

covenant are repeated in the new covenant, that does not mean we are under the old covenant. Our Christian laws get their authority from being in the new covenant, whether they were in the old covenant or not.

As a matter of fact, nine of the ten commandments are repeated in the New Testament in one form or another. Only the Sabbath law is not repeated. So, as a matter of fact, we are under most of the ten commandments, not because we are legally under the covenant that included the ten commandments, but because the new covenant includes most of these commandments.

When the apostles and elders held the big conference in Jerusalem to determine whether Gentile Christians had to keep the customs of Moses or not (Acts 15:1, 5), their decision (which was reached by the guidance of the Holy Spirit [Acts 15:28; Gal. 2:2]) was that the Gentiles did not have to keep any of the laws of Moses except to avoid idolatry, and fornication, and things strangled, and eating blood (Acts 15:20). Not a word was uttered about keeping Sabbath days, or diet laws, or feast days, or sacrifices, or circumcision.

Failure to understand these things will cause us to seek to return to the law of Moses, which is a ministration of death (II Cor. 3:7), a ministration of condemnation (II Cor. 3:9). The law of Moses passes away (II Cor. 3:11). It brings us under a curse (Gal. 3:10). It causes us to be cut off from Christ (Gal. 5:4). It was only a shadow of things to come (Col. 2:17; Heb. 10:1). Let us hold on to Christ, and in so doing we shall fulfill the law.

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY

1. *Who uttered the ten commandments?* (20:1)

God (Heb., *Elohim*, God, the powerful creator, God of nature, and God of all nations) spoke all these words, saying "I am *Jehovah* (Yahweh, the LORD) thy God." Yahweh is

the covenant name of God as God of Israel. See Ex. 3:13-15.

Note how the Bible text links GOD to the WORDS which were spoken. Deut. 5:22: "These words Jehovah spake unto all your assembly in the mount."

2. *Were the words of the law given by angels?*

Acts 7:53: "Ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels, . . ." Gal. 3:19: (The law was) "ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator." Heb. 2:2: "If the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, . . ." Deut. 33:2: "Jehovah came from Sinai, . . . And he came from the ten thousands of holy ones." ("Holy ones" frequently refers to angels.)

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

3. *What was the purpose of God's declaration of Himself in 20:2?*

It would seem that God declared His great acts to cause the Israelites to pay strict attention to the great words He was about to say.

Although God had brought Israel out of Egypt, that did not mean that they had no responsibilities to Him. Far from it! Redemption introduces new motivations and responsibilities upon us.

Exodus 20:2 starts with an emphatic *I* in the Hebrew.

The LORD had declared many times in earlier chapters that the people would know that He was Jehovah! (6:7). Surely by now that name had become extremely meaningful to Israel.

Jewish scholars usually regard 20:2 as the first commandment of the ten. However, the eminent Jewish commentator Cassuto¹ says (correctly we feel) that verse two is not a

¹U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), p. 241.

command, but only a proclamation introducing the speaker. Nevertheless, the Jewish designation of 20:2 as the first commandment does emphasize the truth that we cannot have the moral values of the ten commandments without having faith in the LORD who gave the commandments.

4. What does "before me" mean in "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"? (20:3)

Literally it reads "before my face" or "near my face." Since God's face (or presence) is everywhere (Jer. 23:23), to have no other gods "before me" actually means to recognize no other gods at all.

In Hebrew "before me" is *al panay*. Very similar Hebrew expressions are found in Gen. 11:28 ("Haran died *before the face* of his father Terah."); also in Job 1:11 ("He will renounce thee *to thy face*."); also Ezek. 40:15 ("And *from the front* of the gate. . ."); and Ex. 18:13 ("the people stood *before* Moses."). These passages illustrate the meaning of "before me."

The expression may also imply "against me" or "in opposition to me." The Heb. preposition *al* has this meaning in Ezek. 5:8 and Ps. 3:1. It could also mean "in addition to me." This meaning is implied by the preposition *al* in Gen. 31:50. The Greek O.T. translates it "besides me." (The Greek preposition is *plen*, meaning besides, except, or save.)

The verse clearly teaches that God did not tolerate recognition of any god except Him. Israel was to practice a genuine monotheism. The "liberal" view of this verse is that the command does not state that only one God exists, but rather that the LORD was supreme among the gods of the ancient Near East; and that only in the later centuries did Israel affirm that only the Lord existed (as in Isa. 45:5; 46:1).² It surely appears to us that Ex. 20:2 teaches a pure and exclusive monotheism.

The fact that Israel worshipped other "gods" in later centuries (Joshua 24:15) does not prove that a commandment against such practices had not been given. Note Judges 17:4.

²Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 411.

The expression "Thou shalt have" (literally, "There shall not be to thee") has a singular verb, although its subject ("other gods") is plural. This appears to forbid acceptance of all other gods as a collective body of nonentities.

When Israel remained true to the one exclusive God, she was victorious and united. When she forsook the LORD, she was defeated and fragmented. (Judges 2:11-15; Chs. 17, 18)

5. *What are "graven" images? (20:4-5)*

A graven image is a carved image of wood, stone or such material. (Our word *engrave* is from the same root.) Compare Judges 17:3; II Kings 21:7. Cast (or molten) images were also forbidden (Ex. 34:17).

A "likeness" is a form seen by man, rather than an image made by man.³ (Num. 12:8; Deut. 4:12, 15ff; Job 4:16; Ps. 17:15). In 20:4 "likeness" refers to a statue or painting of anything they may have seen.

The command forbidding the making of any graven images was in total opposition to the religious practices of all the world at that time. It is little wonder that God elaborated upon this commandment (in 20:4-6) more than He did upon obvious commandments, such as "Kill not." (The two commandments that are lengthily elaborated - the graven image and Sabbath commandments - are the very ones that deal with completely new religious ideas, and therefore needed a more thorough presentation.)

Israel was not forbidden to make all statues or paintings. They were just forbidden to make such things "unto thee," that is, as objects of worship. God Himself commanded them to make golden cherubim (angel figurines) upon the ark of the covenant. Presumably these were made by an "engraver" (Ex. 38:23). Also in Solomon's temple there were decorations of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers (I Kings 6:32), and also of lilies (I Kings 7:22). Decoration of lions, oxen, and cherubim decorated the lavers by Solomon's temple (I Kings

³C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 115.

7:29). Moses made a brass snake at God's command (Num. 21:8-9). Thus it appears not all statues and art work was forbidden in Israel, only those which were objects of worship. (Even the brass snake was destroyed when it became an object of worship (II Kings 18:4).

6. *What is the "water under the earth"? (20:4)*

The "water under the earth" is simply the water lying below the surface of seas, rivers, etc. This is made clear by Deut. 4:18, which refers to the "fish that are in the water under the earth." It is "under (or below) the earth" because it is lower than the ground level at the surface of the water.

Occasionally we read the view that the "waters under the earth" refer to one of the "three stories" which ancient people thought the universe consisted of, namely of heaven above, the earth, and the world "beneath the earth," as if there were some great subterranean cavity under the earth full of water. The Bible presents no such unscientific and superstitious world-view.

7. *In what way is God jealous? (20:5)*

He is jealous in that He is full of zeal and ardor against those who give to graven images the recognition and worship that He alone deserves as God.

This word *jealous* is a term applied exclusively to God. Compare Deut. 34:14. The word does not suggest the pettiness and nastiness that we often associate with jealousy.

Isaiah 42:8: "I am Jehovah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images." Compare Isa. 46:5; 44:9-17; 42:8; Deut. 6:15; Josh. 24:15; Nahum 1:2.

8. *Is it fair for God to recompense the iniquity of the fathers upon the children? (20:5-6)*

Assuredly it is just and fair. It would be just and fair even if we did not understand why God did it, because God is always just (Rom. 3:26).

Consider first Deut. 24:16: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his

own sins." Compare Ezekiel 18:4, 20!

The word translated "third generation" (*shillesh*) means a great-grandchild. The expression "third and fourth generation" seems simply to refer to indefinite future generations. Compare Amos 1:3, 6.

The best way to understand the threat of 20:5 is to see how God carried it out. From later history we learn that God often endured the wrongdoing of people with great longsuffering. However, His patience had a definite limit. And when God finally brought down punishment upon the later generations, He inflicted upon those generations the punishment for their own sins and also those of their fathers. But - and this is very important - God only did this to the descendants who continued to walk in the wicked ways of their fathers. To those who loved Him and kept His commandments He showed great lovingkindness. ("Lovingkindness," or "mercy," or "steadfast love" is *hesed* in Hebrew, an enduring covenant-love. See notes on 15:13 and compare Ex. 34:7.) (Loving God means keeping God's commandments. I John 5:3).

The histories of the Biblical kings illustrate Ex. 20:5-6. King Manasseh was a very evil king, whose evils brought the sentence of destruction upon the kingdom (II Kings 21:10-15). However, Manasseh's good grandson, Josiah, who kept God's covenant, was not punished (II Kings 22:16-20). Nonetheless, Josiah's goodness did not turn away the wrath upon Manasseh's sins (II Kings 23:26-27); and the penalty for the wrongdoings of *all* the kings fell in the time of Josiah's son Zedekiah (who was Manasseh's great-grandson, "the third generation"), who "did that which was evil" (II Kings 24:19).

Similarly, God threatened doom on the house of king Ahab for his sins (I Kings 21:19, 22-26). But Ahab repented somewhat and "walked softly" (I Kings 21:27). Therefore God postponed His judgment (II Kings 21:29), but brought it down upon Ahab's son Jehoram who "walked in the ways of Ahab" (II Kings 3:2-3; 9:24).

Likewise, because of king Jehu's sins and excessive bloodshed (II Kings 10:29; Hosea 1:4), his great-grandson

was slain (along with the entire dynasty) because "he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, as his fathers had done." (II Kings 15:9).

The children "fill up the sins of their fathers" so that when they are punished for doing as their fathers did, the consequences of both their sins and those of their fathers fall on them at once. Compare Lev. 26:39; Amos 7:17; Jer. 16:11ff; Dan. 9:16. If the children would only keep God's covenant, they would receive mercy from God, regardless of what their fathers had done.

The "thousands" in 20:6 has no reference to the sequence of generations, that is, it does not refer to a "thousand generations." There have been less than two hundred generations in the entire time since Moses' life.

9. *What does taking the LORD's name IN VAIN mean? (20:7)*

"In vain" (or "for vanity") means at least three things:

- (1) It means to use God's name to back up a LIE. The following are some of the verses that illustrate this meaning of "vain": Isa. 59:4: "They trust in vanity and speak lies." (The word *lies* here is the same Hebrew word *shav* translated "vain" in Ex. 20:7). Hosea 10:4: "swearing *falsely* in making covenants." Ex. 23:1: "Thou shalt not take up a *false* report." Compare Job 31:5.
- (2) It means to use God's name in an idle, useless, flippant, irreverent utterance. This meaning of "vain" is illustrated by the following passages: Psalm 60:11: "for *vain* (useless) in the help of man." Compare Ps. 108:12. Malachi 3:14: "Ye have said, It is *vain* (useless) to serve God." Psalm 119:37: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding *vanity*."

The Greek O.T. confirms this meaning of the word *vain*, by translating the phrase *epi mataio*, "for something worthless" (idle, foolish, trifling).

- (3) "In vain" also means to use God's name for any wicked purpose, in defiance, blasphemy, etc. Ps. 139:19: "For they speak against thee wickedly. And thine enemies take thy name *in vain*."

Ex. 20:7 condemns the cursing and much of the slang that is so popular in our time. Read Psalm 19:14.

A person's name is closely associated with the person who bears it. Thus to use the name wrongly is to use the person wrongly. Note Ex. 3:13-15.

The Old Testament saints could swear by God's name if they swore the truth. (Lev. 19:12; Jer. 4:2; II Sam. 2:27). The New Testament forbids taking oaths in God's name (Matt. 5:34-37; James 5:12).

Instead of uttering God's name in vain, we should reecho Psalm 111:9: "Holy and reverend (fearsome) is his name;" also Matthew 6:9: "Hallowed be thy name."

Jewish interpreters have felt that the law against using God's name in vain meant that God's name is not to be uttered unnecessarily in common conversation. In fact, in centuries after Moses' time the Jews pronounced the divine name (Yahweh) only once a year, by the high priest when he gave the blessing on the day of atonement. It appears to us that Jehovah's name was used quite freely by Godly people in the Old Testament age. See Ruth 2:4; Gen. 14:2; II Sam. 16:12; and others also. Of course, we agree that it would be better not to use the name at all than to use it irreverently.

Some liberal commentators think they detect implications of evil or magical powers in the uttering of the divine name; and hence it was not to be uttered "in vain." We feel that this notion is apparent only to those who are looking for some such idea.

10. *What was the law about the Sabbath day?* (20:8-10)

Two things: (1) Keep it *holy*; (2) Do not work on that day. It was to be a day not profaned by usual workaday activities.

What day of the week is the Sabbath day? It is the seventh day of the week, Saturday on our calendars. It is a mistake to call Sunday, the first day of the week, the Lord's day, the Sabbath day.

See the Special Study on the Ten Commandments concerning the differences between the wording of the commandments (especially the Sabbath law) in Exodus and

Deuteronomy, and concerning whether Christians are obligated to keep the ten commandments or not.

11. *What does REMEMBER imply in "Remember the Sabbath day"? (20:8)*

Remember may simply mean to observe faithfully. See Malachi 4:4 for an example of this meaning of *remember*.

More probably *remember* implies that the people already knew something about the Sabbath, which they were to remember by appropriate obedience. They knew that the manna had not been provided on the Sabbath days, and that they were to rest on that day. (See Ex. 16:22-23, 29). This they were to remember, along with other things about it.

There is no scriptural indication that men knew anything about the Sabbath day until the giving of the manna, as related in Exodus sixteen. Neh. 9:13-14 says, "Thou camest down also upon Mt. Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, . . . and MADEST KNOWN unto them thy holy Sabbath, . . ." See also Ezek. 20:10-12.

Thus it seems that although God had rested on the seventh day after creation, He had not commanded man to keep the seventh day until Exodus sixteen and twenty. Israel may have known that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, but no commandment had been given to man to sanctify that day.

Is there archaeological information which suggests that men were acquainted with the Sabbath day before the time of Moses? We do not feel that any such evidence exists. The Babylonians and the Assyrians applied the name *shabattu* (or *shapattu*) to certain days, and this name is etymologically related to the Hebrew word *Sabbath*. But the applications of the Babylonian and Hebrew words were fully as different as *Sunday* is different from *sun-god's day*.

U. Cassuto⁴ sums up the archaeological evidence by noting that the Babylonians and Assyrians applied the name

⁴Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-245.

Shabbattu to the day of the full moon, the fifteenth of the month, which was especially dedicated to worship of the moon-god and of related deities. Also the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first and twenty-eighth days of the month had a particular significance in the Mesopotamian calendar. They were connected with the four phases of the moon, and were seven days apart, except for the seventh of the month, which came eight days after the twenty-eighth day of the preceding month, if that month was defective (that is, consisted of 29 days), or nine days thereafter if that month was full (that is, comprised 30 days). All these days, both the day of the full moon, and the other days mentioned above, were considered days of ill luck, on which it befitted a man to fast, to abstain from pleasures, and to avoid performing important works, for they would not succeed. It seems that the Israelite sabbath was instituted in opposition to the Mesopotamian system, and its character was completely original. It was not on the day of the full moon, nor any other day dependent on the moon's phases. It was the seventh day in perpetual sequence, and had no connection with the signs of heaven. It was not a day for the worship of the host of heaven, but a day consecrated to Him who created the Host of heaven. It was not a day of fasting and of misfortune, but a day of rest and blessing. No work was to be done, not because of the danger it would fail, but because it was a day on which the people rose above the need for hard work that they were called upon to do on other days for a living, and thereby shared the divine refreshment with the creator of the world. (Summary adapted from Cassuto)

12. *Why was the Sabbath given?* (20:9-11)

- (1) It was given to provide *rest* for men and beasts. See Deut. 5:14. The Hebrew word *sabbath* means a day of *rest*. The related verb means to cease, or to rest. This principle of a day of rest each week is a valuable, necessary, and joyful arrangement. It was a day of delight (Isa. 58:13), a precious boon to the weary.

On the sabbath days all work activities were to be

suspended except those utterly unavoidable. Forbidden work included plowing and reaping (Ex. 34:21), pressing wine and carrying goods (Neh. 13:15), bearing burdens (Jer. 17:21), carrying on trade (Amos 8:5), holding markets (Neh. 13:15ff), gathering firewood (Num. 15:32), and kindling fires for cooking (Ex. 35:3).

While the Lord's day, the first day of the week, is not strictly a sabbath (rest) day, we are of the opinion that Christians ought to keep it holy, and that this can probably be best done by keeping the day somewhat as the Jews kept their sabbaths. Many of the early Christians were slaves or soldiers and did not have the opportunity of rest on the Lord's day. Thus, God did not command a particular legal rest day for Christians. But the principle of rest still deserves our serious attention.

"Six days shalt thou *work*." Certainly work is a necessary part of the life of God's people, and is commanded in both the old and new Testaments. Gen. 3:17-19; I Thess. 4:11; II Thess. 3:10. But the principle of rest is also important.

- (2) A second reason for the Sabbath is to attest the fact that the LORD is the creator of the world (Ex. 20:11). In fact, if it had not been for this link with God as creator, we doubt that the Sabbath law would have had a place in the Decalogue, any more than the laws about the other holy days.

The fact that the LORD blessed a *day* of rest after six *days* of creation, and then used the Sabbath *day* as a direct comparison to the seventh *day* of creation surely indicates that the *days* of creation in Genesis one are the same duration as our days now. This means that we should regard the earth as "young" in contrast to the speculations of many, who assume the earth is several billion years old. There is no cause to assume that the earth is much over 6,000 years old. All theories to the contrary disregard much scientific evidence as

well as Biblical evidence.⁵

- (3) A third reason for keeping the Sabbath was stated in Deut. 5:15. This was to cause Israel to remember that they had been slaves in Egypt and that the LORD had brought them out of Egypt. This reason for keeping the Sabbath would apply to Israel only, and shows that the Sabbath day was never designed to be observed by all races and nations.

13. *Are Christians to keep the Sabbath (Saturday) as a holy day?*

The answer is No. We live under a new covenant (II Cor. 3:6), and the new covenant does not include the commandment to keep the Sabbath day. The early Christians, who were under inspired apostolic oversight and direction, met on the first day of the week, our Sunday (Acts 20:7). The first day of the week is not called by the name *Sabbath* in the New Testament, but is referred to as the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10). The Sabbath, like the other Hebrew feast days, such as the new moon, and the laws about meat and drink, was only a shadow of things to come. But the "body" (which cast the shadow) is Christ's. (Col. 2:16-17) Hebrews 4:9 speaks of a "sabbath rest" which now remains for the people of God. The setting of that verse indicates that this "sabbath rest" was a rest that was different from God's rest on the seventh day of creation, and was instituted long after that. It came into being even after Joshua gave Israel "rest" in the conquered promised land. Thus our Christian "sabbath rest" is not the seventh-day rest commanded in Moses' law, but is probably our spiritual rest in Christ (Matt. 11:28), or our eternal rest (Rev. 14:13), or both.

14. *What was the law about parents? (20:12)*

They were to be *honored*. The reason for honoring parents was that the children's days might be long in the land which

⁵There are many books now available which give scientific as well as Biblical evidence that the earth and the universe are young in comparison to the billions of years proposed by evolutionary dates. We mention here only a few: John C. Whitcomb, Jr., & Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961); Henry M. Morris, *Biblical Cosmology and Modern Science* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970); Melvin A. Cook, *Prehistory and Earth Models* (London: Parrish, 1966).

Jehovah their God was giving them.

The command to *honor* is a very impressive significant command. The same word *honor* that is here applied to parents is frequently applied to the honor due to God. See Prov. 3:9; Isa. 43:23. The Hebrew noun translated *honor* (*kabod*, from the verb *kabed*) is also translated *glory*, and is applied to *God's* glory (Ex. 16:7; 24:17; 40:34; I Kings 8:11; and others). The Greek O.T. translated "honor" as *timao*, a verb referring to honor rendered to superiors, of men to gods, of men to elders, rulers, and guests. The use of these words shows that honoring parents was a very meaningful act.

How is this honor to be shown to parents?

- (1) Negatively, parents were not to be cursed or struck. See Ex. 21:15; Lev. 21:15, 17.
- (2) By showing them respect. Lev. 19:3: "Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father."
- (3) By obeying them. Deut. 21:18-21; Ephesians 6:1.
- (4) By caring for them in their advanced years. Mark 7:10-12; I Timothy 5:4, 8. The honor due to parents continues on into their elderly life, even after their children are grown.

A persistently disobedient, stubborn, drunken, gluttonous son could be stoned to death. God views disobedience in sons as very serious. See Deut. 21:18-21.

The command about honoring parents comes immediately after the law about the Sabbath. The same two commandments are mentioned together in Lev. 19:3. Probably God intended that they should be associated together. In societies where divine worship is not practiced, the elderly are sometimes neglected, rejected, and "turned out."

In our modern society youth is worshipped and old age is dreaded or despised. The result is a folly in which men and women strive to remain eternally youthful, only to find it is an impossible task. We need to return to the Biblical ideal of honoring parents and respecting the elderly.

As the apostle Paul stated (in Eph. 6:2) this command about honoring parents is the "first commandment with a

promise," the promise that their days would be long in the land which the LORD their God gave them. Also there is the promise "that it may go well with thee" (Deut. 5:16).

Obedience by children will generally result in good health, safety, and wisdom. These things, plus the blessing of God, will generally make the days of our life longer.

It must not be assumed, of course, that obedience to parents guaranteed longevity in every case, any more than that lack of obedience guaranteed a short life for all wicked men.

The promise probably had a collective national application. If Israelite children obeyed Godly parents, their nation (or land) would survive longer. If they disobeyed, their land would go into captivity and they would not "dwell long in the land."

If the promise of long life seems to be too material and earthly for those who feel they are more spiritually minded, remember that in the O.T. age God's promises were usually of a material nature because the people were yet spiritual children, as it were yet in God's school. See Gal. 3:23-25. Most of us are still in that state!

15. *What is forbidden in the command "Thou shalt not kill"?* (20:13)

It seems to forbid murder, manslaughter, and suicide.

Certainly the Hebrew word *ratsah* translated *kill* referred to *murder*. It has this meaning in numerous references. See Num. 35:16, 17, 18; and others. In the laws in the following chapters more detailed laws about murder are given. Note 21:12, 14; and others.

The word *kill* also applies to *manslaughter*. It has this meaning in at least a score of references. See Num. 35:16-21; Deut. 4:42; Josh. 20:3; Num. 35:6, 11; and others. In the laws in the following chapters more specific details are given about manslaughter. See 21:13, 20, 29; and others. We have a divinely ordained obligation to respect and protect the lives of others in all our life's activities (including our auto driving). We must not kill in carelessness, anger, hatred, or vengeance.

Inasmuch as there is no specific object named after "Thou shalt not kill," the verse surely forbids killing ourselves

(suicide) also.

In the O.T. life is viewed as sacred, as a gift from God. "All souls are mine," God said in Ezek. 18:4. The ending of any man's life must be left to God's decision.

"Thou shalt not kill" does NOT forbid capital punishment when that punishment is administered by authorized judges following God's directions. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:5-6). In the following three chapters alone there are at least eight offences named for which God commanded that men be executed. The apostles Paul and Peter believed in capital punishment. Acts 25:11; Rom. 13:4; I Pet. 2:13-15.

Neither does "Thou shalt not kill" forbid war. Wars were frequently instituted by God himself. Ex. 15:1; Deut. 20:1; Ex. 17:16; Num. 10:9. The question as to what circumstances might now be the basis of a "just war" is a topic that lies outside the scope of this book.

We must not conclude our comments about "killing" without referring to our savior's words. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; . . . But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and . . . whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." (Matt. 5:21-22, King James, vers.)

16. *What is adultery?* (20:14)

In the O.T. *adultery* meant sex relations between a man and a married woman (other than his wife) or a betrothed woman. See Gen. 39:9. Both an adulterer and the adulteress were to be put to death. See Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22. To lie with a betrothed virgin brought death to both man and woman, unless she cried out for help (Deut. 22:23-27). A betrothal (engagement) was regarded as being as binding a contract as the marriage. If a man lay with a virgin, he had to pay a dowry to her father and take the woman as his wife, and could never leave her (Deut. 22:28-29; Ex. 22:16-17).

The law of Moses did not directly forbid concubinage and polygamy, although the ideal of one wife for one man with

no divorce ever occurring had been God's intention for men from the beginning. See Matt. 19:7-8; Malachi 2:15-16; Deut. 24:1-4.

While adultery, strictly speaking, is limited to relations with a married woman, the law also dealt with other types of sexual offenses. These include bestiality (Ex. 22:19), homosexuality (sodomy) (Lev. 20:13), sex relations with near relatives (incest) (Lev. 20:14-21), and rape (Deut. 22:25-29). While there is no specific law in the Torah forbidding seeking prostitutes, God did indicate that this was a detestable practice to Him, and its practice would fill the land with wickedness (Lev. 19:29). No Israelites were to make prostitutes of their daughters (Lev. 19:29; Deut. 23:17-18). In the later writings by the prophets (like Hosea 4:11, 14) and other writings (Prov. 6:26; 29:3) God expressed His condemnation of prostitution clearly. The New Testament condemns lying with harlots in the severest language (I Cor. 6:15-18; Eph. 5:5-6).

The law against adultery is an absolute necessity for the security and happiness of homes and family life.

Matt. 5:27-28: "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

17. *What was the law about stealing?* (20:15)

The law was "Don't do it." Every unlawful acquisition of property by violence, cheating, embezzlement, forgery, etc., is forbidden. Even "sophisticated" methods like moving over a neighbor's property boundary marker (usually just a rock pile) were forbidden (Deut. 19:14). The law forbade stealing people (kidnapping) (Ex. 21:16). The laws and penalties for stealing are expanded in 22:1-4.

Eph. 4:28: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor." II Cor. 8:21: "Take thought for things honorable . . . in the sight of all men."

The eighth commandment protected the right of private property. Not even a king dared to steal the property of one

of his people without just compensation (I Kings 21:15-19). In our times of communist propaganda and growing socialism and agitation for government ownership of everything, we need to proclaim loudly that the right of private property is a God-given right, and is the basis for the only social and economic system that will produce enough wealth to supply a nation.

18. *What is meant by bearing false witness?* (20:16)

Since witnessing generally referred to testimony in courts of law, bearing false witness meant lying in court, or perjury. See Ex. 23:2; I Sam. 12:3; Prov. 14:5; Deut. 19:18.

However, the command about bearing false witness is broad enough to include all lying in daily conversation (Ps. 40:4; 101:7; Prov. 6:16-17), the flattery of a false tongue (Ps. 12:2-3), and even tattling and unfounded unkind gossip (Lev. 19:16). "Putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor" (Eph. 4:25). Compare Col. 3:9; Rev. 21:8, 27.

Who is "thy neighbor" against whom we are not to bear false witness? It seems that "neighbor" probably means "all men." Thus "neighbor" in Ex. 11:2 referred to anyone near to a person. In Lev. 19:18 "neighbor" is made parallel to "children of thy people" (or Israelites). Lev. 19:34 says that the Israelites were to love the stranger that sojourned with them "as thyself." Therefore, Jewish scholars have interpreted the "neighbor" in this command to refer to all men, and we think this is correct. Jesus in the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) taught that our "neighbor" is anyone who needs our help.

The commandment to be truthful always in dealing with our neighbor is so contrary to usual human conduct that it surely bears the marks of God's divine authorship right on the face of it.

19. *What is coveting?* (20:17)

To *covet* means to desire. The Hebrew word for *covet* (*hamad*) is translated "desire" in Psalm 68:16. The word itself does not necessarily suggest an EVIL desire. Like the

Greek *epithumeo*, it indicates evil only when the desire is directed toward unlawful things.

Sin begins with wrong thoughts and wrong desires. This commandment cuts off sin at its root - our own desires and cravings. See Eph. 5:5; James 4:1-2. Only God would issue a law against coveting. Can you imagine the U.S. congress passing a law against coveting?

Many interpreters (generally those of a "liberal" persuasion) feel that *coveting* refers not just to a mental state but to activities by which we seek to acquire what we desire. Thus coveting is (to them) the attempt to take property. We agree with Cassuto (*op. cit.*, p. 248-249) that this is NOT implied in the word *covet*. If it were, it would only be a repetition of the commands about stealing and adultery. The use of the word *desire* in Deut. 5:21 as a synonym for *covet* also argues against the idea that coveting primarily refers to actions to take things. The verses set forth to prove this view (such as Deut. 7:25; Josh. 7:21; Micah 2:2) merely indicate that coveting preceded seizure. We fear that it is easier to reinterpret the word *covet* than it is to discipline our spirits to stop coveting.

The commandment about coveting as stated in Deut. 5:21 differs somewhat in arrangement of words from Ex. 20:17. In Deuteronomy the reference to a neighbor's wife comes first and then the neighbor's house. Deuteronomy adds "field" which is not in Exodus. The Greek O.T. of Ex. 20:17 follows closely the order of items as listed in Deut. 5:21, but adds *cattle*, which is not mentioned in the Hebrew of either Deuteronomy or Exodus. As stated in our special study on the Ten Commandments, we do not regard the changes in Deuteronomy from the text in Exodus as having any real significance.

The variations between the commandment about coveting in Exodus and Deuteronomy suggest that the Roman Catholic division of the commandment in Exodus into two commandments is probably not valid.

20. *How did the people react to the thunderings, voice, etc.?* (20:18)

They trembled and stood afar off. The spectacle was too much for them. (Ex. 19:16-19). They shrank back away from the mountain in near-panic.

Josephus (*Ant.* III, v, 6) says that when the multitude heard God himself giving these precepts [the decalogue], they *rejoiced* at what was said! That is an astounding contradiction to the Biblical story, and suggests that Josephus' writings are frequently pure propaganda to make Israel look good.

The word "perceived" (or "saw") has the idea of perceiving a continuous viewing. (It is a Hebrew participle.) The sentence is worded so as to indicate that their "perceiving" was not after the preceding account of hearing the ten commandments, but during the course of it.⁶

Ex. 20:18-21 forms the introduction to the "book of the covenant," that body of laws given by God and recorded in Ex. 20:18—23:33. This "book of the covenant" contains numerous enlargements upon the ten commandments, but it is more than just that. It has new subject material of its own. The actual phrase "book of the covenant" appears in Ex. 24:4, 7.

The clause which the A.S.V. translates "When the people saw it," the R.S.V. translates "the people were *afraid*, they trembled. . . ." This is really a very small and even possibly legitimate alteration. The change was made because the R.S.V. translators felt that the vowels attached to the Hebrew consonants of the verb should be altered to read "They feared" rather than "They saw." The R.S.V. reading is supported by the Greek reading (*phobethentes*). However, it does involve changing the vowels that were added by the Jewish Masoretic rabbis A.D. 500-900, and are in the common Hebrew Bible now.⁷

⁶The "and" in the Hebrew is attached to the pronoun *all* rather than to the verb, as is done to indicate consecutive action.

⁷The R.S.V. reads the verb as *yira'* (from *yare'*, to fear) instead of *yar'* (from *ra'ah*, to see). This involves no changes in the Hebrew consonants. We do not assume that the vowel markings in modern Hebrew Bibles are part of the inspired Biblical text. Nonetheless we are not disposed to alter the vowel markings without rather strong cause for doing so.

21. *How did the people want to hear God's words? (20:19)*

They wanted to hear them from Moses. They wanted Moses to listen to God's awesome voice and then have Moses to speak to them. They feared (unnecessarily) that they would die if God spoke more to them. Deut. 5:23 says that when they heard the voice, they came near unto Moses, that is, the heads of their tribes and their elders came unto him.

It is easy to criticize Israel's fear of God's voice. But it probably is not fair to do so. Even Moses felt some fear (Heb. 12:21). At least Israel desired to hear what God would say. We doubt that any of us now living would have been less fear-struck than they. But what Israel dreaded, Moses desired! See Ex. 33:18.

At this point please read Deut. 5:28-33. God very graciously accepted the Israelites' words and promise to Moses, saying "They have well said all that they have spoken." God knew that the people would not live up to their promises, but He was gracious nonetheless. The people were sent back to their tents, while Moses was called to stand by the Lord and hear His commandments.

Moses' position as the *mediator* through whom the law was given becomes very apparent at this time. See Gal. 3:19.

Israel's terror at God's voice (see Heb. 12:18-21) should be a warning to the ungodly of our time. We shall ALL hear God's voice in the time to come. That voice will then not shake the earth only (as at Mt. Sinai) but the heaven itself (Heb. 12:26). If the Israelites, a people who had committed themselves to accept God's covenant (Ex. 19:8), were terrified by God's coming, what will be the fears of those who have scorned His gracious covenant offers?

22. *For what purposes had God come to the people at Mt. Sinai? (20:20-21)*

(1) To prove (or test) you; (2) that his fear may be before you; (3) that ye sin not.

Proving Israel is a frequent theme in Exodus. See 16:4. God did not test Israel to discover for Himself how they would react in any situation. That He already knew. But, as

any experienced teacher will know, a test is a powerful training tool in itself. It intensifies study and thought. God's awesome demonstrations at Sinai brought the Israelites face to face with realities of His power and majesty that many of them had simply not yet faced up to (not that they had lacked opportunity).

Note that God wanted to put the "fear of God" into the people. Prov. 16:6: "By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil."

The use of the name *God* (Heb., *elohim*) in 20:21 rather suggests that God spoke then as the Lord of all creation, rather than as YAHWEH, the LORD of Israel. However, 20:22 starts, "And Jehovah said," Thus all aspects of God's name and nature are on display.

Moses drew near "unto God," that is unto the place where the infinite omnipresent God had designated for finite man to meet him. And Moses drew near the "thick darkness." Compare Ex. 19:9.

23. *What was Israel not to make? (20:22-23)*

They were not to make gods of silver or gold. These shall not be "with me" (a slightly different expression than "before me" in 20:3). Twice in 20:23 God declared, "You shall not make. . . ." The building of the golden calf (Ex. 32) soon violated this command.

When Israel left Mt. Sinai, she began to encounter many pagan peoples of that region. All of these had their own religions, idols, altars, and temples. There was strong probability that Israel would pick up practices of these religions and corrupt her own true worship. Therefore God gave the restrictions on worship in 20:23-26.

24. *What were altars to be made of? (20:24-25)*

Altars were to be made of earth or unhewn stones ("Cyclopean" altars). These would be the humble altars of wanderers, to be used and then abandoned.

We do not know the exact reasons why God commanded them to use earth and uncut stones. Certainly such humble materials would restrain a common feeling that men get,

thinking one spot is more holy than another because it has some impressive statue or monument on it. It would be very humbling to a skilled stone cutter to be told that his chiseling upon stones would pollute them and make them unacceptable in God's altar! This suggests that human works and human skill cannot in any way bring God's salvation to us. It is God's gift altogether (Eph. 2:8-9). No human shall glory in God's presence.

Not long after this God gave to Israel the instructions about the altar to be built for use in their tabernacle. It was made of wood and brass. See Ex. 27:1-8.

25. *What types of offerings were to be made on the altar? (20:24)*

Two types: burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. These are two very ancient types of offerings. (Gen. 8:20; 22:2; Ex. 18:12). These were the very two kinds of offerings that the young men offered on the altar soon afterwards (Ex. 24:5). Offerings with names like "peace-offerings" and "burnt-offerings" were offered by the ancient Canaanites. These were, of course, corrupted forms of the ancient offerings to God.

Burnt-offerings are described in Lev. 1:3-17 and 6:8-13. Peace-offerings are described in Lev. 3:1-17; 7:11-18.

The offering of sacrifice indicates a break of fellowship between God and men. Burnt-offerings involved the death and destruction of sacrifices to cover the separation between man and God. Peace-offerings were given in gratitude when that separation between God and man had been covered (atoned for) through burnt-offerings.

26. *Where was sacrifice to be made? (20:24)*

"At every place where I cause my name to be remembered." Compare Jer. 7:12. As God led Israel from encampment to encampment by His guiding cloud (Num. 9:17-18), they would set up their altar at each stop. It is noteworthy that only ONE altar for all the people is mentioned in 20:24. God did not say, "Ye shall build *altars* of earth unto me," but "an altar (singular) of earth shalt thou (a collective singular pronoun, referring to all the people) make unto

me." Note in Ex. 24:4 that they set up twelve pillars, but only one altar.

Thus from its very outset Israel's worship was supposed to be centralized. This is in perfect agreement with the restriction in Deut. 12:11 that all offerings in the promised land of Canaan were to be made in the place which Jehovah would choose. God's word is consistent within itself.

The site of the one altar was, of course, transferred from place to place - from wilderness camps, to Mt. Ebal (Josh. 8:30-31!), to Shiloh, to Gibeon, and to Jerusalem.

The people later disobeyed this law about the single altar and built many altars, many of them to other gods. But that did not occur because God had not given commandment to build only one altar.

We stress this point, because one of the basic ideas in the "critical" interpretation of the Old Testament is that the idea of a single sanctuary and a single altar developed much later in Israel's history, long after the time of Moses. Supposedly the "primitive" people in the day of Moses had many altars and many gods. "Critics" think that they can see evidence of this in some passages, and they attribute these to authors they call J (for Jehovist) or E (for Elohist). Then supposedly in the time of king Josiah (621 B.C.) a new document called D (for Deuteronomy) was sprung on the people in an effort to shut down the many sanctuaries and altars outside of Jerusalem and to centralize worship there. By attributing this D document to Moses, the priests overcame the popular resistance and centralized worship at Jerusalem. Some scholars now think this "Deuteronomistic reformation" occurred earlier, in the time of King Hezekiah (728-696 B.C.) or thereabouts.

Admittedly kings Josiah and Hezekiah shut down the out-of-Jerusalem sanctuaries. But they did this because they were obedient to the word of God given through Moses. Their actions in no way prove that Deuteronomy and other passages advocating a single place of worship were written long after Moses' time.

One particularly valuable book showing that Deuteronomy (and other passages teaching the idea of a single place of worship) could not have been written centuries after the time of Moses is G. T. Manley, *The Book of the Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

We suspect that the solitary altar of ancient Israel served as a type of Christ, who alone is our altar. (Heb. 13:10-12).

27. *Why were steps not to be made up to God's altar?* (20:26)

"So that your nakedness be not revealed while you are on the altar." "Nakedness" is a euphemism for the sex organs. See Lev. 18:6.

We know that priests in Ancient Mesopotamia (Sumer) sometimes were naked.⁸ But among the Israelites even immodesty by priests, much more nakedness, was forbidden by the holy God of Israel. God's priests even wore pants! (Ex. 28:42)

God made clothes for Adam and Eve after they sinned (Gen. 3:21). When people get away from God, they want to throw off their clothes and "break loose" and act like animals (Ex. 32:25, King James vers.). God's people should dress modestly (I Tim. 2:9).

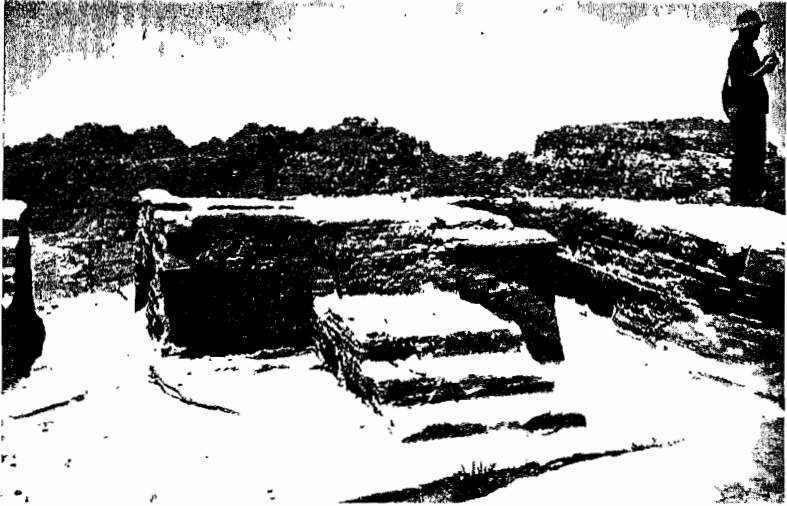
The Canaanites built steps up to their altars (like those at Megiddo and Petra). The Israelites' equipment for worship was to be as distinctive as the God whom they worshipped.

THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE LAW CODE OF HAMMURABI*

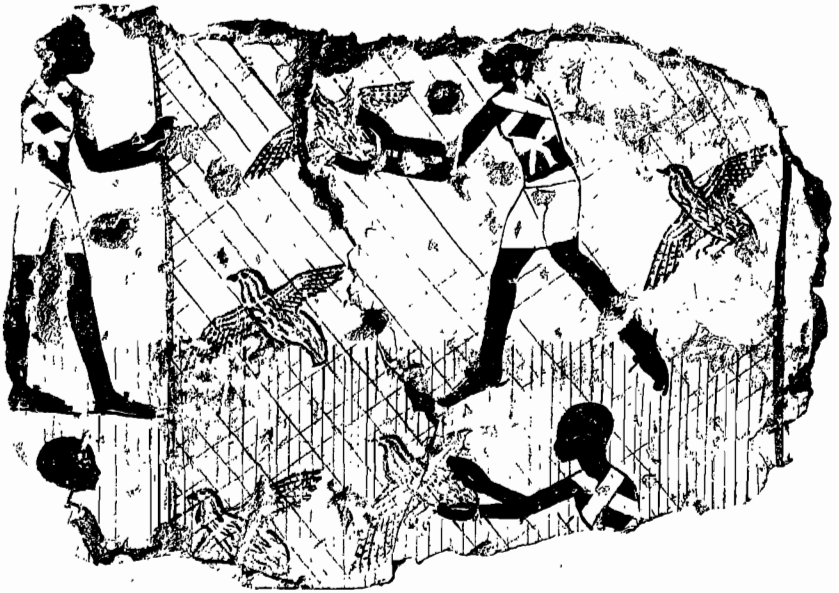
The law code of Hammurabi is one of the most helpful archaeological discoveries ever found to aid us in understanding the law of Moses.

⁸James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near East in Pictures*, 2nd ed., with Supplement (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 197.

*The entire Code of Hammurabi and the Laws of Eshnunna are given in an English translation in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, James B. Pritchard ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1955), pp. 163-180.



Two altars with steps. The Israelites were not to build altars with steps (Ex. 20:26). The lower picture shows the great Canaanite altar at Megiddo (about 1900 B.C.). The upper shows a stone altar at the "high place" of Petra (probably Nabatean, about 300 B.C.). (Photos by author.)



"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh . . . And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp"
(Exodus 16:11-13).

Quails are found not only in Europe but also, as has been observed from ancient times, in Egypt and Arabia. Every spring, flocks of these migratory birds cross the Red Sea on their way to the Sinai peninsula, where they land exhausted near the coast and are easily caught. This is exactly how the Bible describes what happened during the Israelites' sojourn in the desert (Exodus 16:13 and Numbers 11:31). The birds were on their way northwards: "and there went forth a wind . . . and brought quails from the sea". This wall-painting from a grave at Thebes shows that the trapping of quails was a normal occurrence on the Nile and indicates how it was done. Four men are walking through a cornfield holding a square fine-meshed net, extended in a horizontal position. When the birds fly up they are entangled in the net and can be readily caught.

FROM: THE BIBLE AS HISTORY IN PICTURES
By Werner Kellge - Wm. Morrow Co.

Hammurabi (1728-1696 B.C.) was the greatest king of the Old Babylonian empire. He was a great conqueror, but was also a builder and a lawgiver for his people.

The significance of Hammurabi's law code to us lies partly in the change its discovery made in the thinking of scholars about the Old Testament law.

In the last century (the nineteenth) Bible critics confidently declared that ancient Israel did not have any written law code in the time of Moses. Such codes did not exist that long ago. They believed that Deuteronomy was the first written law in our sense of the word, and that Deuteronomy was not written till nearly 600 B.C. (eight hundred years after Moses' time)!

Julius Wellhausen, the famous German critic, wrote, "Ancient Israel was certainly not without God-given bases for the ordering of human life; only *they were not fixed in writing*." (Emphasis ours.) He also said, "There was no Torah as a ready-made product, as a system existing independently of its originator and accessible to every one; it became actual only in the various utterances, which naturally form by degrees the basis of a fixed tradition." (*Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Edinburgh, 1885), pp. 393, 395). Views like these came to be accepted far and wide.

In A.D. 1901-2 the Frenchman Jacques de Morgan found at Susa (the Biblical Shushan) fragments of a black stone pillar about seven and a half feet tall and two feet in diameter. It had been inscribed by King Hammurabi. It contained a prologue dedicating it to Shamash, the sun god. The main body of its writing consisted of about 282 brief laws dealing with many social issues. An epilogue heaps praise on Hammurabi for his noble deeds. Fragments of two other duplicates of this code have also been found. It must have been widely known.

When this code was translated, it was found to contain numerous laws resembling those in the law of Moses. This caused a great change in the thinking of scholars about the Old Testament law. No longer could men allege that law codes such as that of Moses were nonexistent in those ancient times.

Since the discovery of Hammurabi's Code, more than half a

dozen other ancient codes of law have been found, many of which are older even than that of Hammurabi. Law codes presently known include (besides that of Hammurabi) the following:

- (1) Code of Ur-Nammu, king at Ur. Dated about 2050 B.C. It is a mutilated fragment having only five fairly readable laws.
 - (2) Laws of the city of Eshnunna (near the Tigris river). These are dated about 2000 B.C. There are over sixty laws in this, three of which closely resemble the laws in Ex. 21:28, 29, 35.
 - (3) Code of Lipit-Ishtar, king of the city of Isin. About 1900-1850 B.C.
 - (4) Later Babylonian laws (after the time of Hammurabi).
 - (5) Assyrian laws, from Cappadocia (about 1800 B.C.), and from the City of Ashur (about 1350 B.C.)
 - (6) Hittite laws, found in Asia Minor. Dated about 1350 B.C.
- A large group of these were found.

In the course of our commentary on Exodus we shall refer to numerous laws of Hammurabi and others which shed light on the verses in the Bible, either by similarities or by differences. These are quite striking in many cases.

We list here just a few of Hammurabi's laws that seem to be comparable to laws in Exodus:

- a. Smiting parents. Hammurabi 195; Ex. 21:15.
- b. Stealing people. Ham. 14; Ex. 21:16.
- c. Wounding people. Ham. 206; Ex. 21:18-19.
- d. Law of retaliation. Ham. 196; Ex. 21:24.
- e. Knocking out someone's eye. Ham. 199; Ex. 21:26.

Was Moses familiar with law codes such as that of Hammurabi? We feel that he was. Both certain similarities and certain contrasts are so striking that we hardly see how it could have been accidental. This need not trouble us. God did not give His laws in a vacuum, to a people who had never had contact with any other cultures and never would. Educated people in Egypt like Moses were familiar with the Babylonian language and literature. If Israel's law was to be truly meaningful to them, it

had to relate in some ways to the laws of the world with which they were familiar. Thus God gave to Moses a law which resembled other law codes in occasional good points, and differed from them noticeably in points where men's laws had departed from God's standards. Overall, there is not much relationship either way.

Did Moses copy from Hammurabi or adapt some of Hammurabi's laws? We definitely think not. The scripture declares that God directly gave His law to Moses. Furthermore, most scholars who have studied Hammurabi's code feel that the differences between Moses and Hammurabi are so basic that it is unbelievable that Moses could have borrowed from Hammurabi. George A. Barton wrote as follows:

A comparison of the code of Hammurabi as a whole with the Pentateuchal laws as a whole, while it reveals certain similarities, convinces the student that the laws of the Old Testament are in no essential way dependent upon the Babylonian laws. (From *Archaeology and the Bible*, 7th ed. [Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937], p. 405.)

Hammurabi's code is altogether secular. It does not give spiritual or religious reasons for obedience, as the Torah does. Note Ex. 22:7.

Hammurabi's code shows much partiality toward the upper classes of society. Those who harm them receive severer punishment than those who harm poor citizens or slaves. Moses' law shows very little of such class distinctions.

The law of Moses presupposes that life is sacred. No one is to be executed for taking property, as Hammurabi commanded. Even the life of a slave is sacred in the Torah. Hammurabi is often more interested in protecting property than people.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

21 Now these are the ordinances which thou shalt set before them.

(2) If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. (3) If he come in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he be married, then his wife shall go out with him. (4) If his master give him a wife, and she bear him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. (5) But if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: (6) then his master shall bring him unto God, and shall bring him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever.

(7) And if a man sell his daughter to be a maid-servant, she shall not go out as the men-servants do. (8) If she please not her master, who hath espoused her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a foreign people he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. (9) And if he espouse her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. (10) If he take him another *wife*; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. (11) And if he do not these three things unto her, then shall she go out for nothing, without money.

(12) He that smiteth a man, so that he dieth, shall surely be put to death. (13) And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver *him* into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. (14) And if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.

(15) And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.

(16) And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.

(17) And he that curseth his father or mother, shall surely be

put to death.

(18) And if men contend, and one smite the other with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keep his bed; (19) if he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed.

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

(22) And if men strive together, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart, and yet no harm follow; he shall be surely fined, according as the woman's husband shall lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. (23) But if any harm follow, then thou shalt give life for life, (24) eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, (25) burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

(26) And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, and destroy it; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake.

(27) And if he smite out his man-servant's tooth, or his maid-servant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake.

(28) And if an ox gore a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be surely stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. (29) But if the ox was wont to gore in time past, and it hath been testified to its owner, and he hath not kept it in, but it hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death. (30) If there be laid on him a ransom, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatsoever is laid upon him. (31) Whether it have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him. (32) If the ox gore a man-servant or a maid-servant, there shall be given unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

(33) And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein, (34) the owner of the pit shall make it good; he shall give money unto the owner thereof, and the dead *beast* shall be his.

(35) And if one man's ox hurt another's, so that it dieth, then they shall sell the live ox, and divide the price of it; and the dead also they shall divide. (36) Or if it be known that the ox was wont to gore in time past, and its owner hath not kept it in; he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead *beast* shall be his own.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. What does Ex. 21:1 entitle the section that follows it?
2. For how many years was a Hebrew servant (slave) obligated to serve his master? (21:2)
3. What did the servant have to pay upon his release? (21:2)
4. Could a Hebrew slave take his wife and children with him when he left free? (21:3-4)
5. Did the Hebrew slave have a choice of going free or remaining as a servant? (21:5-6)
6. To whom did a slave's owner bring a servant who did not want to be freed? (21:6)
7. What act was done to indicate that a slave had bound himself permanently to his master? (21:6)
8. Were maidservants freed in the seventh years as menservants were? (21:7)
9. What was to be done and NOT done with maidservants who were displeasing to their masters? (21:8)
10. To whom might a man arrange for his maidservant to be given? (21:9)
11. From 21:10 we see that the "maidservant" was regarded as practically equivalent to what?
12. What was the penalty for striking a man fatally? (21:12)
13. Can a man's death be an "act of God"? (21:13). How might this occur?
14. What was to be done by a man who unintentionally killed another? (21:13; Compare Num. 35:9-28).

15. Was a murderer safe while at the altar of God (21:14; I Kings 2:28-34)
16. What was the penalty for striking parents? (21:15) For cursing parents? (21:17)
17. What was the penalty for kidnapping? (21:16)
18. What was the penalty for wounding a man or disabling him in a fight? (21:18-19)
19. What was the penalty for fatally beating one's own slave? (21:20-21)
20. Who determined the fines upon men who caused a woman to suffer injury and miscarriage? (21:22)
21. Did the laws about "eye for eye," etc. entitle people to take revenge for themselves? (21:22-25; Compare Matt. 5:43-46)
22. What was the penalty for destroying the eye or tooth of one's slave? (21:26-27)
23. What was the penalty upon a man-killing ox and upon its owner? (21:28)
24. What intensified the penalty upon the owner of a man-killing ox? (21:29). Was any variation allowed in this penalty? (21:30)
25. What penalty was imposed upon an ox and its owner if it killed a slave? (21:32)
26. What rule was given concerning the deaths of animals that fell into pits that were not covered over? (21:32-34)
27. What was the rule about one ox killing another ox? (21:35-36)

EXODUS TWENTY-ONE: GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES

1. The Hebrew servant; 21:2-11
 2. Capital offenses; 21:12-17
 3. Injuries to people; 21:18-27
 4. Injuries by and to oxen; 21:28-36.
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EXODUS TWENTY-ONE: SERVANTS, SECURITY, SAFETY

- I. Servants; 21:2-11.
 - II. Security; 21:12-22.
 - 1. Security guaranteed by capital punishment; 21:12-17.
 - 2. Security guaranteed by punishment of smiters; 21:18-27.
 - III. Safety; 21:28-36.
 - 1. Safety from animals; 21:28-32.
 - 2. Safety from hazards; 21:32-34.
 - 3. Safety for property; 21:35-36.
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EXODUS TWENTY-ONE: GOD'S ORDINANCES, A PROTECTION!

- 1. Protection for servants; 21:2-11.
 - 2. Protection from killers; 21:12-14.
 - 3. Protection for parents; 21:15, 17.
 - 4. Protection from kidnappers; 21:16.
 - 5. Protection from financial loss; 21:18-19.
 - 6. Protection for slaves; 21:20-21, 26-27.
 - 7. Protection for women; 21:22-24.
 - 8. Protection from animals; 21:28-32.
 - 9. Protection from negligence; 21:33-34.
 - 10. Protection from property loss; 21:35-36.
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GOD'S CARE FOR THE SLAVE; 21:2-11

- 1. His term of service as strictly limited; 21:2.
- 2. He was set free without charge; 21:2.
- 3. His service was such that it might be preferred to freedom; 21:5.
- 4. Women could be slaves only on condition of marriage; 21:7-11.

GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES 21:1-36

5. Kidnapping and selling into slavery was a capital offense; 21:16.
 6. A slave's life and limb were protected by law; 21:20; 26-27.
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EXODUS TWENTY-ONE: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

I. RIGHTS.

1. Freedom; 21:2, 11.
2. Service at the place of one's own choice; 21:5.
3. Protection from assault; 21:12-14.
4. Protection from kidnapping; 21:16.
5. Protection from injuries; 21:18-19, 22.
6. Payment for damages; 21:18-19, 22, 32, 35.
7. Protection from hazards; 21:33.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES.

1. Respect men's right to freedom; 21:2, 7, 8.
 2. Respect for parents; 21:15, 17.
 3. Must pay for damages; 21:18-19, 22-24, 32.
 4. Must practice safety; 21:22-25.
 5. Must avoid negligence; 21:29, 33, 36.
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CRIMES THAT FORFEITED LIFE!

1. Smiting and killing a man; 21:12.
2. Smiting father or mother; 21:15.
3. Stealing and selling a man; 21:16.
4. Cursing father or mother; 21:17.
5. Neglecting warnings about dangerous animals; 21:29.
6. Sorcery (witchcraft); 22:18.
7. Lying with a beast; 22:19.

8. Sacrificing to other gods; 22:20.

(Note: God still hates these sins, and they will be punished in hell. But the "church" does NOT now have authority from God to execute wrongdoers, for example witches!)

GOD'S INDIGNATION AGAINST ABUSING PARENTS!

1. Against smiting father or mother; 21:15.
 2. Against cursing father or mother; 21:17.
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GOD'S DISAPPROVAL OF BRUTE FORCE!

1. The smiter who kills must die; 21:12.
 2. The smiter who injures must pay damages; 21:18-19, 26.
 3. The fighter may be afflicted as he afflicts others; 21:23.
 4. The laws protect all victims - men, women, even slaves.
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NEGLIGENCE! (21:28-36)

I. Examples of Negligence

1. Not keeping in a goring ox; 21:29, 36.
2. Not covering a pit; 21:33.

II. Penalties for Negligence

1. A goring ox must be killed; 21:28.
 2. A heedless ox-owner slain; 21:29.
(A ransom might be paid instead.)
 3. Money charged for damages; 21:32, 34.
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THE ORDINANCES OF GOD
(EXODUS 21-23)

1. The ten commandments are simple and comprehensive principles. But human character and life is crooked and complex. Is all killing murder? Are all sexual wrongs of the same seriousness? To bridge the gulf between the simple absolute principles of the ten commandments and everyday life, many ordinances were needed. These are found in the "book of the covenant" (Ex. 21-23; 24:7), and in Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. (Adapted from Ramm, *op. cit.* p. 132)
2. Many of the ordinances in Ex. 21-23 are extremely attractive to us. Read Ex. 23:1-9 for example! All of these laws derive their force from a personal relationship with God. See Ex. 23:25.
3. Some of the laws in Ex. 21-23 will seem strange to you at first, perhaps even shocking.

Remember that God revealed His will in many "divers portions" (Heb. 1:1). Things which we have known as God's truth for centuries had not all been revealed in Moses' time.

Also many of the laws which seem at first glance to be harsh and even sub-Christian served a very beneficial purpose. For example, the laws about slavery, as strange as they seem to us, served a very needful social purpose. See Ex. 21:2-4, 20-21. Every nation must do something about its destitute people, and Israel's "slavery" system cared for this need. And besides this, the Israelites were to carry out these laws in a kind, non-rigorous manner. See Lev. 25:39-55; Deut. 15:12-15.

4. The laws in Ex. 21-23 dealt with a wide variety of subjects, covering practically all aspects of life. There were laws about servants (21:2ff), criminal laws (21:12), property laws (21:35), moral laws (22:16), laws of personal conduct (22:21-27; 23:1-9), laws about religious ceremonies (23:14ff), etc.

No people can have a functioning society without a culture system of rules and beliefs. The ordinances of God provided an instant, ready-made cultural basis for Israel as a society.

5. The principles illustrated by these laws have endless applications. For example, the law about releasing your enemy's overloaded and fallen donkey (23:4-5) establishes a principle of kindness that is applicable in countless situations.
6. We must not assume that the covenant ordinances in Ex. 21-23 constitute a complete and systematic code of law. Numerous regulations are mentioned without giving enough details to make clear how the commandments were to be carried out. For example, Ex. 22:16 speaks of "the dowry of virgins" without indicating how much it was. (Compare Deut. 22:28-29). Ex. 23:14-17 mentions the three annual compulsory feasts to be kept by all Israelites. But the text tells very little about how they were to be observed. These details were added later in the laws in Leviticus (Chap. 23) and Deuteronomy.

Unless we realize that the ordinances in Ex. 21-23 are only a "sampler" of the more complete laws given later, we may be perplexed by their lack of completeness and orderliness.

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

1. *What is in Exodus chapter twenty-one?*

Exodus 21 contains the first group of the "judgements" (or ordinances) of the LORD. These extend on through chapter 23. This chapter contains laws about slaves, crimes requiring the death penalty, offenses involving injuries, and property losses.

We must keep in mind that as Christians our conduct is to "establish" the law (Rom. 3:31). We cannot be less concerned about the lives and safety of people than God required people under the law of Moses to be. While we are not under the law, we *fulfill* the law by loving our neighbor as ourselves (Rom. 13:9-10).

2. *What are ordinances (or judgments)?* (21:1)

Judgments (Heb., *mishpatim*) are judicial decisions, decisions at law, legal rulings. The uses of this word in Ex. 21:31 and Deut. 1:17 illustrate this meaning.

But the word *judgments* implies yet another conception: that of JUSTICE. The Hebrew word for *judgment* is often translated *justice*. See Ex. 23:6; Deut. 16:19. This fact implies that perfect justice for all social relationships is found in God's ordinances. It surely has not been found in men's ordinances!

The word *Now* (Heb., *and*) at the start of 21:1 links the ordinances that follow with the words of God that preceded them in chapter twenty. All are from God and all are part of the same covenant.

Radical critics assume that these "judgments" presuppose a society settled a long time into the land, and that they were therefore written long after the time of Moses. We cannot accept such a notion. Moses had already judged many cases (Ex. 18:13). He knew the types of questions that would arise and need written precedents to guide future judges. Furthermore, Moses had very probably studied the legal system in Egypt, and he had observed Midianite tribal laws. He was probably acquainted with Near Eastern law codes, such as that of Hammurabi.

But all of these arguments are second-rate evidence of the Mosaic origin and divine authority of these "judgments." The plain assertions that GOD gave these ordinances to Moses is the basis of our faith in them. They were revealed words of Jehovah (23:3).

3. *How long did a Hebrew servant serve his master?* (21:2)

He served six years. In the seventh year he went out free, for nothing, without payment of any redemption or ransom price. In fact, he was to be given liberal gifts of food and livestock (Deut. 15:12-15). The same rule applied to women servants (Deut. 15:12).

The word translated *servant* means a bondservant or slave. But we should not picture in our minds the Hebrew slave as as victim of a harsh cruel system. The slavery actually served

the social purpose of caring for the destitute. The service of Hebrew bondmen to their masters was rather mild. Their masters were not to treat them as bondservants, but as hired servants. They were not to rule over them with harshness (Lev. 25:39-43). Servants were to rest on the Sabbath days and be refreshed like the rest of the family (Ex. 23:12).

The year of a servant's release was the seventh year of his service, which was not necessarily the Sabbatical year, which occurred every seventh year and was observed by all Israel (Ex. 23:10-11).

Servants were also to be freed in the year of Jubilee, every fiftieth year, even if that occurred one year after they signed on. Lev. 25:10, 39-41.

The Law of Hammurabi (No. 117) said that if because of obligations a citizen sold his wife, or son, or daughter to service to someone else, they would serve *three* years in the house of their purchaser, and then go free in the fourth year. Hammurabi did not provide for generous gifts to be given to the liberated servant, as the Hebrew law did. Neither did his law ordain the generous loans and credit assistance that were in the Hebrew law (Lev. 25:35-37; Deut. 15:7-11). These provisions probably kept many poor people from having to sell themselves or members of their family into servitude.

Laws like 21:2ff that are formulated from cases and are introduced by "If," are called *casuistic* (or case) laws. The law codes of the ancient Near East (like Hammurabi's law) have almost all of their laws in this casuistic form: "If such and such an event occurs, then this is what the law requires to be done." Casuistic law is distinguished from apodeictic laws, which concisely state principles for conduct, often in negative form. Laws like "Thou shalt not kill" are apodeictic. The presence of many apodeictic laws in Exodus suggests the intrinsic, divine authority of the laws. The presence of casuistic laws in Exodus shows that God expressed His word and laws to Moses in literary and legal forms familiar to men. God's word comes to men in men's language!

4. *What was a HEBREW servant? (21:2)*

We feel that *Hebrew* is here synonymous with *Israelite*. Indeed, Jer. 34:9 later equated Hebrew with Jew. This identification is supported by the parallel passage Deut. 15:2, which says, "If thy *brother*, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee," This is further indicated by the fact that Lev. 25:44-46 says that strangers and foreigners bought by Israelites were kept as bondmen *for ever*, in distinction to the requirement to release a *Hebrew* in the seventh year.

This question might seem to be a matter of no significance. Our reason for bringing it up is that some interpreters (Cassuto, for example) feel that the word *Hebrew* is here equivalent to a broader term *Habiru* (or 'Apiru, or Khapiru), which is found frequently in writings of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan prior to Moses' time. The Habiri were alien peoples who were employed as servants or took other subordinate service. They existed outside of the normal societal system, something like "gypsies." Sometimes they are referred to as predatory conquerors. In the Amarna letters (written by Canaanite city-rulers to the kings of Egypt shortly after the time of Moses), the Habiri are said to be taking over the land. We feel that the Habiri referred to in these letters included the Israelites, but also included other invading settlers.

If the term *Hebrew* in 21:2 were equivalent to *Habiri*, then the command about releasing slaves in the seventh years had a very broad application to peoples of numerous races. However, the evidence cited above makes us think that the term *Hebrew* here meant only an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham.¹ The Egyptians and Babylonians would have considered the Israelites as Habiri (or Hebrews), while including other racial groups within that term. Thus Joseph was called a Hebrew (Gen. 39:14), as was Abraham (Gen.

¹In the Hebrew language the name *Hebrew* seems to come from the verb *eber*, meaning "to cross over." Abraham was presumably a *Hebrew* because he crossed over the Euphrates to come to Canaan. The name of Abraham's forefather Eber (Gen. 11:16) is probably in some way also linked to this meaning.

5. *Could a liberated Hebrew slave take his family with him?* (21:3-4)

If he became a servant alone (not married), he was liberated alone. If he was married when he became a slave, his wife went out free with him. If during his slave-service his master gave him a wife and she bore him children, the man went free alone. The wife and children stayed with the master. Note that the slave had no right to contract a marriage for himself. The master had to give him the wife.

This law about not letting the slave's wife go free with him may seem severe to us. But it would have been a very expensive loss to the master when he was already rendering a valuable service to the bondman by providing for him an opportunity to work himself out of debt. Also any woman that the master may have given to him would probably have been a foreign permanent bondwoman. It is improbable that the master would have had authority to give away a Hebrew woman indentured to him for only six years. Certainly marriage to such foreign women by Israelite servants could raise racial difficulties in Israel. Also one other practical effect of keeping slave women as slaves was that the rule prevented the contracting of many marriages which could not well continue after the servant went free. We assume that in the administration of the law about marriages of bondmen that the Israelites were basically kind to their bondmen. (Ex. 22: 21; Lev. 19:33-34).

6. *How could a Hebrew slave commit himself to a lifetime of service?* (21:5-6)

He could do this by having his ear pierced through before the judges (or "before God").

The bondman's master brought him "unto God" (or, "unto the judges"), and there took him to the door and pierced through his ear with an awl. Compare Deut. 15: 16-17.

The very fact that this law is given in the law of Moses is indicative of the fact that slaves would desire permanent servitude frequently enough that a law was needed to tell the

procedure for bringing it about. The law indicates that many Hebrew masters were kind. (This is like our service to Christ, our kind master.)

The exact meaning of the expression "unto the judges," or "unto God" (Heb. *elohim*), is a bit uncertain.

In the Code of Hammurabi (law #120) we are told that a dispute over loss of grain was to be settled "in the presence of *god*," that is, in the court of the local idol. Similarly in the laws of Eshnunna (#'s 36-37) a disputed property loss was to be settled by an oath taken in the gate of the main god at Eshnunna. These literary examples suggest that the Hebrew bondman went to the tabernacle of God to make his declaration and have his ear bored.

The Greek O.T. says that they were to bring the bondman to the tribunal (*kriterion*) of God. This strengthens our view that the bondman came before God's tabernacle for commitment of himself.

On the other hand, the uses of *elohim* in Ex. 22:28, 8, 9 indicate that the word sometimes meant *judges*, and this idea is as old as the Targum of Onkelos (a paraphrase of the law in the Aramaic language, dated about 400 B.C.). Perhaps the judges were looked upon as God's agents in this matter.

Commentators disagree on whether the servant's ear was bored at the door of his master's house or at the door of God's house. We feel that the Biblical text says it was at God's house. We suppose that the boring was done as the ear was placed against the door post.

"For ever" (21:6) seems to mean "for life," although the Jewish rabbis interpreted it to mean "till the year of jubilee."

Psalm 40:6 quotes God's servant (whoever he may be) as saying, "Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in. Mine ears hast thou opened."

This passage is applied to Jesus in Heb. 10:5, 8. On the basis of this some interpreters (e.g. Pink) have thought that the servant who pledged himself permanently to his master by having his ear bored is a type of Jesus Christ. We do not think this is a legitimate or true type. We do not see any

definite connection between Ex. 21:6 and Psalm 40:6. The word translated "opened" in Psalm 40:6 is not the same word as the word translated "bore" in Ex. 21:6. Also the type seems incongruous. Admittedly Jesus committed himself to a master (God) so that he might gain a bride (the church). But when Jesus did this the bride was in no way already in the service of the master, as was the bride in Ex. 21:4-6.

7. *Why were maidservants not released after six years? (21:7-8)*

They were not released because these women became concubines, or secondary wives, to the master. Note that the master *espoused* her to himself or to one of his sons.²

The word *maid-servant* used here (*'amah*) is applied to the slave woman Hagar (Gen. 21:10, 12, 13); to Bilhah, Rachel's maid (Gen. 30:3). Both of these women bore children in the house. Gideon's son Abimelech was born of a maid-servant (Judges 9:18). These examples show one common meaning of the term *maid-servant*.

However, the term was also employed by such primary wives as Hannah (I Sam. 1:11), Abigail (I Sam. 25:25), Bathsheba (I Kings 1:13), and Ruth (Ruth 3:9), when speaking of themselves. So the term does not always indicate a servant-concubine.

8. *What did a master do with a maid-servant who displeased him? (21:8)*

He permitted her to be redeemed (bought back). Probably she was purchased by some Israelite outside of his family because her father was too poor to buy her back. The law forbade the master to sell her to a foreign power. Hertz tells of the Saxons in England, who at the time of the Norman conquest would sell maid servants on their estates into a life of shame or into foreign slavery after associating with them

²A.S.V. margin says, "Another reading is "so that he hath *not* espoused her." This appears to be the reading of the written Hebrew text (the kethib). But the marginal reading in the Hebrew (the qere) gives "to himself," and this definitely seems to be the correct reading. See Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

themselves.³ The Hebrews were forbidden to practice such abominations.

9. *What was to be done with maid-servants taken as wives for sons? (21:9)*

They were to be treated like daughters. Ex. 21:10 seems to say, "If he (the father-purchaser) take for him (that is, for his son) another wife, her (the first maid-servant's) food, . . ."

The old Chinese custom of buying a slave girl as a future wife for a son is an exact parallel. By buying the girl thus, he avoided paying a higher price in the years to come, and guaranteed that she would "fit in" in the future. Such a system abolished slavery in all except its name.⁴

10. *What rights did the hand-maid have? (21:10-11)*

She had the right to (1) food, (2) clothing, and (3) participation in family life. If the master did not grant these things, she could go out as a free woman, without anyone's paying money for her.

"Food" is literally *flesh*, suggesting that she was not to get a mere subsistence diet, but meat and other quality food.

"Duty of marriage," or "marital rights" (as in R.S.V.) probably simply means (1) a place to live and (2) the right to associate with the family like all the other members of it. The Hebrew word *'onah* (unique here) comes from a verb meaning "to dwell," suggesting an abode.⁵ The Greek O.T. translated it *homilia*, meaning association or companionship. Later traditions interpreted it to mean times of cohabitation. This seems quite unlikely to us. The Bible does not present sex as a "right" that women (or men either!) cannot live without. But ostracizing and snubbing a young woman, refusing to talk with her and refusing to treat her as part of the household she dwells in is an intolerable hurt, and is forbidden here.

11. *What was the penalty for killing a man? (21:12-14)*

³J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 307.

⁴Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

⁵Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

A person who struck another and caused him to die was to be put to death, unless it happened accidentally and unintentionally. In that case the manslayer had to flee to a place of safety prepared for this situation. But the presumptuous (willful) slayer was to be put to death, even if he fled to the Lord's altar for safety from vengeance. The "and" at the beginning of 21:14 is better rendered as "but."

This law was applied to non-Israelite foreigners, as well as Israelites. (Lev. 24:17, 21, 22).

Gen. 9:6: "Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." This law goes back to the time of Noah, when it was given to the whole human race.

In ancient times if a man was killed, his close relatives sought to avenge his death by killing the killer.

Human life is sacred according to the Torah (law of Moses). Whoever assails this sanctity forfeits his own life. But the life of the slayer is sacred too, and so his life was not to be taken if the death was accidental. But human life is so sacred that even an accidental killing brings drastic consequences, and the normal life pattern of the manslayer was interrupted.

The place for the manslayer to flee to was called a city of refuge. There were six of these designated to be set up in the land of Israel. See Num. 35:10-34; Deut. 19:1-10; 4:41-43; Joshua 20:1-9. Perhaps in the wilderness wanderings some temporary place of safety was designated.

But there was no place of security for a murderer! See Numbers 35:16-21. Killers have fled to sacred places hoping to escape punishment, both in eastern and western countries. David's general Joab and David's son Adonijah both did this, fleeing to the altar and clutching its horns. (I Kings 1:50; 2:28-34). It did not save Joab.

Ex. 21:13 describes an accidental killing as an act of God: "If . . . God deliver him into his hand; . . ." We do not know enough about God's workings in men's experiences to state positively how far this statement about God's actions should be applied. Is every man's every misfortune or

death under God's direction? Or do "time and chance" bring about events without any definite purpose or pattern? (Eccl. 9:11). We understand the scriptures to teach that "a [righteous] man's goings are ordered by the LORD" (Ps. 37:23), while recognizing that many choices are left up to us. King Saul declared that the Lord had delivered him into David's hand (I Sam. 24:18).

The idea that calamities (lightnings, windstorms, floods, etc.) are "acts of God" was widespread in the ancient Near East. Hammurabi's law (number 266) spoke about a "visitation of god" occurring in a sheepfold.

12. *What was the penalty for striking father or mother?* (21:15)

Those who smote father or mother were to be put to death. This act was a specific breaking of the commandment about honoring father and mother. (Ex. 20:12).

The verb translated *smite* (*nakah*) sometimes means to smite hard enough to kill. See Ex. 2:12. This suggests that the beating of parents referred to here was a violent striking and beating. Note that in 21:12 "smiting" could lead to death. The Jewish rabbis interpreted 21:15 to mean that only when a blow left a bruise upon parents was the death penalty to be inflicted. Certainly we do not regard their interpretation as being authoritative like the divine word itself. Neither do we consider that a non-injurious blow struck at parents is less reprehensible to God than a severe blow. It is the attitude of the heart that mattered most.

We must not disregard and dismiss this law about killing a child for smiting its parents as a "temporary cultural practice." Certainly in our Christian age we do not execute children for smiting parents. On the contrary, the prodigal son was allowed to live and was received back home with much joy (Luke 15:11-32). But God's hatred of smiting and cursing parents still continues. And unless there is a repentance (as in the case of the prodigal son), the smiter's punishment in hell will be infinitely worse than killing his body on earth!

Hammurabi's law (#195) prescribed that if a son struck

his father, his hand should be cut off. God took a more serious view of this offense than even Hammurabi did.

Compare Ex. 21:17 for more information concerning offenses against parents.

13. *What was the penalty for kidnapping? (21:16)*

The kidnapper was certainly to be put to death. God so hated this crime that He prescribed dire consequences. Men may not execute the kidnapper, but God will recompense him.

Deut. 24:7: "If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and he deal with him as a slave, or sell him, then that thief shall die: so shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee."

The kidnapper was condemned even if he had not yet collected his ransom and still had his victim.

The kidnapping law, of course, recalls to our minds the case of Joseph's brothers selling him (Gen. 37:25-28). God hated this act.

The Jewish rabbis held that this verse (21:16) meant that only if a person stole a man AND he was seen by witnesses in possession of the kidnapped one was he to be slain. Admittedly, the Hebrew conjunction is *and* and not *or*. Furthermore, criminals were not to be executed without witnesses to prove their guilt (Num. 35:30). Nonetheless, most commentators and translators think that the man-stealer was to be slain, even if his victim was not found with the abductor, if clear evidence of his guilt could be obtained. Possibly the ransom money or sale price money could be traced. We feel that the translation "or" in the middle of 21:16 is correct.

Other law codes in the ancient Near East also forbade kidnapping. Hammurabi's law (#14) directed that if a citizen stole the young son of another citizen, that he should be put to death. However, stealing a slave was not looked upon so seriously. Eshnunna law (#49) directed that a man caught with a stolen slave or slave girl was to surrender one slave for each one stolen.

14. *What was the penalty for cursing parents? (21:17)*

The one cursing father or mother was most certainly to be put to death.

Lev. 20:9: "For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him."

What does it mean to CURSE father or mother? The Hebrew verb (*qalal*) translated *curse* has several applications. Often it referred to language much like our modern slanderous profanity. See I Samuel 17:43; II Sam. 16:5. The dictionaries define it to mean "to esteem lightly, hence to revile, curse, or execrate." In Deut. 23:4 to *curse* refers to a curse of supernatural type, like voodoo or hexing. In I Sam. 2:30 the word *qalal* is translated "lightly esteem" and is set forth as the opposite of honoring. Jesus quoted Ex. 21:17 in Matt. 15:4 and Mark 7:10 to condemn the Pharisees for neglecting to care for their parents. obviously, therefore, to *curse* parents had a very broad meaning.

Respect for parents is commanded in the New Testament in Eph. 6:1. God does not feel less strongly now about those who curse their parents than He did in Moses' time.

15. *What was the penalty for injuring someone in a fight? (21:18-19)*

One who inflicted a non-fatal injury upon someone in a fight was to pay for the loss of the injured man's time off from work and to cause him to be completely healed, that is, pay for his medical care. Aside from these requirements, he was "quit," that is, clear and free from further penalty. The guilty party had to pay workman's compensation and health benefits, to express it in modern jargon. God cares about injuries and injustices, as well as about the loss of life.

If the smitten man died, then 21:12 would apply as the rule.

It seems to us that Ex. 21:18 refers to an unplanned, impromptu fight. The use of impromptu weapons like the fist⁶

⁶Both the Hebrew and the Greek have a word meaning *fist*. The Aramaic Targums and some other versions understand it as a stick or cudgel.

and the stone suggests that the blow was not premeditated.⁷ If the smiter had planned the deed he would have carried a knife or a club. Martin Noth⁸ does not feel that the text clearly indicates by mentioning fist and stone that there was no evil intent in the smiter. We concede that the evidence is not positive. But the law could be applied, whether the blow was planned or unplanned.

Laws about personal injuries were common in ancient Near Eastern law codes. Hammurabi's law #206 asserted that if a citizen struck another citizen in a brawl and inflicted an injury upon him, that the citizen was to swear that he had not struck him deliberately, and should pay for the physician. This stipulation is similar to that in Moses' law. Hammurabi added (in laws 207-208) that if the smitten one died because of his blow, that the smiter was to swear that it was not deliberate; and if the slain man was a member of the aristocracy, the slayer should pay one-half mina of silver; but if the slain man was a member of the commonality, the slayer was to pay one-third of a mina of silver. Thus Hammurabi made class distinctions which God did not make in the Torah. (Also we wonder how honest some of the oaths were!)

16. *What was the penalty for beating a slave to death? (21:20-21)*

For beating a slave to death, his master shall "certainly be punished." However, if the slave survived the beating for a day or so, the master was not to be punished because the financial loss incurred by the slave's death was considered punishment enough. "They are your possession."

We think that this passage refers to foreign slaves. Lev. 25:44-46 declares that Israelite bondmen were not to be made to serve with rigor.

The manner of inflicting the punishment on the slave-killing master is not specified. Some think the master was executed, as 21:12 directs. But this seems unlikely to us. If the punishment for killing a slave were the same as for killing

⁷Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

⁸*Op. cit.*, p. 181.

any other person, there would seem to be no purpose in this distinct law applying to slaves.

The word for *punish* is a word usually meaning "to take vengeance." This might make it appear therefore that some members of the slave's family would punish or kill the master in the usual ways of taking blood vengeance. But we doubt that foreign slaves would have relatives available to take such action.

We suppose that it was left to the Israelite authorities to instigate investigation and determine punishment in such cases.

The "rod" referred to was probably the instrument customarily used to chasten and impress a slave. See Prov. 10:13; 13:23. "Under his hand" means during the act of the beating, or very quickly thereafter.

The fact that a beaten slave lived a day or two was taken as proof that his master had not intended to kill him, and he therefore was exonerated from further penalty.

If all of this seems harsh and sub-Christian to you, consider the additional fact that the law (in 21:26-27) stated that permanent physical injuries to the slave, like loss of an eye or tooth, brought about his release from slavery. Also this very law in 21:20-21 hints that a strong public sentiment might arise in behalf of a slain slave and indignation might rise so high as to be difficult to repress without specific rules about the matter. The Israelites were not indifferent to the rights of a slave. Much less was God indifferent!

The protection of slaves afforded by this verse may seem to us a slight one. But it is the earliest trace of such protection known in legislation. God had to educate His people little by little, line upon line. He overlooked many things in olden times of which he now commands all men to repent (Acts 17:30).

Babylonian law was not concerned about the slave at all, but only about the loss to his master. If someone killed another man's slave, he had to pay one-third mina of silver and also forfeit other valuables. (Hammurabi's law #116). To the

Israelite a slave was a person, a human being created in the divine image, and whoever assaulted this divinely-given life was answerable for it and would surely be punished. This attitude and approach to the matter of slavery could eventually lead only to total emancipation.

17. *What was the penalty for accidentally causing a woman to have a miscarriage? (21:22)*

If two men were fighting and accidentally injured a woman in the fracas and caused her to have a miscarriage, the one who had caused the miscarriage was to be fined according as the woman's husband demanded and the judges gave sentence.⁹

If, however, harm followed, then the one who injured the woman was punished by being injured in a manner similar to the injury that he had inflicted.

What is this "harm" that might follow? This word ('*ason*) translated "harm" is found elsewhere in scripture only in Gen. 42:4, 38 and 44:29. In these passages it seems to signify serious harm, perhaps even death. We assume that it has this meaning here.

Was the *harm* that done to the mother, or to the unborn child, or both? We feel that it was the harm done to the mother because her violently-aborted fetus probably would die in nearly all such cases. The Jewish rabbis and the Targum of Onkelos understood the "harm" as referring to the death of the mother.¹⁰ We think that this certainly was one possibility that the verse relates to, and that this is indicated by the "life for life" judgment in 21:23. But the other penalties that are suggested ("eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc.") suggest that this law dealt with other possible injuries and effects besides the woman's death. The text says that the woman was *hurt* so as to have a miscarriage. She was not just frightened to the point of losing her baby (something that

⁹"As the judges determine" is a permissible but loose translation. Literally the text says only "In (or among, amidst) judges. . . ."

¹⁰Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

does indeed happen).

The law was general enough that it could apply in many different situations, both in cases when the women just happened to be too near men who started fighting; or when as wife of one she interfered with their quarrel. (Compare Deut. 25:11-12.)

The expression "that her fruit depart" could be literally translated "and her children go out" (of her womb). The word "children" is plural because it might be twins.

The word translated "fruit" is *yeled*. This word is almost always translated "child." (It is rendered that way seventy-two times in the King James Bible. See Gen. 21:8; Ex. 2:3, 10.) Sometimes it is rendered "boy" (Zech. 8:5), "son" (Ruth 1:5), or "young man" (Gen. 4:23; I kings 12:8).

The use in Ex. 21:22 of the word *yeled* to describe the woman's aborted fetus is surely no comfort to the advocates of "legalized" abortion. Some writers have used Ex. 21:22 to argue that a fetus is not really a child, and that the abortion of a fetus is not regarded in the law as equally serious to the death of a person after birth.¹¹ (Note Ex. 21:12). But the same term (*yeled*) describes the unborn child that refers to the child after birth.

The Greek O.T. renders 21:22, "And the child come out not perfectly formed." We do not consider this to be an authoritative translation; but it is worth noting that the Greek-speaking Jews understood the verse to refer to a non-liveable fetus.

Hammurabi (Laws 209-212) dictated that if a citizen struck another citizen's daughter and caused her to have a miscarriage, he was to pay ten shekels of silver for her fetus. If the woman died they were to put the striker's *daughter* to death. Hammurabi then decreed that if a citizen caused a commoner's daughter to have a miscarriage, he was to pay five shekels of silver; but if that woman died, he was to pay one-half mina of silver. The law of Moses did not make such

¹¹Surprisingly even Keil and Delitzsch, *ibid*, makes this allegation.

class distinctions among people.

18. *What was to be done if harm followed a miscarriage?* (20:23-25)

In such a case, the one who brought on the miscarriage by hurting the woman was punished in a degree according to what he had done - "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc." This is the so-called *lex talionis*, a Latin expression meaning law of retaliation. Compare Lev. 24:17-21.

The *lex talionis* may seem severe, but it is not a bad law. It makes the penalty fit the crime. It prevents extreme harsh retaliations. It was more valuable as a deterrent than as a penalty.

Cassuto¹² thinks that it is very unlikely that accidentally killing a pregnant woman was punishable by "life for life," when 21:13 says that accidental killers were not to be executed. Also Num. 35:31 indicates that a ransom was to be refused only for the life of a murderer. This led Cassuto to hold that the formula "life for life" is a stereotyped legal saying meaning that the punishment for a crime was to correspond generally to the crime itself, but did not always require exactly the same infliction as punishment. Thus "life for life" sometimes meant only a fair monetary compensation. We feel that this is probably correct; and that "life for life" here probably meant that the slayer was to spend his life in a city of refuge working to repay to the husband the loss of the life of the mother and baby.

Although there is no mention of the decision of *judges* in 21:23-25, the reference to judges in 21:22 causes us to think that the penalty to be inflicted was decided upon by judges. The references in Deut. 19:18-21 to judges deciding in another situation how to administer the "life for life, eye for eye" law strengthens our view that the judges decided the punishments of Ex. 21:23-25.

In ancient times wrongdoings were sometimes punished by the *law of unlimited revenge*. According to this system a

¹²*Op. cit.*, p. 276.

wrongdoer's entire family was wiped out for his misdeed (Gen. 34:25-31). In later times the "eye for an eye" law prevented such extreme punishments, and functioned as a *law of limited revenge*. While this was progress in human relationships, even it will not solve the fightings and enmities of society. To achieve this, men must accept the law taught by Christ, the *law of unlimited forgiveness*: "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." (Rom. 12: 20).¹³

Matthew 5:38-39: "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

The Jewish rabbis regarded "eye" and "tooth" as typical of all sorts of injuries, and this is probably true. They enumerated twenty-four bodily organs which come within the operation of this law. Probably that did not exhaust all the possible applications of the law.

Hammurabi gave several laws about personal injuries. He also employed the *lex talionis*, and decreed that if a citizen destroyed the eye of a member of the aristocracy, they should destroy his eye; and if he broke another citizen's bone, they should break his bone. Also if a citizen knocked out a tooth of a citizen of his rank, they were to knock out his tooth. (Laws 196-197, 200). Hammurabi's application of this law shows it was *not* always interpreted to mean that one paid the *value* of a tooth when he knocked one out. His own tooth was knocked out!

19. *What was the penalty for injuring slaves?* (21:26-27)

If a man inflicted permanent injury upon his slave, like destroying his eye or knocking out a tooth, the slave or slave girl was set free for the sake of the eye or tooth. We presume that other permanent injuries also brought about emancipation. Compare this law with 21:20-21.

¹³The author learned these three laws of human relationship from Dr. Najib Khouri, a gracious, wise, elderly Arab Christian of Beit Hanina, Israel.

Hammurabi (law 199) decreed that if a citizen destroyed the eye of another citizen's slave or broke the bone of another man's slave, he was to pay one-half his value. Hammurabi says nothing about a man's injuring his own slave.

20. *What was the penalty if an ox gored a man to death? (21:28-29)*

The ox was to be stoned to death, and its flesh was not to be eaten. The owner was then clear of further responsibility. However, if the ox was known to be a gorer in times past, and its owner had not kept it shut up, and it gored a man or woman to death, then the ox was stoned and its owner was also put to death. Probably injuries inflicted by other animals were settled by the example of the law about the ox.

Gen. 9:5-6: "Surely your blood, *the blood* of your lives, will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it: and at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

The ox that killed a man was slain because it had killed a human life, that which is a divine gift and has the image of God. So extreme is the act of taking a life that even the beast, though it has no moral sensibilities, was removed from existence to implant horror for killing. Guilty negligence on the part of the owner was reckoned to be a capital offense, though it could be commuted by a fine.

We suppose that the ox was not eaten because in being stoned it would not be properly bled for slaughtering. Also its carcass would be bruised. Also bloodguiltiness was imputed to the ox.

Law codes in the ancient Near East had several laws similar to Ex. 21:28-29. Hammurabi's law (No. 250) said that if an ox, when it was walking along the street, gored a citizen to death, the case was not subject to claim. The law of Moses required the ox to be slain in such cases.

Hammurabi also commanded (laws #251-252) that if a citizen's ox was a gorer and the city council made it known to him that it was a gorer, but he did not dehorn it or tie up the

ox, and that ox gored to death a member of the aristocracy, he should pay one-half mina of silver. (This law resembles Ex. 21:32). Eshnunna law 54 is quite similar. We notice in these laws a somewhat less positive view of the sacredness of human life than the Torah presupposes.

21. *How might the owner of a killing ox escape execution? (21:30-31)*

The owner of the ox could escape execution if the other people involved (the family of the dead man and the authorities) agreed to lay upon him a ransom for his life. In that case he had to pay whatever was laid upon him as the redemption of his life (soul, Heb. *nepesh*). The words *redemption* and *ransom* are important words for the later teachings about salvation. Note Psalm 49:7-8.

Ex. 21:31 emphasizes the impartiality of the law. The owner of an ox that killed someone after the owner had been warned was either sentenced to death or had a ransom charged for him, regardless of whether the ox gored a son or a daughter. It is barely possible that the law in 21:31 may reflect an acquaintance with a Babylonian law (Hammurabi #229-230). This law sentenced the *son* of a house builder to death if the builder built a house and it collapsed and killed the son of the house owner; the law sentenced the builder himself to death if the house he built collapsed and killed the house owner. The Babylonian law was a severe deterrent, but it did punish the innocent son for the sins of his father. The Hebrew law put the penalty where it belonged, upon the negligent manslayer. The children were not to be put to death for the sins of the father (Deut. 24:16).

22. *What was the penalty if an ox gored a slave? (21:32)*

The owner of the ox gave to the master of the slave (whether the slave was male or female) thirty shekels of silver and the ox was stoned.

This law is one of the very few rules in Israel's law which shows a differentiation in the evaluation of bond and free men. But the slave was still a person, and the ox that gored the slave was slain.

Ex. 21:32 reveals the price of a dead slave - thirty pieces (shekels) of silver! See Zech. 11:12; Matt. 26:15.

Hammurabi's law (No. 252) prescribed a payment of one-third of a mina of silver as payment to a slave's owner if he were fatally gored, but the goring ox was not to be destroyed.

23. *What was the penalty for causing an animal's death in a pit?* (21:33-34)

If a man dug a pit and did not cover it adequately, and an animal belonging to someone else fell into it, the owner of the pit had to pay for the dead animal, and the dead beast was given to the pit owner. (A dead ox would probably be more trouble than benefit! Imagine trying to remove a dead ox from a pit!) The text does not indicate what judgment was to be given if the animal in the pit was only injured.

Pits of various types were common in Israel. They were dug into the bed rock (which is often very near the surface), for water cisterns, for grain storage, for traps for animals (II Sam. 23:20), or prisons for men (Jer. 38:6), or military defences (Jer. 41:9).

The principle of personal liability for the physical safety of people and animals is clearly stated in God's law. We who are Christians do not have in the New Testament all the detailed instructions about safety which are given in the law, such as rules about covering pits or building railings around the edges of flat roof tops. But we who are under the gospel of Christ are more obligated to protect the safety and lives of people than were the people under the law. We can receive guidance from the law and internal motivation from the Holy Spirit within.

Romans 13:9-10: "If there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law."

24. *What was the judgment if one man's ox killed another man's ox?* (21:35-36)

In such a case the live ox was sold and the money was divided between both men. The dead ox was also divided

between them. This provision very probably ended up with both men being losers, but not losers to the degree that they would have been without this protective law.

If the ox that killed the other ox was known to be a gorer in times past and the owner had been warned and had not kept it in, then the owner assuredly paid for the dead ox totally, but the dead beast was to be his (21:36).

One of the laws at Eshnunna (No. 53) was very similar to the Hebrew law. It decreed that if an ox gored another ox and caused its death, that both ox owners should divide among themselves the price of the live ox and also the equivalent of the dead ox.

The concern often expressed in the O.T. prophets for fair dealing had its roots in the law of Moses, and, of course, ultimately in the very nature of God. To a struggling Israelite farmer a fair payment for the death of an ox might mean the difference between subsistence and hunger, or between freedom and slavery for debt.¹⁴

THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

22 If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall pay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. (2) If the thief be found breaking in, and be smitten so that he die, there shall be no bloodguiltiness for him. (3) If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be bloodguiltiness for him; he shall make restitution: if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. (4) If the theft be found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall pay double.

(5) If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall let his beast loose, and it feed in another man's field; of the

¹⁴Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution.

(6) If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the shocks of grain, or the standing grain, or the field are consumed; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

(7) If a man shall deliver unto his neighbor money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, he shall pay double. (8) If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall come near unto God, *to see* whether he have not put his hand unto his neighbor's goods. (9) For every matter of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, *or* for any manner of lost thing, whereof one saith, This is it, the cause of both parties shall come before God; he whom God shall condemn shall pay double unto his neighbor.

(10) If a man deliver unto his neighbor an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep; and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no man seeing it: (11) the oath of Je-ho-vah shall be between them both, whether he hath not put his hand unto his neighbor's goods; and the owner thereof shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution. (12) But if it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the owner thereof. (13) If it be torn in pieces, let him bring it for witness; he shall not make good that which was torn.

(14) And if a man borrow aught of his neighbor, and it be hurt, or die, the owner thereof not being with it, he shall surely make restitution. (15) If the owner thereof be with it, he shall not make it good: if it be a hired thing, it came for its hire.

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

(18) Thou shalt not suffer a sorceress to live.

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

(20) He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto Je-ho-vah only, shall be utterly destroyed. (21) And a sojourner shalt thou not wrong, neither shalt thou oppress him: for ye were sojourners in the land of E-gypt. (22) Ye shall not afflict any widow, or

fatherless child. (23) If thou afflict them at all, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; (24) and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

(25) If thou lend money to any of my people with thee that is poor, thou shalt not be to him as a creditor; neither shall ye lay upon him interest. (26) If thou at all take thy neighbor's garment to pledge, thou shalt restore it unto him before the sun goeth down: (27) for that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.

(28) Thou shalt not revile God, nor curse a ruler of thy people. (29) Thou shalt not delay to offer of thy harvest, and of the outflow of thy presses. The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. (30) Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, *and* with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with its dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me. (31) And ye shall be holy men unto me: therefore ye shall not eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. What was the penalty (or required restitution) for stealing a sheep? An ox? Why the difference? (22:1)
3. What distinction was made in the responsibility upon one who smote a thief in the night so that he died, from the responsibility upon who killed a thief in the daytime? Why? (22:2-3)
4. What punishment was imposed upon a thief if a stolen animal was found in his possession? (22:4)
5. What was the penalty for letting one's animal graze in another's field? (22:5)
6. What penalty was imposed for letting fire burn in a neighbor's

- grain field? (22:6)
7. Who decided what was to be done when goods entrusted to someone were stolen? (22:7-9)
 8. What was to be done if entrusted animals died while under the care of someone? (22:10-11)
 9. What were people to do about borrowed things that were damaged or hurt? (22:14-15).
 10. What requirements were imposed upon those who seduced virgins? (22:16-17)
 11. What was the law about sorceresses (witches)? (22:18)
 12. What was the penalty for immorality with a beast? (22:19)
 13. What punishment was given to those who sacrificed to other gods?
 14. What treatment was to be given to sojourners? Why? (22:21)
 15. Who claimed the poor people as “my people”? (22:25)
 16. What interest was to be charged to poor people? (22:25)
 17. How long could garments held as security for a loan be kept? Why? (22:26-27; Compare Lev. 25:35-37)
 18. What was the law about reviling rulers (and God)? (22:28)
 19. Who quoted this law? (Acts 23:5)
 20. What was to be done with the firstborn? (22:29-30)
 21. What sort of men were the people to be unto God? (22:31)
 22. What rule was given about eating torn flesh? (22:31)
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EXODUS TWENTY-TWO: GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES (CONTINUED)

1. Laws about theft; 22:1-4.
2. Laws about damaging others' produce; 22:5-6.
3. Loss of thing entrusted to others; 22:7-15.
4. Seduction of a virgin; 22:16-17.
5. Capital crimes; 22:18-20.
6. Laws protecting the weak; 22:21-27.
 - a. The sojourner; 22:21.

- b. The widow and orphan; 22:22-24.
 - c. The poor debtor; 22:25-27.
 - 7. Duties to rulers and to God; 22:28-31.
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EXODUS TWENTY-TWO: PROPERTY, PEOPLE, POTENTATES

I. Property.

- 1. Restitution for stolen goods; 22:1, 4.
- 2. Repayment for pasturing or burning fields; 22:5-6.
- 3. Responsibility for goods left in trust; 22:7-13.

II. People.

- 1. A homeowner - Right to self-protection; 22:2.
- 2. A thief - His life is to be spared; 22:3.
- 3. A virgin - Seduction brings consequences; 22:16-17.
- 4. A sorceress - Execution; 22:18.
- 5. A sodomite - Execution; 22:19.
- 6. An idolater - Execution; 22:20.
- 7. A sojourner - Kind treatment; 22:21.
- 8. A widow or orphan - Not afflicted; 22:22-24.
- 9. A poor man - Kind credit treatment; 22:25-27.

III. Potentates.

- 1. Rulers - Do not curse; 22:28.
 - 2. God; 22:29-31.
 - a. Offer your produce.
 - b. Offer your firstborn.
 - c. Be holy; eat no torn flesh.
-

THE SACREDNESS OF HUMAN TRUSTS (22:7-13)

- 1. God recognizes the owner's possession of entrusted goods; 22:7.

2. God gives judgment in disputes over trusts; 22:8-9, 11.
 3. God holds a trustee responsible for theft; 22:12.
 4. God excuses the trustee in cases of violence; 22:13.
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CRIMES THAT FORFEIT LIFE (22:18-20)

1. Sorcery; 22:18.
 2. Sodomy; 22:19.
 3. Idolatry; 22:20.
-

WITCHCRAFT! (22:18)

1. Dangerous;
 2. Deceptive;
 3. Doomed.
-

GOD'S EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAN'S WORSHIP! (22:20)

1. Based on God's nature.
 2. Based on non-reality of other gods.
 3. Based on fact of God's creating man.
-

TREATMENT OF THE WEAK AND THE MIGHTY (22:21-31)

- I. Treatment of the weak; 22:21-27.
 1. The sojourner - Not wronged or oppressed; (22:21).
 2. The widow and orphan - Not afflicted; (22:22-24).
 3. The poor debtor - Gentleness in lending; (22:25-27).

- II. Treatment of the mighty; 22:28-31.
 1. Treatment of rulers - Curse not; (22:28)
 2. Treatment of God; (22:28-31)
 - a. Do not revile; (22:28)
 - b. Bring your offerings and firstfruits; (22:29-30)
 - c. Be holy in diet; (22:31)
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

1. *What is in Exodus 22?*

Exodus twenty-two continues God's *covenant* ordinances, which are given in Ex. 21-23. The chapter deals with punishment of thieves, damage to field produce, goods left in care of non-owners, etc. The chapter has a section of laws protecting the weak (22:21-27), and closes with ordinances about duties to God (22:28-31.)

It might be helpful to remember the contents of this chapter by saying that it has ordinances about property, people, and potentates (rulers and God).

2. *What was the penalty for stealing an ox or sheep?* (22:1)

For stealing an ox and killing or selling it, a man had to restore or pay five oxen for the stolen one. The penalty for stealing and selling a sheep was four sheep. The word *sheep* (*seh*) may also refer to a goat. Killing or selling the animal would indicate that the theft was deliberate.

The difference in penalty for stealing an ox from that of stealing a sheep is probably due simply to the greater value of the ox. It took years to train an ox well.

The fourfold restitution for a stolen sheep is referred to in King David's condemnation of the man who stole the little ewe lamb: "He shall restore the lamb fourfold" (II Sam. 12:6). Prov. 6:30-31 mentions a *sevenfold* restitution of stolen things. Perhaps that passage uses the larger number to emphasize the seriousness of theft, without meaning to be

legally precise in defining the punishment.

People have always made harsh laws against thievery, because it hits them where it hurts, in the pocketbook. They may wink at immorality (if no one is physically injured), but theft is not so excusable among men. Hammurabi's law (No. 8) reflects this common human feeling toward theft, and declared that if a man stole an ox or a sheep, or ass, or such, and it belonged to the church or state, he had to make a *thirtyfold* restitution. If it belonged to a private citizen, he had to make it good *tenfold*; and if he did not have enough to make restitution, he was put to *death*!

Possibly the law of Moses contained the law in 22:1 to oppose the extreme sentence of Hammurabi, which was probably a prevailing approach to punishing thieves. Certainly God's law never allowed that a man's life be taken for offenses against property.

Ex. 22:4 gives a related law about stealing animals. See below.

3. *How might the time of a theft affect its consequences? (22:2-3)*

If a thief was caught breaking in at *night* and was killed in the act, his slayer was not held accountable for the thief's death. If the sun had risen and the thief was smitten and slain, his slayer had bloodguiltiness (Heb., *blood*) upon him. The dead thief's relatives could attempt to take the life of the one killing the thief. Compare 21:12.

The proper punishment of a thief caught stealing in the daytime was that he had to make restitution (repay double; see 22:4, 7). If the thief could not repay, then he was sold for his theft. Compare 21:2.

The principle is that human life is greater than property. If the thief were breaking in at night, there was the possibility that he was going to harm or kill the householder or his family; thus the householder was not held accountable for striking and slaying the thief because this may have been necessary self-defence. But in the daytime the thief's intentions (whether he was just stealing or seeking to harm people)

would probably be visible by his actions. He was not to be smitten just to make certain that he did try to kill someone.

Admittedly 22:2 does not mention the *night* time, but the contrast of 22:2 and 22:3 indicates that 22:2 does refer to a nighttime breakin.

"Breaking in" (literally, "digging in") presupposes the houses were made of mud brick or other easily removeable materials.

The way Hammurabi's law dealt with thieves breaking in makes us shudder. If a citizen made a breach in a house, they put him to death in front of that breach, and then walled him up in the breach! (Law No. 21). If a citizen committed robbery and was caught, he was put to death.

4. *What was the penalty for a thief "caught with the goods"?* (22:4)

Whatever he was caught with (ox, or ass, or sheep), he had to pay double. (It seems that this was in addition to restoring the stolen animal.)

Possibly the reason for the lesser penalty (double instead of fourfold) was that if the stolen item was still with the thief, he yet might repent of his crime, acknowledge his guilt, and restore what he had stolen. He could not do this after the animal was disposed of.

The R.S.V. of the Bible places 22:3b-4 right after 22:1. The reason for doing this is that verse four deals with the same subject as verse one. We do not feel that anyone has the right to rearrange the Biblical text. The Greek Bible gives the verses in the same order as the Hebrew Bible and most English versions. Furthermore, the laws in Ex. 21-23 are not set forth as a comprehensive and systematic presentation of all Israel's laws. They are sort of a "sampler" of the fuller code of laws in Leviticus, Deuteronomy, etc. It is an indication of misunderstanding of the section (chs. 21-23) to assume that the section originally had all laws on the same topics grouped together in a polished and systematic legal and literary style.

5. *What was the penalty for pasturing another man's field?* (22:5)

The one who pastured another man's field or vineyard was to make restitution out of the *best* part of his own field or vineyard.

It appears that the pasturing of the field was intentional. The text could be translated literally, "If a man . . . shall *send* his cattle and cause them to eat in a field of another," The Greek translates *send* as *aphiemi*, meaning to send away or let go. The law would be applicable, whether the pasturing was intentional or unintentional.

The words *eat* in 22:5 and *consume* in 22:6 are in Hebrew the same word (*ba'ar*). This word usually (but not always) means to consume by fire. The New English Bible translates 22:5 as "burn off."

Beast in 22:5 is a collective word referring to cattle.

The law of Moses set a stiff penalty for presumptuously grazing another's field. Isa. 3:14 speaks of elders and princes in the land who ate up the vineyards of the poor. Probably some inconsiderate people thought they could profit more by pasturing another man's field than the law would possibly exact from them in punishment. Therefore God decreed that they had to make restitution from the best part of their fields.

No one pastures his neighbor's field and still loves his neighbor as himself. Lev. 19:18.

6. *What was the judgment for burning another man's field?* (22:6)

He that kindled the fire was surely to make restitution.

The fire referred to "got away" and "went forth." Small fires started for cooking or burning off stubble might break out in a strong breeze (and such a breeze is customary in Palestine), and catch in thorns, and quickly spread to fields of standing grain. Burning off fields of grain was a sure way to arouse an agitated response! See Judges 15:4-6; II Sam. 14:30-31.

Palestinian thorns are very flammable in the dry season and are used as fuel by the poor. The author has vivid memories of helping fight a fire in the thistles and thorns on Tell

Gezer in Israel. The strong breeze had caused a fire set in a nearby wheat field to burn off stubble to break out into the adjoining uncultivated hillside. The thorns and thistles and sheep dung in the hot dry late June air were almost explosively flammable, and the flames could hardly be beaten out.

7. *What was to be done if goods left in someone's care were stolen? (22:7)*

If the thief were caught, he had to pay double. This refers back to 22:4, where a thief caught with the goods was sentenced to pay double to the owner.

8. *What was to be done if goods left in someone's care were stolen and the thief was not caught? (22:8-9)*

In such a case the keeper of the goods had to clear himself. The keeper of the goods would come "unto God" (K.J.V., "Unto the judges") to determine whether he had stolen or embezzled the goods left in his care. The Greek and Latin translations add that the keeper was to swear that he had not taken the goods. God would reveal in some way who had transgressed, and whoever was condemned had to pay his neighbor double. Possibly this was done by the priests by their Urim and Thummim or other means of obtaining information from God (Ex. 28:30; Ezra 2:63; Deut. 1:16-17).

We prefer the translation "unto God" rather than "unto the judges" in 22:8. "Before God" is the Greek rendering here. Compare 21:6 and 22:28 on the translation of *elohim* as *God* or as *judges*.

If an owner of goods had entrusted the goods to someone and the goods disappeared, and then the owner located his lost livestock (or clothing or whatever it was), he could declare, "This is it!" "That's mine!" The Israelites did not follow the Anglo-Saxon practice of "Finders-keepers." A lost object remained the possession of its original owner, who could claim it on sight.

The practice of settling disputes over property in the presence of God (or "the gods") was common in the ancient Near East. Hammurabi's law (No. 120) commanded that a dispute about grain that disappeared while in the care of

someone was to be settled "in the presence of god," that is at the local idol sanctuary, which doubled as the court of justice. Certainly there is no evidence here that Moses borrowed his law from Hammurabi. Hammurabi decreed that the owner of the grain should go to their gods for the truth. Moses had the accused keeper to go before God to clear himself. The Torah here protected the accused man.

9. *How was a case involving uncertainty about the loss of livestock to be settled? (22:10-13)*

If livestock in the care of someone besides its owner died or was hurt or driven away (by enemy raiders or attacked by animals), and no one saw it happen, an oath in Jehovah's name was sworn out as to whether the keeper had stolen or slaughtered the animal for himself. In some way Jehovah would make known the truth of the matter. If the keeper was innocent, no restitution was made. Natural losses (from beasts or sickness, etc.) were not the responsibility of the keeper.

If wild beasts had killed a sheep or other animal, the keeper could bring the remaining pieces of the animal as evidence of what had happened. The keeper might rescue "two legs or a piece of an ear." (Amos 3:12).

If the animal(s) had been stolen from the one keeping them, the keeper had to make restitution to the owner. The keeper was responsible to protect against thievery.

Jacob spoke to his father-in-law, Laban, about animals stolen while under his care: "Of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night" (Gen. 31:39).

The Jewish Talmud applied 22:7 to an unpaid custodian and 22:10 to a paid keeper of goods.¹ This has no authority to us, but it was probably generally true, because objects (as in 22:7) would usually be cared for without pay, but livestock would probably be kept by a paid guardian.

10. *What was done about borrowed animals that died or were hurt? (22:14-15)*

¹Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

If the owner was not present when they were hurt, the one who borrowed the animals had to make restitution. If the owner was there when it happened, the borrower was not held responsible for the damage. Presumably the owner could have done something in such a case to prevent the loss.

If the keeper had hired (or rented) the animal and it was hurt or died, the renter did not have to make it good. The owner assumed this risk in return for the hire given to him.

"Borrow" in 22:14 is from the same verb that is used in 3:22 with reference to "asking" (or "borrowing") jewelry of the Egyptians. The verb itself leaves open the question as to whether the object was to be returned or not. But we feel that in this passage (22:14-15) the return of the goods is certainly implied.

An alternate translation of 22:15b has been suggested by Noth and others: "If the man [through whom the damage came] is a hired man, the damage shall be charged to his hire." This reading suggests the carelessness of a hired man as opposed to the care of the owner (John 10:12). The word translated "hired thing" does frequently mean a hired laborer or hireling (Job 14:6; Lev. 25:53). But it does not always mean that. See Isa. 7:20 where it just means "hired." We must agree with Keil and Delitzsch that this is not a good translation. The Hebrew simply reads, "If [it is] a hired [thing], it came in (or with) its hire." The past tense of the verb *came* argues against the idea that the verse refers to a future repayment coming out of a hired man's wages.

11. *What were the consequences if a man seduced a virgin?* (22:16-17)

He had to pay her father the bride-money (dowry), and take the woman as his wife, and could never divorce her. See Deut. 22:28-29. The dowry was fifty shekels of silver. If her father absolutely refused (the *absolutely* is stressed) to give her to him, the man still had to pay the marriage price.

If the woman had been a betrothed virgin, then both the

man and the woman were put to death. See Deut. 22:23-24. If the man forced the woman and she cried for help, only the man was slain. See Deut. 22:25-27.

It might seem strange to insert this section about seducing a virgin right after discussing the property laws. But a man's daughters were his property, although few men looked upon children as no more than property. In their culture a young woman who was not a virgin was generally rejected as a candidate for marriage. See Deut. 22:14ff. Thus, to violate the woman meant a probable financial loss to the father, to say nothing of the feelings of the girl.

The laws in Ex. 22:16-17 and Deut. 22:23-27 partly explain the consternation of Joseph, husband of Mary, in Matt. 1:9. Would Mary be sentenced to die? Would she be compelled to marry the father of her child?

The law in Ex. 22:16-17 is not full and complete, as is the law on the same subject in Deut. 22:22-29. This points up again that the covenant ordinances in Ex. 21-23 are not designed to be an exhaustive law code but a "sampler" of the laws later to be given in full.

12. *What was to be done with a sorceress (witch)? (22:18)*

She was not to be allowed to live. (I Samuel 28:3, 9)

This verse does NOT give authority to Christians now to execute witches, whether real or unreal. We are not under the covenant of the law of Moses which commanded this. Furthermore, to force confessions out of witches (or anyone else) by torture was never part of the Jewish law, much less of Christian doctrine.

Other passages condemning witchcraft, sorcery, consulting with a "familiar spirit," etc. include Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:10-11; I Kings 21:6; I Chron. 10:13; Isa. 8:19-20; Micah 5:12. The New Testament condemns sorcery and witchcraft in Gal. 5:20; Rev. 21:8; 22:15. It is an "abomination unto Jehovah."

Witchcraft has always been a forbidden practice for the people of God. It is an attempt to bypass the rule of God in nature and human life. It was a capital offense under the

law. We must not be involved with it, even to learn about it. Many who have been involved with it testify that it is dangerous. But we should not avoid it just for that reason. Our reason for avoiding it is that God says it is sin.

Although specifically forbidden by Israelite law, sorcery continued through much of Israel's history. It was also commonly practiced by other nations. See Ex. 7:11; Isa. 47:9, 12; Dan. 2:2; Num. 24:1.

The Hebrew word for *witch* in 22:18 is feminine, probably because many of those who practiced sorcery as a profession were woman. However, the law applied against men sorcerers as well.² See Lev. 20:2.

As an illustration of the character of witchcraft, we cite from an article in the *Joplin (Mo.) Globe*, Aug. 7, 1975, concerning a man and wife in Salem, Mo., who practice witchcraft. They declare that they are not satanists, and believe that Jesus Christ lived and was a great healer. But they object to Christian doctrine and the idea that humans have the ability to really know what God is. (This is a denial that God has ever revealed Himself through His prophets or in His word.) They tell of dancing nude under the full moon inside concentric circles of sulfur to gather power to heal or influence an event. Facing retirement, the couple said, "We feel a little sorrow in retiring, but it's not as bad as it used to be in the old days. In those days you didn't just retire. You were sacrificed in a ritual."

13. *What was the penalty for immorality with a beast?* (22:19)

Whoever lay with (that is, performed a sex act) a beast was surely to be put to death.

The verse begins in Hebrew with "All" (or "Everyone who"). So also do the parallel passages which condemn this

²The Greek translation of the Hebrew word for sorcerer is *pharmakeus*, one who deals in drugs and poison, a sorcerer, a poisoner. The Hebrew word for one having a familiar spirit is 'ob, meaning a hollow place, particularly a hollow space in the belly which was supposedly inhabited by the spirit, and from which came the muttering and peeping sounds. The Greek translation of 'ob is *eggastimuthos*, meaning "one making utterance in the belly."

sin. (Lev. 18:23; 20:16; Deut. 27:1). *All* must die who do this. But *WE* must now leave this judgment to God, although such acts should result in suspension from a church.

This unnatural act was partly legal among the Hittites. Those who did evil with a pig were to die. But those doing this with a horse or mule were free of penalty.³

In Canaanite (Ugaritic) literature, there is a story of Baal (the god) coupling with a cow in order to be saved magically from death. Also in the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh there are references to the relations of the goddess Ishtar with various animals.⁴ The Hebrews were NOT to be like their pagan neighbor nations.

14. *What was the punishment for sacrificing to other gods?* (22:20)

Such people were to be utterly destroyed. Those who served other gods were to be stoned to death. Deut. 17:2, 3, 5; 13:1-16.

The verb translated "utterly destroyed" comes from the verb *haram*, "to utterly destroy." (The related noun is *herem*, an accursed thing, something devoted to destruction, something set apart for God's use or for destruction at God's orders.) The word *haram* has religious overtones absent in other words meaning kill or slaughter. Those who sacrificed to other gods were accursed, put under the ban, and devoted to destruction.⁵

15. *What was not to be done to sojourners?* (22:21)

They were not to be wronged (cheated) or oppressed. The Israelites had once been sojourners in Egypt and knew the feeling of strangers in a foreign land. Shielding an alien from wrong is a basic act of Godliness. Compare 23:9.

³Hittite Laws No. 199-200, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, James B. Pritchard, ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1955), p. 197.

⁴Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

⁵The *herem* may refer to something "devoted" to God in a good sense, as for sacrifice, as well as something devoted to destruction. See Lev. 27:21, 28; Ezek. 44:29. But with both meanings the idea is present that the *herem* ("devoted thing") is set apart for God's disposal.

The "sojourners" referred to were resident aliens living amongst the Israelites. See Ex. 20:10; 23:12.

Deut. 10:18-19: "Jehovah loveth the sojourner, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the sojourner;" Compare Lev. 19:34; Matt. 25:35.

Note the singular *thou* and the plural *ye* in this verse. Right treatment of strangers is both an individual and a collective responsibility.

Love for aliens was not the practice in most ancient nations. The Egyptians hated "strangers," and the Greeks called them barbarians.

16. *What was the penalty for afflicting widows and orphans?* (22:22-24)

God would hear the prayer and cry of these lonely people and His wrath would grow hot, and He would cause their afflictors to be slain with the sword. Killing with the sword refers to wars in which men and their families would perish.

All through the scriptures God reveals that He has a special protective love for the widows and fatherless. See Deut. 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19-21; 26:12-13; Ps. 94:6; Isa. 1:23; 10:2; Jer. 7:5-7; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5. In the New Testament we have James 1:27; Mark 12:40. If there is an especially hot corner in hell, it is reserved for those who cheat and oppress any widow or orphan.

God's *wrath* is often referred to in scripture. See Ps. 69:24; Rev. 14:10. We should fear the wrath of God.

The "surely" in 22:23 is emphatic.

Ex. 22:22 begins (in Hebrew) "*Every* widow and orphan. . . ." Placing the word *every* (or *all*) first stresses the fact that this command applies with reference to ALL. (Compare 22:19, which also starts with the word *all*.)

The punishment of "making your wives widows and your children fatherless" is a severe but strikingly appropriate punishment to those who afflict any widow or orphan.

17. *What were those who loaned money NOT to do?* (22:25).

They were not to speak and act roughly to their debtors. Neither were they to lay interest charges upon these people.

Note that the poor are called "my people" (GOD'S people).

The Israelites were not to act like the demanding creditors in II Kings 4:1 and Matt. 18:28, and seize a debtor or his family or land.

The law about not charging interest applied only to Israelite debtors. They could charge interest to foreigners. Deut. 23:19-21.

Note the switching between *thou* (singular) and *ye* (plural) in 22:25. The duty of not charging interest was both individual and collective.

Nehemiah (5:3-10) condemned wealthy Jews for charging usury (interest) to their less fortunate brothers. Compare Psalm 15:5.

Christ told us to give not even expecting the principal back, much less any interest. (Luke 6:34-35). Christians must be even more gracious and generous to their needy brethren than Ex. 22:25 requires.

In modern times money is usually loaned for commercial purposes, to increase a man's capital, increase his business, or enhance his comfort. It is proper that a reasonable interest or payment be collected for this help. Thus Ex. 22:25 does not mean we should demand that our banks stop charging interest. Jesus himself approved the taking of interest from a bank (Matt. 25:27; Luke 19:23). But this is quite a different thing from making gain out of a neighbor's need or being callous to the needs of a brother in the Lord.

18. *What restriction was made about taking security for loans?* (22:26-27)

Items that were necessary for a man's life were not to be taken as security (or pledge) for a loan. A creditor could not take a poor man's garment. It might be the only clothing he had. In the daytime it was his clothing. In the nighttime it was his bed covering, if he even had a bed.

Another item that could not be kept as security for a loan was a handmill or mill stone (Deut. 24:6). Without these

items a poor man (or woman) could not grind grain for his daily bread.

If the poor man's garment was taken as loan security, it had to be returned to him before the sun went down the same day. Taking a pledge was legal, but barely so.

God said in 22:27, "When he crieth unto me, I will hear!" This verse seems to be set as a parallel passage to part of 22:23.

The backdrop of many of God's laws about loving one's neighbor is the marvelous truth about God: "I AM GRACIOUS" (or compassionate).

19. *How were the Israelites NOT to speak about their rulers?* (22:28)

They were not to revile them nor curse them. This applied to rulers who were unreasonable, unjust, and harsh, as well as to the noble and respected ones.

The apostle Paul quoted this verse in Acts 23:5. Compare Rom. 13:1-7; Heb. 13:17; I Peter 2:13-17.

The King James version has "Thou shalt not revile the *gods*." The marginal reading gives "judges." The Greek O.T. also reads, "Thou shalt not revile the *gods*." This is an abominable translation. The O.T. nowhere recognizes the existence of other gods. Much less does it command us to speak respectfully of them.

The word translated *gods* in King James version is *elohim*, the word which is usually translated *God*. The word is plural in form (though singular in meaning when referring to God), and is therefore used to refer to the gods of all nations. Furthermore, the word *elohim* basically means *mighty ones*. See Gen. 23:6. (Its singular form *el* means "a mighty one, a powerful one."). Because of this meaning "mighty ones," *elohim* sometimes refers to judges or other mighty rulers among men. See Ex. 21:6; 22:8. Also it refers to angels (Ps. 8:5), which are mighty.

We think that here in Ex. 22:28 *elohim* refers to judges or other dignitaries among men. The fact that it is made parallel with "ruler of thy people" supports this view.

Whether the reviling and cursing is directed at God or earthly judges, it should not be done.

Reville is from the same Hebrew word translated "curse" in 21:17 ("curseth father or mother"). See notes on that verse for the meanings implied by *curse*.

Lev. 24:15-16 tells of one who blasphemed God's name and was stoned to death for doing so. God's name is holy.

"Reviling the king" is a bad act for God's children. Eccl. 10:20: "Revile not the king, no not in thy thoughts," Compare I Kings 21:10. Jude 8 speaks of evil men who "set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities." (Jude even goes so far as to indicate that we would do well not to rail at the devil.)

If the apostles Paul and Peter could direct the early church to honor the emperor (Nero!), we need to shut our mouths when tempted to speak harsh things against our rulers. We may reprove wicked acts, but we should not condemn people.

Keil and Delitzsch⁶ suggest that in 22:28 the "reviling" of God refers to disregarding His threats with reference to the poor (vss. 22-23), and withholding offerings of the firstborn, etc. This interpretation ties the verse closely to its setting, but it seems to us to restrict the applications of "revile" too much.

20. *What were people to do with the fruits they produced and their firstborn?*

These were to be brought to the Lord (at least certain parts of their harvest were to be brought to the Lord). Compare 23:19.

Ex. 22:29 speaks (literally) of "thy fulness and thy tear." *Tear* seems to refer to juice or liquid that could form drops, as from a wine press. Num. 18:27 speaks of the "fulness of thy winepress."

Ex. 22:29 may refer to several (or all) types of offerings

⁶*Op. cit.*, p. 143.

of grain and produce, and not just to the firstfruits, although it certainly includes the firstfruits, and may refer to them primarily. The Greek version renders it, "Thou shalt not keep back the first-fruits of thy threshing floor and [wine] press."

The Israelites were not to delay offering their firstfruits or any other offerings. This would sometimes be a temptation.

The law about giving firstfruits and firstborn (men and beasts) is given more fully in Lev. 19:23-25; Num. 15:17-21; 18:12-17; Deut. 26:1-11; 15:19-20. The first produce of everything was the Lord's.

The firstborn sons were "given" by giving to the LORD five shekels of silver as a redemption price for them. See Ex. 13:2, 11-15. Firstborn animals were all either brought to the LORD (to His priests), or slain. Compare Num. 3:46-48; Deut. 15:19. Part of the meat of firstborn animals went to the priests as part of their livelihood. (Num. 18:15, 19).

The firstborn animal was left seven days with its dam (mother), and then on the eighth day was brought to the LORD as a sacrifice and offering. Apparently, in its first seven days the animal was not sufficiently developed to be regarded as a suitable sacrifice. Compare Lev. 22:27.

21. *What sort of men were the Israelites to be unto God?* (22:31)

They were to be *holy* men.

Among other ways, this holiness was to be shown by what they ate and did not eat. They were to eat no flesh of animals that had been killed and torn (chewed up) by beasts. Such flesh was to be cast to the dogs. They must not eat carrion.

All Israel was a holy nation. Ex. 19:6; Lev. 19:2. On the meaning of *holy*, see notes on Ex. 19:5-6.

Lev. 17:15 decreed that those eating an animal that died of itself or was torn by beasts were ceremonially unclean till the evening. Compare Ezekiel 4:14.

Presumably the rule forbidding the eating of animals torn in the field rested on the fact that such animals were not properly bled in slaughtering. The people who ate of them would eat blood. See Lev. 17:11-15.

What lesson or truth is there for Christians in the ancient rule about not eating torn beasts? Firstly, Christians should practice the same restriction, since we also are not to eat blood. Acts 15:20. Secondly, Israel's atonement was provided by the blood offered on the altar. Blood was not to be thought of as applicable to other purposes. This points out to us the incomparable value and unique power of the blood of the Lord Jesus. His blood was a covering for our sins.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

23 Thou shalt not take up a false report: put not thy hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. (2) Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to turn aside after a multitude to wrest *justice*: (3) neither shalt thou favor a poor man in his cause.

(4) If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. (5) If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, thou shalt forbear to leave him, thou shalt surely release *it* with him.

(6) Thou shalt not wrest the justice *due* to thy poor in his cause. (7) Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. (8) And thou shalt take no bribe: for a bribe blindeth them that have sight, and perverteth the words of the righteous. (9) And a sojourner shalt thou not oppress: for ye know the heart of a sojourner, seeing ye were sojourners in the land of E-gypt.

(10) And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather

in the increase thereof: (11) but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beast of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, *and* with thy oliveyard. (12) Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest; that thine ox and thine ass may have rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the sojourner, may be refreshed. (13) And in all things that I have said unto you take ye heed: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

(14) Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. (15) The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep: seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, at the time appointed in the month A-bib (for in it thou camest out from E-gypt); and none shall appear before me empty: (16) and the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of thy labors, which thou sowest in the field: and the feast of ingathering, at the end of the year, when thou gatherest in thy labors out of the field. (17) Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord Je-ho-vah.

(18) Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my feast remain all night until the morning. (19) The first of the first-fruits of thy ground thou shalt bring into the house of Je-ho-vah thy God. Thou shalt not boll a kid in its mother's milk.

(20) Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. (21) Take ye heed before him, and hearken unto his voice; provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgression: for my name is in him. (22) But if thou shalt indeed hearken unto his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. (23) For mine angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Am-or-ite, and the Hit-tite, and the Per-iz-zite, and the Canaan-ite, the Hi-vite, and the Jeb-u-site: and I will cut them off. (24) Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works; but thou shalt utterly overthrow them,

and break in pieces their pillars. (25) And ye shall serve Je-ho-vah your God, and he will bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. (26) There shall none cast her young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil. (27) I will send my terror before thee, and will discomfit all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. (28) And I will send the hornet before thee, which shall drive out the Hi-vite, the Ca-naan-ite, and the Hit-tite, from before thee. (29) I will not drive them out from before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee. (30) By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. (31) And I will set thy border from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Phi-lis-tines, and from the wilderness unto the River: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. (32) Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. (33) They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me; for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a topic for the chapter.
2. What was the law about spreading false reports? (23:1)
3. How might this be done? Where? (23:1)
4. What was the law about following a mob? (23:2-3)
5. What law was given about witnessing in court? (23:2-3)
6. Why was it necessary to forbid the people to "favor a poor man in his cause"? (23:3; Lev. 19:15)
7. How were the people to treat their enemy's overloaded fallen donkey? (23:5) Was the general attitude that is

commanded in the law about the fallen donkey limited to that one situation?

8. What was the law about justice to the needy? (23:6)
9. What was the law about bribes? (23:8)
10. How were the Israelites to treat strangers? Why? (23:9; 22:21)
11. What was the law about farming in the seventh years? (23:10-11)
12. What was the purpose of the sabbath day according to 23:12?
13. What was the law concerning talking about other gods? (23:12-13)
14. Name the Israelites' three annual compulsory feasts. (23:14-15; Compare Ex. 34:22-24; Deut. 16:16)
15. What did God mean by saying "Ye shall not appear before me empty"? (23:15)
16. What was not to be offered with their sacrifices? (23:18)
17. What law was given about preparing a kid to be eaten? (23:19)
18. What was to be sent before Israel? (23:20)
19. What divine characteristics did the guiding angel have? (23:21)
20. What was to be done with Canaanites' religious objects? (23:24, 32)
21. What promise was given about sickness? (23:25)
22. How would God help the Israelites to conquer the Canaanites? (23:27-28)
23. Were the Canaanites to be driven out suddenly? Why or why not? (23:29-30)
24. What were to be the boundaries of the promised land? (23:31; Compare Gen. 15:18)
25. What "River" is referred to in 23:31?
26. Were the Canaanites to live among the Israelites? (23:33) Why or why not?

**EXODUS TWENTY-THREE: GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES
(CONCLUDED)**

1. Justice and goodness to all men; 23:1-9.
 2. The sacred seasons and feasts; 23:10-19.
 3. Conquering the Canaanites; 23:20-33.
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EXODUS TWENTY-THREE: GOD'S GOOD ORDINANCES

1. Ordinances about JUSTICE; 23:1-9.
 2. Ordinances about WORSHIP; 23:10-19.
 3. Ordinances about VICTORY in the Lord; 23:20-33.
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SLANDER! (Ex.23:1)

1. Don't start it.
 2. Don't listen to it.
 3. Don't repeat it.
-

ADMINISTERING JUSTICE (Ex. 23:1-3, 6-9)

1. Avoid perjury; 23:1a.
2. Avoid collusion; 23:1b.
3. Avoid mob pressure; 23:2.
4. Avoid false sentiment; 23:3.
5. Avoid oppression; 23:6-7, 9.
6. Avoid bribes; 23:8.
7. Remember that judges shall themselves be judged; 23:7.

DUTIES TO ENEMIES (23:4-5)

1. Protect their interests; 23:4.
 2. Restrain our impulses to leave them; 23:5.
 3. Help their difficulties; 23:5.
-

SABBATIC YEARS AND SABBATH DAYS (23:10-12)

- I. Sabbatic years; 23:10-11.
 1. Required faith in God; Lev. 25:20-22.
 2. Benefited the land; Lev. 25:5; Ex. 23:11.
 3. Benefited the land owner; Lev. 25:6.
 4. Benefited the poor and the beasts; Ex. 23:11.
 - II. Sabbath days; 23:12.
 1. Rest for animals.
 2. Rest for men.
-

RELIGIOUS FEASTS (23:14-17)

1. Kept unto God; 23:14.
 2. Kept as memorials; 23:15.
 3. Kept by bringing offerings; 23:15.
 4. Kept frequently; 23:16.

(The Lord requires dedication of our time, as He required it in Israel's time. The Lord blesses those who worship Him.)
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FEASTS REQUIRED BY GOD (23:14-17)

1. A feast to commemorate past deliverance; 23:15.
 2. A feast to dedicate the first-fruits of our labor; 23:16.
 3. A feast to celebrate the year's final ingathering; 23:16; Lev. 23:39-47.
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JESUS, THE ANGEL OF THE COVENANT (23:20-23)

- I. His nature.
 1. Equal with God. "My name is in Him." 23:21.
 2. Able to forgive sins; 23:21.
 - II. His work.
 1. Keeping God's people; 23:20.
 2. Overcoming enemies; 23:22.
 3. Bringing God's people to their destination; 23:23.
 - III. Our attitude toward Him.
 1. Take heed; 23:21.
 2. Provoke Him not;
 3. Hearken; obey; 23:21-22.
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FALSE GODS! (23:24, 32-33)

1. Treatment of them.
 - a. Don't bow down to them; 23:24.
 - b. Destroy them; 23:24.
 - c. Drive them out; 23:31.
 - d. Make no covenant with them; 23:32.
2. Dangers from them.

GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES 23:1-33

- a. Cause sin; 23:33.
 - b. Be a snare; 23:33.
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BLESSINGS FOR THE OBEDIENT! (23:25-30)

1. Bless their food; 23:25.
 2. Bless their rainfall; 23:25.
 3. Bless their health; 23:25.
 4. Bless their productivity; 23:26.
 5. Bless them with long life; 23:26.
 6. Give victory over enemies; 23:27-30.
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AN EXCLUSIVE FAITH! (23:24-33)

1. Destroy false religious objects (23:24; Acts 19:19.)
 2. Drive out sinful associates; (23:27-31, 33; I Cor. 15:33.)
(See I Cor. 5:9-13)
 3. Make no covenant with evildoers; (23:32; II Cor. 6:14-18; II John 10-11)
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

1. *What is in Exodus twenty-three?*

This chapter contains the closing group of God's covenant ordinances, which are given in chapters 21-23. By the acceptance of this "book of the covenant" (24:7), Israel entered into its covenant with God and became God's special people, a holy nation.

The chapter deals with three main themes: (1) justice and goodness for all men (23:1-9); (2) the sacred seasons and feasts (23:10-19); (3) conquering the Canaanites (23:20-33). This last section forms an epilogue to chapters 21-23, and looks forward to future triumphant conquests in Canaan.

2. *What were the people to do with a false report they heard?* (23:1-2)

They were not to pick it up and tell it to others, nor to utter it in court as testimony.

Ex. 23:1-2 could be translated rather literally, "You shall not take up something you have heard (that is) false (or vain); put not your hand with a wicked (man, to conspire together) to be a witness of violence."

There are five brief negative commands in 23:1-3, each introduced by a negative particle (in Hebrew). These would be guidelines in maintaining justice. Ex. 23:1-3 is an expansion of the ninth commandment, which forbade bearing false witness.

We could "take up" a false report by repeating it as gossip, or by telling it in a court hearing. Ps. 101:5: "Who-so privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I destroy." Lev. 19:16: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people."

The word translated "report" means something heard, a rumor, report, reputation, fame. "False" might also be translated "vain," since it is the same word as that used in Ex. 20:7 with reference to taking God's name in vain.

An "unrighteous witness" is a witness of violence, that is, one who inflicts violence upon others. Violence need not always be physically violent to be terribly hurtful!

A witness who made false charges against someone was to be punished with the same penalty which he had tried to bring upon someone else. (Deut. 19:16-21).

The Israelites were not to follow a mob (multitude) in its efforts to do evil. Mobs sway people into doing or tolerating acts that they would not do if they considered the matter without pressure. Christ was crucified through mob

action instigated by a few leaders (Matt. 27:20). Mobs, multitudes, and majorities are often in the wrong. Only Noah was righteous in his time. (Gen. 7:1. Compare Matt. 7:13-14.)

If some cause (lawsuit) was being heard, no Israelite was to give false testimony just because a certain feeling was popular (and probably loud!) just then. Many innocent people have died because a multitude was stirred up against them and many were screaming for their blood. Note the cases of Stephen (Acts 6:11) and Naboth (I Kings 21:10).

3. *Why should they not favor a poor man in his cause?* (23:3)

The Israelites were to promote JUSTICE. Justice favors neither the poor nor the rich; nor does it disfavor either the poor or the rich.

Lev. 19:15: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment. Thou shalt not respect (show partiality to) the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor."

God is NOT indifferent to the plight of the poor. See Ex. 23:6; 22:25-27; Deut. 15:7-11. The poor are often oppressed by the rich and powerful (Amos 5:12). They have their special temptations (Prov. 30:9, 14).

Nonetheless, the poor man may be fully as selfish, cruel, dishonest, lazy, and covetous as anyone else. Men can be "minded to be rich" even when they are not rich (I Tim. 5:9). When a poor man has broken the law, he is to be punished just as anyone else. Note Ex. 22:3.

Neither pressure from a crowd, sympathy for the poor, or even revenge, was to influence the Israelites' conduct.

Our times have seen the rise of the foolish notion that we should pass every possible law to take wealth from the rich and give it to the poor. There is not enough material wealth in the world for all (or even most of us) to live like kings. When there are no longer any wealthy people to help the poor, all become poor.

4. *What was to be done if one saw his enemy's donkey going astray?* (23:4-5)

In such a case, one was *surely* to bring it back to him

again. (The *surely* is emphatic.)

Deut. 22:4: "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fallen down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again."

How beautiful! Animosity is not to destroy one's willingness to be of assistance in the times of need. Your enemy is also your brother! It is only a short step from the kind actions suggested by these verses to the "Love your enemy" of Matt. 5:44. Compare Romans 12:20.

Lev. 19:18: "Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am Jehovah."

Ex. 23:5 describes a situation in which a man sees his enemy with his donkey. The enemy obviously has been cruel to his beast and has overloaded it till it has fallen down under the load and cannot get up. The enemy has brought the problem upon himself. What shall the man of God do? He shall forbear doing his natural inclination of walking off and leaving his enemy to solve his own problem. Rather, he shall most certainly give assistance, and working WITH his enemy, release the ass!

If the law taught men to be good to their enemies (as it surely did!), what did Jesus mean by saying, "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy"? (Matt. 5:43.) Some Jewish authorities are incensed at these words, which they regard as a baseless charge against the Torah and the rabbis.¹

We happily acknowledge that the law taught men to do good to their enemies. However, there are a few verses in the Old Testament which indicate that even some Godly men did *hate* their enemies. See Psalm 139:21, 22; 26:5). Also certain passages in the apocryphal books (like Ecclesiasticus 12:4, 7) and in the Dead Sea Scrolls show that Jesus was telling the truth when he indicated that some pre-Christian Jews really

¹J. H. Hertz, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

advocated hating enemies. *The Manual of Discipline* (one of the Dead Sea Scrolls) declared about their chosen members, "He is to bear unremitting hatred towards all men of ill repute, and to be minded to keep in seclusion from them."² We hasten to add (in shame and pain) that some who claim to be Christians have also taught their followers to hate their enemies. Consider the bloodshed in northern Ireland. But this has never been God's approved attitude for men.

The R.S.V. on Ex. 23:5 reads "You shall refrain from leaving him with it, you shall help him to lift it up." The footnote on this verse says that this is the Greek reading and the Hebrew is obscure.

The Hebrew of 23:5 could be literally translated "If you see the ass of him who hates you [lying] under his (or its) burden, you shall beware that you leave him not, but you shall surely release [it] with him."³

As you can see, this is hardly an "obscure" verse. It is only slightly difficult because no object follows the verb "release." Probably it is best to supply an indefinite object, such as the *it* inserted in italics in the American Standard version. The Hebrew does not make completely clear whether the man is releasing the ass or its load (although both involve the same actions). The Greek reading makes it clear that it is the *ass* that the verb *release* refers to,⁴ and the Hebrew very probably means that also.

5. *What command is given about the justice due to the poor?* (23:6-7)

Men were not to wrest the justice due to the poor man in his lawsuit. ("Wrest" means "stretch out," "distort," "turn aside," or "pervert.")

²Theodore Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English Translation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1964), pp. 46, 68.

³This translation is adapted from that in Alexander Harkavy's *Hebrew and Chaldean Dictionary*.

⁴The genders of the Greek pronouns and articles indicate clearly that the object being released was the ass rather than its burden.

The word translated *justice* in 23:6 is *mishpat*, or judgment. It is the same word occurring in 21:1, translated “judgments” (or ordinances).

Note that the poor are “*thy* poor.” Probably this hints that the poor are our brothers and our responsibility. We cannot say, “They are no concern of mine.”

Ex. 23:7 commands men to keep far away from a false “matter.” In its setting this “matter” appears to refer to false utterance in a lawsuit. Ex. 23:7 is primarily directed at judges in court.

We must take heed to our court decisions, because God also holds court; and all our witnesses and judges are on trial before HIM. Our decisions must be in harmony with His! God will not justify (that is, acquit, declare not guilty) the wicked person. (The word “wicked” is singular, emphasizing every individual’s responsibility in this matter.)

6. *What is the effect of a bribe?* (23:8)

A bribe blinds those whose eyes are usually open and watchful, and perverts (tangles, twists) the words of those usually righteous.

“They that have sight” (KJV, “the wise”) are the judges and officials. Ex. 23:8 (like 23:7) is directed at the judges.

Ex. 23:8 is very much like Deut. 16:19. We simply must not let ourselves be deceived about the power of a bribe upon us.

Bribery was a very common practice in Biblical times (and still is!). See Amos 5:12; I Sam. 8:3; Ps. 26:10; II Chron. 19:7; Isa. 1:23; Ezek. 22:12. Prov. 15:27: “He that hateth bribes shall live.”

No specific penalty is set in the law for accepting bribes. But in the rule of God over men, it did NOT go unpunished!

“The words of the righteous” seem to be the words of usually-righteous judges who have been influenced by bribes. It may also refer to the *causes* (or lawsuits) of the poor, who are referred to as the righteous (or innocent) in 23:7. (The word translated “words” also may have the meaning of “causes.”)

7. *Why were the Israelites not to oppress sojourners?* (23:9)

They had been sojourners in Egypt and therefore knew the "heart" of a sojourner. Compare 22:21.

"Heart" is from the Hebrew *nephesh*, meaning soul, life, feelings, self, and numerous related meanings. The use of *nephesh* here makes a transition to the next paragraph (23:10-12), where a related word (the verb *naphash*) is translated "be refreshed" in 23:12.

8. *For how many years were Israelites to sow the land and gather crops?* (23:10-11)

Israel was to sow seed and gather crops for six consecutive years, but in the seventh years the land lay fallow, uncultivated. The oliveyards (literally "olive trees") and vineyards were to be treated the same way. This seventh year is commonly called the *sabbatical year*. The laws about this year are given more fully in Lev. 25:1-7 and Deut. 15:1-3. Grain which grew by itself in the seventh year was not harvested, but was left for the *poor* of the people to eat, and for the *beast* of the field. God plainly promised that the land would produce enough in the sixth years to carry them over until the harvest of the eighth year. See Lev. 25:20-22 and Neh. 10:31.

The spiritual basis for this law is stated by God in Lev. 25:23: "For the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me."

The word *rest* in 23:11 is not from the verb *shabath* (meaning "to keep sabbath"), but from another verb (*shamat*), meaning to let rest, or to release (as of a debt). (That has interesting spiritual implications.) See Deut. 15:1-2.

Note that God cares for the *beasts*. Ps. 36:6: "O Jehovah, thou preservest man and beast." Compare Ps. 104:21. God cares for sparrows and feeds the raven (Luke 12:24).

In the following centuries Israel neglected keeping its sabbatical years. The seventy years of Babylonian captivity was partly intended to make up for unkept sabbatical years. II Chron. 36:21.

To a child of God, his relationship with God controls all his life, even the way he farms and eats.

9. *What was the purpose of the seventh-day rest? (20:12)*

It was a time of *rest* for all, even for the work (draft) animals, the servants, and the sojourners. It was to bring refreshment and rest. The reference here to the sabbath emphasizes its humanitarian character rather than its memorial character, which is stressed in Ex. 20:8-11 and Deut. 5:12-15.

"Be refreshed" is from a verb (*naphash*) related to the noun (*nephesh*) meaning *soul*. It can be translated "to breathe, to take rest, to draw breath, to be refreshed." On the Sabbath days people were to "catch their breath." By keeping the Sabbath, every Israelite was reminded that he had a soul and there was a higher life than mere drudgery.

10. *What mention of pagan gods were the Israelites to utter? (23:13)*

NO mention was to be made of the name of other gods. While the Israelites were not to oppress sojourners, they were not to utter the names of the sojourners' gods. This prohibition about uttering the names of gods should have prevented marriages and other contacts with idolatrous peoples.

This verse probably accounts for the dropping of the name *Baal* in the names of several men whose names included Baal's name. Instead of *Baal* the word *bosheth* (meaning *shame*) was inserted. Thus Jerubbaal (Judges 6:32) became Jerubbesheth (II Sam. 11:21); Eshbaal (I Chron. 8:33) became Ishbosheth (II Sam. 2:8); Meribaal (I Chron. 8:34) became Mephibosheth (II Sam. 4:4). Note that the book of Samuel, which is prophetic in character, avoided the name *Baal*.

The apostle Paul tells Christians to avoid mentioning several sins, in a manner similar to the way the Israelites were to avoid mentioning the names of gods. (Eph. 5:3)

Ex. 23:13 opens with a general exhortation to obey: "In all things that I have spoken unto you, take ye heed."

11. *How many annual feasts was each Israelite required to keep? (23:14, 17)*

Three. Compare Ex. 34:23; Lev. ch. 23; Deut. 16:1-17.

All male Israelites were required to come before the Lord for these three feasts. Though not required, women and boys often went with the men to the feasts (I Sam. 1:3, 4, 22; Luke 2:41-43). Israel's religious observances were the one factor in their society that could hold the nation together.

The three feasts are not mentioned here for the first time nor in full detail. Probably they are mentioned as part of the privileges of the people bestowed on them by Jehovah. This view relates the observance of the feasts to the nearby paragraphs. Ex. 23:13 told of a false way to worship God. 23:14-17 gave the true way.

"Three *times*" is literally "three *feet*," suggesting pilgrim festivals to which they marched on foot.

Critics (Martin Noth, for example) say that the three feasts were taken over by Israel only after the settlement in Canaan, long after Moses' time. (This view eliminates Moses as author of Exodus.) The proof (?) of such a view is mainly the presupposition that such feasts could not have originated from direct divine revelation and commandments, but gradually developed through cultural contacts with other peoples who observed similar feasts.⁵

12. *What were the three annual compulsory feasts?* (23:15-16)

(1) *The feast of unleavened bread.* This seven-day observance was immediately preceded (the day before) by the Passover, which, surprisingly, is not mentioned here. Perhaps the reason for this was that the Passover in early days was more of a family meal than a central religious activity.⁶ Another possible reason for not mentioning the Passover may be that the extremely close linkage of the Passover to the feast of Unleavened bread probably caused most Israelites to think of both when they heard either one mentioned.

Noth in his usual manner contends that the Passover is not mentioned here with the rules about Unleavened Bread because the Passover came into Israel's practice much later

⁵Noth, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-191.

⁶Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

than the feast of Unleavened bread.⁷ There is no real evidence for this view.

An allusion is made by God in 23:15 to the previous commandment about keeping the feast of unleavened bread, "As I commanded thee." See 12:14-20; 13:6-10. Regarding the month *Abib*, see 13:4.

The Passover was observed sporadically by Israel during the days of the kingdom. (II Kings 23:22).

"None shall come before me empty" means that no man was to come to the central place of worship during the three compulsory feasts without an offering, that is, empty-handed. They were to bring animals and other things for offerings. See Deut. 16:16-17; Lev. 7:32-34; Ex. 34:20. We feel that the same rule about not coming before the Lord empty should be a guideline to Christians: Do not come to the Lord's services without an offering.

(2) *The feast of harvest*. This is the same feast that is called the "feast of weeks" (Lev. 23:9-21; Deut. 16:9-12) and the "day of firstfruits" (Num. 28:26). It is called *Pentecost* in the New Testament (Acts 2:1; 20:16). It came fifty days after the first grain was harvested. It was a harvest feast of dedication and thanks to God.

(3) *The feast of ingathering*. This is the same feast that is called the feast of booths or tabernacles. Its observance is described fully in Lev. 23:34, 39-43; Deut. 16:13-15. Note John 7:2. This feast occurs in late September, "at the end of the year," that is, of the civil year, which begins in the autumn, as distinguished from the religious year, which began in the spring. Its name "Ingathering" is taken from the gathering in of the grapes and olives, which had been completed by that time each year. During this feast the Israelites lived outdoors in temporary brush arbors called booths or tabernacles. This was to remind them year by year of their wilderness wandering experiences. An extensive

⁷Noth, *ibid*.

series of sacrifices was offered each day of this feast.

On 23:17, see 23:14.

13. *What was NOT to be offered with blood sacrifices?*(23:18)

They were not to offer leavened bread with the blood of sacrifices. Also they were NOT to let the *fat* or sacrificed animals remained unburned overnight.

Lev. 3:17: "It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings, that ye shall eat neither fat nor blood."

The fat or sacrifices was all burned, even in the peace offerings, which were partly eaten by the offerer. (See. Lev. 1:8; 3:3-5; 4:8, 19.) Thus no fat should have ever been left unburned overnight. Compare Lev. 19:6.

Israel's burnt-offerings (animal sacrifices) were to be accompanied by a grain (or meal) offering, which was sometimes presented in the form of baked bread (Lev. 2:4-5; Num. 15:1-9). These meal-offerings were NOT to be made with leaven (Lev. 2:11; 6:17). This would be doubly enforced during the week of the feast of unleavened bread, when no leaven at all was to be seen in their property (Deut. 16:4; Ex. 13:6-11; 12:15-20). Leaven is a symbol of evil influence and sin (I Cor. 5:7-8).

During the feast of unleavened bread no flesh sacrificed at evening was to remain all night until the morning: eat it or burn it. See Deut. 16:4. At the original passover, nothing was left till the morning. See Ex. 12:10. This custom of not leaving sacrifices unconsumed overnight seems to have applied to all Israel's sacrifices. The practice impressed Israel with the seriousness and the unique function of sacrifices. They were not to be treated as leftover garbage.

Regarding the offering of first fruits (23:19a), see 22:29-30 and Deut. 26:2-11.

14. *How were kids NOT to be cooked for eating?* (23:19)

They were not to be boiled in the milk of their mother.

This law is now generally understood to make allusion to a Canaanite religious practice, in which a kid was boiled in its mother's milk. This practice was included in the

rituals at Ugarit, when such a dish was prepared at festal ceremonies pertaining to the fertility of the soil. In the Ugaritic tablet on "The gods pleasant and beautiful," it is written, "Boil a kid in milk, a lamb in butter."⁸ The practice of boiling small cattle in milk has been continued among Bedouin to this time. God did not want His people's practice even to resemble those of the heathen.

Partly on the basis of 23:19b Jews do not prepare or serve meat dishes and milk dishes at the same meal. Orthodox Jews even keep separate kitchens for preparation of milk and meat dishes. The connection between this custom and Ex. 23:19 seems rather remote, although the *Kosher* diet laws of the Jews would certainly eliminate any possibility of cooking a kid in its mother's milk. J. H. Hertz,⁹ a Jewish commentator, says that the practice of not eating milk and meat together was doubtless observed long before the age of the rabbis (about 400 B.C.-A.D. 500), and in connecting the practice with this text, they merely sought a support in the Torah for the very ancient Jewish practice. That is a fair and accurate statement. The Jewish diet laws are not directly derived from this verse, although it is an indirect support for their practice.

Christians are not obligated by the diet laws of the O.T., although they may find some helpful guidance in them. See Mark 7:19; I Cor. 8:8; I Tim. 4:3; Rom. 14:13-17.

15. *Who was sent with Israel to keep them in their journey?* (23:20-21)

An angel was sent. Ex. 20:23 reads literally, "behold, I (the *I* is emphatic) am sending an angel before thy face to guard you in the way and to bring you unto the place which I have prepared." Compare Ex. 14:19; 3:2; Acts 7:38.

This angel was a personality. Israel was to hearken unto his voice. He could pardon transgressions and God's name was in him, literally, "in the midst of him," in the inward part of his being and body.

⁸Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

⁹*Op. cit.*, p. 318.

"My name is in him" means "My (God's) presence is in him." In Biblical usage, *name* often refers to one's entire being, nature, and authority. See Ps. 8:1; 20:1; Acts 8:12.

We believe that this angel was none other than that divine person called the Word (John 1:1), who later came to earth as Jesus Christ. The word *angel* means a *messenger*. Jesus has certainly always been God's communicator (John 1:18). Malachi 3:1 prophesied the coming of the "messenger (or *angel*) of the covenant whom ye desire." Certainly no one since Malachi's time has claimed to be eternal with God and to have power to forgive sins and to know all truth, other than Jesus. He backed up these claims with miracles done in the presence of many witnesses.

Isa. 63:9: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the *angel* of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity, he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

Numerous O.T. prophecies foretold the coming of God's Messiah, who would bear God's *name*. "Unto us a son is given; . . . and his *name* shall be called. . . Mighty God, . . ." (Isa. 9:6). Jer. 23:6 spoke of the coming "branch" from David, that "his name . . . shall be called *Jehovah* our righteousness." We believe that these prophecies refer to Jesus. They help us to understand what God meant when he said of the "angel," "My name is in him."

Israel was to take care that they did not provoke the angel of God. "Provoke" means "to make bitter." (The verb is related to *Marah*, bitter.) Sadly, we learn from Ps. 78:40, "How often did they provoke him in the wilderness."

Not surprisingly, "liberal" and Jewish commentators strongly deny that the "angel" could be the Word (Jesus). But they disagree among themselves as to who or what the angel is. Some seek to identify the "angel" with the ark of the covenant that went before the tribes.¹⁰ (This is

¹⁰Broadman Bible Commentary, I, (1968), p. 428.

impossible. The angel was personal and the ark very impersonal.) Hertz maintains that the angel is Moses himself! (How could Moses himself go "before thee," when God was talking to Moses? Furthermore, Moses did not bring Israel into the land, as the angel was to do. See 23:23.) Cassuto¹¹ argues that the "angel" is not distinct from God himself and simply is a term for God's own actions. (It surely seems unlikely that God would say "My name is *in him*, if He only meant "My name is in myself.") Some feel that the pillar of cloud was the angel. See Ex. 14:19. (How could the pillar of cloud "pardon your transgressions"?) The "angel" manifested his presence in the cloud, but was distinct from the cloud. These views show how far men will go in their determined refusal to confess the Lord Jesus.

16. *What would the angel do for Israel if they were obedient?* (23:22-23)

He would bring them unto the Canaanite nations, and there God would "cut them off" (destroy them). This act of cutting them off would be done gradually. See 23:29.

Observe in 23:22-23 how very closely linked are God and the "angel." "If thou shalt indeed hearken unto *his* voice, and do all that *I* speak;" This is exactly the relationship of Jesus and the Father. John 10:30: "I and the Father are one." John 8:28-29: "I (Jesus) do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things . . . for I do always the things that are pleasing to him."

Concerning the Canaanite tribes, see notes on Ex. 3:8, 17.

To "cut them off" (R.S.V., "blot them out") meant to hide or conceal, cut off, efface, destroy. The Canaanites were finally indeed utterly effaced from the earth, although it took Israel a long time.

For God to be "an enemy unto your enemies" is a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Gen. 12:3. Ps. 139:21-22 indicates that God's enemies become enemies

¹¹*Op. cit.*, pp. 305-306.

of God's people. Even the New Testament speaks about those that are "*enemies* of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 1:18).

Some interpreters feel that the idea of God's being an "enemy" to Israel's enemies is theological propaganda justifying Israel's conquest of the land, and differs from the view expressed elsewhere in the O.T. that God is the God of all nations. This idea fails to consider the depravity of the Canaanites. It also injects the implications that the Bible teaches contradictory points of view. We feel that further study will always show that the Bible is completely harmonious.

17. *What was Israel to do with Canaanite religious objects?* (23:24)

They were not to bow down to them or serve them, but were to destroy them utterly. Compare Ex. 20:5; 34:13; Deut. 7:5; Num. 33:52; Ex. 23:32-33. The Hebrew text emphasizes the *utter* destruction of these things. "Thou shalt *utterly* destroy them, and you shall *utterly* break in pieces their pillars."

They were particularly to break in pieces their *pillars*. These were upright standing stones, sometimes as much as ten feet tall. Such pillars have been found in excavations at Gezer and Tanaach. See Deut. 12:3.

The "works" of the Canaanites included burning their sons and daughters in fire to their gods. See Deut. 12:30-31. Israelites were not even to "inquire" about their gods. Compare Deut. 6:14.

18. *What would God bless if Israel served Him?* (23:25-26)

He would bless their bread, their water, and their health.

Their "bread" would be their grain harvest, from which bread was made. See Deut. 28:5. The "water" would be the needed rainfall. See Deut. 28:12.

Malachi 3:11: "I will rebuke the devourer (such as locusts) for your sakes . . . , neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field." Compare Amos 4:9.

The promise to protect the Israelites from *sickness* is repeated several times in the scripture. See Ex. 15:26.

Deut. 7:15: "Jehovah will take away from thee all sickness." It is painful to compare this promise with Israel's later afflictions sent upon them because of their unfaithfulness. See Amos 4:10; Isa. 1:5-6. (In this passage the sickness spoken of seems to be a collective national sickness of soul.)

God further promised that there would not be a woman miscarrying in the land, or a barren woman. Deut. 7:14 enlarges this promise to declare that "there shall not be a male or female barren among you or among your cattle." Compare Deut. 28:4.

Another promise yet more! "The number of thy days I will fulfill." Their people would not die young, before they had fulfilled their potential in life. Compare Ex. 20:12: "That thy days may be long in the land." It would be true of Israelites generally as it was of Abraham: "Abraham gave up the ghost and died . . . an old man, and *full* . . ." (Gen. 25:8). So also David: "David was old and *full* of days" (I Chron. 23:1).

As Christians we do not claim all of these material physical promises in the law. But we do live under a covenant with "better promises" (Heb. 8:6).

19. *How would God prepare things so as to help Israel conquer Canaan? (23:27-28)*

God would send his *terror* before Israel and would discomfit (that is, bring into confusion, or disturb) all the people in Canaan to whom Israel would come; and God would cause Israel's enemies to turn their back (literally "neck") unto Israel, that is, to turn and flee.

God spread this terror ahead of Israel by causing reports and rumors about Israel's invincible power to be circulated widely. See Josh. 2:9, 11; Deut. 2:25; Ex. 15:14-16; Num. 22:2-3; I Sam. 4:6-8.

God further promised to "send the hornet" before Israel, which would drive out the Canaanite nations. Compare Deut. 7:20. The closeness of verses 27 and 28 suggests that "hornet" and "terror" refer to the same thing, the psychological and social weakening of the people's courage and

ability to resist. The word *hornet* as here used seems to have a figurative and indefinite meaning, and could refer to anything which helped Israel to be victorious in its conquest - psychological terror, storms (Josh. 10:11), or such. The word *hornet* is singular (not like KJV and RSV "hornets"), but it is probably used in a collective sense for all the means used by God to "soften up" the Canaanites for Israel's conquest. Josh. 24:12 indicates that God surely did send the hornet before Israel, as He had promised.

The archaeologist John Garstang,¹² who excavated at Jericho in the 1930's, suggested that since the "hornet" (or wasp) was the sacred symbol of some of the Pharaohs of Egypt, that the "hornet" may have referred to the Egyptian armies that fought victoriously in Canaan against the Hyksos and other peoples about eighty years before Israel conquered the land. These Egyptian conquerors supposedly weakened Canaan's ability to resist Israel. We consider this theory very improbable. God did not say "I *have sent* the hornet before you," but "I *will send*" (future).

Furthermore, God never indicated that the Canaanites would be weak (or weakened) adversaries. They are described as being "greater and mightier than yourselves." (Deut. 11:23; 4:38).

20. *Would God drive out the Canaanites quickly?* (23:29-30)

No. Israel would need considerable time to occupy the land. And if the land were left without people, it would soon become desolate and run-down. Israel would occupy the houses, cities, fields, and vineyards of the former inhabitants (Deut. 6:10-11). These things would soon be in disrepair if left unoccupied.

The danger that wild beasts (lions, bears, wild dogs, etc.) would multiply and become a peril in the land if people were not occupying it was a very real menace. (II Kings 17:24-26; Lev. 26:22).

¹²Joshua-Judges: *The Foundations of Bible History* (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), p. 259.

Israel's conquests of Canaan required six or seven years. See Josh. 14:7, 10; Num. 14:33. Jehovah cast out those nations before Israel little by little. Deut. 7:22.

Further reasons for the slowness in conquering the land were (1) that Israel transgressed God's covenant, and He wanted to test Israel whether they would walk in His ways or not (Judges 2:20-23; 3:4); and (2) to teach them war, that is, how to fight (Judges 3:2).

Even after Israel had conquered much of the land, various tribes were slow in occupying it. See Josh. 18:1-3. They lacked the aggressive faith to take over the land.

Skeptical critics think that the promise to drive the Canaanites out little by little indirectly suggests that the number of incoming Israelites was actually considerably smaller than the two and a half million people "often presupposed" on the basis of 600,000 fighting men.¹³ This view is not a presupposition, but merely an acceptance of the statistics given in the scripture (Ex. 12:37). The people who operate on presuppositions are those who feel that the record just could not be true as it stands and therefore it isn't.

21. *What were to be the borders of Israel's land? (23:31)*

From the Red Sea (probably from the tip of the Gulf of Akabah at Elath) to the sea of the Philistines (the Mediterranean); and from the wilderness (probably the Sinai wilderness of Shur) unto the river (the Euphrates).

The boundaries of Israel's promised land are given several places in the scriptures. See Deut. 11:24 ("from the river [Euphrates] even unto the hinder sea" [the Dead Sea]); Gen. 15:18 ("from the river of Egypt [probably the Wady el Arish in the northern Sinai peninsula] unto the . . . river Euphrates"); I Kings 4:21 ("from the River [Euphrates] unto the land of the Philistines"). This passage in I Kings tells of the extent of the land in the days of king Solomon. It reached nearly to that extent in the time of Jeroboam II

¹³Broadman Bible Commentary, I, (1969), p. 429.

of Israel (II Kings 14:25) and Uzziah of Judah (II Chron. 26:1-2, 6).

The reference to the "Red Sea" in 23:31 is literally to the "Sea of Reeds." This is the same body of water known as the Red Sea. See notes on Ex. 13:18.

Observe that while God would deliver the inhabitants of the land into Israel's hand, that Israel had to "drive them out." Human effort must work with the divine assistance.

22. *What sort of covenant was Israel to make with the Canaanites?*

NO covenant was to be made with them or with their gods! The Hebrew says that no covenant was to be made "TO" them, rather than "with" them. Israel was to enter the land as a conqueror, who might condescend to make a covenant of amnesty to the conquered people. But they were not even to do this. Much less were they to deal with the people as equals, *with* whom a covenant might be made. Compare Ex. 34:12-16; Deut. 7:2-3.

Israel was permitted to make peace covenants with cities far off from their land. See Deut. 7:1-2; 20:10-15.

The Canaanites and their gods would cause Israel to sin against God and would surely be a *snare* (trap) unto Israel. The word *snare* (like *stumbling-block* in the New Testament) expresses the idea of being trapped into *destruction*, rather than simply into sin (as bad as that is!). The warning is very severe and stern.

Israel did fall into this snare! Psalm 106:36-37: "And (they) served their (the Canaanites') idols, which became a *snare* unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons, and shed innocent blood."

Ex. 23:33 marks the end of the "book of the covenant." This section has included chs. 21-23, and perhaps part of chapter twenty. It told the terms upon which God would enter into covenant with Israel. The next chapter moves on to the actual ratification of this covenant. In view of the exclusive nature of the relationship between God and Israel, it is appropriate that the covenant book should end with

commands forbidding Israel to make any covenant with any other gods or men.¹⁴

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

24 And he said unto Mo-ses, Come up unto Je-ho-vah, thou, and Aar-on, Na-dab, and A-bi-hu, and seventy of the elders of Is-ra-el; and worship ye afar off: (2) and Mo-ses alone shall come near unto Je-ho-vah; but they shall not come near; neither shall the people go with him. (3) And Mo-ses came and told the people all the words of Je-ho-vah, and all the ordinances: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Je-ho-vah hath spoken will we do. (4) And Mo-ses wrote all the words of Je-ho-vah, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the mount, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Is-ra-el. (5) And he sent young men of the children of Is-ra-el, who offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto Je-ho-vah. (6) And Mo-ses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. (7) And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that Je-ho-vah hath spoken will we do, and be obedient. (8) And Mo-ses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which Je-ho-vah hath made with you concerning all these words.

(9) Then went up Mo-ses, and Aar-on, Na-dab, and A-bi-hu, and seventy of the elders of Is-ra-el: (10) and they saw the God of Is-ra-el; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness. (11) And upon the nobles of the children of Is-ra-el he laid not

¹⁴Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

his hand: and they beheld God, and did eat and drink.

(12) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee the tables of stone, and the law and the commandment, which I have written, that thou mayest teach them. (13) And Mo-ses rose up, and Josh-u-a his minister: and Mo-ses went up into the mount of God. (14) And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, untill we come again unto you: and, behold, Aar-on and Hur are with you; whosoever hath a cause, let him come near unto them. (15) And Mo-ses went up into the mount, and the cloud covered the mount. (16) And the glory of Je-ho-vah abode upon mount Si-nai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Mo-ses out of the midst of the cloud. (17) And the appearance of the glory of Je-ho-vah was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Is-ra-el. (18) And Mo-ses entered into the midst of the cloud, and went up into the mount: and Mo-ses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. Who was to come up with Moses into the mount? (24:1,9)
2. Who alone was to come near the Lord? (24:2)
3. What words did Moses tell the people? (24:3)
4. What did the people promise to do? (24:3)
5. What did Moses write down? (24:4)
6. What did Moses build? (24:4)
7. Who offered sacrifices unto the Lord? Of what types? (24:5)
8. How did Moses divide the blood? (24:6)
9. What did Moses sprinkle the blood upon? (24:6, 8; Heb. 9:19)
10. What did Moses read publicly? (24:7)
11. By what title did Moses refer to the blood? (24:8; Compare

Luke 22:20)

12. What did Moses and the others see in the mount? (24:10, 11)
 13. What was under God's feet? (24:10; Ezek. 1:22, 26; Rev. 4:6)
 14. What is meant by "upon the nobles . . . he laid not his hand"? (24:11)
 15. What did the nobles eat and drink? (24:11, 5). Where did they eat and drink?
 16. What did God promise to give to Moses (24:12)
 17. Who went with Moses up into the mount? (24:13)
 18. What was Moses to do with the tables of stone? (24:12)
 19. What was Joshua's position, or office? (24:13)
 20. Where did the elders wait? (24:14)
 21. Who were appointed to settle legal disputes? (24:14)
 22. What was the appearance of the mount as Moses entered it? (24:15)
 23. How long did Moses wait before God called him? (24:16)
 24. From where did God call Moses? (24:16)
 25. What did the glory of the Lord look like? (24:17)
 26. How long was Moses upon the mount? (24:18)
 27. What did Moses eat during this stay on the mount? (Deut. 9:9)
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EXODUS TWENTY-FOUR: RATIFICATION OF THE COVENANT

1. The call to ascend the mount; 24:1-2.
 2. The blood ratification; 24:3-8.
 3. The fellowship with God; 24:9-11.
 4. The ascent of Moses into the mount; 24:12-18.
-

WORSHIP AFAR OFF! (24:1)

1. Afar off because of past unbelief.
 2. Afar off because of past disobedience.
 3. Afar off because sacrifices had not yet been offered.
(This separation was removed when sacrifices were made!
24:5-6, 8-10.)
-

EXODUS TWENTY-FOUR:
THE OLD TESTAMENT MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION!

1. An ascent into the mount; Ex. 24:1,9; Matt. 17:1.
 2. An emphasis on sacrifice; Ex. 24:5; Luke 9:31.
 3. A vision of God and glory; Ex. 24:10; Luke 9:29.
 4. A covering cloud; Ex. 24:15-16; Luke 9:34.
 5. Moses only - Jesus only; Ex. 24:18; Luke 9:34.
-

THE COVENANT! (Ex. 24:3-8)

1. The covenant was divinely revealed; 24:3.
 2. The covenant was willingly accepted; 24:3.
 3. The covenant was permanently written; 24:4.
 4. The covenant was impressively presented; 24:4-5.
 5. The covenant was ratified with blood; 24:5-6, 8.
-

HOW MEN MAKE COVENANT WITH GOD (24:3-8)

1. By hearing God's words; 24:3.

2. By commitment to obey; 24:3.
 3. By writing God's words; 24:4.
 4. By sacrifices unto God; 24:4-5.
 5. By sprinkling the blood God-ward; 24:6.
 6. By promises to obey; 24:7.
 7. By sprinkling the blood man-ward; 24:8.
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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD! (Ex. 24:3-11)

- I. How fellowship with God was obtained (24:3-8)
 1. By accepting God's words; 24:3, 7.
 2. By offering sacrifices; 24:5.
 3. By sprinkling the blood; 24:5-6, 8.
 - a. Toward God; 24:5-6.
 - b. Toward the people; 24:8.
 - II. Blessings of fellowship with God (24:9-11)
 1. Access to God; 24:9.
 2. A view of God; 24:10.
 3. Security with God; 24:11.
 4. Nourishment in God's presence; 24:11
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MOSES AND CHRIST: COVENANT-MAKERS! (Ex. 24:3-11)

1. Both declared God's words.
Moses (Ex. 24:3); Christ (John 7:16; 8:26)
2. Both offered sacrifices.
Moses (Ex. 24:4-5); Christ (Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:13)
3. Both sprinkled the blood.
Moses (Ex. 24:6, 8); Christ (Heb. 12:24; I Pet. 1:2)
4. Both brought men unto God.

Moses (Ex. 24:9); Christ (Eph. 2:18; II Cor. 3:18)

GOD'S MEDIATOR (Ex. 24:12-18)

1. Called up alone unto God; 24:12-14.
 2. Entered divine surroundings; 24:15-16, 17.
 3. Heard God's call; 24:16.
 4. Continued long with God; 24:18.
- (Both Moses and Jesus shared these experiences.)
-

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

1. *What is in Exodus twenty-four?*

Exodus twenty-four is one of the most sublime and glorious chapters in the Old Testament. We agree with Arthur Pink that there is no subsequent passage in the Old Testament approaching a parallel to the glories revealed in this chapter. Not until we come to the New Testament account of God tabernacling among men through the presence of His son do we have anything equal to Exodus twenty-four (John 1:14). This chapter has been designated the Old Testament Mount of Transfiguration! It is the climactic point of the history in Exodus.

In Exodus twenty-four we have the *call* to Israel's representatives to come up to Jehovah (24:1-2). This indicates the achievement of direct fellowship with God.

The chapter continues by telling of Moses' reading the book of the covenant to the people, and the people's acceptance of it, and the ratifying of it by the sprinkling of blood (24:3-8). Thus Exodus twenty-four tells the fulfillment of the promise God made in 19:5-6 to take Israel as His special

people, a holy nation.

The chapter records the actual meeting with God by Israel's leaders. They saw God and ate and drank with Him in security. (24:9-11)

The chapter concludes with the call to Moses to come up into the mount again to receive the written law and the commandments. Moses ascended and was there forty days. (24:12-18)

This chapter has been a particular target of unbelieving critics, who have tried to dissect it and attribute various parts of it to different authors living centuries apart. It seems that those chapters in which believers perceive the deepest spiritual significance and meaning are often the very ones the critics concentrate their attacks upon. (Such chapters include II Samuel 7, Isaiah 53, Zechariah 6, Genesis 1-2.) We should not be surprised at this, because the Bible says that the god of this world (the devil) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. (II Cor. 4:3-4)

2. *Who was called to come up into the mount?* (24:1-2)

Moses, Aaron, Aaron's two sons (Nadab and Abihu), and seventy men from the elders of Israel were summoned to come up and worship "afar off." Only Moses was to come near to Jehovah. The people were not to go up with him.

It appears that Moses had come down from the mountain after hearing the words in chapters twenty-one to twenty-three. Note 20:21. Either Moses was already down at the start of chapter twenty-four, or he was in the process of descent when God spoke the words of 24:1.

Twice in this chapter Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, are named (24:1,9). They shared the rare honor of seeing God (24:9-10). They are referred to elsewhere in Num. 3:4; Lev. 10:1-2; Ex. 6:23. They are remembered chiefly because they died by fire from the Lord, sent upon them when they "offered strange fire." The repeated mention of them in Exodus twenty-four speaks of lost opportunities, of high privileges thrown away. Neither the dignity and righteousness of parents, nor our own special privileges from God

will save us, if we do not respond to God with a lowly, believing, obedient spirit.

The seventy elders seem to have been the accepted representatives of the entire nation. (Ex. 24:14; Compare Num. 11:16; Ex. 18:12; 3:16; 12:21; 17:5.) Though some disregard the number *seventy* as a "loose traditional number," we accept it as precisely correct.

The fact that Israel's representatives had to worship "afar off" shows that men cannot approach God on the basis of their own works and personal righteousness.¹ Even at our best we need a mediator.

The fact that Moses alone could come near to Jehovah indicates again his unique position as mediator and as a type of Christ, our mediator, who draws near unto the presence of God for us (Heb. 9:24).

The shifting of wording from second person ("thou") in 24:1 to third person ("him") in 24:2 surprises us a bit. We feel that Cassuto² is correct in suggesting that verse two was worded in third person because those who accompanied Moses were also enjoined to let Moses go up by himself. An abrupt change from second to third person occurs sometimes in Hebrew literature. See Ex. 23:25 and 20:5, 6, 7 for other examples.

Many critics of the Bible attribute 24:1-2, 9-11 to one author (Driver says J; Noth says E), and 24:3-8, 12-14 to some other source. Martin Noth says, "In 24:1-11 two different literary strata may easily be distinguished."³ These critics do not agree among themselves as to the exact break-off point after verse fourteen. (Driver sets it after 14; Oesterly and Robinson after 15; Noth after 15a.) Noth feels

¹J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, p. 322, quotes the Jewish authority Nachmanides: "They [the seventy elders] remained uninjured, because they were *worthy* to see the vision." This opinion surely conflicts with the scriptural view that "There is none that doeth good, no not one" (Psalm 14:3). Men are accepted by God solely because of God's graciousness and not because of their worthiness.

²*Op. cit.*, p. 310.

³*Op. cit.*, p. 194.

that even 24:1-2 shows it has been worked over. The lack of agreement among those holding such views reveals the lack of real evidence to confirm them. The fact that these theories conflict so sharply with the scriptures' own statements of authorship reveals the presupposition of the critics that the Bible is not trustworthy.

3. *What did Moses tell to the people? (24:3)⁴*

He told them all the "words of Jehovah and all the ordinances." The people responded to Moses' words by unanimously declaring that they would do all the words which Jehovah had spoken.

We suppose that the "words" and "ordinances" which Moses told the people were all the words that he had heard from God after he left the people. See 20:21. This would include everything in 20:22—23:23. It seems unlikely to us that Moses repeated the words of the ten commandments, since all the Israelites had heard these for themselves from God's own voice. See Deut. 4:33, 36.

After hearing Moses, ALL the people answered with ONE voice, saying, "ALL which Jehovah has spoken we will do." (Compare Israel's earlier promises to obey in Ex. 19:8; 20:19; Deut. 5:27.) Their prompt and unanimous response makes us forget for a moment how short was the time they remained faithful. In less than forty days they made the golden calf (Ex. 32).

4. *What last-minute preparations did Moses make for the ratification of the covenant? (24:4-5)*

(1) He wrote the words of Jehovah.

(2) He built one altar and set up twelve stone pillars.

(3) He sent young men to offer burnt-offerings and peace-offerings.

⁴Martin Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 198, considers 24:3-8 an independent fragment attached to the "originally independent" book of the covenant (chapters 21-23), to connect that book with the covenant made at Sinai. He feels that chapter 34 is the J version of the making of the Sinai covenant, and that the story of the covenant making in chapter 24 was not originally by the same author as the one who wrote chapter 34. We feel that the story as given in Exodus is too harmonious with itself to permit us to accept such extreme ideas about its production.

The words which Moses had told the people orally (24:3), he then wrote upon papyrus or parchment. Surely both Moses' act of oral recitation and his written record of God's words required inspiration from God. Probably no one could have recalled all those details unless God aided him in recalling all that God had said. Compare John 14:26.

Numerous passages affirm that Moses *wrote* a great amount of material. See Deut. 31:9, 19, 24; Num. 33:2; Ex. 17:14. Certainly we believe these statements.

Regarding "under the mount" (or, "at the foot of the mountain"), see Ex. 19:17.

Moses' altar was made of earth or of uncut stones. See 20:25. The altar appears to have symbolized the Lord's presence among the Israelites. See Ex. 20:24.

The twelve pillars (presumably made of stone) symbolized the tribes of Israel. The act of setting up stones as memorials or symbols when a covenant was made is mentioned in other places in scripture. See Gen. 31:45; Joshua 24:25-26.

We appreciate the thought of R. Alan Cole,⁵ that while the pillars represented Israel, the fact that this was only symbolism and not superstition is shown by the fact that in the blood ceremony, the blood was dashed over the people themselves (24:8), and not over the pillars that represented them.

We think that the "young men" who were sent to offer sacrifices were the firstborn sons. Ex. 13:2: "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn." This is the view expressed in the Jewish Talmud and the Targum of Onkelos. Keil and Delitzsch⁶ deny that these young men were the firstborn sons, or some pre-Levitical priests. Positive proof of their identity is indeed not given, but we still think they were the firstborn.

Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were Israel's most

⁵*Op. cit.*, p. 184.

⁶*Op. cit.*, II, p. 157.

ancient types of offerings. See 20:24. God later revealed His will on more involved types of offerings, like sin-, trespass-, and meal-offerings (Lev. 1-7). Burnt-offerings indicated man's guilt and God's condemnation of this guilt. Peace-offerings indicated the state of harmony brought about by the offering of burnt-offerings. Only the peace-offerings were partly eaten by the offerer (Lev. 7:15-16). It seems probable that the food eaten in 24:11 was from the peace-offerings.

There is a special emphasis on the fact that the sacrifices of 24:5 were unto the LORD. See 22:20.

5. *What did Moses do with the blood of the offerings?* (24:6, 8)

He put half the blood in basins, and he sprinkled this part of the blood on the altar he had built (24:4). The sprinkling of the blood on the altar indicated the blood was sprinkled God-ward (toward God) to satisfy the requirements of divine justice. Similarly, Christ's blood was presented in heaven on our behalf (Heb. 9:11-12, 24-25).

After sprinkling blood on the altar (an act of reaching out for God's acceptance), Moses read to the people the entire book of the covenant which he had written. After reading, Moses sprinkled the blood upon the people (or in the direction of the people). He also sprinkled⁷ the book itself. Seemingly, Moses used the remaining half of the blood for these acts. The blood was sprinkled man-ward, as well as God-ward. The blood was to change the lives of the people.

Hebrews 8:18-20: "Wherefore, even the first covenant hath not been dedicated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses unto all the people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the BOOK itself and all the PEOPLE, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God

⁷The verb *zaraq*, translated *sprinkle* in 24:8, means to scatter, to sprinkle, to swing, to shake, to pour out a vessel.

commanded to you-ward."

Christ used similar words at the last supper: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20)

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

6. *Why was blood used in ratifying the covenant?* (24:8)

No theological explanation is given in Exodus, but several reasons are suggested in other passages.

(1) The blood was a *means of enactment*. Heb. 9:15-17 tells us that for a will (or testament, or covenant) to be in force, a death must have occurred. The offering of blood is possible only when a death has occurred. Thus, the blood functioned as a means of ENACTMENT of the covenant. "Wherefore, not even the first covenant (that given by Moses) was dedicated without blood." (Heb. 9:18)

(2) Furthermore, blood has always been connected with the *forgiveness of sins*. See Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:15, 22. The passage in Hebrews quite definitely links remission (release) of sins with the offering of blood, and specifically mentions Moses' sprinkling the blood at the making of the covenant as one of the applications of blood offered for remission of sins. Without the shedding of blood, Israel could not have been accepted as a people.

(3) Also blood served as a visual *warning* to the people that they must keep the terms of the covenant or face death. Blood-covenants showed the deadly seriousness of the commitments being made. See Gen. 15:9-10, 17; Jer. 34:18-20.

(4) The blood functioned also as a means of bringing *unity* between God and Israel. There was blood sprinkled upon both the altar (symbolizing God) and the people. Thus the two contracting parties were by this means united by a solemn bond. The blood was for the people a transposition into the kingdom of God, a fulfillment of Ex. 19:5-6.

7. *What promise did the people make when they heard the law read?* (24:7)

They promised to obey all that Jehovah had spoken. God's covenants must be accepted voluntarily by His people. Regrettably, Israel did not keep to its promise.

Note that Moses twice declared the law to Israel, once extemporaneously and once by reading from the written word. Public reading of a book of covenant was a frequent practice in Bible times. It was done by Joshua and King Josiah, among others. (Joshua 24:1ff; II Kings 23:2, 21.)

If it be objected that Moses could not possibly have spoken so as have been heard by 600,000 men plus women and children, we can only reply that perhaps this was done by speaking to certain individuals who were representatives of all the people or tribes. Probably the same thing occurred in the sprinkling of the blood upon the people. Furthermore, we can not dismiss the possibility that God miraculously amplified Moses' voice so that all could hear it.

Israel's promise to obey in 24:7 was their third open promise to obey. See Ex. 19:8; 24:3. Compare 23:22.

We must remind ourselves at this point that the law of Moses was never given as a means for justifying men from sin. See Gal. 3:21. It only pointed out sins, with the goal of curbing the practice of sin. (Gal. 3:19; I Tim. 1:9-10; Rom. 3:20.) The law was (and is) an essential guide to those who would live Godly. But the attainment of righteousness in God's sight has always been possible only because God graciously accepts those who believe and seek Him through the sacrificial system He has provided, namely through the death of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 3:8-9, 22.)

8. *What marvelous demonstration of fellowship followed the making of the covenant? (24:9-11)*

Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders went up upon the mount and actually saw the God of Israel!⁸ They met in harmony, and beheld God, and ate and

⁸The Greek LXX reads "They saw the *place* where the God of Israel stood." This appears to be a deliberate alteration of the text to avoid the possibility of describing God as having human or tangible form.

drank! However, even at this time it appears that Moses came much closer to God than the others. See 24:2.

Only a few days before it would have been DEATH for any Israelite to have broken through the fence-barrier and gazed at God (19:21, 24). Now after the blood has been sprinkled and the covenant accepted, they eat and drink with God in peace. Though the people had been rebels against God's holy nature and laws, He as the God of all grace meets with their representatives in gracious fellowship.

Moses had previously been commanded to ascend into the mount with the people's representatives (24:1). But they did not ascend till the blood was sprinkled and the covenant was ratified. This point cannot be stressed too strongly! Ponder the power of the blood to bring men into God's presence (Rev. 7:14-15). When we consider the rebelliousness and disobedience of Israel up to this point, and consider that God foresaw their soon-forthcoming disobedience, we are awed at the graciousness of God. We should also be awed that through the blood of Christ we have an access to the Father (Eph. 2:18).

Meditate on the marvel of seeing God!⁹ How unusual this is! Exodus 33:20: "Thou canst not see my face; for man shall not see me and live." John 1:18: "No man hath seen God at any time." Compare I John 4:12. God dwells in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen, nor can see (I Tim. 6:16). When Isaiah saw the Lord, he felt that he was "undone" (or destroyed), "for mine eyes have seen the king. . . ." (Isa. 6:3) It was generally recognized among the Israelites that man could not see God and live. See Judges 6:22; 13:22. Ex. 24:11 itself hints that there was something very out of the ordinary in the fact that God did not lay His hand upon (or harm) the nobles.

⁹Moses and the others with him on the mount saw *elohim*, or God. The name *Yahweh* is not used here. Neither is it used in other accounts that tell of men seeing God. Compare Isa. 6:1; Judges 13:22.

Never again for 1500 years did a body of men see God again, not until they saw the Lord Jesus with "glory as of the only-begotten of the father." We think that the one whom Moses and the elders saw was God the Word, he who later came in the flesh as Jesus; and that they did not actually behold God the Father. If this be true, then both the statements that they saw God and that no man has beheld God at any time can be true. Compare Isa. 6:1 and John 12:41. But we claim no knowledge of the divine vision presented unto Moses other than the words of the scripture text itself.

Critical scholars who seek to connect 24:1-2 directly to 24:9-11, and attribute 24:3-8 to another author, saying it has been inserted into the story, miss a principal point of Exodus 24: the point that the ratification of the covenant in vss. 3-8 was followed by a glorious experience of fellowship with God upon the mount.

The "then" at the start of 24:9 could be (literally) translated simply as "and," although the "and" there does indicate the consecutive sequence of events which we express by "then."

9. *What was the appearance of God like? (24:10)*

The description of God's appearance is so brief that no image could possibly be made from the information given here. See Deut. 4:15. What is described is only that which lay "under his feet," which was like a work (or production of labor) made of brilliant, clear sapphire. The translation "pavement" seems to be a bit too specific, but probably represents the general idea correctly.

The area under God's feet is said to have been like the very essence (KJV, "body") of heaven for (or in) purity. The term translated "body" in KJV does indeed mean bone, body, or frame; but it also has the meanings of "essence, self, self-same, very." This seems to be its meaning in 24:10. This indicates that what Moses and the elders saw had in every way the appearance of heaven itself. They did not see some watered-down representation.

The word "saw" in 24:10 (Heb., *ra'ah*) is a common word for seeing with physical eyes. The word "saw" (or "beheld") in 24:11 (*chazah*) is the customary word for seeing a vision. The use of both of these words leads us to think that God had not actually transported His heavenly throne apparatus to Mt. Sinai but that the nobles saw it by a vision, but with a vision of such clarity that it was like the very essence of heaven, like being there on the spot.

Cassuto¹⁰ says that the word translated "purity" is commonly used (in Ugaritic poetry) to signify the brightness of the sapphire.

The "paved work" under God's feet appears to be the same as that which is referred to in the description of God's throne in Ezekiel 1:26: "Above the firmament . . . was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a *sapphire* stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it." Ezekiel alone refers to the appearance of God as the appearance of a *man*. The sapphire is a sky-blue semi-precious stone. See Ex. 28:18. Rev. 4:6 says that before the throne of God was, as it were, "a sea of glass, like unto crystal." We suppose that this "crystal" refers to the same "pavement" as that described as sapphire in Exodus.

The liberal critic Noth tries to link the sapphire paved work of Ex. 24:10 with painted or glazed pavements of sapphire color, such as are known to have existed in ancient Mesopotamia.¹¹ This, of course, renders the Exodus account a fictitious description, written by some author who devised a description of heaven resembling a Mesopotamian temple, and then alleged that the summit of Mt. Sinai was in heaven and that the God of Israel was present there. We are frequently astounded to see how far unbelievers will go to avoid accepting scripture statements as simple truth.

10. *What was the significance of eating and drinking before*

¹⁰*Op. cit.*, p. 314.

¹¹*Op. cit.*, p. 195.

God? (24:11)

The exact significance of this act is not stated. We suppose that it was mainly an act of fellowship with God, celebrating the ratification of the covenant. It is noteworthy that Jesus also instituted the new covenant with a meal, the last supper. See Luke 22:19.

We suppose also that what they ate were portions of the peace-offerings brought with them upon the mount.¹² See 24:5. The burnt-offerings would have been completely burned, but not the peace-offerings (Lev. 1:9; 7:11, 14). The peace-offerings were the only sacrifice of which the worshippers ate part. See notes on 20:24. The peaceful eating and drinking in God's presence indicates the harmony existing at that moment between God and Israel. It may be even a type of the blessedness of our presence with God in eternity, and of the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9; 21:3).

Was the *eating* in God's presence part of the process of ratifying God's covenant with Israel? We feel that it was. Jacob and Laban sealed the covenant between them by a meal together (Gen. 31:46, 54). BUT - and this is important - it was NOT the complete process of ratifying the covenant. Nor was it even the major part. That had taken place a day (or more) before when Moses sprinkled the people and the altar and the book with blood (24:6-8). The eating seems to us to have been more a celebration of the previous ratification of the covenant than a substantial part in the act of ratifying it.

We stress this, because the liberal critical view is that Exodus twenty-four contains *two* accounts of ratifying the covenant woven together. Supposedly the account in 24:1-2, 9-11 tells of ratifying the covenant by eating the meal with God up on Mt. Sinai. Then 24:3-8 gives another author's version of the covenant ratification by sprinkling blood at

¹²Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 315, feels that they ate and drank *after* they descended and returned to camp. We certainly do not get that impression from the Biblical text.

the foot of the mountain.¹³ It is much better to understand the sprinkling of the blood and the eating as being two acts in the one story.

11. *For what purpose was Moses called up into the mount?* (24:12)

He was called up to receive tablets of stone, and the law (*torah*) and commandment, which God had written.

We assume that the call of verse twelve came AFTER Moses had returned to the foot of the mountain with Aaron and his other companions. This surely seems to be implied by verse fourteen.

The giving of the tablets written by God would be a further and final confirmation of the covenant with God.

When Moses was told to come up into the mount and "Be there," he probably never imagined that he would be there forty days. See 24:18.

The section 24:12-18 looks ahead to 32:1, where Moses was sent down off the mount after the people built the golden calf.

The text surely declares that God himself wrote on the tablets of stone which He gave to Moses. See 31:18. We accept this as true.

It seems to us that the "tablets of stone" and the "law" spoken of are one and the same thing, namely the ten commandments on stone. The text could be translated (and probably should be), "I will give thee the tables of stone, *even* the law. . . ." (The "and" merely introduces another word by way of explanation, and stands between words in apposition.)

Jewish interpreters believe that the "law" spoken of in verse twelve was an oral law (or tradition) given to Moses in addition to the written law. This oral law is supposedly now preserved in written form in the Jewish *Talmud*. The *Talmud* has volumes of material telling how the laws of

¹³Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

Moses are to be interpreted and how they are to be carried out in all of life's activities. To many Jews every interpretation of the law given by a universally recognized authority (or rabbi) is regarded as having been given on Mt. Sinai.

Jesus rejected these traditions which were added to the law as being without authority from God. See Mark 7:5, 8-9. Moses himself declared that men were NOT to add to nor take away anything from the word which had been commanded to them (Deut. 4:2), referring to their written statutes and ordinances (Deut. 4:1).

12. *Who went with Moses up into the mount? (24:13-14).*

Joshua, Moses' servant, went up with him. Regarding Joshua, see 17:9 and 32:17. Not even Aaron went up.

Aaron and Hur are mentioned together in 24:14, as they were in 17:10, 12. See notes on those verses.

Moses had served as the judge in disputes too difficult for the other judges of Israel (18:26). In Moses' absence, the people were to bring such cases to Aaron and Hur.

The last clause of verse thirteen seems out of order with what follows it in verses fourteen and fifteen. That does not prove that the text is a jumble of contradictory statements copied clumsily from several sources. It merely reflects the Hebrew style of writing, which is not as concerned with strict chronological order as modern writers generally are. We saw another example of this back in 10:28—11:4.

13. *What covered the mount when Moses ascended into it? (24:15-17)*

The cloud covered it. The text suggests that the cloud returned, a cloud similar to which appeared previously, when the ten commandments were proclaimed (19:16).

The "glory of Jehovah" was seen there with the cloud. This glory is described as "like a devouring fire on the top of the mount," and it was visible even down below to the eyes of the children of Israel (24:17). Compare Ex. 16:10.

The glory of Jehovah "abode" upon Mt. Sinai. The word *abode* is a translation of the verb *shakan*, from which later developed a non-Biblical term *shekinah* (meaning dwelling,

or presence, of God), that referred to the glory cloud within the tabernacle and above it.

Moses was in the cloud on the mount six days, and on the seventh day God called him from the midst of the cloud. We suppose that these six days were days of spiritual preparation. In the Bible we have several instances where the events of six days reached a culmination on the seventh day. Examples could include creation, the weekly sabbath, the manna, etc. Perhaps the six-days' delay caused Moses to associate this experience with other great doings of God.

God's men need patience! Moses waited six days before God's voice came to him.

Many critics separate the story in Exodus into "sources" at 24:15 or near there. (See notes on 24:1-2). They allege that beginning at 24:15 we have a resumption of the Priestly narrative (P), which was interrupted after 19:20. This Priestly section is said to include 24:15—31:18, and to have been written centuries later, probably during Babylonian captivity (about 550 B.C.), and set into the older story by editors of the literary material. There is certainly no ancient manuscript evidence that the story has such sources. We have observed repeatedly how the text tells a continuous, harmonious story. We should not be intimidated by the critics's confident but unverified declarations. Their views deny the unity, truthfulness, and spiritual significance of the Exodus story.

14. *How long was Moses in the mount?* (24:18)

He was there forty days and forty nights. Moses did not come down until the making of the golden calf (Ex. 32:15). In those forty days he received all the information in chapters 25-31 about the tabernacle, the priesthood, etc. Moses was gone so long that the people thought he had perished or otherwise left the scene (32:1).

We do not know whether Joshua was with Moses at any time in these forty days or not. Perhaps they tented together some of the time, or stayed together in some cave.

During these forty days Moses neither ate nor drank. See

Deut. 9:9. Moses also fasted during his second stay on the mount (Deut. 9:18; Ex. 34:28). Elijah fasted forty days at this same place (I Kings 19:8). And Christ fasted forty days in the desert (Matt. 4:2). Assuredly Moses could not have survived forty days without water if he had not been miraculously sustained.

The spectacle of Moses amidst the cloud and the fire of God's glory is awesome. But it is typical of the events connected with the giving of the law. "Thou heardest his words out of the midst of the *fire*" (Deut. 4:36). The Israelites came to a mount that "burned with *fire*, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest" (Heb. 12:18).

As Christians, we have come to a very different spiritual starting place. We have come, not to Sinai, but to Mt. Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. We have come to "Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant" (Heb. 12:18, 24).

Israel's representatives briefly came into the presence of God after the covenant was ratified. As Christians we have a constant and eternal access to the father through the new covenant ratified by Christ through His death upon the cross.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

25 And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (2) Speak unto the children of Is-ra-el, that they take for me an offering: of every man whose heart maketh him willing ye shall take my offering. (3) And this is the offering which ye shall take of them: gold, and silver, and brass, (4) and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, (5) and rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins, and acacia wood, (6) oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, (7) onyx

stones, and stones to be set, for the eph-od, and for the breast-plate. (8) And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. (9) According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it.

(10) And they shall make an ark of acacia wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. (11) And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. (12) And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four feet thereof; and two rings shall be on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. (13) And thou shalt make staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. (14) And thou shalt put the staves into the rings on the sides of the ark, wherewith to bear the ark. (15) The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it. (16) And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee. (17) And thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. (18) And thou shalt make two cher-u-bim of gold; of beaten work shalt thou make them, at the two ends of the mercy-seat. (19) And make one cher-ub at the one end, and one cher-ub at the other end: of one piece with the mercy-seat shall ye make the cher-u-bim on the two ends thereof. (20) And the cher-u-bim shall spread out their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, with their faces one to another; toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cher-u-bim be. (21) And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. (22) And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cher-u-bim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Is-ra-el.

(23) And thou shalt make a table of acacia wood: two cubits *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and

a cubit and a half the height thereof. (24) And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about. (25) And thou shalt make unto it a border of a hand-breadth round about; and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about. (26) And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. (27) Close by the border shall the rings be, for places for the staves to bear the table. (28) And thou shalt make the staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them. (29) And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and the spoons thereof, and the flagons thereof, and the bowls thereof, wherewith to pour out: of pure gold shalt thou make them. (30) And thou shalt set upon the table showbread before me alway.

(31) And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made, even its base, and its shaft; its cups, its knops, and its flowers, shall be of one piece with it: (32) and there shall be six branches going out of the sides thereof; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side thereof, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side thereof: (33) three cups made like almond-blossoms in one branch, a knop and a flower; and three cups made like almond-blossoms in the other branch, a knop and a flower: so for the six branches going out of the candlestick: (34) and in the candlestick four cups made like almond-blossoms, the knops thereof, and the flowers thereof; (35) and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of the candlestick. (36) Their knops and their branches shall be of one piece with it; the whole of it one beaten work of pure gold. (37) And thou shalt make the lamps thereof, seven: and they shall light the lamps thereof, to give light over against it. (38) And the snuffers thereof, and the snuffdishes thereof, shall be of pure gold. (39) Of a talent of pure gold shall it be made, with all these vessels. (40) And see that thou make them after their pattern, which hath been showed thee in the mount.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. What were the Israelites to bring to Jehovah? (25:2)
2. With what feeling were the offerings to be brought? (25:2)
3. What metals were to be offered? (25:3)
4. What colors of cloth were to be brought? (25:4)
5. What types of animal skins were to be brought? (25:4-5)
6. What type of wood was to be brought? (25:5)
7. What were the Israelites to build for God? (25:8)
8. Where would God dwell? (25:8; 29:45; II Cor. 6:16)
9. According to what was God's tabernacle to be made? (25:9, 40)
10. What were the dimensions of the ark? (25:10)
11. With what was the ark to be overlaid? (25:11)
12. By what means was the ark to be carried? (25:12-13)
13. Where were the staves of the ark kept? (25:15)
14. What is the testimony? (25:16; 32:15; 34:29)
15. What is the mercy-seat? (25:17)
16. What was at the top of the mercy-seat? (25:18; Compare Ezekiel 10:14, 20; Rev. 4:6-8)
17. How were the cherubim positioned? (25:19-20)
18. From where did God meet and commune with Israel? (25:22)
19. Of what was the tabernacle a type? (Heb. 9:9, 11-12)
20. Of what was the ark of the covenant a type? (Psalm 99:1; 80:1; 97:2; 89:14)
21. Of what was the tabernacle a copy? (Heb. 9:23; 8:5; Compare Rev. 11:19)
22. What happened when men looked into the ark without the mercy-seat covering its contents? (I Samuel 6:19)
23. Suggest ways in which Christ compares to the mercy-seat. (Compare I John 2:2; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 12:24)
24. Describe the table of showbread. (25:23)
25. Of what materials was the table to be constructed? (25:23-24)
26. How was the table decorated? (25:25)

27. What equipment was made to be used with the table? (25:29)
 28. When was showbread kept upon the table? (25:30; Compare Lev. 24:5-9)
 - 29-40. From Leviticus 24:5-9 answer these questions about the showbread:
 29. What was the showbread made of?
 30. How many loaves of showbread were to be set on the table?
 31. How much flour went into each loaf? Would this make the loaves large or small?
 32. What was to be poured on each row (or pile) of loaves?
 33. True or false? The showbread is called a type of (sacrificial) offering. (Lev. 24:7, 9)
 34. How often was the showbread to be set in order?
 35. From whom was the showbread to be taken?
 36. By whom was the showbread eaten?
 37. What would the number of loaves of showbread possibly indicate that they symbolized?
 38. What does the name showbread (or "bread of the presence") indicate about the significance of the showbread?
 39. What would the use of frankincense on the bread suggest about it? (Compare Psalm 141:2; Rev. 5:8)
 40. Is the showbread a type or symbol of the Lord's supper?
 41. Describe the candlestick (lampstand). (25:31-36)
 42. How much gold was in the lampstand? (25:39; 37:24)
 43. Who was to bring olive oil for the lamp? (Ex. 27:20)
 44. When was the lamp kept burning? (Lev. 24:3; I Sam. 3:3)
 45. Who tended to the lamp to keep it burning? (Ex. 27:21)
 46. Of what may the lampstand be a type or symbol? (Eph. 5:8; I John 1:5; Philippians 2:15; Psalm 119:105; John 8:12; II Cor. 4:3-6).
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EXODUS TWENTY-FIVE: SANCTUARY INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take an offering; 25:1-8.
 2. Make it according to the pattern; 25:9, 40.
 3. Make an ark and mercy seat; 25:10-22.
 4. Make a table; 25:23-30.
 5. Make a lampstand; 25:31-39.
-

AN OFFERING FOR GOD! (25:1-7)

1. Comes from willing people; 25:1-2.
 2. Consists of valuable possessions; 25:3-7.
-

A SANCTUARY FOR GOD! (25:8)

1. Made by MEN.
 2. Dwelt in by GOD.
-

MAKE IT LIKE THE PATTERN! (25:9, 40)

1. A divinely revealed pattern.
 2. A pattern of the heavenly tabernacle; (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23)
 3. A pattern of the Christian religion; (Hebrews 9:8-9)
-

MESSAGES FROM GOLDEN FURNITURE (25:10-39)

1. The ark (25:10-16): God dwells among men!
2. The mercy-seat (25:17-22): God communes (talks) with men!
3. The table (25:23-30): God desires his people in his presence!
God sets an offering in his presence!
4. The Lampstand (25:31-39): God gives light to men!

THE ARK — THE FOOTSTOOL
OF GOD'S THRONE!
(Ex. 25:10-16)

1. Contained the ten commandments. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne." (Ps. 89:14a)
2. Had the pot of manna (Ex. 16:33). "Lovingkindness and truth go before thy face." (Ps. 89:14b)
3. Had Aaron's staff that budded. "No man taketh the honor (priesthood) unto himself, unless he is called by God" (Heb. 5:4).

THE MERCY-SEAT
(Ex. 25:17-22)

1. A precious golden covering.
2. A worship-centered covering (cherubim).
3. A blood-sprinkled covering; Lev. 16:14.

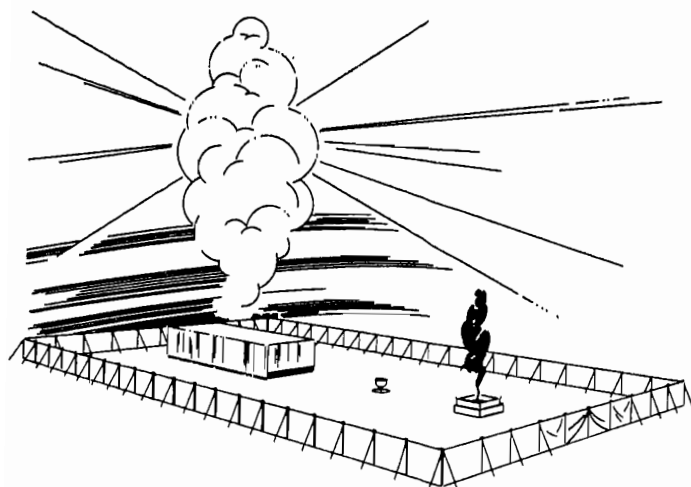
THE LAMPSTAND (Menorah)!

1. A precious light (golden).
2. A united light (all of one piece).
3. A perfect light (seven-fold).
4. A spiritual light (fueled by oil, symbolic of the Spirit).

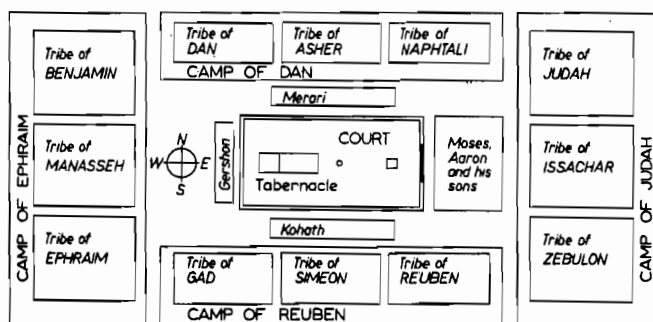
SHOWBREAD
(Presence-bread)!
(Ex. 25:23-30)

1. Twelve loaves (symbolizing the twelve tribes) always in God's presence! (Lev. 24:5-8).
2. An offering made by fire always in God's presence! (Lev. 24:9)

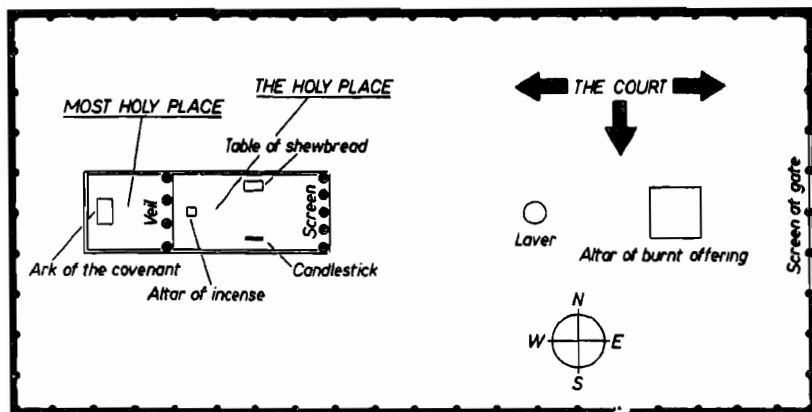
TABERNACLE VIEWS



General view of the Tabernacle and court



The encampments of Israel around the Tabernacle



Ground plan of the Tabernacle and court



Acacia tree beside a wadi running into the Dead Sea. Acacia (or shittim) wood was used in the tabernacle. (Photo by author.)

SPECIAL STUDY: THE TABERNACLE

1. *What was the tabernacle?*

- (1) The tabernacle was that beautiful place of worship made by the children of Israel in the days of Moses. It was a sanctuary, a holy place set apart for God. God showed His presence at the tabernacle, and there received the worship of the people. Exodus 29:43-46.
- (2) It was a portable house of worship. When we go on camping trips, we carry with us a "house" that we can move about, a tent. Out in the desert the Israelites were constantly moving about. Therefore they had to have a house of worship that could easily be moved with them. The very word "tabernacle" means a "tent," and the word "tent" certainly suggests a portable dwelling. God gave instructions about how to transport the tabernacle in Numbers 4:5-15.
 - a. Some pieces of furniture in the tabernacle had staves on each side, so men could carry them on their shoulders.
 - b. The heavier parts of the tabernacle were carried by six wagons pulled by oxen. Numbers 7:1-7.
- (3) It was the meeting place of God and Israel.

God dwelt among his people, Israel. Exodus 25:8. God particularly revealed His presence around the tabernacle, and especially in that part of it called the Most Holy Place. Exodus 25:22.

The fact that God dwelt in the midst of Israel was the central fact of their life. To Israel God's presence meant plan, protection, and provision. If God had not manifested His presence in the tabernacle, the tribes of Israel would have been scattered about helter-skelter, with no one to protect or provide for them.

This was an appeal to the senses of a people whose spiritual discernment was underdeveloped. God's presence among them was plainly indicated by the daily manna, the pillar of cloud, and the miracles that occurred during

their journeyings. But to a people brought up amidst the idolatry of Egypt, a centralized shrine was more readily comprehended than an omnipresent spiritual God.

Today God dwells in the midst of his *church*, just as He dwelt among the Israelites. II Corinthians 6:16. The presence and worship of God give order, protection, and purpose to our lives. The worship of God should be as central to us as the tabernacle was central in the camp of Israel.

2. *Where is the information given about the tabernacle?*

- (1) The instructions about how it was to be built are given in Ex. 25-31.
- (2) The account of its construction and erection are in Ex. 35-40. Most of the information in this section is a repetition of that in Ex. 25-31.
- (3) The book of Hebrews, chs. 9-10, discusses the significance of the tabernacle at length.
- (4) Many other references throughout the Bible refer to it. The legislation in Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy was primarily to be carried out in the tabernacle rituals.

3. *What was the importance of the tabernacle?*

The importance of this tabernacle can be seen in several ways:

- (1) The details of its construction are described *twice* in Exodus, and much information is found about it throughout the rest of the Bible.
Arthur Pink reminds us that God only used two chapters to tell of the creation and furnishing of heaven and earth. But he used at least thirteen chapters (and really many more) to discuss the tabernacle!
- (2) The tabernacle is presented as a *type* of the Christian religion now operative (Heb. 9:8-9). (See Question No. 14 in this special study of the Tabernacle.)
- (3) The tabernacle was an earthly illustration and counterpart of God's heavenly dwelling and tabernacle. The tabernacle was a copy of things in the heavens (Heb. 8:5;

9:23-29). Rev. 11:19: "There was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant." Both the earthly and heavenly tabernacles therefore had covenant *arks*. Both had an altar for incense (Rev. 8:3). Both had seven lamps (Rev. 4:5). Christ entered the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (Heb. 9:11). Christ with his blood entered the true holy place (holy of holies) in heaven (Heb. 9:24). These facts made the earthly tabernacle very important.

- (4) God's insistence that it be made according to the precise pattern he had showed in the mount stresses the importance of each detail of it.

4. *Who were camped around the tabernacle?*

- (1) The Israelites camped all around the tabernacle. Each tribe camped by itself in its designated place. Although each tribe camped separately, the three on each of the four sides of the tabernacle were grouped together into larger encampments, called the Camp of Dan, the Camp of Judah, the Camp of Reuben, and the Camp of Ephraim. See Numbers 2:1—3:39. See page 550A.
- (2) Moses and the priestly families of Gershon, Merari, and Kohath were camped around the tabernacle up close to it.

5. *What were the names which were given to the tabernacle?*

God not only ordains things to exist, but He gives them their names as well. Let us use "Bible names for Bible things." Here are the names for the tabernacle:

- (1) "Tabernacle." Exodus 26:1. This word is the translation of several Hebrew words (2 main ones). One (*ohel*) means "tent." The other (*mishkan*) means "dwelling place."
- (2) "Tent." Exodus 26:36.
- (3) "Sanctuary." Exodus 25:8. This word means "a place set apart," or "a holy place."
- (4) "Tabernacle of the congregation." Exodus 29:42, 44; 30:36; etc. This name is rendered "tent of meeting" in the Revised Version. The name "tabernacle of the congregation" is applied to that room in the tabernacle called

"the holy place." Exodus 27:21.

(5) "House of the Lord." Deuteronomy 23:18. (The church is now the house of the Lord, and God dwells in it through the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:22.)

(6) "Temple of the Lord." I Samuel 1:9. This name suggests the magnificence of the tabernacle, as if it were a palace or temple. The church is now the temple of God.

6. *How were materials obtained for the tabernacle?*

Free-will offerings provided the materials. See Exodus 25:1-9; 35:4-29; 36:5-7.

7. *Who actually constructed the tabernacle?*

It was constructed by men specially called and filled and guided by the Spirit of God to have wisdom and skill. God called them by name. Among these builders were Bezaleel and Oholiab. (Ex. 36:1; Ex. 35:30—36:1.)

These builders of the tabernacle correspond to the apostles of Christ in the church. Christ specifically called His apostles, and filled them with the Holy Spirit so that they could establish the church without error. Acts 1:8; John 16:13.

8. *How many tabernacles did all the parts of the tabernacle combine to form?*

Just one. It was ONE tabernacle. Exodus 26:6. All its parts formed one harmonious whole.

Accordingly we find a unity prevailing the whole church of Christ. There are many different members of it, but all produce one body. I Corinthians 12:2.

9. *How was the tabernacle maintained?*

It was maintained by an offering of "atonement money." Every person over twenty had to give a half-shekel. Exodus 30:11-16. This was an annual offering. Matthew 17:24. The fact that God provided through the tabernacle a means of atonement (or covering) for sins made the people indebted to God and to His tabernacle.

10. *By what act was the tabernacle "sanctified" or set apart for holy use?*

It was set apart by anointing with holy oil. The tabernacle, all its pieces of furniture, and its priests were

anointed with a holy oil, so that it was sanctified and became "most holy." Exodus 30:22-33; 40:9-16.

Anointing oil, as used in the Old Testament, was symbolic of the Holy Spirit. See Luke 4:18; Psalm 133:2; Hebrews 1:9; Acts 10:38.

As every part of the tabernacle was anointed with the holy oil, so every feature of the Christian faith is anointed with the Holy Spirit. See Ephesians 1:22; I Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:17. Our religion is therefore divine, holy, precious, anointed of God.

11. *What covered over, or lodged above, the tabernacle?*

The cloud of God's glory covered over or lodged above the tabernacle. Exodus 40:34-39; Numbers 9:15-23. This glory cloud is called the SHECHINAH. (This word, however, is not actually found in the Bible.)

God's presence has frequently been associated with a cloud, or a shining light, or smoke, or fire. Exodus 16:10; 24:16-17; Numbers 20:6; Isaiah 6:4; Luke 2:9. This creates a great sense of God's presence and majesty.

This cloud also guided and led the Israelites. When the cloud lifted up, this was a sign for the Israelites to pack up for moving on. When the cloud moved, they followed. When the cloud stopped, they camped.

The Scripture indicates that God intends to glorify His people today with a glory like that which crowned the tabernacle. Isaiah 60:2; 4:5.

12. *What was the value of the material in the tabernacle?*

The value was tremendous. See Exodus 38:24-29. The exact value is impossible to determine, but a million and a half dollars has been suggested as a conservative figure. The worship of God is not a cheap, trifling, and inconsequential thing.

13. *Layout and furniture of the Tabernacle.*

A. The Layout of the tabernacle.

- (1) The *Court of the Tabernacle*, in which the Tabernacle itself stood, was an oblong space, 100 cubits by 50 (*i.e.*, 150 feet by 75), having its longer axis east

and west, with its front to the *east*. It was surrounded by linen cloth hangings 5 cubits in height, and supported by pillars of brass 5 cubits apart, to which the curtains were attached by hooks and fillets of silver (thin rods or rails between the pillars). This enclosure was only broken on the eastern side by the entrance, which was 20 cubits wide, and closed by curtains of fine twined linen, wrought with needle-work, and of the most gorgeous colors. (Ex. 27:9-19; 38:9-20.)

- In the outer or eastern half of the court was placed the altar of burnt-offering, and between it and the Tabernacle itself, the laver at which the priests washed their hands and feet on entering the Temple.
- (2) The *Tabernacle itself* was placed toward the western end of this enclosure. It was an oblong rectangular structure, 30 cubits in length by 10 in width (45 feet by 15), and 10 in height; the interior being divided into two chambers, the first or outer of 20 cubits in length, the inner of 10 cubits, and consequently an exact cube. The former was the *Holy Place*, or *First Tabernacle* (Heb. 9:2), containing the golden candlestick on one side, the table of show-bread opposite, and between them in the center the altar of incense. The latter was the *Most Holy Place*, or the *Holy of Holies*, containing the ark, surmounted by the cherubim, with the two stone tablets inside.

The two sides, and the further, or western, end, were enclosed by boards of shittim-wood overlaid with gold. (Ex. 26:15-26; 36:20-70).

Four successive coverings of curtains looped together were placed over the open top, and fell down over the sides. The first, or inmost, was a splendid fabric of linen, embroidered with figures of cherubim, in blue, purple, and scarlet, and joined together by golden fastenings. The next was a woollen covering of goats' hair; the third, of rams' skins dyed red; and the outermost, of porpoise skins (Ex.

26:1-14; 36:8-19).

The front of the Sanctuary was closed by a hanging of fine linen, embroidered in blue, purple, and scarlet, and supported by golden hooks, on *five* pillars of shittim-wood overlaid with gold, and standing in brass sockets. The covering of goats' hair was so made as to hang down over this if desired. A more sumptuous curtain of the same kind, embroidered with cherubim and hung on *four* pillars with silver sockets, divided the Holy from the Most Holy Place. It was called the *VEIL*, as it hid from the eyes of all but the high-priest the inmost sanctuary, where Jehovah dwelt on his mercy-seat, between the cherubim above the ark.

B. Furniture of the tabernacle.

(1) In the Outer Court.

a. *The Altar of Burnt-offering*. See notes on Ex. 27:1-8; 38:1-7.

b. *The Brazen Laver*. See notes on Ex. 29:4; 30:17-21; 38:8; 40:7, 11. See also Lev. 8:10-11.

(2) In the Holy Place.

The furniture of the court was connected with *sacrifice*, that of the sanctuary itself with the deeper mysteries of mediation and access to God. The *Holy Place* contained three objects: the *altar of incense* in the center, so as to be directly in front of the ark of the covenant, the *table of show-bread* on its right or north side, and the *golden candlestick* on the left or south side.

a. *The Altar of Incense*. (Ex. 30:1-10, 34-38; 37:25-29; Lev. 10:1-2.)

b. *The Table of Showbread*. (Ex. 25:23-30; 37:10-16; Lev. 24:5-9.)

c. *The Golden Lampstand*. (Ex. 25:31-40; 27:20-21; 37:17-24; Lev. 24:1-4; Num. 8:1-4)

(3) In the Holy of Holies.

In the *Holy of Holies*, within the veil and shrouded

in darkness, there was but one object, the most sacred of the whole. The *Ark of the Covenant*, or the *Testimony*, was a sacred chest, containing the two tables of stone, inscribed with the Ten Commandments.

The cover of the ark (called the *mercy-seat*) was a place of pure gold, overshadowed by two cherubim, with their faces bent down and their wings meeting. This was the very *throne* of Jehovah, who was therefore said to "dwell between the cherubim."

14. *Typology of the Tabernacle.*

A *type* is some person, thing, or event in the Old Testament age which foreshadowed some person, thing, or event in the New Testament age. The *antitype* is that person, thing, or event in the New Testament age which was foreshadowed by the Old Testament type. We are expressly told in Heb. 9:8-9 that the first tabernacle is a figure, or type, for the time present. The typology is given for many parts of the tabernacle.

In the list of the tabernacle types that follows we have placed question marks alongside our statements if the antitypes are not specifically stated in the scripture. In most such cases reasonable inferences may be drawn from scripture that should enable us to determine the antitypes with some certainty.

- a. The entire tabernacle—A type of the Christian religion that has now come into reality (Heb. 9:8)
- b. The Holy of Holies—A type of heaven (Heb. 9:24).
 - (1) The ark of the covenant—A type of the footstool of God's throne (I Chron. 28:2; Psalm 132:7-8). (?)
 - (2) The mercy-seat—A type of God's throne, which is a place of mercy because Christ our priest is there. See Romans 3:25; I John 2:2; 4:10. The term *propitiation* in these verses is the same word used in the Greek Bible for *mercy-seat*.
 - (3) The veil between the Holy and Most Holy places—A type of Christ's flesh, which was broken on the cross

(Heb. 10:19-20; Luke 23:44-45).

- c. The Holy Place—A type of the church (?). (As the Holy of Holies was entered only from the Holy Place, so heaven is entered only from the church. As the Holy Place was for priests only, so the church is for priests (Christians) only.)

(1) Altar of incense—A type of prayer (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4; Ps. 141:2).

(2) Table of showbread—A type of the fellowship of saints in the presence of God (?). (The twelve loaves seem to have represented Israel. Show-bread means *presence-bread*. Thus the showbread symbolized Israel's being in God's presence, and foreshadowed our fellowship in God's presence [I John 1:3]).

Also as an "offering made by fire" (Lev. 24:9) it was a type of Christ our offering (Eph. 5:2), who is always in God's presence for us.

(3) Lampstand—A type of the light of the Gospel (?). We walk in the light (Eph. 5:7-8). God is light (I Jn. 1:5). Christ is the light (John 8:12). The scriptures are a light (Ps. 119:105; II Pet. 1:19). Churches are lights (Rev. 1:12, 20). Christians are lights (Phil. 2:15).

- d. The court—A type of the world, or God's outreach into the world (?). (As God placed in the court, within the reach of all Israelites, the means for forgiveness, so God has placed in the world the means for forgiveness to all who will draw near seeking God.)

(1) Altar of burnt offering—A type of Christ's death (Heb. 13:10; John 1:29).

(2) Laver—A type of baptism (Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5). (?) The word "washing" in Greek means "laver."

Also the laver appears to have been a type of the daily cleansing available to all priests (Christians!) (I John 1:9). This seems to be a necessary conclusion because the priests washed at the laver each time they entered and went out of the tabernacle (Ex. 30:19-21).

e. The priesthood.

(1) Aaron, the high priest—A type of Christ our high priest (Heb. 4:14).

(2) Aaron's sons (lesser priests)—A type of Christians; all Christians are priests (Rev. 1:6; I Peter 2:9).

15. *What are the views of many critics about the tabernacle?*

Generally the critical view is that the information about the tabernacle in Exodus was written by priestly writers who lived nearly a thousand years after the time of Moses. These priestly writers lived during or after the Babylonian captivity (about 550 B.C.), and wrote their description of the tabernacle from their memories of the Solomonic temple in Jerusalem, or possibly even from their acquaintance with the temple of Zerubbabel built AFTER the Babylonian captivity. They projected back into the distant past an idealized description, based on later temple features. Their writings are usually referred to as the P (for Priestly) document. The P document was supposedly inserted into the older narratives comprising the remainder of Exodus. (Examples of these views may be seen in Noth's *Exodus*, p. 201, and *Broadman Bible Commentary* Vol. I (1969), p. 431.)

The critics hold that the ark was the imaginary creation of one who knew no more about it than that it once stood in the innermost part of Solomon's temple before the Babylonian exile. (Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 203).

The lampstand is said to have been an innovation (!) presumably introduced into the temple of Zerubbabel (516 B.C.). (Noth *op. cit.*, p. 203.) Since it had features resembling those of a tree, some have thought that it reflects an ancient reverence for trees.

The general conclusion drawn from such theories is that nothing in the Biblical stories is true or edifying. Such theories are often asserted as certain truth when there is not a shred of solid evidence to back them up. Archaeological discoveries have frequently shown that the critics have been in error. For example, we now know that

moveable shrines (such as the tabernacle) existed in several nations - Egypt, Canaan (at Ugarit), Syria (at Palmyra). Many of these go back as far as the time of Moses, and some in Egypt back as far as 2600 B.C. (John Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, 241, 243). Why then should critics assume that the Israelites in Moses' times simply could not have produced a moveable place of worship like the tabernacle?

In this commentary we have occasionally discussed the critics' views on certain passages. In most cases we have found ourselves in strong disagreement with their opinions.

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

1. *What is in Exodus twenty-five?*

The chapter contains (1) God's instructions to Moses about taking an offering from the people to obtain materials to build the tabernacle (25:1-9); (2) instructions about how to make the ark (25:10-15) and the mercy-seat (25:16-22); (3) instructions about the table of presence-bread (25:23-30); (4) instructions about the lampstand (25:31-39).

2. *Who was to make an offering for tabernacle materials* (25:1-2)

Everyone whose heart made him willing was to give. Giving to God should be voluntary, not forced. See II Cor. 8:4-5; 9:6-7. Those who are willing do give freely. The Israelites gave more materials than were needed for the tabernacle. See Ex. 35:21-29; 36:5-7. In a similar way many years later they gave very much for the temple (I Chron. 29:1-5).

The word translated *offering* (Heb. *terumah*) means a heave-offering, one that is lifted up or separated unto God. The same word is used in Ex. 29:27, Lev. 7:14, Num. 15:19 to refer to various types of sacrifices. This use of this word

indicates that a sacredness comes upon all things presented to the LORD.

3. *What materials were given for the tabernacle?* (25:3-7)

(1) *Blue*. This was wool cloth dyed with deep violet color made from glands of the murex shell-fish found in the sea by Phoenicia and Palestine.

(2) *Purple*. Wool dyed dark red or reddish-purple by the shell-fish dye.

(3) *Scarlet*. Literally this says "worm of scarlet." The cloth was colored a brilliant red by color from the cochineal (or coccus) worm (or insect). In the Arabic language the word translated *scarlet* is *kirmiz*, from which we get our word *crimson*.

(4) *Gold*. All of the items in the Holy Place room or the Holy of Holies were of pure gold or gold-plated. The gold was probably obtained in Egypt (12:35), or possibly by spoil from the Amalekites or by inheritance from their forefathers. Gold was also used to overlay the boards of the tabernacle (38:24).

(5) *Silver*. This was obtained in part by a levy of half a shekel from each adult man (38:26-28). It was used for casting bases (pedestals or sockets) for the boards and pillars (36:24-26).

(6) *Brass*. This is more correctly translated "copper" or "bronze" (the alloy of copper and tin). Certainly it was not brass (copper and zinc). See 38:28-31. Copper was mined even before Moses' time in the rocky hills north of the Red Sea Gulf of Akabah, and still is.

(7) *Fine linen*. Egypt was famous for this material. See Ezek. 27:7. The Hebrew word for linen (*shesh*) is a borrowed Egyptian term. Joseph in Egypt was arrayed in linen (41:42). It was used for the innermost tabernacle covering (26:1), for the veil (26:31), the screen (26:36), and the priests' garments (28:6, 8, 42).

(8) *Goats' hair*. Literally, just *goats*! The goats usually had black hair (Song of Sol. 4:1). The women spun the goats' hair, twisting it into yarn (35:26), which was woven into

cloth. It was used for the second covering of the tabernacle (26:7).

(9) *Rams' skins dyed red.* These red rams' skins were used for the third covering over the tabernacle (26:14). R.S.V. reads "tanned rams' skins." This does not appear to be the best translation because the verb means "to be made red."

(10) *Sealskins.* (R.S.V. "goatskins," a conjectural translation; K.J.V., "badger skins," a faulty translation.) The *New English Bible* gives "porpoise skins," which seems to be a good rendering. The Hebrew word *tahash* refers possibly to the sea cow (dugong, or manatee), which is found in the Red Sea. It is ten to twelve feet long, with a rounded head. It has a hide admirably suited for making sandals (See Ezek. 16:10). Its upper skin is thicker and coarse, but the lower belly skin is thin yet tough.¹ An Arabic word related to the Hebrew *tahash* refers to several kinds of sea animals - seals, dolphins, sharks, dogfish. Perhaps the Hebrew word is equally applicable to several marine creatures.²

The "sealskins" were used for the outermost covering of the tabernacle (26:14), and for a covering over the ark and other furniture of the tabernacle (Num. 4:6, 8, 10, 11).

(11) *Acacia wood.* (King James, "shittim"). The acacia trees are the only trees in Sinai or Arabia from which planks might be cut. They are very tough, thorny, rather flat-topped trees, not usually over twenty feet high at present. The author has seen many of them in the Negev, the Arabah, and around the Dead Sea. The wood is indestructible by insects. The thorns (very numerous!) are up to two inches long. Most of the acacia trees now surviving are too small to have been cut into planks one and a half cubits broad (26:15-16). The Arab charcoal business has depleted the larger trees. However, S. C. Bartlett in the nineteenth century reported finding a great many large acacia trees in Wady

¹Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 164.

²Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-253.

Sa'al (which leads into Wady Sheikh).³ Many of these were very large, twenty inches to two feet in diameter. Bartlett tells that Mr. Holland, another Sinai traveller, found one nine feet in circumference. It is incorrect to assert that there have been no trees in Sinai from which boards the size of the tabernacle boards might have been cut. (In Ex. 26:15 R.S.V. renders "boards" as "frames.") (The boards might have been made by splicing wood from several trees together.)

(12) *Oil for the light*.⁴ This was a pure (or clear) olive oil beaten from the olives (Lev. 24:2). See Ex. 25:6; 27:20-21.

(13) *Spices* for anointing oil (30:23-33) and for sweet incense (30:34-38; 35:28).

(14) *Onyx stones and other gemstones* (25:7). See 28:9, 17-20. The onyx was probably a banded agate with straight bands. Others consider it to be a beryl. (*Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, article "Minerals.") These stones were used in the high priest's garments. The onyx stones and other gems were presented by the rulers of the congregation (35:27). Ex. 25:7 mentions the ephod and breastplate. See Ex. 28:6-14; 39:2-7 on the ephod, and 28:15-30; 39:8-21 on the breastplate.

The absence of mention of *iron* in the list of materials to be donated is possibly an indication of the very early date of the book of Exodus.

4. *What was God's purpose for the sanctuary?* (25:8)

God's purpose was that He might dwell among the Israelites. God desired to live among his people. See Ex. 29:45; I Kings 6:13; Lev. 26:11-12; II Cor. 6:16; Heb. 3:6; Rev. 21:3. It is certainly true that God inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15), and fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:24). Heaven is His throne and earth is His footstool (Isa. 66:1). Spiritually-minded

³Bartlett, *op. cit.*, pp. 300-301.

⁴The Greek LXX omits 25:6, possibly because of a skip by the eye of the translator between words with similar endings, *shittim* in vs. 5, and *sammim* in vs. 6. But the verse is needed to provide a full list of the materials for the tabernacle. See Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

Israelites realized this. See I Kings 8:27.

Nonetheless, God condescends to meet his children in limited places where they can reach Him.

The word *sanctuary* (25:8) means a holy place, one set apart for God. See Jer. 17:12.

God did not ask for a tabernacle; he asked for a sanctuary. God needs no tabernacle in which to dwell. The word "tabernacle" in 25:8 simply means a "dwelling." Do not read into 25:8 the meaning "Make me a sanctuary to provide a place where I may dwell among them." The text does not say that God dwelt in *it* (the tabernacle), but rather that he dwelt in *them* (the people)!

5. *What was the guide used in constructing the tabernacle?* (25:9)

The guide was the pattern which God showed Moses in the mount. See 25:40; 26:30; 27:8. Making the tabernacle exactly like this pattern was absolutely required. See Heb. 8:5.

God seems to have shown Moses a model or form of the tabernacle made in the way He wanted Moses to make it. This model was actually a model of the very tabernacle of God in heaven, and the earthly tabernacle was thus to be itself a model (pattern) of the heavenly tabernacle. To have digressed from the pattern shown to him would have caused Moses to misrepresent the design of God's tabernacle in heaven. Further, it would have produced a faulty type (or advance representation) of the religion which Jesus Christ has brought to us.

Some Jewish commentators have held that Moses saw a prophetic vision of the actual divine dwelling place in heaven, and that it therefore became necessary for Moses to erect in the middle of the camp of Israel a tabernacle designed like that seen in his vision, corresponding to the heavenly sanctuary.⁵ Hertz (also Jewish) disagrees, saying

⁵Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

that the tabernacle was only an educational tool to wean Israel from idolatrous worship, and that it did not correspond to any tabernacle on a universe-wide scale.⁶

Keil⁷ argues (correctly we feel) that God showed Moses not the heavenly original, but only a model of the heavenly original. The word translated *pattern* (Heb. *tabenith*) seems to have this meaning in Deut. 4:17 ("the *likeness* of any beast"), II Kings 16:10 ("the *fashion* of the altar"), and II Kings 16:10 (David's pattern of the temple, which he gave to Solomon).

Observe that the pattern of the tabernacle shown to Moses extended to the pattern of ALL the vessels (furniture, instruments) of it. There is an opinion that God has given men no definite pattern for His worship. God does indeed allow much freedom of expression in worship, but the command to conform exactly to the tabernacle pattern suggests that the pattern is a very real thing for us to recognize and accept.

6. *What was the first item of tabernacle furniture to be described? (25:10-11)*

The ark of the testimony (or covenant). For further information about the ark, see 37:1-9; Deut. 10:2-5; Heb. 9:3-5.

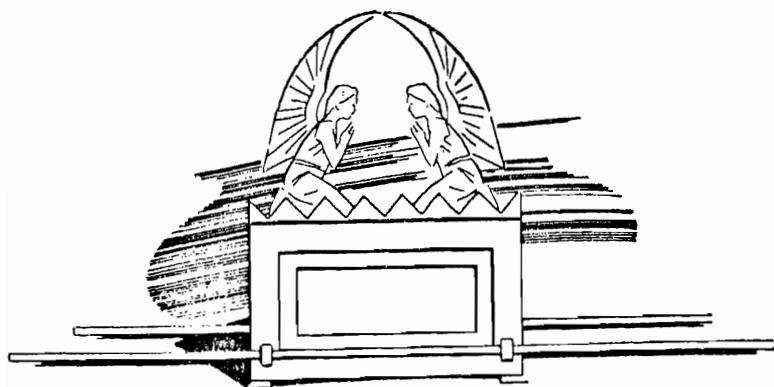
The ark was a wooden chest overlaid "within and without"⁸ with gold. It was 1½ x 1½ x 2½ cubits⁹ (about 27 x 27 x 45 inches). The ark (Heb. *'aron*) of the covenant should certainly not be confused with the ark (Heb. *tebah*) of Noah or the ark-basket (*tebah*) of the baby Moses (Ex. 2:3).

⁶J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London, Soncino Press, 1969), p. 325.

⁷Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.* II, pp. 165-167.

⁸The Hebrew expression in 25:11 meaning "inside and outside" could quite literally be rendered "in (the) house and in (the) street." This same idiom is used to describe how Noah's ark was pitched with pitch "within and without" (Gen. 6:14). Probably the ark was overlaid with gold by the Egyptian method of attaching thin hammered plates of gold to the wood by means of small nails. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

⁹Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 246, discusses the length of a cubit, and settles upon a length of eighteen inches. We adopt his conclusion.



The ark of the covenant and the mercy-seat with cherubim

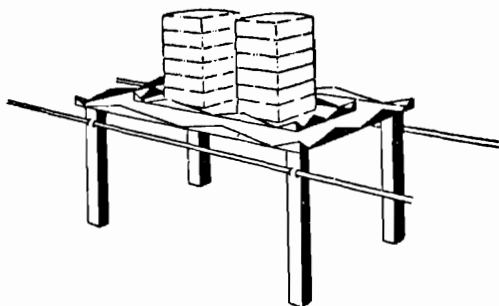
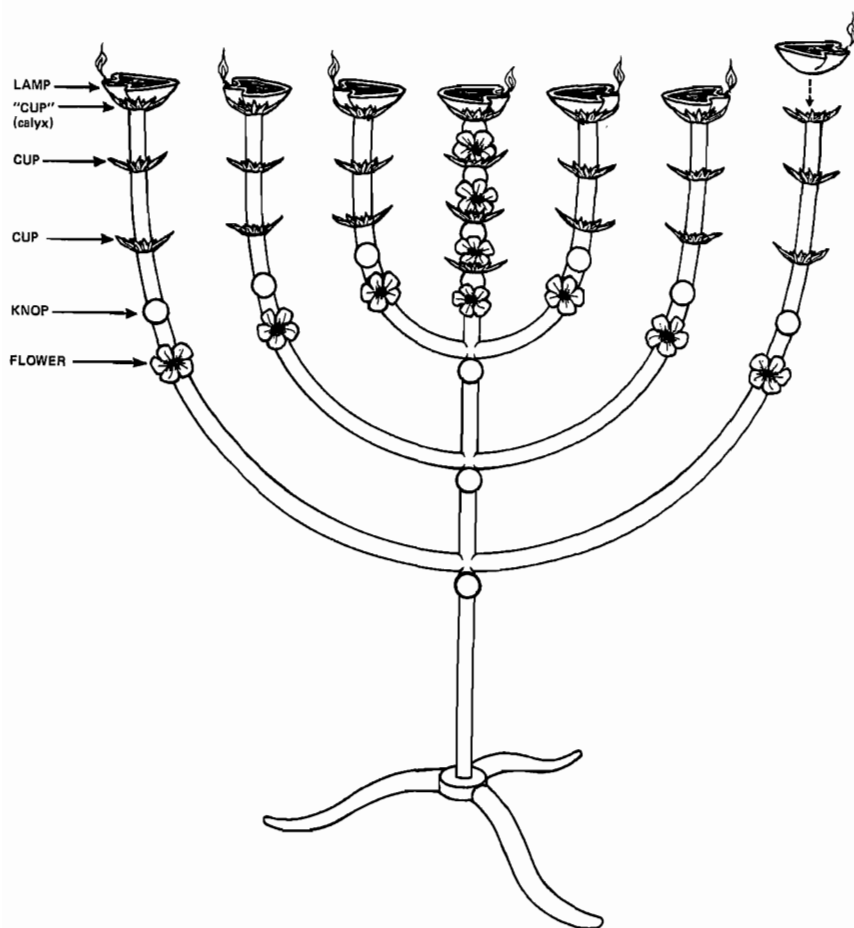


Table of showbread with its double crown and loaves.



The golden MENORAH (lampstand, or candlestick). The drawing shows that the lamps could be lifted off the lampstand for cleaning or refueling. Decorations on the lampstand include "cups" (resembling the calyx, or false petals, of flowers), knops (spherical ornaments), and flowers. The three-legged stand is adapted from a crude ancient sketch of the lampstand found in the Sinai peninsula. (Drawing by James Sherrod)

The ark is called by several names: (1) "ark of God" (I Sam. 3:3); (2) "ark of the covenant" (Num. 10:33; Deut. 10:8); (3) "holy ark" (II Chron. 35:3); (4) "ark of the LORD" (Josh. 6:7, 13; I Kings 2:26); (5) "ark of the testimony" (Ex. 25:22; 39:35); (6) "ark of thy strength" (Ps. 132:8). In Exodus it is uniformly called the ark of the testimony.

The ark and all the articles of furniture within the tabernacle building were of gold or overlaid with gold. Anything closely associated with God's presence was made of gold. God's heaven is golden. Rev. 21:10.

The ark and its covering (the mercy-seat) were the only items in the innermost tabernacle room, the holy of holies. Thus the ark was the central focus of the sanctuary, and the instructions concerning it were given first. It seems to have been a representation of God's throne and His footstool, and therefore it was befitting that first attention should have been given to it.

Likewise we need to set our minds on things above (Col. 3:1-2). Our heavenly home should be our primary focus of interest and our life goal. Set your home perfectly (completely) on the grace (the favor) that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:13).

Although the ark was the first thing described, it appears that it was not constructed until after the tabernacle building was made (37:1-9).

We observe the pronouns in 25:10ff. First, "*they* shall make an ark." But then many times after that, Moses himself is told, "*Thou* shalt. . . ." This points out Moses' leadership in making it. The workman Bezalel actually constructed it. See Ex. 37:1.

It appears from Deut. 10:2-5 that Moses himself had made a previous ark right after coming down from the mount the second time with the tablets of the ten commandments. He put the commandments in this ark, and declared many years later "There they are." It appears therefore that Moses considered the ark of the covenant to be in some way

a continuation of the simpler ark he himself had built for the stone tablets. Perhaps Bezalel only gold-plated and decorated the chest Moses prepared.

The top edge of the ark had a "crown" (moulding, rim, border, edge) round about it. This crown served to keep mercy-seat (covering) upon the top of the ark. Also it was decorative. A similar crown was upon the table of showbread and the golden altar of incense (30:3; 37:26).

7. *How was the ark carried about?* (25:12-15)

Staves of acacia wood overlaid with gold were inserted into rings of solid gold attached to the four "feet" of the ark. These staves were used to carry the ark on the shoulders of the Levites (Numbers 4:15). The "feet" of the ark seem to have been short legs or low blocks attached to the corners under the ark to keep it from sitting directly upon the ground. If the rings were in feet on the bottom, the ark would have stuck well up above the heads of the Levites as it was being carried by the staves. The rendering "feet" in 25:12 is preferable to "corners" (King James version).

The staves were not to be taken from the ark at any time. See I Kings 8:8. For information about how the ark was covered over before being carried about, see Numbers 4:5-6, 15.¹⁰

8. *What was placed in the ark?* (25:16, 21)

The ark was to contain the "testimony." This "testimony" was the two tablets of the ten commandments. See Ex. 31:18; 40:20.

The word *testimony* means a precept or law. The Hebrew word translated "testimony" comes from a verb meaning "to turn, return, repeat, say repeatedly, testify, affirm."

We might therefore say that the "testimony" was a constantly

¹⁰Numbers 4:6 says, "shall put in the staves thereof." This does not contradict the statement of Ex. 25:15 that the staves were not removed from the ark. The Hebrew verb (*sim*) of Num. 4:6 means to "set, put, place," but does not mean to put something *into* something unless it is used with the preposition *in*. Since this is not in Num. 4:6, the verse probably simply means that the staves were to be properly adjusted for use in carrying.

repeated communication to the people. That is worth pondering.

Although the original stone tablets were concealed in the ark, copies of their text were certainly available for the people to see and read.

The ark also had with it two other items: Aaron's wood staff which budded (Numbers 17:10); and a pot of manna (Ex. 16:3. See Hebrews 9:4-5.)¹¹

Only the stone tablets were actually put into the ark. The rod of Aaron was "before the testimony" (Num. 17:10) and so was the pot of manna (Ex. 16:34). The ark contained only the stone tablets in Solomon's day (I Kings 8:9).

Cassuto¹² refers to the fact that ancient kings would sometimes deposit deeds (writings) of a covenant into boxes at the footstools of their idols. The Egyptian king Rameses II placed the documents pledging peace between himself and the Hittites under the feet of his god Re. Similarly the Hittite king placed the documents under the feet of his idol called Teshub. It therefore appears that God used human covenant customs to impress the Israelites with the meaning and seriousness of His covenant with Israel.

9. *What did the ark represent? What was it a type of?*

The Bible does not give a direct statement saying that the ark represented one specific thing. Nonetheless, there

¹¹According to Heb. 9:3-4, the Holy of Holies contained a golden altar (K.J.V., censer) of incense. No such article is mentioned by Moses in Exodus. A censer for incense was indeed taken into the Holy of Holies by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, and this may be what Hebrews 9:3 refers to. Another view is that the passage refers simply to the altar of incense in the Holy place, but speaks of it as being associated with the Holy of Holies because it was so close to the veil and the Holy of Holies. I Kings 6:22 says that in the construction of Solomon's temple "the whole altar that belonged to the oracle (the Holy of Holies) he overlaid with gold." It does not appear from the text that Solomon's temple actually had an altar inside the oracle, and that the altar referred to was probably only the altar of incense in the House (Holy Place). All of these facts seem to support the conclusion that the altar of incense was in some ways not fully explained to us associated both with the Holy Place and to the Holy of Holies.

¹²*Op. cit.*, p. 331.

are some statements that help us to understand what it symbolized.

It appears to us that the ark was a sort of footstool of God's throne and the mercy-seat upon it was a representation of the throne itself.

Psalm 99:1: "Jehovah reigneth; . . . He sitteth (or, is enthroned) above the cherubim." Similar statements are made in Ps. 80:1; I Sam. 4:4; II Sam. 6:2; Isa. 37:16; 25:22. (The cherubim referred to are the gold angel figures on the mercy-seat, the covering of the ark. See below, section 11.)

King David said in I Chron. 28:2, "It was in my heart to build a house of rest for the *ark* of the covenant of Jehovah, and for the *footstool* of our God." The "and" of this verse could be translated "*even* for the footstool. . . ."

Psalm 132:7-8: "We will go into his tabernacle. We will worship at his FOOTSTOOL. Arise, O Jehovah, into thy resting place; Thou, and the *ark* of thy strength."

These passages seem to confirm the idea that the mercy-seat with its cherubim was a symbol of God's throne, and the ark a symbol of the footstool of God's throne.

Consider the rich significance of the ark and the mercy-seat as a symbol of God's throne! The ark contained the ten commandments. This would indicate that God's throne rests upon divine LAW and truth. The ark had with it the pot of manna, symbolizing that God's throne is a place of loving-care for His people. The ark had Aaron's staff with it, symbolizing God's sovereignty in choosing who shall minister unto Him, and how men shall approach Him.

Perhaps the greatest teaching of the ark as a visual symbol was that it was covered by a seat (or throne) of mercy! "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy," (Heb. 4:16)

"Mercy and truth are met together" (Psalm 85:10).
 "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy

throne: Lovingkindness and truth go before thy face" (Ps. 89:14). All of these things - righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, truth - are presented to us by the ARK, God's throne!!!

10. *What covered the ark?* (25:17)

A mercy-seat of pure gold covered the ark. The mercy-seat had no wood in its composition. It had the same dimensions as the top of the ark and was held in position by the crown around the top of the ark (25:12).

The mercy-seat was so significant that in I Chron. 28:11 the whole room called the Holy of Holies is called "the house of the mercy-seat." The mercy-seat was the major spot of significance in the ritual on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:2, 14-15).

The term *mercy-seat* was first used by Wm. Tyndale. It is an apt translation of the Hebrew *kapporeth*. Martin Luther rendered it Gnadenstuhl, meaning throne of mercy. *Kapporeth* has both the ideas of *covering* and of *atonement* for sins. The Latin *propitiatorium* is a good rendering, meaning "a place of propitiation."¹³

The Greek rendering of *kapporeth* is *hilasterion*, meaning a place to please (or propitiate) and be reconciled to God, a *propitiatory*. The Greek word *hilasterion* is found in Romans 3:25 referring to Christ ("whom God set forth as a *propitiation*") and in Heb. 9:5 to refer to the mercy-seat itself. A related word, *hilasmos*, is used in I John 2:2 and 4:10 to refer to Christ as our propitiation. These usages of words show that Christ has for us the same functions as the mercy-seat had for Israel. Christ is our mercy-seat!

The word *kapporeth* (mercy-seat) is not used in the O.T. with the limited meaning of lid or cover, as over a box. It is derived from the verb *kaphar* (found 113 times in the O.T.), which by far most frequently (70 times) means "to make atonement." (In some places it simply means

¹³Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

“to cover.”)

What is it that is *covered* by the functions of the mercy-seat? Your *souls* are covered (Ex. 30:16). *You* are covered (Lev. 23:28). Your sin is covered (Ex. 32:30; Compare Ps. 32:1). Thus the atonement provided by the mercy-seat was a very comprehensive covering. (Atonement is a manufactured word in English, from *at-one-ment*, suggesting harmony.)

Consider the importance of the mercy-seat! When the Israelites in the days of the judges looked into the ark of the covenant (I Samuel 6:19), thousands of them died. They dared to look upon the tablets of ten commandments, God's law which they had broken.

It seems that men cannot confront God's law that they have broken and not perish, unless there is a mercy-seat sprinkled with blood between them and God's law.

On the day of judgment, when the books are opened (Rev. 20:12), and we all stand face to face with God, confronting His law, which we have broken, we shall yet be safe, IF we have accepted Christ as our savior. He is our mercy-seat, our propitiation!

But if we have not received Christ as our propitiation (mercy-seat), we shall be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death (Rev. 20:15).

11. *What was made to project from the ends of the mercy-seat?* (25:18-20)

Two cherubim, made of gold, all of one piece with the mercy-seat, and made of beaten (hammered-out) work, projected upwards from the mercy-seat. (The word *cherubim* is the Hebrew plural form of cherub.) The cherubim were not added upon the mercy-seat, but rose from its top at the ends.

Cherubim are one type of angelic creature. They are frequently mentioned in connection with God's throne. See Ezekiel 1:22, 26, 28; 10:20-21. We are reasonably certain that the “living creatures” (or “beasts”) of Rev. 4:6ff are cherubim. The golden cherubim of the mercy-seat

were earthly representatives of the real heavenly beings. They seem to be outstanding for their rapid activity and their reverent worship.

Ezekiel describes the cherubim that he saw as creatures with bodies like men (1:6), but having four faces (of an ox, man, lion, and eagle) and four wings (Ezek. 1:5-11). Because their faces looked toward one another and also downward toward the mercy-seat, we assume that the cherubim on the mercy-seat had only one face each.

Considerable stress is given to the fact that the cherubim were of ONE piece with the mercy-seat, literally "out of the mercy-seat." Perhaps this is to emphasize that adoring angels are always present at God's throne. Compare Rev. 4:6-8; 5:11; Isaiah 6:1-2.

The wings of the cherubim spread out upwards above the mercy-seat so as to cover it. But certainly their wings did not cover it so completely that it became impossible for the priest to sprinkle blood upon it (Lev. 16:14).

The faces of the cherubim were directed (1) towards (facing) one another. and (2) towards the mercy-seat. In other words, they were bowing. The downward look of the cherubim suggests the reverence due to God, who promised to commune (or speak) with Moses from a position above the mercy-seat (Ex. 25:22). The cherubim did not gaze upon God's presence above their wings. Compare Isaiah 6:2.

Some Bible references picture God as "riding" upon the cherubim. II Sam. 22:11: "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; Yea, he was seen upon the wings of the wind." (Compare Ps. 18:10. It surely seems reasonable to us that this is merely a figurative description of the rapidity of God's actions. Nonetheless, the expression is Biblical, and we certainly approve of it! I Chronicles 28:18 actually refers to the mercy-seat as "the chariot." This brings back to our minds the fact that our God is a God of life and activity, unlike the dead idols that must be moved about by men.

Ancient peoples, such as the Assyrians, Egyptians, and

Phoenicians drew and sculptured composite creatures that many people associate with the Biblical cherubim.¹⁴ These had bodies of lions or oxen, and head of humans or birds. The Egyptian sphinx is such a figure. They were usually winged. The Assyrians even called their winged, human-headed bull statues *karibu*, a word related to the Hebrew *cherubim*.¹⁵

We surely think that these pagan cherubim(?) were nothing more than feeble, distorted attempts to reproduce the appearance of real cherubim. People had known of cherubim ever since man was expelled from Eden (Gen. 3:24). Their superhuman speed and power probably stimulated attempts to make idolatrous representations of them. Certainly Israel did not need to borrow the idea and designs of cherubim from pagans to form their concept of cherubim as given in the scriptures.

We suppose that the cherubs of the mercy-seat had the basic body forms of men, rather than of oxen or lions. Such four-legged forms would have required too much space on the mercy-seat. This view is strengthened by the fact that cherubim with human forms were placed in Solomon's temple (I Kings 6:23-28). The Jewish Talmud says that the tabernacle cherubim resembled youths.¹⁶ We have mentally pictured the cherubim on the mercy-seat as kneeling, although the cherubim in Solomon's temple were standing upon their feet. (II Chron. 3:13)

Cherubim were embroidered upon the veil in the tabernacle (Ex. 26:31) and upon its inner linen curtains (26:1). They were not regarded as "graven images," probably because no worship was directed toward them. See Ex. 20:1.

12. *Where would God commune with Israel?* (25:22)

God promised to meet Moses (and Moses alone is referred to) and to speak (or commune) with him from the area

¹⁴M. F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), pp. 39, 42.

¹⁵Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 191. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-334.

¹⁶B. Hagiga, 13b. Referred to in Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-334.

above the mercy-seat, between the two cherubim. God would speak to Moses all the words which he wished to command unto the children of Israel.

Ex. 25:22 points out vividly the position of Moses as a mediator between God and Israel.

Observe that God was not in the box, the ark! The presence of God was indicated by the glory-cloud (Shekinah) above the mercy-seat. See Lev. 16:2.

13. *What was the second article of furniture to be described? (25:23)*

The table of showbread (presence-bread). We find it surprising to us that the table should be given this priority in listing. But our surprise probably only shows our lack of ability to see things from God's point of view.

14. *Describe the table of showbread. (25:23-25; 37:10-16)*

It was one cubit (18 in.) broad, one and a half cubits high, and two cubits (three feet) long. It was really a very small table. It was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Like the ark and the altar of incense it had a crown (rim) of gold around its top edge. This prevented items on the table from falling off.

The table had a "border" round about it, and the border was a handbreadth (about three inches) wide. The term translated "border" is also rendered as margin, moulding, ledge. The text does not clearly state where the border was placed. Some feel that the border was on the flat table top, so that the table had both an outer and inner crown on its top, causing the top to have a picture-frame appearance. This arrangement would have severely decreased the already limited space available on top of the table for the bread and the vessels. Also, the carved representation of the temple table shown on the Arch of Titus in Rome seems to show a "border" placed around the legs of the table, about halfway down the legs. The Arch of Titus relief shows two segments of such a frame around the legs of the table near the middle of the legs. Such a "border" attached to the legs would strengthen the table, like rungs on a chair.

15. *How was the table carried about? (25:26-28)*

It was carried by gold-plated wood staves thrust into rings of gold, which were placed in the four corners of the table that were on the four "feet" (or legs) of the table. The rings were placed "close by" the border. ("Close by" here means "against" or joined to it.) Therefore, if the border were on the table top, the rings must have been located near the upper ends of the legs. If the border were positioned about halfway down the legs, the rings would have been there. We favor this view. It would have been much easier to cover and carry the table with the rings down lower on the legs than with the rings and staves near the top of the table. See Num. 4:7-8. The staves in the table were removed except when the table was being carried about.

16. *What vessels were used with the table? (25:29)*

The text mentions (1) dishes, (2) spoons, (3) flagons, and (4) bowls. The "dishes" (R.S.V. "plates") may have been flat receptacles to carry the bread on, or upon which were stacked the loaves on the table. The "spoons" were probably small cups or dishes used for holding and pouring incense. The same word is used in Numbers 7:14, 20 to refer to small containers for incense. The "flagons" (K.J.V., "covers") seem to have been small beakers (drinking cups) used for pouring out drink-offerings (Num. 28:7-8). The "bowls," like the flagons, were vessels for pouring out. See Ex. 37:16, where the bowls and flagons are mentioned again, but in reverse order from that in 25:29. Ex. 37:16 says that these vessels were made to pour from. Possibly the bowls were goblets or chalices, having cup-like tops with slim stems beneath for convenience of handling. Such vessels are known to have been used in Moses' time.¹⁷

17. *What was the weekly ritual involving the showbread? (25:30; Lev. 24:5-9)*

¹⁷Ruth Amiran, *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land* (Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. 129-131. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

Twelve loaves were made of fine flour, each having "two tenth parts" of flour in it. If the "tenth parts" were tenths of an ephah (about three-fifths of a bushel), then each loaf would have had about a gallon of flour in it! The loaves would have been of enormous size. Lev. 24:7 says the loaves were placed on the table in two rows (or piles). The Hebrew word simply means "arrangement" and could refer to either loaves or piles. We do not think there was room enough on the table for two rows of such loaves, with six loaves in each row. Josephus (*Ant.* III, vi, 6) says that the twelve loaves were placed six upon each heap, one above another.

Lev. 24:5-6 speaks as if ONE man (the high priest presumably) set up the table each weekly Sabbath day. Then all the priests ("Aaron and his sons") ate the old bread in a holy place. The new loaves were set in place and pure frankincense placed on each row.

18. *What was the significance of the showbread?*

The exact theological significance of the bread is not systematically set forth in the scripture. The more we study about the showbread, the more we realize it was a symbol with many facets of meaning, and cannot be fully comprehended under one brief tidy heading.

Firstly, it seems to have been a symbol of *God's people in God's presence*. The very name *showbread* literally means "bread of the face(s)," or *presence-bread*. Ex. 25:30 says rather literally, "Thou (singular) shalt set (or give) upon the table bread of (the) *presence* before my *presence* continually." The showbread therefore did not symbolize God's presence, but the presence of someone (or something) else in God's presence.

The fact that there were TWELVE loaves set out seems to suggest that the bread symbolized the twelve tribes, the people. The showbread surely reminded the Israelites that they were always in God's presence. Note that the bread is called the "continual bread" in Numbers 4:7, and "holy bread" in I Sam. 21:4. What a marvelous symbol

the bread was, representing as it did a holy people continually in God's presence!

Secondly, the showbread was an "offering made by FIRE unto Jehovah" (Lev. 24:7). As such it was a type of Christ Jesus, who is man's ONLY effective offering unto God (Eph. 5:2). The term "fire-offering" in Lev. 24:7 is applied to several types of offerings - the burnt-offering in Ex. 29:18, 41-42, and Lev. 1:9; the meal-offering in Lev. 2:3; to the peace-offering in Lev. 3:11; to the sin-offering in Lev. 5:12. From this fact we may be reminded that in Christ's ONE offering are summed up all the numerous types of offerings prescribed in the O.T. law. It would appear that the showbread was basically one form of the meal-offering (Lev. 2:1-16).

The idea that in the very sanctuary of God there is constantly displayed before God's presence an "offering made by fire" is very comforting to those who know the horrible realities about sin!

Thirdly, the showbread was to be a "memorial" (Lev. 24:7). The term *memorial* is a sacrificial term referring to that which brings the worshipper into favorable remembrance before God. See its use in Acts 10:4; Lev. 2:2; 5:12; 6:15. The showbread is said to have become a "memorial" when the frankincense was applied to it (Lev. 24:7). Frankincense appears to be a symbol of prayer. See Psalm 141:2; Rev. 5:8. All of these facts cause us to understand that when we pray, trusting in the Lord Jesus, who is always in God's presence as was the showbread, we are brought into good remembrance before God.

Fourthly, setting forth the showbread was a *covenant requirement* for the children of Israel (Lev. 24:8). Such acts of obedience are frequently required by God as conditions of continued covenant relationship with Him.

In pagan religions food was sometimes placed on a sacred table as food for the god. For an example see the apocryphal book *Bel and the Dragon*, vs. 13. The showbread presented a different picture of God - of a God who did

not eat men's food; of a God who wanted his people to be in his presence more than he wanted gifts from them; of a God who ministered unto His people, rather than the people ministering unto Him.

The showbread has been regarded by some as a type or symbol of the Lord's supper. There are a few resemblances, such as the *weekly* eating of bread by the priests, the offering of frankincense (symbolic of prayers) on the bread, and the fact that both are expressions of a *covenant* (Lev. 24:8; Luke 22:20). On the other hand, the fact that the twelve loaves were a symbol of the PEOPLE before God is quite different from the symbolism of the Lord's supper, in which the bread is the LORD'S body. Also the fact that the showbread was a sacrificial offering made by fire is quite in contrast to the Lord's supper, which is certainly not a repeated sacrifice of Christ. (Roman Catholic theology does view the communion [mass] as a sacrifice.) We doubt that the showbread was a specific type of the Lord's supper.

19. *What was made to give light in the holy place?* (25:31-35. Compare 37:17-24; 27:20-21; 30:7-8; Lev. 24:2-4; Numbers 8:1-4.)

A *lampstand* (K.J.V., candlestick) of pure gold was made, and oil-burning lamps were placed on the branches of the lampstand. The Hebrew word for lampstand is MENORAH (a beautiful word, derived from the verb *nor* ["to shine"] and the noun *or*, meaning "light"). The seven-branched lampstand has become the great symbol of the Jewish religion. A relief carving on the Arch of Titus in Rome shows the menorah taken from Herod's temple in Jerusalem (A.D. 70). The lampstand in that carving is not the same one that was in the tabernacle, but it probably resembled it in many ways. It must have been very heavy, judging by the number of men pictured as carrying it. The lampstand in Herod's temple is described in Josephus, *Ant.* III, vi, 7.

The lampstand was made of "beaten" (or hammered)

work, like the cherubim of the mercy-seat. It had a base, the form of which is not described, but the base was almost certainly NOT like the decorated two-stage pedestal shown in the arch of Titus. The Hebrew word translated "base" means literally "hip" or "thigh," but this does not reveal much about its form. Cassuto¹⁸ suggests that the base resembled those on lampstands found at Megiddo and Bethshan, which had three feet projecting from the central shaft. A rough sketch of a menorah with a three-legged base is shown in Beno Rothenberg's *God's Wilderness*.¹⁹ This was scratched onto a rock in the Sinai desert.

The lampstand had a central shaft projecting upwards from the base. We do not know its height. We suppose it was about the same height as the table (1½ cubits, or 27 inches) or the altar of incense (2 cubits, or 36 inches). The word translated "shaft" is *kaneh*, meaning reed, stem, or cane.

Three branches went out of the central shaft on one side and three went from the opposite side, making seven supports for lamps. Because of the use of the number seven to indicate the *complete* number of seals, trumpets, etc. in Revelation, *seven* is usually thought to indicate *completeness*. The lampstand with its lamps was perfectly adequate, and it furnished all the light that was provided. (25:32)

Decorations on the central shaft and branches consisted of (1) cups (K.J.V., bowls), (2) knops (R.S.V., capitals), and (3) flowers. The "cups" probably were like the cup (or calyx) of a flower, consisting of the green false petals directly under the true flower. The "knops" (Heb., *caphtor*) were probably spherical (or egg-shaped) designs, perhaps resembling the ovaries (seed-chambers) of flowers. The "flowers" were like the blossoms of flowers, perhaps like almond-tree blossoms. (25:33)

¹⁸*Op. cit.*, p. 341.

¹⁹Published in London by Thames and Hudson, 1969, p. 179.

The whole menorah had the general shape of a natural plant, with a stalk (or stem) and paired branches, turned upwards. The ornamentation was also of floral design.²⁰

Three cups were in each branch, each almond-shaped (that is, the cups were like the calyxes of almond blossoms). Also on each branch was a knop and a flower blossom design. It appears that the top cup (calyx) was the support for the lamp on each branch. In the center shaft (which is by itself called the "lampstand" in 25:33b, 34) were four cups (calyxes) shaped like almonds (or almond-flowers), and a knop and a flower with each. (25:34)

In the central shaft just below the levels where the pairs of branches issued forth from both sides were knops. The text says that the knops were both *under* each pair of two branches and also "out of the same." We understand this to say that the knops actually touched each pair of branches, but were actually just below them.

20. *How was the entire lampstand made of one piece?* (25:36)

All of the connecting points where the branches came forth from the central shaft were to be constructed of one piece with the rest. The branches were not to be made separately and then attached by couplings to the central shaft.

Admittedly Ex. 25:36 is a difficult verse. Noth (*Op. cit.*, p. 208) says it is "not fully comprehensible." (Such an attitude is typical for Noth.) The plural possessive endings in "*their* knops and *their* branches" appear to refer to the six branches mentioned in vs. 35. But we cannot imagine that the six branches themselves had branches.

Cassuto (*op. cit.*, p. 343) feels that the "branches" of 25:36 (Hebrew, *qenoth*, having a feminine ending) and the "branches" of 25:35 (Hebrew *qanim*, having a masculine ending) refer to different things. The feminine word is used in Job 31:22, where it refers to the joint, or socket

²⁰Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 342-343.

("Let my arm be broken from the joint"). If "joint" be the meaning in 25:36, then the verse would mean "The knops of the six branches and their connecting points (joints) out of the central shaft shall all be of one piece of hammered work of pure (unalloyed) gold."

Considerable stress is given to the fact that the lampstand was all made of ONE piece of gold (25:31, 35, 36). Whatever the lamp symbolized should therefore be regarded as a unity, even if it has several parts.

21. *What was to be placed on top of the lampstand? (25:37)*

Seven lamps, one on each branch. These were made separately from the lampstand. The material used in making the lamps is not stated. It may have been gold, as in Solomon's temple (I Kings 7:49). We definitely prefer this view. Or they may have been made of ordinary clay (terracotta), as were most of the lamps of those times. The clay lamps of the period were like saucers having one place on the rim pinched into a spout or hole for holding the wick up out of the olive oil in the lamp.

The lamps were to be so positioned that they would give light "over against it," that is, in front of it, toward the area across the room from the lamp. The spouts of the lamps were pointed toward the north, the opposite side of the room, so that no lamp shadows would block the light. The lampstand itself stood on the south side of the room. See Ex. 36:35.

22. *What implements were prepared for use with the lampstand? (25:38)*

(1) *Snuffers*. These were a type of tweezers to remove old wicks and install new ones. (2) *Snuffdishes*. These were trays or bowls to hold charred remains of old wicks and soot, which would then be thrown out.

23. *How much gold was used in the lampstand? (25:39)*

A talent, about seventy-five pounds. At a price of \$150 an ounce, the lampstand would be worth about \$180,000. The vessels and implements with the lampstand were included in this total weight of gold.

24. *What final direction was given about the making of the lampstand and its implements? (25:39)*

Make all of them according to their pattern which you were shown on the mount! Compare Ex. 25:9. The verb "was shown" does not imply that Moses had already left the mount and had returned to camp. Rather it indicates that God had already shown Moses the vision of the pattern (or model) of the tabernacle, and then gave the description required to construct it.

25. *What was the ritual connected with the lampstand? (Lev. 24:2-4; Ex. 27:20, 21)*

Pure (or clear) olive oil was obtained by beating olives to extract their oil. (These the Israelites must have obtained from nomadic caravans.) In the mornings the high priest came in to the holy place to light the lamp (literally "to cause it to go up"). He was to keep (or arrange) it "from evening to morning" before the face of the LORD continually.

26. *What was the significance of the menorah? Of what was it a type?*

As with the table of showbread, the scripture does not give a systematic exposition of the significance of the lampstand. Nevertheless, certain conclusions seem rather evident.

(1) The lampstand signified that the covenant of the Lord was essentially a covenant of LIGHT. There were no dark spooky chambers where priests might carry on secret esoteric rites. See Isa. 60:1-3.

In the same way the gospel of Christ is a religion of light. (a) God is light (I John 1:5). (b) Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). (c) Christians are children of light (Eph. 5:8). They are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14) and "lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). (d) The Bible is a light (II Pet. 1:19; Psalm 119:105). (e) The gospel (good news) of Christ Jesus is a light (II Cor. 4:4). Christians are to cast off the works of darkness (Romans 13:12).

(2) God's light is complete and perfect. This is indicated by the seven-fold nature of the lampstand. See notes on

section No. 19 above. Similarly in the gospel of Christ we have been granted all things that pertain unto life and godliness (II Pet. 1:3).

(3) The lamp was fueled by olive oil, which is often a symbol of the Holy Spirit. See Acts 10:38; Heb. 1:9; Lev. 8:12; Zech. 4:2-6. Thus the light was the light of the Spirit. Compare Rev. 4:5 (which tells of a vision of God's throne): "There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God."

The fact that the scriptures were written by men moved by the SPIRIT (II Pet. 1:21) confirms a correspondence between the tabernacle lampstand and the scriptures. The lampstand was fueled by oil; the scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit, which the oil symbolized.

To say that the lampstand was a type of just one thing (as, for example, the Bible alone) is to give an incomplete interpretation of it. Perhaps we could sum it up in a broad way by saying that it symbolized the light of the gospel of Christ (II Cor. 4:4).

THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

26 Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains; of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cher-u-bim the work of the skilful workman shalt thou make them. (2) The length of each curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits: all the curtains shall have one measure. (3) Five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and *the other* five curtains shall be coupled one to another. (4) And thou shalt make loops

of blue upon the edge of the one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is outmost in the second coupling. (5) Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the second coupling; the loops shall be opposite one to another. (6) And thou shalt make fifty clasps of gold, and couple the curtains one to another with the clasps: and the tabernacle shall be one WHOLE.

(7) And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make them. (8) The length of each curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits: the eleven curtains shall have one measure. (9) And thou shalt couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shalt double over the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tent. (10) And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops upon the edge of the curtain which is *outmost in* the second coupling. (11) And thou shalt make fifty clasps of brass, and put the clasps into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one. (12) And the overhanging part that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. (13) And the cubit on the one side, and the cubit on the other side, of that which remaineth in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it. (14) And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of sealskins above.

(15) And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing up. (16) Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half the breadth of each board. (17) Two tenons shall there be in each board, joined one to another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle. (18) And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards for the south side southward. (19) And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for its two tenons, and two sockets

under another board for its two tenons: (20) and for the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side; twenty boards, (21) and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. (22) And for the hinder part of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards. (23) And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the hinder part. (24) And they shall be double beneath, and in like manner they shall be entire unto the top thereof unto one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners. (25) And there shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.

(26) And thou shalt make bars of acacia wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle. (27) and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the hinder part westward. (28) And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall pass through from end to end. (29) And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and thou shalt overlay the bars with gold. (30) And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which hath been showed thee in the mount.

(31) And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined line: with cher-u-bim the work of the skilful workman shall it be made: (32) and thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold; their hooks *shall be* of gold, upon four sockets of silver. (33) And thou shalt hang up the veil under the clasps, and shalt bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the veil shall separate unto you between the holy place and the most holy. (34) And thou shalt put the mercy-seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. (35) And thou shalt set the table without the veil, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side.

(36) And thou shalt make a screen for the door of the Tent,

of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined line, the work of the embroiderer. (37) And thou shalt make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and overlay them with gold; their hooks shall be of gold: and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. How many curtains were made for the first covering of the tabernacle? Of what material? With what colors and decorations were they to be made? (26:1)
2. What were the dimensions of these curtains? (26:2)
3. How were the ten curtains joined together? (26:3-6)
4. What other items in the tabernacle did these curtains resemble in material, decoration, and in color? (26:31, 37; 27:16)
5. What was the number of goats' hair curtains? (26:7)
6. What were the dimensions of the goats' hair curtains? (26:8)
7. How were the goats' hair curtains joined together? (26:9-11)
8. How was the additional goats' hair curtain (one more than the linen curtains) arranged and positioned? (26:12)
9. What were the other two tabernacle coverings made from? (26:16)
10. What materials were the tabernacle boards (frames?) made of? (26:15)
11. What were the dimensions of each board? (26:16)
12. What material was used for sockets (bases or pedestals) under the boards? (26:19)
13. How many sockets were under each board? (26:19)
14. How many boards were on the south (and north) side of the tabernacle? (26:18)
15. What were made to hold the boards into their sockets?

(26:17, 19)

16. How were the rear (west) corners of the tabernacle walls strengthened? (26:23)
17. How many bars on each side held the tabernacle boards together? (26:26-27)
18. How did the middle bar differ from the upper and lower ones? (26:27-28)
19. Of what material were the rings on the boards for the bars to be made? (26:29)
20. According to what plan was the tabernacle to be erected? (26:30)
21. What were the materials and colors of the veil? (26:31)
22. Upon how many pillars was the veil hung? (26:32)
23. Of what material were the sockets under these pillars to be made? (26:32)
24. Why was the ark called the "ark of the testimony"? (26:33; 32:15; 40:20)
25. What covered the ark? (26:35)
26. Draw a rough sketch of the tabernacle floor layout, showing the position of all items of furniture. Indicate directions. (26:35; 40:2-8)
27. What was hung at the doorway of the tabernacle building? (26:37)
28. How many pillars were at the tabernacle door? (26:37)
29. Of what material were the sockets under the pillars at the tabernacle door made? (26:37)

30.

EXODUS 26: ENCLOSINGS!

(The architectural items described in Exodus 26 enclosed the tabernacle building completely.)

1. *Curtains*; 26:1-14.

- Furnished beauty, worshipful atmosphere (26:1), unity (26:6, 11), and protection (26:12-14).

2. *Boards and Bars*; 26:15-30.

- Furnished strength (not seen by men) (26:15-16), portability (so it could always be with men), and beauty (26:29).

3. *Veil and Screen*; 26:31-37.

- Showed a separation between earth and heaven (26:33).
- Showed a separation between the world and the church. (Only the priests served in the holy place [Num. 4:18-20; 3:38]).

CURTAINS! (26:1-14)

1. Glory hidden from those on the outside.
2. Glory revealed to those on inside.
3. Unity produced from many parts (26:6, 11)
4. Protection for the sanctuary (26:12-14).

BOARDS! (26:15-25)

1. The boards provided great STRENGTH. (This strength could not be seen from the outside because the boards were concealed behind curtains.)
2. The boards provided great BEAUTY. (They were gold-covered, but this gold could only be seen from the inside.)
3. The boards provided great ACCESSIBILITY. (The tabernacle was always accessible to the people because its board framework was easily disassembled, carried about, and reassembled wherever the people moved.)

FURNITURE OF THE HOLY PLACE - For Priests Only!
(Numbers 3:10, 38)

1. The showbread - God's people in God's presence!
2. The lampstand - A perfect light, fueled by the oil of God's

Spirit.

3. The incense altar - The prayers of saints (Rev. 5:8).
(All Christians are priests unto God [I Peter 2:5, 9]. They have free access to those things symbolized by the holy place and its furniture!)
-

THE HOLY OF HOLIES - God's Throne Room!

(The Holy of Holies was a type of heaven. Heb. 9:11-12, 23-24)

1. God was enthroned in both. (Psalm 99:1; Rev. 4:1-2)
 2. Both have divine light and glory. (Lev. 16:2; Rev. 21:23)
 3. Both have worshipping cherubim. (Ex. 25:18; Rev. 4:6-8)
 4. Both are golden. (Ex. 25:11, 17; 26:29; Rev. 21:18)
 5. Both are "foursquare." (Ex. 26:16; Rev. 21:16)
 6. Both have God's law in them. (Ex. 40:20; Ps. 119:89; 89:14)
 7. Both are places where blood atonement is made. (Lev. 16:15-16; Heb. 9:11-12, 24-25)
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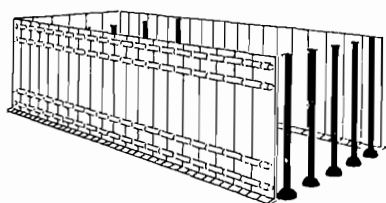
THE VEIL - A Type of Christ's Flesh! (Heb. 10:19-20)

1. The unbroken veil showed that the way into the Holiest place (heaven) was not yet clear. (Heb. 9:8)
 2. The rent veil shows the way into God's presence is now open. (Matt. 27:51; II Cor. 5:6, 8)
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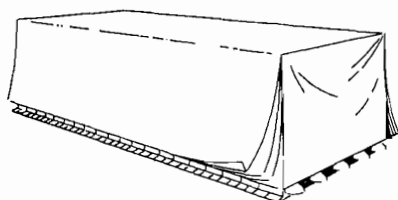
EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

1. *What is in Exodus twenty-six?*

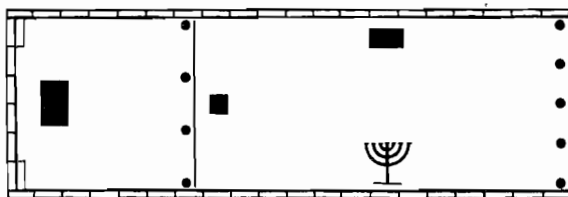
The chapter contains God's instructions to Moses about how to make the ENCLOSINGS of the tabernacle - the curtains and coverings over it (26:1-14), the boards of its walls (26:26-30), the veil that separated the two rooms



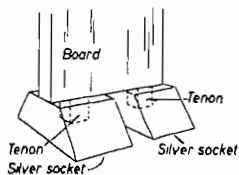
Tabernacle building - showing boards, bars, sockets, pillars, and the two rooms



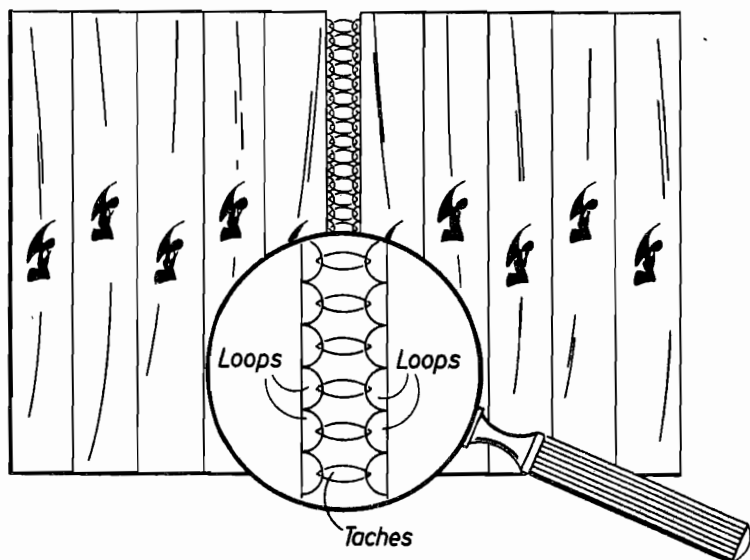
Tabernacle building showing its four coverings and the "hanging" across the front



Floor plan—showing its boards



A tabernacle board with its tenons and sockets.



The innermost (linen) curtains of the Tabernacle. Note that it was formed of two groups of five curtains decorated with cherubim, and joined by loops and taches (or clasps).

(26:31-35), and the screen that closed the entrance (26:36-37).

2. *What was the material of the innermost curtains?* (26:1; 36:8-13)

They were made of fine linen. The threads were prepared by twisting many strands of linen fibre together. These were woven together with blue, purple, and scarlet thread (Ex. 35:25). Cherubim figures were woven into the fabric by a skilled weaver. The expression "work of the skillful workman" literally says "work of a thinker." (It does refer to a weaver.) Regarding the *cherubim*, see notes on 25:19. The material of these curtains was the same as that of the veil (26:31), the screen (26:36), and the screen at the entrance of the court (27:16).

Note that the linen curtains formed a covering called the "tabernacle" (Heb. *mishkan*, meaning dwelling). The same limited technical use of the term *tabernacle* is found in 26:6 and Num. 3:25. However, the term also refers to the entire structure of the tabernacle building in such passages as Ex. 25:9; 26:12, 30. In Ex. 27:19 it even refers to the tabernacle and the court around it.

The word *tabernacle* is derived from the verb *shakan*, meaning to dwell temporarily, suggesting the brevity of Israel's sojourn. The earthly sojourn of all of God's people is brief.

3. *How many linen curtains were joined together, and in what way?* (26:2-6)

Ten curtains, each four by twenty-eight cubits (six by forty-two feet), were joined together. Five were joined together into one set by sewing them together along their long sides.¹ These formed two very large sets of curtains twenty by twenty-eight cubits. Then along one edge of each set fifty loops of blue thread were attached. These rows of loops were placed side by side, and then gold clasps

¹To describe how the curtains were placed side by side, the Hebrew uses the idiom "a woman to her sister."

(K.J.V., “taches”) were used to couple the two large sets of curtains into a single covering. The loops would have been spaced slightly over one-half cubit apart. (“Selvedge” in 26:4 means “end,” “border,” or “extremity.”)

4. *What is the significance of the linen curtains?*

The scripture does not state that they had a specific significance. Some interpreters seek to find symbolism in all their colors and numbers. But those who do this produce widely different interpretations, and show how futile speculative interpretation is. It may be edifying to meditate about such matters, but our conclusions must always remain private opinions.

Probably we are not speculating too much to say that the beauty of the curtains suggests the beauty of God’s divinely revealed religion. The cherubim figures suggest the presence of God, because they are always associated with God’s presence in scripture. (Note that the inside walls of Solomon’s temple were decorated with cherubim. I Kings 6:29).

5. *What material comprised the second tabernacle covering?* (26:7; 36:14-18)

Goats’ hair (literally, just “goats”). This was the usual material of nomads’ tents, and still is. It is black (or nearly so), strong, and gives good protection from the weather. The goats’ hair was spun (twisted) into yarn by wise (skilled) women, and then woven into cloth (35:26).

6. The goats’ hair coverings are called the “Tent” (Heb. *ohel*). See 26:11, 13; 36:14; 40:19 for other examples of this specialized use of the term *tent*. However, Ex. 26:36 uses *tent* to refer to the entire tabernacle building. Also Num. 24:5; Isa. 54:2, and Jer. 30:18 use the terms *tent* and *tabernacle* as synonyms referring to dwelling places generally.

6. *How many goats’ hair curtains were joined, and in what way?* (26:8-11)

Eleven curtains, each four by thirty cubits, were made and then coupled together along their long sides in sets of five and six curtains. Fifty loops were set in one edge of

each set and the sets were joined by placing bronze clasps in the loops that lay side by side. Note that the clasps were bronze, not gold as with the linen curtains. (The material of the loops is not indicated. Probably it was goats' hair cord) The clasps joined the two sets into one huge covering, thirty by forty-four cubits.

The coupling together of the sets of curtains produced ONE tent (26:11). The unity of the tabernacle was a significant feature of it, just as the unity of the church should be a significant quality about it.

7. *How were the first two coverings over the tabernacle positioned? (26:12-13)*

Apparently they were draped flat over the tabernacle, the linen curtains first and the goats' hair curtains over them.

Some interpreters have proposed that this flat-roofed design does not form a "tent." They feel the coverings must have been suspended on a slope from a ridge pole running lengthwise over the tabernacle. The lower ends of the curtains would then have been tautly staked down. The presence of five pillars at the west end of the tabernacle is thought to strengthen this view, because the middle pillar of the five was possibly higher than the rest and served as one support for the ridgepole.

We feel that the flat roof arrangement is more probably the actual one used. Among the desert dwellers "tent" did not usually suggest a sloping roof. Their tents were (and are) generally flat-roofed, except for the spots where the interior stakes hold small areas of the black curtains up in points.

There is no indication that the middle pillar at the front was taller than those about it. The scripture does not mention any ridgepole. And it mentions no pole at the back end of the tabernacle to support that end of a ridgepole.

It is hard to see how the goats' hair coverings could have hung down "over the backside" of the tabernacle if they had been suspended high enough over a ridgepole to have

formed a sloping roof. They would have formed many uneven folds as they hung down from the angle of the sloping roof.

The clasps of the linen curtains were placed directly over the veil separating the holy place from the Holy of Holies. See 26:33. This position would cause the linen curtains to extend exactly to the front edge of the tabernacle boards on the east (the entrance), and to extend westward clear back to the end of the Holy of Holies, and then drape down to the very bottoms of the tabernacle boards on the west end.

With their length of twenty-eight cubits the linen curtains would span the open top of the tabernacle (ten cubits) and hang down over both sides to within one cubit of the bottoms of the tabernacle boards on the north and south.²

The goats' hair curtains were draped flat over the top of the tabernacle boards and over the linen curtains. Being two cubits longer, they completely covered them on the sides, and indeed hung down to the very bottoms of the tabernacle boards on the north and south, extending one cubit lower than the linen curtains.

The set (or coupling) of the six goats' hair curtains was placed over the east (front) part of the tabernacle. It was so positioned that the sixth curtain (which would appear to be the first as one approach the tabernacle) was "doubled over" at the forefront.³ This doubling over (or doubling

²Keil and Delitzsch (*Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 176) suggest that the linen curtains hung down *inside* the boards of the holy place, so that the cherubim figures would be visible on the side walls inside, as well as on the ceiling above. They feel that the elaborate cherubim embroidered on the curtains would be largely needless if they were never seen on the outside of the boards. We do not deny that this might have been the position of the linen curtains. The presence of cherubim figures on the walls of Solomon's temple is a possible parallel. Nonetheless, the text in Exodus does not clearly state that the linen curtains hung inside the walls. And no reference is made to any supports at the tops of the boards from which the curtains may have hung down on the inside.

³Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 352, suggests that the folded-back goats' hair curtain was folded *beneath* the front edge of the linen curtain in order to cover its edge well and give it thorough protection. We find neither proof nor disproof of this idea.

back) would reduce its width to two cubits. Thus the second curtain from the tabernacle forefront started just two cubits from the forefront edge. In this position it would cause the clasps joining the two large sets (couplings) to lie two cubits behind the clasps joining the sets of linen curtains. Having the joints (the clasps) "staggered" in this way would be helpful in keeping out wind and rain from the tabernacle. (Rain was not much of a problem in the Sinai peninsula, but infrequent cloudbursts do occur in winter.)

Since the clasps joining the sets of goats' hair curtains came two cubits behind the clasps of the linen curtains, there would have been eight cubits from the point of the clasps of the goats' hair to the back edge of the tabernacle. But there were twenty cubits of goat's hair extending back from the clasps. This would cause the goats' hair to cover the tabernacle top completely and then dangle down to the ground (ten more cubits), and still have "half a curtain" (two cubits) to remain over at the back, lying on the ground (26:12). Cassuto quotes a passage from the Talmud which said that the two cubits of goats' hair trailed on the ground "like a woman walking in the street with her train trailing behind her."⁴

The dark goats' hair curtains gave no hint of the brilliant colors beneath and within it. The tabernacle materials were so chosen that there was a consistent movement from less valuable materials to more valuable as one moved closer to the most holy place from the outer areas. In a similar way, the nearer that one draws to God and Christ, the greater are the riches that he finds.

8. *What were the two outer tabernacle coverings?* (26:14; 36:19; 39:34)

Coverings of *rams' skins* dyed red and of *sealskins* were placed over the goats' hair curtains. Regarding these materials, see notes on 25:5.

⁴*Op. cit.*, p. 353.

Sacred tent-shrines, some with red coloring, are known to have been used by Moslems; and also even farther back, into the third-first centuries B.C. at Palmyra; and in the seventh century B.C. in Phoenicia.⁵ Certainly this does not necessarily indicate that either the pagans or the Israelites borrowed the idea of a red-covered sacred tent from one another.

The ancient rabbis held that the covering of red rams' skins was ten by thirty cubits, only large enough to have covered the top area of the tabernacle. Cassuto (also Jewish) feels that it may have hung down a little over the walls.⁶ These opinions are hardly solid evidence.

The R.S.V. translation of 26:14 suggests that the two coverings of rams' skins and sealskins were actually just ONE covering made of the two materials. However, the Hebrew text uses the words for "a covering of skins" before *both* the terms translated "rams' skins" and "sealskins." Also the sealskins are said to be "above" the other covering. These facts argue strongly for two separate coverings.

There is, however, a bit of uncertainty about whether the rams' skins and sealskins were one or two coverings. In the account of the erection of the tabernacle in 40:19, the word for "covering" is in the singular, possibly indicating that only the covering of rams' skins was placed over the tabernacle when it was set up. Certainly the two outer coverings would have been very heavy and unwieldy. Some authors suggest that possibly the sealskins were used only as a tent bag or wrapping to protect the outer coverings when they were being moved.⁷ Compare Num. 4:6, 8, 11, 12.

We still think the tabernacle was covered with separate

⁵Frank M. Cross, Jr., "The Priestly Tabernacle," reprinted in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, edited by G. Ernest Wright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1961), pp. 217-219.

⁶*Op. cit.*, p. 353.

⁷Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 194. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

coverings of rams' skins and sealskins.

From the standpoint of outward beauty the tabernacle could not be considered attractive. In a similar way, even Christ Jesus had no outward beauty that we should desire him (Isa. 53:2). The preciousness is seen by those who believe (I Peter 2:7).

9. *What formed the walls of the tabernacle?* (26:15-18)

Boards of acacia wood overlaid with gold (26:29), stood on end like pillars, and held together by rods through gold rings, formed the walls. The boards were ten cubits (fifteen feet) long and a cubit and a half wide (twenty-seven inches). Twenty such boards were on the south side,⁸ and twenty were on the north, but only six with these dimensions were on the west (back) side. Two extra corner boards were also on the west.

The thickness of the boards is not stated. Josephus (*Ant.* III, vi, 3) says that they were four fingers thick, about three inches. This seems very reasonable, but is hardly conclusive evidence. Some Jewish commentators have said that the walls were one cubit thick! This would make the boards into impossibly heavy beams. (This thick dimension was proposed because of a desire to make the tabernacle's inside measurements exactly ten cubits. By assuming that all of the eight boards [26:22-25] on the west side were one and a half cubits wide, they calculated that this side was twelve cubits wide. To reduce this to ten cubits, it was proposed that the side boards were each one cubit thick, and their *outside* faces were even with the ends of the west wall.)

⁸"For the south side" in 26:18 is literally "to the side of the Negev, southward." Similarly "westward" in 26:22 is literally "to the sea." Some critics have argued that the use of these geographical orientations as indicators of directions reveals that the writer of Exodus lived in Canaan, probably long after Moses' time. but inasmuch as the Hebrew language was used even before Israel sojourned in Egypt (Gen. 42:22-23), these geographical expressions indicating directions had probably become established idiomatic usages before the sojourn, and continued to be used by the Hebrews even when they were in areas that did not have the Negev at the south and the Great Sea to the west.

Cassuto comments that most probably the thickness of the boards was small, and hence the question as to whether the tabernacle dimensions (the ten cubits width) were external or internal is of little consequence, since there was no appreciable difference.

Each board of the walls had two tenons (Heb. "hands") in the lower end of it. These were "joined one to another" (literally "the woman to her sister"). It seems that the tenons, though side by side in the ends of the boards, were also joined to one another, perhaps by another short board (or piece of metal) into which they were mortised. This combination of the two tenons and their coupling-pieces could then be attached to the bottom of each board. This design would make the tenons more rigid and less likely to break out of the boards when under strain.

It is widely held that the "boards" of the tabernacle were not boards but hollow "frames" made of two upright pieces and two or more cross pieces at the ends, and perhaps in between, making them somewhat like ladders. The R. S. V. translates the Hebrew word *qeresh* ("board") as "frame." However, it renders the same word as "deck" (of a ship) in Ezek. 27:6, demonstrating that the Hebrew word does not always have the meaning of "frame."

Several arguments have been advanced for the use of *frames* rather than solid boards. (1) Acacia trees were not large enough to yield such large boards. (See our notes on 25:5 on the size of acacia trees. Even if one tree were not large enough for a whole board, wood from several of them could be spliced together.) (2) The solid boards would be so heavy they could hardly have been handled. (This argument depends upon how thick the boards were.) (3) The fact that the cherubim decorations on the linen curtains on the side walls could not be seen if draped on the outside of walls of solid wood argues that the walls were of frames, through which the wall decorations could be seen. This is based on the assumption that everything beautiful in the tabernacle had to be visible. This is hardly

the case. The curtains in the Holy of Holies were seen only once a year. The gold overlay inside the ark of the covenant was never to be seen. The gold overlay on the outside of the tabernacle walls was covered by the goats' hair curtains. The beauty was seen by God, even if it was invisible to men. Men would be aware of its beauty even though it did not always hang in plain sight. Certainly the decorations on the curtains were visible above, on the tabernacle ceiling.

(4) The Hebrew word translated "board" is from a root word meaning "cut off" in other Semitic languages, and in the Ugaritic language the noun is used of a pavillion of the Canaanite god El, which might suggest framework here.⁹ Also Canaanite and Assyrian buildings were made of wooden framework. To this we reply that the example of Assyrian buildings is irrelevant since they date from centuries after the Israelite tabernacle. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the Israelites patterned God's tabernacle after Canaanite architecture. Also the fact that the word for board is derived from a word meaning "to cut off" hardly proves the boards were frames. The boards themselves were also "cut off."

We agree with Cassuto, who says it is hard to suppose that the boards were not actually boards.¹⁰

10. *What supported the boards?* (26:19-21)

Two sockets, or pedestals, or bases, of silver supported each board. Each socket was of one talent (about seventy-five pounds) of silver (38:27). The presence of two sockets under each board with each mortised to receive the tenons under a board, would keep the boards from rotating, as they might have done if each board had had only one tenon at top and bottom. We do not know the shape of the sockets, but they probably were wider at the bottom than at the top.

Altogether one hundred sockets supported the tabernacle

⁹Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-195.

¹⁰*Op. cit.*, p. 351.

boards and the pillars holding up the veil (Ex. 38:27). Wagons were used to transport these heavy silver sockets. See Num. 4:31; 7:3, 6-8.

11. *How were the back corners of the tabernacle designed?* (26:22-25)

The boards for the two back corners are mentioned separately, as if they had different dimensions or designs from the other boards. Their width is not stated. We find ourselves in agreement with various authors who feel that they were only half a cubit wide. Two of them with this width would add only one cubit to the nine-cubit width of the other six boards at the west end of the tabernacle, making ten cubits.

Ex. 26:24 is a difficult verse. We have not found any two commentators in agreement about its meaning. The verse says that the corner boards were in some way "doubled" (paired, or twinned) together "beneath," that is, at the bottom. Possibly this means that the boards were made of two thicknesses of board for a few cubits at the bottom. Perhaps each of the two thicknesses was stuck into one of the sockets. Then the boards extended on up "entire" (or whole, unbroken, perhaps meaning unspliced) to *its* [singular] top (or head), unto "the one ring." This suggests to us that at the top of the boards some type of a ring clamped each corner board to the adjoining end boards of the south and north sides. (The meaning of the Hebrew technical term translated "doubled" is not fully known.)

12. *What bound the tabernacle boards together?* (26:26-30; 36:31-34)

Five bars of acacia wood overlaid with gold were thrust through rings of gold attached to the tabernacle boards. Five such bars were placed on the north side and on the south side, and the west end of the tabernacle. The middle bar on each side was "in the midst of the boards" and "passed through from the end to the end."

This design made the tabernacle easy to assemble and disassemble as the Israelites moved from place to place.

How cleverly designed it was!¹¹

The statement about the middle bar reaching from end to end causes most interpreters to feel that the other four bars did not reach from end to end along the sides of the tabernacle, but probably only half way. These four bars were probably arranged into just two rows, one above and one below the long middle bar. Thus there were only three rows of bars, even though there were five bars, because the top and bottom rows consisted of two bars, each only extending half the length of the walls. We feel this is a probability, but by no means a certainty.

Some have felt that the long middle bar was inserted not through rings, but through holes bored in a straight line through the midst of the boards from edge to edge. However, the text surely sounds as though all the bars were thrust through rings.

Cassuto felt that the rings and bars were on the *inside* of the tabernacle walls. Noth felt that the bars were "presumably on the outside." We think they were on the outside.

The obscurity in the instructions about the boards and bars in our Bibles was cleared up for Moses, because God had showed him exactly how he was to set up the tabernacle (26:30). Observe that even the manner of setting up the tabernacle was not left to human judgment. God has given careful directions to his children on all matters wherein exact obedience is required.

13. *What separated between the two tabernacle rooms?* (26:31-33; 36:35-38)

A beautiful veil separated the rooms called the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies). The word *veil* (Heb. *paroketh*) means "that which separates." Its

¹¹Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 211, fails to sense the reasonableness and efficiency of this design. Instead he imagines that a priestly writer (P) living a thousand years after the time of Moses, fused together two disparate story elements, first of a tent sanctuary such as nomads use; and then the pattern of the Jerusalem temple, which the priestly writer transformed into a wooden structure capable of being dismantled. Such daring, dogmatic assertions of unproven and destructive theories never cease to amaze us.

dimensions seem to have been ten cubits square. It is called the "veil of the screen" in 40:21; 35:12; 39:34, although the term *screen* is usually associated with the hanging at the entrance to the Holy Place.

The description of the material and decorations of the veil is almost identical to that of the linen curtains over the tabernacle. (See 26:1.)

The veil was hung on four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold. These pillars were supported on four sockets (pedestals) of silver. See 26:19. The pillars had hooks of gold at their tops, and the veil was hung upon these hooks, hanging directly below the clasps (*taches*) that joined the two large sets of linen curtains. (See section 7 of the notes on this chapter.)

The "ark of the testimony" (see 25:10-16) was to be brought into the innermost room (the Holy of Holies). Ex. 40:20-21 indicates that when the tabernacle was erected, the ark was put into its position in the tabernacle first and then after that the pillars and veil were set up. Thus 26:33 does not set forth a sequence of acts to be followed in erecting the tabernacle.

14. *What was the significance of the veil?*

The New Testament clearly identifies the veil as a symbol, or type, of Christ's FLESH, which was broken on the cross of Calvary (Heb. 10:19-22).

The Holy of Holies was *God's throne room*, a type of heaven. See Heb. 9:11, 24. The Holy of Holies was closed off by the veil, and no one went past it except the high priest, and he only one day of each year (Heb. 9:7; Lev. 16:2, 34). The Holy Spirit signified to men by this visual means that the way into the true holiest place (heaven!) was not yet made open and plain as long as the tabernacle of Moses was still standing with its veil intact. The same condition continued on into the times of Solomon's temple (which replaced the tabernacle) and later temples. The way into heaven was at that time simply NOT made manifest (open, plain)!

Thus in the O.T. times there was some uncertainty about the future life and immortality. Job cried, "If a man die, will he live again?" (Job 14:14). In later times God revealed the promise of the resurrection of men's dead bodies (Dan. 12:2), but it was still a matter of future hope and not present assurance.

At the hour our Lord Jesus died, the veil in the temple in Jerusalem was ripped in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). This veil corresponded to the one in the tabernacle. It separated the two innermost rooms of the temple, which corresponded to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

When Christ's fleshly body died, the true veil (his flesh!) was torn apart. The barrier between God and man, between earth and heaven, between death and immortality, was swept aside for ever!

Now men may approach boldly to God's heavenly throne. "Let us draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16). We can now KNOW that we have eternal life (I John 5:13). We are of good courage, knowing that even when we are absent from the body (dead!) we are "AT HOME WITH THE LORD" (II Cor. 5:8). We depart from this world and are "WITH CHRIST" (Phil. 1:23). More than that, our mortal bodies will themselves be resurrected at the end to become immortal (I Cor. 15:50-53).

Thanks be to God for sending the Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel! (II Tim. 1:10)

Thanks be to God for a mighty savior, who rent the veil in two through the death of himself, and then rose again from the dead!

15. *How was the tabernacle furniture arranged? (26:34-35)*

In the Holy of Holies there was only the ark and its mercy-seat covering. See 25:16-21. "Outside the veil," in the Holy Place, was the *lampstand* on the south side, the *table* of showbread on the north and the *altar of incense* up near the veil at the west part of the Holy Place (30:6; 40:23-26).

The Holy Place was probably a type of the *church*. As the Holy of Holies was entered only from the Holy Place, so heaven is entered only from the church. As the Holy Place was for priests only, so the church is for priests (Christians) only.

The tabernacle building was a surprisingly small building, only ten by ten by thirty cubits (fifteen by forty-five feet floor size). But it did not need to be extremely large, since no one entered it but the priests. The congregation worshipped at the door of each man's tent. See 33:8. Probably only a small portion of the people ever even entered the courtyard, since even it was small (fifty by a hundred cubits, seventy-five by one hundred fifty feet). On feast days they could view the sacrifices from just outside the court, or from further distance.

16. *What closed the entrance to the door of the tent?* (26:36-37; 36:37-38; 38:18-19)

A "screen" (hanging, curtain) of cloth hung at the door of the Holy Place. Its colors and fabric were like those of the veil and the linen curtains (26:1, 31), except that it had no cherubim figures woven into it. Cherubim were present only in those places immediately associated with God's presence. The colors of the screen were embroidered into it.

The screen was supported by five pillars, one more than held up the veil. Five pillars were probably used here because additional support was needed at the entrance, on account of the frequency with which the screen would be drawn aside for priests to enter.

The five pillars were overlaid with gold, and had gold hooks at the top. See 26:32. Its sockets (pedestals) were of bronze, unlike the silver sockets of the rest of the tabernacle.

Exodus 36:37-38 speaks of the pillars at the entrance having capitals and fillets of gold. We read of no capitals nor fillets on the pillars holding up the veil. The word *capital* here is simply the word meaning top or head. It

does not suggest the presence of a fancy top piece on the pillar.

"Fillet" in 36:38 is a word meaning a junction rod, or something which is attached or fastened together. It possibly refers to rods connecting the pillars. Whether the screen was hung from these fillets, as from a curtain rod, or just hung on the hooks like the veil, is not clearly indicated.

Keil and Delitzsch felt that the fillets formed a sort of architrave, a solid wooden (but gold-overlaid) section above the pillars.¹² Cassuto says that the fillets formed a pole lying on the hooks, and that this prevented the side boards from inclining inwards because of the weight of the curtains suspended over them.¹³

We cannot tell whether the pillars were inside or outside the screen. We are of the opinion that they were inside, because they were covered with gold. Gold was reserved for the things inside the tabernacle, except for the outside of the side boards, and even they were covered by the curtains. However, the fact that the pillars had bronze sockets shows that they were regarded as near or part of the items in the court, which were of bronze.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

27 And thou shalt make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits. (2) And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof; the horns thereof shall be on one piece with it: and

¹²*Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 182.

¹³*Op. cit.*, p. 361.

thou shalt overlay it with brass. (3) And thou shalt make its pots to take away its ashes, and its shovels, and its basins, and its flesh-hooks, and its firepans: all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass. (4) And thou shalt make for it a grating of network of brass; and upon the net shalt thou make four brazen rings in the four corners thereof. (5) And thou shalt put it under the ledge round the altar beneath, that the net may reach halfway up the altar. (6) And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with brass. (7) And the staves thereof shall be put into the rings, and the staves shall be upon the two sides of the altar, in bearing it. (8) Hollow with planks shalt thou make it: as it hath been showed thee in the mount, so shall they make it.

(9) And thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen a hundred cubits long for one side: (10) and the pillars thereof shall be twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets *shall be* of silver. (11) And likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings a hundred cubits long, and the pillars thereof twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver. (12) And for the breadth of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits; their pillars ten, and their sockets ten. (13) And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward shall be fifty cubits. (14) The hangings for the one side *of the gate* shall be fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three. (15) And for the other side shall be hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three. (16) And for the gate of the court shall be a screen of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the embroiderer; their pillars four, and their sockets four. (17) All the pillars of the court round about shall be filleted with silver; their hooks of silver, and their sockets of brass. (18) The length of the court shall be a hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty every where, and the height five cubits, of fine twined linen, and their sockets of brass. (19) All the instruments of the tabernacle in all the

service thereof, and all the pins thereof, and all the pins of the court, shall be of brass.

(20) And thou shalt command the children of Is-ra-el, that they bring unto thee pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually. (21) In the tent of meeting, without the veil which is before the testimony, Aar-on and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before Je-ho-vah: it shall be a statute for ever throughout their generations on the behalf of the children of Is-ra-el.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After reading the chapter carefully, propose a brief chapter topic for it.
2. Of what materials was the altar made? (27:1, 2, 8)
3. What was the general shape of the altar? (27:1)
4. What were the dimensions of the altar? (27:1)
5. What stuck out of the upper corners of the altar? (27:2)
6. What accessory utensils were made for the altar? (27:3)
7. What was the grating (net-work) made from? (27:4)
8. Where were the bronze rings of the altar set? (27:4)
9. Where was the grating of the altar placed? (27:5)
10. Where were the poles placed? (27:7)
11. What were the poles (or staves) used for? (27:7)
12. When were sacrifices made on the altar? (Lev. 6:9, 12, 13)
13. Of what would the altar be a type? (Hebrews 13:10-12; John 1:29; Matthew 23:19)
14. Suggest some ways in which the altar resembled that of which it was a type.
15. What were the dimensions (including height) of the court? (27:9, 13, 18)
16. What formed (or enclosed) the court? (27:9, 10)

17. Describe the way the court was constructed. (27:9-13)
18. How many pillars were used in the court? (27:10-15)
19. On which side of the court was its entrance? (27:13, 14)
20. How wide was the entrance of the court? (27:14, 15)
21. What was hung across the court entrance? Describe it. (27:15)
22. Who might enter the court? (Lev. 17:8-9; 22:18; 6:9-10; 3:1-2)
23. What items of furniture were in the court? (Ex. 40:6-8)
24. Of what may the court have been a type? (Compare Rev. 11:1-2)
25. Of what material were the utensils of the tabernacle made? (27:19)
26. Who was to bring pure olive oil? For what use? (27:20)
27. Of what may olive oil be a type? (Compare Heb. 1:9; Acts 10:38; Zech. 4:2-6)
28. When did the lamp burn? (27:20)
29. In what room (or area) did the lamp burn? (27:21)
30. What is the "testimony"? (27:21; Ex. 32:15; 34:29)
31. Who tended the lamp? (27:21)
32. How long was the law about the burning of the lamp to continue? (27:21)

EXODUS TWENTY-SEVEN: ALTAR, COURT, OIL!

1. The altar; 27:1-8
 - a. Made of wood and bronze; 27:1, 8.
 - b. Made with horns; 27:2-3.
 - c. Made with a grating; 27:4-5.
 - d. Made portable; 27:6-7.
 - e. Made according to the pattern; 27:8.
2. The court; 27:9-19.
 - a. Made of curtains upon pillars; 27:9-10, 17.

- b. Made according to dimensions given by God; 27:11-13, 18.
- c. Made with an entrance; 27:14-16.
- d. Made of sturdy bronze; 27:19, 3.
- 3. The oil; 27:20-21.
 - a. Brought by the people; 27:20.
 - b. Burned before Jehovah; 27:21.
 - c. Brought for ever; 27:21.

THE ALTAR, A TYPE OF CHRIST'S DEATH (27:1-8)

- 1. A place of power! (It had horns!) Ex. 27:2; Eph. 1:19.
 - 2. A place of death! Lev. 17:11; Rom. 6:23, 3-5.
 - 3. A place of atonement (or covering!) Lev. 1:4; 4:20; Heb. 9:24-26.
(The atonement was continual! Ex. 29:42)
 - 4. A place of meeting God! Ex. 29:42; Eph. 2:16-18.
 - 5. A place of sweet smell unto the Lord! Lev. 1:9, 13, 17; Eph. 5:2.
 - 6. A place of thanksgiving! Lev. 7:15-17; Col. 1:12-13.
- "The altar shall be most holy!" (Ex. 40:10)

THE COURT, GOD'S OUTREACH TO MEN! (27:9-19)

- 1. The court was separated from the outside world.
 - a. The court was enclosed by high hangings. (27:12-15)
 - b. We must "draw near" to God. (Isa. 55:6; James 4:8)
- 2. The court was open to all. (Ex. 27:16)
 - a. To priests (Lev. 4:3-4)
 - b. To Israel (Lev. 4:27-29)
 - c. To Gentiles (Num. 15:14)
- 3. The court contained the altar and the laver. (Ex. 40:29, 30, 33)
 - a. The altar, a place of blood atonement. (Lev. 17:11)
 - b. The laver, a place of washing. (Ex. 30:18-21; Titus 3:5)

"Enter into his courts with praise!" (Psalm 100:4)

OIL FOR THE LAMP! (Ex. 27:20-21)

"Let your lamp be burning" (Luke 12:35). "Let your light shine before men; that they may . . . glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). See Matthew 25:2-9.

1. Brought by the people. (27:20)
 2. Beaten from the olives - to be the best oil
 3. Burned continually! (27:20)
 4. Brought daily! (27:21)
 5. Brought for ever.
-

OIL — A TYPE OF GOD'S SPIRIT! (27:20-21)

1. Priests anointed with oil (Ex. 29:7); Jesus anointed with the Spirit (Acts 10:38; Heb. 1:9)
 2. The lamp light fueled by oil (Ex. 27:20; Zech. 4:2-3, 6); The light of God's word fueled (inspired) by the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:20-21; II Tim. 3:16)
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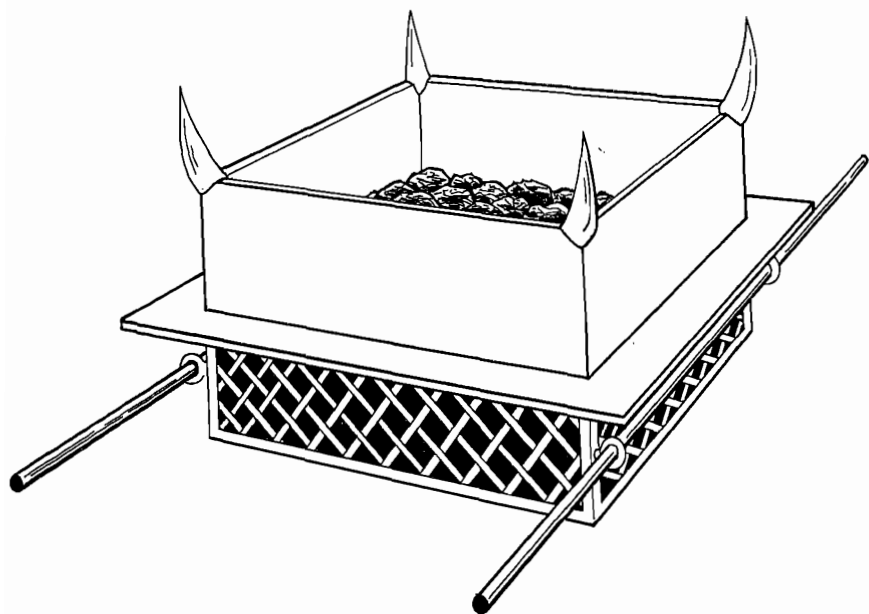
EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

1. *What is in Exodus twenty-seven?*

The chapter gives the instructions for making the altar of burnt-offering, and for making the pillars and hangings around the courtyard of the tabernacle. It closes with instructions about oil for the lamp. Probably it is simplest to remember the chapter as relating to "Altar and Court."

2. *What was the material used in making the altar? (27:1-2)*

Its basic framework was made of acacia wood (25:5). The frame itself was hollow (27:8). Apparently there was no internal bracing. The altar was overlaid with bronze (or copper). At a later time (about a year later) the bronze



Probable design of the altar of burnt-offering, or brazen altar. The altar was hollow, wooden, and copper-plated. It had a network of copper reaching halfway up the altar, under the ledge round about the altar. The altar was almost shoulder-high to a man (three cubits, or four and a half feet). The ledge therefore probably served as place for priests to stand or to lay objects. Uncut field stones may have been placed in the altar to hold up the firewood and sacrifices (Ex. 20:24-26). (Drawing by James Sherrod)



The high priest in his holy garments. The garments include (1) the breastplate with twelve gemstones, (2) the ephod, an apron-like garment with straps over the shoulders, (3) the blue robe of the ephod with pomegranates and bells at its bottom, (4) the inner "coat" of fine linen, (5) the girdle (sash) of the ephod, and (6) the mitre (or turban) with its inscribed golden plate. (Art by Ellen Cline)

censers (incense burners) of certain rebels who sought to become priests were beaten into plates and attached to the altar as additional covering for it (Num. 16:37-39). We suspect that this was done because the wooden framework needed more protection from the fire than had been originally provided (although the stated reason was that these censers were holy).

The use of bronze for the altar is an obvious contrast to the use of gold for the furniture in the tabernacle building. We observe that the value and beauty of the materials used decreased as they were located further out from the Holy of Holies. (We also notice that the order in which the various objects of furniture are described is generally progressively outward from the Holy of Holies, through the Holy place, and now into the court.)

It has been proposed frequently that the hollow altar was filled with natural uncut stones or earth when it was in use. See 20:24-25. The fire that burned the sacrifices would in that case have actually burned on the stones in the center of the altar. This would have left the altar less exposed to heat damage, as well as conforming to the instructions about making altars of earth or stones. There is, however, no definite statement that the altar was actually filled with stones or earth.

3. *What are the names of the altar?*

It is called the "altar of burnt-offering" (Lev. 4:7; 10:18); or the "brazen altar" (Ex. 38:30), to distinguish it from the "golden altar" of incense (Ex. 39:38). When the altar is referred to, it is always THE altar, because it was the only such article in the Israelite religious rituals. King Solomon's temple had ten lavers, ten tables of showbread, etc. But even it had only one altar. Perhaps this points toward the fact that we have in Christ our *only* altar for covering sins.

4. *What were the dimensions of the altar?* (27:1; 38:1)

It was five cubits long, five wide, and three high (7½ feet by 7½ feet by 4½). King Solomon's temple had a much larger altar, twenty by twenty by ten cubits (II Chron. 4:1).

Some have thought that the tabernacle altar was wider at the bottom than at the top, because the sides of the altar below the "ledge" (vs. 5) extended downward from the outside edge of the ledge. The text does not actually describe it this way; however, it really does not preclude this as possibly being the real design. (We doubt that it was.)

5. *Why was the tabernacle equipped with an altar?*

This was necessary because a blood atonement has always been required before men can obtain fellowship with God. "All things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 10:22). Sin requires payment of life. A life is required as a substitute for a life forfeited by sin. See Lev. 17:11.

As repulsive as altars may seem to us, they are part of the necessary education of people to understand the cross. We cannot understand the death of Christ without thinking in terms of altars and sacrifices. Altars speak of *death*. It was not a pleasant object lesson - burning, smelling, smoky, blood-smeared.

We Christians have an altar (Heb. 13:10). The death of Jesus provides for us both an altar and a sacrifice. Christ's death was just as painful and grisly as any burnt-offering on the altar. And, most grievous of all, He had to die because we have sinned. But he loved us and gave himself for us because we could not save ourselves. Because of this supreme gift of Himself, we should concentrate our preaching on "Christ and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2).

Because of the presence of the altar, an infinitely holy God became approachable by His unworthy people. Israel (like ourselves) approached the LORD by the way of the court, the altar, the laver, the lamp, the bread, and incense, the veil, and into the presence of the Lord.

God's covenant with Israel was ratified at the first by the sprinkling of blood (24:8). The presence of "continual burnt-offerings" on the altar (29:42) was a perpetual reminder of the covenant, and a constant means of keeping within the covenant. The sacrifices done at the altar are described

in detail in Leviticus 1-7.

6. *What was upon the corners of the altar?* (27:2; 38:2)

Horns! They were not detachable, but were made "of one piece" with the altar (literally, "from it").

As the horns of an animal give it power, so *horns* came to be a symbol of power and strength. Note Psalm 75:10; Micah 4:13.

The horns indicate the power in the blood atonement - power to remove condemnation and power to cleanse the life of a transgressor. Because of divine power, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us (Romans 8:37).

In the sin-offerings blood was smeared upon the horns of the altar. See Lev. 4:7; 8:15; 9:9; 16:18; Ex. 29:12.

Sacrificial animals were sometimes tethered to the horns of the altar (Ps. 118:27). Men pleading for their lives sometimes clutched onto the horns of the altar (I Kings 1:50; 2:28; Ex. 21:14).

7. *What accessory equipment was made for use at the altar?* (27:3; 38:3)

(1) Pots (KJV: "pans") to hold ashes being taken away; (2) shovels; (3) basins for sprinkling blood (Lev. 1:5); (4) flesh-hooks (or forks) for moving pieces of flesh about (I Sam. 2:13; (5) fire-pans. This is a translation of the Hebrew word rendered "snuffdishes" in 25:38 and 37:23, and "censers" in Lev. 10:1 and 16:12. All of these items were of brass (27:19).

Similar equipment was prepared for the altar in Solomon's temple. (I Kings 7:45)

8. *Where was the network of brass placed?* (27:4-5; 38:4-5).

The exact positions of the "network" and the "ledge" (KJV: "compass") are difficult to determine. Cole¹ suggests that the brass network (or grating) lay horizontally *inside* the altar framework, and was supported upon a ledge protruding from the inside walls of the altar frame and located

¹Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-197.

halfway up the sides. If this was the real design, then the sacrificial animals were burned upon the grating and the ashes dripped below. This design would account for the fact that the wooden altar frame was not damaged much by fire, and explain how the ashes in the altar were spilled out when the altar of Jeroboam I was split apart (I Kings 13:15). (We do not think that the sacrificial animals were burned upon the grating. The text does not definitely state that the network was supported by the ledge. In fact, the network was *under* the ledge. See 27:5)

Most commentators think that the network stood upright (vertically) on edge as part of the outside structure of the altar, extending from the ground upward to halfway up the sides. This design would provide an air draft for the fire on the altar. To us this seems the better view, because the rings employed to hold the staves to carry the ark were of necessity on the *outside* of the altar, and these rings are said to have been mounted on the corners of the network.

Also the net-work is clearly said to have been installed "unto half (way up) the altar." To us this seems meaningless if the net-work were not vertical and on the outside.

As for the "ledge" itself, Cassuto² suggests that it was a kind of horizontal projection that encompassed the altar on all sides, and that its purpose was purely ornamental. He does not think that it was supported under its outer edge by the network or anything else.

This view would interpret the altar as having the same external dimensions at the bottom as it had at the top. We favor this view, because no suggestion is made in the text that the altar was wider at the bottom than at the top.

Keil and Delitzsch³, Barnes⁴, and others have felt that the ledge was a bench or shelf protruding at right angles from the sides of the altar halfway up its sides, and that the

²*Op. cit.*, p. 364.

³*Op. cit.*, p. 186.

⁴*Op. cit.*, p. 73.

network of brass stood vertically under the outer edge of the ledge so as to support the outer edge of it. This design would result in the altar's being wider at the bottom than at the top. Keil and Delitzsch suggest that the priests stood upon this ledge when offering the sacrifices, and that this would explain how Aaron could "come down" from offering sacrifices. (Lev. 9:22).

The use of the ledge as a place upon which the priests might stand seems reasonable (though unproven). The altar was four and a half feet tall (three cubits, or fifty-four inches). Thus a bench or ledge halfway up its sides (twenty-seven inches up) would make the work of lifting firewood, pieces of flesh, pots, tools, etc. upon the altar much easier. Possibly a ramp of earth (certainly no steps!) was sloped up beside the altar to the level of the ledge. See Ex. 20:26.

After all has been said, we have to admit that we do not know the precise purpose of the ledge around the altar. Probably it was used for whatever purposes it might conveniently serve. We also do not know the width of the ledge.

9. *How was the altar of burnt-offering transported about?* (27:6-7; 38:5-7)

It was carried by staves thrust into rings mounted on the corners of the altar, upon the net of brass. The staves were overlaid with brass, unlike the staves with the furniture inside the tabernacle, which were overlaid with gold.

When being transported the altar was covered with a purple cloth and a covering of sealskins. (See 25:5.) Only this altar had a purple covering. The other furniture had blue coverings.

10. *What material was used for the frame of the altar?* (27:8)

"Planks" (KJV & RSV: "boards") were used. The Hebrew word for "plank" (*luach*) in 27:8 is not the same word used of the boards of the tabernacle building. *Luach* is the word also used to refer to the stone tablets of the ten commandments (Ex. 24:12; 31:18). It may mean table, tablet, plate of stone or metal, wooden plate, board, or plank. (Harkavy's *Lexicon*)

11. *What was the name of the enclosure around the tabernacle?* (27:9; 38:9)

It was called the *court* of the tabernacle. "Court" simply means yard or enclosure. There the people could come and assemble at God's house for worship. The court marked the outer limit of the area dedicated exclusively to the service of God. Later temples in Jerusalem would have stone walls marking off their courts (I Kings 7:12). We do not read of vast crowds thronging the tabernacle courts as they did in the temple courts later (Isa. 1:12).

Even Gentiles could enter the court. Lev. 17:8; 22:18; Num. 15:14-16. This shows that the LORD has always been rich unto all who call upon Him (Rom. 10:12, 13).

There was joy in coming into the court. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, That he may dwell in thy *courts*" (Ps. 65:4). "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his *courts* with praise" (Psalm 100:4).

The court shows the two principles of exclusion and inclusion.⁵ The nation of Israel was unholy in its deeds, and thus could NOT go into the immediate presence of Yahweh in the Holy of Holies. The veil before the Holy of Holies and the screen before the Holy Place excluded all but certain peoples. There are barriers between a holy God and unholy men. But the great message in God's good news is that God has reached out to men and provided a meeting place where men may come to Him. The walls of the court are up, but the door is open. God has set forth to reach out and reconcile the world unto Himself (II Cor. 5:16-21). While God's holiness excludes us as unworthy sinners, yet his love and mercy include us in a divine outreach.

This is the reason we have spoken of the court as a type of God's outreach into the world.

⁵Ramm, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-164.

In some manner God's heavenly kingdom also has a "court." See Rev. 11:1-2. We see in this fact another illustration of the truth that the tabernacle on earth was a copy of the things in the heavens (Heb. 9:23).

12. *What were the dimensions of the court?* (27:9, 12, 18)

It was fifty cubits wide (75 feet) on the east and west, and a hundred cubits (150 feet) on the north and south. Its entrance was on the east side (27:13-14). The entrance was twenty cubits wide (27:16), and located in the center of the east side.

If in Egypt the Israelites had ever worshipped the rising sun, this practice would have been unlikely to be continued at the tabernacle, because their backs would have been toward the rising sun as they approached the tabernacle facing west, toward its entrance on the east.

13. *What was the court made of?* (27:9-10; 38:9-10)

It consisted of pillars five cubits tall (7½ feet), which held up a hanging of fine twisted linen cloth (38:16, 18). The court was too tall to gaze over, even on tiptoe. People had to come inside to see what was going on inside.

The material of the pillars is not specifically stated, but probably it was acacia wood. The columns were not made of brass, a fact indicated by the non-mention of the columns in 38:29-31, where the uses of the brass are itemized.

The columns had sockets (bases, or pedestals) of brass, but hooks and fillets of silver at their tops. The capitals (or decorated tops) of the pillars were overlaid with silver (38:17). Josephus (*Ant.* III, vi, 2) says that the brass bases had sharp ends like spears, which were stuck into the ground. The scripture does not mention such a fact.

The hooks were used to hold up the cloth hangings. Cassuto suggests that the hooks were Y-shaped, like the Hebrew letter *waw*.

The nature of the "fillets" remains quite uncertain. See 38:10. The Hebrew word for fillet (*chashuq*) comes from a verb (*chisheq*) meaning "to fasten together" (Harkavy). Therefore, some have suggested that the fillets were

silver connecting rods, like curtain rods, connecting the tops of the pillars to one another; and that the "hanging" hung from these rods. Other commentators suggest that the fillets were bands or rings of silver encircling the pillars at various points, perhaps at the tops, bottoms, and middles, and that the hangings may have been anchored to the pillars at their fillets. The function of the fillets is not clearly indicated. We somewhat favor the view that they were bands of silver upon the pillars, and did not extend from one pillar to the next one.

The expression "south side southward" in 27:9 is literally "to the side of the Negev, to the south." See notes on 26:18.

14. *How many pillars were used in the court?* (27:10-15; 38:10-15)

Sixty pillars. Twenty were on the north and on the south side. Ten were on the east and on the west ends.

The most probable layout is that the pillars were exactly five cubits apart. The pillar at each corner was probably counted as belonging to only one side, even though each corner pillar supported an end of the hanging on two adjacent sides. Keil and Delitzsch affirm that anyone may easily convince himself of the correctness of the number of sixty pillars by drawing a figure of their layout. We agree.

15. *How large was the entrance of the court?* (27:16; 38:18-19)

It was twenty cubits (30 feet) wide. It was made of the same colored linen material as that used at the doorway of the tent. See 26:36. (Regarding *linen*, see 25:4.) The hanging at the entrance to the court was embroidered with needlework. It was held up on four pillars, which rested on four sockets (pedestals). See 27:10. On either side of the entrance fifteen cubits of linen curtains were hung up.

The expression in 38:18 "the height in the breadth" is a rather singular one, and "breadth" there is to be understood of the doorway of the court. It emphasizes that the screen at the court entrance was the same height as the rest of the court.

Regarding the "fillets" of 27:17, see notes on 27:9-10.

16. *What material were the tabernacle instruments made of?* (27:19; 38:20)

Of brass. See 25:3. The instruments referred to are probably the vessels and tools used at the altar (27:3), and possibly others also.

The "pins" of the tabernacle are probably the tent pins which provided anchors to the guy ropes holding upright the pillars of the court. Ex. 27:19 also indicates that the main tabernacle building used "pins." Possibly they held the side boards of the tabernacle rigid, although their position and function are not stated.

17. *What was used as fuel for the light?* (27:20)

Pure olive oil obtained by beating olives was to be brought by the children of Israel to the priests. The Jewish *Mishna*⁶ indicates that the very best oil was produced by beating the olives lightly with rods. This oil was clear and colorless and burned with little smoke. The lower grades of oil were obtained by crushing the olives completely in a press or mortar.

The small amount of oil required by the lamp could have been obtained from caravans passing through the wilderness. There is no need to question the Biblical text because oil was (supposedly) not available in the desert.

The Hebrew words for "light" (*ma'or*) in 27:20 and for "lamp" (*ner*) are different from the word (*menorah*) translated "candlestick" in 25:31. Some have therefore thought that they refer to a different light, perhaps some much simpler light. To us it appears that Ex. 35:14 and 39:37 clearly indicate that all these Hebrew words refer to the same "light."

The wording of Lev. 24:2-4 is almost identical to Ex. 27:20-21.

The lamp is said to "burn continually."

It seems somewhat surprising to find at this point (27:20)

⁶See Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

the instructions about bringing olive oil for the lamp. We would have imagined that such information would have been given back in 25:31ff where the lamp was described. But it is the usual pattern in Exodus to keep the descriptions of the construction of the items of furniture separate from the information about the rituals associated with them.

Also, 27:20-21 may be considered the start of a new section of subject matter, giving directions for the priesthood. Note that chapter twenty-eight continues the discussion of the priesthood. Cassuto⁷ notes that 27:20, 28:1, and 28:3 all begin (in Hebrew) with the word "and thou." He considers this an indication of connection between 27:20-21 and the following chapter. We do not feel that this is a certainty, but it is a possibility.

18. *When was the lamp to burn?* (27:20-21)

It was to burn "continually" (Heb., *tamid*). This word itself may mean either continuously, without interruption; or regularly, that is, every night. It is used with the second meaning in Psalm 34:1: "His praise shall *continually* be in my mouth." This can hardly mean an unbroken flow of praise.

The lamp was to burn "from evening to morning" (27:21; Lev. 24:3; Ex. 30:7-8; I Sam 3:3) I Sam. 3:3 says, "The lamp had not yet gone out."

Nonetheless, we are of the opinion that the seven lamps were never all extinguished at one time. They were the only source of light in the Holy Place. Light would frequently be needed in the Holy Place in the daylight hours, as well as at night. See Lev. 4:7; 24:7-8. Later Jewish practice was to keep the lamp burning unceasingly.

19. *Where was the lamp to burn?* (27:21)

It burned in the "tent of meeting" (KJV: "tabernacle of the congregation"). This was the Holy Place, the room just "without (outside of) the veil," which was before the

⁷*Op. cit.*, p. 369.

testimony (the tablets of the ten commandments in the ark).

The expression "tent of meeting" is used here for the first time as a title for the Holy Place. After this time it is often employed. The word "meeting" (Heb. *mo'ed*) refers to the place, the time, and the event of a "meeting" between God and man.

20. *Who was responsible for caring for the light? (27:21)*

Aaron (the high priest) and his sons (the other priests).

The light was kept "before Jehovah." Keeping the light burning was important to God. It said something about Him and about His people also.

Burning the lamp was to be a statute (or law) "for ever," literally, a "statute of eternity." The Hebrew word *'olam* (translated "for ever") sometimes means existence without end, as in the expression in Gen. 21:33, "the *everlasting* God." However, sometimes it refers to long periods of time which may have an end. Thus we read that slaves might become servants "for ever," that is, for life (Deut. 15:17). Also the grave is called the "everlasting home" in Eccl. 12:5, even though there will be a resurrection. God put His name in Solomon's temple "for ever"; nevertheless, Solomon's temple was destroyed. Thus also circumcision was an "everlasting covenant" (Gen. 17:13), even though at present neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters at all (Galatians 5:6).

These uses of "for ever" (and related expressions) make clear how the lamp could be a "statute for ever," and yet exist no more at present.

The burning of the lamp was "on behalf of" the children of Israel. This expression is translated "by" in the R.S.V., and "for" (margin: Lit. *from*) in the New American Standard version. The Hebrew has a compound preposition literally reading "from with." Primarily it means "from," but the idea that it was also "with" Israel seems true here. God's light was "from" them in the sense that they furnished the oil, but it was "with" them in that it was *God's* light in their tabernacle.