

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

28 And bring thou near unto thee Aar-on thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Is-ra-el, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aar-on, Na-dab and A-bi-hu, E-le-a-zar and Ith-a-mar, Aar-on's sons. (2) And thou shalt make holy garments for Aar-on thy brother, for glory and for beauty. (3) And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aar-on's garments to sanctify him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. (4) And these are the garments which they shall make: a breast-plate, and an eph-od, and a robe, and a coat of checker work, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aar-on thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. (5) And they shall take the gold, and the blue, and the purple, and the scarlet, and the fine linen.

(6) And they shall make the eph-od of gold, of blue, and purple, scarlet, and fine twisted linen, the work of the skilful workman. (7) It shall have two shoulder-pieces joined to the two ends thereof, that it may be joined together. (8) And the skilfully woven band, which is upon it, wherewith to gird it on, shall be like the work thereof *and* of the same piece; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. (9) And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Is-ra-el: (10) six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the six that remain on the other stone, according to their birth. (11) With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones, according to the names of the children of Is-ra-el: thou shalt make them to be inclosed in settings of gold. (12) And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulder-pieces of the eph-od, to be stones of memorial for the children of Is-ra-el: and Aar-on shall bear their names before Je-ho-vah upon his two shoulders for a memorial. (13) And thou shalt make settings of gold, (14) and two chains of pure gold; like

cords shalt thou make them, of wreathen work: and thou shalt put the wreathen chains on the settings.

(15) And thou shalt make a breastplate of judgment, the work of the skilful workman; like the work of the eph-od thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, shalt thou make it. (16) Foursquare it shall be *and* double; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof. (17) And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, four rows of stones: a row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle shall be the first row; (18) and the second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; (19) and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; (20) and the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be inclosed in gold in their settings. (21) And the stones shall be according to the names of the children of Is-ra-el, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, every one according to his name, they shall be for the twelve tribes. (22) And thou shalt make upon the breastplate chains like cords, of wreathen work of pure gold. (23) And thou shalt make upon the breastplate two rings of gold, and shalt put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. (24) And thou shalt put the two wreathen chains of gold in the two rings at the ends of the breastplate. (25) And the *other* two ends of the two wreathen chains thou shalt put on the two settings, and put them on the shoulderpieces of the eph-od in the forefront thereof. (26) And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and thou shalt put them upon the two ends of the breastplate, upon the edge thereof, which is toward the side of the eph-od inward. (27) And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and shalt put them on the two shoulderpieces of the eph-od underneath, in the forefront thereof, close by the coupling thereof, above the skilfully woven band of the eph-od. (28) And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the eph-od with a lace of blue, that it may be upon the skilfully woven band of the eph-od, and that the breastplate be not loosed from the eph-od. (29) And Aar-on shall bear the names of the children of Is-ra-el in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto

the holy place, for a memorial before Je-ho-vah continually. (30) And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the U-rim and the Thum-mim; and they shall be upon Aar-on's heart, when he goeth in before Je-ho-vah: and Aar-on shall bear the judgment of the children of Is-ra-el upon his heart before Je-ho-vah continually.

(31) And thou shalt make the robe of the eph-od all of blue. (32) And it shall have a hole for the head in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of a coat of mail, that it be not rent. (33) And upon the skirts of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the skirts thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: (34) a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the skirts of the robe round about. (35) And it shall be upon Aar-on to minister: and the sound thereof shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before Je-ho-vah, and when he cometh out, that he die not.

(36) And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLY TO JE-HO-VAH. (37) And thou shalt put it on a lace of blue, and it shall be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. (38) And it shall be upon Aar-on's forehead, and Aar-on shall bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Is-ra-el shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before Je-ho-vah. (39) And thou shalt weave the coat in checker work of fine linen, and thou shalt make a mitre of fine linen, and thou shalt make a girdle, the work of the embroiderer.

(40) And for Aar-on's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and head-tires shalt make for them, for glory and for beauty. (41) And thou shalt put them upon Aar-on thy brother, and upon his sons with him, and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office. (42) And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall

reach: (43) and they shall be upon Aar-on, and upon his sons, when they go in unto the tent of meeting, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute for ever unto him and unto his seed after him.

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

1. After reading the chapter carefully, propose a very brief topic-title for it.
2. Who was to bring Aaron near and clothe him? (28:1, 2, 41)
3. What office were Aaron and his sons to have? (28:1)
4. Did Aaron take this office unto himself by volunteering? (Heb. 5:4)
5. Who is the Christian's high priest? (Heb. 4:14)
6. What other people are priests NOW? (I Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10)
7. Name Aaron's four sons. (Ex. 28:1)
8. What were two purposes of the priests' garments? (28:2, 40)
9. Who were to make Aaron's garments? (28:3; 31:2, 3, 10)
10. What were Aaron's garments to do for him? (28:3)
11. Name the six garments of Aaron. (28:4)
12. What materials went into the garments? (28:5)
13. Who contributed these materials? (35:4-9)
14. What materials went into the ephod? (28:6; 39:2, 3)
15. What part of the ephod went over the priest's shoulders? (28:7)
16. What was used to gird (or tie) the ephod on? (28:8)
17. What was placed on the shoulders, as part of the ephod? (28:12)
18. What was carved on the onyx stones on the shoulders? (28:9-11)

19. What class of men wore ephods? (I Sam. 22:18; I Sam. 2:18, 28; 14:3; 30:7; II Sam. 6:14)
 20. What was the breastplate said to be for? (28:15)
 21. What material was used to make the breastplate? (28:15)
 22. What was set upon the breastplate? (28:17-20)
 23. What was engraved on the stones of the breastplate? (28:21)
 24. To what was the breastplate tied? (28:26-28)
 25. What did Aaron bear on his heart? (28:29) What may this symbolize if we apply it to Christ?
 26. What was placed in the breastplate? (28:30)
 27. What was the purpose of these items? (28:30; Num. 27:21; I Sam. 28:6; Ezra 2:62, 63)
 28. What was Aaron to bear upon his heart as he wore the breastplate? (28:30)
 29. What was the color of the robe of the ephod? (28:31)
 30. What was upon the skirts of the robe of the ephod? (28:33, 34)
 31. How important were these items? (28:35)
 32. What was engraved upon a golden plate? (28:36)
 33. Where was the golden plate worn? (28:37, 38)
 34. Besides Aaron, what other priest is *holy*? (Heb. 7:26)
 35. What did Aaron bear? (28:38)
 36. What was the coat of Aaron made of? (28:39; 39:27)
 37. What was the mitre? (28:39; 39:28)
 38. What garments were made for Aaron's sons? (28:40)
 39. What four things was Moses to do to the priests? (28:42)
 40. What covered the naked flesh of the priests? (28:42)
 41. When were the priests to wear the linen breeches? (28:43). What might happen if they did not wear them? (Compare Ex. 20:26.)
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EXODUS TWENTY-EIGHT: HOLY GARMENTS! (28:2)

I. PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH THE HOLY GARMENTS; 28:1-5.

1. Aaron and his sons - To be priests. (28:1)
2. Moses - To make the garments and put them on the priests. (28:1, 2)
3. Wise-hearted men - To make the garments. (28:3-5)

II. PURPOSES OF THE HOLY GARMENTS

1. "For glory and beauty" (28:2, 40)
2. "To sanctify Aaron and his sons" (28:3)
3. "That he may minister unto me in the PRIEST'S office" (28:3, 4)

III. PLANS OF THE HOLY GARMENTS; 28:6-43.

1. The ephod; 28:6-14.
2. The breastplate; 28:15-30.
(Urim and Thummim; 28:30)
3. The robe of the ephod; 28:31-35.
4. The plate of gold; 28:36-38.
5. The coat, mitre, and girdle; 28:39.
6. Garments for Aaron's sons; 28:40, 41.
7. Linen breeches; 28:42, 43.

PRIESTS APPOINTED BY GOD! (Ex. 28:3, 4)

1. Aaron - A type of Christ, our high priest; (Heb. 8:1-6)
 2. Aaron's sons - A type of Christians, who are priests unto God; (I Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6).
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THE EPHOD! (28:6-14)

1. A garment distinctively for priests; (28:6; I Sam. 22:18; 2:28).

2. A garment of beauty and glory; (28:6, 8, 13).
(Christ, our priest, is glorious; Rev. 1:13-16; Phil. 3:21.)
 3. A garment for bearing the names of God's people; (28:9-12)
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THE PRIESTLY BREASTPLATE! (28:15-30)

- I. Its purposes
 1. For judgment; 28:15.
 2. To contain the Urim and Thummim; 28:30.
 3. To bear the names of the children of Israel; 28:29.
 - II. Its pattern
 1. Made as a folded cloth pouch; 28:15, 16.
 2. Made of gold; 28:15, 20, 24.
 3. Adorned with gems; 28:17-20.
 4. Supported on golden chains; 28:22-28.
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ROBE OF THE EPHOD! (28:31-35)

1. Its blue color suggests the close connection of the priest to other blue things of the tabernacle. (25:4; 26:31; 27:16; Num. 4:6)
 2. Its seamless form suggests the robe of Christ. (John 19:23)
 3. Its bells suggest the public nature of Christ's work. (No secret priestly rituals)
 4. Its pomegranates suggest the beauty and fruitfulness which there is in Christ.
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THE GOLDEN PLATE - THE BADGE OF HOLINESS! (28:36-38)

1. By means of the plate of sinful priests became HOLINESS.
2. By means of the plate the priest bore the iniquity of the holy gifts presented by the people. (28:38)

3. By means of the plate the people and their gifts were accepted before the Lord!
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CLOTHES FOR AARON'S SONS! (28:40-43)

1. Resembled those of the high priest; (28:40)
(We also are dressed in the righteousness of Christ, our high priest. Phil. 3:9; Rom. 9:30)
 2. Provided the priests with glory and beauty.
(We also are changed from glory to glory. II Cor. 3:18)
 3. Covered their nakedness. (Ex. 28:42; Rev. 3:18)
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

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

The chapter deals with the garments of the high priest and the other priests. We entitle the chapter "Holy Garments" (28:2). It forms an obvious unit of subject matter. The next chapter continues the instructions about the priesthood, but takes up the topic of their consecration ritual. The material in chapter twenty-eight is very similar to 39:1-31, where we read of the actual making of the garments.

2. *Who was to go get Aaron and make holy garments for him?* (28:1, 2)

Moses was to do this. The "thou" ("you") in 28:1 is stressed. Moses is made very prominent here as the mediator of God's covenant. God does His work through chosen, clearly-designated men.

Moses was to bring near unto himself from the midst of the children of Israel Aaron and his sons, so they might serve as priests unto God. The names of Aaron's four sons - Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar - appear

here together.

Nadab and Abihu had been mentioned in 24:1 as among those going up into the mount. They later died by fire during their consecration ritual (Lev. 10:1, 2). Aaron's sons Eleazar succeeded him as high priest (Num. 3:4; 20:25, 26). Still later the descendants of Ithamar became the high priests, from Eli through Abiathar (I Sam. 2:27, 28; I Kings 2:26, 27). After that time the descendants of Eleazar resumed the priesthood, from Zadok onward (I Chron. 6:8-15).

3. *What service were Aaron and his sons to perform?* (28:1)

They were to be *priests*. Note that they were *called*; they did not volunteer (Heb. 5:4). The priesthood was serious business, as we can see by the case of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1, 2).

The creation of a special hereditary priesthood was a new development in Israel. Up until this time priestly functions had been conducted by the head of each family or tribe, generally in accordance with the principle of the dedication of the firstborn son (Ex. 13:2; Num. 3:12, 13). We read of priests serving at various times and places - men like Melchizedek and Jethro. Job offered sacrifices for his family (Job 1:5). But if there was any continuity in the office of priest - as from father to son - we are not informed about it. Now the priesthood is to become an "established" order in Israel.

The duties of the priests included burning incense daily (30:7, 8; 27:21); keeping fire on the altar (Lev. 6:9-13); offering daily sacrifices (Ex. 29:38-44); blessing the people (Lev. 9:22; Num. 6:23-26); blowing the silver trumpets (Num. 10:8-10); testing for adultery (Num. 5); and teaching the people (Deut. 17:8; 19:17; 21:5).

Many scholars of a skeptical ("liberal") persuasion have set forth the idea that the whole priestly system did not originate until the Babylonian captivity or afterwards. This is part of the Wellhausen theory about a P (Priestly) source of some of the O.T. books. But even Martin Noth

(himself a rather extreme liberal) admits that P would not have written his account of Aaron and his garments purely from fantasy.¹ But while admitting that the priesthood is older than the time of the Babylonian captivity, they still think that the priesthood originated through the people's common reverence of holy men separated from usual worldly activities. Not so! The priesthood was established by divine choice.

Please remember that the whole religious system connected with the tabernacle, including the priesthood, was only a shadow and type of the heavenly realities (Heb. 10:1). Thus Aaron and his sons were only representations of the true eternal priesthood. God never planned that the priesthood from the tribe of Levi (Aaron's family) would be priests forever. God foretold that there would come a priest after the order and likeness of Melchizedek, who would be a priest forever (Psalm 110:4). This, of course, refers to our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:11-17). In the age of the "new covenant" under which we live, the preparatory symbolic religious system existing in the time of Moses has been replaced by the genuine heavenly realities themselves! Thus we are no longer under the priesthood of Aaron and his sons, but of Christ Jesus, of whom Aaron was only a foreshadowing.

Similarly Aaron's sons no longer function as lesser priests working with their father. All Christians are now God's priests. See I Peter 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9, 10. We may all pray for ourselves and for others!

We must beware of religions like Roman Catholicism and its descendants, that set up a special class of individuals within the church as "priests." To adopt a system of having a special class of men as priests is to lapse back into the covenant of Moses! We live under a new and better covenant, with a better priesthood (Heb. 7:18-22). To

¹Exodus, p. 220.

revert to the system of the law of Moses is to revert to condemnation (Gal. 3:10; II Cor. 3:9).

4. *What were the purposes of the priests' garments?* (28:2-4)

They were for "glory and for beauty." God intended that His priests be prominent and glorious before the people. Also the garments were prepared "that he may minister unto me in the priest's office." It surely seems that in Aaron's case the clothes made the man! He was *invested* with his office, not created in it. Note that 28:2 refers to the garments as "holy garments" (or "garments of holiness").

5. *Who was to make the priestly garments?* (28:3)

"Wise-hearted" men. These wise-hearted men were the craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiab (Ex. 31:1-6). "Wise-hearted" in the Hebrew idiom meant able to enjoy skill and practical wisdom, as in artistic skill. (The R.S.V. rendering "endowed with an able mind" seems a rather weak rendering.)

6. *What were the garments of the priest?* (28:4)

Six items are listed: breastplate, ephod, robe, coat, mitre (or turban), and girdle (belt, or sash). Aaron's sons had only coats, girdles, and head covering. In addition, linen breeches (under-pants) were provided (28:42).

7. *What materials were used in the priests' clothing?* (28:5; 39:1)

The gold, blue (cloth), purple, scarlet, and fine linen were used. The use of the article *the* points to specific gold and specific cloth, namely that presented by the people (35:20-23).

8. *What was the ephod?* (28:6-8; 39:2-5)

The ephod was a cloth garment worn by the priest, and sometimes by others temporarily engaged in religious ceremonies.

The ephod worn by the high priest was very much more magnificent than those worn by others. See I Sam. 2:28; 14:2; 21:9; 23:6-9; 30:7. But we do read of common priests wearing ephods (I Sam. 22:18). The boy Samuel wore one

(although he was of the tribe of Levi [I Chron. 6:16, 28]). King David wore one when he brought up the ark to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6:14). References to the "ephod" of Gideon (Judges 8:27) and that of Micah (Judges 17:5) seem to be euphemisms for idols,² although that is not definite.

The ephod was made of gold wires (like threads), and of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twisted linen. The gold was beaten into thin plates and then cut into fine wires and worked into the fabric (39:3). The ephod had the same material in it as the veil and the screen, except for the added gold threads and the absence of embroidered cherubim. The ephod was a spectacular garment.

The exact form of the ephod is rather uncertain. One view is that it was somewhat of a double apron, with one section over the front of the body and another section on the back. These were coupled at the shoulders by strips of cloth attached to the front section (28:25). These shoulder-pieces had upon them two engraved onyx stones resting upon the shoulders. A girdle at the waist held the two sections to the body.³ Compare 28:7 and 39:4. The ancient rabbis seemed to think the ephod had this general form and hung down to about the hips.

Another view of the form of the ephod is that it was sort of a loin-cloth, of one piece, held up by shoulder straps like suspenders, and having its two ends attached together in some way at the back of the body. The band (or girdle) of the ephod was a thicker, belt-like section of the ephod made of one piece with the rest of the garment (28:8). The ephod did not extend higher on the body than the waist. The band (girdle) of the ephod was of the same material as the rest of the ephod. The rings on the lower part of the breastplate (28:28) were attached to the band of the ephod.

²Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

³Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-194, favor this view.

With some hesitancy we adopt this latter view.⁴ *Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Princeton, 1969), p. 66, shows male dancers in Egypt during the Old Kingdom (prior to Moses' time) wearing garments somewhat similar to ephods of this description.

The exact meaning of "two ends" in 28:7 is uncertain.

Josephus (*Ant.* III, vii, 5) said that the ephod was made with sleeves also, and did not appear to be made differently from a short coat. To us this idea does not seem to fit the scriptural information.

9. *What was on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod?* (28:9-14; 39:6, 7)

Two onyx stones were on the shoulders, each engraved with names of the sons of Jacob. Six names were on one stone and six on the other, listed in the order of their births. The names were engraved with the type of engraving used on signets. (A "signet" was a seal, or stamp. These were made of stone or other hard material. They were often shaped like small cylinders about the size of a little finger, with carvings around them. Others were like pebbles with one flat side, and had a carving of a name or figure on the flat face, which was used to stamp an impression on a soft clay tablet.)

The onyx stones were enclosed in setting (K.J.V., "ouches") (or frames) of gold. These settings were of "wreathen" work, which was gold wire twisted to form sort of a chain (28:13, 14). The breastplate was fastened from its top side to these settings (28:25).

The exact function of two chains attached to the settings of the onyx stones (28:14) is not stated. Keil and Delitzsch⁵ think they were the same chains as those extending up from the top of the breastplate to the settings. (See notes on 28:24 below). Others feel that they held the two sections of the ephod together at the shoulders.

⁴Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 373, holds this view.

⁵*Op. cit.*, p. 197.

We do not know for certain what type of gemstone is referred to as "onyx" here (Heb. *shocham*). According to the Greek LXX they were emeralds. Josephus (*Ant.* III, vii, 5) called them sardonyx, which is the best variety of onyx. Harkavy's *Lexicon* suggests that they may have been a beryl.

10. *What was the purpose of the onyx stones and the ephod?* (28:12)

By means of the inscribed shoulder stones Aaron bore the names of the children of Israel before Jehovah for a "memorial." They were "stones of memorial" for the children of Israel.

The term *memorial* is a sacrificial term referring to that which brings the one remembered into favorable remembrance before God. See Ex. 30:16.

It is a delight to our souls to meditate upon the fact that Christ, though he does not wear an ephod made by hands, bears our names before the Father for a memorial. He causes us to be remembered with favor before the Father, and not as we deserve to be remembered. The Lord Jesus is our ADVOCATE with the father (I John 2:1).

The ephod was a garment associated with holy men, with priests. The ephod of Aaron was designed so that he carried about the names of God's people. Similarly Christ is plainly set forth before our minds as the holy priest of God, and one who bears our names before God.

11. *What was the form of the breastplate?* (28:15, 16; 39:8, 9)

Basically it was a folded cloth, forming sort of a pouch, decorated with 12 inscribed gemstones, and worn on Aaron's chest.

It was made of the same gold and fabric material as the ephod (28:6). It was square and doubled, that is, folded double. It was a span each way, about nine inches square. We suppose that it was two spans long and one wide, but when folded double it was a span square. Four rows of jewels were set upon it.

It appears that the fold was at its bottom, so as to form

a kind of pouch to hold the Urim and Thummim (28:30).

The translation "breastplate" is only an interpretation, because we do not know for certain what the Hebrew word *chosen* (translated "breastplate") meant.

12. *What was upon the breastplate?* (28:17-21; 39:10-14)

There was a "setting" (Hebrew, "filling") for stones. In the Hebrew the word for "setting" is singular, suggesting one large setting holding all the gems. However, verse twenty plainly refers to "settings" (plural), showing that the "setting" was a collective plural word.⁶

In the settings were twelve gems, arranged in four rows, and having the names of the twelve sons of Israel engraved upon them, much as the names were engraved upon the onyx stones worn upon the shoulders.

13. *What gemstones were set on the breastplate?* (28:17-19)

The Hebrew names of the gemstones are hard to link positively with modern names of gemstones. The topaz is probably a correct identification. It is a golden yellow gemstone. The blue sapphire is known. The "diamond" is named in several English versions, but there is no indication that the ancients were either acquainted with this stone or had acquired the skill to engrave upon it. The amethyst is probably a correct identification. It is purple.

The Greek LXX renderings of the Hebrew words probably carry no great authority in identifying the stones. But it is interesting that eight of the twelve stones named in the Greek LXX as being on the priest's breastplate are mentioned as adornments of the foundations of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:19, 20).

14. *What held the breastplate in place?* (28:22-28; 39:15-21)⁷

⁶Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 222 refers to a rectangular golden breastplate set with precious stones and found at Byblos. It dates from the Middle Bronze (about 1700 B.C.). It hung from a golden chain. Thus it slightly resembled the ephod of Aaron. Nonetheless, we do not feel that it resembled the breastplate of Aaron closely enough to indicate any real relationship between the two, since Aaron's breastplate had the gems in individual settings.

⁷The Greek LXX uses the 29th verse from the Hebrew text as verse 23. To us this
(Continued on next page.)

It was bound to the settings of the onyx stones on the shoulders by chains. Its bottom was tied to the girdle of the ephod.

"Chains" of "wreathen" (twisted) gold wire were attached to two gold rings at the upper corners of the breastplate. The ends of the chains were attached to the gold settings holding the onyx stones on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod.

Keil and Delitzsch⁸ maintain that the chains mentioned in 28:14 are the same chains as those of 28:22. The chains are mentioned only *once* in the account of the execution of the work in 39:15. Also the chains in both verses are said to be attached to the gold settings on the shoulders. If the chains in the two verses are not really one and the same, then no function is ascribed to those of 28:14. To us this seems true.

The lower corners of the breastplate (as folded double) had gold rings on the inner side. Then two more rings were placed on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, evidently near their lower parts over the abdomen (28:6, 7). Then with a "lace" (probably a thread, cord, or line) of blue, the rings on the girdle of the ephod were tied to the lower rings on the breastplate. (Note that the shoulder-pieces [or straps] of the ephod extended downward to the bottom of the breastplate, probably near the waist.)

15. *What was the function of the breastplate?* (28:29)

By means of the breastplate Aaron bore the names of the children of Israel for a memorial before the LORD continually when he went into the Holy place. The priest represented ALL Israel, as indicated by the twelve stones on the breastplate. Regarding *memorial*, see notes on 28:12.

seems to break the continuity of subject matter about the construction of the breastplate as given in 28:22-28.

Also the Greek LXX omits 28:26-29 of the Hebrew (Masoretic) text. This causes omission of the information as to how the breastplate was attached to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod. Also it modifies the numbering of the following verses. We doubt the accuracy of the LXX here.

⁸*Op. cit.*, p. 197.

We know of no symbol that more vividly pictures how Christ our high priest bears us about upon His heart than the breastplate of Aaron! We are "graven upon the palms of thy hands" (Isa. 49:16).

Also the very use of gemstones is suggestive and comforting. God's people are His jewels (or possession, or treasure) (Mal. 3:17).

Also the fact that the breastplate was for *judgment* (28:15) is a pleasing idea. The word for *judgment* (*mishpat*) was used in 21:1 to refer to God's ordinances. Its use in connection with the breastplate therefore suggests that the priest is the communicator of divine truths (judgments, ordinances). Indeed Christ Jesus is the priest who revealed God's judgments to us, and will finally be the judge of all. See John 8:26! Luke 2:35; Acts 10:42.

16. *What was in the breastplate?* (28:30)

The Urim and Thummim were in it. These objects, whatever they were, were to be upon Aaron's heart when he went in to Jehovah's presence in the Holy place. By the presence of the breastplate and the Urim and Thummim, Aaron bore upon his heart continually the *judgment* of the children of Israel. This may include both bearing their guilt (compare Deut. 1:37), and interceding for Israel in prayer.

The Urim and Thummim functioned as means for discerning facts about the will of God not otherwise knowable. No one knows exactly what they consisted of.

"Urim and Thummim" are Hebrew words transliterated. Most Bibles do not attempt to translate the terms because of the uncertainty about their meaning. "Urim and Thummim" quite literally mean "lights and perfections." The Greek LXX rendered them as "revelation and truth." Symmachus' Greek translation gave a better rendering, "illumination and completion."

The function of the Urim and Thummim is illustrated by Numbers 27:21, where Joshua was instructed to inquire (seek God for unrevealed information) before the priest

Eleazar through the Urim and Thummim. (This does not indicate that the Urim and Thummim had magical power in themselves, but only that God used these items as a vehicle for his truth.)

From the way the Urim and Thummim are spoken of here in Exodus and in Lev. 8:8, it appears that they were some material things, previously existing, and familiarly known. They were separate from the breastplate itself,⁹ as well as from the gems upon the breastplate. Moses was not told to *make* the Urim and Thummim, but just to put them in the breastplate. The Urim and Thummim were considered to be the crowning glory of the tribe of Levi (Deut. 33:8). Inasmuch as the Urim is called the "Urim of judgment" in Num. 27:21, it is appropriate that it was placed in the "breastplate of judgment."

King Saul could get no answer from the Lord by Urim and Thummim or by dreams and prophets (I Sam. 28:6). In the days after the return from Babylonian captivity, the Urim and Thummim were lacking, but men still sought to locate them (Ezra 2:62, 63).

Guesses as to the nature of the Urim and Thummim are legion. Since *Urim* starts (in Hebrew) with the first letter of the alphabet and *Thummim* with the last, they may contain a reference to the nature of God as the alpha and omega (the A and Z), whose will they revealed.¹⁰

The most common opinion is that the Urim and Thummim were two sacred lots (something like dice). Compare I Sam. 14:21. However, this is not positively asserted anywhere.

In those cases in the O.T. when men inquired of the Lord for needed revelations of information, it was the kings or leaders who sought the Lord. This makes it appear

⁹Josephus identified the Urim and Thummim with the stones on the breastplate, which he reports as shining with great light and splendor when Israel marched to victory in battle. *Ant.* III, viii, 9.

¹⁰Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

that the use of Urim and Thummim was limited to questions from the leaders of the people. Note Num. 27:21; I Sam. 14:37, 38; I Sam. 23:2; 30:7, 8; Judges 1:1, 2; 20:18, 23, 27, 28.

Also it does seem to be true that questions asked of the Urim and Thummim were so framed that they could be answered by a Yes or a No, or by a choice between two things.

These facts have led numerous scholars to feel that the Urim and Thummim were two lots. Some have speculated that the Urim and Thummim had a *yes* side and a *no* side, and that rolling two *yes*'s meant *yes*, while two *no*'s meant *no*, and a divided answer meant that no answer was given.¹¹ Certainly lots were in that age directed by the Lord. See Proverbs 16:33. Nonetheless, we still find ourselves unconvinced that Urim and Thummim were lots.

We never read of the presence of Urim and Thummim after the time of King Saul. But the time of and reason for their disappearance still remain mysteries.

The Urim and Thummim are another illustration of the fact that God is a revealer of secrets to His people. See Daniel 2:19, 22. But this does not indicate that we have a right to demand and expect God to reveal the secrets of His government to us at all times. We must be content with what He has already revealed. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29).

17. *What was the robe of the ephod like?* (28:31, 32; 39:22-24)

This robe seems to have been like a sleeveless dress. It seems to have been worn under the breastplate and ephod, although this is not actually stated. It was all of blue cloth. The hole for the priest's head to pass through was rimmed with a woven border to strengthen it, so that

¹¹Compare Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

it would not become ripped at that point. The translation "habergeon" or "coat of mail" is "not beyond doubt" (to quote Cassuto) To us it seems very doubtful, indeed, and much more applicable to a medieval knight's armor than to priestly garments in the time of Moses.

The pullover robe of one piece reminds us of Christ's seamless robe. John's reference to Christ's robe seems almost an indirect reference to Christ's high priestly office. (John 19:23).

18. *What was at the bottom of the robe of the ephod?* (28:33-35; 39:25, 26)

Placed at the bottom of the skirt of the robe were alternating pomegranates and golden bells. The pomegranates were of blue, purple, and scarlet. Pomegranates are fruit about the size of oranges, bright red in color, with juicy red seeds arranged in rows parallel to the core. They have on their outside, at the end of the core where the flower was, short, pointed, calyx-like projections of tissue (like the skin of the fruit). These give the pomegranate a distinctive form and appearance.

Some have suggested that the pomegranates on the robe of the ephod were only embroidered onto the cloth of the robe. Certainly pomegranates do not naturally come in blue and purple colors. Still the fact that the golden bells were solid (and ringing!) objects and that the bells hung "between" the pomegranates (Heb., "in the midst of them") makes us feel that the pomegranates were solid material dangling like bobbles from the robe. The book of Ecclesiasticus (45:9) refers to the glory of Aaron's pomegranates and bells.

The bells provided *sound* to be heard when Aaron ministered in the Holy place before Jehovah and when he came out. This making of sound was essential to Aaron "that we die not." The scripture does not state why the bell-ringing was considered so essential. Some think it was simply a means of announcing Aaron's coming before God. If that is so, the announcement was to alert the *people*

about Aaron's activity, not to alert God that Aaron was about to enter. The ringing made the worshippers conscious that the priest was ministering in their behalf in God's presence. The ringing-forth conveyed the impression that Aaron's work was something that everyone was to know about and feel himself involved in.

The same effect of making all men aware of God's work in their midst is still necessary. See Eph. 3:9. Whether we ring out the news by bells, publish it on paper, preach it from the housetops, men still need to know that God's priest is at work for them.

19. *What object was placed on the high priest's head covering?* (28:36-38; 39:30, 31)

A plate of PURE gold inscribed with the words HOLINESS TO YAHWEH was placed on the front of Aaron's turban.

This plate was placed upon a lace (or cord, thread, line) of blue. Then the plate and its backing of lace were placed upon the mitre (or turban.) (See 28:39). Thus it was kept upon Aaron's forehead.

It appears to us that the K.J.V. translation HOLINESS TO THE LORD is preferable to "Holy to the LORD." The Hebrew word *QODESH* is a noun. Admittedly it is frequently used as an adjective, as in "holy ground" (literally, "ground of holiness"; Ex. 3:5) or "holy city" ("city of holiness"; Isa. 48:2). But the use of the word here without a closely preceding noun that it modifies indicates that it should be taken as a noun, "holiness." The Greek LXX renders it as *hagiasma*, "Holiness of the Lord."

The gold plate testified that Aaron was wholly holy.

By wearing this plate Aaron was qualified by God to bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel presented to the LORD in all of their holy gifts. These "gifts" seem to refer to all their sacrifices, free-will offerings, and such. Even upon these gifts to God there was a stain from the iniquity of the donors, and possibly from the very curse of Adam (Haggai 2:12-14; Gen. 3:17).

Every thing that they offered was unclean. But the fact that a HOLY priest presented their gifts caused the people to be accepted.

These facts should cause us to thank the LORD that Jesus our priest is the HOLY ONE OF GOD! (John 6:69; Rev. 3:7; Heb. 7:26; Luke 1:35). Without a holy and undefiled priest like him, we could present nothing as acceptable to God, neither ourselves nor our gifts.

Aaron's holiness was, admittedly, more in label than in fact. But God in His grace accepted Aaron and accepted the people's gifts given through him.

The Hebrew word (*tsits*) translated "plate" may also be translated "blossom," "flower," or "crown." The N.E.B. renders it "rosette." We do not see clear indication that the golden plate worn by Aaron was flower-shaped.

20. Which priestly garments are very briefly mentioned? (28:39; 39:27-29)

(1) the coat of Aaron, his mitre (turban), and girdle (sash, or belt).

The "coat" was made of fine linen, woven in "checker work." This term does not necessarily imply that it was sewn in squares like a checker-board, but it does imply that it was in some way sewn and "quilted" together. It was the priest's inner garment. It seems that the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate were all worn outside of it.

Josephus (*Ant.* III, 7, 2) says that the inner vestment (the coat) reached down to the feet, and was close to the body, and had sleeves tied fast to the arms. He says further that it was embroidered with flowers of scarlet, purple and blue, and hung loosely down to the ankles, and was tied about the waist. This is interesting information, but is not one hundred percent certain.

The mitre, or turban, was also made of fine linen. It appears to have been a long band of cloth, wrapped in swathes about the head. The Talmud suggests that the turban had sixteen cubits (24 feet!) of material in it.

Compare Josephus, *Ant.* III, 7, 3. The gold plate was attached to the front of it.

The "girdle" of 28:39 appears to have been that which held snug the coat referred to in the same verse. If so, it was concealed by the robe of the ephod. The word translated "girdle" in 28:39 is a different word from that translated "girdle" (or band) in 28:8. We feel they refer to entirely distinct items.

21. *What priestly garments were prepared for Aaron's sons?* (28:40; 39:27-29)

Three garments are named: coats, girdles, and head-tires.

These garments were "for glory and beauty," as were the garments of their father Aaron, the high priest. (28:2).

The priests' coats were made of fine linen, of woven work. Their mitres (turbans) were also of fine twisted linen. The mitres were "goodly." Their girdles were of fine twisted linen, blue, purple, and scarlet, the work of the embroiderer. See 39:28, 29.

While these garments of cloth adorned the flesh of the priests, they were to have a better clothing:

"Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; . . .

Her priests will I clothe with salvation." (Psalm 132:9, 16)

The word translated "head-tires" (K.J.V. "bonnets") is not the word translated "mitre" in 28:39. This word rendered "head-tires" occurs only four times in the O.T., and refers exclusively to the dress of the priests. It is derived from a verb meaning "to be high." This hints that these head-coverings were large and prominent.

No shoes for the priests' feet are mentioned. We suppose that they ministered barefooted. Compare Joshua 5:15 and Ex. 3:5.

22. *Who was to clothe the priests?* (28:41)

Moses was to clothe them, both Aaron and his sons. Compare 28:2; 29:5-7; Lev. 8:7. Moses was also to anoint them by pouring oil upon their heads, and to consecrate them. To "consecrate" means, quite literally, "to fill the

hands." This idiom is very suggestive of the fact that the priests' hands were to be filled with the Lord's service. However, as an idiom, it seems to mean only "to install." (Compare Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 386.) "To sanctify" means "to set apart to holy use."

23. *What innermost garments were provided for the priests?* (28:42, 43; 39:28)

Moses was to make for them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness. These covered from the loins (abdomen) to the thighs. These were to be worn beneath all other garments whenever they came near to the altar in the Holy place. Failure to wear these could cause them to "bear iniquity," (that is, to suffer the punishment of iniquity) and die! This was to be a law for the priests forever.

Modesty was required in God's priests. Compare Ex. 20:26. It is worthy of notice that Moses put upon the priests all of their garments except these linen inner breeches. See Lev. 8:13; Ex. 29:5.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

29 And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office: take one young bullock and two rams without blemish, (2) and unleavened bread, and cakes unleavened mingled with oil, and wafers unleavened anointed with oil: of fine wheaten flour shalt thou make them. (3) And thou shalt put them into one basket, and bring them in the basket, with the bullock and the two rams. (4) And Aar-on and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tent of meeting, and shalt wash them with water. (5) And thou shalt take the garments, and put

upon Aar-on the coat, and the robe of the eph-od, and the eph-od, and the breastplate, and gird him with the skilfully woven band of the eph-od; (6) and thou shalt set the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre. (7) Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him. (8) And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them. (9) And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aar-on and his sons, and bind head-tires on them: and they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aar-on and his sons.

(10) And thou shalt bring the bullock before the tent of meeting: and Aar-on and his sons shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock. (11) And thou shalt kill the bullock before Je-ho-vah, at the door of the tent of meeting. (12) And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger; and thou shalt pour out all the blood at the base of the altar. (13) And thou shalt take all the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul upon the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and burn them upon the altar. (14) But the flesh of the bullock, and its skin, and its dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin-offering.

(15) Thou shalt also take the one ram; and Aar-on and his sons shall lay their hands upon the head of the ram. (16) And thou shalt slay the ram, and thou shalt take its blood, and sprinkle it round about upon the altar. (17) And thou shalt cut the ram into its pieces, and wash its inwards, and its legs, and put them with its pieces, and with its head. (18) And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar: it is a burnt-offering unto Je-ho-vah; it is a sweet savor, an offering made by fire unto Je-ho-vah.

(19) And thou shalt take the other ram; and Aar-on and his sons shall lay their hands upon the head of the ram. (20) Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of its blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aar-on, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the

blood upon the altar round about. (21) And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aar-on, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him. (22) Also thou shalt take of the ram the fat, and the fat tail, and the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul of the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and the right thigh (for it is a ram of consecration), (23) and one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer, out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before Je-ho-vah: (24) and thou shalt put the whole upon the hands of Aar-on, and upon the hands of his sons, and shalt wave them for a wave-offering before Je-ho-vah. (25) And thou shalt take them from their hands, and burn them on the altar upon the burnt-offering, for a sweet savor before Je-ho-vah: it is an offering made by fire unto Je-ho-vah.

(26) And thou shalt take the breast of Aar-on's ram of consecration, and wave it for a wave-offering before Je-ho-vah: and it shall be thy portion. (27) And thou shalt sanctify the breast of the wave-offering, and the thigh of the heave-offering, which is waved, and which is heaved up, of the ram of consecration, even of that which is for Aar-on, and of that which is for his sons: (28) and it shall be for Aar-on and his sons as *their* portion for ever from the children of Is-ra-el; for it is a heave-offering: and it shall be a heave-offering from the children of Is-ra-el of the sacrifices of their peace-offerings, even their heave-offering unto Je-ho-vah.

(29) And the holy garments of Aar-on shall be for his sons after him, to be anointed in them, and to be consecrated in them. (30) Seven days shall the son that is priest in his stead put them on, when he cometh into the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place.

(31) And thou shalt take the ram of consecration, and boil its flesh in a holy place. (32) And Aar-on and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket,

at the door of the tent of meeting. (33) And they shall eat those things wherewith atonement was made, to consecrate *and* to sanctify them: but a stranger shall not eat thereof, because they are holy. (34) And if aught of the flesh of the consecration, or of the bread, remain unto the morning, then thou shalt burn the remainder with fire: it shall not be eaten, because it is holy.

(35) And thus shalt thou do unto Aar-on, and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded thee: seven days shalt thou consecrate them. (36) And every day shalt thou offer the bullock of sin-offering for atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou makest atonement for it; and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it. (37) Seven days thou shalt make atonement for the altar, and sanctify it: and the altar shall be most holy; whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.

(38) Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar: two lambs a year old day by day continually. (39) The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: (40) and with the one lamb a tenth part *of an e-phah* of fine flour mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink-offering. (41) And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meal-offering of the morning, and according to the drink-offering thereof, for a sweet savor, an offering made by fire unto Je-ho-vah. (42) It shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generations at the door of the tent of meeting before Je-ho-vah, where I will meet with you, to speak there unto thee. (43) And there I will meet with the children of Is-ra-el; and *the Tent* shall be sanctified by my glory. (44) And I will sanctify the tent of meeting, and the altar: Aar-on also and his sons will I sanctify, to minister to me in the priest's office. (45) And I will dwell among the children of Is-ra-el, and will be their God. (46) And they shall know that I am Je-ho-vah their God, that brought them forth out of the land of E-gypt, that I might dwell among them: I am Je-ho-vah their God.

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

1. After reading the chapter carefully, propose a very brief topic-title for it.
2. To whom are the commands of 29:1, 3, 5 addressed?
3. What items were to be collected for the consecration ritual? (29:1-2)
4. Where was the consecration ritual to take place? (29:4)
5. What was the first act in the priest's consecration? (29:4)
Of what may this act have been a symbol? (Matt. 3:13; John 17:19)
6. What did Moses put upon Aaron? (29:5-6) Of what may this act have been a symbol? (Isa. 11:5; 63:1-2; 59:17; Rev. 1:13; Psalm 45:8)
7. With what was Aaron anointed? How? (29:7; Psalm 133:2)
Of what may Aaron's anointing have been a symbol? (Acts 10:38; Psalm 45:7; Heb. 1:9; Matt. 3:16; Luke 4:1, 14)
8. What garments were placed on Aaron's sons? (29:8-9)
9. How long was the priesthood to belong to Aaron's family? (29:9)
10. What does the word *consecrate* mean? (Do some research on this.) (29:9)
11. For what type of an offering was the bull brought? (29:10, 14; Compare Lev. 4:1-4)
12. Upon which offerings did the priests lay their hands? (29:10, 15, 19)
13. For whose sin was the bull offered? (29:10; Compare Heb. (5:1-3).)
14. Where was the blood of the bullock put and where was it poured out? (29:12) (Where was the blood of sin-offerings usually put and poured out? Lev. 4:5-7)
15. For what type of offering was the one ram offered? (29:15, 18)
16. How much of the ram was burned? (29:18; Lev. 1:9)
17. Where was the blood of the other ram placed? (29:20).

- What may the application of blood to Aaron's ear, thumb, and toe have symbolized? (Compare Ps. 40:6-9; Heb. 10:5-10; Zech. 3:6-8)
18. What designation (or descriptive name) is applied to the other ram? (29:26, 31)
 19. What two things were sprinkled on the priests' garments? Why? (29:21)
 20. What was placed into the priests' hands for a brief time? (29:22-24) What motions did the priests make while holding these items? (29:24)
 21. What part of the ram was to be saved for Aaron and his sons? (29:26-28; Compare Lev. 7:32-34)
 22. What type of an offering was the portion reserved for Aaron and his sons said to have been? (29:28; Compare Lev. 7:34)
 23. What was done with the high priest's garments when he died? (29:29)
 24. How long did a new priest wear his father's garments? (29:30)
 25. What type of sacrifice does the ram which the priests ate part of appear to have been? (29:31-32; Compare Lev. 7:29-33)
 26. What was done with the bread which Moses brought? (29:33, 2-3; Lev. 7:11-13)
 27. What was the law about "strangers" eating the priests' food? (29:33) What should this teach us about men taking the office and privileges of priesthood to themselves? (Heb. 5:4-6)
 28. Why did the priests eat the bread and flesh? (29:33)
 29. What was done with leftover bread and flesh? (29:34; Compare 12:10)
 30. For how long did the consecration ritual continue? (29:35-36)
 31. What object was cleansed by the sin-offerings? (29:36-37) Why should it need cleansing?
 32. Did touching the altar make whatever touched it holy? (29:37; Compare Haggai 2:12) Is 29:37b a simple statement

of fact, or is it a command of God to be obeyed?

33. What was to be offered every day on the altar? (29:38, 42)
34. When were they to be offered? (29:39, 41)
35. What was offered along with the lambs? (29:40)
36. What did these daily offerings symbolize to us now living? (29:42; Compare Heb. 9:24-26; 10:11-12; I John 1:7, 9; John 1:29)
37. Where did God meet with Israel? (29:42-43; 25:21-22)
38. What was the effect of God's glory and presence on the tabernacle? (29:43-44)
39. What does *sanctify* mean? (29:43-44)
40. What two great promises did God give to Israel in 29:45? Compare 25:8; Gen. 19:5-6; 17:1; Eph. 3:17; Rev. 21:3.
41. What was Israel to know? (29:46; 6:7; 16:12) What would cause them to know this?
42. How could Israel's knowing that Jehovah was their God be BOTH a result of and a means of God's dwelling among them? (29:46)
43. Why state at the close "I am Jehovah their God"? (29:46)

EXODUS 29: CONSECRATION OF PRIESTS;
CONTINUAL BURNT-OFFERING

I. CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS; 29:1-37.

1. Items used in the consecration; 29:1-3.
2. Priests washed (29:4), clothed (29:5-6, 8-9), and anointed (29:7).
3. Bullock of sin-offering; 29:10-14.
4. Ram of burnt-offering; 29:15-18.
5. Ram of consecration; 29:19-28, 31-34. - Priest's garments inherited; 29:29-30.
6. Seven days of consecration; 29:35-37.

II. CONTINUAL BURNT-OFFERING; 29:38-42

1. Offered twice each day; 29:38-41.

2. Offered with meal- and drink-offerings; 29:41.
3. Offered at the place God met with Israel; 29:42.

III. GOD'S PRESENCE WITH ISRAEL; 29:43-46.

1. Sanctified the Tent; 29:43.
2. Sanctified the priests; 29:44.
3. Caused Israel to know the LORD; 29:45-46.

AARON, A TYPE OF CHRIST (our high priest)!

	Aaron	Christ
--	-------	--------

I. SIMILARITIES

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------|------------------------|
| 1. Called. | Ex. 29:4 | Heb. 5:4-6; John 10:18 |
| 2. Washed. | Ex. 29:4 | Matt. 3:13-15 |
| 3. Clothed. | Ex. 29:5-6 | Isa. 63:1-2; Rev. 1:13 |
| 4. Anointed. | Ex. 29:7 | Heb. 1:9; Acts 10:38 |
| 5. Perpetual priest. | Ex. 29:9 | Heb. 7:16-17 |

II. DIFFERENCES

1. Christ needs no sacrifices for His own sins; Ex. 29:10, 15-16; Heb. 7:26-28.
2. Christ never dies; Ex. 29:29; Heb. 7:23-24.
3. Christ need not repeat His sacrifice daily; Ex. 29:38-39; Heb. 10:11-12.

AARON'S SONS, A TYPE OF CHRISTIANS (as Priests)!

- | | Aaron's Sons | Christians |
|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Called. | Ex. 29:4 | I Pet. 2:9 |
| 2. Washed. | Ex. 29:4 | Heb. 10:22; Titus 3:5 |
| 3. Clothed. | Ex. 29:8-9 | Rev. 3:18 |
| 4. Perpetual priests. | Ex. 29:9 | Rev. 1:6 |

- | | | |
|--|-------------------|------------------|
| 5. Offered sacrifices. | Ex. 29:10, 15, 19 | Eph. 5:2 |
| 6. Consecrated in ear, thumb, and toe. | Ex. 29:20 | Rom. 12:1 |
| 7. Made HOLY. | Ex. 29:21 | I Pet. 1:16; 2:9 |
| 8. Sacrifices placed on hands. | Ex. 29:24 | I Thess. 2:4 |
| 9. Partook of the sacrifices. | Ex. 29:32 | Heb. 13:10-12 |
-

THE CONTINUAL BURNT-OFFERING

(A type of the death of Christ)!

(Exodus 29:38-42)

1. Offered every day; Ex. 29:38-39. (Christ's sacrifice in un-failingly available.)
 2. Offered with enrichment (meal- and drink-offerings); Ex. 29:40-41. (Christ's sacrifice is rich.)
 3. Offered to create fellowship with God; Ex. 29:42.
(Christ's sacrifice brings fellowship with God. I John 1:3, 7)
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GOD'S PRESENCE AMONG HIS PEOPLE (Ex. 29:43-46)

1. A *sacrifice-bought* presence; 29:42-43.
 2. A *sanctifying* presence; 29:43-44.
(Sanctifies the tabernacle, altar, and priests)
 3. A *steadfast* presence; 29:45.
 4. A *knowledge-giving* presence; 29:46.
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

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

The chapter deals with the consecration of Aaron as high priest and his sons as ordinary priests. The chapter closes with instructions about the every-day continual burnt-offerings (29:38-46). We entitle the chapter CONSECRATION OF PRIESTS.

The chapter is of great value to us because it illustrates how Christ Jesus received His high-priesthood and how He functions as priest. Also it illustrates how we Christians have become priests and how we function as priests. In other words, the things related in this chapter are TYPES for our enlightenment.

The eternal application of Exodus twenty-nine lies in the fact that true priests must be cleansed, clothed, anointed, installed by sacrifice, and consecrated in ear and hand and foot (29:20). Then and only then can they make sacrifices pleasing to God.

Exodus twenty-nine is very similar to Leviticus chapter eight.

Exodus twenty-nine is different in the character of its subject matter from the material in surrounding chapters. They deal with the materials and construction of the tabernacle, whereas this chapter deals with the *ritual* of consecration of priests and closes with the *ritual* of daily burnt-offerings. The insertion of this chapter gives *purpose* to the instructions about material things in the adjoining chapters.

Although chapter twenty-nine deals mainly with ceremonial instructions, the book of Exodus does not attempt to set forth a thorough description of the religious practices in Israel. Exodus sets forth just enough about the ceremonies to make the history it tells and the construction details it relates relevant and exciting. Exodus leaves to the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy the main body of data about Israel's religious rituals.

Thus, allusions in Exodus twenty-nine to the sin-offering (29:14, 36), the burnt-offering (29:18, 25, 42), wave-offering (29:41), drink-offering (29:40), etc., can only be understood after a study of Leviticus 1-7.

2. *What items were used in the priests' consecration?* (29:1-3)

(1) A young bull (literally, "one bull, a son of the cattle") for a sin-offering (29:10, 14; Lev. 8:2); (2) two rams, one for a burnt-offering (29:18) and the other for the "ram of consecration" (29:22); (3) unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil (resembling pancakes, or tortillas, or Arab *pita*), and unleavened wafers anointed (spread) with oil (29:32; Leviticus 2:1). These bread items were all made of fine white flour and were all brought in one basket. The bread formed a meal-offering (also called a grain-offering, or cereal-offering, or meat-offering in KJV). See Lev. 6:19-23.

The exact significance of meal-offerings is in no place in scripture set forth specifically. It was always offered with the burnt-offerings and with the peace-offerings (Num. 15:4-10). Some have felt that it was a symbol of Christ's human nature (Pink). Others (the author, for example) have felt it was a symbol of the *people* of God (who are often described as God's good harvest of grain) presenting themselves to God, along with Christ's presentation of Himself as our burnt-offering. In cases like this where the scriptures do not definitely inform us about things, we must avoid strong, dogmatic, divisive opinions.

3. *What was the first act in the priests' consecration?* (29:4; 40:12; Lev. 8:6)

They were *washed* with water. This was probably done at the laver (30:17-20). This outward washing certainly is to be viewed as a symbol of their inner cleansing of mind and conscience. But it was also an essential act of obedience in bringing about this inner cleansing.

It is noteworthy that Christ's "washing" (his baptism) was the *first* act as He began His ministry. (Matt. 3:13). However, unlike Aaron he did not need cleansing of soul;

He was washed only to set us an example.

Aaron's sons were washed as well as their father. The washing of the sons appears to be a type of the baptism of believers in Christ. Our baptism is both a symbol of the inward cleansing God gives, and an act of faith required by God to bring about the cleansing. See Titus 3:5; Eph. 5:26; Heb. 10:22. As priests unto God our garments are washed in the blood of the lamb (Rev. 7:14).

4. *What clothes were placed upon the priests?* (29:5-6, 8-9; Lev. 8:7-9, 13)

The same garments are mentioned here¹ that are described in chapter twenty-eight. The breeches of 28:42 are not mentioned in 29:5-6, 8-9, because the priests themselves put these on, and this passage lists only the garments which Moses placed on them.

Leviticus 8:8 mentions specifically that the Urim and Thummin were placed in the breastplate as they were clothed.

5. *What was poured on Aaron's head?* (29:7; Lev. 8:12)

The special anointing oil was poured upon him. The composition of this oil is described in Lev. 30:22-33. It was a unique compound prepared exclusively for the purpose of anointing. It was composed of olive oil and several spices. It appears that only the high priest had the holy anointing oil poured on his head. Compare Ps. 133:2. However, Ex. 30:30 does indicate that his sons were also anointed. Perhaps their anointing consisted of that sprinkling of oil and blood referred to in 29:21, where the oil is said to have been sprinkled upon them and upon their garments.

The anointing of Aaron was a type of the anointing of

¹The RSV omits "Aaron and his sons" from 29:9, although it is in the Hebrew text. This omission does not change the meaning, but it probably should be retained because its presence reemphasizes the distinctive position of Aaron and his sons.

The Hebrew term for "holy crown" in 29:6 is *nezer* (meaning sprout, shoot, branch), whereas in 28:36 the golden "plate" in Hebrew is called *tsits* (meaning blossom, flower). The use of the two different terms for the golden plate on Aaron's turban is hardly a proof for multiple or composite authorship of the two chapters. Two descriptive terms are frequently used to refer to the same object.

Christ Jesus. The very word *messiah* (or Christ) means "the anointed one." Immediately after Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. See Acts 10:38; Ps. 45:7; Heb. 1:9; Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14. These passages seem to indicate that the anointing oil was a symbol (or type) of the Holy Spirit.

Aaron's sons were anointed as was Aaron himself. Similarly Christians are anointed with the Holy Spirit. (I John 2:20, 27; 4:13). When we obey the gospel, and repent and are baptized, we receive God's Spirit as a gift (Acts 5:32; 2:38). We certainly are not anointed in the same degree that Christ was, but we all become partakers of the Holy Spirit.

The fact that Israel's priests, kings, and prophets were anointed as part of their installation into office suggests that to do God's work all human talents need the special touch of God's Spirit.

6. *How long was the priesthood to belong to Aaron's family?* (29:9, 33; Num. 18:7)

The priesthood was given to them by a "perpetual statute." (This may also be translated "a statute for the distant future." See Harkavy's *Lexicon*, under '*olam*.)² Thus their priesthood was to be permanent as long as the statute (the law) was in effect.

God later prophesied the appearance of another priest (referring to Christ Jesus who was to come), who would be of the order (or likeness) of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4). The coming of a priest from an entirely different family and people certainly indicated that the law giving the priesthood to Aaron's family "by a perpetual statute" was to be abolished (Heb. 7:11-18).

7. *What does "consecrate" mean?* (29:9)

²*Olam* is variously translated "distant future," "everlasting," "eternity." It certainly does not always imply an endless eternity to come. For example, it is used in Deut. 15:17, where it clearly means only "for life."

In the Hebrew language the words literally mean "to fill the hand." This literal rendering is very suggestive and causes us to ponder the fact that God's service should fill our hands, and also our minds, lips, etc.

Nevertheless, it seems that the expression "fill the hands" had lost much of its purely literal meaning and had become just a synonym for "install" or "ordain." (Note the R.S.V. and New English Bible.)

8. *What was the purpose of the sacrifice of the bull?* (29:10-14; Lev. 8:14-17)

It was to be a sin-offering (29:14). The sin-offerings are described in Leviticus chapter four and 6:24-30. They were offered for sins done unintentionally and unawares. These sins might include violations of anything which Jehovah had commanded not to be done (Lev. 4:2).

When Aaron and his sons laid hands upon the bull before it was sacrificed, they were making an acknowledgement of their sins. As men "compassed with infirmity" they needed first to offer sacrifice for their own sins before they could offer for others. (Heb. 5:2; 7:27). Killing the bull was an admission, "We deserve to die, but God in His grace accepts the death of this creature instead of my death."

Note that Aaron and his sons laid hands on all three of the offerings made during their consecration (29:10, 15, 19). ALL the priests laid hands upon the bullock of the sin-offering.

The act of the priests in laying hands on the bull was like to our act of confessing, "He (Jesus) was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities" (Isa. 53:5).

Moses himself killed the sin-offering. Priests did not usually have to kill the sacrifices themselves. (Lev. 1:5)

The application of the blood to the horns of the altar of burnt-offering suggests the POWER of the sacrifices. Compare 27:2.

The "inwards" of 29:13 are the entrails. The "caul of

the liver" (29:13) refers to fleshly tissues coupled with and round about the liver. The word translated "caul" literally refers to something which is left over or redundant. (R.S.V. renders it "appendage of the liver.")

"Burn them upon the altar" (29:13) literally reads "make them smoke upon the altar." This expression is applied to burning a sacrifice or burning incense.

Parts of the bull of the sin-offering were burned upon the altar, and parts (the sin, flesh, dung) were burned outside the camp. The burning outside the camp hints that the animal had taken the sins of the offerer upon it in such a way that God viewed it as inappropriate for offering on the altar. Even sin that has been removed by sacrifice has an abhorrent quality about it. Compare Lev. 4:11; Heb. 13:2.

9. *What was the purpose of the sacrifice of the first ram?* (29:15-18; Lev. 8:18-21)

It was to be a *burnt-offering* unto Jehovah. Burnt-offerings are described in Leviticus chapter one and 6:8-12. The burnt-offering was a type of Christ's death on the cross.

The fact that the WHOLE ram was burned has been interpreted to signify that the priests gave themselves completely to the Lord. Much more probably it signifies the TOTAL destruction due to sin and to the sinner. Burnt-offerings illustrate the utter destruction coming to the sinner in hell, and the total ruin endured by Christ when He died.

The numerous sacrifices of the law speak of many things - of the holiness of God, of the sin of men, of the power in sacrifices, of the wickedness of sin, of Christ the lamb to come.³

Sprinkling the blood about the altar (29:16, 12) reminds us that God's offerings must be made where God designates. It is the altar that makes a gift holy (Matt. 23:19).

³Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

Unless brought to the altar, blood was just blood. Similarly, a change in our way of living, unless done with a recognition that Christ is our altar, does not make that change a "repentance unto life."

The mention of "a sweet savor (smell)" reminds us of Noah's sacrifice (Gen. 8:2). A "sweet savor" does not necessarily suggest that the sacrifice smells like perfume. But is one that is agreeable to the Lord. Christ gave himself for us "an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet-smelling savor." (Eph. 5:2)

10. *Where was the blood of the second ram applied?* (29:19-21; Lev. 8:22-24, 30)

The blood of this ram was placed upon the priests - upon the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the toe of the right foot. Also, the blood was sprinkled upon the altar round about (that is, all around it). Further, it was sprinkled upon the priests and their garments.

This second ram (compare 29:1, 15) is called the "ram of consecration." (Note 29:22, 26.) Literally this would read, "the ram of filling (the hands)!" Compare 29:9. Its use was special and unique as a part of the priests' consecration, even though it does seem to have been sort of a peace-offering. The peace-offering was the one offering partly eaten by the offerers. See Ex. 29:31-34; Lev. 7:15-17.

The application of blood to the priest's ear, toe, and thumb suggests that his ears were to be consecrated to hearing God's words, his feet to walking in God's courts, and his hands to God's works.

The blood on their ears also recalls to our minds that a slave's ear was bored if he wished to commit himself to perpetual service to his master (21:6). The priest was committing himself to perpetual service to God.

The application of blood to both *priest* and *altar* suggests the close linkage of priests and sacrifice. Offering sacrifices was one of their primary duties. But sacrifice was also their only hope for personal acceptance before God. Similarly, we must preach Christ and Him crucified (I Cor. 2:2);

but we must recognize as we preach that the cross of Christ is our personal hope and glory (Gal. 6:14) and not just something which we preach to others.

The sprinkling of a mixture of blood and anointing oil (29:21) upon the priests further links together the blood atonement and service to God. Heb. 9:22 tells us that all things are cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no remission.

The sprinkling of the blood hallowed (made holy) both the priests and their garments (29:21-33).

We need not be disturbed by the thought that sprinkling blood and oil upon the priests' costly garments would spatter and befoul them. Some things are much more important than spotless tidiness! Also, not a large amount of oil and blood was sprinkled, probably only a few drops.

11. *What was placed upon the priests' hands during their consecration?* (29:22-25; Lev. 8:25-29)

Several parts of the body of the ram of consecration and one piece of each of the various kinds of bread mentioned in 29:2 were placed upon the hands of Aaron and of his sons. These items were then "waved" before the face of the Lord. The verb "shalt wave" in 29:24 reads literally "thou shalt wave," suggesting that Moses waved the flesh and the bread. However, 29:25 indicates that Moses did not take back the flesh and bread from the priests' hands until after it had been waved. Obviously then the priests did the waving, and Moses himself only waved the flesh and bread in that he caused Aaron and his sons to wave it.

The act of placing parts of the offerings in the hands of the priests seems to symbolize and visualize the fact that they were being given the authority to handle sacred offerings and bring them before the Lord. In a similar way Christ has been fully qualified to bring our offering (Himself!) before God. (Heb. 5:8-9)

Possibly also the waving served to dramatize that the offering was to be seen and known by all men everywhere, and was offered to God, who is everywhere.

The movement indicated by "waving" was a horizontal motion. It may have been forward and back again, like the motion of sawing, as if extending the offering towards the altar. (Isa. 10:15 uses the verb *nuph*, translated "to wave," to refer to the motion of sawing.) Also, the waving motion may have been a right-to-left motion, side to side, like the motions used in cutting with a sickle. (*Nuph* expresses this type of motion in Deut. 23:25 [23:26 in Hebrews].) "Wave" is not necessarily thought of as being in contrast to "heave" (in 29:27), as if waving were horizontal motions and heaving were up-and-down motions. See 29:27.

- The "rump" of 29:22 K.J.V. refers to the "fat tail" of the Oriental sheep. Their tails are thick, wide (often six inches or thereabouts), heavy, and full of fatty tissue.
12. *What was done with the breast of Aaron's ram of consecration?* (29:26-28; Lev. 8:29)

The breast (meat from the lower abdomen) was waved by Moses before the Lord, and then it became Moses' special portion for food. This breast of the wave-offering thereafter (after this one original priestly consecration) was to be the priest's portion of sacrifices, along with the thigh (shoulder) of heave-offerings. See Lev. 10:15; Deut. 18:3. Also, peace-offerings were partly waved before the Lord, and, then the wave-breast of peace-offerings was reserved for the priests to eat. (Lev. 7:30)

The breast was given to Moses on this one occasion because he filled the office of priest for Aaron and his son during their consecration. But thereafter it was a part reserved for the priests' food.

The term "heave-offering" (29:28) (Heb. *terumah*) simply means an oblation or something offered to God or to the priests. The root of the word (*rum*, to be raised, to be high) suggests a raised position, but does not definitely state that it was handled with up-and-down motions during its presentation.

As Moses and Aaron received part of the meat brought

to the altar for sacrifices as support for their priestly work, so also the Lord has commanded that those who now proclaim the gospel shall live by the support of those who hear the gospel. (I Cor. 9:14)

Leviticus 8:30 gives the instruction to sprinkle Aaron and his sons with blood and oil *after* the instructions about the wave-offering. Ex. 29:21ff mentions the sprinkling *before* the instructions about the wave-offering. We need not assume from this (as Noth does. See *op. cit.*, pp. 232-233) that Exodus contradicts Leviticus, or that there is indication of "secondary additions" to the Biblical text. We do not know exactly why there is the difference in order, but it is only a very slight difference. We doubt that this Biblical record of the priests' consecration was recorded with such detail that it could function as a step-by-step procedure manual for repeating the ceremony.

13. *What was done with the high priest's garments when he died? (29:29-30)*

They were passed on to his son after him, and the son was anointed in them and consecrated in them. God intended that there would ALWAYS be a qualified priest on the job to enable men to approach Him acceptably. Compare Heb. 7:23-25.

Numbers 20:25-26 tells of the transfer of Aaron's garments to his son Eleazar.

The new priest wore the robes of his father seven days at the start of his priestly career. These seven days correspond to the seven days that Aaron and his sons remained within the tent of meeting during their consecration. (Lev. 8:33, 35). "Tent of meeting" (KJV, "tabernacle of the congregation") usually refers to the room called the Holy Place (27:21).

"Liberal" critics generally assume (wrongly, we feel) that the instructions about the regalia of high priest were not formulated or put into practice until the post-exilic time after the Babylonian captivity, a thousand years after Moses' time. This is surely NOT the way the Biblical text

tells it.

14. *What was done with the flesh of the ram of consecration?* (29:31-34; Lev. 8:31-32)

Moses was to boil it in a holy place (not THE Holy Place), and Aaron and his sons were to eat it along with the bread (29:2, 23) at the door of the tent of meeting (the Holy Place).

How meaningful it was that Aaron and his sons should EAT those things by which atonement (at-one-ment) was made for them, and by which they had been consecrated and sanctified! (29:18, 25). Similarly, the sacrifice of Christ for us not only provides us forgiveness, but also sustains our spiritual life (John 6:51).

Any bread or flesh which the priests did not eat was to be burned the next morning (29:34). See notes on 12:20 for possible reasons for the destruction of leftover food.

"Atonement" in 29:33 (and elsewhere) refers to *covering*. The Hebrew verb translated "make atonement" (*kaphar*) is related to the word translated "mercy-seat" (*kapporeth*). This idea of atonement (covering) is very prominent in God's covenant with Israel.

No stranger dared to eat the holy food specially reserved for Aaron and the priests. "Stranger" in 29:37 refers to anyone not of the family of Aaron.

15. *How long did the consecration ritual last?* (29:35; Lev. 8:33-36)

It lasted seven days and then on the eighth day Aaron and his sons, as newly consecrated priests, offered the first sacrifices themselves.

In their first sacrifices they offered a calf for a sin-offering and a ram for a burnt-offering (Lev. 9:1-2). It is very noticeable that after all the offerings Moses had made for Aaron and his sons that they themselves had to offer for themselves sin- and burnt-offerings (Lev. 9:7-8). Only then did they present the people's offering (oblation Lev. 9:15). Truly the blood of bulls and goats could NOT take away sins (Heb. 10:4, 11).

The number *seven* frequently suggests completeness. Perhaps the seven-day stay in the tent of meeting points toward the completeness of the consecration of the priests.

16. *What sacrifices did Moses offer during the seven days of the priests' consecration? (29:36-37)*

Every day of the seven he offered the bull of the sin-offering. (See 29:10, 14.) These particular offerings were made primarily to make atonement for the altar itself. Ex. 29:36 can be translated rather literally to read, "And the bull of the sin-offering thou shalt offer daily for the atonement, and thou shalt purge (upon) the altar in thy making atonement for (or upon) it, and thou shalt anoint it to make it holy."

The result of these sacrifices was that the altar became MOST holy (literally, "holy of holy things"). Everyone touching the altar would be "holy." Inasmuch as no one was to touch the altar except the priests (not even the Levites; see Num. 4:15), the statement about the altar making whoever touched it holy really only serves to intensify the "holiness" of the priests. Certainly "lay" persons did not become "holy" by touching the altar either intentionally or accidentally. Compare 30:29; Haggai 2:12.

Christ is our altar (Heb. 13:10-12). The sanctification of the altar at the tabernacle by Moses suggests that great significance is attached to Christ's sanctifying himself unto God's service. See John 17:19.

17. *What was to be offered on the altar every day perpetually? (29:38-42; Num. 28:3-8)*

A continual burnt-offering was to be made daily throughout Israel's generations, consisting of two yearling lambs, one offered each morning and one offered in the evening. (Literally, "between the two evenings." See 12:6.)

Along with each burnt-offering a meal-offering was offered, consisting of a tenth part of an ephah of fine flour mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil. Also, the fourth part of a hin of wine or a drink-offering was poured on the burnt-offering. See Num. 28:15; Ex.

27:20. One-fourth of a hin would be about a quart.

A tenth of an ephah of flour would be about three and a half pints. (The ephah itself is about three-fifths bushel.)

Offering these daily burnt-offerings constituted the major function of the brazen altar. Omission of these daily sacrifices was a matter of greatest consequence (Daniel 8:11).

The continual burnt-offerings seem to have symbolized the future death of Christ, that it would be a continuously effective sacrifice for us. As there was always a burnt-offering smouldering on the altar, so the death of Christ is a constantly available sacrifice for us.

Regarding the significance of the meal-offerings, see notes on 29:2-3. The significance of the drink-offering of wine is not explained in scripture. It certainly was an added enrichment of the sacrifice, and Paul compares his giving his own life to a drink-offering (Phil. 2:17).

18. *Where would God meet with Israel?* (29:42-44)

God would meet with Israel at the door of the tent of meeting (the Holy place). For examples of God doing this, see Num. 12:5; 14:10; 16:19, 42; 20:6.

Note that God met with *Israel* and not just with the priests alone. God's presence was for all.

God had promised to commune (talk) with Israel from above the mercy-seat on the ark (25:22). But because almost no one entered the room where the ark was, God revealed his presence at a nearby place where people could come, at the door of the Tent.

God's presence *sanctified* (made holy) the tent and the altar.

God describes his presence as "my glory." This refers to the cloud described in 40:34ff.

God's presence among His people is precious! Rev. 21:3 promises, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall *dwell* with them."

In 29:43 a subject must be supplied for the verb "shall be

sanctified." The King James and American Standard versions supply the word "Tent" (or tabernacle), and this appears to be correct. Ex. 29:44 appears to contain a statement parallel to 29:43, and 29:44 definitely mentions the Tent. R.S.V. renders the subject of the verb in 29:43 indefinitely: "It shall be sanctified by my glory." To us this seems unnecessarily vague, even though the Hebrew text does not actually state the subject. (Note that *Tent* is in italics, which indicates that it is not actually in the Hebrew text.)

19. *Who would dwell amongst Israel? (29:45)*

God himself would dwell among them and be their God. See 25:8; 19:5. Ex. 6:7: "I will be to you a God." Gen. 17:7: "And I will establish my covenant between thee and thee and thy seed after thee . . . *to be a God* unto thee and to thy seed after thee." God's promise to dwell with Israel (in 29:45) is a fulfillment of promises given as far back as the time of Abraham six hundred years earlier.

20. *What would Israel come to know because of God's presence among them? (29:46)*

Israel would know that He was Jehovah their God! Over and over again in Exodus God had stated that this was His great purpose - that they would know that He was JEHOVAH. See 6:7 notes.

Sadly we must state that in spite of all of God's deliverances for Israel and the wonders He did among them, many Israelites never really learned that God was the LORD. Therefore, when later tests came upon them, they failed to trust God.

Note that the continuation of God's dwelling among Israel was conditioned upon their realizing that He was the Lord.

God closed the instructions about the priests' consecration and the daily burnt offerings by asserting, "I am Jehovah their God." This same declaration is found in many other passages. See Lev. 18:2, 4, 6, 21, 20. The fact

that God is the LORD Jehovah is all the authorization that God needed for Him to command Israel or anyone else.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

30 And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of acacia wood shalt thou make it. (2) A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; four-square shall it be; and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of one piece with it. (3) And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about. (4) And two golden rings shalt thou make for it under the crown thereof; upon the two ribs thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make them; and they shall be for places for staves wherewith to bear it. (5) And thou shalt make the staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. (6) And thou shalt put it before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy-seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee. (7) And Aar-on shall burn thereon incense of sweet spices: every morning, when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn it. (8) And when Aar-on lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before Je-ho-vah throughout your generations. (9) Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt-offering, nor meal-offering; and ye shall pour no drink offering thereon. (10) And Aar-on shall make atonement upon the horns of it once in the year; with the blood of the sin-offering of atonement once in the year shall he make atonement for it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto Je-ho-vah.

(11) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (12) When thou takest the sum of the children of Is-ra-el, according to

those that are numbered of them, then shall they give every man a ransom, for his soul unto Je-ho-vah, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. (13) This they shall give, every one that passeth over unto them that are numbered: half a shek-el after the shek-el of the sanctuary (the shek-el is twenty gerahs), half a shek-el for an offering to Je-ho-vah. (14) Every one that passeth over unto them that are numbered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the offering of Je-ho-vah. (15) The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shek-el, when they give the offering of Je-ho-vah, to make atonement for your souls. (16) And thou shalt take the atonement money from the children of Is-ra-el, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tent of meeting; that it may be a memorial for the children of Is-ra-el before Je-ho-vah, to make atonement for your souls.

(17) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (18) Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and the base thereof of brass, whereat to wash. And thou shalt put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. (19) And Aar-on and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: (20) when they go into the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire unto Je-ho-vah. (21) So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.

(22) Moreover Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (23) Take thou also unto thee the chief spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred *shek-els*, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty, (24) and of cassia five hundred, after the shek-el of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin; (25) and thou shalt make it a holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded after the art of the perfumer: it shall be a holy anointing oil. (26) And thou shalt anoint therewith the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, (27) and the table and all the vessels

thereof, and the candlestick and the vessels thereof, and the altar of incense, (28) and the altar of burnt-offering with all the vessels thereof, and the laver and the base thereof. (29) And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy. (30) And thou shalt anoint Aar-on and his sons, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office. (31) And thou shalt speak unto the children of Is-ra-el, saying, This shall be a holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations. (32) Upon the flesh of man shall it not be poured, neither shall ye make any like it, according to the composition thereof: it is holy, *and* it shall be holy unto you. (33) Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, he shall be cut off from his people.

(34) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stac-te, and on-y-cha, and gal-ba-num; sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a light weight; (35) and thou shalt make of it incense, a perfume after the art of the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure *and* holy: (36) and thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy. (37) And the incense which thou shalt make, according to the composition thereof ye shall not make for yourselves: it shall be unto thee holy for Je-ho-vah. (38) Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereof, he shall be cut off from his people.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a brief summary, topic, or theme(s) for the chapter.
2. What were the materials and the dimensions of the altar of incense? (30:1-2)
3. How were the horns of the altar connected to the rest of

the altar? (30:2)

4. What other items of furniture were made of the same materials as the altar and had several features in common? (25:10-12, 23-26)
5. How was the altar of incense carried about? (30:4-5; Num. 4:11)
6. Where was the altar of incense positioned in the tabernacle? (30:6; 40:5)
7. With what tabernacle room was the altar of incense sometimes associated? Why? (Heb. 9:2-4; I Kings 6:22)
8. When was incense burned on the altar? (30:8)
9. Of what was incense a symbol? (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8; 8:4-5). What might the REGULAR burning of incense suggest about our devotional activities? (Compare Ps. 55:17)
10. What was NOT to be put on the altar of incense? (30:9)
11. What special act was done at the horns of the altar once a year? (30:10)
12. What was to be paid when a census was taken? (30:12-13)
13. What does this census rule suggest that God considers about his people? (Ezek. 18:4)
14. How much were the people to pay? (30:13)
15. Who was to pay it? (30:14-15)
16. As far as the people themselves were concerned, what was the purpose of this payment? (30:12, 15, 16)
17. What was the money used for? (30:16; 38:25-28)
18. What was the laver made of? (30:18, 38:25-28)
19. Where was the laver placed? (30:18)
20. What was the laver used for? (30:19)
21. When was the laver used? (30:20)
22. How seriously did God regard the washings at the laver? (30:21)
23. Of what may the laver have been a type? (Titus 3:5; Eph. 5:26; Rev. 7:14; Heb. 10:22; I John 1:9)
24. What were spices and oil combined to make? (30:22-25)
25. What was anointed? Who was anointed? (30:26-30)
26. What restrictions were placed on the use and making of anointing oil? (30:31-33)

27. Of what is anointing oil a symbol? (Heb. 1:9; Acts 10:38; Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18; Psalm 45:6-8)
 28. What were sweet spices and frankincense used to make? (30:34-35)
 29. Where was incense placed? (30:36, 7)
 30. Where would God meet with Israel? (30:36)
 31. What restriction was placed on making incense? (30:37-38) Why?
-

EXODUS THIRTY: INCENSE
(and other Tabernacle Features)

- A. *Altar of Incense*; 30:1-10.
 1. Its pattern; 30:1-5.
 2. Its position; 30:6.
 3. Its rituals; 30:7-10.
 - B. *Atonement money*; 30:11-16.
 1. Collected during a census; 30:11-13.
 2. Collected from all alike; 30:14-15.
 3. Collected for tabernacle service; 30:16.
 - C. *Laver*; 30:17-21.
 1. Material; 30:17-18.
 2. Position; 30:18.
 3. Function; 30:19-21.
 - D. *Anointing oil*; 30:19:33.
 1. Formula; 30:19-25.
 2. Function; 30:26-31.
 3. Restrictions of use; 30:32-33.
 - E. *Incense*; 30:34-38.
 1. Formula; 30:34-35.
 2. Function; 30:36.
 3. Restrictions on use; 30:37-38.
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INCENSE, A TYPE OF PRAYER! (Ex. 30:1-10, 34-38)

1. Purpose; 30:1. (A sacrifice!; Heb. 13:15)
 2. Pattern; 30:1-2. (Must be *God's* pattern!)
 3. Power; 30:2. (Had horns!)
 4. Position; 30:6. (Nearest to God!)
 5. Practice; 30:7-8, 36. (Regular!)
 6. Purity; 30:35.
 7. Preciousness; 30:3, 34-35.
 8. Pulverized! 30:37.
 9. Private property! 30:37-38.
-

GOD'S COUNTED ONES! (30:11-16)
 "All souls are mine!" (Ezek. 18:4)

1. Those counted need ransom! 30:11-12.
 2. Those counted must pay! 30:13.
 3. Those counted are all equal before God; 30:15.
 4. Those counted render "service"; 30:16.
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EQUALITY BEFORE GOD! (Ex. 30:12-15)

1. ALL CLAIMED by God; 30:12.
 2. All need atonement; 30:12, 15.
 3. All redeemable by God; 30:15.
 4. All useful for service; 30:16.
-

THE WASHING OF PRIESTS (Ex. 30:17-21)

1. Commanded by God; 30:19.
 2. Essential for life; 30:20, 21.
 3. Necessary for service; 30:20.
 4. Perpetual in practice; 30:21.
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ANOINTING OIL - A TYPE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!
(Ex. 30:22-23)

1. Precious; 30:22-25.
 2. Pure; 30:25.
 3. Pervasive! 30:26-29.
 4. Sanctifying! 30:29.
 5. Qualifying; 30:30.
 6. Not for the world; 30:32-33; John 14:17.
-

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY

1. *What is in Exodus thirty?*

The chapter has a MIXTURE of subjects in it. Subjects include (1) the incense altar, (2) atonement money, (3) laver, (4) anointing oil, (5) incense formula. Inasmuch as the INCENSE is mentioned both first and last in the chapter, it is probably our most helpful memory aid to recall the contents of the chapter under the heading of INCENSE, etc.

Although the material of the chapter is mixed, ALL of it is essential for an accurate comprehension of the tabernacle. Without this material, our understanding would be hopelessly deficient.

Note that most of the paragraphs are introduced by the formula, "And Jehovah said unto Moses," (32:11, 17, 22, 34). This same introductory expression continues to appear in chapter 31 (31:1, 12). Indeed, it appears that chapter 31 is very closely joined to chapter 30, and probably should not even be divided from it by a separate chapter number.

We do not know why the segments of information in chapter thirty are grouped together just as they are. It would seem more orderly if the section about the altar of incense were placed back in chapter twenty-five with the

discussion of the lampstand and table. (Indeed, in chapter thirty-seven these three are grouped together.) The discussion of the laver would seem more natural back with that of the altar in chapter twenty-seven. (The two are associated in 38:1-8.) No one really knows why the material in chapter thirty is given just at this point as it is. In saying this we are NOT finding fault with the order that God's word presents its material. We are just stating a fact.

We have good reasons to reject the skeptical critics' notion that chapters thirty and thirty-one are very later supplements to the Priestly narrative,¹ and likely were written as late as the Babylonian exile.² If they really were "late additions," the editors would probably have stuck them into the narrative at points where they would appear to fit more naturally.

2. *What were the materials and dimensions of the altar of incense?* (30:1-5; 37:25-28; 40:5, 26; Lev. 4:7)

It was made of acacia wood. (See 25:5.) It was overlaid with pure gold, so that it is called the "golden altar" in 39:38 and Num. 4:11, to distinguish it from the brazen altar of burnt-offering. It stood two cubits (36") high, and had equal width and length of one cubit (18"). Horns projected from its four upper corners. The horns were made of one piece with the rest of the altar, rather than as separate pieces attached to it. It had a crown, or moulding, around the edge of its top, as did the table of showbread and the ark of the covenant (25:11, 24). Whether this was for ornamentation, or to keep material from sliding off its top is not stated.

The altar was transported by using staves that were thrust through golden rings anchored into the sides of the altar under its crown, very much like those on the ark of the covenant and the table of showbread. The staves were of acacia wood overlaid with gold. For the method of

¹Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

²*Broadman Bible Commentary*, I, (1969), p. 446.

covering and transporting the altar of incense, see Num. 4:11.

3. *Where was the altar of incense positioned in the tabernacle?* (30:6)

It was placed in the Holy Place, just in front of the veil. Just behind the veil was the Most Holy Place, containing the ark of the covenant, covered over by the mercy-seat. The smoke from the altar of incense wafted past the veil into the Holy of Holies, and thus, as it were, into the very presence of God.

The mention here of the mercy-seat along with the facts about the incense altar suggests that the altar of incense had a very intimate relationship to the ark and mercy-seat. Smoking incense was brought into the Holy of Holies on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:12-13). For these reasons, and perhaps others, the altar of incense in Solomon's temple is spoken of as belonging to the oracle (Holy of Holies) (I Kings 6:22). Also Heb. 9:4 speaks of the golden altar as being in the Holy of Holies.

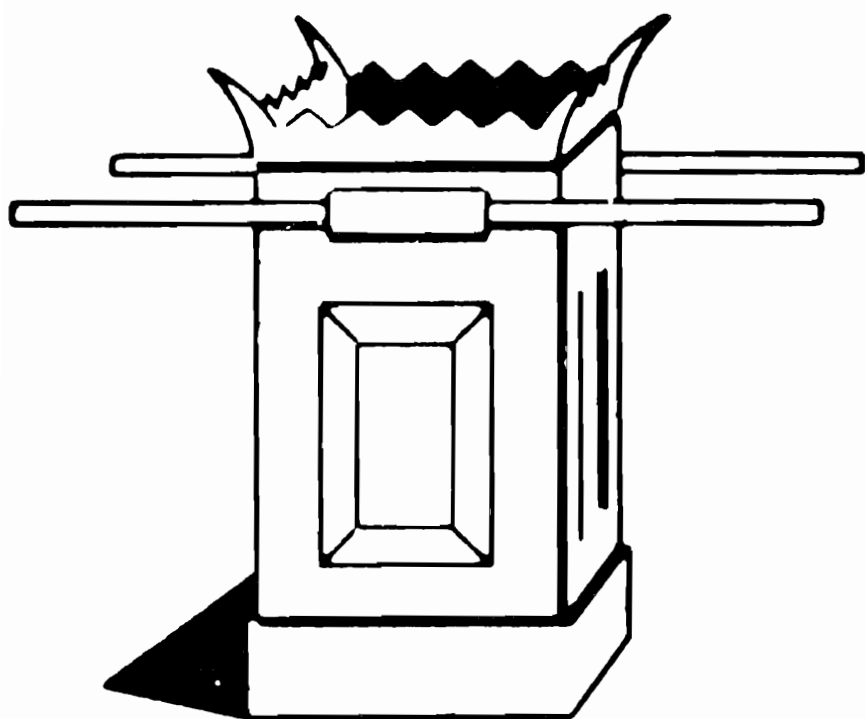
4. *When was incense burned on the altar?* (30:7-8)

Every morning and evening. When Aaron dressed (literally "made good") the lamps in the morning, he burned incense. Also when the lamps were lighted in the evenings (literally, "between the two evenings." See 12:6) he burned incense. "Morning by morning" Aaron caused the incense "to smoke." (These verses sound as if the lamp did not burn during the daytime, but compare 27:20-21; 25:37.)

5. *What was NOT to be put on the altar of incense?* (30:9)

No strange incense, no burnt-offerings, no meal-offering, and no drink-offerings. Sin-offerings were made on its horns once a year. (30:10). "Strange" (or foreign) incense would be incense with any formula other than that described in 30:34-38. There was a distinctiveness about the use of this altar that was not to be compromised.

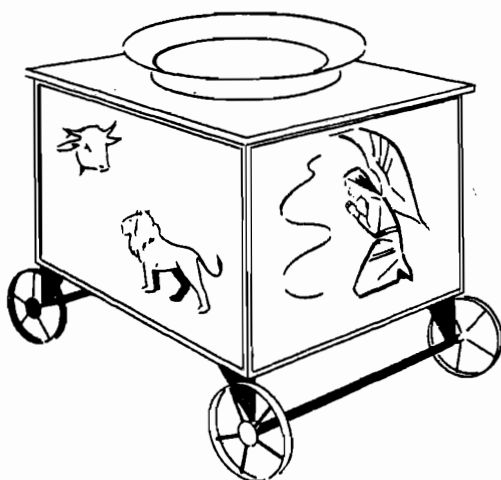
The "strange incense" of 30:9 is probably not the "strange fire" offered by Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1), although the "strange fire" incident shows how seriously



Altar of Incense



Conjectural form
of the laver and its base



Wheeled laver of the type made for Solomon's temple. It is remotely possible that the laver in the tabernacle may have had resemblances to this design.

- God regarding His commands about the incense. See 30:37-38. We do not know with certainty what this "strange fire" was. On the annual day of atonement the priests was to obtain coals of fire from the altar of burnt-offering (Lev. 16:12). Upon these coals he placed incense as he went into the Holy of Holies. It appears that the fire used by Nadab and Abihu was taken from some place besides the altar. It is possible that when the priest burned incense on the altar each day, he did it by bringing in coals of fire from the brazen altar, although we do not know this for sure.
6. *What special act was done upon the horns of the altar once a year?* (30:10)

Once a year Aaron made atonement for the altar by placing the blood of the sin-offering upon the horns of the altar of incense. (Concerning sin-offerings, see 29:10-14.)

The preposition "upon" (Heb. *'al*) in 30:10 probably means "for" it. This preposition is used in 29:36 to refer to making atonement "for" the altar of burnt-offering. Similarly Ex. 30:15 has "atonement *for* (*'al*) your souls." Similarly Lev. 16:18. Certainly the word means "upon," but here it seems to have the added meaning of "for." The A.S.V. has "upon" in the text and "Or *for*" in the margin.

We agree with Keil and Delitzsch³ that the reference in Lev. 16:18 to putting blood "upon the horns of the altar round about" refers to the *altar of burnt-offering* rather than to the altar of incense (even though most commentators hold the opposite view). The expression "go out" in Lev. 16:18 refers not to Aaron's going out of the Most Holy Place into the Holy Place, but to his going out of the tent of meeting into the court.

However, as Keil and Delitzsch also assert, the allusion to Aaron's making atonement "for the tent of meeting"

³*Op. cit.*, II, p. 400.

(Holy Place) most probably refers to the yearly act of atonement on the altar of incense referred to in Ex. 30:10. After making this atonement for the tent of meeting by placing the blood of the sin-offering on the horns of the altar of incense, then Aaron went out to the altar of burnt offering to make atonement for it also.

Note that man's use made God's golden altar contaminated.

7. *How did God view the altar of incense?* (30:10)

It was *most holy* unto Jehovah, literally "holy (or holiness) of holies." The same expression is applied to the altar of burnt-offering (29:37; 40:10), to all the vessels of the sanctuary (30:28-29), and to the offerings of Israel that were partly eaten by the priests (Num. 18:9-10; Lev. 2:3).

8. *What was symbolized by the incense?* (Rev. 5:8; 8:4-5)

Prayer! "Let my *prayer* be set forth as incense before thee, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141:2).

Incense functioned also as sort of a *sacrifice*. The very fact that it was offered on an *altar* (Heb. *zebach*, a place of sacrifice) suggests the sacrificial quality in prayer. "In every place incense shall be *offered* unto my name" (Mal. 1:11). This should cause us to regard prayer as very necessary and serious in our Christian activities.

The *closeness* of the altar of incense to the veil and to the ark of the covenant suggests that we are never closer to God than when we pray. Only a thin veil separates us from the very face of God, and in Christ even this veil is removed! (II Cor. 3:14-18)

The presence of horns on the altar of incense suggests the *power* of prayer. Compare 27:2.

The necessity of *regularity* in prayer is suggested by the regular daily offering of incense. "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Psalm 55:17; Compare Dan. 6:10.)

The importance of *reading God's word* ("a lamp unto my feet"; Ps. 119:105) at the time of our prayers may be

suggested by the fact that the incense was offered at the same time that the lampstand was tended.

The concept of prayer as a *tribute* to God as king is at least hinted in the fact that the burning of incense was done as a tribute to great kings. See II Chron. 16:14; 21:19.

There is NO New Testament example or teaching which would lead Christians to incorporate the burning of incense into our worship assembly activities. To do this would be to borrow from the outgrown system of the law of Moses or from pagan religious rituals. To pagans incense is burned to drive out demons, or to add punch to prayers, or to convey some priestly blessings.

9. *What was to be paid when a census was taken?* (30:11-15)

Every one was to pay half a shekel. This money was a ransom for their souls, "to make atonement" for their souls. The amount paid was a very small sum. A shekel was about four-tenths of an ounce.⁴ (At that time the shekel was not a coin, but a unit of weight, a piece of metal weighing that amount. Compare Gen. 24:22.) Anyone could have afforded this little payment. This very smallness of the offering should have made obvious the fact that the people were NOT purchasing their atonement by this pittance, but only acknowledging that they had a debt which God alone could pay for them. Compare I Pet. 1:18-19.

Implied in this law about censuses is the truth that *God owns all souls* (people). "All souls are mine" (Ezek. 18:4). The very fact of counting one's flock or one's wealth suggests ownership. We do not usually count our neighbor's sheep or his income; we count our own. If we do count them, the owner will want to know about it. The experience of King David taking a census showed that taking a census could be a dangerous business. Seventy thousand people

⁴*Broadman Bible Commentary*, II, (1969) gives 0.40302. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 394, says the "shekel of the sanctuary" was double the weight of the regular shekel; but the difference is not positively known.

died in a plague (II Sam. 24:1, 15). Being counted in Israel meant that each Israelite owned up to his covenant membership and responsibilities with God. God still claims exclusive ownership of His people. (John 10:27-29).

The "offering" mentioned in 30:13 was a heave-offering (Heb. *terumah*), something "lifted up" to God. See notes on 29:27-28. Note the three-fold reference to the *offering* (30:13, 14, 15). Note also the three-fold reference to "soul" (30:12, 15, 16). ("Soul" is a very comprehensive term; it refers to everything about us that relates to life - our whole person, our physical animal life, our spirit, our emotions, etc.)

The payment of the half-shekel acknowledged not only God's ownership, but also the uncleanness and unworthiness of the people. By nature Israel was alienated from God, and could remain in covenant with the LORD only on the ground of His grace, which covered the sin. This idea of ransom and redemption extends on into the New Testament, where we read that in Christ we have "redemption" (ransom). (Eph. 1:7; I Pet. 1:18)

The fact that the rich and poor alike paid the same amount may have suggested to the people's minds that all people stand alike before God - one not preferred above another, all equally in need of atonement (30:15). Note that there were rich people in that generation of Israelites.

Censuses are referred to in Num. 1:2-3; 26:2. Ex. 38:25-26 mentions the silver half-shekel collection from 603,550 men, the exact same count as in Numbers 1:46. The census in Numbers one did not take place until *after* the building of the tabernacle, or some nine months after this atonement-money offering. The fact that the count was the same in both indicates the precision of both the atonement-money collection and the census. Probably the numbering in Numbers one according to "fathers' houses" (families and tribes) was greatly speeded up by the information gained in the previous numbering for atonement money.

On the shekel being 20 gerahs, see Lev. 23:25. The

word "gerah" means a "grain" (Harkavy's *Lexicon*) or possibly a "bean" (Barnes).

10. *What was the atonement money used for?* (30:16)

It was used for the *service* of the tabernacle. Compare 38:25-31. The shekels of silver furnished the material for the sockets (pedestals, or bases) used in the tabernacle, and also the hooks on the pillars.

The text does not state that the half-shekel atonement money was to be an annual levy, but rather that it was paid only when a census was taken. At a later time the half-shekel did become an annual temple tax (Matt. 17:24). In the time of Nehemiah the Jews themselves made ordinances to charge themselves yearly one-third of a shekel for the service of the house of God. But this is not the same law as that in Exodus.

The atonement money was to be a "memorial" for the children of Israel before Jehovah. *Memorial* is a sacrificial term referring to something which brings the offerer into favorable remembrance before God. The term is applied to various sacrifices (Lev. 2:2, 9; 5:12; Num. 5:26), and to the memorial stones worn by the priest (Ex. 28:12), and to prayer and alms (Acts 10:4).

11. *What was the laver made of?* (30:17-18; 38:8; I Kings 7:37-38)

The laver was a wash basin made of brass, or, more correctly, bronze (See 25:3). The bronze came from metal that had formerly been in the mirrors owned by the women that ministered at the door of the tent of meeting. (Regarding the women, see I Sam. 2:22 and Luke 2:37.) These mirrors were probably obtained in Egypt (Ex. 12:35-36), where such mirrors were common objects.⁵ They were made of flat discs of polished bronze to which was attached a short handle to be held in one hand. The handles were

⁵For photographs of Egyptian mirrors see *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 546; or *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. III, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), p. 403.

sometimes ornate, carved, made of ebony, and even covered with gold plate. The reflector and handle would together be about eleven inches long. These would be difficult to obtain out in the wilderness where the Israelites were. But the women seemed willing to sacrifice that which assisted them to acquire beauty of features to make the thing which would give the priests beauty of soul. We admire this sacrifice.

The dimensions and shape of the laver are not given. If only Aaron and his four sons used it, it need not have been large. We doubt that it was shorter than the lowest item of tabernacle furniture, the table, which was a cubit and a half in height (27"). By contrast the molten "sea" where the priests washed in Solomon's temple was huge! (I Kings 7:23; II Chron. 4:2-6.)

A *base* (K.J.V., "foot") is always mentioned with the laver. The fact that they are always referred to separately suggests that they were detached from one another (31:9; 35:16; 39:39; Lev. 8:11). The base was anointed separately from the rest of the laver (Ex. 40:11). The bases under the ten lavers in Solomon's temple were separate from the lavers. These bases in Solomon's temple were bronze four-wheeled carts with side panels engraved with cherubim, lions, and palm-trees (I Kings 7:27-37).

The form of the base supporting the laver in the tabernacle is not described. We do not know whether it was actually coupled to the laver, or whether the laver simply rested on the base. We rather favor the view that they were not coupled to one another.

The fact that a cart-like wheeled base for a laver has been found in Cyprus⁶ dating back to 1400-1200 B.C. causes us to think that possibly the base of the laver in the tabernacle may itself have had a similar form, and that this pattern was later adopted for Solomon's temple.

⁶Werner Keller, *The Bible as History in Pictures* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), p. 190.

Was there water in the base of the laver, as well as in the laver itself? Josephus says there was. (*Ant.* III, vi, 2) Except for the difficulty of washing the feet in a laver probably over two feet above ground, we know no reason to suspect that the base was designed to hold water.

12. *What was the function of the laver?* (30:19-21; 40:30-32)

The priests washed their hands and feet there when they went into the Holy Place and also when they came near to the altar to minister. They were to do this "that they die not." (Compare 28:35.) There is no mention of the priests' washing at the laver *after* they completed their ministrations.

Nothing is stated in Numbers four about the method of packing or transporting the laver or its base.

13. *Of what may the laver have been a type?*

Generally speaking, it was a type of the inner cleansing required of all who serve the Lord. "I will *wash* my hands in innocency: So will I compass thine altar, O Jehovah" (Psalm 26:6).

The laver was used both for the *initial* washing of the priests during the consecration ceremony, and *repeatedly* thereafter when they came to minister. We suppose therefore that the laver symbolized the Christian's initial cleansing upon receiving the Lord, and the repeated cleansing he can share thereafter.

The Greek word for *laver* (*loutron*) occurs in Titus 3:5 and Eph. 5:26. Hebrews 10:22 speaks of our "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience; and having our body *washed* with pure water." The "sprinkling" is certainly the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:2). Mentioned with the sprinkling of the blood is the washing of the body in pure water. This would seem to refer to our baptism. Thus, in accord with this, we read in the accounts of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, that after Saul had heard and seen the Lord Jesus, and believed, and repented (even asking, "What shall I do, Lord?"), and prayed (Acts 9:11), the Lord sent the devout Ananias unto him. Ananias came and said to Saul, "Why tarriest thou? arise

and be baptized and *wash* away thy sins, calling on his name." (Acts 22:16). Note that the inner cleansing from sins occurred at the same time as the outer washing of baptism.

Even after becoming a priest unto God, after being washed in the "laver of regeneration," the Christian still sins oftentimes and is unclean for the service of God (I John 1:8, 10). In those circumstances he may confess his sins and be forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). (The promise in I John 1:9 is addressed to Christians and not to unsaved people.) The repeated washings at the laver would appear to have portrayed this frequent cleansing available to those in Christ.

The view is commonly expressed that it is the WORD (the scriptures) in which Christians are washed. Note Ephesians 5:26. It appears that Eph. 5:26 refers to the initial cleansing of believers, rather than to the cleansings we experience after receiving the Lord. This initial cleansing was accomplished "in word," that is, in the sphere of the word, wherever the word was preached. In that realm where the word has been proclaimed men may be cleansed by the "washing of water." The word itself does have cleansing power (Psalm 119:9), but only as a guide to direct us in seeking cleansing in God's approved way. We take heed to our way *according to* God's word. Salvation requires more than hearing alone. That word which we hear must be accompanied by faith (Heb. 4:2) and the "obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5; 16:26).

14. *What were spices and oil combined to make? (30:22-25)*

They were made into a holy anointing oil.

Blended with a hin (about a gallon) of olive oil were fifteen hundred shekels weight (about thirty-eight pounds) of spices! This might appear to form a thick mass, not pourable. But information from ancient Mesopotamian (Akkadian) documents indicates that the spices were subjected to a long and complicated process of soaking and boiling in water over a period of many days, so that

at the end of the distillation the fragrance of the spices remained as a liquid, even with the solid materials removed. This distilled fragrance was blended with the oil, and it is to this process that Exodus 30:25 refers.⁷ A "perfumer" (or apothecary) made this product.

Spices mentioned include "flowing *myrrh*" (K.J.V., "pure myrrh"). "Flowing" refers to the liquid form, in contrast to the dry gum. This is a resin exuded from branches, stems, and incisions in a thorny shrub, or small tree found in south Arabia and Palestine. Secondly, there was "sweet *cinnamon*," from a tree up to thirty feet tall native to Ceylon. The commercial cinnamon is obtained from its fragrant inner bark. The third spice was the "sweet *calamus*," or "fragrant cane." The plant producing this is an aromatic reed (a perennial grass) that grows in India. Its sap forms the calamus, or ginger grass oil. The fourth spice was a *cassia*. See Psalm 45:8. This is the aromatic bark of a tree in India, Ceylon, and Malaya, similar to cinnamon, but of quality inferior to the true cinnamon. Ezekiel 27:19 mentions cassia and calamus as products of trade with Tyre. The copper "Treasure" scroll of the Dead Sea Cave III mentions a "vessel of incense in cassia wood."⁸

15. *What was anointed?* (30:26-30; 40:9; Num. 7:1)

Everything connected with the tabernacle was anointed, including the priests and their garments (29:21). This made everything "most holy" (or "holy of holies"). See notes on 29:37 concerning how those who touched the most holy things became "holy."

Since the anointing oil was a symbol of the Holy Spirit, the thorough anointing of the tabernacle suggests that every aspect of the Christian faith, which the tabernacle symbolized, is anointed with the Holy Spirit, and is therefore touched with the very holiness of God. Our faith is precious with God's own Spirit in every aspect.

Anointing the tent did not mean smearing its entire

⁷Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 397. Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, II, p. 215.

⁸*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. I (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), p. 541.

surface, but just sprinkling a few drops on it.

16. *What restrictions were placed on the anointing oil?* (30:31-33)

The people were not to make any with the same formula. They were not to put it upon the flesh of anyone, Israelite or "stranger." People oftentimes did apply sweet oils to themselves (Prov. 27:9; Ps. 104:15). But this oil was for the tabernacle and the priests only. Anyone appropriating it for himself would be "cut off" from his people. This probably meant he would be executed. (See notes on 31:14.) Some have thought that being "cut off" was a punishment imposed by heaven, in that the transgressor would die before his time, leaving no children. A similar restriction was placed on the making of the holy incense (30:38).

17. *What were sweet spices and frankincense used to make?*

They were used to make a special incense to be burned only on the altar of incense. On the spiritual significance of incense, see notes on 30:10.

The spices and frankincense were mingled together in quantities of equal weight. These ingredients were "seasoned with salt" (K.J.V., "tempered together"). While the Hebrew verb here certainly can be translated as "to be salted," it does also appear here to mean "tempered" or "mixed" together. A similar meaning is given in the Greek LXX (*memigmenon*, mingled).

Frankincense is a light-colored (yellow or milky) resin exuded from incisions in the bark of the frankincense tree, which is native to Arabia and northern India. It forms beads which are easily ground into powder, and emit a balsamlike odor when burned. *Stacte* is a highly perfumed gum resin that exudes from the incised bark of the storax tree. The tree has a whitish color and grows in Palestine on dry hillsides with the oaks and terebinths. Another identification of stacte is the opobalsamum. *Onycha* is thought to be the covering flaps from certain mussel shells found in India. (Others say from the Red Sea.) When

⁹J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 354.

burned, this tissue gives a very pungent odor resembling musk. Its smell adds strength to the smell of other materials mixed with it. It was very costly. *Galbanum* seems to have been the gum resin excreted from the lower parts of stems of several species of *Ferula* herbs that grow in the Holy Land. When hardened tears of this resin are burned, the odor is pungent; but the effect when mixed with other spices is pleasant.

18. *Where was incense placed?* (30:36)

Incense was placed in the tent of meeting (the Holy Place), near the testimony (the ten commandments in the ark), where God met with Israel. It was burned on the altar of incense.

Note that the incense was beaten very small, probably in a mortar. This "smallness" might well remind us that when we come to God in prayer, we need to be "beaten small." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

19. *What restriction was placed on making the incense?* (30:37-38)

No one was to make any for themselves so they could smell of it.

If incense is a symbol of prayer, the stern rule about not making any of the special incense for men's own use and pleasure suggests that we dare not pray to anyone except the true God, who alone is worthy of prayer.

Regarding the penalty of "cutting off," see notes on 31:14 and 30:33.

Cole¹⁰ tells that Knobel tried to reproduce the incense formula and found it to be "strong, refreshing, and very agreeable." To a Jew such an experiment would have meant death. His experiment is made even less worthwhile because the identification of some of the spices in the incense is rather uncertain:

¹⁰*Op. cit.*, p. 208. Cole refers to Driver as his source of information.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

31 And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (2) See, I have called by name Be-zal-el the son of U-ri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Ju-dah: (3) and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, (4) to devise skilful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, (5) and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of workmanship. (6) And I, behold, I have appointed with him O-ho-li-ab, the son of A-his-a-mach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee: (7) the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy-seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the Tent, (8) and the table and its vessels, and the pure candlestick with all its vessels, and the altar of incense, (9) and the altar of burnt-offering with all its vessels, and the laver and its base, (10) and the finely wrought garments, and the holy garments for Aar-on the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office. (11) and the anointing oil, and the incense of sweet spices for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.

(12) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (13) Speak thou also unto the children of Is-ra-el, saying, Verily ye shall keep my sabbaths: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am Je-ho-vah who sanctifieth you. (14) Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that profaneth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. (15) Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to Je-ho-vah; whosoever doeth any work on the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. (16) Wherefore the children of Is-ra-el shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

(17) It is a sign between me and the children of Is-ra-el for ever: for in six days Je-ho-vah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

(18) And he gave unto Mo-ses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Si-nai, the two tables of the testimony, tables of stone written with the finger of God.

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

1. After careful reading, propose a brief title (topic or theme) for the chapter.
2. How many times does the expression "Jehovah (the LORD) spake unto Moses" occur in chapters 30-31? Does this expression seem to mark the start of new paragraphs?
3. What man had God called to be a skillful workman? (31:2; Compare 17:10, 12; 24:14.) How specific was the call? Of what tribe was he?
4. How had God assisted the craftsman to do his work? (31:3)
5. What particular skills was this man given? (31:4-5)
6. Who also was appointed to work with the first craftsman? (31:6) Of what tribe was he?
7. Were these two the only ones to be given help by God in craft work? (31:6)
8. How is the candlestick (lampstand) described? (31:8)
9. What are the "finely wrought garments"? (31:10; 35:19; 39:1, 41)
10. What items were the craftsmen to make? (31:11, 6)
11. Of whom may these craftsmen possibly have been a type? (John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 1:8)
12. What was to be a sign between Israel and the Lord? (31:13, 17)
13. What was keeping the Sabbath to cause Israel to know? (31:13)
14. What does "sanctify" mean? (31:13)
15. What was the penalty for profaning (defiling) the Sabbath? (31:14, 15)

16. What day of the week was the Sabbath day? (31:15)
 17. How did God view the Sabbath? (31:15)
 18. How long was the Sabbath to be kept? (31:16. Compare Col. 2:16-17.)
 19. What did the Sabbath commemorate? (31:17)
 20. What effect on *God* did the seventh day rest have? (31:17)
 21. What did God give to Moses? When? (31:18)
 22. What is the "testimony"? (31:18; 34:28)
 23. How were the tables (tablets) written? (31:18. Compare 24:12, 32:15-16; 34:1, 4, 28.)
 24. How long had Moses been up in the mount? (24:18; Deut. 9:11)
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EXODUS THIRTY-ONE: THE WORKMEN AND THE SABBATH

- I. WISE WORKMEN; 31:1-11.
 1. Called by name; 31:1-2, 6.
 2. Filled with the Spirit; 31:3.
 3. Given skills; 31:4-5.
 4. Appointed to make the tabernacle; 31:7-11.
 5. Limited to what God commanded; 31:11.
 - II. THE SIGN OF THE SABBATH; 31:12-17.
 1. The practice ("Verily ye shall keep it."); 31:12-13.
 2. The purpose ("That ye may know that I am Jehovah."); 31:13.
 3. The preciousness ("It is holy."); 31:14.
 4. The penalty ("He shall surely be put to death."); 31:14-15.
 5. The permanence ("for a perpetual covenant"); 31:16-17.
 6. The proclamation (or commemoration). "In six days Jehovah made heaven and earth."; 31:18.
-

GOD'S SPIRIT IN GOD'S MEN! (31:1-11)

1. Filled them; 31:1-3.

2. Furnished them skills; 31:4-5.
 3. Furthered their natural talents; 31:6.
 4. Fulfilled what God commanded; 31:11, 6.
-

THE SABBATH, A SIGN! (31:13, 17)

1. A sign God had spoken to Israel.
 2. A sign of concern for human weariness; (Ex. 23:12)
 3. A sign of faith that God is creator.
 4. A sign of faith that God will provide.
 5. A sign of commitment to obey God.
-

TABLETS OF TESTIMONY! (31:18)

1. Based on the spoken word; (20:1ff; Deut. 9:10)
 2. Promised by God to Moses; (24:12)
 3. Written by God; (32:16; Deut. 4:13)
 4. Presented by God to Moses; (32:18)
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

1. *What is in Exodus thirty-one?*

The chapter tells of God's calling the **SKILLED WORKMEN** to make the tabernacle, its furniture, etc. Then it commands the keeping of the **SABBATH** as a sign between God and Israel. The chapter closes with a statement about God's giving the stone tablets of the ten commandments to Moses.

Exodus 31:1 starts a new paragraph, as is indicated by the words "And Jehovah spake unto Moses saying. . . ." Compare 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:12. With the completion of directions for construction of the sanctuary, the names of its builders are now given.

2. *What man had God called as a skillful workman?* (31:1-2)

God had called *Bezalel*, son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. His grandfather appears to have been the Hur who, along with Aaron, held up Moses' hands during battle (17:10), and was with Aaron while Moses was in the mountain (24:14). (See notes on these passages.) Bezalel was the chief artificer in metal, stone, and wood; and he performed the apothecary's work in compounding the anointing oil and incense (37:1, 29).

We suppose that Bezalel's ancestry is that given in I Chron. 2:3, 5, 9, 18-19 - Judah, Perez, Hezron, Caleb¹ (or Chelubai), Hur Uri, Bezalel.

Bezalel's name seems to mean "In God's (El's) shadow." We do not feel that this meaning of his name has great significance. But it is significant that God called him BY NAME. God knows us individually and uses us individually. Note that the great Persian ruler Cyrus was called "by name." (Isaiah 45:4).

The workmen who were chosen were *God's* choice, not necessarily Moses's. The power imparted to the workmen was *God's* power and not men's.

Bezalel was more prominent than his co-craftsman Oholiab. Bezalel is sometimes mentioned alone (37:1), and when both are named, Bezalel is always named first (35:30, 34; 36:1, 2).

Martin Noth in his characteristic "liberal" fashion attributes chapter thirty-one to a post-Babylonian exile Priestly author, and then even says that parts (e.g., 31:7-11) of the chapter are "secondary additions" to P. He associates the names Bezalel and Hur with men of the same names in Ezra 30:24; Neh. 3:9; I Chron. 2:50; 4:1, 4. Since these writings are post-exilic, he says "This could suggest a post-exilic origin for the tradition."² Noth fails to mention that

¹Certainly this is not the famous Caleb, son of Jephunneh, who was associated with Joshua.

²*Op. cit.*, p. 240. Noth's argument is unproven, to say the least.

there was also a Hur in the time of King Solomon (I Kings 4:8). (This would not support his theory of late priestly authorship.) Cole³ says that the names Bezalel and Oholiab are archaic, since neither contains a form of the divine name YAH. We agree that they are archaic!

3. *How did God assist the craftsman in his work?* (31:3; 35:30—36:1)

Jehovah filled Bezalel with the Spirit of God. This assisted him in wisdom, in understanding, knowledge, and all manner of workmanship. "Understanding" refers to insight, understanding, and intelligence; whereas "wisdom" seems to be the ability to use intelligence effectively.

Exodus 31:6 suggests that these craftsmen were already naturally "wise-hearted." To their naturally-given talents God added His Spirit. The passage certainly does not belittle natural abilities. They are as much a gift from God as are specially bestowed abilities. Even Moses was possessed of natural ability and training before God aided him yet more. Similarly the seven "deacons" of Acts 6:3 were men of wisdom even before they were appointed to their special work.

Please note that *wisdom* included skills of artistry, mechanics, and construction. Note also that God's *Spirit* bestowed the "wisdom" of this type. We usually think of the Spirit empowering prophecy (as in Num. 11:17ff) and moral and spiritual qualities. But the Spirit also empowers other works. On occasion He may impart military power (Judges 3:10). And here in Ex. 31:3 we read of the Spirit bestowing skill in art and construction. The Spirit thus seems to empower all of life's activities that are within the will of God.

4. *What particular skills was Bezalel given?* (31:4-5)

All types of manual skills are listed. He was to "devise skilful works." The Hebrew words thus translated may also be rendered "to devise devices" or "to think thoughts."

³Op. cit., p. 209.

This suggests that he was to think out artistic designs, ideas, and inventions, all of course within the limits of what God had commanded to Moses. Thus these men were not automated puppets but were granted use of their own creative abilities within limits.

Cassuto⁴ says that later Jewish traditions sought to magnify the tabernacle and said it was built miraculously of its own accord. But he correctly affirms that this is not the meaning inherent in the simple interpretations of the text.

5. *What other man was appointed with the first craftsman?* (31:6-8)

Oholiab of the tribe of Dan was appointed. No other Bible person bears this name. He was from the tribe of Dan, the same tribe as Hiram, the chief architect of Solomon's temple (II Chron. 2:13-14). He appears to have had primary charge of the textile work (38:23; 35:34-35). His name means something like "My tent (or shelter) (is) the father (or God)." His name has in it the Hebrew word *'ohel*, which means tent. This does seem very appropriate since he was the maker of the tent curtains.

The "I" at the start of 31:6 is emphatic. The word "behold" seems to be inserted to arrest our attention upon a significant fact.

Exodus 31:6 mentions that God had also granted wisdom to *others* who were wise, so they also could make the tabernacle parts that God had commanded Moses.

Exodus 31:7-11 lists the items to be made, all of which have been described in detail perviously, and all of which will be described again during the account of the construction, which is given in chapters 35-39.

The "furniture" of 31:7, 8, 9 literally refers to "vessels."

6. *What are the "finely wrought garments"?* (31:10)

This expression "finely wrought garments" (KJV,

⁴*Op. cit.*, p. 402.

"cloths of service") appears here for the first time. It is also in 35:19 and 39:1, 41. The Hebrew word *serad* ("finely wrought") occurs only these four times in the O.T. Its meaning is somewhat uncertain. It appears to be derived from a verb meaning to twist, weave together, knot. (This accounts for the ASV translation.) The Greek LXX rendered it "robes of ministry" (*leitourgikai*), from which the KJV rendered it "cloths of service."

We feel that Barnes⁵ has correctly identified the "finely wrought garments" as the robes of the high priest described in 28:6-38; 39:1ff. The "holy garments" referred to in 31:10 are probably the linen garments worn by the high priest on solemn occasions like the day of atonement. Note the expression "holy garments" in both Ex. 31:10 and Lev. 16:4-5. Ex. 31:10 seems to list as a third class of priestly garments the garments of Aaron's sons which were made of linen and worn in their regular ministrations (28:40, 41).

Other identifications for the "finely wrought garments" include the rabbinical view that they were wrappers for vessels of the sanctuary while in transit, and Gesenius' view that they were inner curtains of the tabernacle or inner hangings of the dwelling place.⁶ Cassuto⁷ felt that they may have been inner garments worn by the priests under their tunics in winter time. To us these views seem improbable.

7. *Of whom may these craftsmen have been a type?* (John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 1:8)

The scripture does not say they were types of anyone, of Christ or of anyone else. Certainly Christ builds His own church, and Bezalel and Oholiab could have been types of Christ in this aspect (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:19-22).

Jesus also called his holy *apostles* to build his church.

⁵*Op. cit.*, p. 86.

⁶Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

⁷*Op. cit.*, p. 403.

He called them by name (John 6:70; Mark 3:14-19), as Bezalel was called by name. Jesus gave them power by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:1), so they would be led into all truth (John 16:13), and would speak the things of Christ (John 16:14). In these respects Bezalel and Oholiab resembled the apostles sufficiently to justify comparing the two.

8. *What was to be a sign between Israel and the Lord?* (31:12-13, 17)

The Sabbath day was to be the sign. The Sabbath day is referred to here for the first time as a *sign*. Compare Ezek. 20:12, 20.

Circumcision (Gen. 17:1), and unleavened bread (Ex. 13:19) are also said to be *signs* between God and Israel. The Sabbath, circumcision, and unleavened bread were all practiced outside of Israel, but only in Israel did they have a religious significance.

Note that God calls the Sabbath "MY Sabbath."

Most commentators say that the reference to the Sabbath here relates especially to the keeping of the Sabbath during the construction of the tabernacle. As important and exciting as the construction would be, it was not to be done on the Sabbath days. All of this is true, but it is not set forth in the text as the reason for asserting the Sabbath law just here. Rather, the text emphasizes here that the Sabbath was to be kept "throughout your generations." The application is more for all time than for that particular time.

The keeping of the Sabbath was to cause Israel to know⁸ that God was the LORD who sanctified them (made them holy). Failure to observe times of worship makes men forget that God is the LORD who makes us holy.

⁸"That ye may know" is literally just "to know." Some Jewish interpreters have supplied as the subject for "to know" "that *all nations* shall know." See J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, p. 356. This idea seems legitimate. When the Jews kept the Sabbath, all nations knew that Jehovah was their God. Nonetheless, the text does not definitely imply that "all nations" is the subject of "to know."

Regarding the Sabbath day, see notes on 20:8-11.

9. *What was the penalty for profaning the Sabbath day?* (31:14-15)

Execution! The "surely" in "surely be put to death" is emphatic.

To "profane" (KJV, "defile") the Sabbath is to break it or regard it as unholy.

Is there a difference between being "put to death" for profaning the Sabbath, and being "cut off" from among the people (by excommunication) for working on the Sabbath? We think not. These appear to be parallel statements and not two different assertions. Ex. 31:15 plainly says that doing any work on the Sabbath (such as the work referred to in 31:14) was to be punished by execution. Compare 35:2.

Numbers 15:32-36 tells of one man who was executed (stoned) for gathering sticks on the Sabbath. We have no record of any others who were slain for breaking the Sabbath. Nehemiah later enforced the Sabbath with considerable severity (Neh. 13:15-22). Neh. 13:17-18 declares that the Jews went into captivity because they failed to keep the Sabbaths. Christ was threatened with death for breaking the Sabbath (John 5:16-18). Nonetheless, it appears plain that very few people were ever executed for breaking the Sabbath.

How can we explain this neglect to enforce a plainly-stated penalty for Sabbath-breaking? First of all, if it had been universally enforced, there would have been a near-total depletion of the population! Secondly, God has often laid down clear penalties for certain offenses and then only enforced it occasionally *in this age*, as if to make examples of the few. Thus Uzzah was slain, but not the men who loaded the ark on the cart (II Sam. 6:6-7; Num. 4:15). David and Bathsheba were spared from the penalty of adultery (Lev. 20:10). Ananias and Sapphira died quickly for lying about the use of their money (Acts 5:5, 10), but God in His longsuffering has generally delayed this

punishment, apparently to give opportunity for men to repent and be forgiven (II Pet. 3:8). The punishments for disobeying God will certainly come, but very often God in His grace defers the punishment to allow opportunity for repentance and forgiveness.

7. *How did God view the Sabbath?* (31:15)

He viewed it as "holy to Jehovah" (or "holiness to Jehovah"). (This is the same expression as that on the high priest's golden plate. Ex. 28:36.)

God wanted the Sabbath to be a "Sabbath of solemn rest" (Heb., *shabbat shabbaton*), meaning a complete cessation of work. (The use of *shabbaton* in Lev. 23:3 and 25:5 show it meant "rest" or "complete rest.") Not even fires were to be kindled on the Sabbath. (Num. 35:31.)

8. *What day of the week was the Sabbath day?* (31:15)

The seventh day of the week, our Saturday. For reasons why Christians are certainly not obligated to keep Saturday as a Sabbath rest, see notes on 20:8-11.

9. *How long was the Sabbath to be kept?* (31:16-17)

Israel was to keep it "throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant." "perpetual covenant" is literally "a covenant for distant future." The same expression was applied to the priesthood in 29:9. (See notes on that passage). It does not necessarily mean "for an endless future eternity."

10. *What did the Sabbath commemorate?* (31:17)

It commemorated God's creation of the world in six days and His resting on the seventh day. See Ex. 20:11; Deut. 20:15. Keeping the Sabbath was for an Israelite a constantly recurring proclamation that God was the creator and king of the universe, and thus to desecrate the Sabbath was an open denial of God. We ought to take our worship of God with equal seriousness.

11. *What effect on God did the seventh day of rest have?* (31:17)

He was refreshed! Literally, He "took breath" or "caught his breath." (The verb "refreshed" is a translation of a verb related to the word *nephesh*, meaning soul, life, breath.)

The application of this expression to the creator is surprising and remarkable. It is not used elsewhere in reference to Him. The same expression is used in 23:12 to refer to the rest and refreshing of servants by the Sabbath rest.

We do not feel we should try to be "wise" by commenting on how God might be "refreshed." We leave the statement as the scripture gives it. God does not need our analysis or defense.

12. *What did God give to Moses? When?* (13:18)

God gave to Moses the two stone tablets inscribed with the words of the ten commandments (the testimony). Compare 32:15; 34:1, 28; 25:16. God had promised to give these tablets to Moses (24:12). The other parts of the law were written in a "book," probably a scroll (24:7).

The stone tables were given at the close of God's communing (speaking) with Moses. Moses had been up on the mount forty days. See Ex. 24:18; Deut. 9:11.

The choice of stone as the material and engraving (cutting) as the method for writing both suggests the imperishable duration of the words of God.

The inscription upon the tablets was written with "the finger of God." Does this mean that God himself engraved the writing, or that He wrote it in that he caused Moses to write it? Commentators have mostly taken the latter view. Still the literal force of the statement sounds as if God wrote it. Ex. 32:16 definitely says the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God. Ex. 34:1 instructs Moses to hew out a second set of stone slabs to replace the first set (which he broke), but God indicated that He himself would do the writing. Ex. 34:27-28 contains a commandment for Moses himself to write "these words"; but the words there seem to refer to the covenant words in Ex. 34. The assertion in 34:28 "he wrote" could refer either to God's act or Moses's.

The expression "finger of God" is understood by all to point to a divine source or causation. Its use in Ex. 8:19 to

refer to the plague of lice suggests it refers to a direct work of God, rather than one done by an intermediary. Similarly "finger of God" in Luke 11:20 (referring to Jesus' casting out demons) seems to describe direct divine action. Cassuto⁹ thinks that the use of "finger of GOD" instead of "finger of the LORD" and the use of *finger* instead of hand (since writing requires more, than one finger for man) show that the expression does not refer to God's actual physical act of writing. This argument does not seem very strong to us. But whichever view we take, God was the author of the words on the tablets.

We can only guess as to the size of the ten commandments. Certainly they were smaller than the ark of the covenant, and light enough to be carried in the hand (32:15). Keil and Delitzsch¹⁰ suggest that stone slabs about one cubit by one and a half cubits would be large enough for the 172 words of the ten commandments without the writing being excessively small.

Exodus 31:18 is a transitional verse between the instructions about the tabernacle and the priesthood and the story of the golden calf that follows in chapters 32-34. Notice Ex. 32:15, 19.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

32 And when the people saw that Mo-ses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aar-on, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Mo-ses, the man that brought us up out of the land of E-gypt, we know not what is become of him. (2) And Aar-on said unto them, Break

⁹*Op. cit.*, pp. 405, 406.

¹⁰*Op. cit.*, pp. 219, 220.

off the golden rings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. (3) And all the people brake off the golden rings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aar-on. (4) And he received it at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it a molten calf: and they said, These are thy gods, O Is-ra-el, which brought thee up out of the land of E-gypt. (5) And when Aar-on saw *this*, he built an altar before it; and Aar-on made proclamation, and said, To-morrow shall be a feast to Je-ho-vah. (6) And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

(7) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, that thou broughtest up out of the land of E-gypt, have corrupted themselves: (8) they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed unto it, and said, These are thy gods, O Is-ra-el, which brought thee up out of the land of E-gypt. (9) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: (10) now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. (11) And Mo-ses besought Je-ho-vah his God, and said, Je-ho-vah, why doth thy wrath wax hot against they people, that thou hast brought forth out of the land of E-gypt with great power and with a mighty hand? (12) Wherefore should the E-gyp-tians speak, saying, For evil did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. (13) Remember Abraham, I-saac, and Is-ra-el, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. (14) And Je-ho-vah repented of the evil which he said he would do unto his people.

(15) And Mo-ses turned, and went down from the mount, with the two tables of the testimony in his hand; tables that were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. (16) And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. (17) And when Josh-u-a heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Mo-ses, There is a noise of war in the camp. (18) And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but the noise of them that sing do I hear. (19) And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Mo-ses anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. (20) And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Is-ra-el drink of it.

(21) And Mo-ses said unto Aar-on, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought a great sin upon them? (22) And Aar-on said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are *set* on evil. (23) For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Mos-ses, the man that brought us up out of the land of E-gypt, we know not what is become of him. (24) And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off: so they gave it me; and I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

(25) And when Mo-ses saw that the people were broken loose (for Aar-on had let them loose for a derision among their enemies), (26) then Mo-ses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Whoso is on Je-ho-vah's side, *let him come* unto me. And all the sons of Le-vi gathered themselves together unto him. (27) And he said unto them, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, the God of Is-ra-el, Put ye every man his sword upon his thigh, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his neighbor. (28) And the sons of Le-vi did according to the word of Mo-ses:

and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. (29) And Mo-ses said, Consecrate yourselves to-day to Je-ho-vah, yea, every man against his son, and against his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

(30) And it came to pass on the morrow, that Mo-ses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto Je-ho-vah; peradventure I shall make atonement for your sin. (31) And Mo-ses returned unto Je-ho-vah, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. (32) Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. (33) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. (34) And now go, lead the people unto *the place* of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine angel shall go before thee; nevertheless in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them. (35) And Je-ho-vah smote the people, because they made the calf, which Aar-on made.

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

1. After careful reading, propose a topic or title for the chapter. (This one is easy!)
2. How long had the people waited for Moses? (24:18)
3. To whom did the people come with a request? (32:1; 24:14)
4. What was their request? (32:1)
5. What was the condition of the people's hearts just then? (Ps. 106:21; Acts 7:39-40; Nehemiah 9:17-18)
6. Where did Aaron obtain material to make the calf? (32:2-3)
7. How could a "graving tool" be used to make a "molten" calf? (32:4)
8. What did the people say about the golden calf when they saw it? (32:4) What did they say that contradicted

themselves? (32:1)

9. What did Aaron build after he made the calf? What proclamation did he make? (32:5)
10. What sacrifices did the people make? (32:6; 20:24)
11. What is involved in "they rose up to *play*"? (32:18-19; I Cor. 10:7)
12. Did the Lord know about their idolatry? (32:7-8)
13. Whose people did the Lord say they were? (32:7. Compare 32:11)
14. What is meant by a "stiffnecked" people? (32:9; Deut. 9:6; Isa. 48:4; II Chron. 30:8; Acts 7:51)
15. Did God suggest by saying to Moses, "Let me alone," that Moses very probably could affect and influence His intentions? (32:10)
16. What did God at that moment intend to do with the people? (32:10; Ps. 106:23)
17. What would God make of Moses? (32:10; Compare Num. 14:12; Gen. 12:2; Deut. 9:14)
18. Would this offer have been a strong temptation to Moses?
19. What three arguments did Moses use to influence God to spare the people? (32:11-13)
20. Did God spare the people? (32:14)
21. How can God "repent" when he "changes not"? (Mal. 3:6; Ex. 32:14) (For other examples of God "repenting," see Jonah 3:10; Jer. 26:19; Joel 2:13; II Sam. 24:16; Jer. 18:10; Gen. 6:6-7.)
22. How were the stone tablets written? (32:15-16)
23. Who was with Moses on the mount? (32:17; 24:13)
24. What did the minister of Moses think about the noise from the people? (32:17)
25. What sort of sound did Moses say they heard? (32:18)
26. What did Moses do when he saw the calf and the dancing? (32:19)
27. What did Moses do with the calf? (32:20; Deut. 9:21)
28. What question did Moses ask of Aaron? (32:21)
29. By what title did Aaron address Moses? (32:22; Num. 12:11) Why use such a title?

30. Was it really true that the people were "set on evil" (mischievous)? (32:22; See Deut. 10:6, 24)
 31. What "tall tale" did Aaron tell Moses? (32:24) What does this show about the character of Aaron or the condition of his heart?
 32. How did the Lord feel about Aaron at that time? (Deut. 9:20)
 33. In what way were the people "broken loose"? (32:25). (Compare the King James translation of 32:25.)
 34. How would Israel now be regarded among their enemies since they had "broken loose"? (32:25)
 35. What call did Moses issue to the people? (32:26)
 36. Who answered the call? (32:26)
 37. What were the Levites told to do? (32:27) Wasn't this rather extreme? Compare Num. 25:5, 7-11; Deut. 33:9; Luke 14:26; Ex. 22:20.
 38. How many were slain? (32:28. Compare Acts 2:41)
 39. What were the Levites called to do? (32:29)
 40. What did Moses tell the people that he would do for them? (32:30) Was he certain that his efforts would be successful?
 41. What did Moses ask God to do for the people? (32:31-32)
 42. Is the first part of 32:32 a complete or an incomplete sentence? What is the significance of this?
 43. What self-sacrificing request did Moses make? (32:32) Who made a somewhat similar statement? (Rom. 9:3)
 44. Did Jehovah forgive the people's sins? (32:33, 34; Compare Ex. 34:7; Ezek. 18:20)
 45. Did God agree to let the people go to the promised land? (32:34)
 46. Who (two persons) would lead them? (32:34; 23:20; Num. 20:16)
 47. How did God punish the people? (32:35)
-

EXODUS THIRTY-TWO: IDOLATRY!

I. Causes of Idolatry

1. Forgetful people; (32:1).
2. Weak leadership; (32:2, 21-24, 25).
3. Lust of flesh; (32:6).

II. Consequences of Idolatry

1. Anger of God; (32:7-10).
2. Anger of leaders; (32:19).
3. Punishments; (32:20, 35).
4. Derision of enemies; (32:25).

III. Cure of Idolatry

1. Call for decision; (32:26).
 2. Discipline; (32:27-28).
 3. Prayer for forgiveness; (32:30-31).
-

INTERCESSOR!

1. Need for an intercessor; (32:7-10).
 2. Test of an intercessor; (32:10).
 3. Pleas of an intercessor; (32:11-13).
 - a. Must be earnest.
 - b. Must be based on truth.
 4. Power of an intercessor; (32:14).
 5. Truthfulness of an intercessor; (32:30-31).
 6. Self-sacrifice of an intercessor; (32:32).
 7. Limitations of an intercessor; (32:33).
-

THE REPENTANCE OF GOD! (Ex. 32:14)

A. What it is not!

1. Not a change in God's standards; (Mal. 3:6).
2. Not partiality to God's favorites ("pets"); (I Pet. 1:17).

3. Not getting over a temper tantrum.
 4. Not withholding just punishment; (32:33, 35).
 - B. What it is!
 1. A consistent pattern for God; (Jonah 3:10; Jer. 26:19; Joel 2:13; II Sam. 24:16; Jer. 18:10; Gen. 6:6-7).
 2. An act of compassion. ("Repent" here means "have compassion.")
 3. A change in God's response based on a change in man's relation to Him.
-

FAILURE OF LEADERS! (Ex. 32:21-24)

1. Failure brings sin on the people; (32:21).
 2. Failure brings God's anger on the leaders; (Deut. 9:20).
 3. Failure leads to blame-shifting; (32:22-24).
 - a. Blames the people; (32:22-23).
 - b. Blames chance happenings; (32:24).
-

MOSES - A SPIRITUAL STATESMAN! (Ex. 32:19-20, 25-35)

1. Reacted strongly to sin; (32:19).
 2. Administered discipline; (32:20).
 3. Called for decision; (32:26).
 4. Placed spiritual relationships over fleshly ties; (32:27, 29).
 5. Denounced sin as sin; (32:30-31).
 6. Prayed for the people; (32:30).
 7. Willing to sacrifice himself; (32:32).
-

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

1. *What is in Exodus thirty-two?*

The chapter contains the familiar story of the making of the golden calf, God's anger, Moses' breaking the ten

commandments, and Moses' prayer.

The chapter makes clear that the idolatry of the people brought upon them later punishments that could never be all averted: "I will visit their sin upon them!" (32:34). Israel's idolatry caused them to be rejected temporarily as God's special people, until Moses prayed for their restoration with great earnestness. Note Ex. 33:13: "Consider that this nation is *thy people!*" Ex. 33:9: "Pardon our iniquity and our sin, and *take us* for thine inheritance." The chapter portrays a RUPTURE of the covenant between God and Israel.

Ramm accurately entitles the section "Israel in Idolatry; or Israel is out of Egypt, but Egypt isn't out of Israel."¹

The chapter reveals the power of idolatry. We need this dramatic reminder, because we tend to think idolatry is a temptation only to primitive peoples. We do not always recognize our own idolatries. John wrote, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (I John 5:21). Paul cautions us, "Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them were" (I Cor. 10:7).

Many critics view the chapter as a resumption of the Sinai story left off after 19:24. They consider the story in Ex. 32-34 to have been written shortly after the time of King Solomon to condemn Jeroboam I for making the golden calves (I Kings 12:28-33). According to this theory the author of 32-34 was the writer commonly called "J" (for Jehovist, or Yahwist). J's story was interrupted after Ex. 24 by the insertion of a long section of Priestly instructions (Ex. 25-31), written about the time of the Babylonian captivity. With chapter 32 the "J" (or JE) section is resumed. In addition, some critics hold that within chapters 32-34 themselves there are evidences of later interpolations.²

We cannot accept these critical views. There is utterly

¹*Op. cit.*, p. 179.

²Martin Noth, *op. cit.*, pp. 243-245.

no evidence in any ancient manuscripts of the existence of the separate source documents that the critics write of. The supposed lack of unity in the material seems evident to those who want to believe it and not evident to those who do not want to believe it. To us, the book of Exodus has a remarkable unity and progressiveness. And even the critics cannot agree among themselves as to exact points of division between the various "sources."

King Jeroboam I deliberately created religious ceremonies that would conflict with the Mosaic law, so as to get the people in this new nation completely cut off from loyalty to the Jerusalem temple. Thus it appears that the laws and stories in Exodus were things he was familiar with, things that had been written centuries before his time. It is quite hard to believe that someone ("J") wrote Exodus 32-34 AFTER Jeroboam had already made his golden calves.

2. *What request did the people make to Aaron? (32:1)*

They requested that Aaron make them "gods" who would go before them on their journey.

They referred to Moses as "this Moses ('this guy!') that brought us up out of the land of Egypt." They did not mention that JEHOVAH had brought them up! The lofty truth of an eternal, imageless God had not yet penetrated their minds, much less their religious habits. They wanted visible gods who would go before them - gods they could SEE!

Moses endured "as seeing him who is invisible." (Heb. 11:27). But the people wanted a visible god.

We marvel at how quickly the Israelites had forgotten the LORD! Scarcely five months before they were singing, "Jehovah is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: This is my God . . ." (Ex. 15:2).

The story of the making of the golden calf is a plain demonstration that seeing miracles and experiencing God's great wonders will not save and uphold those who have a weak faith. Those who cannot endure "as seeing the

invisible" (God) will probably not be saved by an abundance of visible miracles.

Moses had been gone forty days (24:18), and the people thought he would never return. Moses had delegated authority to Aaron and Hur (24:14). After 24:14 we hear no more of Hur. Jewish tradition (unverified) says he resisted the people's demands and was put to death by them. Josephus (*Antiquities* III, v, 7-8) mentions the people's anxiety over Moses' delay; but he says not even one word about the golden calf! Josephus tends to glorify Israel and to super-glorify Moses.

There has been MUCH discussion about the identity of the "gods" which the Israelites requested Aaron to make. Were these "gods" (plural) or "a god"? The story mentions only one golden calf (32:8). But the Hebrew verbs translated "go up" and "brought" (in 32:4) are forms used with plural subjects. The Hebrew word for "God" (*'elohim*) is naturally plural in form, although when referred to the LORD it normally takes a singular verb (as in Gen. 1:1: "God [plural form] created [singular verb] . . ."). The word *'elohim* frequently has a definitely plural meaning, "gods." In such cases the verb is plural also, as it is in Ex. 32:1.³ We agree with John Davis⁴ that the people were thinking of "gods" (plural) when they made their request to Aaron. Compare Ex. 32:31. (Isn't it remarkable that the people asked for "gods" to lead them instead of another man like Moses?)

Exodus 34:4 quotes the people as saying when they saw the ONE golden calf, "*These are thy gods, O Israel.*" It has been proposed that the words "gods" and "these" in this verse are "plurals of majesty," which only refer to one god. This is a possible and commonly-accepted explanation as to why *'elohim* often takes a singular verb. But examples

³Interestingly, Nehemiah 9:18, in telling of this very event, quotes the people as saying, "This (singular) is thy God (*'elohim*) that brought thee up out of Egypt."

⁴*Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971), p. 283.

of the pronoun *these* with a singular meaning are RARE indeed. II Chron. 3:3; Ezek. 46:24; and Ezra 1:9 have been proposed as examples of this; but these are extremely uncertain passages, as a little study will reveal.

Our opinion is that the Israelites were not trying to be grammatically consistent at that moment. They were too excited to be bothered about grammatical points, such as whether the word "god" took a singular or plural verb. We should not be surprised if they were inconsistent. Theologically they were very inconsistent. Why not also grammatically?

Another much-discussed question is this: Were the people desiring to make another god instead of Jehovah? Or was their idol a representation of Jehovah? Was it an adaptation of some Egyptian idol? Or perhaps of some Canaanite idol?

The prevailing opinion among scholars is that the golden calf was in some way a representation of Jehovah, or a mount for Jehovah to sit or stand upon. Scholars feel it was probably NOT a representation of an Egyptian god, because the feast held in connection with the worship of the calf was announced as a "feast of Jehovah" (32:5).⁵ (At least Aaron proclaimed a feast unto Jehovah.) Cassuto⁶ thinks that the Israelites were not actually asking for a substitute for the God of Israel, but were only asking for a replacement for Moses; and that Aaron did not consider that he was making another God instead of Jehovah. Scholars who hold views such as these assume that Aaron and the Israelites were thinking about god-images like those of Canaan and Syria, rather than like those of Egypt. The Canaanites at ancient Ugarit called their father-god "El, Father Bull." These Canaanite and related gods are very often pictured as sitting or standing on wild beasts - bulls, lions, cattle, etc. *The Ancient Near East in Pictures*

⁵Zondervan *Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 141.

⁶*Op. cit.*, pp. 411-413.

(Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 163, 164, 167, 179, shows pictures of numerous such gods riding upon animals. Thus according to this view, when Aaron made the calf, he was seeking to fashion a mount for the LORD, a bull calf upon which the invisible God could ride, like Canaanite deities. As the mercy-seat was indeed sort of a throne for Yahweh, so the bull calf was to be sort of a vacant throne for Yahweh. Thus, according to this view, Aaron did not really intend to commit the sin of idolatry when he made the calf.

Though the theories just presented are frequently expressed, there are problems in adopting them. The Biblical text does NOT state that the golden calf was designed like the idols of any particular people. Then there is the problem as to why the Israelites should have tried to make a calf like some Canaanite or Syrian image when they had lived in Egypt for centuries, and had become thoroughly Egyptianized. When the Israelites were in the wilderness and experienced difficulties, they always wanted to go back to EGYPT, and not to Canaan. (See Neh. 9:17; Ex. 14:11; 16:13; Num. 14:4.) Joshua 24:14 and Ezek. 20:7, 8 both speak of the Israelites serving the gods of EGYPT. Ezekiel even mentions that they did not "forsake the idols of Egypt." Acts 7:39 quotes Stephen as saying that they "turned back in their hearts unto EGYPT" (not to Canaan or Syria); and then they "made a calf in those days and brought a sacrifice unto the idol." Observe that the calf is plainly called an idol. Psalm 106:21 says that when they made the likeness of the ox "They *forgot* God their savior who had done great things in Egypt." Surely if they had *forgotten* God, they were not trying to make an image of him or for him to ride upon.

This scriptural evidence causes us to think that the golden calf actually was an idol in the worst sense of that word; and that it was probably adapted from some Egyptian model, rather than being patterned after a Canaanite bull-statue upon which some god-figure was standing.

It is well-known that the Egyptians made statues of animals that were worshipped as gods. These included the Hathor cow images, and the image of the Apis bull. The Apis bull was most often worshipped as a living bull, another one being picked to replace each former one at death. But statues of the Apis bull have indeed been found, dating as far back as the seventh century B.C., and possibly older.⁷

3. *Where was material obtained for the golden calf?* (32:2-3)

It was obtained from the golden rings in the ears of the families of the Israelites. The text does not clearly state this, but possibly Aaron thought that the request for costly earrings might restrain the Israelites. Not only was the value of the earrings great, but the Israelite men had to take them away from their family members, who might be uncooperative. If that was in Aaron's mind, his hopes were in vain. ALL the people BROKE OFF the earrings, and brought them to him. Aaron underestimated their fanaticism, and in so doing put himself in position where he needed to reject his own offer; and he was not equal to it. Thus he was swept along by the mob pressure to make an idol, an act that he certainly did not personally approve.

The Israelites did wear earrings in ancient times (Gen. 35:4). But in later years they did not (Judges 8:24). The taboo on earrings seems to have started at Mt. Sinai after the golden calf incident (Ex. 33:4-6). Gideon made an "ephod" from earrings, but they were the earrings of the Midianites (Judges 8:24-27).

4. *What was the technique used in making the calf?* (32:4, 8)

It was first "molten" and then "fashioned" (cut, form, make) with an engraving tool. "Molten" indicates that the

⁷*Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 190, has a photograph of an Apis statue wearing a sun-disk between its horns and a sacred cobra (uraeus) from its forehead. It is dated in the Saite period, 663-525 B.C. See also *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 141.

gold was first melted. We are not informed how it was made after the gold was melted. We suppose that a wooden model or a wooden frame of the idol was then made, and the gold was then overlaid upon this wood.⁸ Isaiah 30:22 and 40:19 suggest that idols were made in this manner. The fine details (such as eyes) would then be engraved into the golden shell. This would explain how the image could be "burned" (32:20). We get the impression that the calf was made in one day. If so, it could hardly have been anything but CRUDE.

We cannot excuse Aaron's action of making this idol. His heart was surely not in his work, but he did it. This did not disqualify him from the priesthood, any more than the sins of Abraham, Jacob, and David disqualified them from being great leaders in God's program for the ages. God's gifts are bestowed on the basis of grace rather than merit.

5. *How did the people respond when they saw the golden calf?* (32:4)

They became almost delirious with ecstasy! They said, "These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt!" Whereas they had said shortly before (32:1) that MOSES brought them up from Egypt, now they say the calf-idol had brought them up. What insanity! The calf had not even been in existence when they left Egypt!

The use of the plural forms "these" and "gods" gives problems, because only one idol was made. See notes on 32:1. Cassuto⁹ writes that the Jews never had the foolish

⁸An alternate translation of "fashioned it with a graving tool" is "he bound it up in a bag." To arrive at this rendering one must read *charit* (bag, purse, pocket) for the word *cherit* (graving tool) that is actually in the text. Then we must translate the verb *tsarar* as "wrap" or "bind up." This translation is found in II Kings 5:23, where Naaman put two talents in a bag. But this rendering seems incongruous and superfluous. Why should Aaron tie up the earrings in a bag? Why should such a triviality be mentioned? See Kell and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

⁹*Op. cit.*, p. 413.

idea that the calf led them from Egypt, but only that they considered the calf an emblem of God, itself worthy of divine honor along with the Lord, and thus spoke of "these," referring to the LORD *and* to the calf. This idea, as appealing as it might be, just isn't what the text says. The people upon seeing the calf said, "These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up."

The words of the people are the very words later used by King Jeroboam I (931-909 B.C.) to refer to his golden calves set up at Dan and Bethel (I Kings 12:28). Jeroboam's allusion to Aaron's golden calf could hardly be missed. The people were probably just as ready to worship a golden calf in Jeroboam's time as they were in Aaron's time.

The term "calf" (Heb., *'egel*) is masculine, and refers to a young bull in full strength. A three-year old animal is referred to as an *egelah* (same word with a feminine ending). The same word refers to an ox (or to the female heifer counterpart) mature enough to work at plowing or threshing (Judges 14:18; Jer. 50:11; Hosea 10:11). Psalm 106:19-20 makes the "calf" synonymous with an "ox."

6. *What did Aaron do when he saw the people's reaction to the calf?* (32:5)

Aaron built an altar before the calf, and he cried out, "A feast to Yahweh tomorrow!"

What was Aaron thinking when he built the altar and proclaimed a feast to Yahweh (if indeed he really was thinking in any coherent way at all)? It is proper for us to give Aaron whatever credit there may be possible. "Love believeth [the best possible about] all things" (I Cor. 13:7).

Aaron's making the altar was surely a legitimate act (Ex. 20:24), and the altar was not mentioned later as a cause for criticism. Making the altar was Aaron's own idea; the people had said nothing (as far as we know) about an altar.

Proclaiming a feast to Yahweh was also Aaron's own idea. We cannot assert on the evidence of the text that Aaron was trying to link the molten calf to Jehovah worship

(as some have alleged). If that was his idea, it did not work. Jehovah himself told Moses that the people had sacrificed **TO THE CALF**, and not to Him (32:8). It seems to us that Aaron was probably trying to divert the people's minds from the calf to the altar, and thus from calf-worship to Jehovah worship. It hardly compliments Aaron to represent him as thinking that he could transform the calf into a Jehovah-worship accessory by making an altar before it and proclaiming a Jehovah feast. (That would be somewhat like trying to make a cocktail party or a dance holy by having an "invocation" at the start.) Aaron did not later attempt to excuse himself by saying something such as, "Well, I thought we could use the calf to symbolize Jehovah, or use it for Jehovah to ride upon." Compare 32:21-24.

Whatever Aaron had on his mind, it did not cancel his sin. God became so angry with him that He was ready to kill him (Deut. 9:20). The decisiveness of Moses in situations of idolatry makes Aaron look very shaky. See Ex. 32:19-20; Num. 25:4-5.

7. *How did the people worship around the calf?* (32:6)

The people responded enthusiastically, rising up *early* the next morning. (Perhaps it was late in the evening when the calf was completed.) They "broke loose." (See notes on Ex. 32:25 concerning this expression.) They offered burnt-offerings (20:24) and peace offerings. Then they "sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."

Eating and drinking are innocent enough, but the "play" was another matter. Paul classifies this "play" as idolatry (I Cor. 10:7). The "play" including singing and dancing (32:18-19). The "play" included laughter, probably loud and uproarious. The Hebrew word translated "play" (*tsachaq*) means to laugh (Gen. 17:17), jest, mock (Gen. 19:14; 21:9), make sport of (as in Judges 16:25, where the Philistines "made sport of" Samson), and play. The word is used in Gen. 26:8 to refer to Isaac "sporting" with his wife, Rebekah. On the basis of this one use of the word many interpreters have read into the "play"

around the golden calf the idea of a wild sex orgy,¹⁰ such as the Canaanites might have indulged in at a Baal festival.

We seriously question that the "play" around the idol involved any sex orgy. *Tsachaq* does not basically refer to sex acts. What Isaac was doing with Rebekah was out-of-doors in plain sight, and probably involved nothing more than teasing, or joking, or laughing with Rebekah. The passage about Isaac does not indicate that the word meant "fondling" or even "caressing." Paul does not mention in I Cor. 10:7-8 that "fornication" was associated with the "play" around the golden calf, as it was with later idolatry (Num. 25:1).

It is not necessary, or even possible, to assume that all the people (600,000 men!) were involved in the idolatry. But many were, and therefore the whole nation was collectively involved in the transgression.

8. *How did God react to the golden calf?* (32:7-8; Deut. 9:12)

Jehovah was angry enough to destroy them (Deut. 9:19). His displeasure was HOT. Observe the statement that "They have made. . . ." They all made it by contributing materials, by requesting that it be made. See Ex. 32:20, 35.

Note that God referred to Israel as "THY (Moses') people" (32:7). For that moment He disowned them. But Moses reversed this, and (in 32:11) referred to them as "thy (God's) people."

God accused the Israelites of three things:

(1) They had *corrupted* themselves. "Corrupt" means "destroy, lay waste, corrupt morally (Gen. 6:11), overthrow." All acts of forsaking God corrupt those who disobey.

(2) They had turned aside quickly. Quickly indeed! It was scarcely six weeks since they had heard the ten commandments, which forbade the making of any type of image.

¹⁰Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 216. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 414.

(3) They had made a molten calf and worshipped it and sacrificed unto it (NOT unto God). Concerning the plurals "these" and "gods," see notes on 32:1.

9. *What did God threaten to do to the Israelites?* (32:9-10; Deut. 9:13-14).

To consume them, that is, burn them up (literally "to devour" them).

God declared that they were a stiff-necked people. This was a common expression (Deut. 9:6; II Chron. 30:8; Isa. 48:4; Acts 7:51), which described people as being like oxen or horses that would not respond when the guiding rein was tugged.

God declared that He would make of MOSES a great nation, once He had consumed the Israelites. The same promise was made to Moses later at Kadesh (Num. 14:12). The promise was like that given to Abraham (Gen. 12:2). Moses later mentioned this promise to Him in his speech to the people (Deut. 9:14).

Whether this promise was actually an alluring temptation to Moses or not, he rejected it instantly. If he had accepted it, his own descendants would not necessarily have been better people than the other Israelites. His grandson became an idolatrous priest (Judges 18:30).

God said to Moses, "Now therefore, let me alone." But Moses refused to let God alone. Like Jacob, he would not let go until he obtained the blessing (Gen. 32:24-29). In "Let me alone" there is an acknowledgement that Moses' intercession could alter (or at least delay) God's threatened punishment. God placed the fate of the whole nation into the hands of Moses. Would Moses, as the mediator of the covenant, show himself worthy of his calling, and sacrifice his own exaltation for the sake of a guilt-laden people?

"He (God) said that he would destroy them, Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, To turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them" (Psalm 106:23).

10. *What three appeals did Moses make to God to spare Israel?* (32:11-13)

(1) Remember your special relationship with Israel. They are "thy people," which thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt.

(2) The Egyptians would hear of it and think God had brought Israel forth to slay them, and they would gloat. (Joshua later used a similar argument, Josh. 7:9.)

(3) Remember your covenant promises with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to multiply their seed and give them the promised land. The promises mentioned in Ex. 32:13 can be read in Gen. 22:17; 13:15.

Moses mentioned "mountains" in 32:12. The Sinai area was very well supplied with mountains.

Regarding "repent" in 32:12, see notes on 32:14.

Note in 32:13 that God had sworn "by his own self." God can swear by none greater. (Heb. 6:13)

11. *How can God REPENT?* (32:14)

It should not be surprising to us that God "repents" of His threats to do evil (bodily punishment). "Repenting of evil" is one of the most prominent and basic aspects of God's nature. See Joel 2:13; Jonah 3:2. The Old Testament very frequently mentions God's repentance. See Jer. 26:19; 18:10; Jonah 3:10; II Sam. 24:16; Gen. 6:6-7. Aren't you glad that God will "repent" (change his mind about) the evil which He would be absolutely just to inflict?

The word here translated "repent" (*nacham*) most often means "to have compassion, to pity, to be comforted, to console." It is used in Psalm 23:4: "Thy rod and thy staff, they *comfort* me." Ex. 34:14 could be translated, "And Jehovah had compassion concerning the evil which He said he would do to his people." (Note the reassuring reference to "his" [God's] people.) Of thirty-five occurrences of this verb in the Old Testament, thirty refer to God as the subject and only five to men's acts of repenting.

God does not "repent" in the sense that he acknowledges He was in error or made a bad judgment. See Mal. 3:6.

God does not have temper tantrums, of which He needs to repent. God NEVER really desires or gets pleasure from the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11).

God was totally just in being angry over Israel's idolatry. God would be unworthy of our worship if He did not abhor evil. But at the very moment God was angry, He left the door open to Moses' intercession for the people, with the clear hint that if Moses prayed, the consequences would be different. In all of these things, God showed no shiftiness, no uncertainty, no variation. (James 1:17)

We are not told whether Moses was informed at that moment that God had repented. But the fact that God did not object to Moses' prayer for the people was itself a reassurance to Moses. Later when Moses wrote the book of Exodus, he knew that God had forgiven at that moment, and thus Moses wrote of what had actually happened just then.

Many commentators have tried to explain God's "repentance" as a figure of speech that seeks to express God's feelings in human terms that we can understand, because His feelings are beyond human comprehension. They speak of God's repentance as an anthropopathism (attributing human feeling to God) or an anthropomorphism (attributing human forms to God). This explanation seems to us rather unnecessary. Mankind learned of "repentance" from God, not God from man. We do not assume we know all about God. But one revelation from God about Himself is worth a thousand of our speculations about Him.

12. *What did Moses carry as he came down from the mount?* (32:15-16)

He carried the two tables (tablets) of stone inscribed with the ten commandments. See notes on 31:18. It was unusual for ancient inscribed stones to be written on both sides.

13. *What did Joshua think about the noise in the camp?* (32:17-18)

He thought it was a sound of war in the camp. Being a

military man, he was probably conditioned to interpret all loud sounds from people as war. See Ex. 17:9.

Joshua had been left on the lower slopes of the mount when Moses went up (24:13). As Moses descended, he met Joshua, but he did not tell him what God had said in 32:8. Even when Joshua commented about the uproar, Moses did not tell Joshua what God had said, but merely corrected his false impression of the sound.

Exodus 32:18 very definitely has a poetic rhythm in Hebrew. However, this does not necessarily indicate that the whole book was originally written in verse, of which a fragment is here preserved.¹¹ Poetic lines sometimes drop from the lips of gifted people without the lines being in a poetic setting.

The words "shout," "cry," and "sing" are all actually translated from one Hebrew word (*'anah*). This word refers to antiphonal singing in Ex. 15:21, and may do so here, as if one group of idolaters were singing and another group were echoing their words.

14. *How did Moses react when he saw the idolatry?* (32:19)

He was surprised, shocked, stunned, and indignant! Though he had been told about it, the impact of seeing it was much stronger than of hearing about it.

The word "dancing" is plural, as if referring to dances, or different types of dances. Cole¹² suggests that the plural is a "plural of indignation," as if to say "such goings-on!"

Moses slammed down the tables of ten commandments, and broke them "beneath the mount" (that is, at the foot of the mount). In the very place where the covenant had been made (24:4), the tables of the covenant were broken. How sad, but how appropriate.

We are not informed as to whether we should interpret the breaking of the ten commandments as merely an act of Moses in anger, or as a symbol of the breaking of the

¹¹Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

¹²*Op. cit.*, p. 218.

covenant between God and Israel. The scripture does not definitely state the latter idea, but the symbolism comes immediately into our minds. Certainly there was a rupture in the covenant relationship. Observe Moses' fervent pleas to God to accept Israel back as His people (33:13; 34:9).

Perhaps God blamed Moses slightly for breaking the ten commandments. See notes on 34:1.

Moses' breaking ALL the laws seems to illustrate James 2:10: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Israel in breaking one law had broken all the law.

S. C. Barlett tells of climbing up and descending Mt. Sinai:

We started to descend . . . by the gorge on the north-east side [called "Jethro's path"], by which possibly Moses may have descended when he heard the sounds of the camp, before he could see what was taking place there. We were completely shut in by the sides of the gorge till just as we emerged from it near the bottom. There was no sound below for us to hear, but we could readily accept Mr. Palmer's statement that while descending here, he had distinctly heard the sounds of his own camp at the foot of the mountain, while entirely hidden from view. . . . The passage by which we [and presumably Moses] descended was of the steepest, the rocks often loose, and the descent hard. Between the almost perpendicular cliffs, sometimes singularly honey-combed . . . we made our way . . . in an hour and a quarter from the top of Ras Safsafah.¹³

15. *What did Moses do with the golden calf?* (32:20; Deut. 9:21)

He utterly destroyed it, even making the Israelites drink the water containing its ashes. Deut. 9:21 mentions that

¹³*From Egypt to Palestine* (New York: Harper, 1879), pp. 269, 270.

the water was that in "the brook that descended out of the mount."

Moses **GROUND** the calf, probably between stones. See notes on 32:4 regarding how the golden calf might be *burned*.

Moses' treatment of the idol surely showed the worthlessness of it. It also humiliated the idolaters. In later years King Josiah treated the altar at Bethel in a way similar to the way Moses treated the golden calf. (II Kings 23:15)

Numerous Jewish and modern commentators have associated the "water of bitterness" used as a test of a wife suspected of adultery (Num. 5:17-22), with Moses' act of making the people drink the water bearing the ashes of the golden calf. To us this does not appear to be a legitimate association.

Firstly, the scripture does not associate the two passages. Secondly, the law given in Numbers five was apparently revealed by God to Moses some time **AFTER** the golden calf was destroyed. Thirdly, Exodus 32 does not mention any examination of the people to see who passed and who flunked the water-drinking test.

In spite of these barriers to associating the two passages (Ex. 32 and Num. 5), writers still speak as if Moses used the gold-dusted water as a guilt-detector, a sort of trial, or ordeal, by water. Supposedly the people's physiological or psychological reactions to drinking the water would show which ones were guilty of participating in the idolatry. The smiting of the people referred to in 32:35 has been considered to be a reference to those who got sick after drinking the water because they were guilty of the idolatry. But Ex. 32:35 appears to be a statement about punishment rather than about testing.

16. *What excuse did Aaron give to Moses? (32:21-24)*

Aaron blames the people. Also he said that the calf formed itself (miraculously!) in the fire, and "came out" (under its own power!). It is hard to imagine that Aaron

did not have a sheepish grin after he told his story about the calf. What a "tall tale"! God was ready to destroy Aaron (Deut. 9:20).

Moses said, "What did the people do unto thee, that thou hast brought a great sin upon them?" Moses was astounded at Aaron. Aaron had failed miserably to be a strong leader. Moses' question was more designed to convict and reprove Aaron than to get information.

What Aaron said about Israel in 32:22 was very true. They were constantly "in evil." See 14:9; 15:24; 16:2, 20; 17:2, 4. Israel had been rebellious ever since Moses knew them (Deut. 9:7, 24).

Nevertheless, Aaron's answer was very evasive and defensive, like that of Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:12-13). Aaron shows no real sorrow for his sin.

Aaron addresses Moses as "My lord." See also Num. 12:11. This title has a servile tone about it that seems most unfitting from the one who stood with Moses on the bank of the Nile when it turned to blood (7:20).

17. *What call for decision did Moses make? (32:25-26)*

He stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is for Jehovah? Unto me!"

While this had the nature of an ultimatum, it also contained the opportunity of an amnesty.

Exodus 32:25 speaks of the people having "broken loose" (K.J.V., being "naked"). They had broken loose from all the regulations of God. The word does not mean to "make naked," and it is not so translated that way anywhere in the American Standard version. The Hebrew verb *para'* means "to loosen, to let loose, unbridle, to break out" (as a disorder). It may mean to "uncover" (or let loose), as of the hair (Num. 5:18; Lev. 13:45). But there is not one passage where it clearly refers to nakedness. This has a bearing on whether or not the "play" of 32:6 refers to a sex orgy. See notes on that verse.

Israel's "breaking loose" had given their enemies an opportunity for derision (literally, a "whispering"). The

enemies would include the nearby Amalekites and others who would hear about this. Compare Deut. 28:37. The sins of saints cause unbelievers to blaspheme God.

In these circumstances Moses made his ultimatum-amnesty proclamation. And all the sons (meaning descendants) of Levi gathered together unto Moses.

The response of the Levites comes as a surprise to us. Nothing previously written about the tribe of Levi (except possibly the faith of Moses' parents) causes us to think very highly of them. Levi and his brother Simeon were angry and cruel men. They massacred the Shechemites (Gen. 34:25-26). They hocked an ox (Gen. 49:5-7). Still, when the call came for men to stand with Moses, the tribe of Levi responded to a man. (Possibly the "all" may be used here a bit hyperbolically, as in other places. Compare Ex. 9:6.)

Several questions must remain unanswered: Were the Levites as a whole less guilty of participating in the idolatry than the other tribes? Was their family association with Moses cause for their response? Were they more willing to confess their sins than the other tribes?

The immediate response of the Levites suggests that if Aaron had boldly stood up and opposed the people's request that he make them "gods," he would have had many loyal Israelites to stand with him.

18. *What were the Levites commissioned to do?* (32:27-28)

They were to put on their swords and go through the camp slaying people. About 3000 fell that day.

Note that it was *Jehovah* the God of Israel who commanded this mass execution, but the "word of Moses" proclaimed it. A similar order to execute violators is in Num. 25:5.

The expression "from gate to gate" indicates that Israel's wilderness encampment had definite boundaries, and probably a fence with gates.

"Brother" means "fellow-Israelite." Fleshly ties must not be stronger than spiritual relationships. (Matt. 12:46-

50; 10:37; Luke 12:52-53; 14:26).

The small number slain (small in contrast to the total population) may indicate that not all the people were involved in the idolatry, or that God in His grace spared many offenders.

Three-thousand men were slain at Sinai for breaking the law. On the day of Pentecost after Christ ascended three-thousand law-breakers were made alive (Acts 2:41; Eph. 2:5). This is a vivid object lesson showing the differing natures of the law and the gospel.

The command to slay was a drastic test of faith for the Levites. But the punishment was just: "He that sacrificeth unto any God save unto Jehovah only, shall be utterly destroyed" (Ex. 22:20).

How could the Levites rampage through the camp killing without resistance? Was the meekness of the people due to the suddenness of the attack, or the guilt they felt for their sin, or the authority projected by Moses' language and bearing? It would seem reasonable that 22,000 Levites could slay 3000 people before the people realized what was happening (Num. 3:39). The people did not know what Moses had ordered the Levites to do. We suppose that the Levites slew only guilty idolaters, those whom they may have seen participating.

19. *What were the Levites called to consecrate themselves to?* (32:29)

They were to consecrate themselves to Jehovah, for a holy war against sinners. "Consecrate" means literally "fill the hand." Compare 29:9.

Exodus 32:29 is a difficult verse. Does the command refer to something that the Levites were called to do AFTER the 3000 were slain? (We favor this view.) Or is it merely a restatement of the order in 32:27? Or is it merely a report on the consequences of their slaying the 3000?

The R.S.V., which follows the Septuagint here, gives the verse the latter meaning: "Today you have ordained

yourselves." The Septuagint reads, "Ye have filled your hands this day to the Lord." It definitely seems that the imperative reading, "Consecrate yourselves," is the correct reading, rather than the indicative reading, "Today you have ordained yourselves."¹⁴

The words of 32:29 stand AFTER the report of the slaughter. Thus it seems preferable to interpret them as being Moses' words to the Levites after they had completed the punitive slaughter. After that fearsome event, they are called on to present themselves. ("Fill your hand!") They are to give themselves to service to the Lord that day, for service in time to come, so that every man of them might, if need be, be against his own father and mother, and thus to get themselves a blessing that day. They accepted the call.

The "blessing" which Levi was to obtain that day was the privilege of service in God's tabernacle (Num. 3:6-9).

Moses blessed Levi in Deut. 37:9 with these words:

Who said of his father, and of his mother, I have not
seen him,
Neither did he acknowledge his brethren;
Nor knew he his own children:
For they have observed thy word
And keep thy covenant.

The previous ferocity of the Levites was now disciplined and consecrated to serve God alone. And thus the curse that once rested on them (Gen. 49:7) was turned into a blessing.

20. *What did Moses promise to do for the people? (32:30)*

He promised to go unto Jehovah (back up in the mount) to try to make atonement (covering) for them.

¹⁴The Hebrew reading is an imperative, "Consecrate yourselves." The verb could possibly be rendered as an indicative (reading it as *piel* perfect instead of *Qal* imperative); "They have filled *your* (plural) hand." But the presence of the plurals "they" and "your" indicate that the imperative reading is the correct one, and the Greek reading is incorrect.

The “Ye” is emphatic: “You! you have sinned a great sin.”

The word “peradventure” (meaning “perhaps”) is a word that expresses hope in Jer. 20:12. But the same word expresses fear and doubt in Gen. 27:12. The use of this word suggests that Moses was not at all sure his efforts would be successful.

21. *What did Moses pray unto God? (32:31-32)*

Moses confessed their sin. He requested God to forgive (literally “lift up”) their sin. And if God would not do this, to blot out his name out of God’s book.

Exodus 32:31 mentions for the third time their “great sin.” See 32:21, 30, 31. Regarding the “gods,” see 32:1.

Moses’ prayer was utterly selfless. He lived only for the people. His prayer was similar to Paul’s in Rom. 9:3. He was willing to sacrifice himself for the people.

The last part of the request for forgiveness in 32:32 is not stated, leaving its conclusion to be supplied by the mind of the reader. The last part of 32:32 might have been “then I will be content,” or “I will say no more,” or “please do so!” For similar incomplete sentences, see Daniel 3:15; Luke 13:9; 19:42; Romans 9:22; I Samuel 12:14-15. (This type of expression is called *aposiopesis*.)

Moses’ reference to the “book” of God is the first reference to this book in the scriptures. We do not know how Moses even knew such a book existed. We do not know what Moses understood the nature of this book to be. (Many facts and practices in divine religion had been taught to the pre-Mosaic patriarchs, concerning which we are told nothing of the way or time they were revealed. Examples include tithing, the priesthood, burnt-offerings, etc.)

This book is elsewhere called “the book of the living” (Psalm 69:28; Isa. 4:3), “the book of remembrance” (Malachi 3:16), and the “book of life” (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 20:15; 13:8; 17:8).

We do not know for sure that the book mentioned by

Moses was the same book that we know as the book of life. Possibly this "book" was a list of those granted more lifetime on earth, and did not have reference to eternal life. We do feel, however, that it probably was the same book that we know as the book of life, because the names of those to be saved by God have been written in the book of life "from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 17:8). We do not assume that Moses knew as much about the book as we have learned by revelation since his time.

Moses prayed for Aaron also at this time. The exact time of Moses' prayer is hard to specify. Possibly it was during the forty-day period in the mountain that Moses was to in a few days (Deut. 9:18-20; Ex. 34:1-2, 28).

There would come a time when not even the prayers of Moses or Samuel could avert judgment upon Israel, but that time was not yet (Jeremiah 15:1).

22. *Was Moses' prayer granted?* (32:33-35)

The request (or offer) of Moses was refused. Moses could not be a substitute for Israel. (Only Christ could be a substitute.) Whoever had sinned would be blotted out of the book, not Moses.

Though God is forgiving, there are times when He will be no means clear the guilty (Ex. 34:7). This gives God no pleasure. "For he doth not afflict willingly ('from his heart'), nor grieve the children of men." (Lam. 3:32-33) But justice must often be administered, even when it is painful.

God foresaw that that generation would continue in their ways of unbelief. He foreknew that that generation would be rejected at Kadesh-barnea (Num. 14:22-35), and all perish in the desert (Ex. 32:34b).

"Forty years long was I grieved with that generation, And said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Wherefore, I swear in my wrath. That they should not enter into my rest" (Psalm 95:10-11). Hebrews 4:5-7 quotes this passage, and indicates that Israel not only did not get to enter into the promised

rest of Canaan-land, but they did not enter God's eternal rest. How totally tragic! (But the sad fate of Israel was written to warn us of the same danger! Heb. 4:11)

Nonetheless, God did allow the people to be led on by Moses and an angel to the place of which God had spoken (to the promised land). God foreknew they would never make it.

God promised that "My angel shall go before your face" (or presence). Regarding this angel see 33:2; 23:20-24; Num. 20:16.

The statement is 32:35 that "Jehovah smote the people" is indefinite as to when and how the smiting was done. The verb translated "smote" is related to the word translated "plague" (*negeph*) in Ex. 12:13; Num. 16:47. This suggests a deadly smiting. The R.S.V. translates it "The LORD sent a plague upon the people." It has been suggested that this plague was the possible consequence of the potion (the gold-dusted water) that Moses had made them drink.¹⁵ This notion seems untrue. See notes on 32:20.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

33 And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, Depart, go up hence, thou and the people that thou hast brought up out of the land of E-gypt, unto the land of which I sware unto Abraham, to I-saac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: (2) and I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Ca-na-an-ite, the Am-or-ite, and the Hit-tite, and the Per-iz-zite, the Hi-vite, and the Jeb-u-site: (3) unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people; lest I consume thee in the way. (4) And when the people heard these evil tidings,

¹⁵Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 454.

they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments. (5) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Say unto the children of Is-ra-el, Ye are a stiffnecked people; if I go up into the midst of thee for one moment, I shall consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. (6) And the children of Is-ra-el stripped themselves of their ornaments from mount Ho-reb onward.

(7) Now Mo-ses used to take the tent and to pitch it without the camp, afar off from the camp; and he called it, The tent of meeting. And it came to pass, that every one that sought Je-ho-vah went out unto the tent of meeting, which was without the camp. (8) And it came to pass, when Mo-ses went out unto the Tent, that all the people rose up, and stood, every man at his tent door, and looked after Mo-ses, until he was gone into the Tent. (9) And it came to pass, when Mo-ses entered into the Tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the door of the Tent: and Je-ho-vah spake with Mo-ses. (10) And all the people saw the pillar of cloud stand at the door of the Tent: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man at his tent door. (11) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his minister Josh-u-a, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the Tent.

(12) And Mo-ses said unto Je-ho-vah, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found favor in my sight. (13) Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee, to the end that I may find favor in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. (14) And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest. (15) And he said unto him, If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence. (16) For wherein now shall it be known that I have found favor in thy sight, I and thy people? is it not in that thou goest with us, so that we are separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth?

(17) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found favor in my sight, and I know thee by name. (18) And he said, Show me, I pray thee, thy glory. (19) And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of Je-ho-vah before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. (20) And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for man shall not see me and live. (21) And Je-ho-vah said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon the rock: (22) and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand until I have passed by: (23) and I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back; but my face shall not be seen.

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

1. After careful reading, propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. Where was Moses directed to go? Who was to accompany him? (33:1, 12; 32:34)
3. What change does the command of 33:1 indicate had taken place in God's feelings toward Israel? (Compare 32:10.)
4. Who was to be sent before Moses and Israel? Why? (33:2; Compare 23:20-23.)
5. What was the land where they were going like? (33:3)
6. Why would God not personally go up with Israel? (33:3, 5)
7. What made the people mourn? (33:4) What did the people do that showed their sorrow? (33:4)
8. Why did God tell the Israelites to put off their ornaments? (33:5)
9. At what place did the Israelites strip off their ornaments? How long did this non-wearing of ornaments continue? (33:6)

10. Where did Moses take the "tent"? (33:7) What did he do with it? What did he call it? (Compare 27:21.) Was this removal of the tent done just one time? Was this the same "Tent" that is referred to in 26:36, 7?
11. What did the removal of the Tent from out of the camp symbolize or indicate?
12. Who went out to the Tent? (33:7)
13. What did the people do when Moses went out to the Tent? Where did they do this? (33:8, 10)
14. What happened when Moses entered the Tent? What did this symbolize or indicate? (33:9-10)
15. What was remarkable about the way the LORD spoke to Moses? (33:11; Compare Num. 12:6-7.)
16. Who remained at the Tent (possibly as a guard)? (33:11)
17. Where did the conversation of 33:12-23 occur?
18. What did Moses desire more information from God about? (33:12)
19. What had God said to Moses about Moses? (33:12, 17)
20. What did Moses want God to show him? (33:13)
21. For what two purposes did Moses want God to show him His way(s)? (33:13)
22. How did Moses want God to consider (or look upon) the nation (Israel)? (33:13)
23. Who would go with Israel? (33:14) What change in God's intentions does this indicate? (Compare 33:3, 5, 12.)
24. What is the "rest" of 33:14? (Joshua 21:44; 22:4; 23:1; Psalm 95:10-11; Deut. 12:9)
25. How strongly did Moses desire God's presence? (33:15)
26. How could it be known that Moses and Israel had found favor in God's sight? (33:16)
27. How was Israel "separated" from all other peoples? (33:16; Compare Num. 23:9.)
28. What is the "thing that thou (God) hast spoken"? (33:17; Compare 33:14-16.)
29. What is the significance of God's knowing Moses by *name*? (33:17)
30. How many times do forms of the word *know* occur in

33:12-17?

31. What did Moses request God to show him? (33:18)
 32. With what is God's "goodness" made synonymous? (33:19, 22)
 33. What would God proclaim to Moses? (33:19)
 34. What is the significance of "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious" in the setting (context) in which it was uttered? (33:19)
 35. What can man not see and yet live? (33:20, 23; Compare I Timothy 6:15-16; John 1:18. Compare Ex. 24:10.)
 36. What was the "place by me" (God)? (33:21; 34:2, 6)
 37. How would God "cover" Moses as He passed by? (33:21-22)
 38. What would Moses see of God? (33:23)
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EXODUS THIRTY-THREE: GOD AND ISRAEL IN TENSION!

1. God's presence withdrawn; (33:1-3).
 2. The people in mourning; (33:4-6).
 3. The meeting-tent removed from camp; (33:7-11).
 4. The mediator in prayer; (33:12-23).
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WHEN GOD WITHDRAWS HIS FACE! (33:1-7)

1. We journey without Him; (33:1-7).
 2. We confront Him with danger; (33:3, 5).
 3. We mourn; (33:4, 6).
 4. We seek Him at the distant place; (33:7).
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THE FAR-OFF TENT OF GOD (33:7-11)

1. Placed afar-off because of sin; (33:7-8).
 2. Sought by men in need; (33:7).
 3. Fully accessible to the chosen mediator; (33:8-11).
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GOD'S ABOUNDING GRACE (33:12-17)

Grace, the source of hope . . .

1. To remove uncertainties; (33:12).
 2. To learn God's way; (33:13).
 3. To know God; (33:13).
 4. To have God's presence; (33:14-17).
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SEEING GOD'S GLORY (Ex. 33:18-23)

1. Man's desire to see God's glory; (33:18).
 2. Man's limitations in seeing God's glory; (33:20, 23).
 3. God's grace in showing His glory; (33:19).
 4. God's assistance in revealing His glory; (33:21-22).
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

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

The chapter tells of the tense period between Moses' prayer for Israel (32:31-34) and God's re-acceptance of Israel (33:14, 17). The early part of the chapter tells of God and Israel in tension, but it ends with the tension relieved and Moses asking God to show him His very glory.

The theme of the Lord's presence pervades all of chapter 33. How can a sinful people continue to experience God's presence at all? How can Israel survive without God's presence among them?¹

2. *What are the critical theories about chapter thirty-three?*

Some critical scholars have expressed the view that this chapter consists of material from several sources. M. Noth considers 33:1-6 to be mostly of "Deuteronomistic origin" (sixth century) and not to be from just one source. He

¹Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

feels 33:7-11 is an old pre-priestly, pré-deuteronomistic tradition possibly "taken up" by J.²

On the other hand *Broadman Bible Commentary* (1969) attributes 33:7-11 to E (supposedly *after* J), and 33:12-16 to J (tenth century).³ Obviously there is not a unity of opinion about the "sources."

A view much more in harmony with the scripture itself and with the archaeological evidences is that of Cassuto:

For two consecutive passages [like 32:34-35 and 33:1-4] to treat of the same theme, with a few variations, was a common feature of [ancient] epic poetry. It will suffice, for instance, to point out that in the Ugaritic epic of Aqhat [fifteenth century B.C.] Daniel's action in a year of dearth is recounted in two successive paragraphs, which are identical except for the change of a few synonyms.⁴

Thus it appears that Moses wrote in the literary style of his time, and that suspicions about sources and additions are not based on solid evidence.

3. *Where was Moses directed to go?* (33:1)

He was directed to go up with the people into the land God had sworn to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God's wrath of 32:10 had been softened by Moses' intercession. Compare 32:31. God was now allowing them to go up to the land. This broadens slightly the promise of 32:34. But still God was not Himself going up with them, lest he consume them. God refers to the people as "the people" rather than as "thy people" (as in 32:7). But God still had not called them "my people." Compare 33:13.

4. *Who would go before Israel?* (33:2-3)

An angel would be sent. See 32:34. Ex. 23:20-23 also refers to an "angel" who would be sent before them. But

²*Op. cit.*, p. 255.

³P. 456.

⁴*Op. cit.*, p. 425.

the "angel" of 23:20-21 was one like God Himself, if not actually God himself. On the other hand, the angel of 32:2 and 32:34 seems to refer to an ordinary angel, and the verse is a virtual refusal of the direct presence of God. Moses appealed to God in 33:12-16 to reverse this threat.

Regarding the Canaanite tribes, see 3:17. Regarding the "land flowing with milk and honey," see 3:8.

The reason for God's refusal to accompany Israel was "lest I consume thee in the way." God's anger toward Israel was such that if he did go up with Israel, He might destroy her because of her apostasy. Regarding "stiff-necked," see 32:9. God's presence with them would be a danger to them rather than a blessing. For in their state God would be a consuming fire in their midst (Deut. 4:24).

Israel was to be put on a level with other nations. It would lose its character as the people have a special covenant connection with Yahweh. See 33:16.

5. *How did the Israelites show their sorrow and mourning?* (33:4-6)

As a sign of mourning over the lost presence of God among them, the Israelites did not put on their ornaments. More than that, God commanded them to strip off the ones they were wearing. This practice of not wearing ornaments became a permanent custom in Israel thereafter. Israel must have seemed like a nation of ascetics and puritans in the ancient world. Putting off luxurious clothing and jewelry is a sign of mourning. Compare Ezek. 26:16.

Israel's mourning is the first real evidence of repentance in them. "Blessed are they that mourn" (Matt. 5:4). When the Lord is not in the midst of His people, it is a time to mourn! See James 4:9-10. Christians might well strip off some ornaments sometimes and mourn.

The "evil tidings" (literally, "this evil word") was the news that God would not go up in the midst of them. The tidings were "evil" in the sense of being painful, but certainly not morally evil. Actually, God was being very long-suffering to let them live at all.

The translation "If I go up into the midst of thee, . . ." is preferable to the King James reading, "I will come up into the midst of thee." The "if" is implied, if not actually in the Hebrew text.

The "one moment" is the time of a wink, or an instant. Ex. 33:5 could be translated: "(If) I go up in your midst (for) one instant (wink), I will finish you off! And now put off your ornament(s) from you, that I may know what I should do to you."

The wearing of ornaments might indicate a joyous defiance of God or an indifference to Him. Even in their humiliation God was uncertain what to do with them.

The "onward" of 33:6 is not actually in the text. It just reads "from Mt. Horeb." Horeb is the same as Sinai. See 3:1; 17:6.

The word "stripped" in 33:6 is from the same verb (*natsal*) that is translated "spoil" in 12:36: "they despoiled (or plundered) the Egyptians." The people who were once victorious and adorned are now themselves stripped of their ornaments by their sin.

The ornaments that had been partly used to make a golden calf were now available to make God's sanctuary. Ex. 35:22 makes plain that such trinkets were a major source of the offering of gold from the people. Some have suggested that the ornaments were religious medallions of some sort, and were associated with foreign gods. There is no real evidence of this.

6. *Where did Moses pitch the Tent? (33:7-8)*

He pitched it outside of the camp, quite a ways from the camp. (The "camp" of the Israelites had definite boundaries and "gates." See 32:27.) Moses called this tent the "Tent of meeting," the same name that was given to the tabernacle room called the Holy Place. See 27:21; 29:42.

The exact reason for removing the tent from the midst of the camp is not stated. It is natural to assume that the separation was brought about by God's anger toward and

alienation from Israel. Or it may have been a means to keep a distance between God's "glory" and the people. (33:10)

Although the tent was moved from the midst of the camp, God had not withdrawn His presence altogether from them.

As far as we can tell, the removal of the tent was not done by any command of God, but was an act of spiritual discernment by Moses, in faith that God would not totally and finally reject them. (Pink)

When the Israelites now came to seek Jehovah, they had to depend on Moses. Moses had a very direct communication with God, more so than any other prophet ever. See 33:11; Num. 12:8. He did not commune with God in a trance or ecstasy, but as directly as one speaking to a friend.

In the Christian church we do not require such a prophet or direct revelation; for the faith has "once for all been revealed to the saints" (Jude 3); and we may gain a true understanding by reading. (Eph. 3:4)

What is the Tent referred to in 33:7? Probably it was a tent specially designated as the place for talking with God before the more elaborate Tabernacle was built. Certainly it was not the Tabernacle-tent itself. It probably was not Moses' own tent, for Moses left this Tent after communing with God, and returned to the camp, presumably to his own dwelling. Compare 18:7.

The verb "take" (or "took") in 33:7 is in the imperfect form, which usually indicates incomplete, repeated, or future action. This is the reason for the translation "Moses used to take. . . ." Most interpreters therefore feel that Moses' action of taking the tent out from the camp was not a single event, but one repeated many times.⁵ The same imperfect "tense" form is used with the other verbs in 33:7.

However, in this instance the text clearly indicates that

⁵Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

the Tent was not moved back and forth, but remained in one spot outside the camp, while Joshua stayed there constantly. Moses came back and forth, but the Tent stayed. The imperfect therefore does not here have the meaning of repeated action, as it usually does. Ex. 8:24 (Heb., 8:20) is another example of an imperfect form which does not express unfinished action, and is translated "The land was corrupted."

7. *What indicated God's presence at the Tent? (33:9-11)*

The pillar of cloud over the tent indicated God's presence there, like a flag-pole over a royal palace would point it out.

When Moses entered the Tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and Jehovah spoke to Moses. See Num. 14:14 and Ex. 13:21-22 concerning the cloud. Ex. 40:34-35 describes a pillar of cloud that covered the completed tabernacle. This surely was the same cloud as that of 33:9.

The subject of the verb "spake" in 33:9 is not stated, but obviously it is Jehovah.

When the cloud descended, the people would rise up and worship (bow down), each man at his own tent door.

The mention of Joshua stresses his closeness to Moses and to the sacred Tent, and therefore to God. Compare 17:9; 24:13; 32:17. Joshua received a befitting preparatory exposure to the people before he became the successor to Moses. He was a constant guard at the Tent.

It appears from Numbers 11:26 and possibly 12:4 that the Tent where Moses met God outside the camp was preserved even after the tabernacle was constructed; and that on some occasions of rebellion, unbelief, and murmuring among the people that God would appear in the cloud over this out-of-camp tent. This would surely dramatize Israel's estrangement from God at such times.

8. *What information, revelation, and consideration did Moses want from God?*

(1) He wanted to know the identity and status of the angel that God said He would send with them (33:2).

(2) He wanted to know God's "way," and (3) to know God

himself. (4) He wanted God to consider that the Israelites were HIS people.

Moses was fearful (rightly so!) that Israel would never make it through their journeys without God's own presence with them. Who was this "angel" that god said he would send with them? Moses was uneasy, even after the promise of 33:1-2.

The conversation between Moses and God in 33:12-23 seems to have taken place in the Tent of meeting (33:8-9): M. Noth writes that beginning with 33:12 Moses is "once again imagined" as being present on the mountain.⁶ But this is hardly so.

The conversation of 33:12-14 is an illustration of the intimate way Moses was able to talk with God.

The command to "Bring up this people" was that which was spoken in 32:34.

We do not know when God had spoken the words of 33:12, "I know thee by name, and thou hast also found favor in my sight." Compare 33:17.

Moses asked God, "Show me now thy way." The Hebrew word for "way" is spelled as a singular word (as in K.J.V.), although most translations render it as "ways." We prefer the singular translation. The Greek O.T. translated (or paraphrased) the expression very perceptively: "Reveal thyself to me." That is really what Moses wanted. To know God's "way" is to know God himself.

Possibly the "way" could refer to the route through the desert that God would lead them over. (We doubt this view.)

The purpose for which Moses requested to know God's way was that he might "know thee, so that I may find favor and grace in thy sight." One act of grace (33:13a) would lead to obtaining even greater grace. One revelation of God's way would lead to an even deeper knowledge of God.

⁶*Op. cit.*, p. 256.

Finally Moses wanted God to "look upon this nation as THY people." Compare Deut. 9:29! God had spared their lives, and agreed to let them go to the promised land. But Moses wanted God to accept them again as His own people.

9. *Did God agree to go up personally with Israel to the promised land?* (33:14-16)

Yes. God pledged, "My presence shall go with thee." This may mean that the same divine "angel of his presence" promised in 23:20-22 would continue to accompany Israel. Compare Isa. 63:9. This angel's presence was God's own presence. That was guarantee enough that they would attain their goal.

"Presence" (literally, "face") may refer to God's literal presence, or to His gracious care (Ps. 24:6), or to His personal activity. "My presence" could mean "my person," as in II Sam. 17:11.

The "rest" promised was the secure possession of the promised land. See Deut. 3:20; 12:10; Josh. 1:13, 15; 21:44; 22:4; Heb. 4:8. Rest is always the longed-for goal of those on a journey.

Moses was glad for the promise of God's presence. How otherwise could it be known that Moses and the people had found favor in God's sight, except that God was in their midst? Observe Moses' stress in 33:16 on "thy people" (stated twice).

Israel's distinctiveness lay in their fellowship with God. This made them separate from all other nations. Num. 23:9; II Sam. 7:22-24; I Kings 8:53.

- Moses seemed to have a fear, even after the reassurance of 33:14, that the evil root of the people's rebelliousness might yet cause God's presence to depart from them. See 34:9. He wanted God's presence to be guaranteed by God's irreversible commitment, and not on the people's future faithful conduct. He sought guaranteed grace!
10. *Did God agree to accept again the people as His?* (33:17)

Yes! The acceptance was complete. God's acceptance of the people was based upon His acceptance of Moses.

God said, "I know you by name." Compare 33:12. What an illustration this is of our acceptance by God because of *Christ's* merit and His intercession for us! Rom. 8:34; Isa. 53:12.

11. *What all-surpassing thing did Moses ask God to show him?* (33:18-19)

He asked to see God's own glory. He wanted a revelation surpassing all former revelations (such as those of 16:7, 10; 24:16-17). There had been an obvious withholding of full revelation of God's glory in the former revelations, as wonderful as they had been.

We do not know exactly why Moses made this request. Possibly his sense of competency as a leader had been shaken by the events associated with the golden calf. Perhaps he just desired the closest association with God that could be had.

God granted Moses' request, not totally, but in a very large degree. God declared He would make all his "goodness" (Heb., "good") to pass before Moses, and would proclaim the name of Jehovah before him. Proclaiming the "name" of Jehovah seems to mean proclaiming His nature and person. See 34:6-7.

The "I" at the start of 33:19 is emphatic.

Observe that God's goodness and God's glory are equated in 33:19, 22. God's glory is *goodness*. "Goodness" (Heb., *tov*) means "excellence" (Ps. 119:66), "fairness," "beauty" (Hosea 10:11), "joy" (Isa. 65:14), "prosperity," "fortune," etc. "Goodness" here probably refers both to the brilliancy that strikes the senses; and also to the spiritual and ethical goodness of the divine being. See Ps. 31:19. Goodness is beautiful and glorious!

God declared in 33:19, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Possibly God added this declaration here because Moses had repeatedly appealed to God on the basis of grace (or favor). See 33:12, 13, 16. God's words in 33:19b seem like a gentle reminder that although He would grant

Moses' request, pleas based on grace alone have limitations. God was not less gracious than Moses was, but God Himself would determine how far grace and mercy would be extended. Moses could not expect an unregulated supply of grace. Perhaps also God's words hint that it was an act of grace for God to show Moses his "goodness."

Observe that grace and mercy are among the most prominent attributes of God. In God's great self-proclamation He declared Himself merciful and gracious (34:6). "Man is never nearer to the Divine than in his compassionate moments." (J. H. Hertz)

Paul quoted part of Ex. 33:19 in Romans 9:15 to justify God's choice of Jacob over Esau and the temporary fall of the Jews from God's favor. God is above man's power to defy Him or even question Him when He makes a choice as to how grace is to be dispensed.

12. *Can man see God?* (33:20)

"Man shall not see me and live." Therefore God would not allow Moses to see His "face." Seeing "me" refers to the same act as seeing "my face." This meant seeing God in His limitless glory.

Numerous scriptures affirm that man cannot see God, and that no man has seen God. I Tim. 6:16; John 1:18; 6:46; I John 4:12. There was an awareness in the ancient world that seeing God was dangerous. (Judges 6:22; 13:22; Isaiah 6:6)

Nonetheless, some people have seen God! (1) the elders (Ex. 24:10); (2) Jacob (Gen. 32:30); (3) Abraham (Gen. 18:1); (4) Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1); Isaiah (Isa. 6:1); etc. There is NO contradiction in this fact with the truth that "man shall not see me and live." Those who saw God either saw a partially concealed view of Him, or saw that God-one called the WORD, through whom God has always communicated Himself, and who later came into the world as Jesus. Compare Isaiah 6:1-10 and John 12:41.

13. *Where would Jehovah "pass by" Moses:* (33:21-23)

He would pass by a cleft in the rock, in which Moses

would be covered.

The "place by me" where Moses was to stand "upon the rock" was at the "top of the mount" (34:2).

The passing-by of God's glory (33:22) seems to be the act related in 34:6. God "passed by" Elijah at Mt. Horeb somewhat as He passed by Moses. (I Kings 19:11)

The "glory" of 33:22 is called "goodness" in 33:19.

The "cleft of the rock" may refer to a cave. Elijah was in a cave when God passed by (I Kings 19:9, 13). "Cleft" (Heb. *nigrah*) simply means a hole or dug-out place.

God's "hand" would cover Moses in the cleft while His unviewable glory passed over. Then God would take away His hand and Moses would see his "back" or "back part." It would be like seeing the sun by seeing its afterglow just after it set; or like seeing a ship by the magnitude of the wake it left behind it. There is no other way that man can behold God.

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Grace hath hid me safe in thee!" (Toplady/Pink)

"He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock,
Where rivers of pleasure I see." (Fanny J. Crosby)

Commentators almost unanimously have written that the references to God's "hand," "face," and "back parts" must be understood as human terms used to describe the indescribable aspects of God's being in terms as definite as we can comprehend them. There is surely much truth in this, because God fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:24) and inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15). However, we must remember that we cannot improve upon the description of the event that is given. It is easy to explain away the specific reality of the event by trying to explain it abstractly. It is better to have the child-like faith that visualizes Moses in the cleft of the rock, covered by the hand of God, than to utter abstractions that make God unreal.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

34 And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon the tables the words that were on the first tables, which thou brakest. (2) And be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Si-nai, and present thyself there to me on the top of the mount. (3) And no man shall come up with thee; neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount. (4) And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Mo-ses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Si-nai, as Je-ho-vah had commanded him, and took in his hand two tables of stone. (5) And Je-ho-vah descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Je-ho-vah. (6) And Je-ho-vah passed by before him, and proclaimed, Je-ho-vah, Je-ho-vah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; (7) keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation. (8) And Mo-ses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. (9) And he said, If now I have found favor in thy sight, O Lord, let the Lord, I pray thee, go in the midst of us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.

(10) And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of Je-ho-vah; for it is a terrible thing that I do with thee. (11) Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amor-ite, and the Ca-naan-ite, and the Hit-tite, and the Per-iz-zite, and the Hi-vite, and the Jeb-u-site. (12) Take heed to thyself,

lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: (13) but ye shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and ye shall cut down their A-she-rim (14) (for thou shalt worship no other god: for Je-ho-vah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God); (15) lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot after their gods, and sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee and thou eat of his sacrifice; (16) and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters play the harlot after their gods, and make thy sons play the harlot after their gods. (17) Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

(18) 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 the month A-bib thou camest out from E-gypt. (19) All that openeth the womb is mine; and all thy cattle that is male, the firstlings of cow and sheep. (20) And the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break its neck. All the first-born of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.

(21) Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in plowing time and in harvest thou shalt rest. (22) And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, *even* of the first-fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. (23) Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord Je-ho-vah, the God of Is-ra-el. (24) For I will cast out nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou goest up to appear before Je-ho-vah thy God three times in the year.

(25) Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning. (26) The first of the first-fruits of thy ground thou shalt bring unto the house of Je-ho-vah thy God. Thou shalt not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

(27) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Write thou these

words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Is-ra-el. (28) And he was there with Je-ho-vah forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

(29) And it came to pass, when Mo-ses came down from mount Si-nai with the two tables of the testimony in Mo-ses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Mo-ses knew not that the skin of his face shone by reason of his speaking with him. (30) And when Aar-on and all the children of Is-ra-el saw Mo-ses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. (31) And Mo-ses called unto them; and Aar-on and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Mo-ses spake to them. (32) And afterward all the children of Is-ra-el came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that Je-ho-vah had spoken with him in mount Si-nai. (33) And when Mo-ses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. (34) But when Mo-ses went in before Je-ho-vah to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and he came out, and spake unto the children of Is-ra-el that which he was commanded. (35) And the children of Is-ra-el saw the face of Mo-ses, that the skin of Mo-ses' face shone; and Mo-ses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

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

1. After careful reading, propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. What was Moses to hew out? (34:1, 4)
3. Who would write the words on the tablets? (34:1; Deut. 10:2, 4)
4. Is a little blame laid upon Moses for breaking the first tablets? (34:1)

5. Who was to come up into Mt. Sinai with Moses? (34:2-3)
6. Had anyone gone with Moses up on the mount during the first stay there? (24:13)
7. To what part of the mount was Moses to come? (34:3)
8. In what did Jehovah descend onto the mount? (34:5; Compare 19:18; 24:15-16.)
9. What did Jehovah proclaim? (34:5)
10. List the characteristics which Jehovah proclaimed about himself. (34:6-7)
11. Why should God visit the iniquity of fathers upon the children? (36:7; Compare 20:5-6.)
12. What three things did Moses ask God to do for the people? (34:9)
13. What did God declare he would make? (34:10, 27)
14. How impressive would God's marvels be before the people? (34:10)
15. What was to be done with the Amorites, Canaanites, etc. (34:11)
16. What was to be done with Canaanite religious objects? (34:13)
17. What could making a covenant with the inhabitants of the land lead to? (34:12, 15-16)
18. What are "molten gods"? (34:17; 32:4, 8, 24)
19. What was to be done or not done during the feast of Unleavened Bread? (34:18)
20. What animals did God claim as his? (34:19)
21. What things were to be redeemed? (34:20; 13:12-13; Num. 18:15-16)
22. At what particular times were the people to be sure to rest on the seventh (Sabbath) days? (34:21)
23. How many compulsory feasts were to be attended by male Israelites each year? (34:22-23)
24. Why should the enlargement of the Israelites' borders strengthen their obligation to keep the three annual feasts? (34:24)
25. What was not to be offered with the blood of the sacrifices? (34:25)

26. How many of the covenant laws of 34:10-26 have parallels in the "covenant book" of Ex. chs. 20-23? (This will require some research.)
 27. What was Moses to do with the words that God spoke? (34:27)
 28. What did Moses not do during the time he was with Jehovah? (34:28)
 29. What words are called the "words of the covenant"? (34:28) Were these words an eternal covenant? (Jer. 31:31-32; II Cor. 3:6-11)
 30. What was unusual about Moses' appearance when he came down from the mount? (34:29) What had caused this?
 31. How did the people react to Moses' appearance? (34:30)
 32. Could the people look at Moses without being blinded? (34:30-31, 35)
 33. To whom did Moses speak the words of the commandment which Jehovah spoke with him? (34:32)
 34. When did Moses put on a veil? (34:33)
 35. Why did Paul say that Moses put on the veil? (II Cor. 3:13)
 36. Did Moses wear the veil when he came in before Jehovah (in the tent of meeting)? (34:34-35)
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EXODUS THIRTY-FOUR: THE COVENANT RENEWED

1. The tablets restored; 34:1-4.
 2. God's name proclaimed; 34:5-9.
 3. God's covenant pledged; 34:10.
 4. God's ordinances commanded; 34:11-26.
 5. God's words written; 34:27-28.
 6. God's commandments reported; 34:31-32.
 7. Moses' face shines; 34:29-30, 33-35.
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SERMON ON THE NAME OF GOD (Ex. 34:5-7)

- I. An introduction by the Infinite God; 34:5.
 - II. A theme beyond compare (THE NAME!); 34:5.
 - III. An exposition (development) in detail; 34:6-7.
 1. Jehovah, Jehovah (A name doubly-declared).
 2. God (Mighty one!)
 3. Merciful!
 4. Gracious!
 5. Slow to anger!
 6. Abundant in lovingkindness!
 7. Abundant in truth!
 8. Keeping lovingkindness for thousands!
 9. Forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.
 10. Will by no means clear the guilty!
 11. Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children!
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RENEWING THE COVENANT (34:10-26)

1. Promise of the covenant; 34:10.
 2. Prohibitions in the covenant; 34:11-17, 25.
 3. Practices (or precepts) in the covenant; 34:18-24.
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GOD'S REQUIREMENTS OF HIS PEOPLE (34:18-24)

1. Keep the feasts; 34:18, 22-23.
 2. Present your firstborn; 34:20.
 3. Come before me with an offering; 34:20.
 4. Keep the day of rest; 34:21.
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THE GLOW FROM GOD'S PRESENCE (34:29-35)

1. Comes from speaking with God; (34:29).
2. Comes upon a man unawares; (34:29).

3. Frightens sinful men; (34:30).
4. Veiled in men's presence; (34:33).
5. Unveiled in God's presence; (34:34-35).

THE FADING AND UNFADING GLORY
(Ex. 34:33; II Cor. 3:13-18)

1. The fading old covenant glory was veiled.
2. The unfading new covenant glory is unveiled.

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

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

The chapter tells of God's making a covenant anew with Moses and Israel. The broken tablets of the ten commandments were replaced (34:1-4, 28). God proclaimed to Moses His basic nature (34:5-9). God set forth some of the laws He required the people to keep under the renewed covenant (34:10-26). (Nearly all of these laws are repeated from the decalogue and the covenant book of chs. 21-23.) Again, as at the ratification of the covenant the first time (24:4-8), Moses *wrote* the words of God and told them to the people (34:27-35). When Moses came down to the people with the covenant words, his face shone. Moses veiled his face after uttering God's words to the people.

"The whole chapter is a magnificent witness to Moses' power of intercession before God." (Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 193)

2. *What are the critical theories about Exodus thirty-four?*

Many critics have held that Exodus 34 is a separate account of the giving of the Sinai covenant by a different author. Chapters 19-24 have been attributed to *E* (an eighth century Northern Kingdom Elohist writer), and chapter 34 to *J* (tenth century Jehovistic writer), who adapted old Canaanite rituals. Many critics have followed

the conjecture of the German poet Goethe, who in 1773 said that the regulations of 34:14-26 could be grouped into *ten* laws, and that these laws were actually the original ten commandments! Chapter 20 has been entitled the "ethical" (or moral) decalogue and chapter 34 the "ritual" (or cultic) decalogue. M. Noth says that these titles "express quite pertinently, though in somewhat unhappy terminology, a difference in the predominant interest [of the authors of chs. 20 and 34], but we cannot speak of a fundamental opposition."¹ Supposedly chapter 34 was written by a man predominantly interested in religious rituals, and came from an agricultural society; whereas chapter 20 was written by one primarily concerned with ethics, whose cultural and social setting cannot be identified. Such nonsense!

Only by assuming that Exodus 34 has a corrupt, jumbled-up text can Exodus 34:14-26 be arranged into ten commandments. Noth admits that the passage (34:10-26) now offers more than ten commandments, but he regards it as being full of later "deuteronomic" insertions.² Goethe himself in his later and riper years spoke of his alleged discovery of ten commandments in Ex. 34:14-26 as a "freakish notion" due to insufficient knowledge.³

Actually Ex. 34:1 makes it perfectly clear that chapter 34 is a RENEWAL of the original covenant and not a distinct version of the covenant by another author. Also Deut. 9:9-20, 25-29; 10:1-5, 10-11 indicates that Exodus was a renewal of the covenant.

Almost all of the laws in 34:11-26 are like laws in chapters 20-23. This is easily understandable if chapter 34 is a renewal of the covenant of 20-23; but it is hard to explain if chapter 34 was a separate covenant document by a different author and two centuries older than chapter 20.

We should shun the terms "ethical decalogue" and

¹*Op. cit.*, p. 265.

²*Op. cit.*, p. 262.

³Quoted in J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, p. 368.

“ritual decalogue.”

3. *What was Moses to bring up into the mount?* (34:1-4; Deut. 10:1-2)

He was to bring two new tablets of stone. Moses was to hew these out and then God would write upon them the words that were on the first tablets.

The first set of tablets had been completely the work of God, both the hewing out of the tablets and the writing (32:16).

God's comment to Moses concerning the first tablets “which you broke” seems to us a gentle reprimand to Moses. “You broke them; you replace them.” Keil and Delitzsch suggest that God had Moses remake the tablets to show the same zeal that he showed in breaking them.

Moses was to be “ready” when he came up to God. Perhaps the “readiness” was similar to that commanded in 19:10-11, 14-15.

The “top of the mount” was the “place by me” of 33:21.

Moses was to go up completely alone this time. Not even Joshua was to go along. Compare 24:13.

No flocks nor herds were to feed before the mount while Moses was up in it. This restriction is similar to that imposed when the commandments were first given (19:12-13). Compare Hebrews 12:20.

God seems to have wanted His covenant WRITTEN. See 33:27; 24:4.

4. *What did the LORD proclaim about himself?* (34:5-7)

He proclaimed the name of Jehovah. The NAME of Jehovah expresses all that Jehovah is and does. Compare Ex. 6:3. God proclaims His saving ways; He proclaims Himself.

Luther called 34:6-7 the “Sermon on the name of the Lord.” It reveals the most hidden nature of Jehovah. It is impossible to express the Lord's nature better than by His name.

The proclamation of the name of the Lord is a fulfillment of the promise in 33:19.

The statement that Jehovah descended in the cloud is somewhat similar to 19:20. We suppose that it was at this time that Jehovah covered Moses in the cleft of the rock as He passed by (33:22). What Moses saw of God is not stated.

Some interpreters have translated 34:5b, "He (Moses) stood with him (God) there, and called upon the name." This is a grammatically possible translation, but is surely not the preferred one.

Exodus 34:5-7 is the second revelation of the NAME of the LORD. The first revelation (in 3:14-15) was of Yahweh as the self-existent savior. This revelation of the name is of a loving, forgiving, but NOT overindulgent savior.

Jewish interpreters (quite justly!) make much of 34:6-7, calling it The Thirteen Attributes of the Divine Nature.⁴ Jewish interpreters have some variations among themselves in the way they divide 34:6-7 into thirteen attributes, but this is one such analysis:

(1) The LORD; (2) The LORD. (The Talmud explains the repetition of God's name as indicating that God is merciful to a man both before he sins and after he sins. Whatever change has to be wrought must be in the heart of the sinner, not in the nature of deity.⁵); (3) God (or Mighty one); (4) merciful; (5) gracious; (6) longsuffering; (7) abundant in lovingkindness (Heb., *hesed*); (8) abundant in truth; (9) keeping mercy to thousands; (10) forgiving iniquity (or guilt); (11) forgiving transgression; (12) forgiving sin; (13) will by no means clear the guilty.

We do not regard the division of these descriptions of God into thirteen points as a divine revelation. But we thank God for providing us this description of his glorious "name," and we worship Him!

Similar descriptions of God are in Psalm 103:8; 86:15; Num. 14:18; Deut. 5:9-10.

⁴J. H. Hertz, *op. cit.*, pp. 362, 364.

⁵*Ibid.*

Some of the very FIRST things God says about Himself are that He is merciful and gracious. Compare 33:19!

To "clear" (34:7) means to declare innocent, to let go unpunished.

Observe the balance between love and justice, grace and firmness in God's nature.

Concerning "visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children," see notes on 20:5.

Some interpreters interpret 34:7a to mean "thousands of generations." The word *generations* is not actually in the text at that point. There have been barely two hundred generations of men since creation.

The synonyms for *sin* in 33:7 are hard to distinguish precisely. Possibly *iniquity* refers to turning from the right course; *transgression* is rebellion; and *sin* is an act of missing the desired mark.⁶

5. *What was Moses' response to God's self-proclamation?* (34:8-9)

He responded by worship and by asking for acceptance of the people. He took advantage of God's description of Himself as merciful and gracious to ask a favor.

Anyone who becomes aware of God as He described Himself in 34:6-7 will hurry, and bow, and worship. What is worship other than a heartfelt acknowledgement of the greatness of the Lord?

The request that the Lord (Heb., *Adonay*) would go with them is repeated from 33:15-16. God had already accepted this request in 33:14, 17; but seemingly Moses was still uneasy about the matter, not because he did not trust God, but because the people were "stiffnecked." Note that Ex. 34:9 uses the name *Adonay* (meaning "my Lord") as God's title.

Moses did not pray for God to give them an inheritance, but to *take* them as His inheritance. Compare Zech. 2:12.

⁶Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 440.

6. *What did God promise to make and do before the people?* (34:10)

God promised to make a *covenant*, and to do *marvels*. Thus the request of 34:9 was answered and accepted by the promise of 34:10.

The first and the last *I* in 34:10 are emphatic personal pronouns.

The verb "make" is a participle, indicating in some way a continuous action.

God's covenant would be like certain treaties and covenants called suzerainty treaties. Ancient kings (such as the Hittites) would make such covenants with their people. As covenants proclaimed by a superior to vassals, their effectiveness and force depended not on compliance by both parties to specified terms, but on the unilateral declaration and determination of the covenant-maker.⁷

God spoke to Moses (in 34:10) of "thy" people. But this expression no longer carried the idea of alienation that it carried right after the golden calf was made (32:7).

God promised to do "marvels" before "thy people." "Marvels" is a term referring to anything wondrous, or of which men stand in awe. The term was used in 3:20 to refer to the plagues sent upon Egypt. See also Judges 6:13; Psalm 26:7.

The marvels are spoken of (literally) as being "created." This term suggests that the likes of these marvels was never known before. Probably the marvels are the deliverances during future desert wanderings and the conquest of Canaan. The "covenant" was to include a host of miracles, such as driving out the Canaanites. See Deut. 4:38. God is a God of miracles, not a subject for theological speculation.

"Terrible" means fearsome, fearful, dreadful, wonderful, astonishing. Compare Deut. 10:21; Psalm 145:6.

⁷Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 228, 229.

Probably 34:10 is the preamble to the covenant, and we should regard 34:11 as starting a new paragraph (as in R.S.V.). Cole feels we should take verses 10-11 as closely joined together, and together forming the covenant preamble.

The terms of the covenant in Ex. 34:11-26 are in NO way to be considered the complete covenant requirements. They are only a sampler of the full requirements set forth in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The same thing was true of the longer set of ordinances in Exodus 20-23, as explained in our notes before. The very absence of the ten commandments in Ex. 34 shows that it was not a full statement of the covenant.

7. *What did God command about the Canaanites?* (34:11-16; Compare 23:23-24, 32-33; Deut. 7:1-5; 12:2-3.)

Israel was to make no covenant with them, and was to destroy their religious objects utterly. Sadly, Israel later violated this command repeatedly. See Judges 2:1-2, 11-13; Josh. 9:3-27; Psalm 106:34-39.

It was GOD who would drive out the Canaanites, and not actually Israel. The verb translated "I drive out" expresses continuous action: "I am driving out" or "I am about to drive out." Compare 23:27-30. God was already softening up the Canaanites, even before Israel arrived.

Regarding the various Canaanite peoples, see 3:17.

Regarding the "pillars" (K.J.V., "images"), see 23:24.

"Asherim" (K.J.V., "grooves") were sacred trees or wooden poles dedicated to Asherah, a goddess of fertility often associated with Baal or with Baal's father El. Asherim are mentioned here for the first time. See Deut. 16:21; Judges 6:25; II Kings 18:4; 21:3.

In the common Hebrew Bible the word for "other" in 34:14 is printed with an enlarged *R* (*resh*) ('*achaR*) so no one could possibly confuse it with the quite similar-looking word meaning *one* ('*echad*).

The word for "jealous" in 34:14 is a very strong word. It is used only of God in the Old Testament. It expresses

none of the pettiness that is sometimes associated with jealousy, but means to burn with zeal, or be provoked to wrath. See Deut. 4:24; 6:15; Ex. 20:3-5.

Baal worship involved "playing the harlot" quite literally. See Num. 25:1-5; Hosea 4:13-14. Certainly it also constituted a spiritual immorality, and it is thus spoken of here for the first time. Compare Deut. 31:16.

Even the patriarchs Abraham and Isaac had recognized the dangers of intermarriages with Canaanites. See Gen. 24:3; 28:6; Joshua 23:12.

The commands against the Canaanites are sterner in 34:11-16 than in 23:23ff, possibly because of the golden calf incident.

8. *What law was given about molten gods? (34:17)*

They were not to be made "unto thee" (same phrase as in 20:4). "Molten" means melted and cast. The golden calf was molten (32:4), and therefore this command was a very live matter. The specific prohibition against molten images should have been needless after the very comprehensive law against idols of all types in 20:4-5; but the people had failed to heed it.

9. *What was the commandment about the feast of unleavened bread? (34:18)*

It was to be observed annually. Compare 12:14, 15-20; 23:15. (Ex. 34:18 and 23:15 are almost identical verses.) The feast of Unleavened Bread originated with the exodus rather than from events associated with an agricultural season, as some critics have alleged.

The Passover is not mentioned among the feasts in 34:18-23, probably because it was not one of the national feasts to which everyone journeyed, but was a feast observed in each home. It was very closely associated with the feast of Unleavened Bread.

Concerning the month Abib, see 13:4; 12:2.

10. *What was to be done with the firstborn? (34:19-20)*

They were given to the LORD or redeemed. See 13:2, 12-13; 22:29-30.

See 23:15 concerning the instruction "None shall appear before me empty."

The R.S.V. renders 34:19, "All that opens the womb is mine, all your male cattle, the firstlings," A footnote by the word "male" says "Gk., Theodotian, Vg., Tg.: Heb. uncertain." It is simply not true that the Hebrew is uncertain. It differs hardly at all from the Greek. The Hebrew lacks a relative pronoun that we include in English, but it is quite clear. It reads, "Every firstborn of the womb (is) mine, and (or even) all thy cattle (that is) born a male, (the) firstborn of ox and sheep."

11. *What days and feasts was Israel to observe?* (34:21-26)

The seventh day (Sabbath) was to be a day of rest. Compare 20:8-10; 23:12.

The instruction to keep the seventh day as a day of rest during plowing time (K.J.V., "earring time") and harvest time is stated only in this verse. This was a faith-testing command. Rest days were to be strictly observed even at the times when the farmer was busiest and in greatest danger of losing his crop. The Sabbath day was a test of faith from its very first observance (16:4), and it always kept this character about it. God's people still must seek first the kingdom of God in all their activities. (Matt. 6:33)

The feast of weeks (also called the "feast of harvest" and the "feast of firstfruits") came annually in June, after the harvest. See 23:16; Deut. 16:10.

The feast of ingathering (also called "Tabernacles" or "Booths") came at the "year's end," literally at the "revolution" (or "circuit") of the year, in September/October. See 23:16.

Exodus 34:23 is almost identical to 23:17. Compare 23:14.

Exodus 34:23-24 alludes to a central sanctuary, which the Israelites would set up and go to after conquering the land. Critics take this as evidence of a post-Mosaic date for the passage. But those who believe that God can prophesy about events and places that are yet in the future

will accept the words as they stand. See Isa. 41:4, 23; 44:8.

Some Israelites feared that squatters and land thieves would claim and occupy their lands while they were away attending God's feasts. This was probably more of an excuse for neglect of worship than any real danger. But God reassured them that while they were at the feasts, no one would even covet (desire) their land, much less try to seize it. Furthermore, He would enlarge their national borders until there was such an abundance of land that no one would have any cause to covet his neighbor's land.

Exodus 34:25 resembles 23:18. Concerning the matter of not leaving Passover sacrifices uneaten till morning, see 12:10. Ex. 34:26 is similar to 23:19.

Observe the reference to "my sacrifice" in 34:25.

12. *What covenant words were written down?* (34:27-28)

The covenant commands of 34:10-26 were to be written by Moses. The ten commandments themselves were written by God. Compare 34:1. "These words" referred to in 34:27 seem to be the covenant words in 34:10-26.

From 34:27-28 alone it might be assumed that "he" who wrote the words of the ten commandments was Moses. However, this is not definitely asserted here. And the words of 34:1 and Deut. 10:2, 4 are conclusive in asserting that the writing of the ten commandments was the work of God.

In the same manner that Moses wrote the covenant ordinances of chapters 21-23, he also wrote the words of this covenant. (24:4, 7) It appears definite that God wanted His covenant in written form.

"Tenor" in 34:27 is literally "face." It is probably best to translate the expression simply "according to these words." (Harkavy's *Lexicon*; R.S.V.)

Deut. 10:10 repeats a fact asserted here, that Moses fasted during this second stay in the mount. He had also fasted during the first prolonged stay on the mount. (Deut. 9:9)

Deut. 10:1-5 tells that Moses made an ark of acacia wood for the ten commandments when he came down from

the mount, and this simple ark became the predecessor of the ark of the covenant described in 25:10ff.

The ten commandments are specifically identified as the "words of the covenant" in 34:28. This passage makes clear to us what words are referred to as the "covenant" when contrasts are made in the scripture between the "old covenant" and the "new covenant." (II Cor. 3:6-13; Jer. 31:31-32; Heb. 8:7-13).

13. *What was amazing about Moses' appearance when he came down from the mount?* (34:29-30)

His face shone, so that both Aaron and the children of Israel were afraid to come near him. The fear of Israel when Moses came among them with a glowing face is understandable after their recent experience with idolatry and the wrath of Moses!

Moses was unaware that his face was shining. He was not fully conscious of his own spiritual stature and privileges. Numbers 12:13 rightly describes him as the meekest of men. The glow surely proved that Moses had been with God.

The Hebrew verb translated "shone" ("shot forth beams") has a related noun often meaning "horns." Therefore the Latin Bible translated Ex. 34:29 as "having horns." From this rather bizarre translation, medieval art works, such as Michaelangelo's statue at Rome, represent Moses as having a pair of horns from his head!

The K.J.V. translation of 34:29, "while he talked with him," is translated more properly "because he had been talking with God." (R.S.V.)

Things exposed to light and radiation sometimes glow even after being removed from the light. Thus Moses, having been with God who dwells in light unapproachable (I Tim. 6:16), had acquired some of the glow of God (Rev. 21:23), even though he had seen only the "back part" of God (33:23). How he would have shone if he had stood before God in all His glory! God's glowing glory was manifested by Christ Jesus at His transfiguration. (Matt. 17:2; Compare

Rev. 1:16.)

The countenance of Moses did not shine after his first stay on the mount. Probably this happened because the divine presence was then withdrawn from Israel.

14. *What did Moses tell the people after he came down from the mount?* (34:31-32)

Moses spoke (unveiled!) to Aaron and all the rulers of Israel, giving them in commandment all which the Lord had told him in Mt. Sinai. Compare 24:3.

The word "returned" in 34:31 suggests that Aaron and Israel had at first fled in terror from Moses with his shining face.

The acts of sprinkling the blood and public declaration of acceptance of the covenant were not done this time, as they had been done when the covenant was first accepted (24:3-8). Possibly the reason for this was that this time the covenant was less based on the people's compliance and more on God's oath and His grace. Note in Judges 2:1 that God declared, "I said, I will never break my covenant with you."

Ramm remarks that it is proverbial that second weddings are very short. And thus at this second making of the covenant Moses merely assembled the people and announced the covenant with a minimal statement or two of what was involved.⁸

15. *When did Moses put on a veil?* (34:33-35)

He put it on *after* he finished speaking with them. He removed the veil when he went in to speak with Jehovah (presumably in the tent of meeting). Upon coming out, he spoke with the children of Israel that which was commanded by God. They saw his face shining and unveiled. Then he put the veil upon his face again, until he went in again to speak with God.

The Hebrew word for veil (*masweh*) is used only in this

⁸Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

passage; but its meaning seems obvious from the story. Some interpreters have speculated that the "veil" was actually a priestly mask, such as priests in Egypt wore. But there is no real evidence for this idea, and it is contrary to the New Testament explanation of the veil.

Paul in II Cor. 3:7-18 says that Moses put the veil on his face so the Israelites would not see the "end" of the glory that was fading away (II Cor. 3:13). The Exodus narrative does not tell us why Moses wore the veil. It surely was not because the Israelites were not allowed to see the glow, or because it was so bright it blinded them. We believe Paul was an inspired interpreter, not just another speculative rabbinic interpreter.

Paul used the fading glory of Moses' face as a symbol of the fading glory of the old covenant that God made with Moses. That covenant has passed away, like the glow of Moses' face.

The veil also was a symbol of the hardening of the minds of the Israelites in rejecting Christ (II Cor. 3:14-15). For to this day, whenever Moses (that is, the writings of Moses, or the law) is read, a veil lieth upon their heart. This veil is removed when they turn to the Lord.

Somewhat as Moses had an unveiled association with the LORD, so believers in Christ, by the Spirit of the Lord, view with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, though beholding it as in a mirror. In the presence of that glory we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory. We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (I John 3:2).

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

35 And Mo-ses assembled all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el, and said unto them, These are the words which Je-ho-vah hath commanded, that ye should do them. (2) Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a sabbath of solemn rest to Je-ho-vah: whosoever doeth any work therein shall be put to death. (3) Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day.

(4) And Mo-ses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el, saying, This is the thing which Je-ho-vah commanded, saying, (5) Take ye from among you an offering unto Je-ho-vah; whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, Je-ho-vah's offering: gold, and silver, and brass, (6) and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' *hair*, (7) and rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins, and acacia wood, (8) and oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, (9) and onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the eph-od, and for the breastplate.

(10) And let every wise-hearted man among you come, and make all that Je-ho-vah hath commanded: (11) the tabernacle, its tent, and its covering, its clasps, and its boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets; (12) the ark, and the staves thereof, the mercy-seat, and the veil of the screen; (13) the table, and its staves, and all its vessels, and the showbread; (14) the candlestick also for the light, and its vessels, and its lamps, and the oil for the light; (15) and the altar of incense, and its staves, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the screen for the door, at the door of the tabernacle; (16) the altar of burnt-offering, with its grating of brass, its staves, and all its vessels, the laver and its base; (17) the hangings of the court, the pillars thereof, and their sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court; (18) the pins of the tabernacle, and the pins of the court, and their cords; (19) the finely wrought garments, for ministering in the holy place, the holy garments

for Aar-on the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office.

(20) And all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el departed from the presence of Mo-ses. (21) And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, *and* brought Je-ho-vah's offering, for the work of the tent of meeting, and for all the service thereof, and for the holy garments. (22) And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, *and* brought brooches, and ear-rings, and signet-rings, and armlets, all jewels of gold; even every man that offered an offering of gold unto Je-ho-vah. (23) And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' *hair*, and rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins, brought them. (24) Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought Je-ho-vah's offering; and every man, with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service, brought it. (25) And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, the blue, and the purple, the scarlet, and the fine linen. (26) And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun the goats' *hair*. (27) And the rulers brought the onyx stones, and the stones to be set, for the eph-od, and for the breastplate; (28) and the spice, and the oil; for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense. (29) The children of Is-ra-el brought a freewill-offering unto Je-ho-vah; every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all the work, which Je-ho-vah had commanded to be made by Mo-ses.

(30) And Mo-ses said unto the children of Is-ra-el, See, Je-ho-vah hath called by name Be-zal-el the son of U-ri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Ju-dah; (31) and he hath filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; (32) and to devise skilful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, (33) and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of skilful workmanship. (34) And he hath put in his heart that he may teach both he, and O-ho-li-ab,

the son of A-his-a-mach, of the tribe of Dan. (35) Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of workmanship, of the engraver, and of the skilful workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any workmanship, and of those that devise skilful works.

EXODUS 35 - 39

These chapters repeat the material in chapters 25-31 almost word for word. The earlier chapters gave God's instructions about how to build the tabernacle. Chapters 35-39 tell how it was built part by part, following God's instructions word by word.

Naturally the forms of the verbs are changed from imperative ("thou shalt make"; 30:1) to indicative ("he made"; 37:25). Also the instructions in the earlier chapters about the *functions* of the tabernacle equipment are omitted in chapters 35-39 because the rituals associated with the tabernacle parts are given in the following books. Compare 25:30 with 37:16, and 28:35 with 39:26. Also information about how to set up the tabernacle parts is omitted in chapters 35-39 because chapter forty tells about setting up the tabernacle. Compare 25:16 with 37:5, and 30:18 with 38:18.

The *order* in which the tabernacle parts are described in 35-39 differs from the order in 25-31. Chapters 35-39 begin with a description of the basic architectural structure - the curtains, boards, bars, veil, and screen. The earlier chapters started by describing the most significant furniture - the ark, table, and lampstand. Possibly the building in which to house the items of furniture was made before the furniture. More probably a number of craftsmen were working on different parts simultaneously (see 36:2), and the order in which the parts are mentioned is not necessarily the same as the order of their construction.

The question naturally arises: Why should there be such extensive repetition of material in 35-39? Certainly it was not a mere accidental duplication of documents. The interesting additions and the rearrangements of material preclude this possibility.

Possibly the repetition was written to stress how faithfully and lovingly Moses carried out God's instructions. The phrase "as Jehovah commanded Moses" appears seven times in chapter thirty-nine and eight more times in chapter forty.

The skeptical critics at once suspect more "sources" as the explanation for repetition in 35-39. S. R. Driver¹ says, "If chapter 30 be allowed to belong to a secondary stratum of P [post-exilic Priestly writer], the same conclusion will follow for these chapters [35-39] as a necessary corollary. For in chapters 35-39 the notices referring to chapters 30-31 are introduced *in their proper order*; and chapter 30 alludes to the altar of incense." Martin Noth² regards chapters 35-39 as a later reworking of P. (He attributes chapters 25-31 to P.)

In reply to Driver we may observe that while the order in which the tabernacle parts are mentioned in chapters 30-31 is quite similar to that in 36-39, it is not identical. The anointing oil is mentioned just AFTER the laver in chapter thirty, but just after the altar of incense in chapter thirty-seven. But even if the items had been listed in exactly the same order in both groups of chapters, that would not prove multiple authorship for Exodus. It would seem to argue even more strongly for a single author for the book.

Cassuto³ has a most valuable comment. He says that the repetition in chapters 35-39 has caused some to suspect a secondary stratum of P. But this conjecture is based on ignorance of the methods employed in the composition of books in the Ancient East. Thus in the Ugaritic epic of King Keret (about 1400 B.C.), the king saw El, the father of the gods,

¹*Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Meridian, 1958), p. 42.

²*Op. cit.*, p. 274.

³*Op. cit.*, p. 453.

in a dream, and received from him instructions concerning the offering of sacrifices, the mustering of an army, and other things. At the conclusion of the instructions, we are informed that King Keret did as El had directed in his dream. And his actions are described by the literal *repetition* of the terms of the instructions, except for changes in the verb form and other very minor changes - precisely what we find in the latter section of the book of Exodus. Chapters 35-39 are not therefore a later document. They are required just where they are, and if they were not there, we should have to assume that they were missing from the text.

EXODUS 35 - 40 IN THE HEBREW AND GREEK BIBLES

In this book we have frequently referred to the wording of the Greek (Septuagint) Bible. (See Index under "Septuagint.") In chapters 1-34 there is a remarkably close overall agreement in the readings of the Hebrew and Greek Bible. There are indeed a few notable passages showing variations (for example, 1:5 and 12:40). But in most chapters only a few words, or sometimes a single verse, are different.

However, in chapters 35-40 there are very conspicuous differences between the Greek and Hebrew texts. Both tell of the construction of the tabernacle, but the order the events are related is quite different. The information is the same in both the Hebrew and the Greek, but the order of presentation certainly is not.

The question naturally arises: Which reading is closer to the original document of Exodus, the Hebrew or the Greek? How did the variations develop? Since we do not have the original document, we simply do not know. Perhaps the Dead Sea (Qumran) writings may yet shed some light on this.

Although certainty is impossible, we are strongly of the opinion that the Hebrew text (which is followed in our common

English Bibles) is preferable to the Greek reading of Ex. 35-40. Unless there is good evidence otherwise, the Hebrew Old Testament should consistently be regarded as a more trustworthy transmission of God's word than the Greek. The Greek is a translation of the Hebrew and has all the weaknesses inherent in any translation. Furthermore, Jesus endorsed the religion of the Jews as being the way of salvation (John 4:22). We suppose that this implies that He endorsed the Hebrew scriptures as the generally reliable ones.

Furthermore yet, there are certainly improbabilities in the way the Greek text of Ex. 35-40 is arranged. The very first tabernacle items described are the garments of the priests! See LXX, chapter 36. It is nearly incredible that the report about these garments actually preceded information about the making of the ark, the table, the lampstand, or the basic tabernacle structure. Also the Greek Bible mentions only the inner (linen) curtains in discussing the making of the tabernacle coverings. See LXX, 37:1-2. This just does not match up with the information in 26:1-14, whereas the Hebrew reading of 36:8-19 corresponds closely to the instructions in chapter twenty-six. Also it is very surprising to us that the Greek Bible gives information about such major items as the ark, table, and lampstand AFTER the information about less prominent things such as the curtains, veil, screen, and court. See LXX 38:1-17; 37:1-18. (See also the notes on 38:22.)

We know that in a very few verses the Greek Bible gives a reading that is more correct than the Hebrew. (For example, Psalm 19:4 has the word for "sound" [or "voice"] in the Greek Bible, rather than "line," which the Hebrew has. "Sound" makes better parallelism with the next line, and is the form quoted in the New Testament in Romans 10:18.) Nonetheless, we feel that the Hebrew Bible gives a more trustworthy form of the material in Ex. 35-40 than the Greek does.

We give here lists of the order of subject matter in Exodus 36-40 as it is given in the Hebrew Bible and in the Greek Bible.⁴

⁴Compare S. R. Driver, *Introduction to Literature of Old Testament*, p. 41.

The parallel (or nearly parallel) passages in the other version are listed alongside. Our lists start at Exodus 36:8, because the principle divergences begin there. (Admittedly Ex. 35:8-20 is arranged in a different order in the Greek than in the Hebrew, but the same material is presented.)

HEBREW (MASORETIC) TEXT

36:8-19 (Tabernacle curtains)
 36:20-34 (Boards and bars)
 36:35-38 (Veil and screen)
 37:1-9 (Ark)
 37:10-16 (Table of showbread)
 37:17-24 (Lampstand)
 37:25-28 (Altar of incense)
 37:29 (Anointing oil and incense)
 38:1-7 (Altar of burnt-offering)
 38:8 (Laver)
 38:9-20 (Court)
 38:21 (Introduction to sum of materials)
 38:22-23 (Bezalel and Oholiab)
 38:24-31 (Materials used)
 39:1-31 (Priests' garments)
 39:32 (Work finished)
 39:33-43 (Delivery of tabernacle to Moses)
 40:1-16 (Moses to rear up tab.)
 40:17-33 (Tabernacle erected)
 40:34-38 (Cloud and fire)

GREEK (SEPTUAGINT) TEXT

37:1-2 (Much omitted from Heb.)
 38:18-21 (Much omitted)
 37:3-6
 38:1-8
 38:9-12
 38:13-17
 Lacking; Compare LXX 40:5.
 38:25
 38:22-24 (Some differences)
 38:26
 37:7-18
 37:19
 37:20-21
 39:1-10
 36:8b-40 (Garments listed in same order in Heb. & Gr.)
 39:11
 39:14-23
 40:1-16 (Vss. 7-8, 11 of Heb. omitted. Some other differences also.)
 40:17-33; 38:27 (40:20b, 28, 29b-32 of Heb. omitted. LXX 38:27 resembles Heb. 40:30-32.)
 40:34-38.

GREEK TEXT

36:8a (Intro. to robes)
 36:8b-40 (Priests' garments)
 37:1-2 (Curtains. Brief)
 37:3-6 (Veil and screen)
 37:7-18 (Court)
 37:19 (Tab. service for Levites)
 37:20-21 (Bezalel & Oholiab)
 38:1-8 (Ark)
 38:9-12 (Table)
 38:13-17 (Lampstand)

HEBREW TEXT

36:8a (Intro. to tab. curtains!)
 39:1-31
 36:8b-19
 36:35-38
 38:9-20
 38:21
 38:22-23
 37:1-9
 37:10-16
 37:17-24

38:18-21 (Posts, rings, capitals, hooks, pins)	36:36, 38 (Considerably different from the Greek)
38:22-24 (Altar of burnt-offering)	38:1-7 (Numerous differences)
38:25 (Anointing oil & incense)	37:29
38:26-27 (Laver)	38:8; 40:30-32
39:1-10 (The gold, silver, brass)	38:24-31
39:11 (Israelites obey)	39:32b
39:12-13 (Leftover gold and cloth)	Lacking
39:14-23 (Items brought to Moses)	39:33-43
(Items listed in 39:14-21 differ in order from the Heb.)	
40:1-16 (Tabernacle set up; Greek lacks 40:7-8, 11 of Hebrew.)	40:1-16
40:17-33 (Lacks 40:28, 29b-32 of Heb.)	40:17-33
40:34-38 (Cloud and fire)	40:34-38

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a brief title or topic for chapter thirty-five.
2. What restriction was imposed on kindling fires? (35:3) Where was this to be observed?
3. Who was to give an offering? (35:5, 21, 29)
4. How are the makers of the tabernacle described? (35:10; 28:3)
5. What items are referred to as the "tabernacle" and "its tent"? (35:11; Compare 26:1, 7.)
6. What items did the men and women bring in the offering? (35:22-24)
7. What work did the wise-hearted women do? (35:25-26; Compare Prov. 31:19.)
8. Who was the leading craftsman? (35:30; Compare 31:1-5.)
9. Who was the second notable craftsman? (35:24)
10. What were the craftsmen to do besides their skilled work? (35:34)
11. How is the verb "work" translated differently in the American Standard version from the King James version? (36:1)
12. Before whom had the donated materials been placed? Who came there to receive the materials? (36:2-3)

13. When were materials being donated? (36:3)
 14. What (joyful!) complaint did the builders have about the materials available? (36:5-7)
-

EXODUS THIRTY-FIVE: OFFERING, CRAFTSMEN!

- I. Offering
 1. Called for; 35:4-9.
 2. Contributed freely; 35:20-29.
 - II. Craftsmen
 1. Called; 35:10-19.
 2. Commissioned; 35:30—36:1.
-

EXODUS THIRTY-FIVE: COMMANDS AND COMPLIANCE

- I. The Lord's commands
 1. Sabbath rest; 35:1-3.
 2. Free-will offering; 35:4-9.
 3. Wise-hearted men to come; 35:10-19.
 - II. The people's compliance
 1. Offering collected; 35:20-29.
 2. Workmen commissioned; 35:30—36:1.
-

A BUILDING COMMITTEE'S DREAM! (35:20-29)

1. Immediate response. (35:20-29).
 2. Willing earnest response. (35:21-22).
 3. Sacrificial response. (35:22-24).
 4. Working response. (35:25-26).
-

WISE-HEARTED MEN! (35:10, 30—36:1)

1. Filled with God's Spirit; (35:30-31).
 2. Skilled in work; (35:32, 35).
 3. Committed to teach others; (35:34).
-

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

1. *What are the parallel passages to the sections in chapter thirty-five?*

(1) 35:1-3 (on Sabbath): 20:8-11; 31:12-17; 34:21.

(2) 35:4-9, 20-29 (on offering): 25:1-7.

(3) 35:10-19 (on craftsmen): 31:1-11; 35:30—36:1; 38:22-23.

2. *What was the law about fires on the Sabbath day?* (35:1-3)

No fires were to be kindled on the Sabbath days throughout their habitations. Fire was certainly permissible at the tabernacle on the sabbaths for the sabbath sacrifices (Num. 28:9-10). It was only in their habitations that fire was not kindled.

This law is not stated elsewhere in the O.T. However, Ex. 16:23 does indicate that the manna for the Sabbath was to be cooked the day before the Sabbath. This law about no fires on the sabbath days strengthens the view that the seventh-day rest was never designed to be kept in all climates by all nations.

Note (in 35:1) that Moses assembled ALL the congregation of Israel. What a huge assembly this was, unless the expression refers only to the heads of the class as representatives of all the people. However, 35:20 indicates that "all the congregation departed from the presence of Moses" to go get their offerings.

The Sabbath was to be a "holy day," literally "holiness." (35:2)

The "sabbath of solemn rest" (Heb., *shabbath shabbaton*)

was a "sabbath of entire rest." See 31:15.

The reference to the sabbath in 35:1-3 comes as a surprise so soon after the command in 34:21. Even though 35:1-3 seems to be somewhat associated with the covenant stipulations of chapter thirty-four, the text makes clear that the commandment of 35:1-3 was delivered on a separate occasion from those spoken of in 34:31-32. Israel needed to be reminded to keep the sabbath days during the construction of the tabernacle.

3. *Who was to give an offering?* (35:4-9)

"Every one" (Heb., "all") who was willing (or generous) in heart was to bring an offering. The willingness is strongly stressed. See 35:21, 22, 29. Grateful hearts give willingly. God loves a cheerful giver (II Cor. 9:7). The temple of God cannot be built unless everyone takes a part (Eph. 4:16).

The offering is called (in Hebrew) a "heave-offering" (*terumah*). See 25:2; 29:27-28. This refers to something "lifted-up" (figuratively) as an offering to God.

See 25:3-7 concerning the materials mentioned in 35:5-9.

4. *How are the makers of the tabernacle described?* (35:10-19)

They were "wise of heart." (28:3; 31:1-5). Their "wisdom" was that which was shown by manual and artistic skill. See 35:31-32.

The construction work was not limited to Bezalel and Oholiab (35:30, 34), but was shared by every wise-hearted man.

"Covering" in K.J.V. of 35:12 refers to the entrance curtain, or screen, at the door of the Holy Place.

"Tabernacle" in 35:11 refers only to the inner linen curtains. See 36:8. "Tent" in 35:11 refers to the goats' hair curtains. See 36:14. The term "tabernacle" (same Hebrew word as in 35:11) refers to the entire structure. Thus the term "tabernacle" (*mishkan*) had both a broad application and a specific narrow application.

"Cloths of service" in K.J.V. 35:19 are the priests' garments. See 31:10; 39:1, 4.

5. *What items were brought as offerings?* (35:20-24, 27-29)

They brought items of jewelry - brooches (K.J.V., "bracelets"); earrings (the same term applies to both earrings and nose-rings. See Gen. 35:4; Ezek. 16:12; Isa. 3:21); signet-rings (Signet-rings had carved designs on them which were used to stamp the owner's name on documents.); armlets (K.J.V., "tablets." Literally "globules," probably referring to strings of beads, or necklaces).

Note that the rulers brought some expensive items - onyx stones, spices, etc. (35:27-28; 28:9, 17-20).

6. *What work did the wise-hearted women do?* (35:25-26)

They spun goats' hair into yarn, which was then woven into cloth. See Prov. 31:19. Spinning was done with a stick about eighteen inches long. It bore a round weight (called a spindle-whorl) on one end. This served as a fly-wheel to help rotate the spindle. A hook on the opposite end caught the raw wool, and the rotating motion twisted it into thread or yarn.

7. *Who were the two principal tabernacle workmen?* (35:30—36:1)

Bezalel and Oholiab. See 31:1-6; 38:22-23. The obscure tribe at Dan was honored by supplying a craftsman, as well as the prominent tribe of Judah.

These men not only did artistic and craft work themselves, but they taught others. "A light that cannot kindle other lights is but a feeble flame." (J. H. Hertz)

The work of making the tabernacle could only be done by those with divine enlightenment from the Holy Spirit. See 35:31-35. Note that Gen. 41:38 speaks of administrative ability and wisdom in social affairs as "the spirit of God." We do not often think of manual work and administrative ability as something that the Spirit of God assists. But on various occasions this has been so, and probably still is.

The word "engraver" in 35:35 is translated from a verb meaning to "cut" or "engrave." The "skilful workman" (K.J.V., "cunning workman") of 35:35 is one who devises and thinks out artistic designs and then produces them.

8. *Is the division between chapters 35 and 36 correct?*

It is not correct if chapters are expected to be rather complete blocks of subject matter. The discussion about the workmen in chapter 35 goes right on to 36:7, or at least to 36:1.

Possibly one reason for separating chapters 35 and 36 at the point where they are divided was the faulty translation of 36:1 in the Greek Bible (which is followed in the K.J.V.). It translates the verb "work" as a past (aorist), "wrought." The Hebrew very plainly gives it as a future (a 'perfect with *waw* consecutive), which should be rendered "shall work."

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

36 And Be-zal-el and O-ho-li-ab shall work, and every wise-hearted man, in whom Je-ho-vah hath put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all the work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that Je-ho-vah hath commanded.

(2) And Mo-ses called Be-zal-el and O-ho-li-ab, and every wise-hearted man, in whose heart Je-ho-vah had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it: (3) and they received of Mo-ses all the offering which the children of Is-ra-el had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, wherewith to make it. And they brought yet unto him freewill-offerings every morning. (4) And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they wrought; (5) and they spake unto Mo-ses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which Je-ho-vah commanded to make. (6) And Mo-ses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from

bringing. (7) For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.

(8) And all the wise-hearted men among them that wrought the work made 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, *Be-zal-el* made them. (9) The length of each curtain was eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits: all the curtains had one measure. (10) And he coupled five curtains one to another: and *the other* five curtains he coupled one to another. (11) And he made loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling: likewise he made in the edge of the curtain that was outmost in the second coupling. (12) Fifty loops made he in the one curtain, and fifty loops made he in the edge of the curtain that was in the second coupling: the loops were opposite one to another. (13) And he made fifty clasps of gold, and coupled the curtains one to another with the clasps: so the tabernacle was one.

(14) And he made curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle: eleven curtains he made them. (15) The length of each curtain was thirty cubits, and four cubits the breadth of each curtain: the eleven curtains had one measure. (16) And he coupled five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves. (17) And he made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that was outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops made he upon the edge of the curtain which was *outmost in* the second coupling. (18) And he made fifty clasps of brass to couple the tent together, that it might be one. (19) And he made a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of sealskins above.

(20) And he made the boards for the tabernacle, of acacia wood, standing up. (21) Ten cubits was the length of a board and a cubit and a half the breadth of each board. (22) Each board had two tenons, joined one to another: thus did he make for all the boards of the tabernacle. (23) And he made the boards for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the south side southward; (24) and he made 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. (25) And for the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, he made twenty boards, (26) and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. (27) And for the hinder part of the tabernacle westward he made six boards. (28) And two boards made he for the corners of the tabernacle in the hinder part. (29) And they were double beneath; and in like manner they were entire unto the top thereof unto one ring: thus he did to both of them in the two corners. (30) And there were eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; under every board two sockets.

(31) And he made bars of acacia wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, (32) and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle for the hinder part westward. (33) And he made the middle bar to pass through in the midst of the boards from the one end to the other. (34) And he overlaid the boards with gold, and made their rings of gold for places for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold.

(35) And he made the veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen: with cher-u-bim, the work of the skilful workman, made he it. (36) And he made thereunto four pillars of acacia, and overlaid them with gold: their hooks were of gold; and he cast for them four sockets of silver. (37) And he made a screen for the door of the Tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the embroiderer; (38) and the five pillars of it with their hooks, and he overlaid their capitals and their fillets with gold; and their five sockets were of brass.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

(Questions over 36:1-7 are included in the notes on chapter 35.)

1. *Topic:* It is helpful to remember the contents of this chapter

under the title of ENCLOSINGS, because it tells of the curtains, boards, bars, etc. that enclosed the tabernacle.

2. *Outline:* (1) Workmen called; 36:2.
 (2) Excessive materials donated by people; 36:3-7.
 (3) Tabernacle curtains made; 36:8-13.
 (4) Tent of goats' hair made; 36:14-19.
 (5) Boards; 36:20-30.
 (6) Bars; 36:31-34.
 (7) Veil and screen; 36:35-38.
3. *Parallel passages:* (See the notes on the earlier parallel passages.)
 (1) 36:2-7 (Offering) - 25:1-7; 35:4-9, 20-29.
 (2) 36:8-19 (Curtains) - 26:1-14.
 (3) 36:20-30 (Boards) - 26:15-25.
 (4) 36:35-38 (Veil and screen) - 26:31-37.
4. *Notes:*
 36:1 - The A.S.V. translation "shall work" is a better translation than the King James translation "wrought." "According to all" is more clearly translated "with respect to all."
 36:3 - The offering is pictured as having been brought and placed in a heap before Moses. The craftsmen then came and took from it whatever they needed.
 The people brought offerings every morning. The Hebrew idiom is picturesque: "In the morning, in the morning."
 36:4 - "Wrought" is an old past tense form of the verb "work." The Hebrew text emphasizes the continuity of the work: they "were doing" it.
 36:5 - The generosity of the Israelites reminds us of that of the churches of Macedonia (II Cor. 8:2, 3). These people are examples for us.
 36:8 - The subject of the last verb ("made") in 36:8 is not stated, but the verb is singular: "he made them." The same is true of numerous verbs in the following verses (36:10, 11, 13ff). It is probable that the subject is "Bezalel" (as in 37:1). The A.S.V. supplies this reading

in italics. Possibly the subject is indefinite, and refers to whichever craftsman did each work.

36:8 does not indicate that the items were made in the exact order in which they are mentioned. Probably they were all being made simultaneously.

36:16 - The instructions in 26:9b about doubling back the sixth curtain (the one that lay at the front of the tabernacle) is not repeated here, because chapters 36-39 do not give details about how the tabernacle parts were positioned. Similarly 26:12-13 is not repeated after 36:18.

36:38 - "He overlaid their capitals and fillets with gold." In the passage parallel to this (26:37) it says only that he was to "overlay them (the pillars) with gold." This is an example of the infrequent but interesting variations between chapters 26-31 and 36-39.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

37 And Be-zal-el made the ark of acacia wood: two cubits and a half was the length of it, and a cubit and a half the breadth of it, and a cubit and a half the height of it. (2) And he overlaid it with pure gold within and without, and made a crown of gold to it round about. (3) And he cast for it four rings of gold, in the four feet thereof; even two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. (4) And he made staves of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold. (5) And he put the staves into the rings on the sides of the ark, to bear the ark. (6) And he made a mercy-seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half *was* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. (7) And he made two cherubim of gold; of beaten work made he them, at the two ends of the mercy-seat; (8) one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end: of one piece with the mercy-seat made he the

cher-u-bim at the two ends thereof. (9) And the cher-u-bim spread out their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, with their faces one to another; toward the mercy-seat were the faces of the cher-u-bim.

(10) And he made the table of acacia wood: two cubits was the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. (11) And he overlaid it with pure gold, and made thereto a crown of gold round about. (12) And he made unto it a border of a handbreadth round about, and made a golden crown to the border thereof round about. (13) And he cast for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that were on the four feet thereof. (14) Close by the border were the rings, the places for the staves to bear the table. (15) And he made the staves of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold, to bear the table. (16) And he made the vessels which were upon the table, the dishes thereof, and the spoons thereof, and the bowls thereof, and the flagons thereof, wherewith to pour out, of pure gold.

(17) And he made the candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work made of the candlestick, even its base, and its shaft; its cups, its knops, and its flowers, were of one piece with it. (18) And there were 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: (19) 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. (20) And in the candlestick were four cups made like almond-blossoms, the knops thereof, and the flowers thereof; (21) 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 it. (22) Their knops and their branches were of one piece with it: the whole of it was one beaten work of pure gold. (23) and he made the lamps thereof, seven, and the snuffers thereof, and the snuff-dishes thereof, of pure gold. (24) Of a talent of pure

gold made he it, and all the vessels thereof.

(25) And he made the altar of incense of acacia wood: a cubit was the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof foursquare; and two cubits was the height thereof; the horns thereof were of one piece with it. (26) And he overlaid it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns of it: and he made unto it a crown of gold round about. (27) And he made for it two golden rings under the crown thereof, upon the two ribs thereof, upon the two sides of it, for places for staves wherewith to bear it. (28) And he made the staves of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold. (29) And he made the holy anointing oil, and the pure incense of sweet spices, after the art of the perfumer.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

1. *Topic:* The Inside Furniture. The chapter discusses the ark and the mercy-seat (37:1-9), the table of showbread (37:10-16), the lampstand (37:17-24), and the altar of incense (37:25-29). All of these items were inside the tabernacle building.
2. *Parallel passages:* (See the notes on the earlier parallel passages.)
 - (1) 37:1-9 (Ark and mercy-seat) - 25:10-22.
 - (2) 37:10-16 (Table) - 25:23-30.
 - (3) 37:17-24 (Lampstand) - 25:31-39; 27:20-21.
 - (4) 37:25-28 (Incense altar) - 30:1-10.
 - (5) 37:29 (Anointing oil and incense) - 30:23-25, 31-33, 34-38.
3. *Notes:*

Several statements in chapter twenty-five about the positioning of the articles of tabernacle furniture are not repeated in the parallel sections in this chapter. Compare 25:15b and 37:5; 25:21-22 and 37:9; 25:30 and 37:16; 25:37b and 37:22.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

38 And he made the altar of burnt-offering of acacia wood: five cubits was the length thereof, and five cubits the breadth thereof, foursquare; and three cubits the height thereof. (2) And he made the horns thereof upon the four corners of it; the horns thereof were of one piece with it: and he overlaid it with brass. (3) And he made all the vessels of the altar, the pots, and the shovels, and the basins, the flesh-hooks, and the firepans: all the vessels thereof made he of brass. (4) And he made for the altar a grating of network of brass, under the ledge round it beneath, reaching halfway up. (5) And he cast four rings for the four ends of the grating of brass, to be places for the staves. (6) And he made the staves of acacia wood, and overlaid them with brass. (7) And he put the staves into the rings on the sides of the altar, wherewith to bear it; he made it hollow with planks.

(8) And he made the laver of brass, and the base thereof of brass, of the mirrors of the ministering women that ministered at the door of the tent of meeting.

(9) And he made the court: for the south side southward the hangings of the court were of fine twined linen, a hundred cubits; (10) their pillars were twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver. (11) And for the north side a hundred cubits, their pillars twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver. (12) And for the west side were hangings of fifty cubits, their pillars ten, and their sockets ten; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver. (13) And for the east side eastward fifty cubits. (14) The hangings for the one side *of the gate* were fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three; (15) and so for the other side: on this hand and that hand by the gate of the court were hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three. (16) All the hangings on the court round about were of fine twined linen. (17) And the sockets for the pillars were of brass; the

hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver; and the overlaying of their capitals, of silver; and all the pillars of the court were filleted with silver. (18) And the screen for the gate of the court was the work of the embroiderer, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen: and twenty cubits was the length, and the height in the breadth was five cubits, answerable to the hangings of the court. (19) And their pillars were four, and their sockets four of brass; their hooks of silver, and the overlaying of their capitals, and their fillets, of silver. (20) And all the pins of the tabernacle, and of the court round about were of brass.

(21) This is the sum of *the things* for the tabernacle, even the tabernacle of the testimony, as they were counted, according to the commandment of Mo-ses, for the service of the Le-vites, by the hand of Ith-a-mar, the son of Aar-on the priest. (22) And Be-zal-el the son of U-ri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Ju-dah, made all that Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (23) And with him was O-ho-li-ab, the son of A-his-a-mach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver, and a skilful workman, and an embroiderer in blue, and in purple, and in scarlet, and in fine linen.

(24) All the gold that was used for the work in all the work of the sanctuary, even the gold of the offering, was twenty and nine talents, and seven hundred and thirty shek-els, after the shek-el of the sanctuary. (25) And the silver of them that were numbered of the congregation was a hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred and threescore and fifteen shek-els, after the shek-el of the sanctuary: (26) a be-ka a head, *that is*, half a shek-el, after the shek-el of the sanctuary, for every one that passed over to them that were numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men. (27) And the hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil; a hundred sockets for the hundred talents, a talent for a socket. (28) And of the thousand seven hundred seventy and five *shek-els* he made hooks for the pillars, and overlaid their capitals, and made fillets for them. (29) And the brass of the offering was seventy talents, and two thousand

and four hundred shek-els. (30) And therewith he made the sockets to the door of the tent of meeting, and the brazen altar, and the brazen grating for it, and all the vessels of the altar, (31) and the sockets of the court round about, and the sockets of the gate of the court, and all the pins of the tabernacle, and all the pins of the court round about.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

1. *Topic:* The Outside Furniture and court; Cost of Materials. The theme of Outside Furniture gives this chapter an easily-remembered topic that contrasts with that of chapter thirty-seven.
2. *Parallel passages:* (See the notes on the earlier parallel passages.)
 - (1) 38:1-7 (Altar of burnt-offering) - 27:1-8.
 - (2) 38:8 (Laver) - 30:17-31.
 - (3) 38:9-20 (Court) - 27:9-19.
 - (4) 38:22-23 (Builders) - 31:1-11; 35:10-18, 30—36:1.
3. *Questions Answerable from the Bible:*
 - (1) What was the source of the brass for the laver and its base? (38:8)
 - (2) Which tribe was to do service for the tabernacle? (38:21)
 - (3) Under whose "hand" (or leadership) was the sum (accounts) of the tabernacle materials counted? (38:21)
 - (4) What craft work was Oholiab particularly skilled in? What materials did he use? (38:23)
 - (5) How much gold was used in the sanctuary? (38:24)
 - (6) How much silver was used in the sanctuary? (38:25)
 - (7) How much silver had been given by each of the men over twenty? (38:26; Compare 30:12-14.)
 - (8) How many Israelite men were counted and assessed for silver? (38:26; Compare Num. 1:46.)
 - (9) What was the silver used for? (38:27-28)

(10) How much brass was contributed for the sanctuary? (38:29)

(11) What was the brass used for? (38:30-31)

4. Notes on Exodus 38:

38:1 - The fuller title "altar of burnt-offering" is used here, to distinguish the altar from the altar of incense (37:25). Ex. 27:1 simply referred to "the altar" because the altar of incense had not yet been introduced.

38:8 - Only here is the information given that the laver and its bases were made from copper from the mirrors of the ministering women. See notes on 30:17-21. The laver and its base were not made from the material donated in the Lord's offering (38:29), but from the brass mirrors of the women.

This verse refers to the "ministering women" for the first time. The verb translated "minister" (*tsabab*) means "to assemble for service" (Num. 4:23), "to assemble for military service, to go forth to war" (Num. 3:17). The verb is related to the Hebrew word for "host" (as in the "Lord of hosts"). The same word is applied to the women in I Sam. 2:22, whom the sons of Eli wickedly lay with.

Statements have been made that the reference to the women ministering at the door of the tent of meeting is an anachronism, because there was not yet any tent of meeting built before which they could minister. (See *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1, [1969], p. 466.) This statement is nonsense, if not blasphemy. The "tent of meeting" referred to is obviously the "tent of meeting" mentioned in 33:7. These women served there; and after the tabernacle was built, they continued their service around the new structure.

38:20 - The reference to the "pins" in the tabernacle is found only here. The word refers to a peg, nail or pin, something used for fastening. Probably it refers to the pins or stakes used to hold upright the tabernacle court and boards.

38:21 - Translation (with slight paraphrase in parentheses):

"These are the enumerations (or accounts) of (the materials collected for) the tabernacle, even the tabernacle of the testimony (or law), which were numbered (counted) by the order (literally "mouth") of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand (the work of leadership) of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest." On Ithamar, see 6:23 and 28:1.

Moses specifically ordered an inventory of the materials used. Apparently the Levites did the tabulating and Ithamar supervised the Levites.

The "sum" (literally "enumerations") of the materials - the gold, silver and brass - is given in 38:24-31.

Observe the striking name "tabernacle of the testimony." Regarding the "testimony," see 25:1. "Testimony" means precept, law, or testimony, and refers to the ten commandments.

This verse is the first mention of the service of the Levites since they were consecrated to Jehovah in 32:29. The formal appointment of the Levites to the service of tabernacle is related in Numbers 3:5-51. A special setting-apart ceremony for them was done at yet a later time, and is mentioned in Deut. 10:8.

38:22 - High tribute is here paid to Bezalel. The Greek Bible relates erroneously that Bezalel had made the brazen altar of the brazen censers which belonged to the rebels who joined with Korah. See Numbers 16:36-39 for the real facts about this incident.

38:24 - A talent was approximately seventy-five pounds. A talent consisted of 3000 shekels, as can be calculated easily from 38:25-26. A shekel was about four-tenths of an ounce.

From these values we learn that the gold of the sanctuary amounted to one ton and 350 pounds. This would be worth over five and a half million dollars at \$150 an ounce. "Gold of the offering" is literally "gold of waving." It was in God's sight a type of wave-offering. See 29:26.

The amount of metals offered for the sanctuary may

seem very large. But vast amounts of gold, silver and copper are known to have been assembled by ancient kings. See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, pp. 251-252, for examples. The Egyptians had a great love for valuable and elegant ornaments, gold, rings, necklaces, etc., as can be seen from their monuments. The Israelites had collected much of this Egyptian jewelry.

38:25 - The silver for the sanctuary amounted to four tons. The silver mentioned here was not the silver from the offering of 35:5, but was the silver obtained from the numbering of the men, who all gave a half-shekel when numbered. See 30:12-14. This silver was used for the silver sockets (pedestals), and for overlaying the capitals of the pillars.

We are not informed concerning the uses made of the silver referred to in 35:24. Possibly, as Cassuto suggests (*op. cit.*, p. 472), the silver in 35:24 is actually the same silver as that referred to in 39:25. This appears uncertain to us.

38:26 - The word *bekah* (from a verb meaning "to divide") means "half," hence, half-shekel.

Concerning the heavier "shekel of the sanctuary" see 30:13.

See 30:11-14 for the instructions about taking a census and collecting the half-shekel atonement money. A major census is described in Num. 1:1. It was taken only a month after the tabernacle was set up (Ex. 40:17). But the count in Ex. 36:26 was obviously taken *before* the tabernacle was built. Yet the number of people counted - 603,550 - is exactly the same in Exodus 36 and Numbers 1!

It appears from Numbers 1:18 that that count of the Israelites by families and by tribes was done in a single day! To accomplish such a feat would require complete cooperation by the people and thorough preparation and organization in advance by the leaders. Such preparation is exactly what the count in Exodus thirty-eight would

have provided. The names of the people were all already written down (possibly on potsherds). With the names already on hand, the census takers could quickly have checked and collated them into tribes and families. See Num. 1:2, 20, 22, 24, *passim*.

A collection of money similar to that mentioned in Ex. 38:26 was made in the time of King Joash (II Chron. 24:4-6), apparently at the same rate per head, for the repairing of the temple. This was not an annual tax, but a special one. The tax of Matt. 17:27 (which seems to have been an annual levy) was a later and different tax, even though it involved the same sum (half a shekel) as the special levy for the sanctuary.

38:27 - Regarding the "sockets," see 26:19-25.

38:28 - Regarding the pillars, see 27:10, 17.

38:29-30 - The brass (copper) of the offering amounted to two tons and 500 pounds.

The uses of the brass are described in 38:30. No mention is made of the laver among these uses listed, because the brass for the laver came from a separate source.

See Ex. 27:4 concerning the "brazen grating." This grating seems to have been a network of brass on the sides of the altar, through which a draft of air could be drawn up into the fire inside the altar.

38:31 - The heavy brass and silver sockets and other heavy items were transported about in six covered wagons pulled by twelve oxen. See Num. 7:2-5.

Does the great amount of gold, silver, and brass in the tabernacle indicate that God's people should expect to live in wealthy surroundings and comfort? Does it indicate that we should build church buildings of luxurious quality?

The Israelites themselves, who made the tabernacle, were often brought low and even caused to hunger, that they might learn that man does not live by bread alone, but by the word of

God (Deut. 8:2-3). These people did not live in luxury, even though their tabernacle was somewhat luxurious. Neither can we as God's people expect soft luxurious living. The people of God have often been destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (Heb. 11:37). The early Christians took joyfully the spoiling of their possessions (Heb. 10:34). We really must not expect better treatment.

There is, however, another side to this matter. God's prophet Isaiah (60:5-14) spoke of the time when the "wealth of the nations shall come unto thee," referring to Zion, the people of God. Similarly Haggai 2:7-8 prophesied that "the precious things of all nations" would come to fill God's house with glory. In fulfillment of these prophecies, there have indeed been times when the church has had a great deal of wealth. Even Paul declared that he knew how "both to abound (have abundance) and to suffer need" (Phil. 4:2). Thus it appears that the church should not expect to be poor at all times in all places. The important thing is to learn to be content, whatever our lot, and not to set our hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God. (Phil. 4:11; I Tim. 6:17)

Does the luxury of the tabernacle suggest that we should build luxurious church buildings? Probably not. The New Testament does not even mention church buildings. The PEOPLE of God now constitute His temple, rather than a building of stones and gold (I Peter 2:5; Eph. 2:19-22). The Christians in apostolic times met in homes, public porches, school houses, etc. They were aware that everything in this earth is to be burned up (II Peter 3:10). They did not consider that the tabernacle or even Solomon's temple was a precedent to them to make luxurious structures. In fact, God had never asked Solomon to build any temple; and God caused the temple to be demolished when the people became unfaithful to Him. God dwells with him that is "poor and of a contrite spirit" (Isa. 66:2). We do not condemn the making of adequate attractive meeting houses. They may be helpful and even quite necessary. But the tabernacle is hardly a precedent to us to build buildings of great luxury. If God should grant

us on some occasions a degree of luxury, we shall pray it may be used to His glory. If we suffer want, we shall still praise Him, and be content.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

39 And of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, they made finely wrought garments, for ministering in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aar-on; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(2) And he made the eph-od of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. (3) And they did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet, and in the fine linen, the work of the skilful workman. (4) They made shoulder-pieces for it, joined together; at the two ends was it joined together. (5) And the skilfully woven band, that was upon it, wherewith to gird it on, was of the same piece *and* like the work thereof; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(6) And they wrought the onyx stones, inclosed in settings of gold, graven with the engravings of a signet, according to the names of the children of Is-ra-el. (7) And he put them on the shoulder-pieces of the eph-od, to be stones of memorial for the children of Is-ra-el; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(8) And he made the breastplate, the work of the skilful workman, like the work of the eph-od; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. (9) It was four-square; they made the breastplate double: a span was the length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof, being double. (10) And they set in it four rows of stones. A row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle was the first row; (11) and the second row, an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; (12) and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; (13) and the fourth

row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper: they were inclosed in inclosings of gold in their settings. (14) And the stones were according to the names of the children of Is-ra-el, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, every one according to his name, for the twelve tribes. (15) And they made upon the breastplate chains like cords, of wreathen work of pure gold. (16) And they made two settings of gold, and two gold rings, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. (17) And they put the two wreathen chains of gold in the two rings at the ends of the breastplate. (18) And the *other* two ends of the two wreathen chains they put on the two settings, and put them on the shoulder-pieces of the eph-od, in the forepart thereof. (19) And they made two rings of gold, and put them upon the two ends of the breastplate, upon the edge thereof, which was toward the side of the eph-od inward. (20) And they made two rings of gold, and put them on the two shoulder-pieces of the eph-od underneath, in the forepart thereof, close by the coupling thereof, above the skilfully woven band of the eph-od. (21) And they did bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the eph-od with a lace of blue, that it might be upon the skilfully woven band of the eph-od, and that the breastplate might not be loosed from the eph-od; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(22) And he made the robe of the eph-od of woven work, all of blue; (23) and the hole of the robe in the midst thereof, as the hole of a coat of mail, with a binding round about the hole of it, that it should not be rent. (24) And they made upon the skirts of the robe pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, *and twined linen*, (25) And they made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates upon the skirts of the robe round about, between the pomegranates; (26) a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, upon the skirts of the robe round about, to minister in; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(27) And they made the coats of fine linen of woven work for Aar-on, and for his sons, (28) and the mitre of fine linen, and the goodly head-tires of fine linen, and the linen breeches

of fine twisted linen, (29) and the girdle of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, the work of the embroiderer; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(30) And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like the engravings of a signet, HOLY TO JE-HO-VAH. (31) And they tied unto it a lace of blue, to fasten it upon the mitre above; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(32) Thus was finished all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting; and the children of Is-ra-el did according to all that Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses; so did they. (33) And they brought the tabernacle unto Mo-ses, the Tent, and all its furniture, its clasps, its boards, its bars, and its pillars, and its sockets; (34) and the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of sealskins, and the veil of the screen; (35) the ark of the testimony, and the staves thereof, and the mercy-seat; (36) the table, all the vessels thereof, and the showbread; (37) the pure candlestick, the lamps thereof, even the lamps to be set in order, and all the vessels thereof, and the oil for the light; (38) and the golden altar, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the screen for the door of the Tent; (39) the brazen altar, and its grating of brass, its staves, and all its vessels, the laver and its base; (40) the hangings of the court, its pillars, and its sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court, the cords thereof, and the pins thereof, and all the instruments of the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting; (41) the finely wrought garments for ministering in the holy place, and the holy garments for Aar-on the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office. (42) According to all that Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses, so the children of Is-ra-el did all the work. (43) And Mo-ses saw all the work, and, behold, they had done it; as Je-ho-vah had commanded, even so had they done it: and Mo-ses blessed them.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

1. *Topic:* Priests' garments; Finished Work Presented. Much of the material in this chapter is parallel to material in chapter twenty-eight. Note that seven times in this chapter (and eight times in chapter forty) it says that things were made "as God commanded Moses" (39:5, *passim*).
2. *Outline:* A. Garments of priests; 39:1-31.
 - (1) Materials; 39:1.
 - (2) Ephod; 39:2-5.
 - (3) Onyx shoulder-stones; 39:6-7.
 - (4) Breastplate; 39:8-21.
 - (5) Robe of ephod; 39:22-26.
 - (6) Coats, head-coverings, breeches, girdle; 39:27-29.
 - (7) Golden plate; 39:30-31.B. Tabernacle brought to Moses; 39:32-43.
3. *Parallel passages:* (See the notes on the earlier parallel passages.)
 - (1) 39:1 (Materials) - 28:1-5.
 - (2) 39:2-7 (Ephod) - 28:6-13.
 - (3) 39:8-21 (Breastplate) - 28:15-30.
 - (4) 39:22-26 (Robe) - 28:31-35.
 - (5) 39:27-29 (Coat mitre, girdle) - 28:39-40, 42-43.
 - (6) 39:30-31 (Golden plate) - 28:36-38.

(Observe how closely the order of items described in chapter 39 follows the order in chapter 28.)

4. *Questions* on Ex. 38 answerable from the Bible:
 - (1) How were gold wires (or threads) obtained for weaving into the ephod? (39:3; 28:6)
 - (2) What is the golden plate on Aaron's mitre called in 39:30? Compare 28:36.
 - (3) How fully did Israel carry out Jehovah's commands about making the tabernacle: (39:32, 42)
 - (4) To whom were the items of tabernacle furniture bought? (39:33)

- (5) What was brought with the "pure candlestick"? (39:37; Compare 25:37-38.)
 (6) What is the "golden altar"? (39:38; 30:3; 37:25-26; 40:26-27)
 (7) What was Moses' response to the people who brought the tabernacle? (39:43)

5. Notes:

39:1 - Regarding the King James reading "cloths of service," see 31:10. Concerning the "blue, purple, scarlet," see 25:4; 35:23.

39:3 - The information about the obtaining of gold threads by cutting from thinly beaten-out sheets of gold is given only here.

39:10-13 - Exodus 39:10 may be translated "And they shall fill in it four rows of stone(s). . . ."

We do not know with certainty the identity or the modern names of all the gemstones mentioned.¹ Neither do we know how the names of the tribes were positioned upon the gemstones. But, using the arrangement of the tribes' encampments in Numbers two as a guide, and arranging the names from right to left (like Hebrew writing), we propose the following:

ZEBULUN - Carbuncle (Green emerald)	ISSACHAR - Topaz (Green peridot)	JUDAH - Sardius (Red Carnelian)
GAD - Diamond (Transparent, hard?)	SIMEON - Sapphire (Blue lapis-lazuli)	REUBEN - Emerald (Rich green turquoise)
BENJAMIN - Amethyst (Purple quartz)	MANASSEH - Agate (Banded red, white, brown)	EPHRAIM - Jacinth (Orange color)
NAPHTALI - Jasper (Red-brown, yellow)	ASHER - Onyx (Banded milky-white, black, red)	DAN - Beryl (Sea-green feldspar)

¹See "Jewels," *Interpreter's Dictionary of The Bible*, Vol 2 (New York: Abingdon, 1962), pp. 898-902.

- 39:22 - We are not told exactly where the priest wore the robe of the ephod. We suppose it was worn under the ephod and under the breastplate, so that it did not cover the gems of the breastplate or the gorgeous ephod. The bells and pomegranates would hang below the ephod.
- 39:29 - The singular "girdle" with the definite article does appear to refer to Aaron's girdle. There is no special description of the girdles of Aaron's sons that are referred to in Ex. 28:40. We suppose that those were made of the same materials and in the same form as Aaron's, and that the singular "girdle" in 39:29 is a collective, or generic, expression referring to the girdles of all priests. (See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, pp. 253-254.)
- 39:30 - The golden plate is called a "crown" (diadem) here. In 28:36 it is spoken of as a "plate" of gold.
- 39:31 - The construction details end at 39:31.
- 39:32 - Cassuto (*op. cit.*, p. 476) says that the word "finished" in 39:32 recalls Gen. 2:1 to our minds, where God "finished" the work of creation. (The same verb is used in both verses.) He feels that there are intentional parallels made between the completion of creation and the completion of the tabernacle. Compare Ex. 39:43 and Gen. 1:31 (Moses/God "saw."); Ex. 39:43 and Gen. 1:22, 28 (Moses/God "blessed.") This idea seems to us rather weakly supported by the evidence.
- 39:33 - "Tabernacle" in 39:33 probably refers to the inner curtains. "Tent" probably refers to the goats' hair curtains. See 40:19; 26:13.
- 39:34 - The "veil of the screen" (K.J.V., "vail of the covering") refers to the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Compare 39:38; 35:12, 15; 40:3, 21.
- 39:37 - A new expression "lamps of the order" (or arrangement) appears in this verse. The expression uses a form of the word "order" employed in 27:21: "Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning

before Jehovah." The lamps were to be positioned in such an arrangement that they would give light toward the opposite side of the room.

39:40 - Regarding the "hanging of the court," see 27:9-15; 38:9-17.

39:42 - Credit was given to all the children of Israel, not just to the principal craftsmen.

39:43 - How Moses must have rejoiced to see the tabernacle completed! Less than two years before he had been a fearful shepherd. Now he has lived to see the fulfillment of God's promise: "Ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (3:12).

The work of building the tabernacle had been brief, but probably arduous. In a little over five months all the work had been done. See 19:1; 24:18; 34:28; 40:2.

The words "as Jehovah had commanded" describe ALL the work done. It was necessary to make the tabernacle according to HIS directions. Only God knew what was His plan to redeem man. Only God knew what pleased Him.

Jewish tradition attributes Psalm 90 to this occasion of completing the tabernacle. (J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, p. 388.) Note Psalm 90:17, the closing words of the psalm: "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; Yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it." The Psalm is attributed to Moses by its title, but the idea that it was composed for this occasion is not a certainty.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

40 And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (2) On the first day of the first month shalt thou rear up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. (3) And thou shalt put therein

the ark of the testimony, and thou shalt screen the ark with the veil. (4) And thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the things that are upon it; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps thereof. (5) And thou shalt set the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the screen of the door to the tabernacle. (6) And thou shalt set the altar of burnt-offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. (7) And thou shalt set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and shalt put water therein. (8) And thou shalt set up the court round about, and hang up the screen of the gate of the court. (9) And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the furniture thereof: and it shall be holy. (10) And thou shalt anoint the altar of burnt-offering, and all its vessels, and sanctify the altar: and the altar shall be most holy. (11) And thou shalt anoint the laver and its base, and sanctify it. (12) And thou shalt bring Aar-on and his sons unto the door of the tent of meeting, and shalt wash them with water. (13) And thou shalt put upon Aar-on the holy garments; and thou shalt anoint him, and sanctify him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. (14) And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them; (15) and thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: and their anointing shall be to them for an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations. (16) Thus did Mo-ses: according to all that Je-ho-vah commanded him, so did he.

(17) And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up. (18) And Mo-ses reared up the tabernacle, and laid its sockets, and set up the boards thereof, and put in the bars thereof, and reared up its pillars. (19) And he spread the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent above upon it, as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (20) And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the staves on the ark, and put the mercy-seat above upon the ark: (21) and he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the veil of the screen, and

screened the ark of the testimony; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (22) And he put the table in the tent of meeting, upon the side of the tabernacle northward, without the veil. (23) And he set the bread in order upon it before Je-ho-vah; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (24) And he put the candlestick in the tent of meeting, over against the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward. (25) And he lighted the lamps before Je-ho-vah; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (26) And he put the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the veil: (27) and he burnt thereon incense of sweet spices; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (28) And he put the screen of the door to the tabernacle. (29) And he set the altar of burnt-offering at the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered upon it the burnt-offering and the meal-offering; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (30) And he set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water therein, wherewith to wash. (31) And Mo-ses and Aar-on and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat; (32) when they went into the tent of meeting, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (33) And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Mo-ses finished the work.

(34) Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Je-ho-vah filled the tabernacle. (35) And Mo-ses was not able to enter into the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of Je-ho-vah filled the tabernacle. (36) And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Is-ra-el went onward, throughout all their journeys: (37) but if the cloud was not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. (38) For the cloud of Je-ho-vah was upon the tabernacle by day, and there was fire therein by night, in the sight of all the house of Is-ra-el, throughout all their journeys.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER FORTY
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. Who designated the day for the setting up of the tabernacle? (40:1-2)
3. On what day was it to be set up? (40:2, 17). How long had it been since Israel left Egypt? (12:6-8, 29-33)
4. By what name is the ark called in 40:3?
5. Where was the altar of burnt-offering placed? (40:6, 29)
6. Where was the laver placed? (40:7, 30)
7. What was the anointing to cause the tabernacle to be? (40:9)
8. What was to be done to Aaron and his sons? (40:12-15). Is this the same ritual described in 29:1-37 and Lev. chapter eight?
9. Who set up the tabernacle? (40:18)
10. What did Moses put into the ark? (40:20; Compare Deut. 10:4-5.)
11. On which side of the Tent of meeting was the table placed? (40:22)
12. Who performed the first priestly work of setting bread in order, lighting lamps, and burning incense? (40:22-29)
13. Who washed at the laver? (40:31) What parts of their bodies were washed?
14. What covered the tent of meeting when the tabernacle was finished? (40:34; Compare I Kings 8:10-11.)
15. What is the "glory of Jehovah"? (40:34; 24:17; Num. 16:43; Luke 2:9; Rev. 21:23)
16. Why could not Moses enter the tent of meeting for a time? (40:35)
17. How did the cloud signal for Israel to prepare to move? How did the cloud direct their journeys? (40:36-37; Num. 9:15-23)
18. How did the cloud appear by day and by night? (40:38)
19. Who could see the cloud? When? (40:38)

EXODUS FORTY: TABERNACLE SET UP! GLORY OF THE LORD!

1. Command to set up the tabernacle; 40:1-15.
 2. Compliance of Moses; 40:17-33.
 3. Cloud of glory! 40:34-38.
-

GOD'S INVOLVEMENT IN HIS SANCTUARY (40:1-16, 34)

1. He determines who sets it up. (40:2)
 2. He determines when it is set up. (40:2)
 3. He directs the arrangement of all parts. (40:3-8)
 4. He commands the anointing of all parts. (40:9-11)
 5. He requires the consecration of its priests. (40:12-15)
 6. He covers the tent with glory. (40:34)
-

"AS THE LORD COMMANDED"! (40:16-33)

An overview of obedience! A chronicle of compliance!

See 40:16, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32 - eight statements of obedience!

THE GLORY OF THE LORD! (40:34-38)**A. At the tabernacle.**

1. Filled God's house; 40:34; II Chron. 7:1; Ezek. 43:5.
2. Kept men at a distance; 40:35; II Chron. 7:2.
3. Directed God's people; 40:36-37.
4. Was visible to all! 40:38.

B. At other places and times.

1. Indicated God's presence when the law was given; Ex. 24:16-17.
2. Indicated God's presence in anger; Num. 16:19, 42; 14:10; 20:6; Ex. 16:7, 10.
3. Indicated God's presence in blessing; Lev. 9:23, 6.

4. Revealed to Moses; Ex. 33:18, 22.
5. Revealed to Ezekiel; Ezek. 1:28; 3:23; 9:3; 43:4-5.
6. Shone the night Christ was born; Luke 2:9.
7. The glory of the Lord is upon his people; Isaiah 60:1-2.
8. Christians behold it as in a mirror; II Cor. 3:18.
9. Will lighten the New Jerusalem. Rev. 21:23.

“Let the glory of Jehovah endure for ever!” (Ps. 104:31)

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER FORTY

1. *What is in Exodus 40?*

The chapter deals with the setting up of the tabernacle. It tells God's commands about how it was to be set up (40:1-15), and tells of Moses' compliance (40:16-33). The chapter closes excitingly with information about the cloud of God's glory filling the tabernacle and leading Israel through their journeys.

Note that eight times in the chapter the statement is made that Moses did just as the Lord commanded him.

The chapter is composed in accordance with the technique frequently used in various Biblical sections, and in general with the literary tradition of the Ancient East: one paragraph tells of the divine command, and the next records its implementation. (See Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 478.) Skeptical critics accuse it of being made of three parallel literary layers (40:1-17, 18-33, 34-38), each written separately, and all being additions to “P.” (See Martin Noth, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-283.)

2. *When was the tabernacle to be set up? By whom? (40:1-2, 17)*

It was to be set up by Moses on the first day of the first month of the second year after their departure from Egypt. It had been eleven and a half months since they left Egypt, nine months since they arrived at Mt. Sinai, and less than

six months since Moses came down from Sinai after his second forty-day stay. Compare 12:2, 6.

3. *What was to "screen" (or cover) the ark?* (40:3, 21)

The VEIL was to "screen" the ark. The other "screen" at the entrance of the Holy Place is referred to in 40:5. Although the Hebrew verb translated "screen" (*sakak*) may mean "cover," it does not here indicate that the veil lay over the ark like a cover. The mercy-seat did that. But the veil did screen the ark from view from the Holy Place.

4. *What did Moses set on the table?* (40:4, 23)

He set the showbread in order upon it. Compare 25:30. It surely appears that the instructions about the showbread in Lev. 24:5-9 are here presupposed, and must have been issued before the tabernacle was set up.

Exodus 40:4 reads literally, "And thou shalt arrange its arrangement" (referring to the showbread).

5. *Where were the altar of burnt-offering and the laver located?* (40:6-7)

The altar was in the court, in front of the entrance to the tent of meeting (the Holy Place). The laver was between the altar and the tent of meeting. Note that the laver had water in it; but there is no indication that water was in its base. Compare 30:17-18. The translation "water therein" appears to be a little too definite; the Hebrew just says "You shall put water there." Note the separate anointing of the laver and its base (40:11).

6. *What effect was the anointing to have on the tabernacle and its furniture?* (40:9-10)

It was to make it "holy." The "it" in 40:9 refers to the tabernacle and all its equipment. On anointing, see 30:26-28.

Exodus 40:10 says that the altar of burnt-offering would be "MOST holy" after its anointing. Because all of the tabernacle equipment is said to be "most holy" in 30:29, we suppose that in 40:9-10 "holy" and "most holy" are parallel terms and not distinctions.

7. *Does 40:12-15 refer to the consecration ritual of the priests?*

Although both this passage and the passages about the priests' consecration mention washing, robing, and anointing the priests, it still does not seem that 40:12-15 refers to the consecration ritual described in detail in Ex. 29 and Lev. 8. There is no allusion in Ex. 40 to the elaborate program of sacrifices described in the other passages, nor to the application of the blood, nor to the seven-day stay at the tabernacle. Also it seems that Nadab and Abihu died during the consecration ritual (Lev. 10). There is no hint of such an event in Ex. 40. The consecration of 40:12-15 must have been preparatory and preliminary to the full ritual.

Concerning the "everlasting priesthood" (literally, "priesthood of eternity"), see 29:9 and Numbers 25:13.

8. *How fully did Moses carry out the instructions about setting up the tabernacle? (40:16-17)*

He obeyed in all points. The order in which his acts of obedience are listed (in 40:17-33) corresponds to that of the directions, in accordance with usual ancient literary practice. (Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 481)

9. *What did Moses place in the ark? (40:20)*

He placed the "testimony" in the ark, the tablets of the ten commandments. This verse seems to indicate that the pot of manna (16:33) and Aaron's budded rod (Num. 17:10) were not actually inside the ark, but were kept beside it. Compare Heb. 9:4. In the time of Solomon nothing was in the ark except the ten commandments (I Kings 8:9).

10. *What did Moses do with the lamps? (40:25)*

He "lighted" the lamps before Jehovah. Some translations (A.S.V. margin) have rendered this to mean "he set up" the lamps. But the verb used here refers to *lighting* the lamps in Num. 8:3 and Lev. 24:2, and probably means that here.

Needless to say, the lighting was not done the instant the lampstand was set in place, but after the erection and anointing of the tabernacle.

11. *What sacrifices did Moses offer? (40:29)*

He offered the burnt-offering and the meal-offering. Compare 20:24; 29:39-41. Moses himself performed the first priestly ceremonies in the tabernacle. After that the priests (the family of Aaron) and the Levites performed these functions. Observe that Moses offered incense (40:27), another priestly function.

12. *Who washed at the laver? (40:30-32)*

Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons. Compare 30:19-21. The detail of *Moses'* washing is not given in 30:19.

13. *What command and what promise were fulfilled when Moses finished the work? (40:33)*

The words of Ex. 25:8 were fulfilled: "Let them *make* a sanctuary, that I may *dwell among them*."

See notes on 39:32 concerning the expression "finished." See the outline on the Glory of the Lord near the start of the notes on this chapter.

14. *What covered the tent of meeting and the tabernacle? (40:34)*

The cloud of the glory of the Lord covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

This verse is quite poetic in wording (in Hebrew), and the two clauses show parallelism. (The second line repeats the thought of the first in slightly different words.)

The presence of the cloud was a fulfillment of the promise in 29:43, 45. God showed His approval of the Tent by descending in a cloud of glory. God's approval was based on what the tabernacle showed about the hearts of the people and about Himself, rather than on the material magnificence of the building.

God's glory had previously descended on Mt. Sinai (24:15-16). In a similar way the glory came upon the tabernacle. As Mt. Sinai had been a holy place where Israel met God, the tabernacle was to be a portable holy place (a portable Mt. Sinai!) where they would meet with God wherever they might be.

15. *Why could not Moses enter the tabernacle? (40:35)*

LATER HISTORY OF THE TABERNACLE

1. It was probably set up at Gilgal after Israel crossed the Jordan into the promised land. (Josh. 4:19; 5:10; 9:6; 10:6, 43).
2. It was erected at Shiloh in the center of the land, and remained there through the period of judges. (Joshua 18:1; 19:51; I Samuel 1:3; 4:3, 12).

While at Shiloh, it was altered so as to have "doors" (I Sam. 3:15); and it came to be called the "temple." (I Sam. 1:9; 3:3).

3. The ark was captured by the Philistines (I Sam. 4:10-11), but was returned to Israel to Kiriath-Jearim west of Jerusalem. (I Sam. 7:1).

Shiloh seems to have been destroyed about 1050 B.C., possibly in the time of Samuel and Eli. (Jer. 7:12-14)

4. After the time of Eli it was removed to Nob (probably just north of Jerusalem). (I Sam. 21:1-9) The ark remained at Kiriath-Jearim till the time of David. (I Sam. 7:1-2; I Chron. 13:5-6)
5. By the time of David (about 1000 B.C.) the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, and the altar of burnt-offering had been moved to Gibeon, located five miles northwest of Jerusalem. (I Chron. 21:29; 16:39-40; II Chron. 1:3; I Kings 3:4; 9:2)
6. David brought the ark to Jerusalem, where he had prepared a new tent for it. (II Sam. 6:17; I Chron. 16:1)
7. Solomon built the temple, and replaced every part of the tabernacle except the ark of the covenant, which he placed in the Oracle (Holy of Holies) of the temple. (I Kings 8:4, 6)
8. Solomon's temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. After this we hear no more of the ark of the covenant. It was not replaced in the second temple by Zerubbabel (516 B.C.) II Maccabees 2:4-8 has a fanciful tale about how the prophet Jeremiah hid the ark of the covenant and the altar of incense in a cavern on Mt. Sinai.

Because the glory cloud filled it for a time. Compare I Kings 8:10-11. In a somewhat similar fashion, Moses did not immediately enter the cloud on Mt. Sinai (24:16-18).

16. *What guided the Israelites in their journeys?* (40:36-37)

The cloud. See Numbers 9:15-23; 10:11. The lifting up of the cloud was a signal for Israel to pack for moving. The people followed the cloud as it moved slowly in the direction God desired. When the cloud descended, they camped again.

"Let the fiery, cloudy pillar,
Lead me all my journey through."
(From "Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah")

The statement about the leading of the cloud presupposes that at least this part of Exodus was written late in their wilderness journeyings.

The verb form "went onward" (or "moved") indicates frequentative, repeated movements.

17. *How constant was the presence of the cloud?* (40:38)

It was always there, as a cloud by day and a fire by night. It was visible to all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys. God never forsook them.

Exodus 40:38 ends with the same words as 40:36. The words reverberate like a final echo of what was narrated previously in 13:21-22.

The book of Exodus ends with a confident look ahead toward Israel's journey to Canaan. This confidence belongs to the people of God in every age.

The book of Exodus ends with the house of God full of glory! May the house of God always be filled with the glory of God. "Jehovah will create over the whole habitation of mount Zion, and over all her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory *shall be spread* for a covering." (Isaiah 4:5)

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