

THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**11** And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Yet one plague more will I bring upon Pha-raoh, and upon E-gypt; afterwards he will let you go hence; when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether. (2) Speak now in the ears of the people, and let them ask every man of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. (3) And Je-ho-vah gave the people favor in the sight of the E-gyp-tians. Moreover the man Mo-ses was very great in the land of E-gypt, in the sight of Pha-raoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

(4) And Mo-ses said, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, About midnight will I go out into the midst of E-gypt: (5) and all the first-born in the land of E-gypt shall die, from the first-born of Pha-raoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill; and all the first-born of cattle. (6) And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of E-gypt, such as there hath not been, nor shall be any more. (7) But against any of the children of Is-ra-el shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that Je-ho-vah doth make a distinction between the E-gyp-tians and Is-ra-el. (8) And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out And he went out from Pha-raoh in hot anger.

(9) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Pha-raoh will not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of E-gypt. (10) And Mo-ses and Aar-on did all these wonders before Pha-raoh: and Je-ho-vah hardened Pha-raoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Is-ra-el go out of his land.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER ELEVEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. Propose a theme or topic for chapter eleven.
2. When did the LORD say the things in 11:1-3 to Moses? How do they fit into the narrative of chapters 10-11?
3. What was to be the result of the last plague? (11:1)
4. What was Moses to tell the Israelites to say to the Egyptians? (11:2)
5. How did the Egyptians regard the Israelites? What brought this about? (11:3)
6. What was the estimation of Moses by the Egyptians? (11:3)
7. At what time of day would the LORD pass over? (11:4)
8. To whom is 11:4ff addressed?
9. What was to be the extent of the death of the firstborn? (11:5)
10. Who were the highest and lowest people in Egyptian society? (11:5)
11. What would be the immediate effect of the death of the firstborn? (11:6)
12. What would the silence of the dogs reveal about the status of the Israelites? (11:7)
13. What was Pharaoh to know (to learn) from the fact that the Israelites were spared the death of their firstborn? (11:7)
14. Who would urge the Israelites to depart? (11:8)
15. What was Moses' feeling as he departed from Pharaoh? (11:8)
16. Why would not Pharaoh hearken? (11:9)

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EXODUS ELEVEN: THE LAST WARNING!

1. Revealed by God to Moses; 11:1-3.
2. Related by Moses to Pharaoh; 11:4-8.
3. Rejected by Pharaoh; 11:9-10.

## EXODUS ELEVEN: ONE MORE BLOW (OR PLAGUE)!

1. The day for judgment is set; 11:1-3.
2. The day of judgment will be final; 11:4-8.

## GOD'S SAINTS FAVORED (11:2-3)

1. Jewelry given; 11:2; 3:22; 12:35-36.
2. Honor given; 11:3.

## RESULTS OF THE LAST PLAGUE

1. Death of the firstborn; 11:5.
2. Great cry; 11:6.
3. Distinction demonstrated; 11:7.
4. Supplication of Egyptians; 11:8.
5. Departure of Israel; 11:8.

## THE LORD MAKES A DISTINCTION!

1. Between Israelites and Egyptians.
2. Between Moses and Pharaoh.
3. Between Himself and Egypt's gods.

## THE SAD SUMMARY (11:9-10; John 12:37)

1. Pharaoh would not hearken.
2. Moses and Aaron worked wonders.
3. Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. *What does Exodus eleven tell about?*

It gives God's last warning to Pharaoh through Moses. It tells us that God revealed to Moses that only one more plague - the death of Egypt's firstborn - remained before Pharaoh would thrust out the Israelites. It tells of Pharaoh's rejection of Moses and God's message.

2. *When did God inform Moses about the last plague? (11:1)*

God either revealed this information to Moses' mind during his hot conversation with Pharaoh (Cassuto's view); or God had already told it to Moses before his arrival at Pharaoh's house (10:24) (view of Keil and Delitzsch, Hertz, and others.) If that is the true interpretation of 11:1, then the verse should be translated, "Jehovah *had said* unto Moses, . . . ." We lean to this latter view, but either view is possible. Perhaps God revealed to Moses the facts about the last plague and about the Passover during the three days of darkness.

The word for *plague* in 11:1 is not used elsewhere in Exodus. Its most numerous occurrence is in Lev. 13-14, where it refers to the plague of leprosy. It means a *blow*, or *striking*. It was to be the final decisive blow.

We must reject the unproven views of critics<sup>1</sup> who argue that 11:1-3 was written by one author (called E), and 11:4-8 was by another author (called J). This interruption of the record of the conversation between Moses and Pharaoh is necessary for our understanding of how Moses knew about the last plague (as related in 11:4-8).

3. *What were the Israelites to ask the Egyptians for? (11:2)*

For jewels of gold and silver. The word *jewels* actually just means *vessels*, but the fact that they were of gold and silver justifies the translation of it as *jewels*.

In 3:22 only *women* were mentioned as those who were to request jewels. Here *men* are mentioned also. This is not a contradiction, just an enlargement of the command.

The word *borrow* in KJV is misleading. Neither the Hebrews nor the Egyptians interpreted their asking as borrowing. No one hinted that the items would be returned. See notes on 3:22.

4. *How did the Egyptians feel toward Moses and the Israelites? (11:3)*

They looked upon the people with favor, and upon Moses as very great. This had been predicted to Moses back at the

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<sup>1</sup>S. R. Driver, *Intro. to the Literature of the O. T.* (New York: World, 1965), p. 27.

burning bush (3:20-22). In 12:33, 35-36 we read about how Jehovah gave the Israelites favor with the Egyptians.

The "people" of 11:3 seem to be the *Israelite* people. Just at this moment Moses was very high in the esteem of the Israelites. Not long before, they had scorned him (5:20-21); and very soon after this they were blaming Moses for every trouble they had (15:23; 16:21).

The honor Moses achieved must be held up in contrast with the excuses he once gave about being such an inferior person (3:11; 4:10). This is a warning to us not to low-rate ourselves too much.

Would Moses as the author of Exodus write words like Ex. 11:3 about himself? Certainly! Why not? It was the truth. Compare the way Paul wrote of himself (II Cor. 10:8-14), and the way Nehemiah wrote of himself (Neh. 5:18-19).

#### 5. *When would the last plague strike?* (11:4)

About midnight! The hour of this plague would make its coming even dreadful.

God did not specify which midnight. We know from 12:1 that a new month (called Abib) had then started. Ex. 12:3 tells us that on the tenth day of that month each family was to select a lamb. Then on the fourteenth day of the month the lamb would be slain (12:6). Thus the "midnight" was at least four days distant, and maybe as many as nine. But Pharaoh did not know this. Possibly the approach of each midnight gave him premonitions of terror as he recalled Moses' words.

In Egyptian mythology the sun god Re was supposed to fight each *night* with Apepi, the monster-serpent, and his army of fiends, who tried to overthrow Re.<sup>2</sup> Re always conquered, and thus the sun arose day after day in the sky. The occurrence of the death of the firstborn at *night* may have therefore made some Egyptians sense that Jehovah could

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<sup>2</sup>E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Mummy* (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1972), pp. 270-271.

enter the nighttime arena of combat with Egypt's gods, and so utterly overwhelm them that it was evident that they never had existed at all.

The conversation between Moses and Pharaoh that was interrupted at 10:29 is picked up again in the narrative at 11:4.

6. *What would happen in the last plague?* (11:4-6)

God would go out into the midst of Egypt. (The *I* in 11:4 is emphatic.) All the firstborn of Egypt would die, those high-born and those low-born, and the firstborn of all beasts. There would be a great cry of anguish throughout all the land of Egypt.

The lowly maidservant (slave woman) working at the "two grindstones" (a lower one and an upper stone that rotated upon the lower) would see her firstborn die. Pharaoh on his throne would suffer the same.

Pharaoh's forefather had once tried to slay the babes of Israel (1:22). Now all Egypt is sentenced to have its firstborn die.

The death of firstborn beasts would be impressive in Egypt, where many beasts were worshipped as manifestations of various gods.

Ramm comments<sup>3</sup> that the universality of the plague of death of the firstborn is a type of universality of God's last judgment, when the small and great alike shall stand before the judge (Rev. 20:12). God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). There will be weeping and wailing, like the cry that came up from Egypt (Matt. 25:30).

The cry that was to arise throughout Egypt on that dreadful night recalls the cries of the Israelites (2:23). Now it is the Egyptians who will cry out in anguish at God's judgment.

We surely cannot accept the hypothesis set forth<sup>4</sup> that the story of the death of the firstborn is an exaggerated account of a fatal pestilence which struck the Egyptian children and

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<sup>3</sup>Bernard Ramm, *His Way Out* (Glendale, Calif.: Regal, 1974), p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>*The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman, 1969), pp. 363-364.

brought about the release of the Hebrews. Proponents of this theory think that through years of transmission within Israel the memory of the event was so shaped that the end product, the present Exodus narrative, suggests that *only* the firstborn were involved, and that both the firstborn of man and beast were involved. Bernard Ramm replies well to this notion with the point that Pharaoh would not have released Israel because of an ordinary epidemic among children.<sup>5</sup>

7. *How would God show that He made a distinction between Egyptians and Israel? (11:7)*

He would protect the Israelites from the death of their firstborn. His protection would be so total that not even a dog would bark at the hordes of departing Israelites and their cattle. (Literally the text says that a dog will not "sharpen" [or point] his tongue. This same idiom is used also in Joshua 10:21.)

What a contrast! The wicked crying, the good quiet; the wicked dead, the good living; the wicked frightened, the good peaceful; the wicked helpless, the good protected. (*Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*)

8. *What would Pharaoh's servants do when their firstborn died? (11:8)*

They would come to Moses, bow down, and beg him and his people to leave. "After that," Moses said, "I will go out!" These were Moses' last words to Pharaoh before the Passover.

What a reversal! Egyptians begging Moses to leave? Yes, and even Pharaoh joined in the begging (12:30-33).

9. *With what feeling did Moses leave Pharaoh? (11:8)*

With hot anger! First Pharaoh became angered (10:28); then Moses' wrath arose. But it was a righteous anger, the kind all noble Godly souls should feel sometimes when dealing with people like Pharaoh - lying, double-dealing, promise-breaking, stubborn, cruel, persecuting, hard, resistant to the truth.

10. *Did Pharaoh change his mind after Moses left him? (11:9-10)*

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<sup>5</sup>Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

In no wise! God cautioned Moses not to expect Pharaoh to come to his senses. All along God had foretold that Pharaoh would not listen, and that He would work his signs (miracles and plagues) in Egypt; and *then* after all that, "I will bring forth my hosts, my people, the children of Isreal" (7:4; 4:21).

There is a marvelous review and summary of the first nine plagues in the two verses Ex. 11:9-10.

The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart after plagues number six (boils), eight (locusts), nine (darkness), and after Israel departed (14:4, 8). See notes on 4:21 concerning this hardening.

Ex. 11:9-10 are truly transitional verses. From now on Moses will be dealing with Israel and not with Pharaoh.

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**12** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses and Aar-on in the land of E-gypt, saying, (2) This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. (3) Speak ye unto all the congregation of Is-ra-el, saying, In the tenth *day* of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household: (4) and if the household be too little for a lamb, then shall he and his neighbor next unto his house take one according to the number of the souls; according to every man's eating ye shall make your count for the lamb. (5) Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old: ye shall take it from the sheep, or from the goats: (6) and ye shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Is-ra-el shall kill it at even. (7) And they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two side-posts and on the lintel, upon the houses wherein they shall eat it. (8) And they



shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; with bitter herbs they shall eat it. (9) Eat not of it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roast with fire; its head with its legs and with the inwards thereof. (10) And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; but that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. (11) And thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is Je-ho-vah's passover. (12) For I will go through the land of E-gypt in that night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of E-gypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of E-gypt I will execute judgments: I am Je-ho-vah. (13) And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of E-gypt. (14) And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to Je-ho-vah: throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

(15) Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Is-ra-el. (16) And in the first day there shall be to you a holy convocation, and in the seventh day a holy convocation; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you. (17) And ye shall observe the *feast of unleavened bread*; for in this selfsame day have I brought your hosts out of the land of E-gypt: therefore shall ye observe this day throughout your generations by an ordinance for ever. (18) In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. (19) Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Is-ra-el, whether he be a sojourner, or one that is born in the land. (20) Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.

(21) Then Mo-ses called for all the elders of Is-ra-el, and said

unto them, Draw out, and take you lambs according to your families, and kill the passover. (22) And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. (23) For Je-ho-vah will pass through to smite the E-gyp-tians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, Je-ho-vah will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. (24) And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. (25) And it shall come to pass, when ye are come to the land which Je-ho-vah will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. (26) And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? (27) that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of Je-ho-vah's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Is-ra-el in E-gypt, when he smote the E-gyp-tians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped. (28) And the children of Is-ra-el went and did so; as Je-ho-vah had commanded Mo-ses and Aar-on, so did they.

(29) And it came to pass at midnight, that Je-ho-vah smote all the first-born in the land of E-gypt, from the first-born of Pha-raoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle. (30) And Pha-raoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the E-gyp-tians; and there was a great cry in E-gypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. (31) And he called for Mo-ses and Aar-on by night, and said, Rise up, get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Is-ra-el; and go, serve Je-ho-vah, as ye have said. (32) Take both your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. (33) And the E-gyp-tians were urgent upon the people, to send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We are all dead men. (34) And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. (35) And the children of Is-ra-el

did according to the word of Mo-ses; and they asked of the E-gyp-tains jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: (36) and Je-ho-vah gave the people favor in the sight of the E-gyp-tians, so that they let them have what they asked. And they despoiled the E-gyp-tians.

(37) And the children of Is-ra-el journeyed from Ram-e-ses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children. (38) And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks and herds, even very much cattle. (39) And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of E-gypt; for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of E-gypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victuals. (40) Now the time that the children of Is-ra-el dwelt in E-gypt was four hundred and thirty years. (41) And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of Je-ho-vah went out from the land of E-gypt. (42) It is a night to be much observed unto Je-ho-vah for bringing them out from the land of E-gypt: this is that night of Je-ho-vah, to be much observed of all the children of Is-ra-el throughout their generations.

(43) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses and Aar-on, This is the ordinance of the passover: there shall no foreigner eat thereof; (44) but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou has circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. (45) A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat thereof. (46) In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof. (47) All the congregation of Is-ra-el shall keep it. (48) And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to Je-ho-vah, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: but no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. (49) One law shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you. (50) Thus did all the children of Is-ra-el; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses and Aar-on, so did they. (51) And it came to pass the selfsame day, that Je-ho-vah did bring the children of Is-ra-el out of the land of E-gypt by their hosts.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWELVE  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. Where were God's instructions about the Passover given? (12:1)
3. What change in the calendar did the Passover make? (12:2)
4. When is the month Abib according to our calendar? (13:4)
5. On what day of the month was the lamb to be selected? (12:3)
6. What was the passover lamb a type of? (I Cor. 5:7)
7. What groups of people selected lambs? (12:3)
8. What if a family was too small to eat a whole lamb? (12:4)
9. What were the qualifications for the passover lamb? (12:5)
10. On what day was the lamb slain? At what time of day? (12:6)
11. What was done with the blood? (12:7, 22)
12. How was the lamb to be cooked and served? (12:8-9, 11)
13. What was done with the inwards of the lamb? (12:9)
14. What was to be done with the leftovers? (12:10, 45)
15. How were the people to be clothed as they ate the passover? In what manner was it to be eaten? (12:11)
16. What does *passover* mean? (12:11-13)
17. Who passed over the land? (12:12, 13, 23)
18. Against what would God execute judgment? (12:12)
19. What caused God to pass over the Israelites? (12:13)
20. How was the Passover remembered after the original observance in Egypt? (12:14)
21. What feast followed the Passover? (12:15, 17)
22. How long did this feast last? (12:15, 18)
23. What was the penalty for eating leaven? (12:15)
24. When were holy convocations (gatherings) to be held during the feast of Unleavened bread? (12:16)
25. What work was to be done during this feast? (12:16)
26. What was the cause or purpose for observing the feast of unleavened bread? (12:17)
27. On what days of the month were the feasts of Passover and unleavened bread? (12:18)

28. Was there any restriction about leaven besides not eating it? (12:19)
29. Who selected and killed the passover lamb? (12:21)
30. What was used to apply blood? (12:22)
31. Where were the people to stay during the passover? (12:22)
32. Did the Israelites leave in the middle of the night or the morning? (12:22)
33. How long was the Passover to be observed? (12:24)
34. Who would ask questions about the Passover observance? (12:26)
35. What was the reaction of the Israelites to Moses' orders about the Passover? (12:27-28, 50)
36. At what time did the firstborn die? (12:29)
37. What was the reaction of the Egyptians to the death of their firstborn? (12:30)
38. Who called Moses and Aaron? When? (12:31)
39. What did Pharaoh tell Moses and Aaron to do? (12:31-32)
40. What did Pharaoh ask Moses to do for him? (12:32)
41. How urgent were the Egyptians? (12:33)
42. What is stated about the bread dough the Israelites carried out? (12:34, 39)
43. What did the Israelites ask for? (12:35)
44. What place was the starting point of Israel's journey out? (12:37)
45. How many Israelites went out of Egypt? (12:37; Numbers 1:46)
46. Who went out with the Israelites? (Ex. 12:38)
47. How long had the Israelites dwelt in Egypt? (12:40-41; Gen. 15:13; Acts 7:6; Gal. 3:17)
48. How were the Israelites to feel about and react to the Passover? (12:42)
49. Could foreigners eat the passover? (12:43)
50. When could servants or sojourners eat the passover? (12:44-45, 48)
51. Where was the passover to be eaten? (12:46)
52. What was the law about the bones of the passover lamb? (12:46)

53. Why is this law about the bones significant to Christians? (John 19:36)  
54. Which Israelites were to keep the passover? (12:47)  
55. In what groups did God bring the Israelites out? (12:51)
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### EXODUS TWELVE: OVER AND OUT!

(The radio-operators' expression "Over and out" sums up much of the story in Exodus 12.)

- I. God passed over Egypt; 12:1-36.  
II. Israel went out of Egypt; 12:37-51.

### THE FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR! (Ex. 12:2)

- I. A time of deliverance; Ex. 12:13.  
II. A time of sacrifice; Ex. 12:3-6.  
III. A time of observance; Ex. 12:42.  
IV. A time to step forth; Ex. 12:37.

### RELIGION IN THE HOME! (12:3-4, 15)

- I. Sacrifices in every home; (12:3)  
II. Gatherings in every home; (12:3-4, 22)  
III. Blood on every house; (12:7, 22)  
IV. Instruction in every home; (12:26-27)

### NO LEAVEN IN YOUR HOUSES! (12:19)

- I. Unleavened bread after the Passover; (12:15).  
(After accepting Christ, our Passover lamb, we must put out the leaven of malice and wickedness. I Cor. 5:7-8).

- II. Unleavened bread in every generation; (12:17).  
 ("Be thou faithful unto death." Rev. 2:10).

**DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN,  
 A TYPE OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING! (12:29)**

- I. A time of judgment and vengeance; Ex. 6:6; II Thess. 1:7-9.  
 II. Advance warnings given; Ex. 11:4-5; 12:12; Rev. 1:7.  
 III. Sudden; Ex. 12:29; I Thess. 5:2-3.  
 IV. No one escapes; Ex. 12:30; I Thess. 5:3.  
 V. A time of cry; Ex. 12:30; Rev. 1:7; 6:15-17.  
 VI. Deliverance to those under the blood; Ex. 12:13, 23; Rev. 5:9.

**DELIVERANCE OF GOD'S PEOPLE! (Ex. 12:29-36)**

- I. It is the work of GOD; (12:29).  
 II. It requires obedience; (12:28).  
 III. It requires stepping forth; (12:34, 37)  
 IV. It is triumphant; (12:35-36).

**GOD FULFILLING HIS PROMISES!**

1. His people would come out from bondage. (Gen. 15:14)  
 2. His people would come forth with great substance. (Gen. 15:14; Ex. 12:36)  
 3. Pharaoh would drive them out. (Ex. 6:1; 12:31-33)  
 4. His people would be ill treated for four hundred years. (Gen. 15:13; Ex. 12:40)

**THE PASSOVER**  
 in Egypt

—— A Type of ——

**CHRIST,**  
 Our Passover

1. The start of a new year.

1. The start of new life for

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| Ex. 12:2.   | the believer. II Cor. 5:17.  |
| 2. Each family, led by the father, kept the feast.    | 2. Each person and family keeps "the feast."                         |
| Ex. 12:3  | II Cor. 5:8.   |
| 3. Unblemished lamb;                                  | 3. Christ, the lamb of God (John 1:29), without sin; (Heb. 4:14-15). |
| Ex. 12:5  |  |
| 4. Lamb pre-selected;                                 | 4. Christ foreknown;   |
| Ex. 12:3.   | I Peter 1:19-20.   |
| 5. Lamb slain! Ex. 12:6, 21.                          | 5. Christ slain! Rev. 5:6; 13:8.                                     |
| 6. Not a bone broken;                                 | 6. Not a bone broken;  |
| Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12.                                 | John 19:33, 36.  |
| 7. Blood applied to doors;                            | 7. Blood sprinkled upon our hearts; I Pet. 1:2;                      |
| Ex. 12:7, 22.   | Heb. 12:24.  |
| 8. Lamb eaten; 12:8-10                                | 8. Must eat of Christ;   |
|   | John 6:53.   |
| 9. Be ready to march;                                 | 9. Be ready to obey;   |
| Ex. 12:11.  | Titus 3:1.   |
| 10. All firstborn died, except those under the blood; | 10. All to perish except those under the blood;                      |
| 12:12-13, 29.   | Heb. 9:22; Rom. 5:9.   |
| 11. An eternal observance;                            | 11. Jesus the same forever;  |
| Ex. 12:14, 24-25.                                     | Heb. 13:8.   |
| 12. Leaven removed;                                   | 12. Purge out old leaven (malice, wickedness);                       |
| Ex. 12:15, 19-20; 13:6-7.                             | I Cor. 5:8.  |
| 13. Holy convocations to be kept; Ex. 12:16.          | 13. Need to assemble together; Heb. 10:25.                           |
| 14. Brought deliverance;                              | 14. Brings deliverance;  |
| Ex. 12:30-33.   | Heb. 2:14-15.  |
| 15. Available to all those circumcised; 12:43-48.     | 15. Available to all those circumcised in baptism;                   |
|   | Col. 2:11-13.  |
| 16. To speak of it always;                            | 16. Speak always of our hope;  |
| Ex. 12:24-27; 13:8-9.                                 | I Pet. 3:15.   |



## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWELVE

1. *What is in Exodus twelve?*

God's instructions to Moses in the land of Egypt occupy 12:1-20. These instructions concerned how the Israelites should kill and eat the passover in Egypt (12:3-14), and how they should keep the feast of unleavened bread (12:15-20). Pervading these instructions are words about the future observance of these feasts.

The chapter relates how Moses gave a last-day reminder to the people to kill the passover (12:21-28).

The chapter tells of the death of Egypt's firstborn, and how the Egyptians thrust out the Israelites, and how the Israelites collected jewelry from the Egyptians. It tells of Israel's mass departure. (12:29-42)

The chapter closes with Jehovah's revelation to Moses about foreigners eating the Passover (12:43-51).

2. *Where did God give the instructions about the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread? (12:1)*

He gave them *in Egypt*. Of the three annual feasts of the Israelites, the Passover alone is said to have been instituted in Egypt. Why should this statement be made, unless as a matter of fact it is true?

Critics maintain that the Passover information in Ex. 12 is a very late priestly composition (fifth century B.C.), designed to give an explanation for the Passover and to enforce its observance upon the people. Supposedly it had been borrowed from a sheep-herding people, who at lambing season smeared blood on their tent-flaps to protect their flocks from some demonic spirits. Such ideas lack any proof at all, and certainly do not agree with the Biblical information about the Passover's origin.

3. *What month became the first month of the year? Why?*

The month when the Passover occurred became thereafter the first month of the Israelites' religious year. God designated this to be done because the Passover was the occasion of Israel's liberation from Egypt. It started a new epoch in

Israel's history.

The month containing the Passover was anciently called *Abib*, and occurred partly in our March and partly in April. Ex. 23:15: "You shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month *Abib*, for in it you came out of Egypt. Compare Ex. 34:18; Deut. 16:1.

This month was called Nisan after the Babylonian captivity. See Esther 3:7; Neh. 2:1.

The Israelites had two starting points for their years. The religious calendar began in Abib. The civil (or agricultural) calendar began six months later in Ethanim (also called Tishri), which was in our Sept.-Oct. The Tishri-to-Tishri year had been used before the Passover was instituted.

In a true spiritual sense the Passover marked the beginning of a new year for Israel. In the same way, our acceptance of Jesus as Lord, Messiah, and savior is the start of God's new year for us. It is our spiritual birthday. Our past life in sin was a bondage, like Israel's in Egypt. When any one is in Christ, lo, he is a new creature! (II Cor. 5:17)

4. *What animal was selected for the Passover?* (12:3-5)

A *lamb* was selected. The Hebrew word for lamb used here (*seh*) referred also to kid goats. See 12:5.

Each family was to select its own lamb, and thus many lambs would be sacrificed. In view of this fact, it is very noteworthy to see that throughout this chapter the lamb is referred to as *singular* (not *lambs*). We feel that this was no accident, but was God's way of indicating that there was only ONE true passover lamb in HIS mind. That lamb is Christ, our passover, who has been sacrificed for us! (John 1:29; I Cor. 5:7). Unless the Passover is studied with this in mind, it is little more than a triviality of history. But the twelfth chapter of Exodus becomes exciting when we realize that almost every line of it reveals more about Christ, the true Passover lamb.

5. *When was the Passover lamb to be selected?* (12:3, 6)

The lamb was to be selected on the tenth day of the month.

Presumably it was kept apart from the rest of the flock. It was to be slain on the fourteenth day of the month. (12:6)

The act of selecting out the Passover lamb four days in advance served several purposes. It directed the people's minds toward the coming feast. It became a topic of conversation. The visible presence of the lamb stimulated the people to do the other necessary jobs in preparation for the coming feast and for their departure. More than that, it illustrated the fact that Christ our passover lamb was selected and foreordained to die long before He perished on Calvary. Indeed, he was foreknown before the foundation of the world! (I Pet. 1:19-20)

In Ex. 12:3 we have the first Biblical usage of the term *congregation* (Heb. *edah*). This became a common technical term for the whole body of the Israelites. The word has a somewhat similar meaning to the New Testament word *ekklesia*, the church, or the called-out assembly. Though there were many families in Israel, they were all one congregation. In a similar way we Christians today should think and act like members of a single, world-wide congregation of those redeemed by Christ, our Passover lamb. Loyalty to our humanly-created denominations and exclusive devotion to our local congregations destroy the Spirit-given unity of the whole world-wide congregation of God.

6. *What function did family units have in the Passover?* (12:3-4)

The Passover was eaten by family groups individually. The Passover was fundamentally a family-feast, although two or more small families could join together if one family was too small to eat an entire lamb. Jewish tradition later specified ten as the smallest number of participants at a family Passover. But this number was originally left to the discretion of individual heads of families.

The observance of the Passover in this way was a simple, manageable way to guarantee the participation of every Israelite in the Passover feast. It also showed God's approval of and stress on the family. The family is a vital, divinely-ordained unit in society.

7. *What kind of lamb was selected?* (12:5)

The lamb was without blemish, having no sores, scars, or deformities. Compare Lev. 22:20-22. Likewise Christ was without blemish of sin (I Peter 1:19; Heb. 4:15). The lamb was to be a male a year old. The Jewish rabbis interpreted this to mean "born within the year." More probably it meant "a full year old." The Hebrew literally says "a son of a year." A similar expression is used in Gen. 21:4, where we are told that Isaac was circumcised when he was a "son of eight days," that is, eight days old. Lev. 27:6 has a similar wording: "from a son of a month unto a son of five years."<sup>1</sup>

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

8. *Who killed the lamb? When?* (12:6)

The whole congregation killed it "between the two evenings." (Compare Num. 9:3.) Probably only one person in each family actually killed the lamb, the father or someone he appointed. But by the principle of *representation* every member of the family killed it; all were involved in its death. It is most remarkable that "*all* the assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill *it*," as if God referred to ONE lamb for the whole body of Israelites. We feel that this is exactly what God had in mind. God was providing to them an advance symbol, or type, of THE lamb, Christ!

By the same principle of representation, we all killed the Lord Jesus. The Jews and the Romans condemned him and drove the nails. But we by our sins also shared in killing him!

This principle works also for our benefit. We become sharers in the death of Jesus by this principle. Jesus died *for* sins, and died *to* sins, once for all. We who are baptized *into his death* (Romans 6:3-4) have been united with Him in death. His death becomes our death to sin. We are united with him in death and in resurrection.

The lamb was slain about sunset. Deut. 16:6: "Thou shalt

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<sup>1</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun." Ex. 12:6 literally says "between the two evenings." The meaning of this is not absolutely certain, but the Jews interpreted it to mean between three and six o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>2</sup> Supposedly if it were after sunset, it would place the sacrifice on the next calendar day. The annual Day of Atonement was on the tenth day of the seventh month, but the observance began on the ninth day of the month, at even (Lev. 23:32). Perhaps this is an analogy with the start of the Passover: it could be slain at any period from late afternoon, to sunset, or shortly after.

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

#### 9. *Was the Passover a SACRIFICE?*

Certainly it was a kind of sacrifice. Observe that the Passover ritual is called the *sacrifice* of the Lord's Passover (Ex. 12:27; 34:25; Deut. 16:2).

The only reason for hesitating to call the Passover a sacrifice is that its original observance in Egypt did not involve use of altars or priests. But this was due to the fact that the first Passover was kept during the patriarchal age before the law of Moses (given at Mt. Sinai) set up a system of priests, altars, etc. But this did not keep it from being a true sacrifice. Prior to the law of Moses the heads of families often functioned as priests to offer sacrifices (Gen. 8:20; Job 1:5).

Like all true sacrifices the Passover involved blood and death. Blood was given by God to make atonement for our souls (Lev. 17:11), and was employed for no other purpose.

Like all true sacrifices, the Passover was in later times to be offered only at the central place of worship which God had designated (Deut. 12:2, 5-6).

Like all true sacrifices, the Passover involved substitution! The Israelites were sinners and idolaters, just like the Egyptians. They deserved to perish (as we do also). God did

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<sup>2</sup>Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIV, iv, 3.

not spare Israel because they were righteous (Deut. 9:4). God was determined to destroy all the firstborn IN Egypt; not just the firstborn OF Egypt (Ex. 11:4). The death of the lamb was accepted as the substitute for the death of the firstborn of Israel.

We stress the fact that the Passover was a sacrifice, because it was a type of the death of Christ. Christ's death was also a sacrifice, the righteous Christ dying in the place of unrighteous sinners like us. His death was not just a moral lesson or good example but a provision for our guilt, a substitution for us. This is a great comfort to us, if we have become truly aware of our desperate condition in sin.

10. *Where was the blood placed?* (12:7, 22)

It was placed on the two side posts and on the lintels across the tops of the doorways of the houses where the passover was being eaten. A bunch of hyssop was used to apply the blood to the door-posts, after the hyssop had been dipped in the blood in the basin.

The sprinkling of the blood and the use of *hyssop* both suggest cleansing and putting out (expiation) of uncleanness. Hyssop is a lowly plant, sometimes growing out of cracks in walls (I Kings 4:33). Hyssop was used in the rituals for cleansing leprosy (Lev. 14:4-6, 49-52), for cleansing the uncleanness associated with the dead (Num. 19:18-19), and for cleansing sin generally (Ps. 51:7).

The blood spattered about the door was the only difference that night between Israel and Egypt. Likewise, on the day of judgment, whether or not the blood of Christ is sprinkled upon our hearts (that is, souls) will be the only criterion for determining whether we receive eternal life or eternal punishment. See I Peter 1:2; Heb. 12:24.

Ex. 12:22 speaks of dipping the hyssop in the blood in the *basin*. The Hebrew word translated *basin* (*saph*) indeed means basin, or bowl, (as in Jer. 52:19; I Kings 7:50). But it is also translated *threshold*, or sill (as in Judges 19:27; II Kings 12:9). The Greek O.T. translated it in Ex. 12:22 as *thura*, meaning door or threshold.

Some interpreters make a big matter of this, arguing that by having blood on the threshold, all four sides of the doorway were sprinkled with blood, and thus the Israelites were totally protected from entry by a "destroyer." Whether this idea is set forth with a reverent attitude (as by Pink) or as an attempt to explain the sprinkling of the blood as a custom borrowed from other nations by the Israelites, it is still not valid. How could there be enough blood in (or on) the threshold to dip a hyssop into it? Why should blood be placed on the door threshold where it could be trodden under foot of men?

The 1969 *Broadman Bible Commentary* seriously assures us that we need to know that the doorway was the abode of good and evil spirits in Near Eastern culture, in order to have understanding of the smearing of the blood in the Passover narrative (p. 373). Possibly some superstitious peoples did believe that this was true; but it has no proven connection with the acts of the Israelites.

11. *How was the lamb prepared for eating? How was it served?* (12:8-9, 46)

It was roasted entire (not cut up), probably over an open fire. It was served with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The inward parts were roasted with the rest of it. (We are quite sure that the entrails were first cleaned out before roasting.)

Perhaps the significance of the lamb's being roasted entire lay in the fact that Christ sacrificed himself entirely, body and soul. The entirety of the lamb hardly represents the perfect unity of Israel as a nation,<sup>3</sup> unless Israel is represented as a sacrifice for its own salvation.

The Greek O.T. (LXX) inserts into 12:10 the words, "and a bone of it ye shall not break." This is stated in 12:46, both in the Hebrew and the Greek. The unbroken bones of the Passover lamb symbolized the unbroken bones of Christ (John 19:36). See notes on 12:46.

Unleavened bread is bread made without yeast or other

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<sup>3</sup>J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 255.

“starter.” Usually the leaven was a pinch of the old dough added to the next new batch of dough. Unleavened bread would be flat, unraised, and probably pancake-shaped. Leaven was not used on Passover night because there was not time for the process of letting the bread rise (Ex. 12:34).

The apostle Paul reveals that there was a spiritual meaning in the unleavened bread, which was not clearly revealed in the original feast. Leaven is a symbol of such evil influences as malice, wickedness, and hypocrisy (II Cor. 5:7; Luke 12:1; Mark 8:15). These are “leaven” which must be put out of a Christian’s life.

The *bitter herbs* that were served with the unleavened bread and roasted lamb probably were symbols of the previous sufferings of the Israelites. They also remind us that Christ was a man of sorrows (Isa. 53:3). The bitter herbs are also referred to in Num. 9:11. The Jewish writings called the *Mishna* allowed as bitter herbs lettuce, chicory, pepperwort, snakeroot, or dandelion. (*Pesahim* 2:6) (The *Mishna* dates from second century B.C. to second century A.D.)

12. *Why were no leftovers kept from the Passover feast?* (12:10, 46)

The reason is not stated. Compare Num. 9:12; Deut. 16:4. Perhaps it was to cause the participants to associate this food exclusively with the deliverance they experienced that night. Also perhaps leftover fragments might have been used as objects for superstitious practices. Also any leftover fragments might have fallen into irreverent hands that would treat them spitefully. God has frequently claimed holy things for His exclusive use. See Ex. 30:37-38; Lev. 27:30ff.

13. *In what manner were the Israelites to eat the Passover?* (12:11)

They were to eat it in haste. The hour was probably late by the time the lamb was roasted and served, and lamb had to be eaten by midnight (11:4; 12:29). There was also many other last-minute jobs for the Israelites, as any one who has



ever packed up to move can testify. As they ate the supper, they were to be packed-up and clothed for travel; even though the hour was late. We wonder if some babies were not crying because of the interruption in their usual life patterns.

Little did the Israelites dream that those same clothes and shoes they wore that night would be miraculously preserved for forty years in the desert. (Deut. 29:5; Neh. 9:21)

The instructions about the Passover were made forcible by God's declaration "It is *Jehovah's* passover." Although the passover was for man's good, it was not BY man. The Lord God was the creator and designer of the passover. Salvation is of GOD. "GOD so loved the world that he gave. . . ." Often we fail to honor God and His basic place in our salvation. In various cases of sacrifice God himself has provided FOR HIMSELF the sacrifice that saves us. Thus he did for Abraham (Gen. 22:8). Thus also He did when he provided for Christ a *body* in which to die for us (Heb. 10:5-7).

The Passover was a new thing, and not a reinterpretation of some old previously-existing ritual.

The Hebrew word for *passover* is *pesach*; the Greek is *pascha*, from which we get "*paschal* lamb." *Pesach* means a sparing, or immunity from penalty or calamity. Its meaning can be seen (by the use of the related verb *pasach*) in Isaiah 31:5: "Jehovah of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect it and deliver it, he will *pass over* and preserve it." *Pasach* has another meaning: to halt, limp, or waver, as in I Kings 18:21. This meaning does not seem to apply to the matter of the Passover.

14. *What disaster would strike Egypt the night of the Passover?* (12:12)

God would go through the land of Egypt on that (literally "this") night, and smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both of men and beast. By this act God would perform (literally "do") judgments against all the gods of Egypt. Compare Numbers 33:4. Note that it was GOD who passed over the land. No "destroying angel" is mentioned here; but

see the notes on 12:23.

*Pass through* in 12:12 is a different term from *pass over*. Passing *through* merely has the idea of movement across some area. Passing *OVER* has the idea of sparing, or passing by. To Egypt it was a passing through; to Israel it was a passing over!

Pharaoh considered himself a son of various gods. His firstborn son was the prime heir to his divine royal dignity. But God executed judgment upon Egypt's *gods* during the plagues, and particularly at the passover. All the gods of Egypt could not save the firstborn of Egypt.

Again God asserted, "I am Jehovah." How often God had said that! See notes on Ex. 6:2.

15. *What was the purpose of the blood?* (12:13)

The blood was to be a *token*, or sign, for the Israelites, upon their houses. A sign of what? A sign of faith; a sign of sacrifice; a sign of obedience; a sign for deliverance. A sign to whom? To God; to the "destroyer" (12:23); to one another.

How glorious are the words: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

Does the word *plague* in 12:13 indicate that the firstborn of Egypt died by a *disease* plague? The Hebrew word here translated *plague* (Heb. *negeph*) is a rather general term meaning a smiting, hurting, or stumbling. By itself it does not necessarily refer to a disease plague.

However, Psalm 78:50-51 says, "He spared not their soul from death, But (Heb., *And*) gave their life over to the *pestilence*, and smote all the firstborn in Egypt." The word *pestilence* here is *deber*, the same word translated *murrain* (once) and *pestilence* forty-seven times. In some Bibles the words "their life" is translated "their beasts" in the margin. This would connect the pestilence to the death of the cattle. However, the literal reading is "their life"; and the close connection of Psalm 78:50c with 78:51a seems definitely to link the pestilence with the death of the firstborn.

When we first read Ps. 78:50-51, we found ourselves resisting the idea that a pestilence killed Egypt's firstborn,

lest anyone think that we were endeavoring to give a purely natural explanation for the death of the firstborn. We believe that this was a *miraculous* judgment in the fullest sense of that term. Still we cannot deny the testimony of Ps. 78:50; it is also part of God's word. Therefore we accept the information that the firstborn of Egypt perished by a pestilence. But what a miraculous pestilence! It was almost instantaneous in its effect. It struck every house at the same moment. It struck only at the oldest child in every family, and the oldest beasts. It did not strike in houses with blood at the doors.

16. *What observance of the Passover was to be kept in the future? (12:14, 24-27)*

It was to be observed every year thereafter as a memorial and as a feast unto Jehovah, throughout Israel's generations, for ever. Ex. 13:10. Compare Lev. 23:4-5. In one way the Passover was for ever, because Christ is for ever.

The Old Testament records just six times when the passover was kept: 1. Egypt (Ex. 12); 2. Sinai (Num. 9); 3. Canaan (Joshua 5); 4. Hezekiah (II Chron. 30); 5. Josiah (II Kings 23); 6. Jews returned from Babylon (Ezra 6). We suppose that it was kept in other years. But we know the Israelites were not always faithful in observing it.

Repeating the Passover yearly made the later generations participants in the original event in a very real way. Similarly God has given to us the observances of baptism and the communion. These are both memorials to past events and means to help us be participants in those events.

17. *What observance followed the Passover? (12:15-25)*

The feast of Unleavened bread followed the Passover during the seven days after it. (See Lev. 23:5-8; Num. 28:17-25; Deut. 16:3-8.) These two feasts were so closely associated that they were sometimes spoken of as one feast (Ex. 23:14-15).

During this feast no leaven of any sort was to be tolerated in the Israelites' houses.<sup>4</sup> This was a convenient ordinance

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<sup>4</sup>Jews in later centuries excluded as leaven any product made of grain, such as beer, vinegar, porridge, paste, or cosmetics.

for the Israelites who left Egypt to observe. They left in such a hurry their bread was not leavened anyway (12:34).

It rather appears that Moses did not relay God's instructions (given in 12:15-20) concerning the feast of unleavened bread until after their departure was underway. Ex. 12:17 speaks of Israel's departure as a completed act, which had occurred "this day." Moses gave the instructions about the Passover at least four days in advance (12:3, 6), and he gave a last-day reminder about killing the Passover (12:21). But the instructions about the feast of Unleavened bread apparently were delivered the day of Israel's departure (13:5-7). Another possible interpretation is that God said "I have brought you out" (a completed action) before He actually had brought them out, because the predicted act was as good as done in His determined plans. Numerous Bible prophecies are spoken of as completed acts.

During the feast of unleavened bread Israel was to hold holy convocations (assemblies) on the first and seventh days of the feast. Also they were to do only such work as was necessary to eat.

The feast of Unleavened bread was probably impossible to keep fully during the years of Israel's wanderings. They had no "houses" to remove leaven from (12:19). God stressed that they were to observe the feast when they arrived in Canaan (13:5-6).

The New Testament explains leaven as a symbol of corruption and evil influence. (See Matt. 16:6; Mark 8:15; I Cor. 5:7. Matt. 13:33 seems to be an exception.) This suggests the following typology: When we accept Christ (symbolized by the Passover lamb), then we must put out of our lives all ungodliness and worldly lusts (symbolized by the leaven) for ever (symbolized by the seven days). *Seven* is the Biblical number signifying completeness. The seven days of unleavened bread suggest complete and constant conformity to God's word.

Failure to keep the feast of unleavened bread was to be punished by being cut off from the congregation of Israel.

Exactly what this punishment involved is not clearly specified, whether execution, or expulsion from access to the temple sacrifices, or from buying and selling among Israelites, or from all social contacts with the people. These are dire penalties.

Liberal critics<sup>5</sup> maintain that the feasts of Passover and Unleavened bread were both borrowed by the Israelites from the Canaanites or someone else. They maintain that these were originally distinct, unrelated occasions. Passover was supposedly a pastoral feast when blood was placed on the tent flaps to protect herds. Unleavened bread was a cult feast at the beginning of wheat harvest, when the first yearly produce of the land was offered to the gods, and eaten while uncontaminated by addition of leaven. There is no concrete evidence even for the existence of such feasts, much less for the Israelites borrowing them. Certainly this interpretation conflicts with the Biblical information.

18. *What last-day Passover instructions did Moses give the people? (12:21-22)*

Moses called the elders (the older men functioning as leaders of tribes and families) and told them again the information God has given approximately a week before. See 12:3-7. Moses added statements about using hyssop.<sup>6</sup> (See notes on 12:7.) He added instructions about not leaving the houses that night until morning.

"By faith Moses kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the firstborn should not touch them" (Heb. 11:28).

Regarding the *basin* (12:22), or threshold, see notes on 12:7.

Regarding the perpetual observance of the passover (12:24-25), see the notes on 12:14.

Critics ascribe 12:21-27 to a tenth century author ("J") in

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<sup>5</sup>As an example see Martin Noth, *Exodus*, p. 97.

<sup>6</sup>The exact botanical identification of the hyssop referred to in the Bible is somewhat uncertain. It may be the herb majoram. Or it may be a long-stalked, corn-like plant, such as durrah. John 19:29 seems to refer to such a plant.

the Southern kingdom of Judah.<sup>7</sup> But 12:21-27 makes good sense as a continuation of the preceding narrative. Either 12:21-27 is the public announcements by Moses of the instructions God had given him (in 12:1ff), or, much more probably, it was Moses' last-day reminder of those instructions.

19. *Who was the destroyer?* (12:23)

We suppose that the destroyer was an angel sent by God. Psalm 78:49 says, "He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, . . . a band of *angels* of evil." Whether Ps. 78:49 refers to the preceding verse, which refers to the plague of hail, or to the following verse, which refers to the death of the firstborn, can be debated. It may refer to both. Angels have been employed on other occasions by God to execute His judgments. Angels were sent to Sodom (Gen. 18:2; 19:1, 13). An angel of God slew in Jerusalem (II Sam. 24:15-16).

In Ex. 11:4 and 12:12 God said that HE HIMSELF would pass over the land that night. Even 12:23 says that JEHOVAH would pass through to smite the firstborn. But this does not rule out the likelihood that an angel or angels accompanied God in this mission. The scripture does not contain the expression "death angel." "Destroying angel" might be more Biblical terminology.

Certainly this *destroyer* was not some demonic spirit trying to get to the Israelites in their houses while God was trying to fend it off. Evil spirits are real, but they operate only within the limits that God tolerates. Satan could only afflict Job to the degree that God consented to tolerate (1:9-12; 2:6). The universe is not controlled by two powers competing for mastery, but by God alone, who barely tolerates the Satanic evil for a little while. It was God himself, accompanied by HIS destroyer(s), who went forth that night to take vengeance.

20. *How would children be taught about the Passover?* (12:26-27)

When the Israelites observed the unusual supper in future

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<sup>7</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 372.

generations, the children would ask questions about it, as children do! The parents were to be prepared to answer and eager to do so. There was to be no talk like, "Can't you see I'm busy, Junior? Beat it!"

In the modern Jewish passover ritual there is a prescribed point when a child asks "Why do we keep the Passover?" and the parent then relates the history of it. Originally the passover was not so formally structured, and the question was to be answered at whatever time it came up.

John Davis<sup>8</sup> reminds us that the concern which Moses showed over the meaning of this Passover ordinance should be a warning to us that God's ordinances are not only to be perpetuated in correct form, but to be taught as representing personal experience and correct theology. In our homes and Bible schools we should be quick and eager to answer the questions of our children concerning the religious observances they see. It is God's plan that the children be taught from infancy to serve God intelligently.

Note the rather formal title for the passover: "the sacrifice of Jehovah's passover." Here again the Passover is expressly said to be a sacrifice. Sacrifices deal with SIN. Compare Deut. 16:2. This fact transforms the Passover from a ritual of the past to a reality in the present.

The word *Passover* is applied to (1) the lamb killed in the sacrifice (12:21); to (2) all the events of the feast (Lev. 23:5); to (3) the Lord's act of mercy in sparing the Israelites (Ex. 12:14).

21. *Did the Israelites obey Moses' instructions?* (12:27-28)

They not only obeyed, but obeyed worshipfully.

Their obedience was purely an act of faith in God and Moses. However, after seeing all the plagues Moses had predicted and brought upon Egypt, the people certainly should have had faith. But people do not always respond in a reasonable manner. After people had seen all the miracles Jesus did, they still did not believe him (John 12:37).

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<sup>8</sup>*Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, p. 144.

22. *What happened at midnight in Egypt?* (12:29-30)

The Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. There was not a house where there was not one dead.

These deaths were not painless and silent. The shrieks of the dying awakened every house. And there arose a great cry in Egypt as the firstborn expired. (Compare 11:6)

God had foretold to Pharaoh, "Because thou hast refused to let Israel, my firstborn, go, . . . behold, I will slay thy son, thy firstborn" (4:23). Moses had clearly forewarned Pharaoh (11:4-6). But seemingly Pharaoh had just refused to believe. Therefore, the fearsome threat to Pharaoh came to pass. There is a time-limit on God's mercy to rebels.

Sinners cannot elude the retributions of God. Men cannot avoid the stroke of heaven. It comes at a time when "ye think not," when everyone is "safe" asleep. The second coming of Christ will be like the death of the firstborn in Egypt - sudden, final, and fearsome to those who are not under the blood. (See I Thess. 5:1-3; II Thess. 1:7-8; Rev. 1:7.)

The Egyptians did not see the destroying angel(s) who struck their firstborn with a sudden fatal pestilence. But they knew the source of this calamity: it was from Jehovah, the God of Israel, whose prophet Moses they had disbelieved. (Regarding the destroying angel(s), see notes on 12:23. Regarding the pestilence, see notes on 12:13.)

The firstborn of every social level died, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat upon the throne, to the firstborn of the captive in the dungeon (literally, "house of the pit"). In 11:5 the lowest level of society was "the maid-servant that is behind the (grinding) mill." But on the Passover night social status made no difference. Only the blood mattered.

If Amenhotep II was the Pharaoh of the exodus, his son who died was the older brother of Thutmose IV, who succeeded Amenhotep II. Between the legs of the Sphinx in Egypt stands a large stone bearing an inscription by Thutmose IV. In this inscription, called the dream-inscription, it is evident that Thutmose IV was not the oldest son, the



usual heir to the throne, but that he had to obtain this position by other means. We feel that this came about as the result of the death of the firstborn son.

This inscription<sup>9</sup> tells how Thutmose IV went to sleep beside the Sphinx, whose body was then mostly covered with sand. In a dream as he lay there, the Sphinx told him that he would give Thutmose the kingdom upon earth, at the head of the living. "Thou shalt wear the southern crown and the northern crown." If Thutmose had been the legitimate heir of the throne, he would not have needed such a rationalization as this to claim it.

Liberal critics do not like the story of the death of the firstborn. While we get no joy from it (neither did God!), we do not feel we have the right to sit in judgment upon God's word and dismiss whatever sections offend our natural feelings. To write that this story is "perhaps contradictory to the later and fuller revelation," or that it was written "in the words of men who spoke in pre-Christian cultural, ethical, and theological words,"<sup>10</sup> seems to us like setting our judgment above God's. Surely a comprehension of God's absolute holiness and his hatred for sin would remove the emotional resistance to the revelations about God's punishments upon the ungodly.

23. *What did the Egyptians do when their firstborn died?* (12:30-33)

All of the Egyptians, including Pharaoh, rose up in the night, and called for Moses and Aaron, and begged them to leave their land. They seemed to fear that the plague was just beginning, and that before it was over "We are all dead men!"

Pharaoh's spirit was broken. He was no longer arrogant. He called for Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh uttered the long-awaited words: "GO, SERVE JEHOVAH." He pleads, "And bless me also." This is an amazing request in the

<sup>9</sup>*Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, (Princeton, 1955), p. 449.

<sup>10</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 365.

light of Pharaoh's assumed divinity. "Bless me also" is a request that God would save them from further disasters, and perhaps restore their plague-battered land.

All of God's predictions came true! There was a loud cry in all of Egypt (11:6). Pharaoh's servants did come and bow down to Moses and ask them to leave (11:8). True to God's prediction, Egypt did let Israel go (3:20). As God predicted, Pharaoh by a strong hand drove them out of his land (6:1).

On the other hand, Pharaoh's prediction (or threat) that he would kill Moses if he saw him again (10:28) was forgotten! "Egypt was glad when they departed, for fear of the Israelites had fallen upon them" (Psalm 105:38).

The statement about Israel's being sent out in *haste* relates to 12:39. The Israelites did not have time enough before their departure to prepare leavened bread or food for their journey.

24. *What food did Israel take out? (12:34, 39)*

They took out only the unleavened dough, which they possibly baked on hot rocks as they stopped briefly in their travels. They had no leftover food from the Passover feast (12:10, 46). They were in a position where they would very soon become utterly dependent upon God to provide their needs.

Israel left on foot, as pilgrims, not in chariots. They left carrying their kneading-troughs (or kneading-bowls) bound up in cloths upon their shoulders. (However, that was surely better than carrying bricks, whether made with or without straw!) Israel's first experiences of freedom involved the labor of long walks, and carrying their goods, and of going forth without an adequate food supply for a long trip. Israel's experiences were much like our own: victory and glory are accompanied by hardships. They were going to need perseverance and fortitude. In giving liberty to His church God may put upon it some hardships.

25. *What did the Egyptians give to the Israelites? (12:35-36)*

They gave them jewels (literally, *vessels*) of silver and gold; and also clothing. (It does get quite cold in the mountainous

parts of the Sinai peninsula. It even snows in spots.)

As Jehovah had instructed them, the Israelites asked for these jewels (3:22; 11:2-3). The Lord gave the Israelites favor in the feelings and thoughts of the Egyptians (3:21), and the Egyptians let them have what they asked. And they *despoiled* the Egyptians. The word *spoil* has the connotation of a conqueror taking the goods of a people defeated in battle. Thus the jewelry given by the Egyptians was not basically a remuneration for long service and a compensation for cruel wrongs, but it was a symbol of triumph. (Note the theme of triumph in 15:1.)

The giving of goods was part of the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham six centuries earlier, that the descendants of Abraham would come out of their land of bondage with great substance (Gen. 15:14).

Psalms 105:37: "He brought them forth also with silver and gold; and there was not one feeble person among their tribes." God was already at work among Israel, and thus none of them were sickly or infirm when they left Egypt.

We gather from 13:18 that some weapons were taken by the Israelites also, although our information about this is very scanty.

26. *What were the first two places in the Israelites' journey out of Egypt? (12:37)*

They journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. The *Rameses* of 12:37 is presumably the same place as that referred to in Ex. 1:11. How thrilling it was to say "Good bye forever!" to a place of cruel slave labor.

Rameses is at present considered to be either the city-site known as Tanis and Avaris (modern San el-Hagar) in the northeast part of the Nile delta, or the site of Qantir, some twelve miles south of Tanis. Extensive temple ruins from the time of king Rameses II have been found at Tanis, but no remains of the XVIII dynasty. At Qantir ruins of a large palace were found. Pottery fragments bearing the name of Per-Rameses (the name of the capital of Rameses II) were found at

Qantir.<sup>11</sup> We have selected Qantir as the proposed site of Rameses on our map. It is nearer to the land of Goshen (the Wadi Tumilat area) than Tanis is. The absence of XVIII dynasty remains at these sites remains a problem for those accepting the early exodus date, as we do, but we feel this problem will be resolved in time, as many other problems have been already.

*Succoth* is generally thought to be the hill-mound of Tell el-Maskhuta, about ten miles west of Lake Timsah. *Succoth* means booths, or tents, or temporary dwellings.

While the Israelites were travelling from Rameses to Succoth (a distance of about thirty-eight miles, or three days travelling), the Egyptians were burying their dead. Numbers 33:3 says that the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of the Egyptians.

27. *How many Israelites left Egypt? (12:37)*

There were six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children. This is a round number. The same number is given in Num. 11:21. A census at Mt. Sinai not long after their departure recorded 603,550 men (plus 22,000 Levites). See Num. 1:46; 2:32; 3:39; Ex. 38:26. After adding women and children, the total departing horde of Israelites would surely have numbered two and a half million. This vast number fulfilled God's promise to Abraham: "I will make of thee a *great nation*" (Gen. 12:2).

This enormous number seems incredible to many people.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, we believe it is the correct figure. It is not incredible. J. H. Hertz<sup>13</sup> tells that at the close of the eighteenth century 400,000 Tartars started from the confines of Russia toward the Chinese border in a single night.

In the censuses recorded in the book of Numbers (chapters

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<sup>11</sup>Jack Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past*, Vol. I (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), p. 115.

<sup>12</sup>Even conservative authors like Alan Cole and Bernard Ramm find the number hard to believe. The radical Martin Noth says the number exceeds enormously what is even the slightest degree historically probable. (*Op. cit.*, p. 99)

<sup>13</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 259.

one and twenty-six) the total population of Israel is broken down by tribal divisions into small segments (46,500 for the tribe of Reuben, etc.). The fact that the big total population is the sum of numerous smaller group totals shows the integrity of the whole count; and also it gives evidence of the accurate preservation and presentation of the whole enumeration.

What are some of the objections to the large number of 600,000 Israelite men?

(1) The Sinai peninsula could not have supported such a mass of people, even if it was greener in Moses' time than now.<sup>14</sup> Answer: Parts of the Sinai are greener than is generally realized. But that is beside the point. The scripture unhesitatingly asserts that there was simply NOT enough food for the Israelites in Sinai (Ex. 16:3; Num. 11:6). The Israelites were maintained by the miraculous manna from the LORD for forty years (Ex. 16:35; Compare John 6:31-32, 39).

(2) The number in Ex. 12:37 is thought by some<sup>15</sup> to have been transferred from the census figures taken by King David over four hundred years later (I Chron. 21; II Sam. 24). Statistics from David's census were somehow transferred into the story of the exodus. Answer: the population totals in David's census do not agree with the 600,000 figure in Exodus (II Sam. 24:9; I Chron. 21:5).

Also the notion that the Bible as delivered to us is so scrambled up that statistics from a census taken centuries later might be included in the exodus story casts serious shadows over the general reliability of the whole Bible as God's true revelation. We prefer to accept the words of Jesus about the reliability of God's law: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail" (Luke 16:17).

(3) Egypt could not have kept in subjection a people numbering over two million. Bernard Ramm asserts that all

<sup>14</sup>Ramm, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-83.

<sup>15</sup>G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), pp. 66-67.

Egypt had only about seven million people, and an army of not over twenty-five thousand. These could not have subjected such a host as 600,000 Israelites. Answer: If Egypt had counted every man in their country as a fighting man, as the Israelites did, Egypt would have had two million fighting men (even by Ramm's figures). But neither nation had *all* of their men armed and ready to fight at all times. In Egypt Israel was not armed to resist the domination of Egypt.

Furthermore, it is not necessary to assume that for one people to subjugate another, that they must greatly outnumber them. Small groups of well-armed, determined, and disciplined revolutionists have taken over whole nations frequently. The Egyptians had the upper hand over the Israelites. As long as that was the case, they did not need to outnumber the Israelites many times over in order to rule them.

(4) The word translated *thousands (eleph)* may also mean family, or clan, or tribal subdivision. Mendenhall suggests that the *eleph* was a "military unit." Thus, Israel supposedly had about six hundred families in its total population, with a population of perhaps six thousand. Others suggest up to twenty-five thousand.

Answer: This argument is weakened by the fact that the large total is broken down into twelve smaller tribal populations in Numbers. Most of the individual tribes numbered more than the total population conceded to Israel by advocates of the low total. Also we read in Joshua 8:3 that an Israelite army of thirty thousand attacked Ai. Five thousand more joined the army (Josh. 8:12). Surely this does not mean thirty families, plus five families.

(5) If Israel had a population of over two million, it would have been almost impossible for it to move as a unit. That many people walking five abreast with their cattle would likely make a speed of one mile per hour, and would take two hundred and thirty hours to pass a given point; and would need for bare subsistence nine hundred tons of food

daily. They could not have crossed the Red Sea in one night.

Answer: We certainly concede the logistical difficulties! This only makes us marvel the more at Moses' amazing ability as a leader to organize and direct this mob. However, it is not necessary to assume that the Israelites marched five abreast (though some have interpreted Ex. 13:18 to say that). They probably marched in a column at least a mile wide. The dry path across the Red Sea was probably a mile or more in width. The people could all see the pillar of cloud and fire which guided their movements (13:21-22). Daily travel instructions did not have to be handed down to every family.

28. *Who went out with the Israelites?* (12:38-39)

A mixed multitude<sup>16</sup> accompanied Israel out. A multitude means MANY. Also they were accompanied by flocks and herds and very numerous cattle. The reference to cattle indicates that the bondage of the Israelites did not extend to confiscation of livestock.

We do not know the racial identity of this mixed multitude. Possibly they were remnants of an old Semitic population left over from the Hyksos occupation. (The Hyksos were expelled in 1580 B.C.) Egyptian writings and paintings tell of numerous Amorites and other Asiatics who entered Egypt. Perhaps they were included in the mixed multitude. Moses' Cushite (Ethiopian) wife may have been included among these (Num. 12:1). We doubt that any Egyptians were part of the mixed multitude; their firstborn had all died in the Passover.

In a very similar manner, when the Jews nine centuries later came back from Babylonian captivity, there came unto them people from among the nations that were round about them (Neh. 5:17). Thus also the Gibeonites joined themselves to Israel (Joshua 9).

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<sup>16</sup>Mixed is from the same root as the word *swarms*, which refers to the plagues of flies in Ex. 8:21.

This mixed multitude proved to be a thorn in the flesh of the Israelites. They lusted (craved) for meat at Kibroth-Hattaavah, being dissatisfied with the manna (Num. 11:4-5). This caused a plague (Num. 11:33).

Why did the mixed multitude leave with Israel? We do not know for certain. Perhaps they had seen God's judgments in Egypt, and wished to escape any future judgments there. Perhaps they just followed the crowd. Many people still do that. When God's people are dominant and triumphant, there are always a lot of hangers-on to them. If there is a genuine Barnabas around, there will probably be Ananias and Sapphira also. Like a net full of mixed fish, or a grain field infested with tares, so God's congregation is often mixed (Matt. 13:25-30, 47-48).

Regarding the Israelites' unleavened bread and lack of victuals, see notes on 12:34.

29. *How long had Israel been in Egypt?* (12:40-41)

They had been there four hundred and thirty years. They came out at the *end* of four hundred and thirty years, on the very self-same day! This implies that there had been a record made of the exact year, month, and day when Israel came in. On that very day exactly four hundred and thirty years later they left. The existence of such a record need not astound us. The Egyptians were the most thorough record-keepers of all antiquity, and family records giving genealogies and business transactions spanning hundreds of years have been preserved.<sup>17</sup>

Note that the Israelites are called the "hosts of Jehovah." What a beautiful honor-bearing title! They were God's by creation and by purchase.

Although there are some problems associated with this four hundred and thirty year period, we believe it is the correct number.

For a study of "How Long Was Israel in Egypt?" see the

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<sup>17</sup>K. A. Kitchen, "Some Egyptian Backgrounds to the Old Testament," *Tyndale House Bulletin*, Nos. 5-6 (April 1960), pp. 14-18.



article at the end of this chapter.

30. *How were the Israelites to commemorate the night of their deliverance?* (12:42)

They commemorated it by an observance<sup>18</sup> to the Lord. "It is a night of observance to the Lord concerning (the way) He brought them from the land of Egypt. That night shall be an observance to Jehovah by all the sons of Israel, unto (all) their generations."

Ex. 12:42 appears to be an exhortation by Moses, inserted when he wrote the book of Exodus some time after the events of the Passover night. Ex. 12:42 leads directly into the instructions about the Passover in 12:43-49.

Notice that 12:42 states *twice* that that night was to be a night of *observance*. Future generations were to make special observance of that night. This should speak also to us about the great significance of the Passover observance, including its significance to Christians.

Skeptical critics see the duplication in Ex. 12:42 not as emphasis, but only as indication of multiple sources for Exodus. Driver ascribes Ex. 12:42 to "E" and calls it a "gloss" (an insertion). Oesterly and Robinson attribute it to "J" (in the "P" section 12:40—13:2). Noth does not separate 12:42 from the rest of the narrative. These authors make positive pronouncements about multiple authorship, but cannot agree even with one another.

31. *Why are supplementary instructions about the Passover given in 12:43-50?*

The reason for giving them here is not clearly stated. But since the instructions primarily concern the participation of foreigners in the Passover, and since a mixed multitude had left Egypt with Israel (12:38), we suspect that these instructions were given at this early point in Israel's journeys, perhaps at Succoth (12:37), to clarify to both Israelites and

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<sup>18</sup>The word-form *shimurim*, translated "to be observed," occurs only in Ex. 12:42. It is plural in form ("occasions to be observed"), though probably singular in meaning ("vigil," "observation"). It has a passive appearance (something to BE observed).

non-Israelites how His passover was to be observed.

Basically, the instructions were that a hired servant or sojourner (alien) living among the Israelites was *not* to partake of the Passover. A sojourner could partake if he consented to be circumcised. Observe the stress on the fact that there was ONE law for both strangers and for Israelites, when it came to eating the Passover (12:49).

Num. 9:14 refers to strangers keeping the passover "according to the statute of the passover." Probably this refers to the laws in Ex. 12:43-48.

The Passover belonged only to covenant-keepers. The instructions in 12:43-48 probably were uttered to persuade the non-circumcised fellow-travellers with the Israelites to get into Israel all the way, or to expect none of the blessings of Israelites. In our times people sometimes attend Christian worship meetings and activities, but never consent to be baptized and really get into the group. Much like the mixed multitude accompanying Israel, they enjoy God's people, but do not desire to acknowledge their need for further obedience.

The instructions about the Passover in 12:43-48 seem to be stated in seven (or six) laws.<sup>19</sup> These are stated succinctly and precisely, and in Hebrew each ends with the suffix *o* (meaning "him" or "it"). In condensed form the commands are as follows: a. No foreigner may eat (12:43). b. The circumcised may eat (12:44). c. No settler or hired servant may eat unless circumcised (12:45). d. Eat it in one house (12:46). e. All the congregation shall keep the feast (12:47). f. Let sojourners be circumcised (12:48). g. The circumcised aliens shall be accepted as are natives of the land (12:48). (The last two regulations may actually constitute only one.)

Certainly these instructions about the future observance of the Passover in Israel's future homeland gave much assurance to Israel that God surely intended to bring them into the land, where they would keep these ordinances. Christians likewise have clear promises about their activities in our

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<sup>19</sup> U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on Exodus* (Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1967), p. 150.

eternal home in the new heaven and earth.

32. *What was the law about the bones of the Passover lamb?* (12:46)

Not a bone of it shall be broken. Compare Numbers 9:12. John 19:33-36 tells that this foreshadowed the fact that the bones of Christ (the true Passover lamb) would not be broken. It is not easy to imagine any other satisfactory explanation for this law.

The Greek wording of John 19:36 is quite similar to the Greek O.T. wording of Ex. 12:46. (The Greek text has the same law about not breaking the bones of the lamb in 12:10. The Hebrew text gives it only in 12:46.)

Psalms 34:19-20 also refers to the unbroken bones of the righteous. ("Righteous" is the singular, "the righteous one.") This verse applies in a general way to all of God's saints, but probably had a specific application to Christ, THE righteous one.

All three of the laws in 12:46 about the Passover lamb - eating it in one house, keeping all fragments of it in one place, and not breaking its bones - suggest the UNITY and integrity of the Passover lamb, and of Christ.

33. *To what chapter and verse does 12:51 refer back?*

It refers back to 12:41. Note the reference to the "selfsame day" in both 12:41 and 12:51. The interruption of 12:42-49 cleared up some of the relationships between the mixed multitude that left with Israel and Israel itself. Ex. 12:51 connects the following laws (in Ex. 13) about the firstborn to the preceding material.

Concerning the *hosts* of Israel, see notes on 7:4.

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## SPECIAL STUDY: HOW LONG WAS ISRAEL IN EGYPT?

1. The Hebrew Bible says in Ex. 12:40-41, "The time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt was *four hundred and thirty years*. And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day, it came to pass, that all the hosts of Jehovah went out from the land of Egypt." We accept this statement without any qualification.
2. The statement of Stephen in Acts 7:6 is in basic agreement with the chronology in Exodus: "His (Abraham's) seed should sojourn in a strange land, and that they should bring them into bondage, and treat them ill, *four hundred years*." We suppose the number Stephen gave is a round number for the four hundred and thirty in Ex. 12.
3. God's, original covenant with Abraham in Gen. 15:13 foretold that Abraham's seed would be sojourners in a land that was not theirs, and that they would serve them; and that Abraham's seed would be afflicted *four hundred years*. Gen. 15:16 adds that Abraham's seed would return to Canaan "in the fourth generation." Seemingly this makes each of the generations referred to a hundred years long, which is unexpectedly long, but is not impossible.
4. The three foregoing scripture passages seem mutually harmonious. A problem arises when we consider the Greek O.T. (LXX), and the statement of Paul in Galatians 3:17.
5. The Greek O.T.<sup>1</sup> has in Exodus 12:40: "And the sojourning of the children of Israel, while they sojourned in the land of Egypt *and the land of Canaan* was four hundred and thirty years." The addition of the words *and in the land of Canaan* makes the four hundred and thirty years include the total time from Abraham's entry into Canaan until Israel's exodus from Egypt. Since two hundred and fifteen years elapsed from Abraham's entry into Canaan until Jacob's family came

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<sup>1</sup>The Greek O.T. was translated about 275 B.C., over a thousand years after the time of Moses. In most passages it is astoundingly close to the wording of existing ancient Hebrew manuscripts.

into Egypt, this would leave only two hundred and fifteen remaining years as the duration of the sojourn in Egypt (For scriptural chronological data, see Gen. 12:4; 21:5; 25:26; 31:38; 37:2; 41:46-47; 45:6; 47:9.)

As a general rule we regard the Hebrew Bible as being more authoritative than the Greek Bible. Also it seems very improbable that the scripture should refer to the sojourning of the *children* of Israel in *Canaan*, as the Greek O.T. does. How could Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be referred to as children of themselves, or of their descendants? The children of *Israel*, or Jacob, sojourned in Canaan for only about twenty-two years of the two hundred and fifteen years from the time of Abraham's entry until Jacob's migration into Egypt. We do not regard the Greek Bible as correct in Ex. 12:40.

6. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century A.D., follows the Greek O.T. rendering: "They left Egypt . . . four hundred and thirty years after our forefather Abraham came into Canaan, but two hundred and fifteen years only after Jacob removed into Egypt" (*Ant.* II, xv, 2). Josephus is, however, contradictory with himself, because he also wrote, "Four hundred years did they spend under these afflictions" (referring to their Egyptian slavery). (*Ant.* II, ix, 1)
7. It might appear that the apostle Paul in Galatians 3:17 follows the Greek reading of Ex. 12:40, as opposed to the Hebrew reading. He writes as follows: "A covenant confirmed beforehand by God [referring to God's covenant with Abraham], the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, . . ." This sounds as if Paul meant that the law which was given at Mt. Sinai shortly after Israel left Egypt, was given four hundred and thirty years after God made his covenant with Abraham. The only reference in Genesis to God's *making* a covenant with Abraham is in Gen. 15:18. Abraham was approximately eighty-five years old at that time. (See Gen. 15:18.) If the four hundred and thirty years before the law was given (Gal. 3:17) started with this covenant in Gen. 15:18, then the 430 years would

include BOTH the time Israel was in Egypt AND in Canaan, as the Greek reading indicates.

8. We are persuaded that the Bible as originally written, and when properly understood, is always in harmony with itself. We believe also that Paul was a true apostle of Christ, and that his writings are therefore completely true, like all the other scriptures. We therefore feel that Gal. 3:17, when properly comprehended, will be in harmony with Ex. 12:40-41 and with the statement of Stephen (Acts 7:6), and all other passages.
9. It seems to us that the key to understanding Gal. 3:17 is to understand what Paul referred to when he spoke of the "covenant [with Abraham] *confirmed beforehand* by God." Is *pre-confirming* only a synonym for the *making* of the covenant? We think not. In Gal. 3:17 Paul uses the Greek verb *prokuroo* to describe this pre-confirming. This word means "to make valid, or sure, or firm, in advance." W. G. Moorhead says<sup>2</sup> that the word (*prokuroo*) is never employed in the New Testament, nor as far as we have discovered, in the Greek version of the Old, to designate the institution of a thing, a first transaction; it signifies to ratify, or confirm a thing already in existence. All of the references to *making* a covenant in the Greek Pentateuch (Gen.-Deut.) use some form of the verbs *tithemi* (to set, put, or place) or *histemi* (to cause or make to stand, to place, put, set). See Gen. 6:18; 9:9; 15:18; 17:2; Ex. 23:32; Jer. 31:31 (38:31 in Gr.) as examples.

The verb *kuroo* (root of *prokuroo*, which is used in Gal. 3:17) occurs only twice in the O.T. In Gen. 23:20 it refers to Abraham's purchase of the cave for burial being *made sure* after Sarah was buried in it. The original purchase is referred to by another word (in the Greek, but not in the Hebrew) in 23:16-17. This use of the verb *kuroo* tends to confirm our interpretation of its meaning as a later confirmation of a previous transaction.

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<sup>2</sup>Outline Studies in the Books of the Old Testament

The other use of *kuroo* is in Lev. 25:30. There the passage concerns the buying back of property sold by any one. In the case of a house in a walled city, there was a one-year time period in which it could be *redeemed* (bought back) from the purchaser. If it was not redeemed in that time, then the house was surely *confirmed* (*kuroo*) to him that bought it for all his generations. This use of *kuroo* shows the same meaning as in Gen. 23:20, the confirmation of a previous transaction.

10. What event could be referred to by Paul as a *confirming beforehand* of the covenant God made with Abraham? A careful reading of Gen. 15:13-21 (which tells of God's making the covenant with Abraham) reveals that the first words God spoke to Abraham were these: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, . . . ." The seed (descendants) of Abraham did not begin their sojourn in the land of Egypt till 215 years after Abraham entered Canaan. Abraham had died before his grandson Jacob migrated to Egypt with his family. But at the time when Jacob and his family entered into Egypt, the covenant with Abraham was truly confirmed, because God's first prediction in the covenant had come to pass. Four hundred and thirty years after this emigration into Egypt, God led the Israelites out, and gave them the law at Mt. Sinai. We feel that Paul was probably referring to this time period in Gal. 3:17.
11. I Chronicles 7:25 lists *ten* generations between Joseph and Joshua. Gleason L. Archer, Jr. writes that ten generations can hardly be reconciled with a mere two hundred and fifteen years (especially considering the longer life span of pre-Exodus Israelites), but it fits in very plausibly with an interval of four hundred and thirty years.<sup>3</sup>
12. Exodus 6:18-20 names only four generations from Levi to Moses - Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses. As stated in our notes on this passage, we are practically forced to conclude

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<sup>3</sup>A *Survey of O. T. Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), p. 212.

that the names of some of the generations from Levi to Moses are not named here, because Levi's descendants numbered 22,000 just after the exodus (and the descendants of Kohath, Levi's son, alone numbered 8600 [Numbers 3:27].) Four generations cannot have produced that many descendants, especially since Levi himself had only three sons (Kohath, Gershon, Merari). Therefore, this genealogical listing does not argue against the four hundred and thirty-year sojourn in Egypt.

13. Finally, there is the argument from the population growth of the Israelites. When they came into Egypt, they numbered only seventy. When they left, there were over six hundred thousand men. Such a multiplication would require longer than two hundred fifteen years. Keil and Delitzsch report that the six hundred thousand population total could be obtained if every married couple among the Israelites produced three sons and three daughters for six generations, and then two sons and two daughters in the last four (making ten total) generations.<sup>4</sup> Such a population increase would have been possible in four hundred and thirty years, but extremely unlikely in two hundred and fifteen years.

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**13** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (2) Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Is-ra-el, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

(3) And Mo-ses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from E-gypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand Je-ho-vah brought you out from this

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<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 30.



place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. (4) This day ye go forth in the month A-bib. (5) And it shall be, when Je-ho-vah shall bring thee into the land of the Ca-naan-ite, and the Hit-tite, and the Am-or-ite, and the Hi-vite, and the Jeb-u-site, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month. (6) Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to Je-ho-vah. (7) Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee, in all thy borders. (8) And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying, It is because of that which Je-ho-vah did for me when I came forth out of E-gypt. (9) And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thy hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the law of Je-ho-vah may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath Je-ho-vah brought thee out of E-gypt. (10) Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.

(11) And it shall be, when Je-ho-vah shall bring thee into the land of the Ca-naan-ite, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, (12) that thou shalt set apart unto Je-ho-vah all that openeth the womb, and every firstling which thou hast that cometh of a beast; the males shall be Je-ho-vah's. (13) And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break its neck: and all the first-born of man among thy sons shalt thou redeem. (14) And it shall be, when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand Je-ho-vah brought us out from E-gypt, from the house of bondage: (15) and it came to pass, when Pha-raoh would hardly let us go, that Je-ho-vah slew all the first-born in the land of E-gypt, both the first-born of man, and the first-born of beast: therefore I sacrifice to Je-ho-vah all that openeth the womb, being males; but all the first-born of my sons I redeem. (16) And it shall be for a sign upon thy hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand Je-ho-vah brought us forth out of E-gypt.

(17) And it came to pass, when Pha-raoh had let the people go, that God led them not by the way of the land of the Phi-lis-tines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to E-gypt: (18) but God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea: and the children of Is-ra-el went up armed out of the land of E-gypt. (19) And Mo-ses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Is-ra-el, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. (20) And they took their journey from Suc-coth, and encamped in E-tham, in the edge of the wilderness. (21) And Je-ho-vah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; that they might go by day and by night; (22) the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, departed not from before the people.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a brief topic or theme for the chapter.
2. What group of the Israelites was sanctified (or consecrated) unto the Lord? (13:1-2)
3. What day was Israel to remember? (13:3)
4. Name the month when Israel left Egypt. (13:4)
5. What was to be done and what not to be done during the feast of Unleavened Bread? (13:6-7)
6. What were the people to tell their sons? (13:8)
7. On what places were "signs" to be affixed? (13:9, 16)
8. What was to be done with firstborn men and animals? (13:12)
9. What was to be done with firstborn asses (donkeys)? (13:13)
10. Why were the firstborn male animals sacrificed to the Lord? (13:15)

**DEMANDS AND DIRECTION TO THE REDEEMED 13:1-22**

11. By what route did God NOT lead Israel out of Egypt? (13:17)
  12. By what route did God lead Israel out of Egypt? (13:18)
  13. Whose bones were carried up out of Egypt? (13:19; Gen. 50:24-25)
  14. What two places did Israel pass through after leaving Rameses? (13:20)
  15. What led the Israelites in their journeys? (13:22)
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**EXODUS THIRTEEN: DEMANDS AND DIRECTION  
TO THE REDEEMED**

- I. God's demands; 13:1-16.
  1. Consecrate the firstborn; 13:1-2, 11-16.
  2. Keep the feast; 13:3-10.
- II. God's direction; 13:17-22.
  1. Safe direction; 13:17.
    - a. Physically safe; 13:17.
    - b. Spiritually safe; 13:17.
  2. Rigorous direction; 13:18.
  3. Visible direction; 13:21.
  4. Constant direction; 13:22.

**GOD'S CLAIMS ON MAN'S FIRSTBORN:**

"It is mine!" (13:2)

1. The firstborn must be set apart; 13:12.
2. The firstborn must be redeemed; 13:13.
3. Every generation must be taught this truth; 13:14.  
God claims man's first and best!

## UNLEAVENED BREAD! (13:3-10)

1. A memorial; 13:3, 9.
2. A time for purging out leaven; 13:7.
3. A means for placing God's law in men's mouths; 13:9.
4. A regular annual observance; 13:10.
5. A type of purging out of sin; I Cor. 5:6-8.

## JOSEPH'S BONES! (13:19)

1. A fulfillment of past prophecies; Gen. 50:25.
2. A forecast of future victories; Heb. 11:22.

## GOD'S DIRECTION OF HIS PEOPLE (13:17-18)

1. Directs to a place of rest; (13:5; Deut. 8:8-10).
2. Directs around dangers (Philistines); (13:17).
3. Directs by circuitous routes; (13:18).
4. Directs into hard paths ("wilderness"); (13:18).
5. Directs into places of testing; (16:4; Deut. 8:2).
6. Directs into spiritual growth; (Deut. 8:3-6).

## THE CLOUD - AN ILLUSTRATION OF GOD'S LEADING (13:21-22)

1. Visible obvious leadership; (13:21; 40:38).
2. Light-giving leadership; (13:21; Neh. 9:12; Ps. 105:39).
3. Constant leadership; (13:22; Num. 9:19; Neh. 9:19).
4. A protecting (covering) leadership; (14:19-20; Ps. 105:39; Isa. 4:5; Ex. 40:34; Num. 9:15).
5. A glory-bearing leadership; (Ex. 40:34-35; 16:10).
6. A directing leadership; (Ex. 40:36-37; Num. 9:17-23; 10:11-12, 34; Neh. 9:12, 19; Ps. 78:14).
7. God spoke from the cloud; (Ex. 33:9; Ps. 99:7; Num. 12:5).
8. A leadership to become universal; (Isa. 4:5; Rev. 21:23).

## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. *What is in Exodus thirteen?*

The theme-title DEMANDS AND DIRECTIONS TO THE REDEEMED sums up most of the chapter. God's redeemed people have obligations to Him, as well as direction from Him.

The chapter opens with God's command to Moses to sanctify (or consecrate) all the firstborn of Israel, both of men and beasts (13:1-2)

The chapter continues with Moses' speech to the people (13:3-16). This speech dealt with two matters: (1) the observance of the feast of unleavened bread (13:3-10); (2) the consecration or redemption of their firstborn (13:11-16).

The chapter closes with information as to how God wondrously led the Israelites as they left Egypt (13:17-22).

The words of God to Moses (13:1-2) and Moses' words to the people (13:3-16) seem to have been given at Succoth, Israel's first encampment after leaving their homes in Egypt. We are not told how Moses managed to get the great horde of people all grouped together so he could give them the messages. Perhaps he relayed the messages through their elders. Moses spoke of their coming into Canaan (13:5), and how they would there keep the feast of unleavened bread and set apart their firstborn in that land (13:11-12). These confident assertions by Moses gave Israel courage and purpose in their journeys. The fulfillment of Moses' predictions in later years gave proof that Moses' words had come from God.

2. *What was to be done with the firstborn of Israel? (13:1-2)*

God commanded that all the firstborn be sanctified unto him. They were to be regarded as holy, and kept for holy use.

It seems that the firstborn referred to were the firstborn of males only. See 13:12. Daughters and female animals were apparently not affected by this regulation.

To *sanctify* is explained in 13:15 as being the act of sacrificing the animal (an act permissible only in the case of clean

animals), or by redeeming it by offering another animal as a sacrifice in place of it.

The act of sanctifying the firstborn was a positive act as well as a negative one. They were separated **TO** the Lord at the same time they were separated **FROM** any worldly use.

God's ground for claiming the firstborn as **HIS** lay in the fact that He had spared them in Egypt on the day when He struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. See Num. 3:13; 8:17.

A major purpose for sanctifying the firstborn was to perpetuate the memory of their deliverance in the mind of the nation. Israel tended to forget divine blessings very quickly.

The command about sanctifying the firstborn has an application to Christians, because Christians are described as the *firstborn ones* in Heb. 12:23. Thus, the type suggests that all Christians, as God's firstborn, are the **LORD's**. Some Christians may resent the idea that their children or they themselves should be dedicated to be preachers, missionaries, etc. They do not like religious duties to make demands upon their property or pleasures. They want a cheap religion. But in truth all of us who claim God as our father are the firstborn ones, and dedicated to the **LORD**.

3. *Where and when did Moses speak to the people about sanctifying the firstborn?* (13:3-4)

Moses spoke to the people on the first day of their departure. Literally, Ex. 13:4 says, "*You are going forth. . .*" Presumably this was at Succoth. The Passover had been the night before. Probably Moses spoke at their first stop on the way. We suspect that he spoke to their elders, who relayed the word back to their clans and families. (Compare 12:21.)

How smooth and naturally this chapter develops! First God commanded Moses concerning the sanctifying of their firstborn. Then Moses spoke the words to the people, telling them about the two matters God had spoken to him about: (1) About the feast of unleavened bread (13:3-10); (2) About sanctifying their firstborn to the **LORD** (13:11-16).

Some critics (e.g. Driver) ascribe 13:1-2, 20 to a fifth century B.C. priestly author, and 13:3-16, 21-22 to a tenth century author called the Jehovist. Martin Noth attributes the whole chapter to J, but thinks it has numerous later insertions in 13:1-16 by unknown Deuteronomistic (D) writers, and by an E writer in 13:17-19. There is no proof of such speculations. The disagreements among those who hold such ideas demonstrate their flimsy basis. These suggested multiple sources break up the natural progress in the story as it is given to us.

4. *What were the Israelites to remember?* (13:3)

Remember this day! Compare 12:14.

It was their day of coming out! Note that Egypt is called a "slave house" (literally "house of bondmen"). Israel was free! Certainly they faced hardships and conflicts. But their new freedom was worth more than all the security (?) of Egypt's prison life.

The words "from this place" could only have been uttered at the very time when they were emancipated, but yet on Egyptian soil. No authors after Moses' time could thus have written (assuming that they were honest).

This remembering was to be demonstrated by ACTS, such as abstaining from unleavened bread for the week. Mere mental memory is cheap. Real remembering regulates our resources and routine.

5. *In what month did Israel depart?* (13:4)

In the month *Abib*. See 12:12. This is near the end of March. After the Babylonian captivity this month was called Nisan (Neh. 2:1).

The term *Abib* means *sprouting*. As the name of a month it is found in Ex. 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Deut. 16:1. In Ex. 9:31 the same word refers to the *ear* (or head of grain): "the barley was in the *ear*." In Lev. 2:14 it refers to the "green ears of corn," that is, the fresh grain.

Much as Israel went forth in the month *Abib* ("sprouting forth," "springing up"), we also accept Christ in a time of springing up to new growth and life.

6. *What observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be kept in Canaan?* (13:5)

They were to observe the feast every year in that month!

In their future prosperity and ease ("milk and honey"), they were to keep the ordinances faithfully.

Only five of the seven "nations" in the land of Canaan are named here. The Greek O.T. adds the names of the Gergashites and Perizzites. Concerning these seven "nations," see Ex. 3:8. Compare Gen. 15:19-21 and Ex. 23:23-28.

These people in Canaan (all of whom were collectively called Canaanites) were not actually separate sovereign nations. They were racial groups. Canaan was controlled at that time by small city-states, all of which were nominally under the authority of Egypt, but were independent of one another.

Regarding God's oath to give the land of Canaan to the "fathers" (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), see Gen. 12:7; 15:18; 26:3; 35:12.

Concerning the land "flowing with milk and honey," see Ex. 3:17.

Note that keeping the feast of unleavened bread was a "service." They were to "Serve this service." The Hebrew word for *serve* emphasizes the feature of work and labor.

7. *What was the major feature of the feast of unleavened bread?* (13:6-7)

The eating of unleavened bread for a week was its major feature. No leaven was permitted within the Israelites' property during that time. On the seventh day of this period there was a feast to Jehovah. See Ex. 12:15-20 for more about the feast of unleavened bread. It had a profound meaning.

8. *What were the Israelites to tell their children about the unleavened bread?* (13:8, 10).

They were to tell them the reason for eating the unleavened bread that week. They were to say, "It is because of that which Jehovah did for me when I came forth out of Egypt."



The instruction of Israelite children during the feasts is referred to in 10:2 and 12:26-27. See notes on these verses.

The command to keep the ordinance about the Unleavened bread is given several times and is very strong. See 12:24-25; 13:5, 10.

9. *How were the people to show their devotion to the Lord for bringing them up out of Egypt?* (13:9, 16)

They were to make a *sign*, which would keep their deliverance ever in their minds.

Of course, the *sign* referred to was not some lettered placard or billboard. Their deliverance itself was the sign and memorial. But in some way their deliverance was to be made unforgettable to them throughout future generations. ("Unto thee" in 13:9 means unto Israel as a collective body.)

The purpose of the sign and memorial was that the law of Jehovah might be "in thy mouth." The Israelites, both individually and collectively, were to speak about their deliverance through all future times.

The exact form of the sign which God had in mind is not specified. Jews in later centuries interpreted the verse to mean that they were to make and wear *phylacteries*. These are small leather boxes attached to straps. They are worn upon the forehead and the left arm. They contain strips of paper with certain scripture passages written upon them. (The passages are Ex. 13:2-10; Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21). The arm phylactery is tied to the inside of the left arm, a little above the elbow, so that the scripture passage might be close to the heart.

Our Lord Jesus referred to phylacteries in Matt. 23:5. He pronounced woe upon the scribes and Pharisees for making their phylacteries extra large, so as to be seen by men and be praised for their holiness. Jesus did not actually condemn the phylacteries, only the misuse of them.

The scripture seems to indicate that the *sign* was the deliverance from Egypt (13:8) or was the feast of unleavened bread (13:7). If this is true, then the later Jewish use of this verse as justification for making and wearing phylacteries is

not a very strong argument. God did not specify exactly how this devotion was to be expressed, or what the sign and memorial consisted of. It would have been best to leave the command just as Moses delivered it. See Deut. 4:2. It is equally wrong to insist on an exclusively spiritual meaning in it, or to use the verse as a warrant for elaborate phylacterial ceremonialism. Similarly in the New Testament church, we do not have details for worship ceremonies, only broad guidelines. To insist on a highly structured formal service or on a very loose informal program is equally wrong.

Regarding the *strength* of God's hand in bringing Israel forth, see Ex. 15:6 and Deut. 7:19.

10. *What was to be done with the firstborn of man and beast?* (13:11-12)

The firstborn were to be set apart to the Lord. Ex. 22:9; 34:19; Lev. 27:26. Literally, they were to cause the firstborn to "pass over." Sometimes this expression meant to sacrifice (as in II Kings 23:10), and sometimes it meant to transfer over to (as in Num. 27:8). Both of these meanings seem to be implied here.

God chose the firstborn of each family to be dedicated to full time labor at the tabernacle in administering the sacred services.

This practice of setting apart the firstborn was to be done when they came into the land of the Canaanites. However it was also done in the wilderness (Num. 3:13).

The paragraph 3:11-16 is a detailed exposition by Moses about God's law concerning sanctifying the firstborn. This law was briefly stated in 13:1-2.

At Mt. Sinai God commanded that the entire tribe of the Levites (the descendants of Jacob's son Levi) be set apart to Him instead of the firstborn of each family in every tribe (Num. 3:5-13, 41, 45).

Regarding the Canaanite tribes and God's promise to Israel's forefathers to give them the land, see notes on 13:5.

Ex. 13:12 is quoted in Luke 2:23. There we are told that the infant Jesus was "presented to the Lord" by Joseph and

Mary, by the act of making a sacrifice. This sacrifice was that which was offered following the birth of all children (Lev. 12:6-7). However, it appears that the sacrifice also involved the matter of redeeming (buying back) the firstborn male sons. Even though the Levites replaced them in the actual temple labors, they still had to be redeemed.

11. *How were the firstborn set apart to the Lord?* (13:13)

a. Firstborn lambs, or kids, or cattle were sacrificed. (13:15)  
These animals were killed and their fat burned as an offering made by fire. But their flesh was given to the priests for food. (Num. 18:17-18)

b. The firstborn of an ass or any unclean beast (like a camel; Lev. 11:4; Num. 18:15) was to be killed by breaking its neck. Or a lamb or kid could be sacrificed in its place. The people would surely carry out this law scrupulously, because the ass was a much more costly animal than a lamb.

c. The firstborn of man was to be redeemed by payment of five shekels each. See Ex. 13:15; Num. 3:46-47; 18:15-16.

These laws should cause us to consider our own giving to the Lord. Do we give our firstborn, or an equivalent value, to the Lord? Do we in Christ give less to the Lord than those who lived under the law of Moses? May it never be so! Rather, we ought by love to do more than the law required, and thus to fulfill the law and establish it firmly in our lives. (Rom. 3:13; 13:10).

12. *What connection was there between Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the practice of redeeming the firstborn?* (13:14-15)

Redeeming the firstborn was (1) a *memorial* to Israel's redemption from Egypt; (2) also it was a *response* and repayment to God for sparing the firstborn of Israel in Egypt.

Certainly men can never repay God for His saving acts toward us. But we are under the necessity of rendering unto him whatever we can, both as a debt and as an expression of our gratitude.

Concerning the teaching of children about God's acts, see

notes on 13:8; 12:26-27; 10:2. Also see Deut. 6:20-21.

Regarding the "strength of hand" which God used to get Israel out of Egypt, see Ex. 13:3, 16. This refers to all of God's acts during the ten plagues.

Concerning the death of the firstborn in Egypt, see Ex. 11:4-6; 12:12, 29.

Concerning the *signs* and frontlets which Israelites were to use, see notes on 13:9, 16. The word *token* in 13:16 is from the same Hebrew word as *sign* in 13:9.

13. *What are the "frontlets between thine eyes"? (13:16)*

They seem to refer to some type of object, or strap, or bandage about the head. Wearing such an object on the head to commemorate God's delivering the people would be a useful reminder and testimony, if it did not become an object for show and pride.

Jews in later centuries specified that these "frontlets" should consist of leather phylacteries, or amulets, to be worn on the forehead and left arm during morning prayers. (The Jews call them *tephilin*, from the Hebrew word for prayer.) See notes on 13:9, where the "frontlets" are referred to as a *memorial* between thine eyes. Tregelles (in Gesenius' *Hebrew Lexicon*) aptly says, "It requires proof [which is lacking] that the Jewish phylacteries are intended by these fillets or bandages." God surely intended that His instructions regarding these "frontlets" be left simply in the form in which His divine wisdom stated them, without any official ecclesiastical interpretation and enforcement. See Deut. 4:2.

14. *By what route did God NOT lead the Israelites? (13:17)*

God did not lead them by the short route, along the Mediterranean seacoast linking Egypt and Canaan. This was a heavily-travelled route, approximately one hundred and fifty miles across. This route crosses a sandy desert (the desert of Shur). It would have required only about two weeks to travel this way.

This route was called the Way of the Sea (Via Maris) or the Way of Horus (by the Egyptians). The way was dotted

with Egyptian fortresses. Careful lists were kept by Egyptian guards of arrivals and departures at the northeast frontier forts in Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

The Bible calls this road the Way of the Philistines, because Philistines had settled along the SW coast of Canaan, and the road would pass through the area settled by them. Ex. 15:14 also mentions the Philistines.

The Philistines made their major immigration into Canaan about 1200 B.C., coming from Crete, or Caphtor, and other Mediterranean islands. This was 200 years after the time of the exodus. However, the Bible indicates that a few Philistines had settled into Canaan as far back as Abraham's time, about 2000 B.C. (Gen. 21:32; 26:1, 18) Most liberal critics view these early references to the Philistines as anachronisms.<sup>2</sup> However, some recent archaeological inscriptions indicate the presence of settlers in the area of Philistia considerably before 1200 B.C.<sup>3</sup>

Note that GOD LED the Israelites. He chose their path. "He leadeth me, O blessed thought!" (Psalm 23:2; 37:23)

God knew that the Israelites were not yet able to face war. Ex. 14:11-12 reveals how frightened Israel became when they were under attack. Numbers 14:1-4 shows their terror of "giants." The path into Canaan by the short way of the sea would have led them into southern Canaan, the very center of these giants (Anakim; Num. 13:22, 33). God does not allow His people to be tested more than they can bear (I Cor. 10:13). "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14).

Furthermore, the Israelites were not yet *spiritually* prepared to occupy the land of Canaan. They had a divine appointment to "serve God on this mountain," Mt. Sinai (Ex. 3:12). There they would receive the law from God and be organized into a holy nation (Ex. 19:5-6), with a

<sup>1</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>3</sup>*Biblical Archaeologist*, Sept. 1966, pp. 73-74.

tabernacle worship center and a priesthood. Frankly, they needed to be converted (turned) to the LORD!

Spiritually, Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan was a longer trip than the physical journey. The people had to be converted from the idolatry of Egypt and converted to the service of God. They were to be transformed from slaves to spiritual leaders. They were to become God's holy nation. The harsh Sinai desert became a demonstration area and a school where they could daily see God's power and care, and learn to rely totally upon Him. God did not intend that they should ever return to Egypt, either in body or spirit (Deut. 17:16; Neh. 9:17; Num. 14:4; Josh. 24:14).

In view of the plain assertion that God did NOT lead Israel by the seacoast route, it is astonishing to read some modern (especially Jewish) authors who say that the route of the Israelites was along this very route. They express the view that the Sea of Reeds (or Red Sea which Israel crossed) was Lake Sirbonis or Lake Menzaleh, both of which are on the Mediterranean Sea.

15. *By what route did God lead the Israelites? (13:18)*

He led them by the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. The name *Red Sea* is literally (in Hebrew) *Yam Suph*, meaning Sea of Reeds, or Sea of Weeds. See Introductory Studies VII and VI. Our study has led us to the firm belief that the *Yam Suph* is simply the same body of water which we call the Red Sea, and here in Ex. 13:18 it particularly refers to that arm of the Red Sea called the Gulf of Suez.

What wilderness (or desert area) is referred to as the "wilderness of the Red Sea"? We feel it was the Sinai wilderness lying just north and east of the Gulf of Suez, the area east of the Bitter Lakes.

Admittedly most interpreters (even conservative authors like John J. Davis) feel that the desert referred to was that which lay between Egypt and the Red Sea, and not that of the Sinai peninsula, which we propose.

Ex. 13:20 indicates that they came into the "wilderness" after they left Succoth. The location of Succoth (Tell

Maskhuta) is only about ten miles west of Lake Timsah. The closeness of Succoth to the Sinai wilderness strongly suggests that the "wilderness of the Red Sea" into which Israel came was *Sinai* wilderness.

The term *wilderness* in Exodus generally refers to the wilderness in Sinai, east of Egypt. Compare Num. 33:8, 6; Ex. 3:18; 5:3. This gives additional support to our view that Israel travelled east from Succoth into the Sinai wilderness, travelling probably just south of Lake Timsah into the wilderness. There they turned southward, going along the east side of the Bitter Lakes, and onward toward the Gulf of Suez (Red Sea).

Note that the Israelites encamped in "Etham in the edge of the wilderness." (Ex. 13:20; Num. 33:6) The Wilderness Etham and the Wilderness of Shur are two names for the same desert; or at least the Wilderness of Etham is part of the Wilderness of Shur. See Ex. 15:22 and Num. 33:8. The fact that Israel came out into the wilderness of Etham AFTER they crossed the Red Sea gives support to our view that the place called Etham was in the wilderness area east of the present Suez canal, in the Sinai peninsula.

16. *Did the Israelites have arms when they went out of Egypt?* (13:18)

They surely did. "The children of Israel went up armed (K.J.V., "harnessed") out of the land of Egypt."

The Hebrew word (*chamushim*) translated *armed* is a difficult term, but the meaning *armed* seems correct.<sup>4</sup> It is used in Judges 7:11; Joshua 4:12; 1:14. All of these passages refer to armed men.

The Greek O.T. translated *chamushim* ("armed") as *pempte*, meaning *fifth*, and says that the people went out of Egypt "in the fifth generation." The Hebrew word for *armed* is somewhat similar to the words meaning five and

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<sup>4</sup>In Num. 32:30, 32 and Deut. 3:18 the word *chalutsim* (meaning "armed for battle") is obviously used as a synonym for *chamushim* in Josh. 4:12. This indicates that *chamushim* also means "armed."

fifty, and this may account for the Greek translation from the Hebrew. Since Israel did not leave Egypt in the fifth generation (see Gen. 15:16), we do not feel that the Greek translation is correct.

We can hardly see how Israel could have come out of Egypt *heavily* armed, well-disciplined, and trained for warfare. Our text states that they had some arms, though these were surely very limited. They went out not as fugitives fleeing in disorder, but prepared and orderly, organized into groups. Moses had been trained in all the wisdom and knowledge of the Egyptians, and this surely included military leadership. Josephus tells that Moses defeated an Ethiopian army by clever strategy. (*Ant.* II; x, 2) We can neither verify nor disprove this story.

17. *Whose bones were carried out of Egypt?* (13:19)

The bones of Joseph! What a thrill it must have been to the Israelites when word was circulated among them that the bones of Joseph were in their possession. These would be an inspiration to the people, because they would know that the prophecy uttered by Joseph three hundred and fifty years before was coming to pass in their day. See Gen. 50:24-25. "By faith Joseph when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel and gave commandment concerning his bones." (Heb. 11:22).

Joseph was later buried in Shechem. (Josh. 24:32). Like Jacob his father, Joseph never looked upon Egypt as his true homeland, and he showed this by his request for burial in Canaan. No mention is made of the bodies of Jacob's other sons. But Stephen's statement in Acts 7:15-16 implies that all of the "fathers" were carried into Shechem.

18. *Where was Etham?* (13:20)

Etham lay in the "edge of the wilderness." The term *wilderness* is usually employed in Exodus to refer to the desert area of the Sinai peninsula, east of the present Suez canal and the Gulf of Suez. See Ex. 3:1, 18; 15:22. The exact location of Etham is not known. We feel that it lay east or southeast of Lake Timsah. It seems reasonable to suppose



that Etham lay in the Wilderness of Etham. This Wilderness of Etham is identified as being a part of the Wilderness of Shur, which definitely lay east of the present Suez Canal. See Num. 33:6, 8; Ex. 15:22.

19. *How were the people led?* (13:21-22)

They were led by the pillar of cloud and fire.

This column in the air above them began to lead the people at Succoth. It had the appearance of smoke (or cloud) by day and of fire by night. There was only one pillar: "Jehovah looked forth . . . through THE pillar of cloud and fire" (Ex. 14:24). The pillar is sometimes referred to as "the cloud," even when it was shining as fire in the dark. See Ex. 14:19; Num. 9:21.

The cloud must have been huge and high to have been visible to all the Israelites. Seemingly in the first few days of travelling, the Israelites did some night marching as well as daytime travelling. They sought to put as much distance between them and Pharaoh as possible. From Succoth (Tell Maskhuta) to the Gulf of Suez by a route along the east side of the Bitter Lakes is about fifty-five miles. This could have been traversed in four days of marching.

The Scripture does not say that the cloud was a type of any one particular thing. We can safely say that it was an illustration of God's leading His people during the present age. God now leads us by the Bible, by the Holy Spirit, and by providential events.

Those who hold the "liberal" view of scripture, that is merely a human production, naturally reject any miraculous views about the cloud. They assert (without proof) such ideas as that the story of the cloud "goes back to observation of an active volcano"<sup>5</sup> "located perhaps as far away as Midian."<sup>6</sup> Always, however, they assert that whatever the cloud and fire was, it was associated with *natural* phenomena. Some feel that the entire story of the cloud is a vivid but

<sup>5</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>6</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 381.

*figurative* way of describing the reality of God's presence with his people. The descriptions of the cloud in the scripture certainly present it as real and miraculous.

The cloud LED God's redeemed people. (Psalm 78:14). God does not abandon those whom He saves. The rising of the cloud was a signal for the people to prepare to move. The people followed the cloud as it slowly went before them. Its descent toward the ground was a signal to stop and make camp. The cloud was an infallible and constant guide. See Num. 9:15-23; 10:11-12, 34; Ex. 40:34-38.

"Let the fiery cloudy pillar

Lead me all my journey through."

The cloud GAVE LIGHT to the people by night. See Neh. 9:12. Interestingly, the same cloud which gave light to Israel was darkness to the Egyptians (Ex. 14:40). How much this is like the teaching of the gospel. The truths which bring light to the believers are hidden from the wise and prudent of this world. See Matt. 11:25; II Cor. 4:3-4.

The cloud was for a COVERING. (Psalm 105:39: "He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light by night."

"Round each habitation hovering,

See the cloud and fire appear;

For a glory and a covering,

Showing that the Lord is near."

(By John Newton, in the hymn "Glorious Things  
of Thee Are Spoken")

God SPOKE from the cloud. Psalm 99:7: "He spake unto them in the pillar of cloud." See Ex. 33:9; Num. 12:15.

The fire and cloud was a visible manifestation of the Lord's presence. The cloud filled the tabernacle with GLORY. There was a shining glow and radiance in it, which indicated God's presence.

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**14** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying (2) Speak unto the children of Is-ra-el, that they turn back and encamp before Pi-ha-hi-roth, between Mig-dol and the sea, before Ba-al-ze-phon: over against it shall ye encamp by the sea. (3) And Pha-raoh will say of the children of Is-ra-el, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. (4) And I will harden Pha-raoh's heart, and he shall follow after them; and I will get me honor upon Pha-raoh, and upon all his host; and the E-gyp-tians shall know that I am Je-ho-vah. And they did so. (5) And it was told the king of E-gypt that the people were fled: and the heart of Pha-raoh and of his servants was changed towards the people, and they said, What is this we have done, that we have let Is-ra-el go from serving us? (6) And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: (7) and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of E-gypt, and captains over all of them. (8) And Je-ho-vah hardened the heart of Pha-raoh king of E-gypt, and he pursued after the children of Is-ra-el: for the children of Is-ra-el went out with a high hand. (9) And the E-gyp-tains pursued after them, all the horses *and* chariots of Pha-raoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-ha-hi-roth, before Ba-al-ze-phon.

(10) And when Pha-raoh drew nigh, the children of Is-ra-el lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the E-gyp-tains were marching after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Is-ra-el cried out unto Je-ho-vah. (11) And they said unto Mo-ses, Because there were no graves in E-gypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to bring us forth out of E-gypt? (12) Is not this the word that we spake unto thee in E-gypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the E-gyp-tains? For it were better for us to serve the E-gyp-tians, than that we should die in the wilderness. (13) And Mo-ses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Je-ho-vah, which he will work for you to-day:

for the E-gyp-tians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. (14) Je-ho-vah will fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

(15) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Is-ra-el, that they go forward. (16) And lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Is-ra-el shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground. (17) And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the E-gyp-tians, and they shall go in after them: and I will get me honor upon Pha-raoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. (18) And the E-gyp-tians shall know that I am Je-ho-vah, when I have gotten me honor upon Pha-raoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. (19) And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Is-ra-el, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud removed from before them, and stood behind them: (20) and it came between the camp of E-gypt and the camp of Is-ra-el; and there was the cloud and the darkness, yet gave it light by night: and the one came not near the other all the night.

(21) And Mo-ses stretched out his hand over the sea; and Je-ho-vah caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. (22) And the children of Is-ra-el went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. (23) And the E-gyp-tians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pha-raoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. (24) And it came to pass in the morning watch, that Je-ho-vah looked forth upon the host of the E-gyp-tians through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and discomfited the host of the E-gyp-tians. (25) And he took off their chariot wheels, and they drove them heavily; so that the E-gyp-tians said, Let us flee from the face of Is-ra-el; for Je-ho-vah fighteth for them against the E-gyp-tians.

(26) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Stretch out thy hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the E-gyp-tians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. (27) And Mo-ses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned

to its strength when the morning appeared; and the E-gyp-tians fled against it; and Je-ho-vah overthrew the E-gyp-tians in the midst of the sea. (28) And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, even all the host of Pha-raoh that went in after them into the sea; there remained not so much as one of them. (29) But the children of Is-ra-el walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left. (30) Thus Je-ho-vah saved Is-ra-el that day out of the hand of the E-gyp-tians; and Is-ra-el saw the E-gyp-tians dead upon the sea-shore. (31) And Is-ra-el saw the great work which Je-ho-vah did upon the E-gyp-tians, and the people feared Je-ho-vah: and they believed in Je-ho-vah, and in his servant Mo-ses.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER FOURTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. Propose a theme or topic for chapter fourteen.
2. What change of directions did God have the Israelites make? (14:1-2)
3. What place were the Israelites to encamp in front of? (14:2)
4. Between what places were they to encamp? (14:2)
5. On which side of the sea was Baal-zephon? (14:2)
6. What would Pharaoh say when he heard where Israel had gone? (14:3)
7. What would cause Pharaoh to follow Israel? (14:4)
8. What would bring honor to God? (14:4, 18)
9. What would the Egyptians know after their host was destroyed? (14:4)
10. What was told to Pharaoh about the Israelites' activities? (14:5; Compare Num. 33:3-4)
11. What was changed within Pharaoh and his servants? (14:5)
12. What did Pharaoh take to pursue Israel? (14:6)
13. How many chariots did Pharaoh take? (14:7)

14. What did Jehovah do to Pharaoh's heart? (14:8)
15. In what manner had the Israelites gone out? (14:8)
16. At what place did Pharaoh overtake Israel? (14:9)
17. What was Israel's reaction upon seeing Pharaoh? (14:10)
18. To whom did the Israelites first cry out? (14:10)
19. What taunt did Israel make to Moses? (14:11)
20. What was the feeling of the Israelites toward Moses? (14:11)
21. What words had Israel previously spoken to Moses? (14:12)  
When?
22. What heroic words did Moses utter? (14:13)
23. What did Moses predict would be the fate of the Egyptians?  
(14:13)
24. Who would fight for Israel? (14:14)
25. What did God tell Israel to do? (14:15)
26. What did God tell Moses to do? (14:16)
27. What would Pharaoh do when Israel crossed the sea? (14:17)
28. Who or what went before the Israelite camp? (14:19)
29. What separated Israel from the Egyptians? (14:20)
30. What gave light to the Israelites? (14:20)
31. What did God use to divide the waters? (14:21)
32. What was the sea like on the right and left sides? (14:22)
33. Who followed Israel into the sea? (14:23)
34. At what hour did the LORD look forth upon the Egyptians?  
(14:24)
35. What did the LORD do to slow down the Egyptians? (14:25)
36. What was the reaction of the Egyptians to their difficulties in  
crossing? (14:25)
37. What was used to cause the waters to return to their usual  
position? (14:26)
38. Did the Egyptians attempt to escape? (14:27)
39. How many Egyptians survived? (14:28)
40. What was Israel's last view of the Egyptians? (14:30)
41. What was Israel's reaction when they saw all that had hap-  
pened to the Egyptians? (14:31)

## EXODUS FOURTEEN: BAPTIZED UNTO MOSES

- I. *A point of transition.*
- II. *A place of triumph.*

## GOD'S PEOPLE IN TRYING SITUATIONS (14:2-4)

- I. Situations unexpected; (14:2.)
- II. Situations under enemy observation; (14:3)
- III. Situations where God gets honor; (14:4)

## FEELINGS OF WEAK SAINTS (14:10-12)

- I. Fear; 14:10.
- II. Suspicion of leaders; 14:11.
- III. Forgetting past misery; 14:12.
- IV. Choosing slavery over freedom; 14:12.

## MOSES' MARVELOUS FAITH (14:13-15)

- I. Held in the face of fearful multitudes; 14:10. 10.
- II. Publicly declared; 14:13.
- III. Pointed the people to God; 14:13-14.
- IV. Sought God in private prayer; 14:15.

## DIRECTIONS IN DILEMMA (14:13-16.)

1. Fear not; 14:13.
2. Stand still (be silent); 14:13-14.
3. See the salvation of Jehovah; 14:13.
4. Go forward! (14:15)

## GOD'S TROUBLING OF THE WICKED (14:23-28)

1. Done in the midst of their sin; 14:23.
2. Recognized too late; 14:25.
3. Precedes total destruction; 14:27-28.

## THE MIRACLE-CROSSING!!

1. Miraculous light and darkness; 14:20.
  2. Miraculous wind and storm; 14:21; Ps. 77:16-18.
  3. Miraculous wall of water; 14:22, 29.
  4. Miraculous safe crossing; 14:22, 30.
  5. Miraculous motivation upon the Egyptians; 14:4, 17.
  6. Miraculous hindrance of Egyptians; 14:25.
  7. Miraculous return of waters; 14:28.
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## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. *What is in Exodus fourteen?*

The chapter tells of Israel's miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, and the destruction of the Egyptians who pursued them.

2. *What is the spiritual significance of this chapter?*

The chapter is an eternal illustration of the truth that God is able to deliver his people. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21).

The chapter makes the meaning of baptism clear. We are told in I Corinthians 10:2 that "Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all *baptized unto Moses* in the cloud and in the sea." By the same words we are said to be "*baptized into Christ*" (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3).

Up until the crossing of the Red Sea Israel was in Egyptian territory and in danger from Egypt. Similarly up until our baptism we are yet in sins. Though Saul of Tarsus came to believe in Jesus upon the road to Damascus, and had changed his mind (repented) toward Jesus, and though he had prayed for three days, yet the preacher sent by the Lord himself said to him, "Arise, and be baptized, and *wash away thy sins, calling on his name.*" (Acts 22:16)

When Israel crossed the sea, they were baptized unto Moses. They came completely under his authority and rule.



Egypt had no more dominion over them. Similarly, in Romans six, where Paul talks about our being baptized into Christ, he writes that "Sin shall not have dominion over you." (Rom. 6:11, 14)

By mighty works done by Moses, God made it possible for the Israelites to step forth in FAITH to forsake Egypt. By mighty works done through Christ (such as raising Him from the dead), God has made it possible for us to step forth in FAITH to escape sin. After that act of faith, we are *baptized into Christ*. It is at that point that we are saved (I Peter 3:21; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). It is the point of transition. Baptism must be preceded by faith; indeed it is an act of faith. God has called us "unto obedience of faith" (Rom. 2:5; 16:26). Noah and Abraham *by faith* obeyed God's commands (Heb. 11:7-8). We do not have Biblical faith if we take lightly God's commands, such as to be baptized.

3. *What unexpected directions did God give to Israel?* (14:1-2)

The Lord told Moses to tell Israel to TURN BACK toward the sea and camp in front of Pihahiroth, between Migdol (the tower) and the sea, in front of (east of) Baal-zephon.

Israel was to encamp in a vulnerable place, as if just waiting for Pharaoh to respond.

The identifications of Pihahiroth, Migdol, and Baal-zephon are as numerous as the commentaries on the subject! Every body of water along the east edge of Egypt has been identified by some interpreter as the *sea* spoken of. Identifications of the *sea* include Lake Sirbonis (Martin Noth, Aharoni), Lake Menzaleh (G. E. Wright), Lake Timsah (Naiville),<sup>1</sup> the Bitter Lakes (Cassuto, John Davis), and the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez) (S. C. Bartlett, J. W. McGarvey).

We feel that the *sea* referred to in 14:2 (and subsequently) is the Red Sea Gulf of Suez. See Introductory Study II of this book for our reasons for holding this view. Acceptance of this view certainly requires acceptance of miraculous features in the crossing! We assuredly regard the crossing as miraculous

<sup>1</sup> See J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 266.

in many respects.

When God told Israel to "Turn back," he probably meant for them to turn *west*. To the Hebrews the west side of anything was spoken of as the back side. See Ex. 3:1. In Genesis 14:7 we have the account of how the four kings from the east "turned *back*" from Mt. Seir (Edom) to Kadesh (presumably Kadesh-barnea). This was a generally *westward* turn, as a check of a map will show.

Israel had been travelling in the wilderness (13:18, 20), probably going southward in the area east and southeast of the Bitter Lakes. Now they are directed to *turn back*, meaning westward, toward the north tip of the Gulf of Suez.

The Hebrew verb translated "turn back" may simply mean "turn." It has both meanings. We mention this to show that "Turn back" does not necessarily have to mean a complete reversal of direction, as from south to north. A turn to the west would fulfill the command completely.

The exact locations of Pihahiroth, Migdol, and Baal-zephon are not known. We feel that all three were near the north tip of the Red Sea Gulf of Suez.

*Pihahiroth* is a name having a definite Egyptian sound.<sup>2</sup> Numbers 33:8 gives it as Hahiroth, omitting the *Pi*, which is the Egyptian article *the*.

Several places called *Migdol*, meaning watchtower, are known. We propose that a tower on one of the summits of Mt. Atakah, just west of the Gulf of Suez tip, would be a most probable location.<sup>3</sup>

*Baal-zephon*, meaning "Baal of the North," was the name of a Canaanite god that was evidently worshipped in Egypt. G. E. Wright tells of one site called Baal-zephon in later centuries, located on the south tip of Lake Menzaleh.<sup>4</sup> But

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<sup>2</sup>Alan Cole (*op. cit.*, p. 119) says *Pihahiroth* means "region of salt marshes." We have seen no other authorities who confirm this meaning.

<sup>3</sup>*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, IV, p. 2396, concurs with this suggested location.

<sup>4</sup>*Biblical Archaeology*, p. 61. The same view is in *Broadman Bible Commentary*, (1969), 381.

another site named Baal-zephon must be referred to here, since Lake Menzaleh is far more than a three-days' journey from Marah ('Ain Hawwarah). See Num. 33:8; Ex. 15:22. U. Cassuto refers to an Egyptian papyrus which refers to a tower of Baal-zephon located near the Bitter Lakes.<sup>5</sup> The existence of this second site called Baal-zephon certainly shows us that we are not forced to accept Wright's location of Baal-zephon near Lake Menzaleh as the only possible one.

4. *What would Pharaoh think when he heard of Israel's detour? (14:3)*

He would think they were entrapped in the land. Our suggested location of the Israelite camp is in an area hemmed in by Mt. Atakah on the west and south and by the sea on the east. They were definitely shut in by the wilderness. (A *wilderness* is any desert, whether mountainous or level, sandy or rocky.)

5. *Why was God going to harden Pharaoh's heart again? (14:4)*

Three reasons are given: (1) so that Pharaoh would pursue the Israelites (a suicidal mission); (2) so God would get honor through what He did to Pharaoh and his host (compare 14:17; 9:16); (3) so that the Egyptians would know that God was the LORD (Jehovah). This third goal has been mentioned time and again in Exodus (7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 14:18).

Concerning the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, see notes on 4:21; 7:3. See pp. 116-119.

The paragraph 14:1-4 closes with a picture of the people encamped near the Sea of Reeds (Red Sea) tranquil and trusting in the LORD and in Moses his servant.<sup>6</sup>

If it should seem to you harsh that God should again harden Pharaoh's heart, after having already slain all of Egypt's firstborn, observe the text carefully! We are first told that Pharaoh would take notice of Israel's detour, as if in exultant amazement (14:3). Obviously the Egyptians had spies, trackers, and runners reporting on the journey of

<sup>5</sup>*Commentary on Exodus*, p. 159.

<sup>6</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

Israel. After telling of Pharaoh's own reaction to Israel's detour, God declared that He would harden Pharaoh's heart (14:4). This occurred just as God predicted. When Pharaoh heard of Israel's position, his heart was changed toward the people and he regretted having let them go (14:5). At that point, AFTER Pharaoh had already expressed his own real feelings, God hardened his heart, causing him to pursue Israel suicidally (14:8).

6. *What was Pharaoh's reaction when he heard that Israel had fled?* (14:5)

His heart was changed - maliciously changed - and so were the hearts of his servants, presumably his government officers. Previously they were very glad to get the Israelites out of the land (12:30-34). Now they regret it.

The upper classes of Egypt had depended on the manual labor of Israel to do the physical labor that made their comforts possible. Many nations even now have peasant, or working, classes, whose toils enable the "upper crust" to live grandly. The Egyptians now see Goshen empty, the brickyards deserted, the fields forsaken (1:14). This loss was socially and economically paralyzing.

Besides the pain of the economic loss, the Egyptians had a spiritual and emotional fury in them, a frustration born of defeat in the ten plagues, a desire for revenge, a religious resentment and hatred. The Egyptians said, "I will pursue; I will overtake; I will divide the spoil!" (15:9)

"Fled" does not suggest that Israel left surreptitiously, without Pharaoh's being aware of it.<sup>7</sup> Far from it! They left in full view of the Egyptians, with a high hand, defiantly (Ex. 14:8; Num. 33:3-4). The word *fled* here probably is intended to give the idea that they had utterly left the country. Moses had previously proposed to Pharaoh that Israel should go a

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<sup>7</sup>Martin Noth, *Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 111, argues that "fled" is a fragment from an *E* tradition, that Israel fled without Pharaoh's notice; and that this contradicts the other descriptions of Israel's escape as given in Exodus. This dissection of the text is unnecessary and unproven. "Fled" does not always imply "to flee secretly." Compare Gen. 16:16; Num. 24:11.

three-days' journey into the wilderness to worship the LORD (5:3). Probably when Israel left, Pharaoh supposed that they would only go a short ways, stop, worship, and return. Now he learns that they have FLED the country! Indeed they had. By this time Israel had almost certainly been travelling four days and probably more, and had gone about sixty miles and were still going. But suddenly news comes to Pharaoh that the Israelites are entrapped in the wilderness as the result of an unexpected detour.

7. *What Egyptian forces were sent after the Israelites?* (14: 6-7, 9)

Pharaoh prepared his *chariot*, and took his *people* with him. He took six hundred chosen (or tested and selected) chariots of Egypt, and all the chariots of Egypt, with captains (warriors) over all of them. Besides these, there were horses and horsemen (15:1), and an army (footmen) (14:7, 9, 17).

The word *chariot* in 14:6 is singular in Hebrew. But so also is the obviously plural *chariots* in 14:7, 9. The Hebrew *rekeb* often means chariotry, or chariots, in a collective sense. Compare Judges 4:3. Thus here it probably refers to Pharaoh's chariots generally, rather than to Pharaoh's own personal chariot.

*Chosen* chariots refers to those specially tested, or proved, chariots, selected because of their proven effectiveness in battle. Such chariots won many victories for the Egyptian eighteenth dynasty kings in battles in Canaan and Syria.

The *captains* in the chariots were "chariot warriors." The Hebrew word for captains (*shalishim*) resembles the word for *three*, suggesting three men were in each chariot. Since pictures of ancient Egyptian chariots show only two men in each chariot, this led Martin Noth<sup>8</sup> to assert that the Biblical record is here in error. However, the significance of a related word in the Ugaritic texts<sup>9</sup> means only "chariot warriors,"

<sup>8</sup>*Op. Cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>9</sup>Ugaritic is a Semitic language related to Hebrew, and written by the Canaanites at the ancient city of Ugarit (now called Ras Shamra).

without reference to the number of them.<sup>10</sup> It is a joy to believers to see again and again how false accusations against God's book are always refuted when all the facts are known.

During the ten plagues the military forces of Egypt were never mentioned. They were the "sleeper," the silent threat in the shadows. Now the chariots are a terribly present danger. The memory of this pursuit by the Egyptians was vivid to the Israelites in later centuries (Josh. 24:6).

8. *Where did the Egyptians overtake Israel?* (14:9)

By the sea, by Pihahiroth, before (in front of, east of) Baal-zephon. See notes on 14:2. *Overtake* means only that they drew near enough to see Israel. The time required for preparation of this military force and its pursuit was surely several days in length.

9. *What was Israel's reaction upon seeing the Egyptian host?* (14:10)

They were in great fear and cried out to the LORD. However, their cry seems to have been a cry to dismay and terror, rather than a prayer for deliverance. The Israelites had been enslaved so long that they were not yet emotionally and spiritually conditioned to respond to danger with faith. Nonetheless, God heard their cry and hearkened to them.

10. *What bitter words did Israel say to Moses?* (14:11-12)

"Are there no graves in Egypt, so that you have brought us to die in the desert?"

Probably the Israelites were too frightened to sense the almost humorous sarcasm in these words. No people in the world have ever been more preoccupied with the making of tombs and regular attention to the dead than the Egyptians. There are millions of tombs in Egypt. Even the pyramids were just tombs. Many tombs had an adjoining room where rituals were conducted daily for the feeding and care of the dead in their after-life.

We have no record that the Israelites had spoken the exact words quoted in 14:11-12 in Egypt. However, the fearful

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<sup>10</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

spirit expressed by these words is quite similar to that expressed in Ex. 5:21. Possibly they had indeed uttered these words, even though we have no record of it.

Psalm 106:7-8: "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy loving-kindnesses, but were rebellious at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known."

The Israelites had been slaves too long to realize that death in freedom is preferable to existence in slavery. Young Christians facing tests soon after accepting Christ, may, like the Israelites, long for the lack of responsibility in the old life.

11. *With what words did Moses reassure Israel? (14:13-14)*

"Fear not; stand firm, and see the salvation of JEHOVAH!"

Moses' faith is truly remarkable. He urged them to be quiet, for the LORD would fight for them. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15). They were to stop their outcries.

The word *salvation* here means deliverance and victory. Compare I Samuel 14:45. However, we must not interpret it as if it referred exclusively to physical and material deliverance. Its use in Psalm 51:12 suggests that it bore a spiritual connotation as well. Their deliverance at the Red Sea was a faith-producing salvation experience. Observe how it produced courage to face future battles. (Deut. 1:30)

Moses said, "You will *see* the salvation of the LORD; but never *see* the Egyptians again."

The concept of the LORD fighting for his people is a common one in the Old Testament. See Josh. 10:14; Ps. 35:1; Neh. 4:20; Isa. 30:22; 63:3-5. Even the Egyptians soon sensed that God was fighting against them and for the Israelites (14:25).

12. *What did God tell Moses and Israel to do? (14:15-16)*

"Go forward!" "Lift up your rod!" "Divide the sea!" "Go across!"

When God's people have learned to trust God and stand still, then they are prepared to go forward.

From 14:15 we learn that Moses had cried (prayed) unto God. Moses prayed a great deal. See 5:22; 8:12; 8:29-30.)

Moses' use of the rod again probably brought back memories to the Israelites of what that rod had done in Egypt. See 4:17; 7:15, 19. Moses stretched out his hand and rod both to open and to close the waters. See 14:21, 26.

13. *What would cause the Egyptians to pursue Israel?* (14:17)

God would harden their hearts. See notes on 14:4. This was to be the final fatal hardening. The words of 14:17 give the first specific clue as to the exact means by which Egypt would be defeated.

The word *I* in 14:17 comes first for emphasis, as *You* was stressed at the start of 14:16. "*YOU* lift up your rod; *I* will harden their hearts."

14. *What would the Egyptians know by their defeat?* (14:18)

They would know that the Israelites' God was the LORD Jehovah! (At least their surviving relatives would know it!) This thought has been stated repeatedly in Exodus. See notes on 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 14:4.

Dear reader, I pray that you also know that God is the LORD!

15. *What shielded the Israelites from the Egyptians?* (14:19-20)

The angel of God and the pillar of cloud went between the Israelites and the Egyptians, and separated them all the night.

The *angel of God* is almost certainly the same person as the *angel of the LORD* who appeared to Moses at the burning bush (3:2). "The angel of his presence saved them" (Isa. 63:9.). (The Hebrew word for *angel* means *messenger*.) This "angel" was no one other than Jehovah himself (see 14:24), specifically Jehovah the WORD, the one who was later sent to earth by God the Father, and is known to us as Jesus of Nazareth. Many passages in the Old Testament tell of the angel of Jehovah who appeared unto men, and had all the qualities of God. See Gen. 22:15-16; 32:24, 30; Judges



6:22-23; 13:21-22. No man has ever seen God the father (John 1:18). But God the WORD (Jesus) was indeed seen many times in the world, even before He emptied Himself of His divine glory and was conceived in Mary. Note John 12:41; Isaiah 6:1.

This divine angel of the LORD travelled before Israel in the pillar of cloud (13:21; compare 23:20-23). Thus, when the cloud moved behind the camp of Israel, GOD himself was separating Israel from the Egyptians. Certainly we believe that God's presence is universal (Jer. 23:23-24). But God has often condescended to make His presence perceivable to men by manifesting Himself in limited places, like the cloud. Compare Ex. 25:22.

Ex. 14:20 clearly indicates that during that night it was dark on the Egyptians' side of the cloud. Probably so utterly dark that it stopped movement and reminded them of the plague of darkness. However, the cloud gave light on the Israelites' side of it. They did not walk in darkness.

The Greek Bible (LXX) has a different wording in 14:20: "There was . . . darkness, and the night passed." It does not mention the light. The Revised Standard Version follows this reading. But the Hebrew reading is very definite about the cloud lighting up the night. This was indeed a miracle to top all miracles! We accept the scriptural record of this event with joyful faith.

#### 16. *What divided the sea?* (14:21)

Three things: (1) Moses' rod;<sup>11</sup> (2) the LORD; (3) a strong east wind. The dividing of the sea was fundamentally a miracle by God. No other explanation can fully account for it.

Nonetheless, the east wind played a big part in the dividing of the sea. The strong east wind blew all night, and made the

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<sup>11</sup>Josephus (*Ant.* II, xvi, 2) tells the fanciful story that Moses smote the sea with his rod, and it parted asunder at the stroke. Josephus consistently tries to glorify Moses by unnecessary exaggerations.

sea before the Israelites to be dry land. Undoubtedly this wind was unique and miraculous in its strength, its precise points of applying pressure, and its timing. Nevertheless, it had certain "natural" characteristics.

S. C. Bartlett,<sup>12</sup> who was an eyewitness traveller over the route of the Israelites, refers to the words of M. de Lesseps, who told of the effects on the Red Sea waters by severe storms, such as occur only at intervals of fifteen or twenty years. De Lesseps had seen the northern end of the sea in places blown almost dry. Bartlett refers also to the map of the Maritime Canal Co., which reported that the ordinary difference between high and low tide in a calm sea was only eight-tenths of a meter (about thirty-one inches). However, the difference between the highest and lowest known seas during a storm was 3.24 meters (over ten feet). This is a remarkable confirmation of the Biblical information about the effect of the powerful winds on this part of the sea.

If it should seem irreverent that we state that the wind was such a basic force in making the path dry across the sea, we reply that the greater irreverence lies in a refusal to accept the plain statement of the narrative, which clearly indicates that the result was in a great measure brought about by use of the wind.

#### 17. *Did the waters form a WALL? (14:21-22)*

They surely did - a wall on the right and on the left. "The waters were piled up, the floods stood upright as a heap; the deeps were congealed in the midst of the sea." (Ex. 15:8)

According to the official Israel survey map, the waters at the north end of the Gulf of Suez have a depth of at least five meters (15-20 feet). This would be the height of the wall of water on either side of the Israelites' path.

The views of various interpreters that the "wall" was a figure of speech, or an "exaggeration" simply do not agree with the wording of the text.

From both sides of the sea the sea bottom gently slopes

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<sup>12</sup>*From Egypt to Palestine* (New York: Harper, 1879), pp. 180-181.

down into the water. There are no sudden drop-offs. The crossing place would be about four miles across.

We should not picture in our minds Israel's crossing path as narrow; it was probably more than a mile wide.

18. *What was the sea bottom like where Israel crossed?* (14:22,29)

They walked across on *dry ground*, through the sea!

Dr. Edward Robinson<sup>13</sup> argued very plausibly that the Israelites probably could not have entered the passage much before midnight, because the blowing of the wind would require some time for its full effect. Their march was completed (or nearly so) by the time of the morning watch, about two o'clock. They must have marched slowly because of encumbrances. If the column moved one thousand abreast, it would occupy a space more than half a mile wide, and being at least 2000 people in depth, would extend for not less than two miles from front to rear. It would require an hour for all to enter the sea, and two hours more for the column to traverse a space of four miles across. The whole body of Israelites could have passed over the distance of four miles before the morning watch time, when the Egyptians were troubled as they tried to pursue Israel.

Heb. 11:29: "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as on dry land, which the Egyptians attempting to do were drowned."

Isaiah 63:12-13: He "divided the waters before them to make himself an everlasting name, (and) led them through the depths, as a horse in the wilderness, so that they stumbled not." Compare Ps. 77:19-20; 66:6.

19. *What was the weather like when Israel crossed?*

Psalms 77:16-18 refers to a terrible storm that occurred as the Israelites crossed. There was rain and thunder. "The lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook. Josephus (*Ant.* II, xvi, 3) also tells of this storm. He says that it struck when the Egyptians tried to cross. (Of course this is uncertain.)

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<sup>13</sup>Cited in Bartlett, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

Inasmuch as the "wind blew all night" (14:21), we might wonder if the Israelites had to buck the east wind in their faces as they crossed eastward. We do not know, but we suspect that God directed the main force of the wind at the walls of water on either side, leaving the center of the path relatively calm.

20. *When did the Egyptians follow the Israelites?* (14:23-24)

They followed after the Israelites when they were mostly all across, if not indeed all completely across. They started across some time before the morning watch, about 2:00 a.m.

We doubt that the Egyptians even noticed the walls of water on either side. A fifteen-foot wall of water a half-mile away might not appear too threatening, especially at night when it was the dark, and more especially if your attention was diverted by lightning flashes and howling wind.

The Egyptian host surely had to be aware that the whole experience had very unusual features! First the dark cloud utterly blocked out their view for hours. Then the cloud moved from before them. And in the middle of the night they see the Israelites several miles away, almost all far across the sea. They surely recalled how the Israelites had been blocked by the sea a few hours before. They probably wondered how in the world the sea had been cleared before them! Then there was that light from the cloud, lighting up the path, even though it was two o'clock in the morning! Besides that, a storm overhead began to flash lightning, and to boom thunder, and pour rain, while the wind blew violently. All of this was so unusual, even eerie, that we feel that if the LORD had not hardened their hearts, they would never have gone in after the Israelites.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Skeptical critics have outdone themselves in seeking to dissect and discredit this passage (14:22-28). For example, Noth (*op. cit.*, p. 119) says the Priestly writer simply thought the Israelites passed through the sea and the Egyptians wanted to follow. The Jehovist writer, or source, is mysterious, and indicates that the Egyptians were driven into the sea by the fear of God. The Elohist writer suggests that they were engulfed by the return of the sea that had been driven back. What such critics seem unwilling to acknowledge is that all of these facts are true, and they all easily harmonize into the one story. There is simply no solid evidence for proposing that such contradictory "sources" ever existed.

21. *What hindered the pursuit by the Egyptians?* (14:24-25)

The LORD *looked* down upon them through the pillar of cloud and fire and "discomfited" the Egyptians. *Discomfit* means to perplex, confound, trouble, confuse, agitate, make to panic, thwart.

The *look*, or glance, of the Lord, which discomfited the Egyptians, often overwhelms evil doers: "Pour forth the overflowings of thine anger, And *look* on every one that is proud, and abase him" (Job 40:11).

This discomfiture came as a result of the thunderstorm (Ps. 77:16-18), and their chariots breaking down. The LORD "took off" their chariot wheels. Wagon wheels can most certainly come off their axles. And the axles can break, leaving the wheels in useless positions. The "chosen chariots" did not prove to be equal to the test. Any effort to move a one-wheeled chariot, or a wheelless chariot, would panic and frustrate both horses and charioteers.

The Egyptians correctly diagnosed the problem: "The LORD fighteth for them." These were the Egyptians' last recorded words. They decided to turn and flee, but it was too late. See notes on 14:14.

The Greek Bible says the Lord "clogged" their chariot wheels. This reading is followed in the R.S.V. Possibly the sand may have balled up in their chariot wheels, jamming and immobilizing them, and even producing the breakoff of the wheels. But the Hebrew verb (*sur*) means to "turn aside, turn away, depart, be removed, cease, disappear." These meanings make good sense without adopting the Greek reading as a substitute.

## THE WORKS OF THE LORD

Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people,

The sons of Jacob and Joseph.

The waters saw thee, O God;

The waters saw thee, they were afraid:

The depths also trembled.

The clouds poured out water;

The skies sent out a sound:  
 Thine arrows also went abroad.  
 The voice of thy thunder was in the whirlwind;  
 The lightnings lightened the world:  
 The earth trembled and shook.

Thy way was in the sea,  
 And thy paths in the great waters,  
 And thy footsteps were not known.  
 Thou leddest thy people like a flock,  
 By the hand of Moses and Aaron.  
 (Psalm 77:15-20)

22. *How were the Egyptians destroyed? (14:26-28)*

Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The waters that had been walled up were released, and returned to their "strength," to their usual position of overflowing the sea bed.

The word *strength* (Heb. *'ethan*) in 14:27 is rendered "wonted flow" in R.S.V. In Gen. 49:24 it refers to the *strength* of weapons (a bow). Parallels in other Semitic languages suggest it means a stream that never dries up.

The text here in Exodus seems to say that the sea at that place always covered the sea-bed with *strong* waters. They were too powerful for swimmers; the Egyptians were no match for this water.

The Egyptians fled "against it" (R.S.V., "into it"). This expression carries the idea of an encounter, or meeting.<sup>15</sup> Thus, it appears that when the wall of water was released it first filled up along the west shore, making sort of an "end run." As the Egyptians began to retreat they ran right into (or against) this water. Then it rapidly swept eastward, filling all the seabed in a rushing tide. What horror the Egyptians felt as they saw themselves trapped and unavoidably confronted by this water. Their bodies and chariots were swept

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<sup>15</sup>This Hebrew expression (*leqerathu*) is used to tell of meeting people (Gen. 29:13; Ex. 18:7), and to describe the position of things like armies opposite (or against) one another (Gen. 15:10; I Sam. 17:21).

eastward by the waters and dumped on the seashore (15:29). Not so many as one escaped. All there covered - chariots, horsemen, and all the army. See Neh. 9:11; Psalm 106:11; 78:53; Ex. 15:1, 7.

Jehovah *overthrew* the Egyptians. This literally says that he "shook off" the Egyptians. (The same word is in Neh. 5:13 and Ps. 136:15.) We cannot press this figure of speech too literally, but in a very real way God did "shake off" the Egyptians from the Israelites; and he shook them off from himself. They would no longer stick to him as an annoying, persecuting, hard-hearted people. He shook them off as we might shake off a crawling bug from our hand.

23. *Did Pharaoh himself perish in the sea?*

We believe that he did. Absolutely all of those going into the sea perished (14:28). Seemingly Pharaoh went with the host. "*He shall follow after them*" (14:4). "I will get me honor upon *Pharaoh*, and upon all his host" (14:4). The king "took his people *with him*" (14:6). "When *Pharaoh* drew nigh. . . ." (14:10). God "overthrew *Pharaoh* and his host in the Red Sea" (Psalm 136:15).

This poses a big question for us: Who then was this Pharaoh? We have been suggesting in this book that he was Amenhotep II, and we still hold this view. However, the mummy of Amenhotep II (with his great bow alongside it) is preserved to this day, something that would not be true if he perished in the Red Sea. It is most unlikely that his body would have been retrieved from the east shore of the Red Sea (or even be identifiable).

Possibly the verses quoted above that refer to the destruction of Pharaoh mean that he was overthrown representatively when his army was overthrown in the sea, as he beheld from the west shore. Admittedly the text does not convey this impression.

Dr. Donovan Courville<sup>16</sup> proposes that the drowned

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<sup>16</sup>*The Exodus Problem and Its Ramifications*, Vol. 1 (Loma Linda, Calif.: Challenge, 1971), p. 122.

Pharaoh was *Koncharis*, a king listed in the Sothis list of Egyptian kings. Courville dates the exodus about the same time as we do, but maintains that the usually-accepted dates for the kings of Egypt are several hundred years too far back. Some of Courville's ideas could prove correct, but they surely are not held by most Egyptologists.

24. *Why is the record of Israel's crossing repeated in 14:29?*

Probably it is repeated for emphasis. What a marvelous event! What a cause for exultation! Even with repetition the story cannot do justice to the event.

Possibly the repetition is made to stress the contrasting fates of Egypt and Israel. Note 14:28, 29.

Concerning the wall of water, see notes on 14:21-22.

25. *Where did Israel last see the Egyptians? (14:30)*

Dead upon the seashore! Obviously this was the east shore. They could not have seen them four miles away on the west shore. This was final retribution, measure for measure. For casting the infant sons of Israelites into the water (1:12), Egypt had perished in the water.

The Egyptians considered that being exposed in death and fed to the vultures, was the greatest of all misfortunes. According to their beliefs the soul could not find rest till the body was properly interred. One is reminded of Rev. 19: 17-18.

Josephus (*Ant.* II, xvi, 6) says that Moses the next day gathered the weapons of the Egyptians, which were brought to the camp of the Hebrews by the current of the sea and the force of the winds. And Moses conjectured that this also happened by divine providence, that they might not be destitute of weapons. This is a possibility, but not a certainty.

The death of these enemies suggests to OUR minds the death of our "old man," the sinful nature. In being baptized unto Moses, the Israelites beheld the death of their old enemies. In being baptized into Christ, our old man (our old nature and life) was crucified with Christ. We are *dead* unto sin (Rom. 6:3-6, 11).

26. *What effects did the crossing of the Red Sea have upon the*



*Israelites?* (14:31)

(1) They feared the LORD.

(2) They believed the Lord and his servant Moses. Israel had once before believed (Ex. 4:31). Now their faith is renewed and enlarged.

Israel had been saved from the *hand* of the Egyptians (4:30). They had now seen the power (literally, *hand*) of the LORD. Compare 15:6.

27. *Did the crossing of the Red Sea involve a battle between spiritual powers?*

It surely seems to have done so. At its root, the crossing of the sea was a triumph over the old Devil, Satan, who has always opposed God and His people, even more than it was a triumph over Pharaoh. "He hath sent redemption unto His people" (Psalm 111:9).

Some interpreters have attempted to link the story of the Red Sea crossing with ancient legends, such as the Babylonian "creation" story. This story (called *Enuma Elish*) interprets creation as the consequence of a battle between Marduk, the god of the city of Babylon, and Tiamat, a goddess who was the personification of the deep, the sea waters.<sup>17</sup> After this battle Tiamat's body was cut in half, and the halves made into the heavens and earth.

Even Cassuto,<sup>18</sup> a usually careful interpreter, links the crossing of the Red Sea with ancient mythological legends about the rebellion of the Sea against the Lord. He thinks the Song in Ex. 15 is an adaptation of a lost ancient epic Poem on "The Lord's Triumph Over the Rebellious Sea."

Several scripture verses are thought to allude to this legendary battle between the Lord and the Sea. These include (1) Isaiah 51:9-10; (2) Ezek. 29:3; (3) Ps. 74:13-14; (4) Ps. 93:3-4; (5) Hab. 3:13-15.

A check of all of these passages (all of which are poetic) will show that they do not positively teach such a view.

<sup>17</sup>As an example, see *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 385.

<sup>18</sup>*Op. cit.*, pp. 178-181.

(1) Isaiah 51:9-10 refers to Rahab, a *monster*, that was destroyed, apparently when the Red Sea dried up. *Rahab* seems here to be a poetic name for Egypt. See Ps. 87:4; 89:10. (2) Ezek. 29:3 figuratively refers to Egypt as "the great *monster*." (3) Psalm 74:13-14 pictures the division of the Red Sea waters as killing numerous sea-monsters (which it surely did). These monsters became "food for the people, for inhabitants<sup>19</sup> of the desert," probably referring to wild beasts that ate their carcasses. (4) Ps. 93:3-4 says that the floods have lifted up their voices (roaring waves), but God is high above even these. There is no clear indication here that the sea was in conflict with God. It says only that God's voice was greater than the sound of the roaring sea. (5) Habakkuk 3:13-15 alludes to God's acts in punishing the enemies of His people, without any reference to a mythological battle: At the sea "Thou didst tread the sea with thy horses" (probably angelic horses; Compare II Kings 6:17).

In none of the references suggested is there clear and certain statement about an ancient battle between the LORD and the sea. It seems to us that this idea has little or no support from the holy scriptures.

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

- <sup>15</sup> Then sang Mo-ses and the children of Is-ra-el this song unto Je-ho-vah, and spake, saying,  
I will sing unto Je-ho-vah, for he hath triumphed gloriously:  
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.  
(2) Je-ho-vah is my strength and song, And he is become my salvation: This is my God, and I will praise him; My father's God, and I will exalt him.

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<sup>19</sup>The Hebrew words in Ps. 74:14 translated "people inhabiting the wilderness" (*tsiyim*) refer to wild beasts in Isa. 13:21; 34:14. Probably they also do so in Ps. 74:14. The RSV translation "creatures of the wilderness" probably gives the correct meaning.

- (3) Je-ho-vah is a man of war: Je-ho-vah is his name.
- (4) Pha-raoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea;  
And his chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea.
- (5) The deeps cover them: They went down into the depths like a stone.
- (6) Thy right hand, O Je-ho-vah, is glorious in power, Thy right hand, O Je-ho-vah, dasheth in pieces the enemy.
- (7) And in the greatness of thine excellency thou overthrowest them that rise up against thee: thou sendest forth thy wrath, it consumeth them as stubble.
- (8) And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were piled up,  
The floods stood upright as a heap; The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.
- (9) The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.
- (10) Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: They sank as lead in the mighty waters.
- (11) Who is like unto thee, O Je-ho-vah, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?
- (12) Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, The earth swallowed them.
- (13) Thou in thy lovingkindness hast led the people that thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation.
- (14) The peoples have heard, they tremble: Pangs have taken hold on the inhabitants of Phi-lis-ti-a.
- (15) Then were the chiefs of E-dom dismayed; The mighty men of Moab, trembling taketh hold upon them: All the inhabitants of Ca-na'an are melted away.
- (16) Terror and dread falleth upon them; By the greatness of thine arm they are as still as a stone; Till thy people pass over, O Je-ho-vah, Till the people pass over that thou hast purchased.
- (17) Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, The Place, O Je-ho-vah, which thou hast

made for thee to dwell in, The sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.

(18) Je-ho-vah shall reign for ever and ever.

(19) For the horses of Pha-raoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and Je-ho-vah brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Is-ra-el walked on dry land in the midst of the sea. (20) And Mir-i-am the prophetess, the sister of Aar-on, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. (21)

And Mir-i-am answered them,  
Sing ye to Je-ho-vah, for he  
hath triumphed gloriously;  
The horse and his rider hath he  
thrown into the sea.

(22) And Mo-ses led Is-ra-el onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. (23) And when they came to Ma-rah, they could not drink of the waters of Ma-rah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Ma-rah. (24) And the people murmured against Mo-ses, saying, What shall we drink? (25) And he cried unto Je-ho-vah; and Je-ho-vah showed him a tree, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet. There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them; (26) and he said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Je-ho-vah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his eyes, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee, which I have put upon the E-gyp-tians: for I am Je-ho-vah that healeth thee.

(27) And they came to E-lim, where were twelve springs of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees: and they encamped there by the waters.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER FIFTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a topic for Exodus chapter 15.
2. Specifically, who sang the song in Exodus 15? (15:1)
3. Why did Israel sing to the LORD? (15:1)
4. What had the LORD become unto Israel? (15:2)
5. What significance was there in God's name being the LORD? (15:3; Compare 6:2, 7)
6. Exactly who drowned in the Red Sea? (15:4)
7. How had the waters reacted at the "blast of God's nostrils"? (15:8)
8. What had Israel's enemies said they would do to Israel? (15:9)
9. What had the Egyptians sunk like? (15:10)
10. According to 15:13, what three things had God done for His people?
11. How did the various nearby nations react to Israel's crossing the Red Sea? (15:14-16)
12. What confidence did the song express about Israel's future occupation of the land? (15:16-17)
13. How does 15:18 relate to the verse immediately preceding it?
14. What office did Miriam have? (15:20)
15. What did Miriam take into her hand? (15:20)
16. In what act did Miriam lead the women? (15:20-21)
17. Into what wilderness (or desert) did Israel come after crossing the Red Sea? (15:22; Compare Numbers 33:8)
18. How long did they journey without finding water? (15:22)
19. What was the water at Marah like? (15:23)
20. What does the name *Marah* mean? (15:23; Ruth 1:20)
21. By what means were the bitter waters sweetened? (15:25)
22. What statute did God make at Marah? (15:25-26)
23. What conditional promise did God make at Marah? (15:26)
24. By what title did God call himself at Marah? (15:26)
25. What was found at Elim? (15:27)

## EXODUS FIFTEEN: FROM TRIUMPH TO TESTING

1. Songs of triumph; 15:1-21.
2. Situations of testing; 15:22-26.  
(Often God's children experience severe testing shortly after times of spiritual triumph. Even Jesus went from His baptism to his temptations in the wilderness.)

## EXODUS FIFTEEN: FROM SONG TO BITTERNESS

1. Songs by the Red Sea; 15:1-21.
2. Bitterness at Marah; 15:22-26.

## THE SONG OF MOSES (Ex. 15:1-17)

1. Triumph of the LORD; (15:1-3)
2. Tragedy of Egypt; (15:4-12)
3. Terror of the Canaanites; (15:13-16)
4. Transition (and transfer) of the Israelites; (15:17-18)

## THE SONG OF REDEMPTION (Ex. 15:1-17)

1. The LORD's part: Divinity and decisive action: (15:1-3)
2. The enemies' part: Destruction (15:4-13) and dismay (15:14-16)
3. Israel's part: Direction and destination; (15:17-18)

## MY LORD AND I (15:2-3)

1. My strength.
2. My song.
3. My salvation.
4. My God.

## THE LORD'S RIGHT HAND (15:6)

1. Glorious in saving Israel.
2. Fearsome in destroying the enemy.

## THE PRIDE OF PERSECUTORS (15:9-10)

1. Makes them cruel.
2. Makes them boastful.
3. Brings them to destruction.

GOD'S WORK FOR HIS PEOPLE (Ex. 15:13)

1. Redeeming.
2. Leading.

THE LORD'S ETERNAL REIGN (15:18)

1. His past triumphs guarantee it.
2. His promises declare it.

EXPERIENCES SHARED BY GOD'S PEOPLE (15:22-26)

1. Lack of life's necessities; 15:22-23.
2. Temptations to murmur; 15:24.
3. Opportunity to pray; 15:25.
4. The Lord's help and healing; 15:25-26.

GOD'S TEST FOR HIS PEOPLE (15:25)

(Check your score on this examination!)

1. Do you trust me during hardships? (15:22-23)
2. Do you pray? (15:25)
3. Do you hearken to my commandments? (15:26)

THE LORD OUR HEALER (15:26)

1. Heals those that hearken.
2. Heals those who keep His statutes.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1. *What is in chapter fifteen?*

The chapter contains the following sections:

- (1) The song of Moses and the children of Israel (15:1-18). (They sang this after they crossed the Red Sea.) One verse of prose connects this song to the song that follows it (15:19).
- (2) The song of Miriam and the women (15:20-21). (This was probably a response to the song of Moses.)
- (3) The record of Israel's travels from the Red Sea, through Marah, to Elim (15:22-27).

We entitle this chapter FROM TRIUMPH TO TESTING. It starts with the song of God's triumph and closes with bitter complaining because of the *testing* they endured at the bitter Marah waters. This transition from triumph to testing is a common experience in the lives of many of God's people.

2. *How is the song of Moses divided?*

The song is not divided so clearly that interpreters agree about its divisions. Some interpreters divide it up into stanzas (strophes) on the basis of the repeated phrases in 15:6 and 15:11. Using these verses as dividing points, we could outline the strophes thus:

- (1) The triumph of the Lord; 15:1-6.
- (2) The tragedy of the Egyptians; 15:7-11 (or 12)
- (3) The transfer (or transition) of Israel; 15:13-17.

We prefer to divide the song into sections on the basis of its thought divisions, somewhat as follows:

- (1) What the LORD *IS*; 15:1-3.
- (2) What the LORD *DID*; 15:4-16a.
- (3) What the LORD *WILL DO*; 15:16b-18.

3. *What is the purpose of the Song in Exodus 15?*

It is to declare the greatness of the Lord Jehovah in bringing Israel across the Red Sea. In times of great emotions - joy or sorrow - men turn to poetry and music. Ordinary prose cannot convey the volume of feeling. Redemption and salvation set the heart to singing.

In pagan songs of triumph the glory of victory is ascribed to the conquering king. But here there is not a word of praise or glory given to Moses. These are rendered to the LORD alone.<sup>1</sup>

Exodus fifteen is so highly esteemed by the Jews that Jewish literature speaks of it as The Song, and the Sabbath on which it is read as the Sabbath of the Song. Many other passages in the scriptures contain poetic sections about Israel's deliverance at the Red Sea. See Neh. 9:9ff; Ps. 78:11ff; 77:16ff; Ps. 105; 106:7ff; Habakkuk 3:8ff. Probably in our Christian

<sup>1</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 174.



hymn singing we should incorporate more allusions to God's victory at the Red Sea than we generally use.

As Moses and Miriam led in praise, ministers of God should still lead the church in praise.

From Ex. 15:20-21 it appears that there was musical accompaniment to this song. Male and female choruses sang antiphonally. Note that 15:21 is almost identical to 15:1. The women may have repeated the words of 15:21 after each line or stanza of Moses's song, or just after the whole song.

The song is full of brief, bold, strong thoughts. Its language contains very archaic Hebrew expressions. The English translations cannot reflect the majestic rhythm and dramatic diction of the original poem.

4. *What sort of triumph had the Lord had?* (15:1)

He had triumphed triumphantly! The Hebrew quite literally reads, "I shall sing to Jehovah, Because triumphing he has triumphed." The word *triumph* means to *rise up* (like a river; Ezek. 47:5), to swell, increase, be great, exalted. God's triumph on this occasion was His work of casting Egypt's "horse and his chariot" into the sea. This brought honor to God, as God had predicted (14:4, 17).

5. *What had God become to Israel?* (15:2-3)

a. He was their *strength* and *song*. (This expression recurs in Ps. 118:14 and Isa. 12:2.)

b. "He has become to me (for) a *salvation*." (This word *salvation* has strong spiritual overtones.)

c. "This is my *God*," "and I will praise (adore) Him."

d. "My father's God and I will exalt him."

e. "Jehovah is a *man of war*." (15:3)

The Hebrew word for LORD (Jehovah) in 15:2 is YAH (or Jah), which is a shortened form of the name Jehovah (Yahweh), here used for the first time in the Bible, but found later in poetic passages (Ps. 77:11; 89:8; 94:7). *Yah* is the last syllable in *Hallelujah*, meaning "Praise ye JAH!" The name carries the idea of *being*. See notes on 4:14-15.

How powerful and beautiful it is to read that "Yahweh (the LORD) is His name!" God had declared (in 3:15) that

this name was His name forever. God had desired that Israel know His name. Now they do know it, and know the meaning associated with the name. Compare Ps. 83:18.

Note the continuity of faith implied in the phrase "my father's God." The word *father's* is singular. See notes on 3:6 and 18:4.

The King James translation (of 15:2) "I will prepare him an habitation" is probably not as good a translation as the A.S.V., which has "I will praise him." The KJV reading does not correspond to the parallel thought of the next line ("I will praise him"). Hebrew poetry often has successive lines parallel in thought in some way. The reading "I will build thee a sanctuary" first appeared in the Targum of Onkelos, and then in later rabbis.<sup>2</sup>

God had promised that He would fight for Israel (14:4), and now He is praised as a man of war.

#### 6. *What had happened to Pharaoh's host?* (15:4-5, 10)

God cast Pharaoh's chariots and army into the sea. He "cast" them into the sea by impelling them to enter the sea bed (14:17). His chosen captains (R.S.V. "picked officers") were sunk (or drowned; the verb is passive) in the Red Sea (*Yam Suph*, the Sea of Weeds). See Introductory Study VII and notes on 3:18 concerning the Red Sea. Note that the stormy wind contributed to the Egyptians' destruction (15:10; Ps. 77:16-18).

The "deeps" (KJV "depths") "are covering them."<sup>3</sup> The word *deeps* suggest the deep sea waters, not a swampy marshy reedy area. *Deeps* is the plural of the *deep* referred to

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<sup>2</sup>The reason for the translation "I will build him a sanctuary" lies in the double meaning of the Hebrew verb *nawah*, which may mean to  *dwell*, abide, or rest; its cognate noun *naweh* means dwelling or habitation, and refers to the temple in I Sam. 15:25. However, *nawah* (in Hiphil, as here) also means to make beautiful, or adorn. This is something that can be done to God only by *praising* Him. This seems to be its correct meaning here.

<sup>3</sup>The Hebrew verb translated above "are covering them" is in the imperfect tense, as if indicating incomplete action, as if the event were taking place before the eyes of the singers. Mentally they were reliving this victorious experience.

in Gen. 1:2.

The Egyptian host went down into the depths like a stone. Perhaps their armor weighted them down. More probably the moving currents made swimming impossible, even without armor. At any rate, they sank like lead. Compare Neh. 9:10-11; Ex. 14:28.

7. *What is stated about God's right hand?* (15:6-7)

God's right hand is glorious in power, and dashes the enemy in pieces. Compare Ex. 15: 12; 14:31; 3:20. (The Hebrew word for *hand* is translated *work* in 14:31.) The phrase "right hand" (of God) is common in Psalms, where it occurs over twenty times. Ps. 20:6; 118:15-16; 48:10. Inasmuch as the scripture uses such expressions in referring to God, we should not hesitate to use them, even though we know that God is spirit (John 4:24), and fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:23-24), and does not necessarily have hands like ours.

The word *excellency* (or *majesty*) in 15:7 is from the same root as *triumphed* in 15:1, and refers to God's splendor, highness, and glory. Note the reference to God's *wrath* in 15:7. God's wrath consumes (or eats up) his enemies, like fire consumes stubble.

8. *What position had the sea waters taken?* (15:8)

They were "piled up" in a "heap" and were "congealed." (*Congeval* means to thicken, or condense.) They were a "wall" (14:22). The term *heap* is a word chiefly limited to descriptions of the Red Sea crossing and the crossing of Jordan (Psalm 78:13; 33:7; Joshua 3:13, 16). We agree with Cassuto that the word *heap* plainly suggests a miraculous piling up of the waters. We should not try to weaken its force by calling it a poetic anthropomorphism.<sup>4</sup> See notes on 14:21-22.

9. *What had the enemy planned to do to Israel?* (15:9)

To pursue. To overtake. To divide the spoil. To destroy.

In the Hebrew reading the threats of 15:9 are short, crisp words, expressing the eagerness of the exultant foe and his

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Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

assurance of complete victory. His threat "My hand shall destroy them" uses a word (*yarash*) often used later to refer to Israel's expulsion of the Canaanites (See Ex. 34:24). It has a strong irony when applied here to Israel.

On 15:10, see notes on 15:4-5.

10. *Who is like unto the LORD?* (15:11)

No one! Not even any among the gods. The "gods" (or mighty ones) are probably the idols and false gods of the heathen. Whether the word *gods* (Hebrew, *elim*, plural of *el*) refers to mighty men (as in Ezek. 32:21), or to mighty angels (as probably in Ps. 29:1), or to other supposedly-existing mighty gods, NO ONE is like the LORD.

Many Biblical references assert that there is no one like the LORD. See Deut. 3:24; Ps. 71:19; 86:8; 89:6, 8; Jer. 10:6; Micah 7:18; II Sam. 7:22; I Kings 8:23. Let us learn this truth for ourselves.

The LORD is glorious in holiness. *Holiness* means uniqueness, separation, distinction, and moral perfection. See Lev. 19:2.<sup>5</sup>

The Lord is fearsome, or wonderful, in praises. Probably this means that the praises justly given to the LORD are such as to create reverent fear in the beholder. See Rev. 4:8-11; 5:11-14; Isa. 6:2-3.

11. *Did the earth swallow the Egyptians, or the sea?* (15:12)

"The earth swallowed them." Certainly they were swallowed up in the sea, but the sea is part of the earth.

The word *earth* in the literature of Semitic peoples living around the Israelites sometimes served as a designation for Sheol, the underworld.<sup>6</sup> This meaning makes good sense here.

Concerning God's right hand, see notes on 15:6.

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<sup>5</sup>The idea set forth in *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1(1969) that moral perfection and righteousness were applications of the term *holiness* used only in centuries later than Moses is contradicted by its use in Leviticus, a book written by Moses. See Lev. 19:15. Of course, the skeptical critics affirm (without proof) that Leviticus was written during or after the Babylonian exile!

<sup>6</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

Ex. 15:12 probably is the end of stanza two (15:7-12) of the song, a stanza dealing with the destruction of the Egyptians.

12. *What had God done for His redeemed people?* (15:13)

He had LED the people whom he had redeemed. Ps. 77: 15, 20). He GUIDED them to his holy habitation. This verse could well be called the KEY VERSE in Exodus, because it sums up much of what is related in the book.

Concerning *redeemed*, see notes on Ex. 6:6.

God's leading His redeemed people was an act of "loving-kindness" (or "steadfast love"; Heb. *hesed*). See Ex. 34:7. *Hesed* is the great covenant word of the O.T. to describe God's unfailing attitude of love toward His people. In turn, this is what God expects from His people. See Hosea 6:6. *Hesed* has no exact equivalent in Greek or in English. It combines the ideas of loyalty, steadfastness, mercy and love. For uses of *hesed* see Psalm 5:1; 6:5; Gen. 19:19; Deut. 7:9, 12. The term generally refers to a covenantal type of love, an unfailing love based on pledged commitment.

God's "holy habitation" referred to in 15:13 probably refers to the promised land of Canaan, as in Jeremiah 25:30. The term *habitation* in later literature frequently refers to the temple sanctuary at Jerusalem. See II Sam. 15:25. Ex. 15:17 refers to the promised land as "the mountain of thine inheritance." Since God's people had not actually entered and "inherited" this land in Moses' time, some scholars assume that 15:13-18 was written AFTER Israel's occupation of Canaan. (For an example, see *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 [1969], p. 392.) But this is an unnecessary assumption. After all of God's triumphs in Egypt and at the sea, why should not Moses speak of God's promise to bring them into the land (see 6:8) as being "as good as done"? Faith gives substance to things hoped for.

The verb tenses in 15:13-15 shift back and forth, between perfect (indicating completed action) and imperfect (incomplete action). "Led," "guided," "heard" are in the perfect tense. However, "tremble" (KJV "be afraid") in

15:14, and "take hold" in verse 15, and "shall fall" and "be still" in verse 16 are imperfect.

This shifting of the tenses when all of the verbs refer to the same series of events, shows that the time of the events was partly in the past, partly in process, and partly future. The past (or perfect) tenses also may be "predictive perfects," which are used to refer to predicted future events as if they had already taken place. Faith in God's promises and predictions can lead us to view the promises as already fulfilled.

13. *What effect did the crossing of the Red Sea have on nearby nations?* (15:14-16)

They had heard about it, and had become very fearful, realizing that if the Israelites and their God could overcome the mighty Egyptians, they could overcome them also. For similar thoughts, see Habakkuk 3:7; Joshua 2:9, 11, 24; Num. 22:3; I Sam. 4:6-8.

Philistia was the area along the southern coast of the Mediterranean in Canaan. The major immigration of the Philistines into this area occurred about 1200 B.C., about 250 years after the exodus date. However, there had been groups of Philistines (or similar peoples) settle there from Crete and other Mediterranean islands as far back as Abraham's time (2000 B.C.). See Gen. 21:35. It is untrue to say, as many writers have, that the reference here to the Philistines is a historical error, or indicates that this verse in Exodus was written long after the time of the exodus, even after their settlement into Canaan. There is some archaeological evidence of Philistine presence in this area before 1200 B.C., as well as the Biblical testimony. See notes on 13:17.

Edom lay just SW of the Dead Sea, east of the Arabah valley joining the Dead Sea and the Red Sea gulf of Akabah, in a mountainous area called Mt. Seir. The title *chiefs* (or dukes; Heb. *'aluphim*) of Edom seems to be a technical title for Edomite rulers. It is used in Gen. 36:15-19.

The phrase "melt away" in 15:15 is explained in the next line to mean that the people were in terror and dread of the approaching Israelites. Their courage and will to resist

melted away. See Ex. 23:27.

The "passing over" of the people (15:16) is explained to mean the entry of the people into the land of Canaan. Certainly they had to "pass over" Jordan to enter this land. (Joshua 3:17). Moses may not have been referring to passing over the Jordan, but he knew they would pass over the territory between Egypt and the promised land (Ex. 3:8; Num. 32:20-21, 27).

The word *purchased* in 15:16 means to procure, buy, acquire, get, obtain. Truly God had obtained Israel as a people by His wondrous deeds. A participial form of the word translated *purchase* (*qanah*) is used in Gen. 14:22 as a title ("possessor" or "maker") for God. Possibly therefore the meaning is that God "created" the people Israel, as well as "purchased" them.

14. *By what terms is Israel's promised homeland called? (15:17)*

(1) "The mountain of thine inheritance." (2) "The place of thy dwelling." (3) The "sanctuary." It is striking that each of these three titles asserts that this land was GOD'S land in a special way; it was *God's* inheritance, *God's* dwelling-place, and *God's* sanctuary (or holy place). Why the land of Israel should be a place that God specially favored, we know not. But numerous passages confirm that this is so. See II Kings 17:25-26.

The term *mountain* is an interesting title for the land of Israel. Psalm 78:54: "He brought them to the border of his sanctuary, to this *mountain* which his right hand had gotten." Perhaps it was given this title of *mountain* because of its prominence among nations, like a mountain among hills. Compare Isaiah 2:2 and Psalm 68:16.

The term *sanctuary* (holy place) seems to refer to all of the land of Canaan, and not just Jerusalem or the temple. *Sanctuary* in later times did often refer to the temple (Psalm 73:17). This fact causes some skeptical authors to assert that Ex. 15:17 was written after the time of Solomon's temple. But even Martin Noth, a rather extreme critic, says that *sanctuary* here may mean the whole of the land and not just

Jerusalem.

15. *What sublime spiritual thought closes the song?* (15:18)

Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever! Ramm correctly asserts that the whole exodus experience is a commentary on what the reign of God is. We must be cautious not to think of the reign of God as being totally in the future, either in a millenium or in heaven. The kingdom of God existed in Moses' time (Ex. 19:6; I Chron. 29:11), exists now as the church (Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 1:9), and shall exist hereafter (II Pet. 1:11, II Tim. 4:18).

16. *Why is the restatement of the Red Sea story placed after the Song?*

Probably it is inserted to make the transition into the following prose narrative. It certainly also strengthens the assertion of 15:18 that Jehovah shall reign for ever. This verse has three clauses, each of which ends in Hebrew with the word *sea*.<sup>7</sup>

17. *How does the Song of Miriam relate to the Song of Moses?* (15:20-21)

The words of Miriam's song are almost identical to Moses' words in 15:1. Only the verb is changed from indicative to imperative. This similarity suggests that they sang antiphonally, Miriam and the women responding to the words of Moses and the "sons" of Israel. We do not know whether we have all or just part of Miriam's song. We suspect it is only partly given.

Numerous speculations about the relation of Miriam's song to Moses' song have been made. One radical proposal is that Miriam's song is the oldest part of Ex. fifteen, and was written by a different author than the writer of 15:1ff.<sup>8</sup> Another writer (S. R. Driver) gives a contradictory, though equally radical view, saying that verse 19 is a "later redactional addition," written AFTER 15:1-18.<sup>9</sup> Alan Cole

<sup>7</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>8</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>9</sup>*An Introduction to the Literature of the O. T.* (New York: World, 1965), p. 29.



proposes that Moses' song was a "theological expansion" of Miriam's song.<sup>10</sup> It is difficult to see how anyone could say that and still give credence to the plain statement of 15:1 that Moses and the children of Israel sang the song. The variations in these speculations show the futility and folly of men's judgments upon God's word.

In 15:21 Miriam is mentioned for the first time by name and by title. She is called the "prophetess." Compare Num. 12:2; Judges 4:4; II Kings 22:14; Isaiah 8:3. She was a prophetess because of God's divine gift, and not because of natural poetic and musical ability. Micah 6:4 indicates that when the Lord delivered Israel out of Egypt, he sent before them Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. This suggests that she played a rather important role in these events.

Although Miriam is here referred to only as the sister of Aaron, Numbers 26:59 specifically identifies her as also the sister of Moses. Miriam had watched over Moses as a babe in the river (Ex. 2:4). She would have been about ninety years old at this time.

A *timbrel* is a small hand drum, similar to a Salvation Army tambourine (without the jingling metal pieces). See Ps. 81:2; 68:25; 149:3. Its Hebrew name (*toph.*) resembles its sound (*thump!*).

The Hebrew women and men *danced* on occasions of victory (I Sam. 18:6) and on special religious holidays (Judges 21:21; Psalm 30:11; 150:4; II Sam. 6:14). These dances seem to have been practiced by each sex alone, and hardly resemble our modern social dancing, which is more like the evil dancing referred to in Job 21:7, 11, and is spoken of in the New Testament as "revelling" (Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3).

18. *What area did Israel enter after crossing the Red Sea?* (15:22)

They entered the Wilderness of Shur. The part of the Wilderness of Shur they entered was also called the Wilderness of Etham (Num. 33:8). *Shur* means *wall*. It may have acquired this name from the abrupt wall-like rise in the land

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<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 123.

ten to twelve miles east of the Red Sea and the Suez Canal line. The Wilderness of Shur lies in the NW part of the Sinai peninsula, south of Mediterranean coastline, between the present Suez canal and the River of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish). The direct route from Egypt to Canaan runs through Shur. Its southward extension ran along the Red Sea east coast almost to Marah.

It is about thirty-seven miles from Israel's crossing place to Marah.

There are springs (called the 'Ayun Musa, or Springs of Moses) lying about one and a half miles from the east shore of the Red Sea, just east of the point where we think Israel crossed the sea. The scripture makes no mention of these springs. S. C. Bartlett<sup>11</sup> found them to be in a hillock some sixteen feet above the level of the surrounding plain, containing a basin twelve to fifteen feet in diameter, surrounded by a rocky rim. Their water is brackish and disagreeable because of mineral salts in it. Different travelers have described these springs differently, because the flow of water differs from year to year, and sandstorms choke up the springs in different patterns.

The surface from the Red Sea to Marah is hard compacted sand, sprinkled with gravel and some boulders scattered about. Sharp flints are occasionally seen on the surface, such as that used by Zipporah in circumcising her son (Ex. 4:25).

We must remember that Israel passed through this area in springtime, the most delightful time of year. S. C. Bartlett reported that when he passed through in February, the temperature some days dropped to the freezing point at night, and then shot up to 98 degrees in the sun at noon. The heat would certainly have continued up into March/April when Israel passed through. Little wonder the Israelites were

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<sup>11</sup>We have found Bartlett's book *From Egypt to Palestine* (New York: Harper, 1879) particularly helpful in its descriptions of the places in Israel's journeys. Bartlett was a very careful observer and recorder. Also he was thoroughly acquainted with the reports of other travellers; and he visited the area before modern roads and oil wells altered so much of it.



Caravan at the Springs of Moses (Ayun Musa)  
(Matson Photo)



Elim (now called Wadi Gharandel). Here Israel found twelve springs and seventy palm trees. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L W. Cleave)

dreadfully distressed when they reached Marah and found no good water.

Between the place of Israel's crossing and Marah are at least two dozen smaller or larger depressions (valleys, or wadies) to be crossed. All of these have lines of vegetation along their courses. These would have had new spring vegetation in them as Israel passed through. The area is NOT good pasture land, but there was some pasture for Israel's flocks in transit.

19. *What did Israel find at Marah?* (15:23)

They found a spring of bitter water. The name *Marah* means bitter, or bitterness (Prov. 14:10). Most of the flowing springs in Sinai are bitter and unpleasant because of mineral salts dissolved in the water.

Marah is generally identified with the spring 'Ain Hawwarah.<sup>12</sup> Bartlett<sup>13</sup> reported it as being in the center of a low, flat-topped mound, which was largely a calcareous deposit. The water was in a hole five or six feet in circumference and was some two feet deep. The mineral deposit suggests that the flow of the spring was formerly larger. The water is so bitter that men cannot drink it unless they are very thirsty.

Besides its bitterness, it has laxative qualities, resembling those of Epsom Salts. Its bitterness varies from year to year, depending on the amount of rainfall and the volume of its flow. There are other springs in the immediate vicinity, which would furnish additional water, and may be included in the name *Marah*.

Ex. 15:23 says literally, "He called its name Marah." This suggests that Moses named it. However, this wording probably should be taken indefinitely to mean "It was called Marah."

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<sup>12</sup>Other identifications of Marah include the Springs of Moses (*'Ayun Musa*); Bir-Huwara, about 47 mi. SE of the Springs of Moses and seven miles from the coast; or El-Churkudah, a fountain of brackish water ten mi. SE of the town of Suez and fifty miles from Lake Timsah. We definitely prefer the 'Ain Hawwarah location as being the actual site.

<sup>13</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 199.

20. *How did Israel respond to the bitter waters? (15:24).*

They murmured. In murmuring against Moses, they actually murmured against God himself. This was their second murmuring: they murmured before at the Red Sea (14:11). There are over a dozen passages in the story of Israel's wanderings where murmuring is mentioned. It was characteristic of them. Psalm 106:13: "They soon forgot his works: they waited not for his counsel." But in their murmurings they were, sadly, a picture of all humanity; and their punishments are a warning to us (I Cor. 10:11).

21. *How were the waters sweetened? (15:25)*

By casting a certain tree into the water. No known tree can instantly (or even gradually) sweeten spring water. Hence, this was a miracle. Compare II Kings 2:19-22.

Medieval commentators on Exodus delighted in seeing in this tree a reference to the cross of Christ, by which the bitterest of life's waters are sweetened. As an illustration it is edifying; but the comparison cannot be called an exegesis of the Biblical text.

Moses received the instructions to cast in the tree as an answer to his cry (prayer) to the LORD. We admire Moses' action of turning to prayer, rather than to rebuke and contention with the unreasonable people.

The fact that the LORD showed Moses the tree was God's method of teaching Israel that they constantly needed divine guidance and instruction. This awareness of their need for instruction prepared the people spiritually for their acceptance of the law at Mt. Sinai.

This experience at Marah was a *testing* for Israel. There God *proved* them. Similarly he tested them again soon after this by the manna (16:4), as to whether they would walk in his law (torah) or not.

At Marah God made for them a statute (or law) and an ordinance (or judgment). Possibly the words of God in 15:26 constitute the law and ordinance. If so, the ordinance is extremely general in nature. If 15:26 is not the ordinance referred to, then we simply do not know what the ordinance

was. Possibly God's *act* of sweetening the water was in itself the ordinance, since there was a message from God implied in the miracle: "Thou shalt always trust the LORD and seek His deliverance in thine every affliction."

22. *What did God promise Israel if they obeyed His commandments?* (15:26)

God would put none of the diseases which He had brought upon the Egyptians upon them.

Deut. 7:15 extended this promise into the time after Israel entered and occupied Canaan. Deut. 28:58 warned that they would get plagues in Canaan if they were disobedient there.

Why are the words about Jehovah being their healer inserted here? It may have been a broader application of the healing of the bitter waters of Marah. God would heal ALL their bitter diseases, just as He had sweetened the Marah waters. Also it may have been a warning to the Israelites as they journeyed: they were not morally superior to the Egyptians. They could suffer diseases like those which killed Egypt's firstborn. See Ps. 78:49-50. See notes on Ex. 12:29. A redeemed people must be a holy, spiritual people.

23. *What happened to Israel at Elim?* (15:27)

They camped there by the waters from twelve springs, in an area graced by seventy palm trees. The specific details about these numbers sound like the record of an eyewitness.

It is about seven miles from Marah to Elim, an easy day's journey. S. C. Bartlett found much shrubbery between Marah and Elim.

Elim is generally considered to be the Wady Gharandel. This wady (or winter-flowing brook channel) has water issuing from it in several spots, forming brisk rivulets, flowing several barrels a minute. Several considerable pools of water overgrown with rushes lie by the wady channel.

The water of Elim is as good as that of the Nile, and nowhere in the Sinai peninsula, except in the wadi Feiran, is it so abundant.

Elim can be an illustration of the Lord's Day, a time of refreshment amidst the toils of life's journey.

“Elim! Sweet foretaste of rest and blessing:  
 Soon must be left for the lengthening way.  
 But it is well that the pilgrims may gather  
 Courage and strength for the wearisome day.”<sup>14</sup>

THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
 TRANSLATION

**16** And they took their journey from E-lim, and all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between E-lim and Si-nai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of E-gypt. (2) And the whole congregation of the children of Is-ra-el murmured against Mo-ses and against Aar-on in the wilderness: (3) and the children of Is-ra-el said unto them, Would that we died by the hand of Je-ho-vah in the land of E-gypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

(4) Then said Je-ho-vah unto Mo-ses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or not. (5) And it shall come to pass on the sixth day, that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. (6) And Mo-ses and Aar-on said unto all the children of Is-ra-el, At even, then ye shall know that Je-ho-vah hath brought you out from the land of E-gypt; (7) and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of Je-ho-vah; for that he heareth your murmurings against Je-ho-vah: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? (8) And Mo-ses said, *This shall be*, when Je-ho-vah shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that

<sup>14</sup>From *Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*, Vol. II, p. 293.



Je-ho-vah heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against Je-ho-vah. (9) And Mo-ses said unto Aar-on, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el, Come near before Je-ho-vah; for he hath heard your murmurings. (10) And it came to pass, as Aar-on spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Is-ra-el, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of Je-ho-vah appeared in the cloud. (11) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (12) I have heard the murmurings of the children of Is-ra-el: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am Je-ho-vah your God.

(13) And it came to pass at even, that the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the camp. (14) And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness a small round thing, small as the hoarfrost on the ground. (15) And when the children of Is-ra-el saw it, they said one to another, What is it? for they knew not what it was. And Mo-ses said unto them, It is the bread which Je-ho-vah hath given you to eat. (16) This is the thing which Je-ho-vah hath commanded. Gather ye of it every man according to his eating; an o-mer a head, according to the number of your persons, shall ye take it, every man for them that are in his tent. (17) And the children of Is-ra-el did so, and gathered some more, some less. (18) And when they measured it with an o-mer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating. (19) And Mo-ses said unto them, Let no man leave of it till the morning. (20) Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Mo-ses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and became foul: and Mo-ses was wroth with them.

(21) And they gathered it morning by morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. (22) And it came to pass that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two o-mers for each one: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Mo-ses. (23) And he said unto them,

This is that which Je-ho-vah hath spoken, Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy sabbath unto Je-ho-vah: bake that which ye will bake, and boil that which ye will boil; and all that remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. (24) And they laid it up till the morning, as Mo-ses bade: and it did not become foul, neither was there any worm therein. (25) And Mo-ses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a sabbath unto Je-ho-vah: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. (26) Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. (27) And it came to pass on the seventh day, that there went out some of the people to gather, and they found none. (28) and Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? (29) See, for that Je-ho-vah hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. (30) So the people rested on the seventh day.

(31) And the house of Is-ra-el called the name thereof Man-na: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers *made* with honey. (32) And Mo-ses said, This is the thing which Je-ho-vah hath commanded, Let an o-mer-ful of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread wherewith I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Epgypt. (33) And Mo-ses said unto Aar-on, Take a pot, and put an o-mer-ful of man-na therein, and lay it up before Je-ho-vah, to be kept throughout your generations. (34) As Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses, so Aar-on laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. (35) And the children of Is-ra-el did eat the man-na forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat the man-na, until they came unto the borders of the land of Ca-naan. (36) Now an o-mer is the tenth part of an e-phah.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER SIXTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. Into what wilderness did Israel go from Elim? (16:1)
3. How long did it take Israel to reach the wilderness of Sin? (16:1; 12:6)
4. Who participated in the murmuring in the wilderness? (16:2)
5. Why did Israel murmur? (16:2-3)
6. Where did the Israelites say that they wish they had died? (16:3)
7. What had Israel eaten in Egypt? (16:3; Numbers 11:5)
8. How much did Israel say they had to eat in Egypt? (16:3)
9. What was the purpose of the manna? (16:4; Deut. 8:3)
10. How much manna was to be gathered on the sixth day of each week? (16:5)
11. What would cause them to know that the LORD had brought them out of Egypt? (16:6)
12. What would Israel see in the morning? (16:7)
13. Against whom had Israel really murmured? (16:7-8)
14. How much bread would be provided for them? (16:8)
15. For what purpose were the Israelites summoned together? (16:9)
16. What did Israel see when they assembled? (16:10)
17. What would Israel know because they ate flesh and bread? (16:12)
18. How many quails came into the camp? (16:13)
19. What did Israel say when they saw the manna? (16:15, 31)
20. Do some research to discover what the word *manna* means.
21. How much manna was gathered for each man? (16:16)
22. Who gathered manna for each tent? (16:16)
23. Why did some gather more or less than others? (16:17)
24. What result happened, even though some gathered more and some less? (16:17)
25. What was the rule about leftover manna? (16:19)
26. What happened to leftover manna kept over to the next day? (16:20)

27. What happened to manna that was not gathered each day? (16:21)
  28. Who reported to Moses that twice as much manna was gathered on the sixth day? (16:22)
  29. How is the seventh day described? (16:23)
  30. In what ways could manna be prepared for eating? (16:23)
  31. Were the Israelites warned that there would be no manna on the seventh days? (16:25-26)
  32. Did all heed the warning about gathering manna on the Sabbath? (16:27)
  33. What was God's response to Israel's disobedience about gathering manna? (16:28)
  34. What restriction was imposed upon movements on the seventh days? (16:29)
  35. What did the house of Israel name the bread? (16:31)
  36. What did the manna taste like? (16:31; Num. 11:6-8)
  37. What is the true manna, or bread, from heaven? (John 6:49-51; I Cor. 10:1-3)
  38. Who gathered a pot of manna to be kept throughout future generations? (16:33)
  39. Where was the pot of manna to be kept? (16:34; Heb. 9:4)
  40. How long did the Israelites eat manna? (16:35; Neh. 9:20-21)
  41. Where did the manna cease? (16:35; Joshua 5:11-12)
  42. How much is an omer? An ephah? (16:36)
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#### EXODUS SIXTEEN: BREAD FROM HEAVEN

1. Murmuring in the Wilderness of Sin; 16:1-3.
2. God's promise of provisions; 16:4-12.
3. Quails and manna sent; 16:13-21.
4. No manna on the Sabbath; 16:22-30.
5. Pot of manna preserved; 16:31-36.

## EXODUS SIXTEEN: THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN

1. Given to the undeserving; 16:2-3.
2. Given as a test; 16:4, 28; Deut. 8:16.
3. Given to teach; 16:6, 12, 32; Deut. 8:3.
4. Given without fail; 16:35.

## GOD'S PURPOSES IN GIVING MANNA

1. To fill them with food; 16:12, 16; Matt. 6:31-33.
2. To see if they would walk in His laws; 16:4; Deut. 8:16.
3. To show that the LORD had led them out of Egypt; 16:6.
4. To show that He was Jehovah their God; 16:12.
5. To show God's glory; 16:7.
6. To silence their murmurings; 16:7, 8, 12.
7. To introduce the sabbath law; 16:23, 25, 29.
8. To humble them; Deut. 8:16, 3.
9. To teach that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word of God; Deut. 8:3.
10. To point toward Jesus, the living bread from heaven; John 6:41, 48-51.

## MURMURINGS! (Ex. 16:1-3)

1. Murmurers forget past blessings.
2. Murmurers forget past pains; 16:2.
3. Murmurers accuse their true benefactors; 16:3.
4. Murmurers fear imaginary evils; 16:3.

## THE MANNA, A TYPE OF JESUS!

"I am the living bread which came down out of heaven"  
(John 6:51).

1. The manna met a need. Jesus meets our needs.
2. The manna came from "heaven." Jesus came from heaven.  
(Jn. 6:49-51)

3. The manna provided for ALL Israel. Jesus provides for ALL mankind.
4. The manna gave temporary life. Jesus gives eternal life.
5. The manna was not recognized or known. Jesus was not recognized or known. (Matt. 8:27; John 12:37)
6. The manna was a test for Israel. Jesus is the test of our relationship with God. (I Cor. 1:22-23)

#### THE MANNA: A TYPE OF GOD'S WORD

1. From heaven, not earth.
2. Came to the people.
3. Had to be eaten.
4. To be gathered (read) daily.

#### THE MEMORIAL MANNA (16:32-36)

What did the pot of memorial manna teach to Israel?

1. The infinite resources of God.
2. The goodness of God.
3. The faithfulness of God.
4. The abiding presence of God.
5. That they could trust God in the future.

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#### EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1. *What is the subject matter of Exodus 16?*

The entire chapter deals with the giving of the manna. We entitle the chapter BREAD FROM HEAVEN. See Neh. 9:15. The whole chapter directs our minds toward Christ Jesus, who is the living bread which came down from heaven.

2. *Where did Israel journey from Elim? (16:1)*

From Elim they first went to an encampment by the sea.

See Numbers 33:10. Going southward from Elim, Israel passed the mount now called the Mount of Pharaoh's Hot Bath (Jebel Hamman Farun) on their right (west). They came on into the Wady (valley) et-Taiyibeh, which provided an open course to the seaside. Travelers have made the trip from Elim to the seaside in seven and a half hours. It is about twenty miles and probably took Israel two days. This area by the sea at the mouth of the Valley Taiyibeh is a sandy plain extending some four or five miles from the shore, shut in by a range of wild cliffs. Here was room for a great camp. The modern town of Abu Zenima lies in this area.

From the encampment by the seaside, Israel could either have gone north and east, via the sandy table land of Debbet er-Ramleh; or they could have gone on southward across about five miles of hills into the plain of El-Murkhah. To us it seems much more probable that they went southward into the El-Murkhah plain, and that this plain is to be identified with the *Wilderness of Sin*.

The name *Sin* has no connection with the English word *sin*. The names *Sin* and *Sinai* are very similar. (The meaning of these names is uncertain.)

Admittedly the location of the Wilderness of Sin is rather debatable. As stated above, we feel that it is the dry barren coastal plain of El Murkhah. The modern town of Abu Rudeis is in this plain. The plain is about six miles EW and about fifteen miles NS. S. C. Bartlett<sup>1</sup> says that its surface is a dead level, covered only with occasional tufts of desert shrubs. It had a temperature of 96 degrees when he visited it in February. It would be a natural place for Israelitish murmuring. The plain extends on south to the mouth of the Wady Feiran, which is the largest wady in the southern part of Sinai, and was probably the passage route of Israel from the Red Sea coastal area up to Mt. Sinai.

In the El Murkha plain there is a spring about three miles from the sea, which is next in importance only to the Springs

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<sup>1</sup>*From Egypt to Palestine* (New York: Harper, 1879), p. 213.

of Moses (*Ayun Musa*, near Israel's crossing place) and Elim (Gharandel). The traveller Burkhardt told of finding in this area many fissures in the rocks filled with winter rains.<sup>2</sup> Thus Israel probably had water in the Wilderness of Sin, but no food.

Other suggested identifications of the Wilderness of Sin include the interior desert tract called Debbet Er-Ramleh (mentioned above). This is a long desert area running SE-NW along the north side of the granite mountains of the Wilderness of Sinai. This is a possible location, but seems to us less likely than El Murkha, because to get to Debbet er-Ramleh from Israel's encampment by the sea would require considerable backtracking.

Another proposed identification of the Wilderness of Sin is the dry barren coastal plain of El-Qaa, north of the present city of Tor. But this lies much too far south to be on the route to Sinai.

Yet another proposed location of the Wilderness of Sin is the Wady Serabit,<sup>3</sup> containing the famous ruins of Serabit El Khadim. Serabit el-Khadim is sometimes proposed as the location of Dophka (Num. 33:12). The ruins there include a temple to the Egyptian goddess Hathor and abandoned copper and turquoise mines. Egyptian soldiers were stationed at Serabit el Khadim both before and after Moses' time. Some inscriptions in one of the oldest known alphabets known (similar to Hebrew) are found there. This route by Serabit seems very unlikely to us.

Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin on the fifteenth day of the second month of their journey, almost exactly a month after their departure. See Ex. 12:6. They had covered approximately 175 miles during that month.

3. *What did Israel complain about in the Wilderness of Sin?* (16:2-3)

They complained about lack of food. Observe that the

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Bartlett, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

<sup>3</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-179, proposes this as the site.



WHOLE congregation murmured. After seeing all the plagues in Egypt, and the crossing of the Sea, and the leading of the cloud, they still lacked faith in God.

Although their murmurings were directed against Moses and Aaron, they really were complaining against God. It was God himself who had promised to bring them to Sinai (3:12). How could God be God, and yet fail to keep His promise by letting them die of hunger on the way to Sinai?

This was Israel's third grumbling. They had already grumbled at the Red Sea (14:11) and at Marah (15:24). Moses could well say of them, "Ye have been rebellious against Jehovah from the day that I knew you" (Deut. 9:24).

Israel had left Egypt in haste and carried no leftover food. See 12:10-11, 33-34. Now a month later their food is exhausted. They still had livestock, but seemed very reluctant to slaughter their flocks for food.

In their bad state of mind they attributed the worst possible motives to Moses, as if he had deliberately set out to kill them. See 17:3. How utterly unreasonable!

In their distress they recalled only certain good things about Egypt, forgetting all their slavery and crying there (2:23-24; 4:31). They remembered only that they had had food in Egypt - fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, garlic (Num. 11:5). But had they actually had bread to the FULL? Surely not! This was a thoughtless exaggeration, a propaganda blast to hurt Moses.

They even declared that they wished they had died in Egypt by the hand of the LORD, presumably in the ten plagues. Compare Num. 14:2. This statement cannot be taken as a serious wish, but only as a bitter emotional outburst.

It is a wonder that God did not rain fire and brimstone on them, instead of raining manna upon them. (Pink)

4. *From whence would God give Israel bread?* (16:4)

God would rain bread *from heaven* upon them. We suppose that this means from the atmospheric heavens, although the power that brought it about came from God's

abode in the heaven of heavens! Neh. 9:15: "Thou didst provide bread from heaven for them for their hunger." See Ps. 105:40.

This bread is called "angels' food" in Psalm 78:25. This expression could be translated "bread of God" or "bread of the mighty ones" (Heb., *elohim*). I Cor. 10:3 calls it "spiritual food."

In America bread is a side dish to the main meal. In countries of the Middle East, bread is the basic item in the diet of many.

5. *How much bread was to be gathered daily?* (16:4)

A day's portion was to be gathered on each day. This instruction reminds us that we are to pray for our daily bread (Matt. 6:11). A day's portion of manna was an omer full (16:16). This would be approximately six and a half pints, about three-fourths of a gallon.

6. *What purpose besides nutrition would the bread have?* (16:4)

It was to be a *test*, whether they would walk in God's law or not. Would they gather just enough for each day at the start of every day? Or would they hoard it on some days because they did not completely trust God to provide more on subsequent days? Would they gather twice as much on the sixth days, when once they had learned that any excess collected on other days spoiled after one day? Would they rest on the seventh days, or go out searching for bread? These were God's tests! See Deut. 8:3, 16.

God reveals Himself here as a *tester* of men. Psalm 7:9: "The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins." No testing seems pleasant to those who are being tested. But we must expect testing. It is God's way with His people.

7. *What was Israel to know and see by God's providing food for them?* (16:6-8)

They were to know that Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt! It surely had taken a long time for some Israelites to realize that they were truly OUT of Egypt, and that the LORD had delivered them. They would know this by events to occur yet that very evening.

Israel said, "Moses, YOU brought us out of Egypt to kill us." Moses said, "You shall know that the LORD brought you out." The exodus was not an event that had happened by chance. The LORD was not some incompetent deity.

Also Israel was to see the GLORY on the morning to follow. Moses did not specify at first exactly how this "glory" would be revealed to them. This glory was to be something visible, something they could see.

Verse seven emphasizes that Israel would see the glory of Jehovah at the very time when He was hearing their murmurings against Jehovah. The repetition of the name Jehovah in the verse stresses the fact that the murmuring was against Jehovah. God graciously hearkened to them even while they were murmuring.

Also in verse seven the word *WE* is stressed. This emphasizes the denials by Moses that their murmurings were against him and Aaron.

After his opening announcement in 16:7 that Israel would see the glory of Jehovah, Moses, like a skillful speaker, brought his speech to a climax by giving specific details of how they would see God's glory. The Lord would in that very evening give them flesh to eat, and on the next morning He would give them bread "to the full."

8. *How did Moses know what God would give Israel for food?* (16:9-12)

He knew it because God had revealed it unto him. (See 16:12) God communicated with Moses face to face (Num. 12:8). Note that the message which God told Moses to tell Israel (in 16:12) is the very message that Moses delivered (in 16:8).

Probably we should translate 16:11 to read, "Now Yahweh had spoken unto Moses, saying. . . ." Hebrew has no past perfect (pluperfect) tense form. The perfect tense (indicating completed action) sometimes had a past perfect significance (as in Isaiah 38:21; Gen. 6:6; Num. 22:2; and others).

Some critics have suggested that we should rearrange

the Biblical text, placing 16:9-12 before 16:6-8.<sup>4</sup> We have no evidence in ancient manuscripts that the text was ever so rearranged. We do not feel we should lay violent hands on God's word, to rearrange its contents or make emendations in its words just because our present limited knowledge and understanding hinders our ability to comprehend it in the way the ancient Hebrews grasped it.

The command to "Come near before the LORD" was God's call for all the Israelites to assemble together with Moses and Aaron, having the LORD on their minds, for the purpose of learning the LORD's will. Certainly we understand that the LORD is everywhere, but God provided a focus point to which Israel could assemble before Him. That focus point was near the glory cloud, and with His men Moses and Aaron.

When Aaron issued the call for Israel to gather, the "glory of Jehovah" appeared in the cloud which had been leading Israel. Probably this glory was a display of fire and lightnings. See 19:16 and 24:15-17, where God's glory is said to have been "like a devouring fire." The cloud stood apart from Israel, "toward the wilderness," probably toward the east and south.

16: Israel was at this moment in deep unbelief. God was extremely perturbed, and declared, "Ye shall know that I am the LORD your God" (16:12).

9. *When were quails provided for Israel?* (16:13)

In the evening the quails came up and covered the camp. Ex. 16:12 had said, "Between the two evenings ye shall eat flesh."<sup>5</sup>

In the spring each year quails migrate in great numbers from the interior of Africa and Arabia, across the Sinai peninsula and into southern Europe. They return from

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<sup>4</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 396, following the proposal of S. R. Driver.

<sup>5</sup>"Between the two evenings" is the exact phrase used to describe the hour of the Passover sacrifice (Ex. 12:6). As indicated before, this phrase is indefinite as to exact time, and refers only to the period near sunset.

the northern countries in autumn.<sup>6</sup>

The occurrence of quail in Sinai at the time the Israelites passed through was not unusual. The miracle consisted in the precise timing of their arrival, and the announcement of God beforehand that they would have flesh to eat that evening.

When the quails migrate across the Sinai peninsula, they often become exhausted; and when they alight they can be caught easily. The birds are good eating and were a favorite delicacy of the Egyptians.<sup>7</sup> Ancient Egyptian paintings show people hunting quails with hand nets thrown over the bushes where they were nesting.<sup>8</sup> See p. 444B.

Psalms 78:27: "He raineth flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea."

10. *When did the manna appear?* (16:13-14)

It became visible the next morning when the dew evaporated. The Israelites did not realize anything unusual had happened the next morning when they saw the usual dew on the ground. Numbers 11:9 says that when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it (the camp). (The presence of the dew shows that the Sinaitic peninsula is not a totally arid desert.)

The manna appeared as small, fine, flake-like fragments on the ground, as small as the crystals of hoarfrost (white frost).

In Psalm 78:24 the manna is called the "corn (food, or grain) of heaven." It is called "angels' food" (or "bread of the angels") in Ps. 78:25.

The manna was white, and resembled the coriander seed (a strong-smelling seed, which is about the size of a peppercorn.) It had the appearance of bdellium (Num. 11:7);

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<sup>6</sup>The fact that Israel encountered quail migrations in the spring does not support the theory that the Israelites travelled a route along the Mediterranean coast. Quails would have been found along the coast more probably in the autumn, as they started their return from Europe.

<sup>7</sup>Herodotus 2:27.

<sup>8</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

which seems to be a fragrant and transparent resin, resembling wax.<sup>9</sup> It had a sweetish taste, like wafers made with honey (Ex. 16:31), and like fresh oil (Num. 11:8). It could be baked or boiled, or ground in a mill (a stone hand grinder).

11. *What does the name MANNA mean?* (16:15)

Its name means "What is it?" When the Israelites first saw it, they did not know what it was, and said, "*Man Hu?*" These were Hebrew words meaning "What is it?" This question became the name for it: it was called "Whatizit?" The name was sometimes shortened to *Man* (as in Ex. 16:31), which just means "What?" (Most English versions translate the word in 16:31 as *manna*, but the Hebrew just has *man*.)

The usual Hebrew interrogative word meaning "What?" is *Mah*, rather than *Man*. But the form *man* is found in the El Amarna letters,<sup>10</sup> and is a recognized ancient form of the interrogative. The Greek O.T. renders *man hu* by the Greek words for "What is this?"

12. *How much manna was collected by each person?* (16:16-17)

The amounts varied somewhat from person to person, "each man according to his eating."<sup>11</sup> But generally it was an *omer* for each "head" (or person). As a unit of measure the *omer* was the tenth part of an *ephah* (16:36), that is about six and a half pints. The *omer* is referred to in the Old Testament only in this chapter.

An *omer* for each person for each day seems like a lot of food, but probably it was rather fluffy.

Each man gathered enough for all those in his tent. We do not suppose that every household in Israel possessed a pot holding exactly one *omer*. Thus, some gathered more and some less.

Pink calculates that at one *omer* a head daily, Israel would have collected twelve million pints, or nine million pounds daily, and over a million tons were gathered annually!

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<sup>9</sup>The exact identification of bdellium is uncertain. Many think it is a waxy-looking resin. Others think it is a precious stone or pearl. Gen. 2:12 suggests such a possibility.

<sup>10</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 135. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

13. *Was the manna a natural phenomenon?*

Certainly not. It was supernatural and miraculous. This is evident from several facts:

(1) The enormous volume of manna produced and consumed. The secretions of all the trees and insects in Sinai could never have produced such a mass of food.

(2) The fact that the manna was provided the year round for forty years. Secretions from trees that some people call manna only occur during brief seasons in some years.

(3) The fact that the manna first appeared on a particular day, the very day after God had predicted the appearance of it.

(4) The fact that the manna could be found for six days each week, but was not there on the seventh days (16:26).

(5) The fact that the manna spoiled after one day most of the week, but after two days following the sixth and seventh days (16:24).

(6) The fact that the manna could be *boiled* in cooking, but melted in the heat of the sun (16:21, 23).

Very many writers have said that the manna consisted of drops of sugary material exuded by certain kinds of aphids on the tamarisk bushes. In the hot desert air they become whitish or yellowish globules and fall to the ground where the ants get them. Arabs call them *bread (mann)* or bread of heaven. Others say that the droplets are produced by the exudations of the tamarisk itself. These are pea-sized or smaller. These droplets are abundant in the rainy season, but in many years cease altogether. They appear mainly in June for three to six weeks. At peak season of each year a steady worker could only collect about half-pound of the "manna" a day. It cannot be baked or boiled. It does not spoil and stink after one day. The droplets do not melt in the sun's heat, but only dehydrate and harden.

Some extreme writers have said that the unique aspects of the Biblical account of the manna are the result of later theological expansion of the original event.<sup>11</sup> No proof is

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<sup>11</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 398.

offered for such a dogmatic assertion. Also it makes the theologians sound bad, as if they were always exaggerators!

14. *How did the manna equalize out?* (16:18)

When the amounts which the people gathered were measured with an omer (a jar of that size), there was enough manna for each person, with none left over.

This verse is difficult to understand fully. Some have proposed that the Israelites pooled their manna collectively, and each kept the ration of an omer per head.<sup>12</sup> It is suggested that Paul seemed to understand it that way (II Cor. 8:14-15). But the idea of pooling the manna is not definitely stated in the verse. Also the enormous size of the Israelite camp (five or six miles across) and the number of people involved would seem to make pooling very difficult, inconvenient, and improbable. There would have been some large heaps of collected manna!

We doubt that every family went through a ritualistic check on the volume of manna it collected each day. Occasional spot checking would be all that is necessarily implied by the statement "When they measured it with an omer. . . ."

The way the manna supply in each home equalized out certainly hints at some degree of miraculous control of the matter.

The apostle Paul in II Cor. 8:14-15 refers to Ex. 16:18 as an illustration for Christians who have an abundance of this world's wealth to share with those who have needs. The comparison is not identical in every particular, since manna (unlike money) was freely available to everyone. They only had to go out and pick it up. Nonetheless, the fact that all Israelites had about the same amount of manna each day is a valuable illustration to us, urging us to share of our abundance with those in want, that there may be an equality.

It surely seems rather miraculous that the manna collected

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<sup>12</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 132. Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 68.



by each family equalized out in the way it did, and everyone's needs were supplied, whether he gathered much or little of it. This seems to have been a rather obvious and noticeable fact. Their food supply, like their clothing (see Deut. 29:5!), was always adequate for the needs.

15. *Could manna be stored up?* (15:19-20)

No. This was prevented both by direct command and by the fact that any leftover manna became foul and bred maggots by the next morning. Like the flesh of the Passover lamb, there were to be no leftovers (12:10). They were to live in a situation wherein they had to depend on God every day for that day's needs. Do WE trust God enough to depend on HIM for every day's needs, one by one? (Matt. 6:34)

Some Israelites failed this first test with the manna. They tried (vainly!) to store some up. Moses became angry with these people.

The word *melted* in 16:22 may mean "became loathsome."<sup>13</sup> The Hebrew word is similar to a word used in I Sam. 15:9, to refer to the *vile* and *worthless* animals of the Amalekites.

16. *How much manna was collected on the sixth day?* (16:22)

Two omers, or twice as much as usual. The manna was twice as plentiful on the sixth day as on other days (16:29). Ex. 16:22 refers back to 16:5. The scripture does not mention the fact that Moses told the people the words of 16:5, but we assume he did.

The *rulers* of the congregation reported to Moses that the people had collected twice as much. Perhaps Moses had requested them to report to him about this. The reference to these rulers raises questions about the organization of the Israelites. Ex. 34:31 refers to the rulers. We really know very little about the organization of the Israelites and their tribes.

17. *What was the seventh day called?* (16:23, 25)

The *sabbath*. *Sabbath* is a word derived from the Hebrew

<sup>13</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

*shabath*, meaning to cease or rest.

A stronger word, *shabbaton*, is used in 16:23 just before the usual word for *sabbath*. Elsewhere this word is used only of New Year's day and other particularly holy festivals.<sup>14</sup> By this word God stressed the great importance of this first sabbath rest day in the wilderness.

Here in Ex. 16:23 we have the first actual appearance of the word *sabbath* in the scriptures. Nehemiah 9:14 says that God *made known* the holy sabbath at Mt. Sinai. Certainly in Ex. 16:23 there is no general prohibition of all work, only of gathering manna. 16:29-30 indicates a more general cessation of work. This preliminary command concerning rest helped prepare the people for the comprehensive commandment about Sabbath given in Ex. 20:8-11.

We certainly agree with Keil and Delitzsch<sup>15</sup> that it is perfectly clear from the event that the Israelites were not acquainted with any sabbath observance at that time, and that it was only through the decalogue (the ten commandments) that the Sabbath was raised to a legal institution.

Modern religious groups which keep the seventh day (Saturday) as holy day of assembly and rest, generally seek to prove that the Hebrews (and their forefathers) know of a weekly Sabbath before Mt. Sinai. The sabbath is called *holy* in vs. 23, but it is NOT at all certain that it had been revealed or observed as a national sacred day before Sinai. For more on the sabbath, see notes on Ex. 20:8-10.

18. *Did the Israelites obey the sabbath law? (16:27-29)*

Not all did. Some went out to gather manna on the seventh day, as on the preceding six days. We marvel at their behavior. Had they not collected enough on the sixth day for two days? Were they frankly testing Moses' predictions and perhaps his authority? Why did they not yet have faith? Had they not considered the miraculous features about the manna that they had already seen?

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<sup>14</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup>*Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 68-69.

God was angry because of the people's disobedience. He said to Moses, "How long refuse ye (plural) to keep my commandments?" Deut. 3:26 says "Jehovah was angry with me (Moses) for your sakes." Moses was not personally guilty of any wrongdoing. But the principle of collective guilt is quite frequently found in the scriptures. When one member of a people (or church) sins, the whole body shares its guilt and punishment to some degree. Thus God included Moses in His rebuke of Israel. Compare Joshua 7:1; II Sam. 21:1.

19. *How was the seventh day kept?* (16:29-30)

Every person was to abide in his own place (tent); and the people rested that day.

Regarding 16:31, see notes on 16:13-14.

20. *What memorial of the giving of the manna was kept?* (16:32-34)

An omer of manna was to be kept in a pot throughout the generations to follow. This was to be laid up "before Jehovah," "before the Testimony." Aaron was to do this.

The moral significance of the manna - that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God - was to be kept vivid for all future generations.

Heb. 9:4 says the manna was kept in a *golden* pot. This is also the Greek reading of Ex. 16:32.

The *Testimony* is a name applied to the stone tablets bearing the ten commandments. See Ex. 31:18; 25:16, 21; Deut. 10:5.

"Before the LORD" refers to the same place as "before the Testimony," namely in the tabernacle, in the ark of the covenant. Ex. 40:20; Heb. 9:4.

Since the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were not yet constructed at the time of the giving of the manna, we realize that Ex. 16:33-34 tells of events occurring some months, or longer, after the original giving of the manna. But this is no problem. Not every event related in the Bible (or any other history book) is related in precise historical sequence. We should not expect to find every event in such order. But this does not discredit the Bible's accuracy or inspiration.

During later centuries the ark was moved about from place to place - from Shiloh to Ebenezer, Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, Beth-Shemesh, Kiriath-Jearim, Jerusalem. During that time the jar of manna seems to have been lost, as was Aaron's budded rod (Num. 17:10). Thus in Solomon's time there was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses placed there (I Kings 8:9).

21. *How long did the Israelites eat manna?* (16:35)

They ate forty years (Nehemiah 9:21). They ate manna until they entered the land of Canaan after the death of Moses and ate the fruit and produce of the land. Joshua 5:10-12.

Exodus 16:35 sounds as if it was written after the manna had ceased to be provided. If so, this one verse was inserted into Moses' book of Exodus by Joshua or some other writer after Moses' death. This probability no more casts doubt on the overall Mosaic authorship of Exodus than does insertion of the facts about Moses' death cast doubt on the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy (Deut. 34:4-12).

22. *Why is the description of the omer inserted at 16:36?*

Possibly because the omer was a unit of measure not generally familiar to and employed by the Israelites. The word is used throughout this passage (16:16, 18, 22, 23); but it occurs nowhere else in the scriptures. Edward J. Young<sup>16</sup> says that the omer was not actually a measure, but a small cup; and it is perfectly understandable that Moses might have remarked upon the size of this cup when it was used to gather the manna.

Some writers assume that those acquainted with the exodus would have been acquainted with the omer; and that this tends to indicate a later date for composition of 16:36, or that the verse is a later explanatory addition.<sup>17</sup> This seems to us much less likely than our suggestion that the omer is described because it was not generally familiar to the

<sup>16</sup>*Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 77.

<sup>17</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 399.

Israelites (any more than it is to us now).

23. *What does the manna mean to Christians?*

The manna means to Christians everything it meant to the Jews. See the brief outlines after the questions on Ch. 16.

The manna is certainly a type of Jesus, the living bread who came down from heaven. (John 6:41, 48-51).

The Lord Jesus promises to give His people who overcome "the hidden manna" (Rev. 2:17). This seems to be a symbol of the blessings of our heavenly home.

## THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**17** And all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, by their journeys, according to the commandment of Je-ho-vah, and encamped in Reph-i-dim: and there was no water for the people to drink. (2) Wherefore the people strove with Mo-ses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Mo-ses said unto them, Why strive ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt Je-ho-vah? (3) And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Mo-ses, and said, Wherefore hast thou brought us up out of E-gypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? (4) And Mo-ses cried unto Je-ho-vah, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they are almost ready to stone me. (5) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Pass on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Is-ra-el; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thy hand, and go. (6) Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Ho-reb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Mo-ses did so in the sight of the elders of Is-ra-el. (7) And he called the name of the place Mas-sah, and Mer-i-bah, because of the striving of the children of Is-ra-el, and because they tempted Je-ho-vah, saying, Is Je-ho-vah among

us, or not?

(8) Then came Am-a-lek, and fought with Is-ra-el in Reph-i-dim. (9) And Mo-ses said unto Josh-u-a, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Am-a-lek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand. (10) So Josh-u-a did as Mo-ses had said to him, and fought with Am-a-lek: and Mo-ses, Aar-on, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. (11) And it came to pass, when Mo-ses held up his hand, that Is-ra-el prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Am-a-lek prevailed. (12) But Mo-ses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aar-on and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. (13) And Josh-u-a discomfited Am-a-lek and his people with the edge of the sword. (14) and Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Josh-u-a: that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Am-a-lek from under heaven. (15) And Mo-ses built an altar, and called the name of it Je-ho-vah-nis-si; (16) and he said, Je-ho-vah hath sworn: Je-ho-vah will have war with Am-a-lek from generation to generation.

EXPLORING EXODUS : CHAPTER SEVENTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. Propose a topic or theme for chapter 17.
2. Where did Israel go from the Wilderness of Sin? (17:1; Compare Num. 33:12-13)
3. Who directed Israel to Rephidim? (17:1)
4. What disaster faced them in Rephidim? (17:1)
5. Who "tempted" the Lord? How did they tempt the Lord? (17:2, 7)
6. How did the Israelites feel toward Moses? (17:3, 4)
7. What did Moses do when the Israelites strove with him? (17:4)

## TWO TESTS: WATER AND WAR 17:1-16

8. Who went with Moses as he went to smite the rock? (17:5, 6)
  9. Where did God stand when Moses struck the rock? (17:6)
  10. What place is Horeb? (17:6; 3:1)
  11. How abundant was the flow of water from the rock? (Ps. 78:15-16)
  12. What two names did Moses give to the place where the waters came forth? What do these names mean? (17:7)
  13. Who fought against Israel? (17:8; Deut. 25:17-18)
  14. Who led Israel's armed forces? (17:9, 13)
  15. How did Moses help in the battle? (17:9)
  16. What was Joshua's original name? (Num. 13:16; Ex. 17:9)  
See if you can find the meanings of Joshua's names.
  17. Who held up Moses' hands? (17:10, 12)
  18. What did Moses sit on? (17:12)
  19. How long did the battle last? (17:12)
  20. What was to be written in a book? (17:14)
  21. When was the prophecy against Amalek fulfilled? (17:14; I Sam. 15:8-9; I Chron. 4:43)
  22. What was the name of the altar that Moses built? (17:15)
  23. What did the LORD swear that he would have? (17:16)
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## EXODUS SEVENTEEN: TWO TESTS: WATER AND WAR

### I. Water; (17:1-7)

1. The danger; 17:1.
2. The disagreeable debate; 17:2-3.
3. The deliverance; 17:4-6.
4. The memorial names; 17:1.

### II. War; (17:8-15)

1. The danger; 17:8.
2. The deliverance; 17:9-13.
3. The memorial name; 17:15-16.

WATER FROM THE LORD  
(John 4:10, 14; 7:37-39)

1. Given to the undeserving; Ex. 17:1-3.
2. Given miraculously; 17:4-6.
3. Given abundantly; Ps. 78:15-16.

TEMPTING THE LORD Vs. FAITH

1. Tempting the LORD: "Is God among us or not?" (Ex. 17:7)  
Faith: "God exists!" (Heb. 11:6)
2. Tempting the LORD: "It is vain to serve God." (Mal. 3:14-15)  
Faith: "God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Heb. 11:6)
3. Tempting the LORD: "Give us food that we crave!" (Ps. 78:18)  
Faith: "Feed me with food that is needful for me." (Prov. 30:8)
4. Tempting the LORD: "Leap from the pinnacle!" (Matt. 4:5-6)  
Faith: "You shall not tempt the LORD." (Deut. 6:16)

TWO PLACES TO AVOID! (Ex. 17:7)

1. Massah - The place of Tempting (testing).
2. Meribah - The place of Strife (quarrelling).

AMALEK: THE PROTOTYPE OF GOD'S ENEMIES

1. Cruel (Attacked the weary stragglers); Deut. 25:17-19.
2. Determined (Fought all day); Ex. 17:12.
3. Powerful (Only God's power can defeat); 17:11.
4. Doomed; 17:13-14.

JEHOVAH-NISSI: JEHOVAH IS MY BANNER! (17:15-16)

1. He gives me triumph.
  2. He forgets not evil.
  3. He lives through every generation.
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## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

1. *What is the subject matter of Exodus 17?*

The chapter contains two distinct sections: (1) Concerning the giving of water from the rock of Israel; 17:1-7. (2) Concerning Israel's battle with Amalek; 17:8-16.

2. *Where did Israel go from the Wilderness of Sin? (17:1)*

The whole congregation journeyed by stages ("By their journeys") and encamped in Rephidim. By *stages* we mean the most significant stopovers and encampments, which became starting points for travel to their next major encampment.

Numbers 33:12-13 names two of these stages, Dophka and Alush. These lay between the wilderness of Sin and Rephidim.

3. *Where was Rephidim? (17:1)*

No one knows for certain. Ex. 17:6 indicates that it was very near to Horeb (Mt. Sinai). Also 18:5 relates that Moses was camped at the "Mt. of God" when his father-in-law Jethro came to him. This occurred at Rephidim (19:2).

We feel that Keil and Delitzsch<sup>1</sup> are correct in suggesting that Rephidim lay near the point about ten miles north of Mt. Sinai where the great Wady es Sheikh opens into the Plain of Er Rahah, which lies at the north end of Mt. Sinai.

Others have located Rephidim at a small wady (valley) called Wady Rephayid.<sup>2</sup> This lies some fifteen miles NW of Sinai. It is an inconsequential wady. We see little to commend the identification except a partial resemblance between the names Rephidim and Rephayid.

<sup>1</sup>*Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>John Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Baker, 1971), p. 184.

## SPECIAL STUDY: ISRAEL'S PASSAGE ROUTE TO SINAI

From Israel's encampment by the seaside (which we have suggested was near modern Abu Zenima) there are two main routes by which Israel could have passed up to Mt. Sinai, a northern route and a southern route. Each of these two routes could have been entered by two different valleys (wadies). Both would be about the same length, about one hundred and ten miles. We feel the southern route is much the more probable. But no one can be completely certain.

## The Northern Route

The northern route would primarily pass through the sandy plain of Debbet er Ramleh (the "Plain of Sand"). This lies south of the mountain range called Jebel et-Tih ("Mt. of the Wandering") and north of the granite mountains of southern Sinai. If this route is the true one, then the Wilderness of Sin is probably the Debbet er-Ramleh.

This northern route could have been entered from Israel's seaside encampment, by "backing up" northward via the Wady Taiyibeh. After six or seven miles this wady turns abruptly eastward, where it is called the Wady Hamr (or Humur), and goes into the sandy plains.

This northern route could also have been entered if Israel had travelled SE along the seacoast about ten miles into the barren plain of El Murkha (which we feel is the true Wilderness of Sin). They could go east across this plain, and enter a narrow wady and follow it northeastward twenty miles (or thereabouts), where it enters the sandy plains near Debbet er Ramleh.

The northern route would have taken Israel to within ten miles of the ruins now called Serabit-el-Khadim. Numerous scholars suggest that this is the site of Dophka (Num. 33:12). We can see no cause for this identification. Serabit is off from the main trails. It was an Egyptian mining location (turquoise and copper). An Egyptian temple to the goddess Hathor was there. Egyptian troops were stationed there both before and after the

time of Moses. They would not have really gone “*from* the Wilderness of Sin” (Debbet el Ramleh) in going to Serabit, for the sandy plains extend far on east of Serabit. Therefore, it does not appear to us as even a remote possibility of being the site of Dophka.

The northern route would primarily move southeastward. Eventually it would enter the valley of the *Wady 'Esh*. Some identify this with *Alush* on the basis of the remote resemblance between the names.

Finally the route would join the Wadi esh-Sheikh about fifteen miles north of Mt. Sinai. The Sheikh valley goes directly south into the plain of Er-Rahah at the north foot of Mt. Sinai.

### The Southern Route

The southern passage route is the route via the Wady Feiran and its north branch, the Wady esh-Sheikh. The Wady Feiran is the largest Wady in southern Sinai, and extends a little over eighty miles from its mouth to the region of Jebel Musa (the Mount of Moses, or Mt. Sinai).

To enter the Wady Feiran passage, we feel that Israel came southeastward from its seaside encampment into the great barren plain of El-Murkha (which contains the modern town of Abu Rudeis and its oil fields). This plain is about six by fifteen miles. We feel it is the true site of the Wilderness of Sin, where Israel first received the manna. Israel could depart from this plain at its south end, and after going no more than ten miles, with ridges of hills on their left (east), they would come to the mouth of the Wady Feiran, where they would turn eastward.

The Wady Feiran is one to two miles broad much of its way up to Sinai, but frequently narrows between mountains to the width of half or a third of a mile.<sup>3</sup>

Another route by which Israel might have entered the Feiran valley would have been to have left the Wilderness of Sin from its east side, near its south end, via the Valley (Wady) Sidri.

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<sup>3</sup>Bartlett, *Op. cit.*, p. 238.

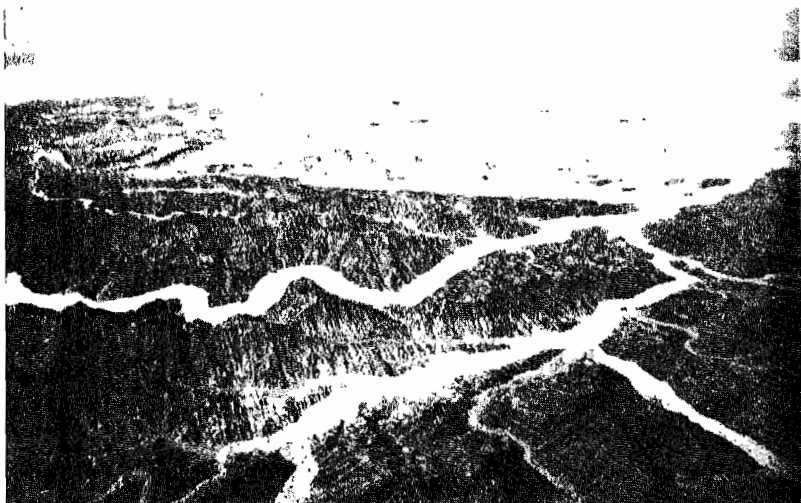
After going eastward about ten miles between hills, they would veer north to bypass a mountain. After going around northeast of this mountain, they would enter the Valley (Wady) *Mukkatab* (the "Written valley," so-called on account of the numerous Sinaitic inscriptions in it). This broad rather flat valley gradually rose as they journeyed SE about fifteen miles, where, after crossing a watershed, it would descend to the Wady Feiran. This entry into Feiran may have been Israel's actual passage route.

The Feiran zig-zags a great deal, but has an overall easterly direction. About forty miles up the Wady Feiran is the magnificent Oasis of Feiran ("The Pearl of the Desert"). Here pure sweet water flows in the valley. There are many lovely palm groves and other trees. High cliffs (800-900 feet) rise on every side.

Just to the south of this oasis about five miles stands the great Mt. Serbal (6,790 feet). From its peak one has a view spanning almost the entire length of the Gulf of Suez.

Just on the north side of the Oasis of Feiran is Mt. Tahuneh. A spot on this mountain has been called the Place of Moses' prayer (Ex. 17:11). The Oasis of Feiran has been identified as Rephidim, the place where the Amalekites attacked Israel. These proposed identifications are known to have been made at least as far back as A.D. 600. Nonetheless, we cannot accept the identifications, because Rephidim, where Moses prayed, seems to have been very much closer to Sinai than the Feiran Oasis. See Ex. 17:6; 18:5. It is possible that this Oasis was the site of *Alush*. *Dophka* would then have been some small oasis downstream (westward).

Israel most probably detoured left (north) off the Feiran into its northern branch, the Wady esh-Sheikh. This is the route usually followed by caravans even today. The Sheikh circles around the rugged hills lying northwest of Mt. Sinai, and then turns directly south toward Mt. Sinai, and enters into the plain Er-Rahah, lying at the north foot of Mt. Sinai. Er Rahah was almost certainly Israel's place of encampment before Mt. Sinai.



Exit of Wadi Feiran into the coastal plain. (Feiran is the light-colored dry brook channel coming in from the left.) The Red Sea Gulf of Suez is in background. View westward. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Oasis in Wadi Feiran. The Israelites probably went through this wadi on their way up to Mt. Sinai. View west. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Oasis in Wadi Feiran. This might be the site of Dophka or of Alush (Numbers 33:12-13). (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Summit of Mt. (Jebel) Serbal, looking SW towards the coastal plain south of modern Abu Rudeis. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)

4. *What did the Israelites chide with Moses about? (17:2-3)*<sup>4</sup>

They had no water, and they demanded that Moses give them water. It was an angry confrontation. They did not just murmur; they *strove* with Moses. The verb translated "strove" (or "did chide" or "found fault") is the Hebrew *rib* (or *riv*), meaning to quarrel, strive, or contend. This word is the key to the passage, because it explains why the place was called *Meribah*, meaning strife, or argument. (Note the *rib* in *Meribah*.)

In demanding water, the Israelites used the plural pronoun: "You (plural, referring to both Moses and Aaron), give us water!"

Note that in 17:3 the Israelites accused Moses of trying to kill them. Compare 16:3. They asked, "Why did you bring *us* up out of Egypt, to kill *me* (singular) and *my* children?" The singular pronoun *me* seems to be used following the plural *us* to give special emphasis to the suffering of the children. For if the text had read *us*, the children would also have been implied.<sup>5</sup>

The reference to the Israelites' cattle indicates that they had many animals. See 12:38.

The previous deliverances of the Israelites from Egypt, and at the Sea, and at Marah should have produced in them a habit of trusting God in every emergency, and of trusting Moses. Surely Moses' leadership was by then thoroughly vindicated. Sadly, they were still ruled by an evil heart of unbelief (Heb. 3:12). They were never fully delivered from

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<sup>4</sup>Some critics assert that the first part of 17:1 is by one author (P), and then 17:1b-7 is by yet another author (J); but even this J section has been mixed with the writings of a third (E) author. Thus 17:1b-2 is assigned to J, and 17:3-6 to E. Cassuto (*Op cit.*, p. 201) well says concerning these unproven allegations, that in conformity with Biblical usage, which expresses things in coordinate rather than subordinate clauses (since Hebrew lacks many subordinating conjunctions), the opening part of Vs. 3 is to be understood as a subordinate clause, to wit, "Since the people thirsted for water, they complained against Moses. . . ." Verse two contains the general information about the accusations against Moses. Verse three gives a detailed account of the general statement. There is no necessity for assuming the existence of multiple sources.

<sup>5</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

this lack of faith in that whole generation. Forty years later at Kadesh-Barnea, they murmured for water once again, even after water was provided for them this time. See Num. 20:2-3.

God's people must expect to face problems, discomforts, dangers, and tribulation. They must be spiritually prepared to trust God when such experiences arrive.

5. *Did Moses trust God when they were without water?* (17:2, 4)

Definitely he did. He reproved the people saying, "Why do ye tempt the LORD?" ("Why do you put the LORD to the test?") In this situation Moses went and cried (prayed) to the Lord: "What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me!" The Israelites on several occasions were ready to stone leaders with whom they were displeased. See Num. 14:10; I Sam. 30:6.

Prayer was very characteristic of Moses. See Ex. 15:25; 32:31-32.

6. *How did Israel TEMPT God?* (17:2, 7; Deut. 6:16; Psalm 78:18, 41)

They tempted (or tested) the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" To question God's reality, his presence, power, and concern for us is to *tempt* him.

Psalm 78:18 says that they tempted God by asking food for their desire (Heb. *nephesh*!) Seemingly they did not really need all they were demanding. They were asking for food to spend it on their pleasures (James 4:3).

God wanted to prove (test, tempt) Israel. Instead Israel proved the LORD. This was God's right, but not Israel's right. "Ye shall not tempt Jehovah your God, as ye tempted him in Massah." (Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:7). Testing God shows a lack of faith.

7. *Who was with Moses when he went to provide water?* (17:5-6)

He took with him some men from the elders of Israel (not all of the elders). Regarding the elders, see 24:1,11; 4:29; 18:12.

The elders were to be the eyewitnesses of this miracle, that they might bear testimony to the unbelieving people.



Certainly there was not enough room around the rock for 600,000 men to crowd around Moses and see him do this. The fact that water did not flow from the rock until MOSES struck it was surely a powerful evidence that Moses was a divinely appointed leader.

Moses was to take with him the rod with which he had smitten the Nile river (7:20).

8. *What happened when Moses struck the rock?* (17:6)

The answer to this is vividly stated in Psalm 78:15-16: "He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink abundantly, as out of the depths (the sea). He brought forth STREAMS also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers."

The text says the waters went out FROM the rock. This suggests that the waters flowed TO the people, probably several miles.

I Cor. 10:4: "They did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ." It was not Moses who produced the stream of water. Rather, the water was provided by Christ, who is the spiritual rock. Christ "followed them" so as to be with them always to provide their needs. In the same way he is always available to us to provide our spiritual and material needs.

9. *Where was God when Moses struck the rock?* (17:6)

He stood before Moses upon the rock in Horeb (Mt. Sinai). We suppose that the statement "I shall stand" meant "My pillar of cloud shall stand." Here again God condescended to man's level by manifesting Himself in one spot, though He fills heaven and earth.

10. *By what names did Moses call the place where water was provided?* (17:7)

He called it *Massah* (meaning tempting, or proving) and *Meribah* (meaning strife, chiding, or quarrelling).

The word *Massah* is derived from the verb (*nasah*) meaning to prove or test. This verb is used in 17:3 and 16:4. We must not read into the word *tempt* here the idea of moral

temptation, but only the idea of testing.

Ps. 95:8: "Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness. Compare Num. 20:13.

Ps. 81:7: "I proved thee at the waters of Meribah."

Num. 14:22: "... because all those men that have seen my glory, and my signs, which I wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have *tempted* me these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice."

The name *Meribah* was also given to a second place where God miraculously provided water from a rock (See Numbers 20:1, 13). But the events occurred in different places and forty years apart in time. It may seem a little surprising that two places should get the same nickname. But it is by no means impossible.<sup>6</sup>

The two stories of God's providing water for Israel (in Ex. 16 and Num. 20) occur near the start of the wilderness wanderings and near its close. This suggests the continuity of God's care and of Israel's unbelief.

#### 11. *Was the water-from-rock event a miracle?*

This seems like an obvious question to which the answer would be YES. We accept it as a miracle. Christ, the spiritual rock, brought water from a rock of flint (Deut. 8:15).

However, some semi-natural explanations for it have been suggested. Cassuto tells of an English army officer over a Sudanese camel corps in southern Sinai, who, when seeking to discover the source of water dripping between pebbles in a gravel heap by a cliff, struck the outer face of the cliff a hard knock, fracturing it, and an abundance of water began to flow. The scripture does not suggest that Moses fractured the rock, releasing a barely-shut-in vein of water.

A very extreme view is that of Noth, who felt that the water came from the rock in such a way that those who went there could only think that at one time the rock had been made to

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<sup>6</sup>Martin Noth (*op. cit.*, p. 140) thinks that the two events were actually only one event but that we have two versions of the one story. The scripture, however, clearly distinguishes the two events.

produce water in a miraculous way. This is an example of the astounding lengths to which people will go to avoid accepting the scripture accounts of miracles.

Josephus (*Ant.* II, i, 7) says that Moses informed the people that a river should run for their sakes out of the rock. Also, when it happened, "they were astonished at this wonderful effect; and, as it were, quenched their thirst by the very sight of it." (That is a BIG yarn!)

12. *What hostile tribe fought with Israel at Rephidim? (17:8)*

Amalek (the Amalekites) fought Israel. Amalek was a grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:12); the Amalekites were his descendants. These people are mentioned at least twenty-five times in the Old Testament. Amalek feared not God (Deut. 25:17-18). As Israel passed through the wadies (valleys) on the way to Mt. Sinai, they got strung out into a column perhaps ten miles long. Amalek smote the stragglers at the rear of the column when they were weary and faint (Deut. 25:19). These Amalekites were nomads. We read of their presence in northern Sinai, near Kadesh (Gen. 14:7). They dwelt in the Negev, the semi-desert area of southern Palestine from Beersheba south (Num. 13:29).

The exact cause of Amalek's hostility is not stated. Perhaps it harks back to the ancient feud between Jacob and Esau over the birthright and blessing (Gen. 27:41). More probably it was precipitated by the fear of the Amalekites that the Israelites would occupy all the good pasture spots and springs in Sinai. There the grass dries up in the lower districts by the beginning of summer, and the nomads seek pasture at the cooler heights, the very area where the Israelites were now entering. Therefore, they fell upon Israel, to destroy them if possible. We suppose that this occurred in the Sheikh valley (Wady) north of Mt. Sinai.

God had provided Israel with food and water. Now He must save them from attack by an enemy. This was absolutely necessary, if God was to be triumphant for His people.

13. *Whom did Moses send to lead Israel in battle? (17:9-10)*

He sent Joshua, who is mentioned here for the first time in

the scripture. Moses did not need to explain to the original readers of Exodus who Joshua was. By the time the book had been written, Joshua had become well-known to them.

Joshua had been a tribal chieftan of the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:8). His name had originally been *Hoshea* (meaning salvation). To the name *Hoshea* Moses added God's name *Yah* (or *Jah*), making his name Joshua (Heb. *Yehoshua*), meaning "Jehovah is salvation."

We are impressed with Joshua's faith, courage, and immediate obedience. For forty years he was Moses' principal minister. See Ex. 24:13; 32:17. He became the leader of Israel after Moses died, and led in the conquest of Canaan. His name in Greek is *Jesus*, and the King James Bible refers to him as *Jesus* in Acts 7:45 and Heb. 4:8.

14. *Where did Moses go during the battle? (17:9-10)*

He went to the top of the hill with the rod of God in his hand.

Note that the rod is again called the "rod of God," as it was back in Ex. 4:20. We suppose that Moses had received instructions from God about going up onto the hill while Joshua was fighting Amalek.

We suppose that the hill was the height now called Fureia (or Feria), on the very north side of the plain Er-Rahah. The traditional location is just north of the great Oasis in Wady Feiran, on Mt. Tahuneh. S. C. Bartlett, who climbed these hills, thought that a hill called Jebel Shiah, just to the west of Mt. Tahuneh, was more likely the place, since it commanded a much wider range of view than Mt. Tahuneh. Bartlett felt that the Amalekites were contesting the Israelites for possession of the great Oasis of Feiran, which was certainly a prize worth fighting for.

These proposed locations of the hill of Moses' prayer do not seem to us to harmonize with the clear statements that the site of the battle at Rephidim was very close to Mt. Sinai (Horeb).

15. *Who accompanied Moses to the hill top? Why? (17:10-12)*

Aaron (Moses' brother) and Hur accompanied Moses, to

help him keep his arms uplifted.

Hur is mentioned again in Ex. 24:14: "Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them." A man named Hur is named in Ex. 31:2 as the grandfather of Bezalel, a builder of the tabernacle. So also in I Chron. 2:3-5, 18-20. However, we cannot be certain that the Hur of Ex. 31 is the same man as Hur in Ex. 17:10. Josephus (*Ant.* III, ii, 4) says that Hur was the husband of Miriam. We do not know whether this tradition is true or false.

16. *What was the significance of Moses lifting up his hands?* (17:11)

It meant victory if he did and defeat if he did not!

We feel that the lifting up of his hands was an act of prayer. The expression "lifting up the hands" frequently refers to prayer. (See Ps. 28:2; I Tim. 2:8; Ps. 63:4). The lowering of the hands was a sign of ceasing to pray.

The weariness that soon comes when we try to hold our arms up-lifted for long periods is familiar to all. Moses' hands soon became "heavy." When his hands came down, Amalek began to win the battle. So Aaron and Hur seated Moses upon a stone, and helped him hold his hands uplifted till the sun went down that day.

Because the text does not specifically mention Moses as praying, some interpreters feel that the lifting of his hands and the rod had other significance. Some say it was a signal to do battle (as in Joshua 8:18). Others propose that some mysterious force was thought to radiate from the rod of Moses. (This view is sheer blasphemy.) Yet others have thought that the lifting up the hand and rod was the sign of some oath (Gen. 14:22), putting Amalek under a ban or curse of complete destruction. None of these views seem very satisfactory.

At the very least, we can say that Moses' lifting up his hands pointed toward God as their only strength for victory. It is difficult for us to think that Moses was not praying, considering how often he prayed on other occasions.

Ponder the mixture of human effort and divine power needed for victory. Israel had to fight, but they won only by the power of God. The dividing line between natural effort and supernatural help is often difficult to pinpoint in our experience. The child of God must perceive that both are real and both are necessary for victory.

17. *How severe was the battle with Amalek? (17:11-13)*

It lasted all day. This indicates both the strength and determination of their assailants. It started as a hyena-like attack on the Israelite stragglers, but it developed into a massive battle. Israel had full opportunity to use the weapons they took as they went up armed out of Egypt (13:18). There are times when God's people must fight. See Luke 22:36.

Joshua "discomfited" Amalek. This unusual verb seems to mean "prostrated," or "mowed down," or "disabled." There were many casualties inflicted in close combat "with the edge of the sword." (This expression often indicates a great slaughter of the enemy. See Josh. 6:21; 8:24; Num. 21:24.)

18. *What was to be written in a book? (17:14)*

Moses was told by God to write in a book that He would utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. They would be exterminated from the earth.

The prophecy of Amalek's future annihilation was also given in later prophecies. See Num. 24:20. Deut. 25:17-19.

It was centuries before this prophecy was fulfilled. In the time of king Saul (1050-1010 B.C., about 400 years after Moses' time), God sent Saul to wipe out the Amalekites (I Sam. 15:2-3). Saul did not fully do this. In the time of king Hezekiah (728-696 B.C.) the remnant of the Amalekites (in one area anyway) were smitten. We read no more about them after that. (I Chron. 4:41-43)

Ponder the fact that God's promises and threats will certainly be fulfilled, even if it takes centuries, and even if we do not live to see it done. God does not look at time as we do (II Pet. 3:8).

Does the Bible say that Moses wrote the words in *A* book

or in *THE* book? Was this the start of a new book, or was it added to the book Moses already was writing? As the Hebrew text now reads, it says "in *the* book." However, this reading depends on the vowel marking, and the vowels were not added to the Hebrew Bible until A.D. 500-900. Obviously, the later Jewish rabbis who added the vowels to the text thought that it meant "in *the* book," although the consonants can be read either way. (Ancient Hebrew was written with consonants only.) The Greek Bible is similarly indefinite as to whether it says *A* book or *THE* book.

19. *What does the command to write indicate about the writing of the book of Exodus?* (17:14)

It indicates that Moses was proficient in writing, but it really tells little about the composition of Exodus. Num. 33:2 says that Moses wrote all the places where Israel encamped, by the command of the Lord. Probably Moses had therefore been doing a little writing as they journeyed, although he surely had very little time to do this during their marches.

Other references to writing in Exodus include 24:4 ("And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD"), and 34:27 ("The Lord said to Moses, Write down these words").

The Egyptians were thorough recorders of all types of family and business records. Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He surely knew several languages.

We suspect that the document Moses wrote about the Amalekites was a separate roll at first, and was later incorporated into the entire book of Exodus. This was done most likely during the forty years of wandering around Kadesh-Barnea, after Israel left Mt. Sinai.

20. *What did Moses build, and what did he call it?* (17:15)

He built an altar after the victory over Amalek, and called the name of it *Jehovah-nissi*, which means The LORD is my banner.

The meaning seems to be that the name of Jehovah is the true banner under which victory is certain.

There are numerous cases in the scripture where memorial names were given to altars or special spots. Jacob built an

altar and called the place "God of the house of God" (*El-Bethel*). See Gen. 35:7; 31:46-47; 22:14; 16:14; 29:18-19.

21. *What did Moses prophesy about Amalek?* (17:16)

Very literally translated, 17:16 says,

"For (because) a hand upon (or against) the throne of Jah;  
War for Jehovah with Amalek from generation, generation."

To us this seems to say simply that because the hand (or power) of Amalek was lifted against the throne of Yah, or Jehovah, Jehovah would have war with Amalek through every generation. The expression, "God's *throne*" implies His kingdom, which included His people Israel.

The verse is confessedly difficult, and anyone acquainted with it knows that there are several interpretations of it.

The first difficulty is this: Whose *hand* is referred to in the phrase "A *hand* upon the throne"?

(1) Is it *God's* hand upon the throne? Some understand it this way, and take the verse to mean, "Jah hath sworn (with his hand upon his throne), Jehovah will have war. . . ." As we take an oath with our hand upon a Bible, so Jehovah makes an oath with his hand upon his throne. To us this seems a poor interpretation. Jehovah can swear by nothing greater than Himself (Heb. 6:13). Why should it strengthen His oath to lay his hand upon his throne? Furthermore, we have no other examples of God's taking an oath in this manner.

(2) Is it the hand of *Israel* (or Moses)? This view would give the meaning that Israel lifted up its hand toward the throne of God in heaven, in cooperation with God's war against Amalek. This view is more acceptable. It does leave unanswered the question as to why there should be a shift between *Israel's* declaration in the first line of the prophecy, and *God's* declaration in the second line.

(3) Is it the hand of *Amalek*? We prefer this view. It makes clear why Jehovah decreed war against Amalek from generation to generation. (To adopt this view we must assume that the preposition *al* means *against*. This is a common meaning for it, as in Ezek. 5:8, although it usually means on, or upon, or above, etc.)



(4) Could the *hand* refer to the altar just built by Moses? The Hebrew word for hand (*yad*) also means *monument*. According to this view, the altar was a monument (or hand) to Jehovah's throne, or rule, which had been challenged by Amalek.

Another difficulty is in the word translated *throne* (Heb., *kes*). This is an unusual spelling for *throne*, which is usually *kise'*. Cassuto thinks that *kes* means a plan or reckoning, and thinks that it refers to the Lord's plan to blot out Amalek's memory. This interpretation makes the first part of the quotation difficult to understand.

Other interpreters propose altering the spelling of throne (*kes*) to the word for banner (*nes*), and thus making it refer back to the *banner* of the LORD mentioned in vs. 15. R.S.V. accepts this conjectural change, and translates the passage "A hand upon the banner of the LORD." We feel that the verse makes good sense without making changes in the Hebrew text that have no support in the ancient manuscripts.

Even the translators of the Greek O.T. seem to have had difficulty with Exodus 17:16. The Greek reads, "For with a *secret* hand the LORD wages war upon Amalek from generation to generation." There was surely nothing secret about the way the LORD fought with Amalek!

The general idea that the Lord was going to fight Amalek always is clear from the verse. The exact wording for a translation remains a problem.

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## THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**18** Now Je-thro, the priest of Mid-i-an, Mo-ses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Mo-ses, and for Is-ra-el his people, how that Je-ho-vah had brought Is-ra-el out of E-gypt.  
(2) And Je-thro, Mo-ses' father-in-law, took Zip-po-rah, Mo-ses'

wife, after he had sent her away, (3) and her two sons; of whom the name of the one was Ger-shom; for he said, I have been a sojourner in a foreign land: (4) and the name of the other was E-li-e-zer; for *he said*, The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pha-raoh. (5) And Je-thro, Mo-ses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife unto Mo-ses into the wilderness where he was encamped, at the mount of God: (6) and he said unto Mo-ses, I, thy father-in-law Je-thro, am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her. (7) And Mo-ses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent. (8) And Mo-ses told his father-in-law all that Je-ho-vah had done unto Pha-raoh and to the E-gyp-tians for Is-ra-el's sake, all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how Je-ho-vah delivered them. (9) And Je-thro rejoiced for all the goodness which Je-ho-vah had done to Is-ra-el, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the E-gyp- tians. (10) And Je-thro said, Blessed be Je-ho-vah, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the E-gyp-tians, and out of the hand of Pha-raoh; who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the E-gyp-tians. (11) Now I know that Je-ho-vah is greater than all gods; yea, in the thing wherein they dealt proudly against them. (12) And Je-thro, Mo-ses' father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God: and Aar-on came and all the elders of Is-ra-el, to eat bread with Mo-ses father-in-law before God.

(13) And it came to pass on the morrow, that Mo-ses sat to judge the people: and the people stood about Mo-ses from the morning unto the evening. (14) And when Mo-ses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand about thee from morning unto even? (15) And Mo-ses said unto his father-in-law, Because the people come unto me to inquire of God: (16) when they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between a man and his neighbor, and I make them know the statutes of God, and his laws. (17) And Mo-ses' father-in-law said unto him, The thing that thou doest

is not good. (18) Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for the thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. (19) Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God be with thee: be thou for the people to Godward, and bring thou the causes unto God: (20) and thou shalt teach them the statutes and the laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. (21) Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: (22) and let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge themselves: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear *the burden* with thee. (23) If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people also shall go to their place in peace. (24) So Mo-ses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said. (25) And Mo-ses chose able men out of all Is-ra-el, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. (26) And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Mo-ses, but every small matter they judged themselves. (27) And Mo-ses let his father-in-law depart; and he went his way into his own land.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER EIGHTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a topic or theme for Ex. 18.
2. What had Jethro heard about? (18:1)
3. Whom did Jethro bring with him when he came to Moses? (18:2-3)

4. What did the names of Moses' two sons mean? (18:3-4)
  5. What formalities began the meeting of Moses and Jethro? (18:5-7)
  6. What did Moses tell Jethro about? (18:8)
  7. What was Jethro's reaction to Moses' report? (18:9)
  8. What did Jethro learn about the LORD from Moses' report? (18:11)
  9. What priestly act did Jethro perform? (18:12)
  10. How long did the people stand around Moses? Why? (18:13)
  11. From whom did Moses get knowledge to make judgments? (18:15)
  12. What did Jethro advise Moses to do? (18:20, 22)
  13. Over what groups were judges and rulers to be appointed? (18:21, 25)
  14. Did Moses hearken to the advice of his father-in-law? (18:24)
  15. Who judged the small cases? (18:26)
  16. Where did Jethro go after the visit? (18:27)
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#### EXODUS EIGHTEEN: JETHRO'S VISIT AND JUDGES APPOINTED

- I. Jethro's Visit; 18:1-12, 27.
  1. His coming; 18:1-6.
  2. His conversation with Moses; 18:7-11.
  3. His worship; 18:12.
- II. Judges Appointed; 18:13-26.
  1. Moses' labor; 18:13-16.
  2. Jethro's advice; 18:17-23.
  3. Moses' compliance; 18:24-26; Deut. 1:9-18.

#### EXODUS EIGHTEEN: JETHRO, A GOOD MAN

1. Kept informed about God and His people; 18:1.
2. Recognized Moses' just claims to his wife and sons; 18:2.
3. Courteous; 18:5-6.

4. Rejoiced in others' blessings; 18:9.
5. Praised the Lord; 18:10.
6. Worshipped; 18:12.
7. Gave good advice; 18:19-22.
8. Recognized God's final and supreme authority; 18:23.

## GODLY FAMILIES (Ex. 18:1-12)

1. Keep informed about one another; 18:1.
2. Seek association with one another; 18:2-5.
3. Courteous; 18:6-7.
4. Converse on the things of God; 18:8.
5. Bring spiritual blessings to one another; 18:10-11.
6. Worship together; 18:12.

## THE FOLLY OF ONE-MAN RULE (18:13-23)

1. Overburdens one individual; 18:18.
  2. Delays justice; wears out the people; 18:18.
  3. Interferes with the most important work; 18:19-20. Acts 6:2, 4.
    - a. Going "Godward" for the people; 18:19.
    - b. Teaching statutes and laws; 18:20.
  4. Leaves many useful people unemployed; 18:21.
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## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1. *What is the subject matter of Exodus 18?*

It tells of the coming of Jethro with Moses' wife and sons to Moses (18:1-12). Then it tells of Jethro's suggestion to Moses that he appoint judges to help him govern the people. We entitle the chapter JETHRO AND THE JUDGES.

2. *What spiritual implications can we observe in chapter eighteen?*

We can see one of the fulfillments of God's promise to Abraham: "I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse" (Gen. 12:3). Jethro blessed the

LORD and His people Israel. As a result Jethro and his descendants received rich blessings after that.

We can also see the fulfillment of another part of God's promise to Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the *nations* of the earth *be blessed*" (Gen. 22:18). Jethro was a non-Israelite who was blessed because of his association with the "seed" (descendants) of Abraham.

Consider the *joy* which God brings to nations that are friendly to His people: "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people" (Deut. 32:43).

In the coming of Jethro to Moses there is a resemblance between Moses and the Lord Jesus. Many nations hated Moses and the Israelites (for example, the Amalekites). Many peoples hated Christ Jesus (Acts 4:26-27). But a few, like Jethro, came to Moses. Similarly a few people of other nations came to Jesus, "ill at ease in the old dispensation," seeking the things of God. See John 12:20-21; Matt. 2:1-2. Jethro was the first-fruits of many heathen who would later come seeking the living God.

### 3. *What had Jethro heard about?* (18:1)

He had heard about all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people. Jethro had kept informed of the progress and fortunes of Israel since they left Egypt. The news about Israel's deliverance from Egypt was widely known in all the nations around Egypt. See 15:14ff.

Regarding the name of Jethro and his office as priest, see the notes on 2:16-18; 3:1.

It is notable that Jethro had heard that the LORD (Jehovah) had brought Israel out. Even the word-of-mouth reports about Israel gave credit to Jehovah and not to Moses only. Apparently even Jehovah's name had become known.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Greek LXX translates both the Hebrew words *elohim* (God) and *Yahweh* (the LORD) in Ex. 18:1 as *kurios*, or Lord. This is an illustration of the frequent lack of consistency in the LXX renderings of the divine names. This creates problems for those who desire to divide up the Biblical text according to the "sources" they think they can detect on the basis of the use of different divine names.

The name *Jethro* and the title *father-in-law* give some interpreters a bit of trouble. There is only one Hebrew word (*hothen*) for both father-in-law and brother-in-law. This term is applied to Hobab in Judges 4:11, where it is translated *father-in-law* in King James and R.S.V., but *brother-in-law* in A.S.V. Since Hobab was the son of Reuel (or Jethro; Ex. 2:18; 3:1; Num. 10:29), we are sure that Hobab was Moses' wife's brother, Moses' brother-in-law.

4. *Whom did Jethro bring with him?* (18:2-4)

He brought Zipporah, Moses' wife, and her two sons, Gershom and Eliezer.

We last read of these in 4:24-26. Moses had sent them back to Midian after the difficulty at the inn. Some have felt that Moses sent them back from Egypt during the conflict with Pharaoh. There is, however, no hint that they were with Moses when he met Aaron at the mount of God, or any time after that. See 4:27. We feel that Zipporah and the sons returned to Midian shortly after the inn experience.

We admire Moses' self-restraint and faith in getting along without dissatisfaction on his part because of his separation from them. This separation had lasted no less than six months, and probably longer. (Mark 10:29-30)

Regarding the meanings of the names *Gershom*<sup>2</sup> and *Eliezer*,<sup>3</sup> see notes on 2:22.

John Davis wisely cautions that it is precarious to attempt to analyze the whole character and disposition of some Old Testament person on the basis of the etymology of his name alone. That is true; but sometimes the names do have significance which we ought to notice clearly.

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<sup>2</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 187, suggests that Gershom's name is derived from the verb *garash*, meaning to drive or thrust away. This is possible, but we still prefer the usual explanation, "a stranger there."

<sup>3</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 187, argues that Moses' use of the name *Eliezer* (a name containing *El* as the divine name) supports the view that the name *Yahweh* was unknown until Moses' vision (sic!) at the burning bush at Sinai! To assert this is to deny the historical accuracy of all the uses of the name *Yahweh* (Jehovah) in Genesis (as in Gen. 22:14).

It appears to us that Gershom was probably much older than Eliezer, having been born near the start of Moses' stay in Midian and Elizer near its end. This would make Zipporah a rather elderly mother at Eliezer's birth, perhaps sixty years old. All this is rather uncertain, however.

5. *Where did Jethro meet Moses?* (18:5)

He met him at the mount of God, at Rephidim. See 19:2. This location appears to have been very close to Sinai, in the Wady esh-Sheikh, perhaps within ten miles of Sinai. Probably Moses' camp was somewhat in advance of most of the Israelites' tents. See 19:1; 18:5.

The events at Rephidim - the water from the rock, the war with Amalek, and Jethro's visit - all occupied only fifteen days. See 16:1 and 19:1.

6. *How did Jethro greet Moses?* (18:6-7)

With all the ceremony and exuberance of an Arab greeting!

First, Jethro, as he came near to Moses' dwelling, sent word ahead: "I, thy father-in-law Jethro, am come unto thee. . . ." (The Greek and Samaritan Bibles render this, "Behold, thy father-in-law Jethro is come." This puts the announcement into the mouths of others, rather than from Jethro himself.)

Moses then went out to meet Jethro. Moses bowed before Jethro. (Compare Gen. 43:26, 28.) Then he kissed him (probably on both cheeks). (Compare Ex. 4:27.) They asked one another about their welfare. Arabs still make a big ceremony out of greetings. No business can be discussed until all the personal news has been inquired into. (We rather like this. People are more important than business anytime.) The word translated *welfare* ("they asked each other of their *welfare*") is the Hebrew *shalom*, or peace.

Moses respected Jethro for his wisdom as well as his age and for being his father-in-law. Such humility and respect for age is not popular in our times, but it is highly commended in the scriptures, and needs to be restored.

7. *What did Moses report to Jethro?* (18:8)



He reported all that JEHOVAH had done. He gave all the credit to Jehovah, which was surely the right thing to do. Notice that Moses used the divine name *Jehovah* (Yahweh) in reporting God's deeds for them. Note also that the text says God had done these things "for Israel's sake." Israel was God's son, His firstborn (4:23), His people (7:4). How gracious God had been to Israel on their journey in the face of Israel's almost-constant murmuring and disobedience! Moses also told Jethro of the travail and hardship they had endured on the way, and how Jehovah had delivered them from all of it. Compare Num. 20:14. Interestingly, the text does not suggest that Moses related to Jethro about the rebelliousness of the people,

8. *How did Jethro react to the news from Moses?* (18:9-10)

He rejoiced.<sup>4</sup> Then he blessed Jehovah for delivering the people. Compare I Kings 8:56.

Jethro was a good man. He could rejoice with them that rejoice. He had no jealousy or cynicism. He was a lover of good. He was glad to see how greatly his son-in-law had advanced from sheepherding!

The R.S.V. reading of 18:10-11 is an example of the numerous arbitrary renderings in that version that so impair the usefulness of the R.S.V. Old Testament. The last phrase of verse ten ("who hath delivered . . . from . . . Egyptians") is removed and placed in the middle of verse eleven. The King James and A.S.V. follow the Hebrew reading. The Greek reading omits the last clause of vs. 10, and in this the R.S.V. follows the Greek. But the insertion of the last phrase of verse ten into the middle of eleven has neither the support of the Greek nor the Hebrew Bible.

Cassuto<sup>5</sup> helpfully says that the three-fold use of the word *deliverance* in vss. nine and ten is intended for emphasis, and

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<sup>4</sup>The Greek Bible here reads "He was amazed" (or "shuddered"). This is based on a Jewish interpretation, which is recorded in a *Midrash* written in later centuries. See Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-216.

<sup>5</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 216.

that the omission of the last clause in the LXX, although accepted by many scholars, is only due to lack of understanding! We agree.

9. *What testimony about Jehovah did Jethro make? (18:11)*

Jethro said, "Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods, yea (He is greater even) in the thing wherein they (the gods) acted haughtily against them" (against the Israelites).

Jehovah excelled the gods of Egypt in the very thing in which their gods (and their worshippers) haughtily claimed superiority (such as the power to preserve their people). Jethro rightly perceived that the struggles among nations were conflicts of principalities and powers, conflicts between spiritual powers in high places.<sup>6</sup> Compare Ephesians 6:12; 3:10.

Jethro's declaration that he now recognizes Jehovah's great superiority is in conflict with the so-called Kenite theory, namely that Moses first learned of Jehovah as a God from the Midianites, or Kenites, of whom Jethro was one. Jethro learned about Jehovah from Moses and not Moses from Jethro. The Bible clearly indicates that Israel's forefathers had known Jehovah since the very beginning.

On the other hand we do not assume that Jethro did not at least know the name of Jehovah and a little bit about Him. The use of the word *now* in 18:11 contrasts present knowledge with former knowledge, not present knowledge with former total ignorance of Jehovah.

10. *What religious ceremony did Jethro perform? (18:12)*

He offered a burnt offering and sacrifices to God. After this Aaron and the elders came and ate bread with Jethro.

The fact that Aaron and the elders came stresses the validity of Jethro's priesthood. He was a legitimate priest before God, like Melchizedek.

The act of eating together shows that a bond of community and harmony was established between them and Jethro.

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<sup>6</sup>Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

Aaron had not actually met Jethro previously.

Jethro offered his sacrifices to *God (elohim)*. This is a very striking expression. In no other account of sacrifices in the book of the law (Gen. to Deut.) is a sacrifice offered to *God*; it is always to *Jehovah* (the LORD, Yahweh). Inasmuch as *Jehovah* is the covenant name which God used to designate Himself as the God of the chosen people, we suppose that the unique use of the term *God* here with reference to sacrifice was employed because Jethro was an alien. Despite his declaration about Jehovah's greatness, he had not yet attained to the covenant relationship with Yahweh that Israel had.

What were the sacrifices that Jethro offered like? We surely know very little about the sacrifices practiced before the time of the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai. Details of how the offerings were made and what was offered are not preserved for us. We read of offerings by Abel, Noah, Abraham, and others. From archaeological sources we know that even the pagan Canaanites (at Ugarit) in the time of Moses made offerings which had names like those made by the Israelites - peace offerings, trespass (or guilt) offerings, burnt offerings, etc.<sup>7</sup>

We do know this much: since the very beginning God has required *blood* sacrifices from His worshippers. Without shedding of blood there is no release from sins (Heb. 9:22). In our times we cannot be right with God without accepting the blood of His son Jesus as our covering (or atonement) for sins.

The expression "before God" in 18:12 does not imply that the tabernacle had yet been built and that this visit of Jethro occurred later and is out of chronological position, as numerous interpreters assert. Any sacrifice offered in genuine worship of God or in an act of seeking God's favor will be "before God."

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<sup>7</sup>Millar Burrows, *What Mean These Stones?* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1957), p. 234.

11. *What was the significance of Jethro's visit to Israel and Moses?*

Certainly it must have been very reassuring. Moses had had nothing but trouble and contention with Israel from the outset of their trip. There had been hunger, thirst, quarrelling, and attack by enemies. Jethro's friendly visit was surely a lift for their spirits.

Cassuto (a Jewish scholar) feels that the favor shown to Israel by Jethro was indicative of the wonderful destiny of the children of Israel, and of their election (God's choosing them) shortly to come up at Mt. Sinai. Cassuto entitles chapter eighteen "Israel welcomed as one of the nations of the world." To a degree he is correct in this. However, Israel's "welcome" was by NO means the unanimous sentiment of the surrounding nations!

12. *What did Jethro see Moses doing? (18:13-14)*

He saw him the next day spending all the day judging disputes between Israelites. The Israelites had said harsh things against Moses, but they sought him in times of disagreement among themselves.

It has been supposed that the division of the spoil of the Amalekites created numerous disagreement which demanded impartial decisions on the part of Moses. This may have been true, but we do not know for certain.

Note that the people *stood* before Moses, but he *sat*. These were customary positions for litigants and judges.

Probably the expression "from morning unto evening" should not be taken to mean every second of all that time.

13. *What did Moses make known to the people? (18:15-16)*

He made known unto them the will of God in cases of dispute. He taught them the statutes (ordinances) of God and His laws.

Moses was unique among prophets in that God spoke to him face to face (mouth to mouth). Num.12:7. The Lord knew Moses face to face (Deut. 34:10). If Moses did not know God's judgment on a matter, he would pray and then listen to what the Lord commanded about it. See Num. 9:6, 8.

The people seemed to accept Moses' judgments as God's, at least in their cooler moments.

At the foundation of this passage is the profound truth that all justice issues from God! Every judge, lawyer, and citizen needs to recognize this. Without God there is no real justice.

Of course, the statutes of God had not yet been issued in written form in the manner that they were soon written thereafter at Sinai (Ex. 21:1ff).

14. *Why was Moses' work as judge not good?* (18:17-18)

It was not good because he could not handle it all alone as he was trying to do. He was wearing himself out, and wearing the people out too, because they had to stand in line for long hours in the desert sunshine waiting for their cases to be heard.

Like many a Christian leader, Moses was wearing himself out by unnecessarily trying to do everything single-handedly. This is not always the sign of overambition. Sometimes it is the mark of the overconscientious and the overanxious.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, it was wearing out the people, a problem often overlooked. Delay in administering justice was one of the causes of Absalom's revolt against David (II Sam. 15:1-6).

We feel that Jethro's warning and his advice to Moses were good. Moses himself acknowledged that he could not "carry" all the people "because it is too burdensome for me" (Num. 11:14). Another time he asked, "How can I bear the load and burden of you?" (Deut. 1:12) Even our Lord once told His apostles to "Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest" (Mark 6:31).

15. *What responsibility was Moses to keep for himself?* (18:19-20, 22)

(1) He would be the representative of the people before God. No one else could do that job as Moses could. (2) He would bring their causes unto God by prayer. (3) He would teach them statutes and laws. (4) He would judge

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<sup>8</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

only the hardest cases that other judges could not decide. Moses, like the apostles later (Acts 6:2, 4), dared not neglect the most important jobs of prayer and of teaching.

Jethro recognized Moses' unique relationship with God. By this relationship Moses could come "before God," or "Godward."

Jethro's words "And God be with you" seem to be a polite way of urging Moses to do as Jethro proposed. But it also carries the idea of submission to God's will, if God would not confirm his advice. See 18:23.

For Moses to show them "the way" was quite literal in Israel's case. But metaphorically it meant the way of life. Compare Gen. 6:12.

16. *What were the qualifications for Israel's judges? (18:21-22)*

(1) *Able*, men. The word here translated "able" often means strength, usually physical. The Greek O.T. translates it *dunatos*, meaning strong, mighty, powerful. We suppose that the strength was more strength of character than of body. A judge must be tough-minded (but sometimes physically tough too!).

(2) *God-fearing*. (3) *Men of truth*. (4) Those *hating bribes*, unjust gain, or filthy lucre.

After the judges were selected, Moses gave them a marvelous charge. Read Deut. 1:16-17! Compare II Chron. 19:5-7.

17. *How many people did each judge handle? (18:22, 25)*

Some were over thousands, some hundreds, some fifties, some tens. Dividing these totals into Israel's population (600,000 men), we get about 78,600 judges!<sup>9</sup> This averaged out to about one judge in every family. Everyone in Israel was either involved as judge or was related to someone who was.

"At all seasons" (18:22) means "at all ordinary times."

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<sup>9</sup>Keil and Delitzsch and others argue that we need not assume the existence of many thousands of judges, because the judges were taken out of the heads of the tribes (Deut. 1:15), and these can hardly have amounted to many hundreds, to say nothing of many thousands. To this we can only ask, How can there have been judges over *tens* without using one-tenth of the total population?

Moses handled the most difficult cases.

18. *What would be the results of Moses' taking Jethro's advice?* (18:23)

(1) Moses would be able to endure his work load.

(2) The people of Israel would go to their place in peace. "Their place" was Canaan, of course. Jethro recognized this as the appointed and true home of Israel.

19. *When did Moses appoint all these judges?* (18:24-25)

Moses appointed them later, at Mt. Sinai. See Deut. 1:9-18. One gets the impression here in Ex. 18 that Moses at once appointed the judges. However, the text does not actually say that he did it that day. And upon a moment's reflection we realize that setting up a system of over 70,000 judges was not the work of a few minutes or even of a few days! We are not surprised therefore to find in Deut. 1:9-18 that the judges were appointed much later, near the end of their stay at Mt. Sinai of nearly a year.<sup>10</sup> We also learn that the people themselves selected their judges after Moses laid down the qualifications for them, an example later followed by the apostles (Acts 6:3). Moses probably did not even personally know very many of these judges.

This type of historical record, wherein related incidents are all fully presented in an unbroken section, even though that may mean getting ahead of the overall progress of a narrative, is not unusual in the Old Testament. One other example of this is the story of Caleb's inheriting Hebron. Compare Joshua 15:13-19 and Judges 1:1, 8-15.

Ex. 18:24 says "Moses hearkened" to Jethro. Meekness was a notable quality in Moses (Num. 12:3). Moses' willingness to obey God and to take good advice was part of his great strength of character.

20. *How did Jethro's visit end?* (18:27)

Moses let Jethro depart unto his own land, Midian. (See notes on Ex. 2:15 regarding the location of Midian.) We

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<sup>10</sup>The account in Numbers 11:10-16, 24-25 of Moses' appointing seventy elders to help him govern Israel has no connection with the event here.

suppose that Zipporah and the two sons stayed with Moses, though we read nothing more about their being with Moses. In the land of Canaan years later, we read of Moses' grandson (Gershom's son) Jonathan becoming an idolatrous priest. See Judges 18:30.

When Israel left Mt. Sinai, Moses requested Hobab, the son of Reuel (Jethro), to accompany them. See Num. 10: 29-32. The family of Hobab grew into the Kenite tribe dwelling among the Israelites. See Judges 1:16; 4:11, 17; I Sam. 15:6.

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**19** In the third month after the children of Is-ra-el were gone forth out of the land of E-gypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Si-nai. (2) And when they were departed from Reph-i-dim, and were come to the wilderness of Si-nai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Is-ra-el encamped before the mount. (3) And Mo-ses went up unto God, and Je-ho-vah called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Is-ra-el: (4) Ye have seen what I did unto the E-gyp-tians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. (5) Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: (6) and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Is-ra-el.

(7) And Mo-ses came and called for the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which Je-ho-vah commanded him. (8) And all the people answered together, and said, All that Je-ho-vah hath spoken we will do. And Mo-ses reported the words of the people unto Je-ho-vah. (9) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people



may hear when I speak with thee, and may also believe thee for ever. And Mo-ses told the words of the people unto Je-ho-vah. (10) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their garments, (11) and be ready against the third day; for the third day Je-ho-vah will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Si-nai. (12) And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: (13) no hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, he shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount. (14) And Mo-ses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their garments. (15) And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not near a woman.

(16) And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled. (17) And Mo-ses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. (18) And mount Si-nai, the whole of it, smoked, because Je-ho-vah descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. (19) And when the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder, Mo-ses spake, and God answered him by a voice. (20) And Je-ho-vah came down upon mount Si-nai, to the top of the mount: and Je-ho-vah called Mo-ses to the top of the mount; and Mo-ses went up. (21) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto Je-ho-vah to gaze, and many of them perish. (22) And let the priests also, that come near to Je-ho-vah, sanctify themselves, lest Je-ho-vah break forth upon them. (23) And Mo-ses said unto Je-ho-vah, The people cannot come up to mount Si-nai: for thou didst charge us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it. (24) And Je-ho-vah said unto him, Go, get thee down; and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aar-on

**with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto Je-ho-vah, lest he break forth upon them. (25) So Mo-ses went down unto the people, and told them.**

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**EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER NINETEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE**

1. After careful reading propose a short topic or theme for the chapter.
2. In what month did Israel come into the Wilderness of Sinai? (19:1)
3. On what day of the month did they arrive? (19:1)
4. Where did Israel make its camp? (19:2)
5. Where did Moses go from the camp? (19:3)
6. Why was Israel called the "house of Jacob"? (19:3; 1:1-7; Gen. 46:1-4)
7. How had Israel been borne along on their journey? (19:4; Deut. 32:11)
8. To whom had Israel been brought? (19:4)
9. What conditions did Israel have to fulfill to become God's people? (19:5)
10. What would Israel be unto God? (19:5-6)
11. What is a "kingdom of priests"? (19:6; Compare I Peter 2:9)
12. To whom did Moses first report God's words? (19:7)
13. What was the response of the people? (19:8)
14. Where did Moses go after hearing the people's acceptance? (19:8)
15. In what manner would God come to Moses and Israel? (19:9)
16. How would God's coming affect the status of Moses? (19:9)
17. What preparations were the people to make before God's revelation of Himself? (19:10, 14)
18. When was God coming down? Who would see God come down? (19:11)
19. What was to be built around the mount? (19:12)

20. What was to be the punishment for touching the mount? (19:12-13)
  21. How were mountain-touchers to be handled? (19:13)
  22. What was to be the signal for them to draw near the mountain? (19:13)
  23. What restriction was imposed upon the people before God came down? (19:15)
  24. What was the appearance and the sound on Mt. Sinai as God came down? (19:16, 18)
  25. What was the reaction of the people as God came down? (19:16)
  26. What did Moses do when the cloud came down? (19:17)
  27. What voice came from the mount? (19:19)
  28. What warning was given to Moses? (19:21) Why the repetition of the command? (See 19:12)
  29. What *priests* are referred to in 19:22?
  30. What protest did Moses make about God's warning concerning the people's breaking through? (19:23)
  31. Was the warning really needed? (19:24-25)
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EXODUS NINETEEN: ISRAEL READY FOR GOD'S COVENANT  
(ISRAEL AT THE DOOR OF NATIONHOOD)

1. The journey completed; 19:1-2.
  2. The divine offers; 19:3-6.
  3. The personal pledges; 19:7-8.
  4. The sanctifying preparations; 19:9-16.
  5. The descent of God; 19:16-25.
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THE LORD'S OFFER TO HIS PEOPLE (19:3-6)

I. BACKED UP BY GOD'S PAST ACTS: (19:3-4)

1. What I did to the Egyptians.
2. How I bore you on Eagles' wings.
3. How I brought you to myself.

II. CONDITIONED UPON OBEDIENCE: (19:5a)

1. Obey my voice.
2. Keep my covenant.

III. BRINGS RICH HONORS: (19:5b-6)

1. You will be my own possession.
  2. You will be a kingdom of priests.
  3. You will be a holy nation.
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SANCTIFIED TO MEET GOD (19:10-15)

1. Wash garments; (19:10; Rev. 7:14)
  2. Set bounds about the mount; (19:12)
  3. Abstinence; (19:15)
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WHEN GOD COMES DOWN!! (19:16-25; John 6:38; 3:13)

1. Nature demonstrates; (19:16-18; Matt. 8:27)
  2. God's men are summoned; (19:19-20; Mark 3:13-14)
  3. Men must keep their distance; (19:21-24; Acts 5:13)
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## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER NINETEEN

1. *What is in Exodus nineteen?*

The chapter tells of the things that occurred just before God gave the covenant of the ten commandments. We call the chapter **READY FOR GOD'S COVENANT**. The people were made ready by (1) their arrival at the destination, Mt. Sinai (19:1-2); (2) God's promise to take them as His own (19:3-6); (3) Their public promise to obey God (19:7-8); (4) The Lord's last-minute instructions (19:9-15); (5) The Lord's descent upon the mount (19:16-25).

The Greek version of Ex. 19:1 contains the word *exodos*, from which we get the name *Exodus*, meaning "going out."

2. *When did Israel arrive at Sinai?* (19:1)

They arrived in the third month after going forth from Egypt. Moses had kept a log book. See Num. 33:2. They had left Egypt on the fourteenth day of the first month (See 12:6, 51), and arrived in the third month. On the "same day" they came to the wilderness of Sinai. If this expression means "the first day of the month," their trip had taken about forty-five days. But the Hebrew simply says "in this day." It is by no means certain that this means Israel arrived at the desert of Sinai on the *first* day of the month. Later traditions affirmed that the giving of the law was fifty days after the Passover. We feel that this is about correct, but it cannot be proved from the text. Ex. 19:11 indicates that the Lord came upon Mt. Sinai on the third day after their arrival. These three days, plus about forty-five days for the journey, give a total of approximately fifty days.

God's promise to Moses about Israel's serving Him "in this mountain" (3:12) was fulfilled upon their arrival there.

3. *What place is the Wilderness of Sinai?* (19:1)

We think that the name refers here to the plain of Er-Rahah at the north edge of Mt. Sinai, at the foot of the peak Ras Safsafah. Ras Safsafah is 6540 feet high, and is part of an oval-shaped ridge with a second (and higher) peak - Jebel Musa, or the Mt. of Moses - at its south end. Jebel Musa is

7647 feet high.

The name Wilderness of Sinai is sometimes applied to the entire southern area of the Sinai peninsula covered by granite mountains. But here the term seems to be restricted to the area just beside Mt. Sinai.

There is a small plain at the south side of Jebel Musa called Wady es-Sebaiyeh. This has been often said to be the plain of Israel's encampment. But travellers in the area report it is only about 7000 feet long and four to six hundred feet broad; and its whole surface is covered with sharp rough stones. There is scarcely a good place for three tents to be pitched together; and its whole area is about 145 acres.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, a small hill lies between es-Sebaiyeh and Jebel Musa, so that there was no possibility of the people coming up to the Mount without a previous process of hard climbing or a long walk around. See Ex. 19:12, 21. Es-Sebaiyeh is in no wise fitted for a major camping ground.

On the other hand the plain er-Rahah on the north of Ras Safsafah comes up to the very foot of the mountain. It is two miles long and one-half broad, and slopes gradually down from the plateau to the north. The slopes of the enclosing mountains afford further space and seating for an almost unlimited multitude. The Wady (valley) Leja, which opens into er-Rahah on the west, is an extensive recess about a mile and a half long and three-fourths broad. This would add substantially to the camping ground.<sup>2</sup>

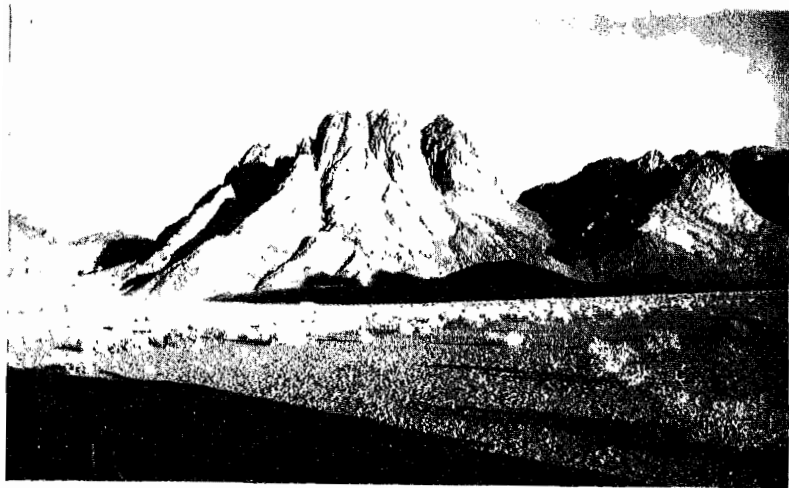
No other district in the premises affords such excellent pasturage as the immediate neighborhood of Mt. Sinai. There are four streams of running water there and several springs and cisterns.

4. *What place had Israel left just before reaching Sinai? (19:2)*

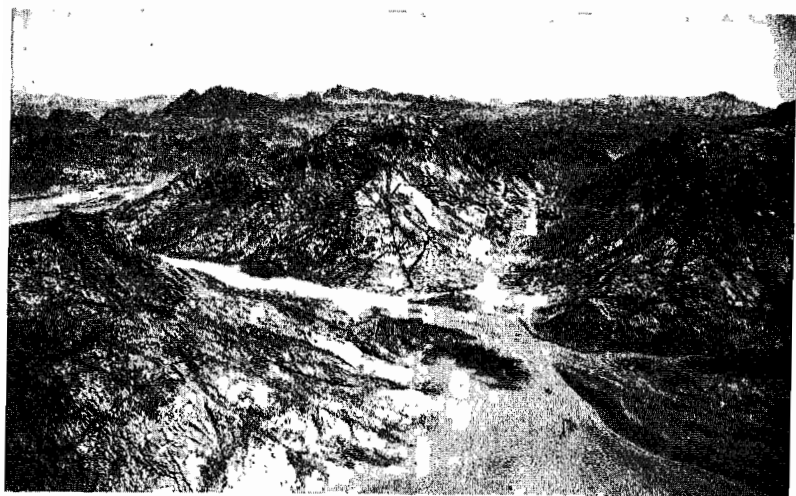
They had left Rephidim. Rephidim had been a place of several events—water from the rock, war with Amalek, Jethro's visit, a system of judges set up. Now they leave

<sup>1</sup>S. C. Bartlett, *From Egypt to Palestine* (New York: Harper, 1879), pp. 270-271.

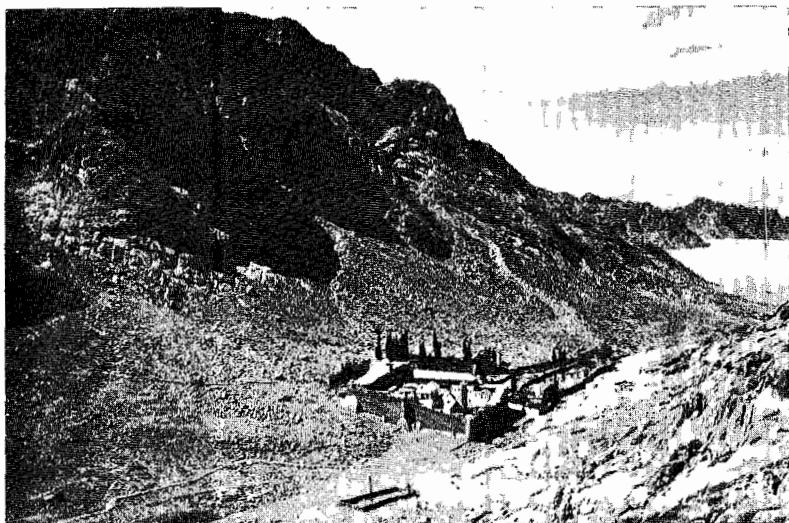
<sup>2</sup>Bartlett, *op. cit.*, p. 272.



Mt. Sinai. This view is SE across the plain of Er-Rahah. Mt. Sinai has two peaks (or summits). The peak in the foreground is Ras Safsafah. The other peak, Jebel Musa, lies behind Ras Safsafah, barely protruding at left of mount. Monastery of St. Catherine lies to left of mount. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



The Mt. Sinai ridge. View NW. Jebel Musa is in center of picture, and St. Catherine's monastery in the valley. Note rugged terrain of the wilderness of Sinai. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Monastery of St. Catherine in the valley east of Jebel Musa (mount of Moses). View NW. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Plain before Ras Safsafah (Mt. Sinai). Probably this flat area was part of the area where the Israelites gathered before Mt. Sinai when the ten commandments were given. The peak of Ras Safsafah lies to the left. This view is just to the right of the picture above. View NW. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Rephidim. It was not far from there to the "mount of God" (Sinai), probably only one day's journey of about ten miles. See 17:6; 18:5.

5. *From where did the LORD call Moses?* (19:3)

Jehovah called Moses from the mount. The text implies that Moses heard the voice of the LORD (Jehovah) as he was ascending the mount unto God. We are not told why Moses went up into the mountain. It probably seemed to be the obvious thing to do inasmuch as God had said, "Ye shall serve God upon this mountain." (3:12)

The expression "house of Jacob" is not found elsewhere in the Pentateuch, but it is very appropriate in the light of God's promises to Jacob (Gen. 46:4).

Note that Moses went up unto *God* (the general term for God as creator and ruler), but the *LORD* (Jehovah, or Yahweh) called unto him. *Jehovah* is God's covenant name, used when dealing with His people. We can almost always detect reasons for the use of the one name or the other.

6. *What had the Israelites seen God do?* (19:4)

Three things: (1) What He had done to the Egyptians; (2) How He bore them on eagles' wings; (3) How He brought them unto Himself!

The expression "upon the wings of eagles" is a figurative but vivid description of the strong and loving care of God. The mother eagle will fly beneath her newly feathered eaglet as it makes its first attempt to fly. The *eagle* may refer to the Palestinian vulture.

Deut. 32:11: "As an eagle that stirreth up her nest, that fluttereth over her young, He spread abroad his wings, he took them, and bare them on his pinions." The mother eagle will tear up her nest and thus force the eaglets to fly. In a similar way God had impelled Israel to leave Egypt. Then He protected them in their spiritual immaturity as they journeyed.

The reference in Ex. 19:4-5 to eagles' wings and the conditional nature of God's covenant reminds us of Deuteronomy, which stresses the same points. How consistent is

God's revelation through it all!

Note God's purpose in delivering Israel: He brought them unto Himself!

Ex. 19:3 begins a great block of divine teaching that stretches clear into Numbers ten.

7. *What did God want Israel to keep?* (19:5)

He wanted Israel to keep his COVENANT, and to become His own covenant people.

This word *covenant* refers to a formal arrangement of relationship between two parties. Covenants can be made between individuals or groups. A national constitution is a covenant. So also is a peace treaty, and a will (or testament).

The principle of *covenant* has always been the basis of God's dealings with his people. God made a covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:9), and with Abraham (Gen. 15:18), and others. Unless we grasp the idea of *covenant*, we simply will not understand Exodus.

The law which God gave through Moses to Israel is presented as a *covenant* (Ex. 24:7-8; 34:27). Exodus chapters nineteen through twenty-four tell of the giving of the covenant and its ordinances. Ex. 32-34 tell how the covenant was broken by making the golden calf and then how the covenant relationship was restored.

There are two main types of covenants:

(1) Parity covenants (or treaties), between parties of equal importance.

(2) Suzerainty treaties (covenants), by rulers for the subjects beneath them.

In the first type of covenant the contracting parties each agree to do certain things, and the covenant is in effect only if both parties keep their bargains. Abraham and Abimelech made such a covenant together (Gen. 21:27).

God's covenants are more like the second type of covenant. God as a ruler makes certain promises and then demands particular acts of obedience. The covenant is imposed by the superior upon the inferiors. Such covenants may be basically offers of grace to an undeserving people; God's covenants are

always such. A will, or testament, is a covenant of the second type because the blessings promised to the heirs after the death of the testator are offered solely upon the basis of the wishes of the testator.

Archaeologists have observed that the suzerainty treaties (covenants) made by ancient Hittite and other kings with their vassals follow the same general format and literary pattern as God's covenant with Israel.<sup>3</sup> These generally contain a preamble (like Ex. 19:3), a historical introduction (19:4), general principles for future conduct (19:5), specific stipulations (Ex. 20-23), divine witnesses (24:9-11), and curses and blessings (23:22-31).

The similarities between the treaties of men and the covenant of God prove very little, except that God has chosen to express His proposals in terms familiar to men; or that the essential features in any complete and logical covenant are similar.

The ancient covenants of human kings which have been preserved show a slight difference in form between those made in the second millenium B.C. (the time of Moses), and those made in the first millenium B.C. (after 1000 B.C.). The fact that the form of the Mosaic covenant more closely corresponds to the form of the covenants of the second millenium than to those of the first millenium supports our belief that the Exodus covenant was indeed written in the time of Moses, rather than by several unknown "sources" (J, E, D, P) living centuries later, as many critics allege.

K. A. Kitchen lists several differences between covenant forms of the first and second milleniums. (1) In late second millenium forms, as far as preserved, the divine witnesses *almost always* come between the stipulations and the curses, whereas in first millenium covenants, so far as known, they never do. (2) A historical prologue is typical of late second millenium covenants, but is unknown in our first millenium

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<sup>3</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 193. K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1966), pp. 90-96.

examples.

8. *What did God propose to make of Israel?* (19:5-6)

Three things: (1) Mine own possession; (2) A kingdom of priests; (3) A holy nation. All of these titles are now applied to the people of Christ's church (I Peter 2:9).

"Mine own possession" means my own special (or peculiar) treasure, one belonging privately to a king. The same expression is found in I Chron. 29:3; Deut. 7:6; Eccl. 2:8. How we guard and protect our treasures! Israel was very precious to God. The expression "mine own possession" sounds more partial than it really is. There was no thought of favoritism in God's choice of Israel (Deut. 7:6-8). Israel had not been called to privilege and rulership, but to being an example and rendering service.

God owns all the earth (Ex. 9:29). God could exalt any people by choosing them, but no people could exalt and elevate God. God is by nature supreme and ultimate. What man says or does cannot change God's power, glory, or authority. Man can neither cause God to be glorious nor diminish His glory. Thus for God to choose one people as HIS people was a great favor, one demanding a grateful response.

God's ownership of Israel has an exact parallel in the church. We are now a people for God's own possession (I Peter 2:9; Acts 20:28; I Cor. 6:20).

"A kingdom of priests" means more than merely a nation of priests governed by Jehovah. It implies that the people had kingly qualities as well as priestly qualities. This is evident by the fact that the Greek O.T. translates the phrase as a "royal priesthood," and the inspired apostle Peter adopted the Greek translation as the true meaning of the verse. See I Pet. 2:9. The Israelites were a *royal* people, who would devour the nations that were their adversaries and crush their bones in pieces (Num. 24:8; Deut. 33:29). Similarly, Christians have a *royal* as well as a priestly character. Christians shall have authority over the nations and rule them with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:26-27). They shall sit

down with Jesus upon His throne.

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

The "fly in the ointment" (Eccl. 10:1) in this glorious honor for Israel was that Israel was as sinful and as far from God as the nations to whom they were to be priests and light! (Rom. 2:19)

The same self-contradictory situation exists in the cases of worldly, covetous, lustful, disobedient, lukewarm "Christians" (?). While they may consider themselves as being the light of the world, the light that is in them is darkness.

Israel was to be a *holy* nation. The primary meaning of *holy* is not *separated*, but "to be pure, splendid, untarnished."<sup>4</sup> The meaning of *holy* is not to be weakened by saying that a thing is *holy* only insofar as it is the exclusive property of God. Sin opposes holiness, and the sinner resists sanctification. God intends that holiness shall prevail and the unholy be destroyed if they will not repent. Holiness means being like God! (Lev. 19:2; I John 3:3). That means more than belonging to an exclusive clique labelled *Holy* (or Private Property).

The concept of Israel's becoming a NATION looms large in Exodus. God had promised Abraham that He would make him to become a great NATION (Gen. 12:2). But when Israel left Egypt, they were hardly a nation! They were a band of escaped slaves without homeland, national constitution, an established system of government, judges, or priests. The story of how Israel became a NATION is really the grand theme of the book of Exodus. The events at Mt. Sinai brought Israel into nationhood.

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<sup>4</sup>C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, Vol. II in *The Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), pp. 99-100.

9. *How did Israel respond to God's covenant offer? (19:7-8)*

ALL the people answered TOGETHER, "All which Jehovah hath commanded we shall do." Their spontaneity and unity rejoice us, until we recall how quickly they forget their promises.

Israel's religion was openly presented by God. There were no secret doctrines to a favored class, no books of mysteries, but a divine offer to rich and poor, young and old, learned and unlearned. Though it could never be earned, it had to be personally accepted. It was not an imposed religion.

Note that the statement is made twice that Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD (19:8, 9). Probably there is a hint in this that Moses rejoiced to report their good words to the Lord. Maybe he felt that the people had finally been converted.

Regarding the *elders*, see 4:29-30.

The Hebrew *Jehovah* (Yahweh, LORD) in 19:7 is translated God (*theos*) in the Greek, instead of *Lord* (*kurios*) as usual. See footnote on p. 378.

10. *In what manner would God come unto Moses? (19:9)*

He would come in a thick cloud.

This verse makes quite plain the fact that God spoke primarily with Moses rather than with Israel. God said, "I come unto *thee* . . . that the people may hear when I speak with *thee*." God, of course, foreknew that the people could not long endure hearing His voice (20:19). Their sin was such that they were both incapable and unwilling to hear God's voice.

One major purpose of the miraculous display of cloud, smoke, etc. was to certify Moses unto the people as God's mediator, "that they may hear when I speak with thee and believe thee for ever." We still must accept Moses as God's spokesman of that time.

God's appearances are often associated with clouds and smoke. See Isaiah 6:1-4; 19:1; Num. 11:25; 1 Kings 8:10; Psalm 97:2; Rev. 1:7.

There is no way that anyone can *prove* that God came

down upon Mt. Sinai in a cloud and lightning and thunder and earthquake. This is a matter of faith. We accept this record because we have faith in Jesus, who said that the Old Testament was all true (John 10:35; Luke 16:17). We accept it because the fulfilled prophecies of the O.T. give us faith. We rejoice that we can live by faith in what God's word says.

11. *What preparations were to be made for Jehovah's coming down?* (19:10-11, 15)

The people were (1) to wash their garments, and (2) to abstain from sex relations, and (3) to set bounds, that is, a fence or barrier, around the foot of the mountain.

The washing of clothes before holy ceremonies was a fairly common practice in Bible times. Levites washed their clothes as part of their consecration (Num. 8:7). Those who touched the dead washed their garments (Num. 19:19). The reasons for washing of garments seem obvious: all nations have sensed the outward joys of cleanliness, and its symbolic resemblance to the cleansing of mind and heart. See Rev. 7:14.

"Sanctify" (or consecrate) means to separate, make holy, pure, and set apart for God's use.

"The third day" in 19:11 obviously meant two days after the day God spoke. This expression can illustrate the Jewish way of speaking of time, and is helpful in understanding the time meant when our Lord said He would rise on the "third day" (Matt. 16:21).

"Against the third day" means "for the third day" or "on the third day."

Abstinence from sex relations prior to God's descent upon Mt. Sinai does not indicate that this is evil or even questionable. Both the O.T. and the N.T. approve of sex relations of married people as good, necessary, protective, and enjoyable. See Prov. 5:18-20; I Cor. 7:2-5.

Nonetheless, as we sometimes fast from eating lawful food as a means of devoting our total energies and mind to God, so on some occasions sex relations are to be left off. See I Cor. 7:5. Thus it was at Mt. Sinai. In the same way David

was permitted to eat the showbread reserved for the priests "if the young men have kept themselves from women" (I Sam. 21:4-5). According to Lev. 15:18 a man was regarded as ceremonially unclean "until evening" after lying with a woman. Certainly no such uncleanness was to be present at the grand forthcoming appearance of God.

Note that Jehovah was to "come down" upon the mount in the sight of all the people. When a covenant is made, the parties must meet. Man cannot ascend to heaven.<sup>5</sup> This is the heart of the Biblical concept of revelation. God comes down to man. "No man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven," Jesus said of Himself in John 3:13.

Certainly it was a condescension on the part of God to localize His appearance at Mt. Sinai, seeing that He fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:23-24). But God has done this often for man's sake, even sending His own son into the world in human form.

12. *How were the people to be kept away from the mountain?* (19:12-13)

By two means: (1) A bound, or fence, was placed about the foot of the mountain; (2) Quick execution was threatened if they even touched the mount.

It was possible to set a boundary about the north end of Mt. Sinai because the rock mass of the mountain rises rather abruptly from the plain beside it.

The people were neither to go up into the mount or even to touch the edge of it while God was appearing upon it. Death by stoning or shooting with arrows was the penalty for this.

This command was quite terrifying to the people. "They could not endure that which was commanded, that if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart" (Heb. 12:20).

The reason for this stern restriction was very basic: Sinful

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<sup>5</sup>Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 123.



mankind cannot approach near God's presence, and God's presence was upon Mt. Sinai. Moses did not even dare come too close to God's presence at the burning bush (3:5). Flesh and blood, such as we are now, cannot inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 15:50). We should not seek explanations in some ancient concepts of taboo. It seems unfounded to offer explanations such as that because the mountain had become "holy," then anything that touched it became "holy" also; and that for living creatures this meant sacrifice and death.<sup>6</sup> If that were true, then carrying "holy" flesh (or meat) would endanger the bearer (Haggai 2:12), but it did not.

"Touch it" in King James version is better translated "touch him."

13. *What would the trumpet sound signal? (19:13)*

"When the trumpet (Heb. *yovel*, or ram's horn trumpet) sounds a long blast, they shall ascend to the mount." This is a difficult verse. We suppose that the "they" spoken of are the people, but that is not without question. Only Moses and Aaron went up (19:24). The close connection of this statement to the command about not coming onto or touching the mount makes it a surprising switch of thought.

Probably the verse merely refers to what is related in 19:17: At the blowing of the trumpet Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the lower part of the mountain.

The Greek O.T. reads, "When the voices and trumpets and the cloud departs from the mountain, they shall come up on the mount."<sup>7</sup> This meaning is very clear, maybe so clear as to be trite. However, there were probably numerous people who would feel that even after God's revelation of himself at the mount was completed, the mount was still too "holy" to climb up into. We could question whether that

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<sup>6</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>7</sup>We are always reluctant to adopt the Greek reading in preference to the Hebrew when they differ. However, in some cases the Greek reading is preferable. Thus in Romans 10:18 Paul quoted the Greek ("sound") of Psalm 19:5 rather than the Hebrew "line."

was a relevant issue at that particular point of time.

Regarding 19:14-15, see notes on 19:10-11.

14. *What happened when God descended upon the mount?* (19:16, 18)

There were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud, and the voice of a trumpet (Heb., *shofar*, a horn or cornet), and an earthquake.<sup>8</sup> The whole mountain smoked, for Jehovah descended upon it in fire (probably lightning; see II Kings 1:12). The smoke rose like smoke from a furnace (that is, a kiln or melting furnace). Compare Gen. 19:28 where Sodom and Gomorrah appeared burning with the same appearance. Deut. 5:4: "The Lord spake to you face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire."

Observe that it was morning when God descended on the mount.

The people trembled at this spectacle. What Israelite could doubt that God was there when he saw this display! God intended that His fear should be before their eyes (20:20). That surely took place.

This was no ordinary thunderstorm on Sinai. Thunderstorms are not uncommon there in winter; but the Israelites arrived in early June, when the season for these was past. Besides that, no thunderstorm was ever like the appearance of God's coming.

The awesome events at the giving of the law are referred to in Hebrews 12:18-19 as a contrast to the less spectacular and gentler giving of the gospel. The contrasting modes of giving the law and the gospel illustrate the contrasting characters of the law and the gospel. "Ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that no more word should be spoken unto them."

15. *Where did Moses assemble the people?* (19:17)

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<sup>8</sup>Ex. 19:8 says "The whole mount quaked greatly." The Greek and several Hebrew manuscripts read this "The people quaked greatly" (or "were exceedingly amazed").

Moses brought them to the lower (nether) part of the mount, but not where they could touch it. Their encampments surely extended out quite some distance (several miles) in front of the mount and in the adjoining valleys. But Moses directed them into a compact group.

16. *What signal called Moses to the top of the mount? (19:19-20)*

The voice, or sound, of a trumpet continued and waxed (grew) very strong. Then Moses spoke. We do not know what he said. Perhaps he asked the Lord what he should do. The Lord answered him with a voice. The Hebrew word for *voice* may also be translated *thunder*, as in Ex. 9:23 and I Sam. 12:17. But the voice (or thunder) was intelligible; and Jehovah called Moses to the top of the mount and Moses went up. Compare John 12:28-29.

The trumpet definitely appears to have been a supernatural trumpet of God rather than a trumpet of man. This trumpet will sound again at our Lord's second coming (I Thess. 4:16; I Cor. 15:52). The Hebrew word for trumpet here (as in 19:16) is *shofar*, not *yovel*, as in 19:13. However, *shofar* and *yovel* are used synonymously in Joshua 6:5, and probably are so used here also.

Neh. 9:13: "Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right ordinances, and true laws, good statutes, and commandments."

17. *Why is the command about keeping the people from the mountain repeated in 19:21-24?*

We think it was necessitated by man's perverse desire to look upon forbidden things and by God's determination to keep the people off the mountain. The command to keep off the mountain had indeed already been once given, and the barricade had been set up about the mountain (19:12). But just as Eve longed for the forbidden fruit, and the men of Beth-Shemesh looked into the ark of the covenant when they certainly knew better (I Sam. 6:19), so some Israelites on this occasion were thinking about taking a little peek beyond the fence.

Moses thought that everything was secure (19:23). But God had a deeper knowledge of what was in man than Moses did. Some were tempted with the plan to "break through" and "gaze" (19:21).

Unbelieving critics have taken aim at 19:21-25, declaring it to be a "secondary passage" from a different source, and unnecessary and repetitious. This attitude arises not from any concrete evidence that such sources ever existed, but from a lack of spiritual comprehension and meekness toward God's word.

18. *Who are the priests referred to in 19:22?*

Certainly they were not the sons of Aaron (Ex. 28:1), nor were they the firstborn of every family (Num. 3:12-13). The exact identity of these priests is not made clear. We can only say that they were the ones who had been discharging the duties of the priestly office according to rights and customs previously employed.

Ex. 24:5 tells of the *young men* of the sons of Israel offering burnt offerings and sacrificing young bulls and peace-offerings to the LORD. Perhaps they were the "priests" referred to in 19:22. Others suggest that the *elders* were the priests; or that the heads of families served in that function. See 19:7; 6:14.

The repetition of the command for all the people, priests included, to stay off the mountain shows their unholiness. Like the people the priests were to "sanctify themselves." Compare 19:10. They were NOT exempt from the commands of God to all the other people. Nor were they too holy to yield to the temptations that attracted other people.

19. *Who was to accompany Moses back up on the mount? (19:24-25)*

Aaron was to go with him. Aaron did not go up the mount until after Moses himself had received the laws of Ex. 21-23. See 20:21. Then God called Moses to come up with Aaron, and Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu, and seventy

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<sup>9</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

elders (24:1). But even then these were to worship afar off, and only Moses came near to Jehovah (24:2).

Exodus 19:25 ends rather abruptly. The words of Moses to the people are not recorded, but they surely consisted of God's repeated warning in 19:21.

As we come to the end of chapter nineteen, we should be in eager expectancy. All things are ready for the declaration of the covenant of the law. The awesome appearance at the mount shows the greatness of the occasion. The miracles of the deliverance from Egypt and the wilderness journey all point toward this great moment. We shall not be disappointed as we proceed into chapter twenty!

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**20** And God spake all these words, saying,  
(2) I am Je-ho-vah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of E-gypt, out of the house of bondage.

(3) Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

(4) Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of *any thing* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: (5) thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Je-ho-vah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me, (6) and showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

(7) Thou shalt not take the name of Je-ho-vah thy God in vain; for Je-ho-vah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

(8) Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. (9) Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; (10) but the seventh day is

a sabbath unto Je-ho-vah thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: (11) for in six days Je-ho-vah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Je-ho-vah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

(12) Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Je-ho-vah thy God giveth thee.

(13) Thou shalt not kill.

(14) Thou shalt not commit adultery.

(15) Thou shalt not steal.

(16) Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

(17) Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

(18) And all the people perceived the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they trembled, and stood afar off. (19) And they said unto Mo-ses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. (20) And Mo-ses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before you, that ye sin not. (21) And the people stood afar off, and Mo-ses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

(22) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Is-ra-el, Ye yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. (23) Ye shall not make *other gods* with me; gods of silver, or gods of gold, ye shall not make unto you. (24) An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt-offerings, and thy peace-offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in every place where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee. (25) And if thou make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stones; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. (26) Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not uncovered thereon.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. What did God, as He began the ten commandments, remind Israel that He had done for them? (20:2)
2. Does "before me" in 20:3 indicate that other gods really exist?
3. What does *graven* mean in "graven image"? (20:4). Compare "molten image" in Deut. 27:15.
4. What is the "water under the earth" in 20:4? Compare Deut. 4:18.
5. What acts involving idols are forbidden? (20:5)
6. Of what is God jealous? (20:5; Compare Ex. 34:14; Ezek. 39:25)
7. Why should God punish the third and fourth generations? Can you give any example of God's doing this? (20:5; Compare Deut. 24:16; Ezek. 18:20)
8. To whom does God promise great mercy (lovingkindness)? (20:6)
9. What does "in vain" mean? (20:7; Compare Lev. 19:12; Ps. 60:11; Prov. 30:8)
10. What day of the week is the Sabbath day? (20:8-10)
11. How was the Sabbath to be kept? (20:8)
12. What was forbidden on the Sabbath days? (20:9-10)
13. What reason is given for not working on the Sabbath? (20:11) What reason is given in Deut. 5:15?
14. What reason is given for honoring father and mother? (20:12)
15. What does honoring father and mother involve? (20:12; Compare I Tim. 5:4; Matt. 15:3-6; Eph. 6:1-3)
16. Does "not kill" forbid only murder, or all killing? (20:13; Num. 35:16, 22-24; I John 3:15)
17. What was the penalty for adultery? (Lev. 20:10)
18. How did Christ modify the command against adultery? (Matt. 5:27-32)
19. Is the command against bearing false witness limited to courtroom statements, or is it applicable in other situations?

- (20:16; Matt. 5:33-37; Eph. 4:25)
20. What does *covet* mean? (20:17)
  21. What items are named that are not to be coveted? (20:17)
  22. What did the Israelites see that frightened them? (20:18). Where did the Israelites move to?
  23. Whom did the people ask to speak to God? (20:19)
  24. For what three purposes did God come unto Israel, according to 20:20?
  25. Where was God as Moses drew near to Him? (20:21; Compare Jer. 23:23-24.)
  26. Who had talked with Israel from heaven? (20:22; Compare Deut. 4:33, 36; 5:24)
  27. Of what materials specifically were idols not to be made? (20:23; Compare Ex. 32:2-4)
  28. Of what were altars to be made? (20:24-25)
  29. At what places only would God come and bless them when they offered sacrifices? (20:24)
  30. What prohibition was given about stones used in making altars? (20:25)
  31. By what means was an altar not to be approached? (20:26) Why not?
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### EXODUS TWENTY: THE TEN WORDS (COMMANDMENTS)

1. The ten commandments given; 20:1-17.
  2. The people's fear; 20:18-21.
  3. Instructions about worship; 20:22-26.
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### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, A PROTECTION

1. First commandment: Protection from false gods; 20:2-3.
2. Protection from false worship; 20:4-6.



3. Protection from misusing God's name; 20:7.
4. Protection of rest and the remembrance of creation; 20:8-11.
5. Protection of parents; 20:12.
6. Protection of human life; 20:13.
7. Protection of marriage; 20:14.
8. Protection of property; 20:15.
9. Protection of truth; 20:16.
10. Protection from evil desires; 20:17

(Adapted from John Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*  
[Grand Rapids; Baker, 1971], pp. 200-210)

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#### THE TEACHING OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AS GIVEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. No other gods. I Cor. 8:5-6; Acts 14:15; Matt. 22:36-37; I Tim. 2:5.
  2. No graven image. I John 5:21; Acts 15:20, 29; I Cor. 5:10, 11; Rev. 2:14.
  3. Name not in vain. James 5:12; Matt. 12:36; Rev. 13:6.
  4. Sabbath. Heb. 4:9; Col. 2:16; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10.
  5. Honor parents. Eph. 6:1-3; Matt. 15:4-6; I Tim. 5:3-4.
  6. Kill. Matt. 5:21-22; Rom. 13:19; I John 3:15.
  7. Adultery. Matt. 5:27-28; I Cor. 6:9, 18; Heb. 13:4.
  8. Steal. Eph. 4:28; Titus 2:10; Rom. 12:17.
  9. False witness. Matt. 5:33-34; Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:25.
  10. Covet. Eph. 5:3, 5; Luke 12:15, 16-21; Rom. 13:9; I Cor. 5:10.
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#### GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF (20:18-20)

1. Is plain and obvious; 20:18.
2. Comes in striking display; 20:18.

3. Brings fear; 20:18-19.
  4. Creates desire for a mediator; 20:19.
  5. Tests his people; 20:20.
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#### WHY GOD COMES TO US (20:20)

1. To *prove* (test) us.
  2. To put *fear* into us. (Prov. 16:6)
  3. That we *sin not*.
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#### MEN'S RESPONSES TO GOD'S REVELATION (20:18-19)

1. Fear; 20:18.
  2. Request for a mediator; 20:19.
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#### GOD'S VOICE, BUT NOT A FORM! (Ex. 20:22-23; Deut. 4:12, 15)

1. No form seen; 20:22.
  2. No forms to be made; 20:23.
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#### THE ALTAR OF GOD (20:24-26)

1. Made of simple materials; 20:24.
2. Used only for God's specified offerings; 20:24.
3. Used only where God designated; 20:24.

4. Made of unadorned materials; 20:25.
  5. Approached with modesty; 20:26.
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#### PUBLIC WORSHIP (20:24-26)

1. Offered in simplicity. 20:24.
  2. Offered only with commanded sacrifices; 20:24.  
(For us this is CHRIST.)
  3. Offered only where God designated. 20:24.
  4. Offered without men's adornment; 20:25.
  5. Offered in decency; 20:26.
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#### SPECIAL STUDY: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. *Where do we find the ten commandments in the Bible?*  
We find them in Exodus chapter twenty and Deuteronomy chapter five. (Please memorize this and do not ever forget it!)
2. *How significant are the ten commandments?*
  - a. They are recognized as the basis of all public morality in the Western world. Their influence is too great for calculation. Probably our society could not survive without these simple comprehensive regulations.
  - b. They are a *unique* thing in all the religious teachings of the world. They are without any real parallels.  
They are unique in their teaching that it is impossible to separate morality from religion.  
They are unique in making duties to mankind on a par with duties to God.  
They are unique in the awe-inspiring manner in which they were delivered.  
They are unique in both their comprehensiveness and

their conciseness.

3. *How does the world feel about the ten commandments?*

Most people will say, "Oh, the ten commandments are great!" But in their hearts they really do not like some of the commandments. The philosopher Will Durant said, "The world has never quite come to terms with the ten commandments." This is not surprising. The apostle Paul in Romans 8:7 declared, "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be."

4. *What are the names that are given to the ten commandments?*

We believe in using Bible names for Bible things. We believe also that names tell us very much about the character and function of the things that are named. What are the names?

- a. The *ten words* (or commandments). (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 10:4). This is the Biblical name for them. The term *words* does not refer to single words, but to utterances, or sayings. We use the term *word* with the same signification in such statements as "Bring me word."
- b. The name *Decalogue* is a good title for the ten commandments. It comes from the Greek words *deka* (meaning ten) and *logos* (meaning word). It is first found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160-210), and was commonly used by the church "fathers" who followed him.
- c. "The words of the covenant" (Ex. 34:28)
- d. "The tables of the covenant" (Deut. 9:9)
- e. "The covenant" (Deut. 4:13)
- f. "The two tables" (Deut. 9:10-17)
- g. "The testimony" (a very common name for them; Ex. 16:34; 25:16)
- h. "The tablets of the testimony" (Ex. 31:18)
- i. "The commandments" (Matt. 19:17)

5. *How are the ten commandments to be divided?*

The scripture does not set forth any division of the ten commandments, either as to which commandment is number

one, two, . . . ten; or as to how the commandments were divided up and arranged on the original stone tablets.

We do know that there were TEN commandments, but opinions differ as to how these are divided.

a. *Which commandments are to be numbered one, two, etc.?*

- (1) Most Protestants and the ancient Jewish authorities Philo and Josephus treat 20:3 as the first commandment, 20:4-6 as the second, and thus on to 20:17 as the tenth. We prefer this arrangement.
- (2) Jewish scholars regard Ex. 20:2 as the first commandment. Then 20:3-6 is treated as the second commandment. The remainder are divided up as most Protestants do, with all of 20:17 being the tenth commandment.
- (3) Roman Catholic and Lutheran theologians treat 20:3-6 as the first commandment; 20:7 as the second, and thus on to 20:17, which is divided into two commandments, the ninth and tenth. The ninth is "Thou shalt not covet they neighbors' house," and the tenth is "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." Most non-Catholics suspect that this method of dividing the commandments was made to deemphasize the commandment against image-making. When stated as a separate command, the law against image-making seems somewhat more definite than it does as part of the commandment about having no other gods.

As for dividing the commandment against coveting into two commandments, the form of the commandments in Deut. 5:21 argues against this. There the order of the two primary objects of coveting (house and wife) is reversed from that in Exodus. Also a synonym for *covet* (*desire*) is used instead of *covet* in one of the statements. This seems to us to weaken the probability that there are two commandments there.

b. *How were the ten commandments arranged and divided on the original stone tablets?*

The undeniable truth is that we do not know. Some have

proposed that five were on one slab and five on the other. This arrangement would have placed 137 words on the first tablet and only 26 on the second. Others have suggested that the first three laws were on the first tablet and the last seven were on the second. This arrangement would come as near to equalizing the writing on each slab as could be done, and still allow the first tablet to end at the bottom with a completed commandment.

Others have proposed that the first tablet had the first four commandments, which concern men's duties to God; and the second tablet had the last six, which involve men's duties to men. To this we can only say "Maybe so." This arrangement would place 122 words on the first tablet and 41 on the second.

We see no reason for assuming that the first tablet had to end its writing at a division between commandments. Many ancient tablets ended in mid-sentence, and then the writing continued on the next tablet.

6. *What is the relation of the Decalogue to the rest of the laws in Exodus?*

The law of Moses (the Torah) makes no clear line of separation between the ten commandments and the laws in the chapters that follow it. All alike disclose the will of God.

Admittedly the ten commandments stand out most prominently among the precepts of the Torah because of the awe-inspiring manner in which they were given and because of their fundamental and far-reaching importance. Only the ten commandments were placed in the ark of the covenant (Ex. 40:20). The conciseness and comprehensiveness of the Decalogue are unique in all the world's literature.

Nonetheless, there is still no clear demarcation between the authority and permanence of the Decalogue and that of the other laws of Moses. The Decalogue is called the *covenant* in Ex. 34:28, but the other laws also constitute the "book of the *covenant*" (24:7). While the Decalogue was kept *IN* the ark, the other laws were kept *BY* the side of the ark of the covenant (Deut. 31:26).

The two greatest commandments of all are not even included among the ten commandments. See Matt. 22:37-40; Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18.

Interpreters have sometimes tried to maintain that the ten commandments are the permanent MORAL law, and that this was not done away with as were the CEREMONIAL laws when Christ died on the cross. This is simply not a valid division of the law. There are many MORAL laws outside of the ten commandments. See Ex. 23:1-3 for example. Also the Sabbath law in the ten commandments has a partly CEREMONIAL character. Furthermore, in God's laws, ceremonial laws often have distinctly moral character about them. Note Ex. 23:10-12. The law is simply not divisible into distinct categories. The law is a unit, and the ten commandments, in spite of all their distinctive features, are an integral part of the larger undivided LAW given in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

7. *How do the ten commandments differ in Exodus from the form given in Deuteronomy?*

- (1) The fourth commandment (about the Sabbath) is different in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy says (in 5:12) to *keep* (or observe) the Sabbath, rather than to *remember* it, as in Ex. 20:8. Deut. 5:12 adds "as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee." Deut. 5:14 adds "your ox or your ass" and "that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou." Deut. 5:15 says that the Sabbath is to be observed in memory of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, rather than because Jehovah made heaven and earth in six days and rested the seventh day (Ex. 20:11).
- (2) In the fifth commandment (Deut. 5:16), the words "that it may go well with thee" are added. Also Deuteronomy has the words "as the LORD thy God commanded thee" added.
- (3) In Deut. 5:18-21 the last four commandments are all introduced by "and" (sometimes translated "neither").
- (4) The tenth commandment (about coveting) is

considerably different in Deuteronomy 5:21 from Ex. 20:17. Deuteronomy reverses the order of "wife" and "house." Deut. adds "field." Deut. also uses "desire" as a synonym for *covet* at the second occurrence of the word *covet*.

8. *How shall we account for the differences between the form of the ten commandments in Exodus and in Deuteronomy?*

Probably it is to be accounted for by the fact that in Deuteronomy Moses was citing somewhat extemporaneously God's words that had been given at Mt. Sinai. Often in such cases the very words themselves are not cited, but certain variations and changes are introduced.

The version in Exodus twenty is said to have been written by the very finger of God (Ex. 31:18). We accept this as true and therefore regard the commandments there as being the exact original wording.

When Moses repeated the law nearly forty years later in the Plains of Moab (as given in Deuteronomy), he enlarged upon many parts of it and paraphrased it somewhat. For an illustration, compare the laws about the Hebrew slave in Ex. 21:1-6 and Deut. 15:12-18. Compare also the laws about the Feast of Weeks in Ex. 23:16 and Deut. 16:9-12. Compare also Ex. 20:24-26 and Deut. 27:5-8. We should not be surprised to find some minor variations between the ten commandments as given in Exodus and in Deuteronomy.

This does NOT imply that the Deuteronomy version of the ten commandments is inferior, or represents only Moses' own imperfect memory of them or his own personal interpretation of the Exodus twenty commandments! Jehovah spoke through Moses at the Plain of Moab just as certainly as He spoke on Mt. Sinai. See Num. 36:13; Deut. 29:1. God allowed Moses or caused Moses to speak some new words in Deuteronomy five. But the ideas are unchanged, or are merely enlarged upon. There is no conflict of truth between Exodus and Deuteronomy.

Cassuto (*op. cit.*, pp. 250-251) calls attention to the fact that the two laws which differ most in Deuteronomy from



Exodus (the laws on obeying parents and the sabbath law) both insert in Deuteronomy the words "as Jehovah thy God commanded thee." Thus Moses alluded to the fact that although the commandments were expressed one way in Deuteronomy, he was not quoting their precise words.

9. *Were the ten commandments given at first in the words in which we now have them?*

It is a popular opinion that the ten commandments as originally given were all brief, succinct, one-line commandments. Supposedly the enlargements and explanations given with some of the commandments (like those in the commandments about graven images, the sabbath day, and coveting) were added later.

We do not feel that this is a correct opinion. The text says of itself that God spake ALL these words (20:1). When Moses repeated the ten commandments in Deuteronomy 5, he declared that "These words Jehovah spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire." Moses referred to the ten commandments in the form in which we now have them.

Also we feel that the idea that the commandments were originally all brief one-line assertions rests upon a basic misunderstanding of the commandments that are somewhat elaborated. The commandments that are elaborated (the ones about graven images, sabbath day, coveting, etc.) are the very ones which expressed NEW religious ideas. Laws about stealing or killing were familiar. But the ideas of a God who must not be represented in any material form, and of a regular day of rest to commemorate the rest of God after creation, and of a law against *desiring* other people's possessions - these were new and revolutionary ideas which required some elaboration, even in the concise presentation the ten commandments make. Compare Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-237.

10. *Are Christians under the ten commandments?*

To this vital question we must give a paradoxical answer: Yes and No.

To the Christian the law is *holy* and *righteous* and *good* (Rom. 7:12-13). We do not nullify the law through faith. God forbid! Rather, we *establish* the law (Rom. 3:31). Christ came not to destroy the law, but to *fulfill* it (Matt. 5:17). He came "that the ordinance (or requirement) of the law might be *fulfilled* in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (Rom. 8:4). We *delight* in the law of God in our inward man (Rom. 8:22). We can speak with all the intensity of King David: "Oh how I *love* thy law! It is my meditation all the day!" (Ps. 119:97). The scriptures of the O.T. law are "able to make us wise unto salvation" (II Tim. 3:15). We could never praise God's law enough!

In spite of the preceding sincere praise of the ten commandments and the other laws of Moses, we must declare categorically that **WE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW**, including the ten commandments. Romans 6:15: "We are not under the law but under grace."

Please consider the following argument carefully:

- (1) Ex. 34:28 and Deut. 9:9 specifically refer to the ten commandments as being the *covenant*.
- (2) Jer. 31:31-32 prophesied that God would make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel, not like the covenant he made when he brought them out of Egypt.
- (3) Heb. 8:6-13 declares that Christ is now the mediator of a *new* and better *covenant*, and contrasts this new covenant with the very one God made when He led Israel out of Egypt. In II Cor. 3:6 Paul declared that he was a minister of a *new covenant*, not of a covenant written on stones (and only the ten commandments were written on stones).

When the present United States were colonies of Great Britain, the Continental Congress enacted laws against various crimes. Our present laws include ordinances against some of the same crimes. Does this mean that we are still under the laws of the Continental Congress because some of our present laws have provisions like those of the Continental Congress? Similarly, although numerous laws in the old