20. **Fear may be before your faces. Keep you from sinning by a steady awe of Him** (Moffatt).

### 3) The Covenant Constitution. 20:21-23:33.

The ordinances next given to Moses and through him to the people have to do briefly with (1) the general form of worship (Ex 20:22-26); at some length with (2) social relations and rights of the people (21:1-23:13); and finally with (3) the relation of the people to Jehovah (23:14-33).

Formerly some critics found grounds in these laws for dating this section much later than the time of Moses. Since the discovery of a number of law codes much earlier than the Mosaic-e.g., Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, and Sumerian-the practice now is to determine the "dependence" of the Hebrew code upon the earlier ones. That people living in roughly the same era and under similar cultures should require legislation along similar lines is obvious, but this does not constitute dependence. "These laws are not all new, but combined approved customs, already established, with fresh legislation suited to the occasion ...; foresight also appears in adapting the legislation less to present nomadic conditions than to the proximate settlement in Canaan" ( *Catholic Commentary* ). The spirit of the Mosaic law is found in the Ten Commandments. Not only were the people to whom these laws were addressed different from the nations around them, but the underlying assumptions of the laws themselves are radically different.

#### a) The General Form of Worship. 20:22-26.

The command is here emphasized (vv. 22,23) that the God whose presence had been manifested to all Israel was not to be likened to any image produced by man's invention. No elaborate structures were to mark the way of approach of Israel to Jehovah, but a simple altar of earth or of common, unfinished stone (vv. 24-26). This precept does not disagree with later instructions concerning a brazen altar (Ex 27:1-9), but deals with a particular situation. Altars were not to be erected everywhere but where "I cause to be remembered my name" (RSV). At such places a simple altar was to be erected, not an ornate shrine. The practical application of the command is found in many places in later history (Judg 6:25-26; Josh 8:30; 1 Kings 18:30-32). **Steps** (v. 26). Flowing garments would be lifted by the raised foot and the body would thus be disclosed. Other regulations provide for the priest serving at the larger altar (Ex 28:42).

b) Civil and Social Relations. 21:1-23:13.

### **Exodus 21:1-11**

*Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them.*

The Israelite Slave. This law deals only with Hebrew slaves; foreign slaves are treated in Lev 25:44-46. Hebrews

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The Israelite Slave. This law deals only with Hebrew slaves; foreign slaves are treated in Lev 25:44-46. Hebrews could become slaves of their own volition because of poverty or some private disaster. The regulations ensured their being treated as brethren under these circumstances. Some have suggested that these are not so much laws to be enforced as personal rights to be observed (e.g., KD), **Seventh** (year) (v. 2). The sabbatical year, the end of toil (cf. Ex 21:2; 23:10-11). The slave was to go out in the same personal status as he came in (21:3-4). **Unto the judges** (v. 6). *Unto God* (ASV, RSV). Either translation is justified. Although the word is ( '*Elohim* '), the customary word for God, the actual transaction undoubtedly took place before judges who acted as representatives of God's righteousness (cf. Ps 82:6; John 10:35). **To the door** . He was thus fastened, as it were, to the house forever by the ear, the organ of hearing and obedience.

The ordinance is different for the female slave, who as concubine or even wife would become a part of the master's household (Ex 21:7-11). She was protected by three regulations: she could not be sold to a Gentile, to a far different kind of slavery (v. 8); if she had been taken to be espoused to a son, she was to be treated as a daughter (vv. 9,10); if she was not given the food, clothing, and rights of a wife, she was to be set free (v. 11). The father, who because of circumstances was forced thus to dispose of his daughter, was not selling her into cruel bondage, but sending her into a household where she would be as well treated as at home.

## **Exodus 21:12-17**

*He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.*

Capital Crimes. The sanctity of life is stressed by these laws against murder, kidnapping, and violence. God curbs the violence of sinful men by this sanction of strict justice. **God deliver him** (v. 13). We would say "accidentally," but to the Hebrew there were no "accidents" in a world where God reigned supreme.

**Exodus 21:18-32**

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

Bodily Injuries, Whether Inflicted by Man or Beast. Here again the value of an individual in the sight of God is stressed. These also are more in the nature of admonitions than ordinances: injury as the result of a quarrel (vv. 18,19); injury to a slave (vv. 20,21); injury to a pregnant woman (vv. 22-25). 22. **No mischief follow** ; i.e., in addition to the loss of her child, no permanent injury to the mother ensues. Verses 23-25 state the ( *lex talionis* ) (law of retaliation) so often quoted as typical of the harsh OT laws. It should be noted first that this ordinance is restricted to matters of bodily harm only. Second, its purpose was not to enforce the rule but to check the passionate vengeance that for a slight injury often retaliated with death and destruction. Slaves were to be freed in retribution for a permanent injury (vv. 26,27). When men suffered injury from animals, the owners were to be held responsible (vv. 28-32).

21:33-22:17. Laws Regarding Property.

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**Exodus 21:33-36**

*And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein;*

*Injury incurred by animals* . In such cases responsibility was fixed for neglect or failure to take precautions. **Open a pit** (v. 33). This refers to cisterns for the storing of water or grain. "I have been astonished at the reckless with which wells and pits are left uncovered and unprotected all over this country" (Thomson, *The Land and the Book* , II, 283; cf. I, 89, 90; II, 194; III, 458).

**Exodus 22:1-4**

*If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.*

Theft. **Breaking up**. (v. 2. Literally, ( *digging through* ). The usual way of access for a thief was digging through the relatively soft clay walls of the house. **The shall be blood shed for him** (v. 3). *The householder is guilty* (Moffatt). A mortal blow struck in darkness in defense of life and property was excused, but in the light of day, it was reasoned, such violent defense would not be necessary. The life, even of a thief, is of consequence in the eyes of God. **Sold** . Not in punishment but in restitution.

**Exodus 22:5-17**

*If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution.*

Loss of value, whether through accident, theft, or other cause. Verses 5 and 6 have to do with restitution for damage done to fields and crops. **To be eaten** may be rendered "to be grazed over" (RSV). Restitution must be made if damage had been done to the field. With slight emendation verse 5 might be read: "If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be burnt," i.e., to destroy stubble and weeds. Getting out of control, the fire destroys another's field.

Loss or damage to goods left on deposit (vv. 7-13). No bonded warehouses or safety deposit boxes, or even banks were known. If a man had to be absent from home, he entrusted his property to a dependable neighbor. In a sense, this law served as the neighbor's bond. **Stuff** (v. 7). A very general term for a variety of things. **Judges** (v. 8). Cf. Ex 21:6. **Manner of trespass** (v. 9). *Breach of trust* (RSV). **Oath of the Lord** (v. 11). Whether before judges or by oath, disputes were to be settled as before God and in recognition of his law. The Law held a man

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responsible for things he borrowed or hired (vv. 14,15).

Seduction (vv. 16,17). The girl is considered here as part of the family wealth, and the attack is regarded in respect to the loss of value because of the dowry, a considerable item, both then and now in the East. The moral crime is dealt with in Deut 22:22-27. **Dowry** . Better, ( *marriage price* ). It was the price paid by the groom to the parents or family of the bride (cf. Gen 24:53).

Ex 22:18-23:9. Moral and Religious Laws. These laws are all based upon the fact that Israel was to be a holy nation unto Jehovah.

### **Exodus 22:18-20**

*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.*

**Witch** . *Sorceress* (ASV, RSV). The malignant practice of magic and divination is still a potent force in primitive areas, and even among the superstitious in more enlightened lands. These few words are often quoted and voluminously commented on as a proof that superstitious ignorance is found in the OT, which must therefore not be inspired. These laws have been grossly misapplied, as in the seventeenth century witchcraft trials in New England. The New Testament, it is true, does not contain such laws, because the Christian economy is not a civil authority as was the Old Testament church. This, however, does not negate the reality of the demonic practices or the validity of the laws against them. 19. Bestiality. This unspeakable act was in fact a part of some of the degraded religious practices of the day. 20. Sacrifice to strange gods. **Utterly destroyed** . Literally, ( *devoted, set apart* ) unto Jehovah. "By death devoted to the Lord to whom he would not devote himself in life" (KD).

### **Exodus 22:21-27**

***Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.***

Humanitarian laws for the protection of the poor, the alien, and the helpless. These admonitions are forgotten by those who think of the Mosaic law as harsh and nationalistic. **I will surely hear** (vv. 22-24). The God who marks the sparrow's fall, will bring due recompense upon the heartless oppressor. **Usury** (v. 25). *Interest*. The lending of money as a commercial transaction is a modern practice and not considered here. Money was loaned as an act of charity to those who were in great need. To charge interest under such circumstances, profiting by another's need, is contrary to all decency. **Raiment** (v. 26). For the poor man who slept in his clothes, the large, rectangular mantle, the only garment worth taking as a pledge, was his only protection at night. **I will hear** (v. 27). God would hear the cry that the hard-hearted creditor ignored (cf. Thomson, I, 54,99; III, 89).

## **Exodus 22:28**

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

Reviling God or the ruler. "Contempt of God consists not only in blasphemies of Jehovah openly expressed, which were to be punished with death (Lev. xxiv. 11 sqq.), but in disregard of His threats with reference to the poorer members of His people (vers. 22-27), and in withholding from them what they ought to receive (vers. 29-31). Understood in this way, the command is closely connected not only with what precedes but also not only what follows. The prince (lit., *the elevated one*) is mentioned by the side of God, because in his exalted position he has to administer the law of God among His people" (KD).

### **Exodus 22:29-31**

*Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.*

The terms of the covenant emphasized the Israelites' responsibility to the Lord. They were to show themselves holy not only in giving what the Lord required but in abstaining from what was forbidden.

### **Exodus 23:1-9**

*Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.*

The duty to uphold truth and justice. The Israelites were to walk in integrity and consideration for all men. They were not to bear false witness (v. 1), i.e., **raise a false report** (AV), nor be in any collusion with such as did. **Unrighteous witness**. Literally, (*witness of violence*). **Not follow a multitude** (v. 2). A classic condemnation of mob violence. Neither by action nor by word was justice to be

perverted because of the pressure of a crowd. **Countenance** (v. 3). To favor or be partial. Some think that this is a scribal error and that "rich" and not "poor" man was meant. But there is need to warn against injustice due to wrongly directed sympathy as well as for other reasons. **Thine enemy's ox** (vv. 4,5). Not only was their conduct not to be determined by public opinion, the direction taken by the crowd, or compassion for the poor man; but personal antipathy, enmity, and hatred were not to lead them to injustice or churlish behavior (cf. Matt 5:44; Thomson, *op. cit.* . III, 345). **Wrest the judgment** (v. 6). *Never tamper with a poor man's rights in court* (Moffatt). This is the converse of the injunction in Ex 23:3.

**Keep thee far** (v. 7). Have nothing to do with unrighteousness. **I will not justify** . The LXX reads, **Thou shalt not justify** . The Hebrew reading makes the forceful point that to do such a thing puts one in opposition to a holy God who will not justify wickedness. **Blindeth the wise** (lit., *the seeing men* ) **and perverteth the causes** (not ( *words* ), AV) **of the righteous** . Again and again God emphasized the Israelites' responsibility for those who were without rights or redress, by recalling their own experiences ( **ye know the heart of a stranger** , v. 9) from which only His compassion delivered them.

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**Exodus 23:10-17**

*And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof:*

A Church Calendar. The responsibilities of worshipers; only brief mention is made here of matters that are treated at length later. Sabbaths, the Year of Rest, and the Day of Rest (vv. 10-12). **Let it rest and lie still** . As the slave was to be released from toil (Ex 21:2), so also the land was to rest the seventh year. The poor were permitted to eat of that which grew of itself that year (cf. Lev 25:1-7,20-22; Deut 15:1-18; 31:10-13). 12. The Sabbath Day. Cf. Ex 20:8-11; 31:12-17; 35:1-3. **That thine ox ... may rest ... the son of thy handmaid ... the stranger** . This adds a humanitarian reason to the religious one given in 20:11, but does not contradict it. 13. **In all ... be circumspect** . Driver ( *Cambridge Bible* ) thinks this verse is displaced and should follow verse 19. But according to KD, it is a transitional sentence: verse 13a stresses their faithfulness in the laws that deal with their fellow men; and 13b prepares for the laws dealing with their relation to Jehovah.

c) The Pilgrimage Feasts 23:14-19.

Though there were other observances to be kept, these three were the great festivals during which all the men of Israel were required to present themselves before the Lord. In them there was a remembrance not only of their redemption, but of God's continual blessing and provision. It has been pointed out that these are not only duties, but rights, "for keeping a feast to the Lord and appearing before Him were both privileges bestowed by Jehovah upon His covenant people" (KD). 14. **A feast**. Cf. Ex 5:1. 15. **Unleavened bread**. Inseparable, of course, from Passover (cf. chs. 12; 13; Lev 23:5). **None shall appear before me empty**. Gifts were to be brought as evidence of thanks for God's blessings and as tribute to Jehovah their King (cf. Deut 16:16-17). 16. **Feast of harvest**. Pentecost (Lev 23:15-22; Num 28:26-31; Deut 16:9-12). **Feast of ingathering**. Tabernacles (Num 29:12 ff.; Lev 23:34-43; Deut 16:13-14). These feasts marked the beginning and ending of the harvest of all the produce of

the land.

## Exodus 23:18-19

*Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning.*

Three rules were to be observed in the feasts. (1) Unleavened bread was to be used, not only in the feast of that name, but in all the feasts. (2) **Fat of my sacrifice** was not to remain (cf. Ex 12:10). **Firstfruits**. The withholding of this confession and expression of gratitude brought judgment on Israel again and again (cf. Mal 3:8). (3) **Seethe a kid**. This direction seems oddly at variance with the other regulations, and long caused much speculation by the commentators. Then, in the Ugarit literature discovered in 1930, it was learned that boiling a kid in its mother's milk was a Canaanite practice used in connection with fertility rites ( *Birth of the Gods, Ex 1:14* ). Israel, by the presentation of the first fruits, acknowledged that blessing came from Jehovah, not from magic.

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## d) Farewell Exhortation. 23:20-33.

The covenant is concluded with these words of promise and warning.

**Exodus 23:20-22**

*Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.*

The Angel of Jehovah. "The name of Jehovah was in this angel; that is to say, Jehovah revealed Himself in Him; and hence he is called in Ex 33:15-16 the face of Jehovah, because the essential nature of Jehovah was manifested in him. This angel was not a created spirit, therefore, but the manifestation of Jehovah Himself" (KD). "The angel is Jehovah Himself in a temporary descent to visibility for a special purpose" (McNeile, *Westminster Commentary* ).

**Exodus 23:23-33**

*For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.*

Promise and Warning. God promised to drive out the nations before them and to bless them, providing for their needs and protecting them. The people of Israel, on their part, were to abstain from all idolatry and covenanting with pagan peoples.

**Overthrow** (v. 24). *Tear down and break down* . **Images. Pillars** (ASV). Stones set up near a temple or in a sacred grove, a regular feature of Canaanite worship. **The number of thy days** (v. 26). Both the faithful individual and the faithful nation were

promised that they would live out their days. **My fear** (v. 27). The panic of heart that would come to the heathen as the knowledge of God's mighty acts on behalf of Israel became known (Josh 2:11). **Destroy**. Better, *throw into confusion* (RSV). **Hornets** (v. 28). This is hardly to be taken literally, though some do take it so. To determine just what is symbolized here has exercised the ingenuity of generations of commentators. It has been suggested that the hornets represent Egyptians, sickness, natural disasters, *et al* . The suggestion of KD that it was the sting of fear (v. 27) seems a most reasonable idea. After gradually expelling the Canaanites, the people of Israel were to occupy the land (vv. 29,30). This they signally failed to do (Judg 1; 2). **I will set thy bounds** (v. 31). Only once, under Solomon (1 Kings 4:21), and then only briefly, did Israel achieve these boundaries. **Sea of the Philistines**. The Mediterranean. **Desert**. The wilderness between Egypt and Palestine. **The river**. The Euphrates. **Lest they make thee sin** (vv. 32,33). The destruction of the Canaanites was necessary, and contact with them was forbidden lest they infect the people of God with their sin as with an infectious disease.

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## 4) The Ratification of the Covenant. 24:1-11.

### **Exodus 24:1-2**

*And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.*

These two verses are actually the conclusion of the words of the Lord from the preceding chapter. God gave Moses directions in regard to the ratification of the covenant which were distinct from the ordinances to be delivered to all the people. Aaron and his two elder sons, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders were to worship "afar off" while Moses drew near to the Lord. The rest of the people were not to go up on the mountain at all.

### **Exodus 24:3-4**

*And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.*

**Words ... judgments.** Both the positive commands and decisions in regard to particular cases (the contents of Ex 20:22-23:33) were delivered to the people. The Decalogue may not have been included, since all Israel had heard this from Jehovah himself. "It was necessary that the people should not only know what the Lord imposed upon them in the covenant about to be made with them, and what He promised them, but that they should also declare their willingness to perform what was imposed upon them" (KD). 4. **Altar ... pillars.** "As the altar indicated the presence of Jehovah, being the place where the Lord would come to His people to bless them (20:24), so the twelve pillars, or boundary stones, did not serve as mere

memorials of the conclusion of the covenant, but were to indicate the place of the twelve tribes and represent their presence also" (KD).

## **Exodus 24:5-7**

*And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD.*

**Young men.** These were neither first-born sons nor Aaronic priests, but men chosen by Moses for this particular act, perhaps "as the strongest and most active members of the community" ( *Cambridge Bible* ). **Burnt ... peace offerings.** It is significant that no sin offering is described. These were redeemed people, who now, by these sacrifices of dedication and fellowship, were committing themselves and entering into a close and binding communion with their Redeemer. 7. **Book of the covenant.** The book written by Moses (v. 4) and containing the laws of Ex 20:22-23:33.

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**Exodus 24:8**

*And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.*

"In the blood sprinkled upon the altar, the natural life of the people was given up to God, as a life that had passed through death, to be pervaded by His grace; and then through the sprinkling upon the people it was restored to them again as a life renewed by the grace of God .... it became a vital power, holy and divine, uniting Israel and its God ... a transposition of Israel into the kingdom of God, in which it was filled with the powers of God's spirit of grace and sanctified into a kingdom of priests, a holy nation (Ex 19:6)" (KD). **Concerning all these words.** *On the basis of all these regulations* (American Trans.).

**Exodus 24:9-11**

*Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel:*

The covenant meal was celebrated by Israel in its representatives. **Saw the God of Israel** (v. 10). "We must not go beyond the limits drawn in ch. Ex 33:20-23 in our conceptions of what constituted the sight of God; at the same time we must regard it as a vision of God in some form of manifestation which rendered the divine nature discernible to the human eye. Nothing is said as to the form in which God manifested Himself" (KD).

*B. Directions for the Sanctuary and the Priesthood. 24:12-31:18.*

The covenant having been established, there still remained the necessity "to give a definite external form to the covenant concluded with His people and construct a visible bond of fellowship in which He might manifest Himself to the people and they might draw near to Him" (KD). For this reason Moses was called up into the mountain for a long period. The construction of the sanctuary was not to be left to the devices of men. "The divine directions extended to all the details, because they were all of importance in relation to the design of God" (KD). At the same time, the absence of Moses served as a test of the sincerity of the recent dedication and pledge of the people.

## 1) Moses' Ascent into the Mountain. 24:12-18.

### **Exodus 24:12-18**

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*And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.*

The **tables of stone** were to have inscribed on them the Decalogue (Ex 31:18). **Law, and commandments**, including, probably, the instructions ( *tora* ) for the sanctuary and priesthood, and the laws now in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. 13. **Joshua** accompanied Moses onto the mountain, but seems not to have been in the immediate presence of Moses when Jehovah gave the laws. 14. **The elders**. Not necessarily just the seventy of Ex 24:1. Aaron and Hur were appointed administrators in Moses' absence.

2) The Offerings To Be Brought for the Tabernacle. 25:1-7.

### Exodus 25:1-8

*Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.*

**Offering**. Literally, ( *lifted* ). A gift lifted from one's possessions and given to the Lord. 3. **Brass**. Actually bronze. Modern brass, an alloy of copper and zinc, was not known in the ancient world. Bronze, i.e., copper hardened by tin, was used widely until iron came to be generally used. 4. The exact shades of the colors mentioned are difficult to determine. **Blue** was nearer purple-blue or violet, while **purple** was a red-purple. Both colors were costly and highly prized for their brilliance. 5. **Badgers' skins**. The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain, and various interpretations have been offered: ( *seal* ) (ASV), ( *goat* ) (RSV), ( *porpoise* ) (American). A similar Arabic word means "dolphin" or "dugong." Another view is that this is an Egyptian word meaning simply "leather" (Moffatt). Badger was suggested by the Talmud, but there is little probability that this was the skin used. **Shittim**. Acacia. Found widely on the Sinaitic peninsula, a very hard and durable wood.

### 3) Instructions for the Sanctuary. 25:8-27:21.

The names given to the structure commonly called the Tabernacle are many. It is called "the tent," usually referring to the outer covering; the "tent of meeting," where God met with his people (Ex 27:21); the "tent of the witness" or "testimony," because it contained the ark and the Decalogue (25:16); the "dwelling" and "dwelling of Jehovah" (Num 16:9), or "dwelling of the testimony" (Ex 38:21); and "the sanctuary" or "holy place" (25:8). The names "house" and "temple" (1 Sam 1:9; 3:3) are also used, but they refer to a more settled condition of the Tabernacle. The common name is "tent," a term which the English translators exalted to the more high-sounding "tabernacle," following the Vulgate ( *tabernaculum* ).

Although no symbolism is attributed to the Tabernacle in the text, there can be no doubt that it symbolized for Israel, as it does for us, great spiritual truths. It clearly taught the fact of God's presence in the midst of his people. At the same time it indicated that he was a holy God in the midst of a sinful people, for the whole arrangement of the Tabernacle made plain that "the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest" (Heb 9:8). With the ark containing the Testimony, it was "an ever present witness to the claims of God and the duty of man" ( *Cambridge*

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containing the Testimony, it was "an ever present witness to the claims of God and the duty of man" ( *Cambridge Bible* ).

## **Exodus 25:9-28**

*According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.*

**According to all that I show thee.** Moses not only received detailed instructions, but he must also have seen a pattern or model. Herein lies the difficulty for us; much that is confusing in the instructions would immediately be made clear if we could only see the model. Therefore, in considering the various speculations as to the exact form and mode of structure for the Tabernacle, we can only attempt to decide which seems the most reasonable.

### a) The Ark of the Covenant. 25:10-22.

The ark was an oblong box or chest of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Taking the cubit as approximately eighteen inches long, the ark measured about three feet nine inches long, two feet three inches wide, and two feet three inches deep. Around the top was a crown or molding of gold, forming a rim. At each of the four corners or "feet"

(v. 12) there was fixed a ring of gold. Through these rings were slipped gold plated poles or staves by which the ark was carried. The cover of the ark is referred to separately as "the mercy seat" (v. 17) or "the propitiatory". It was a slab of solid gold, fitting the length and width of the ark. Mounted upon the cover were the figures of two cherubim made out of beaten gold. These figures faced each other, with their wings spread as though shadowing the mercy seat. "The gold plate upon the ark formed the footstool of the throne for Him who caused His name, i.e., the real presence of His being, to dwell in a cloud between the two cherubim, above their outstretched wings.... Thus the footstool of God became a throne of grace,

which received its name ( *kapporet* ) or ( *hilasterion* ) from the fact that the highest and most perfect act of atonement under the Old Testament was performed upon it" (KD). 16. **Testimony.** The Decalogue upon the tables of stone. 18. **Cherubim.** Whatever the exact appearance of these figures might have been, they always symbolized the presence of the lord (cf. Ezek 1:5 ff.; Gen 3:24; 2 Sam 22:11; Rev 4:6-7).

## b) The Table of Shewbread. 25:23-30.

This was a plain table, three feet long, one foot six inches broad, and two feet three inches high, made of wood overlaid with gold. A border or frame about three inches broad ( **a handbreadth** , v. 25) ran around the table, either just below the top, as in modern tables, or halfway down the legs, as it appears in the representation on the Arch of Titus. On the four legs were rings of gold for the poles by which the table was carried. The name ( *shewbread* ) was first used by Tyndale (A.D. 1526 AD) in translating Heb 9:2, probably following Luther's rendering ( *schoubrot* ). A better translation is *presence bread* (ASV marg.; Moffatt) or *bread of the presence* (RSV). Bread was set on the table in the presence of Jehovah, one loaf for each tribe of Israel. There was thus a continual acknowledgment by Israel that from Jehovah came their daily bread, a symbol of both communion and dependence.

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**Exodus 25:29-30**

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

**Dishes.** Large, platter-like dishes to carry the flat loaves of bread. **Spoons.** Rather, *cups* for the frankincense that was to be placed on the bread, identifying it as a sacrifice (Lev 24:7). **Covers.** Chalices or bowls for the wine of the drink offering. **Bowls.** Flagons to pour the wine out in libations.

The loaves of bread were called *bread of the face* (v. 30) because they were to lie on the table before the face of Jehovah as a food offering presented by the children of Israel (Lev 24:7), "not as food for Jehovah but as a symbol of the spiritual food which Israel was to prepare ... so that the bread and wine, which stood upon the table by the side of the loaves, as the fruit of the labor bestowed by Israel upon the soil of its inheritance, were a symbol of its spiritual labor in the kingdom of God, the spiritual vineyard of its Lord" (KD). The shewbread also reminded the Israelites of their dependence upon Jehovah, from whom came their daily sustenance (cf. Ezek 16:19; Hos 2:8).

### c) The Candlestick. 25:31-40.

The only light in the Tabernacle was furnished by the candlestick, or, properly speaking, the lampstand. This consisted of a central shaft from which three branches extended outward and upward from each side; on the tops of the branches and the shaft, lamps were fixed, seven in all. Both stem and branches were decorated at intervals with ornamental work shaped like the calyx and corolla of the almond flower. The size of the lamp is not given in Scripture. Josephus says that it was five feet high and three feet six inches broad. Others infer that it was two feet three inches high and wide, the size of the table of shewbread opposite it. A talent of pure gold,

approximately ninety-four pounds, was used to make the lampstand and its various vessels. Apart from its utilitarian function, the lamp stood as a symbol, not only of the light of God by which Israel walked, but of Israel itself, a light in the midst of a dark world, supplied with the oil of the Spirit of God.

## **Exodus 25:31-40**

*And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same.*

**Shaft, and ... branches.** *Base and shaft* (ASV). **Bowls ... knops.** *Cups, each with its calyx and petals* (American). The *cup* is the whole flower, the **knop**, the bud with its outer and inner petals. Some have thought that the lampstand was to resemble the almond tree, called the "awakening one" by the Hebrews because of its early blossoming. 37. A lamp in Bible times was like a saucer with the rim pinched in at one end. It was filled with oil, and a wick was placed in it with one end protruding from the pinched-in part. **Light the lamps.** Actually, "fix on" the lamps to the stand after they had been prepared. 38. **Tongs.** An instrument, something like tweezers, to draw out the wick. **Snuff dish** (lit., *fire catcher*). A tray for the tongs.

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## d) The Tabernacle. 26:1-37.

**Exodus 26:1-6**

*Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them.*

The Ornamental Curtains that Formed the Tabernacle Itself. There were ten curtains, each forty-two feet long and six feet wide. When fastened together, they formed one great hanging, sixty by forty-two feet. The curtains were beautifully woven tapestries of white linen, and blue, purple, and scarlet fabrics, with figures of cherubim either woven in or embroidered on them. These, mounted on the wooden framework (vv. 15-30), formed the Tabernacle proper. Unless we are to understand that this beautiful work was completely hidden, we must suppose either that the boards of the frame formed hollow squares rather than a solid fence (Kennedy, "Tabernacle," HDB), or else that the curtains hung down inside the frame (James Strong, *The Tabernacle*). Strong believes that they were not used as a tent at all, but hung like curtains on the inside of the frame.

**Cunning work** (v. 1). Work of the designer or pattern maker. The curtains (vv. 3-6) were fastened together in two sets of three each by means of loops of blue material on the edges, which were coupled together with gold clasps. The two sets were then fastened to each other in the same way, thus making one large curtain. Since the frame of the Tabernacle was forty-five by fifteen by fifteen feet, the sixty-foot curtain must have hung down to the ground in the back (assuming the front left open), and the forty-two-foot width would have reached to within a foot and a half of the ground.

**Exodus 26:7-14**

***And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair to be a covering upon the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make.***

The Outer Coverings. The tent over the dwelling was made of goats' hair, as Bedouin tents are still made, and probably as the Israelite tents were made then. While the linen curtains formed a beautiful interior, the goats' hair made a serviceable covering outside. This covering was made of eleven curtains, each forty-five by six feet, fastened together by bronze clasps (vv. 10,11) in the same manner as the linen curtains; this formed one great covering sixty-six by forty-five feet. Since the goats' hair curtain was three feet wider than the linen, it must have covered the latter completely on the sides (v. 13). It was six feet longer than the tapestry, and this excess was used by doubling one of the sections over (v. 9) and letting it hang down in front, as a sort of valance to protect the entrance screen. The rest of the excess probably hung down in the back. Any slack in this covering would have been taken up, as in other tents, by the ropes and pegs by which it was stretched out and held. Some think that there may have been a ridgepole to form a peak or gable, but this cannot be determined from the text. Two outer coverings of leather (v. 14; cf. Ex 25:5) covered the woven goats' hair and provided protection from bad weather.

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**Exodus 26:15-30**

*And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up.*

The Wooden Framework. A framework made of boards or frames of acacia wood plated with gold, each board being fifteen feet long and two feet three inches wide. Kennedy argues that these were open frames rather than solid boards ("Tabernacle," HDB). We do not know the thickness of the boards, but Josephus says that it was three inches (*Antiq* . III. 6,3), which would have made a very substantial and exceedingly heavy fence, rather than simply the sturdy frame that was required. Also, as suggested above, unless we are to think of the tapestry as drapes, the beauty would have been completely hidden by a solid frame. The Scripture does not give us enough detail to enable us to picture the frame exactly. Each board had two tenons (lit., ( *hands* ) projecting beneath (v. 17), which fitted into mortices or sockets in bases of silver (v. 19). The silver bases weighed one talent (ninety-five pounds) each, enough weight to secure the frame quite solidly (Ex 38:27). The frames formed the sides and back of the Tabernacle. Twenty boards formed each side, forty-five feet long, and six boards formed the back. At the two corners where side and back met, two extra boards were added in some way for strengthening. Though the exact manner of forming the corners is obscure (v. 24), we know that the extra boards served somehow to buttress the framework. For further strengthening, five bars ran horizontally along each side and the back, fitting into gold rings on the boards. The middle bar ran from end to end (v. 28); the others presumably were shorter, each running perhaps half the length.

**Boards** (v. 15). *Upright frames* (RSV). **Two tenons ... set in order** (v. 17). *Two pegs clamped to the foot* (Moffatt). *Each of these two frames forming a double support and running it up to the topmost ring* (v. 24; Moffatt).

**Exodus 26:31-35**

*And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made:*

The Veil of the Holy of Holies. The "Dwelling" was divided into two sections, called "the Holy Place" and "the Holy of Holies" or "Most Holy Place." The veil was made of the same richly woven tapestry as the inner curtains. It was hung by gold hooks from four pillars of gilded wood, which were held by tenons in sockets of silver, as were the boards of the framework. **Taches** (v. 33). Hooks or clasps.

### **Exodus 26:36,37**

*And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined*

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*linen, wrought with needlework.*

The Entrance Veil. The entrance was covered by a veil of less elaborate workmanship than that of the Holy of Holies, and was hung, like the other, on pillars, fixed into sockets of bronze.

e) The Altar of Burnt Offering. 27:1-8.

### **Exodus 27:1**

*And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits.*

This altar was a hollow frame of acacia wood, plated with bronze, seven and a half feet square and four and a half feet in height. At each corner a bronze point ( **horns** , v. 2) projected. A grating or network of bronze was placed **under the compass** (v. 5), or ledge of the altar, **even to the midst** , i.e., ( *reaching half way up* ) (RSV). Some suppose that this network extended through the altar, forming a grate upon which the sacrifice rested. Others believe that the ledge, supported by the network, ran around the altar and formed a place for the priests to stand on while sacrificing. The latter seems more probable, for it is doubtful that there would have been a fire within the altar itself, as this would soon have charred the wood completely. The bronze altar was probably placed over a mound of earth or stone and the fire laid on top. At the four corners of the ledge were bronze rings, through which bronzed wooden staves were thrust for carrying the altar.

**Horns** (v. 2). "In these the whole force of the altar was concentrated" (KD). Those who fled for safety to a sanctuary laid hold of the horns of the altar (1 Kings 1:50). The blood of the sacrifice was smeared on the horns (Lev 4:7). As throughout Scripture, "horns" stand for power, it is probable that the horns of the altar

symbolized the power of God. **Ashes** (v. 3; lit., *fat* ), i.e., the ashes of the burned sacrifice. **Basons** (lit., ( *tossing vessels* ). Large bowls in which the blood was caught and thrown against the sides of the altar.

#### f) The Court of the Tabernacle. 27:9-19.

A rectangular area, one hundred and fifty feet long by seventy-five feet wide, surrounded the Tabernacle. It was enclosed by hangings of white linen, five and a half feet in height, suspended on pillars. There were twenty pillars for each of the longer sides and ten for the shorter ones. The pillars, or poles, were of bronze with capitals of silver (Ex 38:17), and were set into sockets or bases of bronze. The curtains were attached to the pillars by means of silver hooks which hooked into the silver fillets or bands of the pillars. Cords and bronze tent pins kept the hangings taut (38:19). The entrance to this court was on the east side. There the hangings extended in for fifteen cubits from each corner, leaving a thirty-foot entrance. The entrance was closed by a screen of tapestry embroidered like the entrance screen of the Tabernacle itself. **Vessels of the tabernacle** (v. 19). Probably the tools used for setting up and taking down the Tabernacle.

#### **Exodus 27:20,21**

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## Exodus 27:20,21

*And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always.*

The sanctuary light. Clear olive oil of the first quality, obtained by "beating," i.e., gently pounding the olives in a mortar. Inferior oil was obtained by grinding the pulp that remained. **Evening to morning.** The lamps were kept burning in the Holy Place, before God's testimony, all through the night.

### 4) The Garments and Consecration of the Priests. 28:1-29:46.

## Exodus 28:1

*And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.*

Aaron and his sons were chosen by Jehovah to be the priests, the mediators, of Israel. This was a new ordinance, as were the regulations for the sanctuary and the sacrifices. Critics insist that the restriction of the priesthood to the family of Aaron is a reflection of post-Exilic times. But if there was a Tabernacle, there must also have been a stated priesthood. There is no evidence in any of the later history of Israel that, except for extraordinary circumstances, any but the sons of Aaron ever acted as priests.

a) Directions Regarding the Appointment and Clothing of the Priests. 28:1-5.

b) The Ephod. 28:6-14.

This was the most distinctive part of the high priest's garments. It was a kind of waistcoat or apron, elaborately embroidered. It consisted of two pieces, front and back, joined at the shoulders by straps or **shoulder pieces** (v.

7), and bound around the waist by a girdle that was part of the ephod itself (v. 8). On each shoulder strap was an onyx stone in a setting of gold filigree, upon which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, six on each stone. Thus symbolically the priest bore upon his shoulders the burden of all Israel as he represented them before God. The colors and material of the ephod (v. 6) answer to the colors and texture of the sanctuary, thus identifying the sanctuary and the minister. Instead of cherubim, however, the ephod was embroidered throughout with fine gold wire, woven in with the other colors (v. 8). **Curious girdle.** *Skillfully woven band* (ASV, RSV). **According to their birth** (v. 10). In the order of the ages of the ancestral sons of Jacob. **Ouches** (v. 11). *Settings* (ASV); (*settings of gold filigree*) (RSV).

c) The Breastplate. 28:15-29.

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The breastplate or "pouch" of judgment, was a bag of the same material as the ephod. It was made of one piece of material, folded over to form a pouch, nine by nine inches. Fastened into this pouch in settings of gold were twelve precious stones, four rows of three each, upon which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes. The pouch was held to the ephod by means of two chains of gold, which linked into gold rings at the upper corners of the pouch and attached them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod (vv. 22-25). Through other rings at the bottom corners, the pouch was secured to the girdle of the ephod by means of bands of blue lacing (vv. 26-28).

As the high priest ministered in the sanctuary, he bore the burdens and needs of his people not only in the place of strength, upon his shoulders, but also upon his heart, that with wisdom and compassion he might be their mediator before Jehovah (v. 29).

The identity of some of the stones in the breastplate (vv. 17-20) is very uncertain. And since the early translators of the Bible were also uncertain about the identification, their renderings are quite inconsistent. The following identifications represent a consensus of the opinions of modern authorities.

**Sardius** (v. 17). Possibly carnelian or red jasper. **Topaz**. A yellow or green stone, possibly chrysolite. **Carbuncle**.

Emerald or rock crystal. **Emerald** (v. 18). A red stone, obviously not an emerald; either ruby or garnet. **Sapphire**. More likely lapis lazuli than sapphire. **Diamond**. Either the crystal or sardonyx. There is no evidence that the diamond was known in ancient days. **Ligure** (v. 19). A stratified red and white stone, either jacinth or cairngorm. **Agate**. Properly named, a red opaque stone. **Amethyst**. The same clear purple stone we call by this name. **Beryl** (20). Either the same or chalcedony; possibly yellow jasper. **Onyx**. The same as onyx today. **Jasper**. Beryl or green jasper.

The directions for the lower fastening of the breastplate (v. 27) are not clear, but this was probably as explained above. Moffatt translates: ( *low down on the apron, close to the joining of the shoulder straps and above the artistic ribbon* ).

#### d) **The Urim and Thummim.** 28-30.

The Hebrew words mean ( *lights and perfections* ). The LXX translation is ( *revelation and truth* ). "What the Urim and Thummim really were cannot be determined with certainty, either from the names themselves or from any other circumstances connected with them. Perhaps they were a certain medium given by the Lord to His people through which, whenever the congregation required divine illumination to guide its actions, that illumination was guaranteed; and by means of which the rights of Israel, when called in question or endangered, were to be restored, and ... this medium was bound up with the official dress of the high priest, though its precise character can no longer be determined" (KD; cf. Num 27:21; 1 Sam 28:6; Ezra 2:63).

#### e) **The Robe of the Ephod.** 28:31-35.

It was woven of one piece of cloth, with armholes but no sleeves. It was put on over the head and probably reached to the knees. Around the edge of the skirt small golden bells alternated with pomegranates of twisted yarn. The pomegranates have been taken as symbols of the Word of God, a sweet and refreshing fruit, and the bells as the sounding forth of this Word (cf. Sir (or Ecclesiasticus 45:9). **Binding ... as it were the hole of an habergeon** (v. 32). For **habergeon** the ASV has *coat of mail* . The binding was to keep the edge from fraying. **That he die not** (v. 35). No mere priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies, the immediate presence of Jehovah. "This privilege was restricted to the representative of the whole congregation ... and even he could only

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do so when wearing the robe of the word of God, as the bearer of the divine testimony upon which the covenant fellowship with the Lord was founded" (KD).

#### f) The Headdress. 28:36-38.

The headdress of the high priest was a turban of fine white linen (v. 39) upon the front of which was affixed, by means of a band of blue lace, a gold plate on which were engraved the words, "Holy to Jehovah." Thus was the office and person of the high priest marked out by God before the people, until He should come who was Himself holy (cf. Heb 7:26). **Mitre** (v. 37). The AV, ASV term is misleading, as the headdress bore no resemblance to modern conceptions of a mitre. It more likely resembled the common turban of the East. **That Aaron may bear the iniquity** (v. 38). The high priest was exalted into an atoning mediator of the whole nation; and an atoning intercession was associated with his office.

#### g) **The tunic** (AV, *coat* ). 28:39.

The tunic or coat was woven of linen in a check pattern and was worn close to the body, beneath the robe of the ephod. According to Josephus ( *Antiq* . III. 7,2), the tunic reached to the feet and had tight sleeves. It was bound about the body with a richly colored sash or girdle embroidered like the tapestries of the sanctuary.

#### h) **Dress of the Ordinary Priests. 28:40-43.**

Although they are described as being "for glory and for beauty," these were very simply garments. There was a tunic such as the high priest wore, but of plain color, bound with a sash that is not otherwise described. Upon the head was a cap (RSV), either a band of linen about the head, or, more likely, a skull cap. Beneath the tunic the priests wore linen breeches or drawers. It should be remembered that linen was a

costly and highly prized cloth in those days, so that even the least of the priests' garments were made of the finest material. By these garments the priests appointed by Jehovah were officially marked as his representatives. To fail to wear them, and thus approach the Tabernacle (v. 43) as in their own virtue and personal right, was to bring upon themselves judgment and death.

### **i) The Consecration of the Priests. 29:1-37.**

"Although the holiness of their office was reflected in their dress, it was necessary, on account of the sinfulness of their nature, that they should be sanctified through a special consecration for the administration of their office" (KD). The directions now given for the consecration were carried out in Lev 8. Since a full appreciation of the significance of the directions must wait upon a discussion of the sacrificial laws of Lev 1-7, it seems best to deal here only with the actual directions and not their spiritual meaning.

### **Exodus 29:1-3**

*And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office: Take one young bullock, and two rams without blemish,*

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Verse 1-3. Preparation of the Offerings. Three types of biscuit or **bread** accompanied the offering: ordinary unleavened bread; **cakes** , i.e., unleavened bread mingled with oil; and **wafers** , i.e., very thin cakes anointed with oil (v. 2).

### **Exodus 29:4-9**

*And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water.*

The Investiture of Aaron and His Sons. The priests were to be washed, dressed, and anointed with oil. Certainly this is a very clear indication of their being cleansed spiritually, clothed with God's righteousness, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

### **Exodus 29:10-14**

*And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock.*

**The Sin Offering.** A bullock was offered as a sin offering for the appointed priests. The men who were a type of the Great Priest to come had first to be cleansed from their own sins (cf. Heb 7:27). **Caul** (v. 13). The appendix or the lobe upon the liver.

### **Exodus 29:15-18**

*Thou shalt also take one ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram.*

The Ram of Dedication. The ram, wholly burned upon the altar, symbolized the

priests, wholly dedicated to God. **Sprinkle** (v. 16). Actually, ( *toss* ) or *throw* better represents the Hebrew.

## **Exodus 29:19-28**

*And thou shalt take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram.*

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The Ram of Consecration. The cleansed and dedicated priests, symbolically had communion with their Lord, as they partook of the sacrificed ram. Ears, hands, and feet (v. 20) were dedicated to God to hearken to and obey his word. The cleansing blood and sanctifying oil were sprinkled not only upon the men, but upon their official garments (v. 21), consecrating and empowering them for service.

**Rump** (v. 22; lit., *fat tail* ). The fattailed sheep is still bred in Palestine, the tail being considered a special delicacy. **Wave them** (v. 24). The specified portions of the ram and bread were waved, i.e., extended to the altar and then drawn back; this symbolically presented them to God. God's portion (v. 25) was consumed upon the altar. The breast and the thigh of the ram of the installation offering were given to Moses as to the officiating priest (vv. 26-28). Ordinarily, as here ordained, this portion would go to the priest.

### **Exodus 29:29-30**

*And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons' after him, to be anointed therein, and to be consecrated in them.*

The priestly garments were to be passed on from generation to generation. The installation of priests in succeeding generations was to take seven days, as would this initial consecration (v. 35).

### **Exodus 29:31-46**

*And thou shalt take the ram of the consecration, and seethe his flesh in the holy place.*

The Sacrificial Meal. That the priests should partake of the very offering by which they had been atoned for and consecrated, reminds us of Christian communion in the

Lamb by whose sacrifice we have been redeemed. 35-37. Through seven days, the consecration not only of the priests but of the altar of sacrifice was to be carried out.

**j) The Morning and Evening Sacrifice. 29:38-42.**

Daily, morning and evening, on behalf of the whole congregation of Israel, the priests were to offer a lamb, with the accompanying meal and drink offerings. Thus day by day the dedication of all the people was renewed.

**k) Promise of Blessing. 29:43-46.**

In response to such a continual dedication, Jehovah promised his constant presence and blessing. He would dwell in the midst of his people, and the appointed means of mediation-priest, tabernacle, and altar-would be sanctified to him.

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- 5) Concluding Directions in Regard to the Tabernacle. 30:1-38.  
 a) The Altar of Incense. 30:1-10.

## **Exodus 30:1**

*And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it.*

This small altar, made of acacia wood plated with gold, is often called the "golden altar" (Ex 30:38; 40:5,26; Num 4:11) as contrasted with the brazen altar of sacrifice. It was one and a half feet square and three feet high. Upon the four upper corners were horns. A rim or molding ran around the altar, and beneath this, on the corners, were rings of gold for carrying. The altar was placed in the Holy Place, directly in front of the veil that separated it from the Holy of Holies and the ark. This very close connection between the altar and the ark is apparently referred to in Heb 9:4. (AV erroneously translates *censer* ).

Only incense was to be burned on this altar, and only that mixture prescribed by God (Ex 30:34-38). This altar, the symbol of man's closest approach to God, had also to be cleansed by the atoning blood year by year (v. 10). "The connection between the incense-offering and the burnt-offering is indicated by the rule that they were to be offered at the same time. Both offerings shadowed forth the devotion of Israel to its God, whilst the fact that they were offered every day exhibited this devotion as constant and uninterrupted. But the distinction between them consisted in this, that in the burnt or whole offering Israel consecrated and sanctified its whole life and action, in both body and soul to the Lord, whilst in the incense-offering its prayer was embodied as the exaltation of the spiritual man to God ... the incense-offering presupposed reconciliation with God.... In this respect, the incense-offering was not only a spiritualizing and transfiguring of the burnt-offering, but a completion of that offering also" (KD).

## b) The Ransom Money. 30:11-16.

Each Israelite, **twenty years old and above** (v. 14) was required to pay a half shekel (about forty cents) to Jehovah as **an atonement for your souls** (v. 15). "It was no ordinary tribute ... which Israel was to pay to Jehovah as its King, but an act demanded by the holiness of the theocratic covenant. As an expiation for souls, it pointed to the unholiness of Israel's nature, and reminded the people continually, that by nature it was alienated from God, and could only remain in covenant with the Lord and live in His kingdom on the ground of His grace, which covered its sin. It was not till this sinful nature had been sanctified by a perfect atonement, and servitude under the law had been glorified and fully transformed into that sonship to which Israel was called ... that as children of the kingdom they had no longer to pay this atonement-money for their souls" (KD; cf. Matt 17:25-26). **Every one that passeth among them** (v. 13). *Numbered in the census* (RSV).

## c) The Bronze Laver. 30:17-21.

The laver was a basin for water, set between the brazen altar and the Tabernacle, in which the priest could wash

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both hands and feet before entering the Holy Place. No description of the size or shape of the laver is given. By this laver, the need for daily cleansing for those who served the Lord was not simply suggested but demanded (v. 20).

#### d) The Holy Anointing Oil. 30:22-33.

A perfumed oil, mixed according to a specific recipe, was to be prepared for sacramental anointing. To mark the sacredness of that which was set apart unto the Lord, any other use of the oil was forbidden (v. 33). **Pure myrrh** (v. 23). "Flowing" or liquid balsam. **Five hundred shekels**. About sixteen pounds. **Cinnamon**. In those days a rare and costly spice. **Sweet calamus**. An aromatic cane, possibly the same as that which in classical times came from India. **Cassia** (v. 24). A species of cinnamon. In all, about forty-eight pounds of spices, dried and powdered, were mixed with a gallon and a half of olive oil and *blended as by the perfumer* (v. 25, RSV).

#### e) The Holy Incense. 30:34-38.

The incense to be used for worship was also carefully prescribed, and its use for ordinary purposes was forbidden (vv. 37,38). Thus the fragrance of the holy oil and incense, as it was used in the service of the Tabernacle, was to be unique and unmistakable, a reminder to the people, with every breath they had of it, that God was in their midst. **Stacte** (v. 34; lit., *that which drips*). The word **stacte** is simply a transliteration of the LXX and the Vulgate term. It was a very fragrant kind of myrrh. It has also been identified with the gum of the storax tree, "a beautiful, perfumed shrub, abundant on the lower hills of Palestine" (*Cambridge Bible*). **Onycha**. This is also a transliteration from the LXX and the Vulgate; it was the powdered shell of a certain mollusc, still gathered and used for incense and perfume. **Galbanum**. A pungent, bitter resin, used also medicinally; it gave sharpness to the other ingredients. **Pure frankincense**. Another gum resin, from trees found in ancient times, chiefly in south Arabia. **Tempered**

**together** (v. 35). Literally, ( *salted* ), either as a symbol of purification or to induce more rapid burning; possibly both reasons. The ingredients were to be mixed together and melted into a solid mass (v. 36). Then small portions would be broken off and beaten into a powder to throw upon the live coals of the altar.

6) The Builders of the Tabernacle. 31:1-11.

### **Exodus 31:1**

*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

Two men were named by the Lord to supervise the carrying out of the directions for the Tabernacle. They were men who had been endowed by God with the wisdom and talent necessary for this very thing - Bezaleel of Judah and Aholiab of Dan.

7) The Observance of the Sabbath. 31:12-17.

A solemn and repetitive enforcement of the Sabbath ordinance, already enjoined in the Decalogue. This

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A solemn and repetitive enforcement of the Sabbath ordinance, already enjoined in the Decalogue. This observance was to be the peculiar sign of Israel's relation to Jehovah, "By this shall all men know ...." It is to be noted that this outward observance, along with other outer signs, such as circumcision, the dietary laws, *et al.*, are specifically translated in the NT into inward, spiritual evidences of discipleship (cf. Rom 2:28-29; Gal 4:9-10; Col 2:16-17). **Surely be put to death** (v. 14). An added sanction to enforce the command (cf. Ex 20:8-11; 23:12).

## Exodus 31:18

*And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.*

At the conclusion of this long period of instruction, Moses was given the two tables of testimony, inscribed by God himself with the Decalogue.

### *C. The Covenant Broken and Restored. 32:1-34:35.*

The people of Israel found it hard to walk even forty days by faith while their visible leader was gone. They demanded that Aaron produce a tangible sign of God's presence. It is uncertain whether it was the first commandment that was broken, a repudiation of Jehovah as God, or the second, an image demanded to represent Jehovah. In either case, it was a clear and deliberate transgression of the covenant that they had committed themselves to so boldly a few weeks before, a covenant sealed with blood.

#### 1) Israel's Demand for a God. 32:1-6.

"They were unwilling to continue longer without a God to go before them; but the

faith upon which their desire was founded was a very perverted one, not only as clinging to what was apparent to the eye, but as corrupted by the impatience and unbelief of a natural heart which has not been pervaded by the power of the living God, and imagines itself forsaken by Him whenever His help is not visibly and outwardly at hand" (KD).

### Exodus 32:1-3

*And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.*

Verse 1-3. **Gods.** The word ( '*Elohim* ), though plural, is usually rendered *God* , although it can be and is translated ( *gods* ) just as well. In the present instance it is difficult to know how to translate, and the commentators are divided because, as mentioned above, we do not know just what was in the mind of the people. **Delay.** Literally, *cauyse shame* , i.e., by not returning.

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**Exodus 32:4-6**

*And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

**These be thy gods.** Or, *This be thy God* . **Fashioned it.** The ancient idols were usually made by plating gold or silver upon a wooden center or frame (Isa 40:19-20; 44:12-17; Jer 10:1-9). It is unlikely that Aaron cast a solid gold animal. **Calf.** A young bull. The Egyptian Apis and the Phoenician Baal were both pictured as bulls, a common representation among many peoples of that day for fertility and strength. Whatever the original impulse of the Israelites, the making of the image was the first step on a very slippery path, which led to the eventual identification of Jehovah with the gods of the nations (cf. Isa 40Jer 10). 6. **Rose up to play.** Idolatry was accompanied by sensual, lewd dances which formed a part of the fertility cult.

2) The Sin of Israel Revealed to Moses by God. 32:7-14.

**Exodus 32:7-9**

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:*

**Thy people.** By this word God seemed to disown Israel. The phrase may have been used (as KD suggests) because they were the transgressors of the covenant of which Moses was the mediator, and so they were particularly his.

**Exodus 32:10**

*Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.*

**I will make of thee.** "God puts the fate of the nation into the hand of Moses, that he may remember his mediatorial office, and show himself worthy of his calling. This condescension of God, which placed the preservation or destruction of Israel in the hands of Moses, coupled with a promise which left the fullest freedom to his decision ... constituted a great test for Moses, whether he would be willing to give up his own people, laden as they were with guilt, as the price of his own exaltation. And Moses stood the test. The preservation of Israel was dearer to him than the honor of becoming the head and founder of a new kingdom of God" (KD).

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## Exodus 32:11-13

*And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?*

Moses pled for Israel in this prayer of intercession because they were **thy people** ; because of the great deliverance God had already wrought for them; and lest the Egyptians should mock, misconceiving the reason for the destruction; and finally, he pled the promise made to the fathers.

## Exodus 32:14-18

*And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.*

**The Lord repented.** "God is thus said to 'repent' not because He really changes His purpose, but because He does so apparently, when, in consequence of a change in the character and conduct of men, He is obliged to make a corresponding change in the purpose toward them which He had previously announced, and adopt toward them a new attitude" ( *Cambridge Bible* ). Keil and Delitzsch mention "the deep spiritual idea of the repentance of God, as an anthropopathic description of the pain which is caused to the love of God by the destruction of His creatures."

3) Moses' Return to the Camp. 32:15-24.

## Exodus 32:19-24

*And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his*

*hands, and brake them beneath the mount.*

The actual sight of the blatant transgression affected Moses more strongly than the report of it could do. Overcome with indignation, he threw to the ground the tablets of stone, the commands of which had already been broken by the hearts and acts of Israel. 20. The wooden core of the image was burned, the metal pulverized, and the dust of charcoal and gold strewed upon the water. The people were humbled into drinking their own sin.

#### 4) Punishment of the Idolaters. 32:25-29.

The Levites may have been involved in the sin of the rest of the people, but if so, there was immediate shame,

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The Levites may have been involved in the sin of the rest of the people, but if so, there was immediate shame, repentance, and willingness on their part to turn from their idolatry to Jehovah. The stubborn persistence of the others in their sin was made clear by their unwillingness to respond to the call, **Who is on the Lord's side?** (v. 26)

### **Exodus 32:25-28**

*And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)*

**Naked.** Literally, *broken loose*, i.e., loose from all restraint and from allegiance to God. 27. **Sweep the camp from side to side** (Moffatt). "As in every other decimation, the selection must be determined by lot or accidental choice, so here Moses left it to be determined by chance, upon whom the sword of the Levites would fall, knowing very well that even the so-called chance would be under the direction of God .... The unresisting attitude of the people generally may be explained partly from their reverence for Moses, whom God had so mightily and marvelously accredited as His servant in the sight of all the nation, and partly from the despondency and fear so natural to a guilty conscience" (KD).

### **Exodus 32:29**

*For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.*

**Consecrate yourselves ... even every man upon his son.** *Against his son* (ASV; LXX; Vulg.). *You have ordained yourselves ... each one at the cost of his son* (RSV).

"In the cause of the Lord, every one may not spare even his nearest relative, but must deny either son or brother for the Lord's sake" (KD; cf. Deut 33:9; Matt 10:37-38).

## 5) Moses' Intercession for Israel's Sin. 32:30-35.

### **Exodus 32:30-31**

*And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.*

**Peradventure I shall make an atonement.** Atonement for sin is a far greater thing than even Moses

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understood. Only God's Lamb could take away the sin of the world.

## **Exodus 32:32**

*Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.*

**Blot me ... out of thy book** , "To cut off from fellowship with the living God, or from the kingdom of those who live before God, and to deliver over to death. As a true mediator of his people, Moses was ready to stake his own life for the deliverance of the nation, and not to live before God himself, if Jehovah did not forgive the people their sin" (KD; cf. Rom 9:3). "It is not easy to estimate the measure of love in a Moses and a Paul; for the narrow boundary of our reasoning powers does not comprehend it, as the little child is unable to comprehend the courage of warlike heroes" (Bengel, *Gnomon of the NT* ).

## **Exodus 32:33-35**

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.*

**Whosoever hath sinned.** Not even the sacrifice of Moses could take away sin. 34. "Moses had obtained the preservation of the people and their entrance into the promised land, under the protection of God, through his intercession, and averted from the nation the abrogation of the covenant; but the covenant relation which had existed before was not restored in its integrity. Though grace may modify and soften wrath, it cannot mar the justice of the holy God" (KD).

6) God's Modification of Justice. 33:1-3.

## Exodus 33:1

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it:*

The words, **mine Angel shall go before thee** (Ex 32:34), are explained here. The statement was a modification of God's judgment upon Israel, but it was still punishment. Jehovah himself, not a mere messenger, had been in their midst before; but now, **I will not go up in the midst of thee** (v. 3).

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## 7) Repentance and Probation of Israel. 33:4-11.

The people were beginning to feel the weight of God's judgment, and in sorrow they stripped themselves of all adornment.

### **Exodus 33:7-17**

*And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.*

**Tabernacle of the congregation.** Critics have gratuitously introduced here a confusion which is not at all in the narrative. This "Tent of Meeting" (RSV) is obviously not the Tabernacle which had been described to Moses but was not yet built. To assume that this tent is the Tabernacle is to judge that generations of Jews and Christians, including the original author or editors of Exodus, have been so incredibly stupid as not to recognize the contradiction. What is stated here is that Moses set up at tent outside the camp, a temporary sanctuary where he met with Jehovah, and to which those who sought the Lord might come. Thus he enforced and illustrated God's judgment that He would not dwell in the midst of Israel. Moses' departure for the tent was marked by all the people (v. 8), and the lesson was firmly driven home that their sins had separated them from their God. This very fact awakened a longing in the hearts of the people (v. 10) that made possible a full restoration.

## 8) The Reconciliation of Israel to Jehovah. 33:12-23.

Moses pleaded that although God had declared that Moses had found grace in His sight, He had not given the assurance that was necessary to carry on this difficult

task. Moses also reminded the Lord that, after all, Israel was God's nation. 12. **I know thee by name. I** "know thee individually, more intimately than the other Israelites, like a king who knows the names of only such of his servants as he is on intimate terms with" ( *Cambridge Bible* ).

13. **Show me now thy way.** Literally, ( *make me to know. Show* ), in early Modern English meant not only to "let see" but also to "let know" (cf. *Cambridge Bible* ). 14. God promised that he himself, not simply a representative (vv. 1,3), would go up with Israel.

### **Exodus 33:18-23**

*And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.*

Moses was emboldened by this gracious promise to ask an unparalleled favor. "When God talked with him face to face ... he merely saw a 'similitude of Jehovah,' a form which rendered the invisible being of God visible to the human eye .... What Moses desired, therefore, was a sight of the glory or essential being of God, without any

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figure, and without a veil" (KD). This request was not made from idle curiosity but from "a desire to cross the chasm which had been made by the apostasy of the nation, that for the future he might have a firmer footing than the previous history had given him" (Baumgarten, quoted in KD). 23. **Shalt see my back parts.** "So to say, only the afterglow which He leaves behind Him, but which may still suggest faintly what the full brilliancy of His presence must be" ( *Cambridge Bible* ).

## 9) The Restored Covenant. 34:1-35.

### **Exodus 34:1-3**

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.*

God instructed Moses to ascend the mount as before, bringing with him stone tablets to replace those that had been broken.

### **Exodus 34:4-10**

*And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.*

The revelation of God's glory to Moses. "What Moses saw we are not told, but simply the words in which Jehovah proclaimed all the glory of His being.... "This sermon on the name of the Lord,' as Luther calls it, disclosed to Moses the most hidden nature of Jehovah.... all the words which the language contained to express the idea of

grace in its varied manifestations to the sinner, are crowded together here, to reveal the fact that in His inmost being God is love" (KD).

## **Exodus 34:11-26**

*Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.*

As Israel was restored to fellowship with Jehovah, two of the leading points of the covenant were stressed, the same two points that the people had ignored in their transgression: a warning against any covenant with the Canaanites; and a reminder of their responsibilities in the worship of Jehovah. **Images ... groves** (v. 13). *Pillars ... and asherim* (RSV; ASV). *Asherah* according to Canaanite mythology, was a goddess, the consort of El. In

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the OT she appears as the consort of Tyrian Baal, introduced by the Phoenician Jezebel into Israel (1 Kings 18:19). *Asherim*, the plural form, were cult objects erected for the worship of Asherah, probably trees or poles. The (*pillars*), or (*masseboth*), represented the male deity.

For commentary on verses 18-26, see notes on Ex 13:13-14; 23:12,15-19, **Earing time** (v. 21). Plowing time. The Sabbath was to be observed even at the time when it seemed most necessary to work.

### **Exodus 34:27-35**

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.*

Moses' return from the mountain. "By the renewed adoption of the nation, the covenant in chap. 24 was *eo ipso* restored; so that no fresh conclusion of this covenant was necessary, and the writing down of the fundamental conditions of the covenant was merely intended as a proof of its restoration" (KD). 29. **The skin of his face shone.** The Hebrew word for **shone** is a peculiar one; coming from the word for "horn," it means, literally, (*rayed*). Jerome in the Vulgate translated the clause in the light of the basic meaning of the root word - "horned." Hence Moses has often been represented in art with horns coming from his head.

### *D. The Building of the Sanctuary. 35:1-39:43.*

These chapters relate in detail the carrying out of the instructions given to Moses (chs. 25-31) for the Tabernacle and its furniture and the garments of the priests. In general the instructions are repeated verbatim, with a few additions for explanation and some omissions or abridgments. There is some difference also in the order of contents (cf. *Cambridge Bible* for a tabular comparison).

## 1) Materials for the Work Brought by the People. 35:1-35.

### **Exodus 35:1-3**

*And Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said unto them, These are the words which the LORD hath commanded, that ye should do them.*

Verse 1-3. The command to observe the Sabbath was repeated for the people, with the striking addition of the judgment of death upon the Sabbath-breaker (Ex 31:15). The reminder at this time was given to restrain the people and make it clear that even in their enthusiasm to build the house of the Lord, they were to rest and wait upon Jehovah one day in seven. The spiritual danger of being an over-industrious "Martha" is always present.

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## Exodus 35:4-9

*And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying,*

The invitation was given to the willing-hearted to bring the materials (Ex 25:1-8). It should be noticed that there was no pressure put on the people, no constraint or necessity, but a simple announcement of the need was made.

## Exodus 35:10-19

*And every wise hearted among you shall come, and make all that the LORD hath commanded;*

The **wise hearted** were invited to take part in the work. It is significant that at the very heart of Mosaic legal enactments and activity, there is perfect freedom to will and to do the work of the Lord. **Pins ... cords** (v. 18). Even to the least item, everything was dedicated to Jehovah. Tent cords are not mentioned in Ex 27:19 but would have been taken for granted.

## Exodus 35:20-29

*And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses.*

Presentation of the Offering. **Every one** (v. 21). Both men and women are mentioned; this was an individual expression of faith and worship. **Bracelets ... tabets** (v. 22). *Armlets ... brooches* (ASV, RSV). The precise type of jewelry meant is uncertain. **Offering of gold**. Probably the gold that was not in the form of jewelry.

Verses 23,24 describe the particular offering of the men, while verses 25,26 tell of the special contribution of the women, whose particular work was the spinning of coarser materials. The more precious materials came from the rulers (vv. 27,28).

### **Exodus 35:30-35**

*And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the LORD hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah;*

Moses introduced Bezaleel and Aholiab as God's chosen and specially endowed craftsmen to supervise the work

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(Ex 31:2-5). Their own skills they were to pass on by instructing the others.

## 2) The Liberality of the People. 36:1-7.

### **Exodus 36:1**

*Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded.*

The giving exceeded the need. The materials were delivered to Bezaleel and Aholiab, or their assistants, until the amount was so great that the people had to be restrained from further giving.

## 3) The Execution of the Work. 36:8-38:20.

### **Exodus 37:1-7**

*And Bezaleel made the ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half was the length of it, and a cubit and a half the breadth of it, and a cubit and a half the height of it:*

The record of the construction of the Tabernacle follows the account of the instructions almost verbally. This is not useless repetition, but an emphasis upon the fact of Israel's careful adherence to God's word. Without this obedience, no amount of sacrifice and labor would have been acceptable.

### **Exodus 37:8-29**

*One cherub on the end on this side, and another cherub on the other end on that*

*side: out of the mercy seat made he the cherubims on the two ends thereof.*

The curtains and coverings of the Tabernacle. Cf. Ex 26:1-14. 20-34. The framework. Cf. 26:15-30. 35-38. The veil and screen. Cf. 26:31-37. 38. **Chapiters ... fillets.** Capitals for the pillars, and a band around the pillars just below the capitals (not mentioned in ch. 26). 37:1-9. The ark of the covenant. Cf. 25:10-20. 10-16. The table of shewbread. Cf. 25:23-29. 17-24. The candlestick. Cf. 25:31-39. 25-28. The altar of incense. Cf. 30:1-5. 29. The anointing oil and incense, a summary statement of 30:22-38. 38:1-7. The altar of burnt offering. Cf. 27:1-8.

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## Exodus 38:8

*And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the lookingglasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.*

The brazen laver. Cf. Ex 30:18-21. The bronze for the laver was provided by the polished metal mirrors of the women. That which once reflected their natural faces was now to be used to remind men of their need of spiritual cleansing that they might reflect the glory of God. **Women ... which assembled.** Literally, ( *servant women which served* ), possibly for cleaning, or as a choir.

## Exodus 38:9-31

*And he made the court: on the south side southward the hangings of the court were of fine twined linen, an hundred cubits:*

The court of the tabernacle. Cf. 27:9-19.

### 4) An Estimate of the Amount of Metal Used. 38:21-31.

The gold amounted to 29 talents, 730 shekels, or about 40,940 ounces troy weight. The silver mentioned was only the atonement money (Ex 30:13-14), which amounted to 100 talents, 1,775 shekels, or about 140,828 ounces troy. No account is made of the voluntary gifts of silver. Attempts to value the precious metals used in terms of modern currency do not mean much, as we have no way of knowing the comparable value in that day. It is obvious that the expenditure upon this little sanctuary was enormous, and a monument to the dedication of the people to their God. It is significant that the Tabernacle rested upon, and its curtains were hung upon the silver

that was the representative contribution of every man in the congregation of Israel. The Tabernacle stood thus upon the dedication of God's redeemed people. 29-31. The bronze used weighed about three tons.

## 5) The Clothing of the Priests. 39:1-31.

### **Exodus 39:2-43**

*And he made the ephod of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.*

The ephod. Cf. Ex 28:6-12. 8-21. The breastplate. Cf. 28:15-27. 22-26. The robe of the ephod. Cf. 28:31-35.

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27-29. Tunics and other vestments. Cf. 28:39-40,42. 30-31. The headdress of the high priest. Cf. 28:36-38.

## 6) The Finished Work Presented to Moses. 39:32-43.

As the writer concludes his account of the work, he stresses again, as he has done repeatedly, after the description of each separate piece, that all was done **as the Lord had commanded** Moses.

### *E. The Erection and Consecration of the Tabernacle. 40:1-38.*

#### **Exodus 40:1-16**

*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

Moses was instructed by Jehovah to set up the Tabernacle and to prepare both the Tabernacle and the priests for God's service. The actual erection is simply stated, the details having already been given, but the recurrent phrase, **as the Lord commanded Moses**, again reminds us of how exactly Israel obeyed the words of the Lord.

#### **Exodus 40:17-33**

*And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up.*

The Tabernacle was set up for use on the first day of the first month (New Year's Day) of the **second year** of the exodus from Egypt.

## **Exodus 40:34-38**

*Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.*

The fulfillment of God's commands culminated in the sanctifying by God's visible presence of all that had been dedicated unto him. For Israel and for all ages to come, these chapters clearly teach the lesson that the way of blessing is the way of obedience and faith.

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