

THE EXODUS: FROM EGYPT TO NEBO

A Survey of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

In this study, we will survey the four books that chronicle the Jew's deliverance from Egyptian slavery, the forty-year journey through the wilderness, and the arrival on the border of Canaan. Each of these four books (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), contain a portion of story.¹

Promises made to Abraham that were fulfilled in the Egyptian Bondage

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| 1. The oppression | Genesis 15:13 |
| 2. The multiplication of Abraham's descendants | Genesis 12:1-2; 28:13-14; etc. |
| 3. 400 years in Egypt | Genesis 15:13 |
| 4. Jehovah's judgment of Egypt | Genesis 15:14 |

The story begins several centuries before the events recorded in Exodus. Joseph's brothers, jealous of his favored status with his father and mother, had sold him to travelling slavers. Joseph was seventeen years old at the time (Genesis 37:2). They told his father, Jacob (also known as Israel), that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast. The slavers took Joseph to Egypt, where he was sold to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard (Genesis 37).

Through a series of divinely orchestrated events (recorded in Genesis 39-41) Joseph became the second most powerful man in Egypt – second only to Pharaoh. Because of a Divine revelation given to Joseph, he was able to prepare Egypt for an upcoming famine.

When the famine began, it extended even into Canaan, the home of Joseph's family. Joseph's brothers travelled to Egypt, hoping to obtain grain so that they and their families could survive. When they met Joseph, they did not recognize him. Initially, Joseph played a bit of a game with them, but, in time, he identified himself as the brother whom they had sold into slavery. When they realized that this powerful Egyptian was their brother, they became fearful that he would seek revenge, but Joseph did just the opposite. He supplied them with grain and then asked Pharaoh if he could bring his father to Egypt. Pharaoh, not only agreed, but gave honor to Joseph's father, Jacob (Genesis 42:1-47:12).

When Jacob and his family arrived in Egypt, the entourage included Jacob and sixty-six descendants – a total of sixty-seven immigrants. With the addition of Joseph and his two sons, Jacob's family totaled seventy souls. Note that Jacob's daughters-in-law were not counted (Genesis 46:26-27).

Joseph installed his family in Goshen, the land of Rameses, located in the Nile delta, which was the best portion of Egypt for rearing flocks. Goshen was on the northeastern border of Egypt, in the Nile delta, and somewhat isolated from the rest of the nation.

Joseph instructed his brothers and his father that when they met the Pharaoh, they should tell him that they were shepherds.

¹ For comments on the authorship of the Pentateuch, see ADDENUM A

Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me;³² and the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock; and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.'³³ "When Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?'³⁴ you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' that you may live in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is loathsome to the Egyptians." (Genesis 46:31-34)²

The Hyksos Pharaohs

The fact that the family of Jacob identified itself as being shepherds, contributed to the decision to give the family the land of Goshen. The historical background for this decision has to do with the invasion of the Hyksos.³ Although there is some dispute as to the exact origin of the Hyksos, they were nomadic tribes, probably of Asiatic descent.⁴ The Hyksos conquered portions of northern Egypt and established an independent realm in the eastern Nile Delta – the general vicinity of Goshen. The Hyksos rulers took the title of Pharaoh and established their seat of government at Avaris (later known as, “Tannis,” and then later, as “Zoan”).

Apparently, there were periods in which the Thebian Pharaohs, who ruled in the south of Egypt, were Hyksos vassals. Because the Hyksos were shepherds, the indigenous Egyptians loathed shepherds.

There were six Hyksos Pharaohs:⁵

- Semgen
- Aperanat
- Sakir-har
- Khyan
- Apepi
- Khamudi

There is some dispute as to when the Hyksos entered Egypt. Some argue that it was a gradual immigration and takeover, others describe a military victory.⁶ Some date the first arrival of the

² Throughout this study, all Scriptural quotes will be the New American Standard Bible, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988, 1995, The Lockman Foundation.

³ Josephus defines, *Hyksos*, as *hyk* = “shepherd”; *sos* = “shepherd”, i.e., “Shepherd Kings.” However, the Egyptian expression, *hekau khaswet*, which is used in the Egyptian *Turin King List*, is rendered “rulers of foreign lands.”

⁴ In the context of ancient Egypt, the term Asiatic (which often is used for the Hyksos) may refer to any people native to areas east of Egypt.

⁵ This list is contained in the Egyptian *Turin King List*. In some of the lists, these were known by other names. It was common for Pharaohs to use more than one name, depending on the situation and what they wanted to emphasize by their name.

⁶ The Greek historian, Manetho (c250 B.C) describes an Hyksos invasion. Manetho’s writings have been lost but he is quoted by Josephus (70 AD), Julius Africanus (3rd Century AD) and Eusebius (4th Century AD).

Hyksos in Egypt as early as 2000 BC.⁷ Others cite a later date.⁸ Most are agreed that the arrival of Jacob's family coincides with the Hyksos Egyptian rule. The Hyksos finally were expelled in 1580 BC⁹, by Ahmose I, who was the first Pharaoh of the powerful Eighteenth Dynasty.

The date of the Hyksos invasion and subsequent rule is important because their rule of Egypt and the timing of their displacement, adds to the credibility of the biblical account. The Hyksos were friendly to the Israelite shepherds, thus quite willing to honor Joseph's father, the shepherd, Jacob. The Israelites were given land near the capital of the Hyksos Dynasty. This region was protected by the Hyksos, whereas, other areas in Egypt would have put the Israelites at risk. When the Hyksos were driven out of Egypt and a new dynasty took over the Nile delta, the Israelites no longer were given preferential status. As recorded in Exodus 1:8, *Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph*, and the enslavement of the Jews began.

Prominent Egyptian Characters Involved in the Exodus Story

As discussed earlier, the Hyksos were expelled from Egypt by the Eighteenth Dynasty. Kahmose, the last Egyptian Pharaoh of Dynasty XVII, who ruled from Thebes, began the expulsion, but it was Amose I who successfully expelled the Hyksos and launched Dynasty XVIII.¹⁰

Amose was succeeded by his son, Amenhotep I, whose reign was relatively uneventful. Based on available data, it seems that Amenhotep I left no male heir and the next Pharaoh, Thutmose I, probably was related to the royal family through marriage to Amenhotep's daughter.

Thutmose I was a very successful leader. During his reign the borders of the Egyptian Empire reached their greatest geographical expanse up to that time. Thutmose had no surviving legitimate male heir. His strong-willed daughter, Hatshepsut was in line for the succession. However, since she was a woman, she could do no more than convey to her husband the right to the crown, and thus secure the succession of her children.

Thutmose did have a son by a lesser wife, but since the mother of this boy was not the queen, he was not eligible for the role. To keep his family from losing the throne, Thutmose had Hatshepsut marry her younger half-brother.

Upon Thutmose' death, Hatshepsut's husband/brother took the throne as Thutmose II.

Hatshepsut and Thutmose II had no sons, only daughters, so Thutmose II did the same thing that his father had done – he had the daughter of Hatshepsut marry her half-brother, who, as was true of Thutmose himself, was the son of a lesser wife. The marriage took place when the boy was still a minor.

When Thutmose II died, the boy took the throne as Thutmose III. However, because he was a minor, he did not assume the reins of office for twenty-one years. His powerful step-mother and

⁷ J. McKee Adams, *Ancient Records and the Bible* (Nashville, Broadman Press) 1946, page 28. On page 214 Adams cites the arrival of the Hyksos as 2080 BC.

⁸ K.S.B. Ryholt,, *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period, c.1800-1550 BC*, (cited en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hyksos)

⁹ Adams, page 215

¹⁰ Much of this data is from, Aidan Dodson, Dyan Hilton, *The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt* (London, The American University in Cairo Press) 2004, pages 122-143

mother-in-law, Hatshepsut, not only assumed the kingship during Thutmose III's minority, but when he became a man, she refused to give up her regency. From the first, she declared that she intended to rule as a man. Her reign was brilliant and continued until her death at approximately 1482 BC.¹¹

After Hatshepsut's death, Thutmose III was released from all restraints and as Pharaoh in his own right, he became famous as a military leader and raised the power of Egypt to its zenith.¹²

Thutmose III was succeeded by his son, Amenhotep II. Significantly, when Amenhotep II died, he was succeeded, not by his eldest son, who had died, but by his second son, Thutmose IV.

The relevance of this history will be apparent in the first portion of the Exodus account.

Summary of Pharaohs and their relationship to the Exodus

- Amose I – The first Pharaoh of Dynasty XVIII; the Pharaoh “Who knew not Joseph.”
- Amenhotep I
- Thutmose I
 - Hatshepsut – Thutmose daughter who adopted Moses
- Thutmose II & his half-sister wife, Hatshepsut
- Hatshepsut as regent during Thutmose III minority and until her death
- Thutmose III – the Pharaoh when Moses fled into Midian
- Amenhotep II – the Pharaoh during the plagues

THE LENGTH OF ISRAEL'S SOJOURN IN EGYPT

Related to the topic of the Hyksos Dynasty and Israel's relationship with the Egyptian rulers, is the question as to how many years passed between the Israelites' migration into Egypt and the Exodus. Scripture contains several statements related to this question. The two most important Old Testament statements are the promise given to Abraham and the comment made later at the time of the Exodus:

- *God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. (Genesis 15:13)*
- *Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of Jehovah went out from the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:40-41)*

Two explanations usually are put forth that seek to remove the contradiction between these two statements (i.e. 400 years, vs. 430 years).

1. The statement to Abraham was a general statement – round numbers, so to speak.
2. Although the Israelites lived in Egypt for 430 years, they were not oppressed during the first 30 years of their sojourn in Egypt.

¹¹ Unger, page 144; Adams, page 231

¹² After Hatshepsut's death, the restive a jealous Thutmose III obliterated and destroyed all of Hatshepsut's monuments. If the plaster which covered them had not fallen away, we would not know as much about this remarkable woman. See Unger, page 145

Both the 430-year sojourn and the 400-year sojourn are compatible with the years encompassed in the genealogy of Moses. Exodus 6:16-20 lists the genealogy of Moses and Aaron. The list begins with Levi, one of Jacob's sons, and one of the original group to enter Egypt and concludes with the birth of Aaron and Moses (Genesis 49:5).

Verse 16 *These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon and Kohath and Merari; and the length of Levi's life was one hundred and thirty-seven years.*

Verse 18 *The sons of Kohath: Amram and Izhar and Hebron and Uzziel; and the length of Kohath's life was one hundred and thirty-three years.*

Verse 20 *Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses; and the length of Amram's life was one hundred and thirty-seven years.*

The genealogy produces the following calculation:

Levi	lived 137 years
Kohath	lived 133 years
Amram	lived 137 years
Moses	<u>80</u> years of age when he was called to deliver Israel (Exodus 7:7) ¹³
	487 years

Two things must be considered when the above genealogy is used in an effort to construct a chronology of Israel's sojourn in Egypt:

1. The sons listed probably were not born the last year of a father's life;¹⁴
2. We do not know the age of Levi when the family entered Egypt.¹⁵

Because of these uncertainties, both the 400-year period and the 430-year period are possibilities.

We could be content with realizing that the sojourn in Egypt was either 400 years or 430 years in length, were it not for Paul's statement in Galatians 3:16-17

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.¹⁷ What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

What Paul seems to say is that 430 years after God promised Abraham that "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice,"¹⁶ He gave the Law to Israel. The giving of the Law took place when Israel camped at the base of Mount Sinai in the third month after they had left Egypt (Exodus 19:1).

¹³ Acts 7:23, 30

¹⁴ Joseph appeared before Pharaoh when he was 30 years old (Genesis 41:46). The first seven years of his rule were years of prosperity, followed by years of famine. Joseph's family came to Egypt in the second year of the famine. Thus, Joseph would have been 39 years old when Jacob came into Egypt. Jacob lived to be 130 years old and died shortly after his arrival in Egypt. Thus, 130 – 39 = 91. Jacob would have been 91 years old when Joseph was born. Such an age was not beyond reality in the biblical record.

¹⁵ The only clue that we have as to Levi's age at the time of the migration to Egypt has to do with Joseph's age. Joseph appeared before Pharaoh when he was 30 years old (Genesis 41:46) and Levi was his older half-brother (see Genesis 29:31-30:24).

¹⁶ Genesis 22:18

If only 430 years passed between God's covenant with Abraham and the events at Mount Sinai, then the possibility of an Israelite four-century sojourn in Egypt is not possible. Paul seems to be contradicting the historical statements made in Genesis 15:13 and Exodus 12:40.

Interestingly, most commentaries on Galatians 3:16-17 scarcely mention this challenging issue, but treat it as unimportant to the argument that Paul is making. Indeed, the question of chronology is not relevant to Paul's argument, i.e., that the giving of the law did not annul the covenant made with Abraham.

Even so, the issue of how to deal with this seeming contradiction is important for our study of Israel's time in Egypt and the exodus. Here is some relevant information.

The Greek translation of the Old Testament, which began in the 3rd Century BC, originally contained only the Pentateuch, then, in later centuries, the remainder of the Jewish sacred Scriptures were translated – some not completed until 132 BC.

The Septuagint was the Bible used by the Jews during the time of Christ. The Septuagint Version is the version quoted by the apostles, and, often – though not always - quoted by Jesus. It was the Old Testament of the early Christians. In some passages, the Septuagint differs from the Hebrew manuscripts. The Exodus 12:40 passage in the Septuagint reads, *And the sojourning of the children of Israel, while they sojourned in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan was four hundred and thirty years.*^{17 18}

The Hebrew text does not contain the phrase, *and the land of Canaan*. We can only speculate as to why the Greek Jews of Alexandria added this phrase.¹⁹ Even so, it is clear that the Scripture to which Paul referred was the Septuagint rendering.

Interestingly, the Jewish historian, Josephus, states the matter both ways, thus, contradicting himself.

- In *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book II, chapter 15, paragraph 2, he states, “They left Egypt in the month Xanthicus, on the fifteenth day of the lunar month; four hundred thirty years after our forefather Abraham came into Canaan but two-hundred and fifteen years only after Jacob removed to Egypt.”²⁰ Thus, this quote is consistent with the Septuagint.
- However, he states it differently in Book II, Chapter 9, paragraph 1, “The Egyptians...became very ill affected towards the Hebrews, as touched by envy for their prosperity...and forced them to learn all sorts of mechanical arts, and to accustom themselves to hard labour. And four hundred years did they spend under these afflictions...”²¹ This quote is consistent with the Hebrew text.

¹⁷ Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Originally published by Samuel Bagster & Sons, Ltd. London, 1851; Printed in the United States, Hendrickson Publishers) 1999, page 86

¹⁸ Even the various Septuagint manuscripts available to us, vary somewhat in this verse, but all do contain the addition, *and the land of Canaan*.

¹⁹ Lightfoot speculates, “The LXX translators may have inserted the explanatory clause on grounds of internal criticism, or in deference to chronological records to which they had access in Egypt.” J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Hendrickson Publishers) 1995, page 144

²⁰ Josephus, *Complete Works*, translated by William Whitson, A.M. (Grand Rapids, Kregel Publications) 1991, pg 62

²¹ *Ibid*, page 55

Stephen, as recorded in Acts 7:6, quotes the Hebrew text, asserting, that the sojourn in Egypt lasted four hundred years.

"But God spoke to this effect, that his offspring would be aliens in a foreign land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years.

Philo,²² in *Questions and Answers on Genesis III*, comments on Genesis 15:13,

*Why was it said to him, "Thou shalt know to a certainty that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall be reduced to slavery, and shall be grievously afflicted for four hundred years?"*²³

Given these facts, my personal conclusion is that Paul, as well as Josephus in the earlier quote, referenced the Septuagint, whereas Stephen and Philo (also, Josephus in the second quote noted above) referenced the Hebrew text. Given all of the varied sorts of evidence, my personal view is that the Jews' sojourn in Egypt lasted 400-430 years.

THE DATE OF THE EXODUS

Another important topic, which is related directly to the question of the length of the sojourn is the date of the Exodus. Various views have been presented on this topic. The following presentation is the most consistent with the biblical record.²⁴

The date of the Exodus is established by identifying a biblical event that also is recorded in solidly dated non-biblical literature. The earliest event that can be so identified is the Battle of Karkar. Two sources are involved in dating that event:

- The first source is the Assyrian Canon, which contains a chronological list of the civil officers designated as *limmi* or eponyms.
- The second source is provided by the Greek geographer, Ptolemaeus. Ptolemaeus listed the eclipses which occurred under the various Babylonian, Assyrian, and Persian rulers of Babylon. The exact dates of these eclipses can be determined astronomically.

By harmonizing these two sources, an exact chronology of late Assyrian history is possible.²⁵

²² Philo of Alexandria (25 BC – 50 AD) was a Jewish philosopher and commentator on Scripture who had great influence during the early years of Christianity.

²³ <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/philo.html>

²⁴ For a thorough discussion of the history of the period, including the conditions of surrounding nations, the Egyptian dynasties, and the biblical record, as these matters relate to the date of the Exodus (especially the Eshunna Epic c. 1900 BC; the Code of Hammurabi 1700 BC), see: Merrill F. Unger, *Archeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), pages 140-152

²⁵ See, Unger, page 244; J. McKee Adams, pp. 75-76, 168-174

Battle of Karkar**854-853 B.C.**

Ahab, King of Israel, and Benhadad I, king of Syria, united their armies to oppose the Assyrian invader, Shalmaneser III (859-824 BC). The Assyrian historical record, contained on a monolith now housed in the British Museum, describes this battle and lists the participants, which includes Ahab and Benhadad I. The Assyrian record fits the situation described at the close of I Kings 20, which was the only time that Ahab and Benhadad I were at peace with one another.

Solomon's death and the division of the Kingdom (854 + 77)**931 B.C.**

The date of Solomon's death and the division of the Kingdom can be established by adding together the years that each of Solomon's successors reigned over Israel prior to Karkar.

Kings of Israel from the The Division of Kingdom to the Battle of Karkar

Jeroboam	I Kings 14:20	22 years
Nadab	I Kings 15:25	2 years
Baasha	I Kings 15:33	24 years
Elah	I Kings 16:8	2 years
Zimri	I Kings 16:15	7 days
Omri	I Kings 16:23	12 years
Ahab	I Kings 16:29	22 years*
Total		84 years

Omri and Ahab (father and son) were co-regents for 7 years (I Kings 16:23 and I Kings 16:29). Thus 7 years must be removed from the total: **84 – 7 = 77**

*Ahab's death is generally considered to have been in 854 BC, or within a year following the Battle of Karkar. See Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.) 1952, page 194

Thus, the Battle of Karkar took place seventy-seven years after Solomon's death. Hence the formula 854 (Karkar) + 77 (years between Karkar and Solomon's death) = 931 BC (the date of Solomon's death and the division of the Kingdom).

Beginning of Solomon's reign (931 + 40)**971 B.C.**

Solomon reigned 40 years (I Kings 11:42).

Construction of the Temple began (971 – 4)**967 B.C.**

The construction of the Temple began in the fourth year of Solomon's reign (I Kings 6:1.)

Date of Exodus (967 + 480)**1447 B.C.**

The construction of the Temple commenced 480 years after the Exodus (I Kings 6:1).

This calculation leads us to conclude that the Exodus began in 1447-1446 BC (depending on whether the 854 BC or 853 BC is the beginning date – the battle of Karkar took place sometime in late 854 BC or early 853 BC). For convenience of calculating, we will use the date, 1447 BC as the date of the Exodus.

If we accept 1447 BC as the date of the Exodus, and 400 years as the length of the sojourn in Israel, we conclude that 1847 BC was the date that the sojourn began. Interestingly, this would coincide with the general period in which the Hyksos began their Egyptian rule.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

The Hebrews considered the Pentateuch as a single book. When they came to a new section, the name that they used for the section consisted of the first words of that section. Thus, what we know as the Book of Exodus, the Hebrew name for this section was *we ullah shemath* – “and these are the names,” which is how this book begins.

The name, *Exodus*, was applied to the book by the Septuagint translators. The term means, *way out* (Greek: *exhodos* i.e., ἐξ *out of* ὁδος *way or road*;))

The book naturally divides into two sections:

1. Exodus 1- 19 The deliverance from captivity and the journey to Sinai
2. Exodus 20 – 40 The giving of the Law and the building of the Tabernacle

Contents of the Book of Exodus

Chapter 1	The increase of Jacob’s descendants and the Egyptian persecution
Chapter 2	The birth and early life of Moses
Chapters 3-6	Moses’ preparation and his call to be the deliverer and leader of the nation
Chapters 7-19	The story of the deliverance
Chapter 20	The giving of the Ten Commandments
Chapters 21-23	The establishment of the Covenant and its various requirements
Chapters 24-31	Instructions for building the Tabernacle
Chapters 32-34	Israel’s rebellion
Chapters 35-39	The building of the Tabernacle
Chapter 40	The dedication of the Tabernacle

Exodus Chapter One: The Increase of Jacob’s Descendants and the Egyptian Persecution

Following the death of Joseph and his generation, the population of the Israelites increased so dramatically that five forceful adjectives are used in Exodus 1:7 to describe this increase.

But the sons of Israel

- *were fruitful*
- *and increased greatly,*
- *and multiplied,*
- *and became exceedingly mighty,*
- *so that the land was filled with them.*

Studies have shown that under favorable circumstances, a society’s population will double in size, about every 25 years.²⁶ The 400 years in Egypt would have been ample time for the family of Jacob to reach the numbers attributed to it at the time of the Exodus (I Chronicles 7:20-27,

²⁶ See, *Exponential growth, doubling time, and the Rule of 70*, Colorado Alliance for Immigration Reform, <http://www.cairco.org/reference/exponential-growth-doubling-time-rule-70>

records the genealogy of Joshua – ten generations between Joseph’s son, Ephraim, - a grandson of Jacob - and Joshua).

The number of males over 20 years of age at the time of the departure from Egypt is given in Exodus, and later in Numbers. The number of men is approximate in Exodus 12, but the exact number of men over twenty years of age is given in Numbers 1 (not counting the tribe of Levi nor the number in the mixed multitude). Perhaps the difference is that Numbers records the result of an exacting census ordered by Jehovah.

Exodus 12:37-38 *Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children.* ³⁸ *A mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock.*

Numbers 1:45-49 *So all the numbered men of the sons of Israel by their fathers' households, from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war in Israel,* ⁴⁶ *even all the numbered men were 603,550.* ⁴⁷ *The Levites, however, were not numbered among them by their fathers' tribe.* ⁴⁸ *For Jehovah had spoken to Moses, saying,* ⁴⁹ *"Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor shall you take their census among the sons of Israel.*

Based on the general pattern of population distributions, Dr. Wilkie Winter speculates that the total numbers (not counting Levites and the mixed multitude) were approximately: ²⁷

men over twenty years of age	600,000
men under twenty years of age	600,000 (conjecture)
women and children	1,200,000 (conjecture)
Total number of Israelites on the Exodus,	2,400,000

Exodus 1:8 fits the scenario described earlier, i.e., the expulsion of the Hyksos by the Eighteenth Dynasty of native Egyptian Pharaohs.

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹ *And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we.* ¹⁰ *"Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply and in the event of war, they also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us, and depart from the land."* ¹¹ *So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses.*

Having earlier expelled the Hyksos, the alien shepherd people who had dominated Egypt for several generations, the native Egyptian Pharaohs were afraid that the Israelites might repeat the Hyksos domination. No doubt the Pharaoh worried about the possibility of the Hyksos attempt to retake northern Egypt and that the Israelites would become the Hyksos allies in the ensuing conflict.

²⁷ Dr. Wilkie Winter, *Class Lectures on the Pentateuch*, Cincinnati Bible Seminary, February, 1957

In an effort to halt the population growth of the Israelites, the Pharaoh enacted two policies.

- The first was to afflict the Israelites with hard, back-breaking labor. They made bricks and built the storage cities of Pithom and Raamses. They also were forced to do hard labor in the field. Instead of seeing the population of the Israelites decrease, their number continued to increase (Exodus 1:11-14).
- The second policy that the Pharaoh enacted was to instruct the two Hebrew midwives to kill all male Hebrew babies, as soon as they came from the womb.²⁸ Female babies were to be allowed to live. Because they feared God more than they did Pharaoh, the Hebrew midwives let the Hebrew boy babies live. When challenged by Pharaoh about their failure to obey him, they told him that the Hebrew women gave birth so quickly that the midwives didn't arrive in time to kill the babies. Because of their fear of God, He blessed them with significant families.²⁹

Since the midwives indicated that they could not get to the Hebrew women to attend their births in time to kill the boy babies, Pharaoh put the responsibility on the parents themselves, as well as all of his subjects. He ordered them to throw all boy babies into the Nile, but to let the daughters live.³⁰

Exodus Chapter 2: The birth and early life of Moses

Moses parents, Amram and Jochebed, were descendants of Levi³¹. Moses parents tried to hide the baby, so that he would not be thrown into the Nile River. They succeeded in this for three months, but when the baby began to grow, his presence no longer could be hidden. Jochebed put her son into a wicker basket, covered it over with tar and pitch so that it would float and not allow any water into the basket – then hid it in the reeds along the bank of the Nile. In essence, she was saying that she no longer could hide her son and that she was handing him over to God. Moses' older sister, Miriam, was given the responsibility of watching the basket, to see what would happen to her brother.

A passing note on Moses ark:

Noah's ark was made of gopher wood (Genesis 6:14)

Moses ark was made of papyrus reeds (Exodus 2:3)*

The Ark of the Covenant was made of shittim (acacia) wood (Exodus 37:1)

* The papyrus reeds to which this word refers grow only in a very limited area

²⁸ The names of the two midwives were Shiprah and Puah. These were common Egyptian names. The name, Shiprah is found in an 18th Century BC Egyptian list of slaves; Puah is found in the Ras Shamra texts. L. Thomas Holdcroft, *The Pentateuch*, (Oakland, California, Western Book Company) 1966, page 55

²⁹ Concerning the deception of the women and God's rewarding them, Holdcroft has written, "The good fortune of the midwives illustrates the text, 'Them that honor me I will honor' (I Samuel 2:30). These women were rewarded, not because they deceived Pharaoh, but because they honored God." Holdcroft, page 55

³⁰ Exodus 1:17-22

³¹ Exodus 6:16-20

The location was providential. Pharaoh's daughter came to that spot, accompanied by her maidens, to bathe in the Nile. When she saw the basket floating, wondering what it might be, she had one of her maidens fetch the basket. When the basket was opened, she saw a little baby boy, crying. Her heart was touched. Evidently, her demeanor indicated that she wanted to save the baby, because Miriam demonstrated the courage to rush up to Pharaoh's daughter and said, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from among the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?" Pharaoh's daughter told her to do so. Miriam took Moses to their mother who nursed the child until he was weaned, then he was given to Pharaoh's daughter, who named the child, Moses, and reared him as her son.

She named him, "Moses," because, "I drew him out of the water."³² The name in the Hebrew text is *Mosheh* (מֹשֶׁה) which is a derivative of *Mashah* (מָשַׁח) meaning, "to draw out."

Once again, the history of the Pharaohs enters the picture. As already noted, a study of Egyptian history leads to the conclusion that the Pharaoh at this time must have been Thutmose I. His daughter, the famous Hatshepsut, would have been the one who found Moses and adopted him as her son. Being the strong-willed woman that she was, she no doubt had no difficulty in ignoring her father's edict that Hebrew male babies should be killed.

As Hatshepsut's son, Moses was reared as Egyptian royalty and had the finest education of his day (Acts 7:22). The Egyptians of Moses' day practiced hieroglyphic writing, they knew and enjoyed music, they had advanced insights in mathematics, astronomy, and even chemistry. Other forms of writing also were known at this time.

We do not know how long after Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter that his Hebrew mother had any contact with him. He was kept in his father's house for three months³³ and after Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses, his biological mother was hired as his nurse.³⁴ How long Moses' mother had contact with him after that, we do not know. There must have been sufficient contact for Moses to have a sense of racial identity, given his actions that forced him to flee Egypt.

Hatshepsut would have died when Moses was about forty years-old and Thutmose III was freed from her control. It is not too far-fetched to assume that Thutmose III, probably had some resentment against Moses – who in essence, was his adopted older brother.

It was at this time, shortly after Hatshepsut's death, that Moses chose to visit his Hebrew brethren at their worksite. When he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, Moses was incensed and he killed the Egyptian. He hid the body in the sand. The next day, he again visited the worksite and saw two Hebrew men fighting each other. He tried to intervene and the offender responded with resentment,

"Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid, and said, "Surely the matter has become known."³⁵

³² Exodus 2:10

³³ Exodus 2:2; Acts 7:20

³⁴ Exodus 2:7-9

³⁵ Exodus 2:14

Moses chose to identify with the people of God (an act of faith), and he expected the Hebrews to receive him and perhaps even honor him for this action. Instead, he received words of resentment – no doubt because they saw him as a privileged individual and they were oppressed. No doubt they also viewed him as an Egyptian.

Somehow word of the incident reached the ears of Thutmose III, who sought to kill Moses. Moses fled for his life and settled in the land of Midian.³⁶

Hebrews Chapter Eleven comments on this event:

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;²⁵ choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin;²⁶ considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.³⁷

Thus, at forty years of age, he embarked on forty years of exile. When Moses came to the land of Midian, he sat down next to a well where shepherds came to water their flocks. Seven young ladies arrived at the well, with their father's flock. They were the daughters of Reuel, the priest of Midian. Shortly after these young shepherdesses arrived with their flocks, some male shepherds came to the well and drove them away. Moses, showing the same courage that he had shown earlier in the Egyptian episode, took the side of the shepherdesses and even drew the water to supply the needs of their flock.

Here we see Moses taking the side of the oppressed, as he had done when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew – the incident that led to his fleeing Egypt.

When Reuel's daughters returned home, they told their father about Moses and how he had delivered them and even drew the water for their flocks. Moses looked like an Egyptian and talked like an Egyptian, and so they told their father that an Egyptian had delivered them. Reuel immediately sent for Moses, invited him to stay with him.

The Midianites were descendants of Abraham.³⁸ Jethro seems to have been Ruel's priestly title.³⁹ The title, Jethro, means, "excellence." He probably was a priest of the true God, perhaps in the same manner as the mysterious Melchizedek. We would assume that at this time in Moses' life, Ruel had great influence on Israel's future deliverer. We know that he had influence in Moses' life at a later time when he gave wise counsel to Moses.⁴⁰

Ruel's respect for Moses is seen in that not only did Ruel give the care of his flocks to Moses, but Ruel also gave his daughter, Zipporah, to Moses as his wife. A son, Gershom was born to this couple. Later, a second son, Eliezer was born.

³⁶ Midian is an area on either side of the Gulf of Aqaba. It included the eastern half of the Siniatic peninsula.

³⁷ Hebrews 11:24-27

³⁸ Genesis 25:2

³⁹ Exodus 3:1; 4:18; and throughout Exodus Chapter 18

⁴⁰ Exodus 18:1ff

The names given to Moses' sons indicate somewhat of a change in Moses' attitude.

- Gershom means, "sojourner."⁴¹
- Eliezer means, "God has been my helper."⁴²

It is of passing interest to note that in the unfolding of the Exodus story and later history, the family of Moses seems to have had negligible status among the people of Israel. In fact, in later times, Moses grandson, Jonathan, the son of Gershom was responsible for the first organized system of idolatry in Israel.⁴³

Near the end of Moses forty-year stay in Midian, Thutmose III died and Amenhotep II became the Pharaoh. Amenhotep II continued the harsh treatment of the Hebrews. The closing verses of Exodus Chapter 2, launch the next part of the story.

Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God.²⁴ So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.²⁵ And God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.⁴⁴

Exodus Chapters 3-6: The preparation of Moses and his call to be the deliverer and leader of the nation

NOTE: Chapters 3-40 are an elaborate account of about two years – the last year before Israel's departure and the first year in the wilderness.

Moses became Reuel's chief shepherd. As such, he was tending the sheep at Mount Horeb, the mountain where the Ten Commandments later would be given to him. Thus, when Moses later wrote of this account, he called Horeb, "the mountain of God."⁴⁵

When Moses saw a bush that was burning, but not consumed by the fire, he turned aside from his path to see what was going on.

In the Pentateuch, there is frequent mention of a special angel that often interacted with those whom God was encountering. This angel is referred to as "the angel of Jehovah." When this angel is interacting with an individual or a group, it is as if Jehovah Himself were present and this angel was to be respected and obeyed. At times, in a narrative, it is stated that the angel is called, "the angel of Jehovah," and in the same passage, the angel is called, "Jehovah." Thus, emphasizing that the presence of the angel is the very Presence of Jehovah Himself. Note that such is the pattern in this instance.

⁴¹ The fact that Moses chose this name for his first son indicates that he did not consider himself to be a member of the Midian "clan."

⁴² Exodus 18:3-4

⁴³ Judges Chapters 17-18

⁴⁴ Exodus 2:23-25

⁴⁵ Exodus 3:1

*The angel of Jehovah appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed... **When Jehovah saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."***⁴⁶

Even though Exodus 2:23 does not say that the people were directing their cry toward God, the angel reported that God had heard their cries (Exodus 3:7, 9).

The angel's command to Moses to removed his sandals was to emphasize the sacredness of the spot – it was sacred because of the identity of the one whom Moses was encountering.

When Jehovah, in the person of the angel, identified himself as the God of Moses' forefathers, Moses was overcome with holy fear and hid his face.

After calling Moses to be Jehovah's agent of deliverance and Moses' protests, Jehovah revealed his name as "I Am." The Hebrew basis for the name, Jehovah (יהוה) is the verbal expression, "I am" (אֲנִי־אֵלֶּהּ). The name/term implies:

- the all- sufficiency of God;
- the eternal existence of God;
- the self-sufficiency of God.^{47 48}

Exodus 3:13-16 contains intriguing information about the name of God.

Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"

¹⁴*And God said to Moses, "**I AM WHO I AM**"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, '**I AM** has sent me to you.'"*

¹⁵*And God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, '**Jehovah**, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' **This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.**"¹⁶ "Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, '**Jehovah**, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt.*

The name of God as a memorial is recorded four times in the Psalms and once in the prophet Hosea:

Sing praise to Jehovah, you His godly ones, And give thanks to His holy name (literally, His Holy Memorial). (Psalm 30:4)

⁴⁶ Exodus 3:2, 4

⁴⁷ Note that Jesus revealed Himself as, "I Am" in John 18:6, and, amazingly, this temporarily stunned his would-be captors. In the Septuagint, the Greek term used in Exodus 3:14 is the Greek state of being verb, εἰμί, the same Greek term employed in John 18:5 &6.

Be glad in Jehovah, you righteous ones; And give thanks to His holy name (literally, for the memory of His holiness). (*Psalm 97:12*)

But Thou, O Jehovah, dost abide forever; And Thy name to all generations (literally, Thy Memorial to all generations). (*Psalm 102:12*)

Thy name, O Jehovah, is everlasting, Thy remembrance, O Jehovah, throughout all generations (literally, Thy name, Jehovah, is everlasting, Thy memorial, Jehovah, throughout all generations). (*Psalm 135:13*)

Even Jehovah, the God of hosts; Jehovah is His name (literally, Even Jehovah, the God of hosts, Jehovah is his memorial). (*Hosea 12:5*)

Also of interest is the sign that Jehovah said would be given to Moses so that he, Moses, would know that it was Jehovah who was sending him on this mission. *And He said, "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."*^{49 50}

One has to wonder what Moses thought about this sign. It was something that would take place after the fact. In a fashion, it was calling Moses to display faith in Jehovah. Yet, no doubt this “sign” came to Moses’ mind when he and the Israelites reached the base of the mountain.

As a first test, Moses is instructed to go to the elders of Israel, tell them that the God of their fathers has heard their cries and that they are to go with Moses to confront the Pharaoh. God warned them of what the response would be and what would be God’s response to Pharaoh.

- Their initial request will be for Pharaoh to allow the Hebrews to go three days into the wilderness to worship their God.
- God told Moses that Pharaoh would not let the Israelites to go into the wilderness without God compelling him to give that permission.
- God then said that he would bring calamity upon the Egyptians and, in response, Pharaoh would allow them to leave.⁵¹

God also instructed Moses to tell the Hebrew women, when they were preparing to leave, to ask jewels from their captors.⁵² Egypt had taken advantage of the Hebrews and, in leaving, they were to “spoil” the Egyptians.⁵³ It must be noted that this instruction was given under the Patriarchal Dispensation – which, even though prior to the Mosaic Covenant, still was a

⁴⁹ Exodus 3:12

⁵⁰ This is reminiscent of Isaiah 7:14 in which Ahaz was given a sign that was not to be fulfilled until 700 years after Ahaz’ his death. *"Therefore Jehovah Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*

⁵¹ Exodus 3:15-20

⁵² Exodus 3:21-22

⁵³ Some have criticized this action, because the Israelites “borrowed,” then, “took.” This confusion is the result of the King James Version’s rendering the Hebrew word as, “borrow.” The correct translation is, “ask,” and all recent translations have so rendered it.

dispensation of justice. Jesus, in His dispensation, has instructed His followers to have a different spirit than that which was manifested in this command given to the Hebrew women.⁵⁴

Exodus 3:10 - 4:17 records Moses' argumentative dialogue with the angel of Jehovah. Moses does his best to persuade God to change His mind about commissioning Moses to be Israel's deliverer.

Moses' dialogue with the Angel of Jehovah is intriguing in that two traits are demonstrated:

- The 40 year-old impulsive and self-sufficient Moses has been replaced by an 80 year-old Moses who is humble, somewhat passive, and hesitant to take a risk;
- On the other hand, in his attempt to avoid fulfilling the commission being given to him, Moses displays amazing boldness in his somewhat argumentative attitude with Jehovah

The chart on the following page displays the progress of the dialogue and its culmination.

⁵⁴ Matthew 5:40ff; Romans 12:17

GOD'S COMMISSION AND MOSES' RESISTANCE (Exodus Chapters 3 & 4)

GOD SAID

"Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." (3:10)

And He said, "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain." (3:12)

And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (3:14)

"Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, 'Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt. (3:16)

And Jehovah said to him, "What is that in your hand?" (4:2)

Then He said, "Throw it on the ground." (4:3)

And Jehovah furthermore said to him, "Now put your hand into your bosom." So he put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. (4:6)

Then He said, "Put your hand into your bosom again." (4:7)

"But it shall be that if they will not believe even these two signs or heed what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground." (4:9)

And Jehovah said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, Jehovah? (4:11)

Then the anger of Jehovah burned against Moses, and He said, "Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. (4:14)

MOSES RESPONDED

But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" (3:11)

Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" (3:13)

Then Moses answered and said, "What if they will not believe me, or listen to what I say? For they may say, 'Jehovah has not appeared to you.'" (4:1)

And he said, "A staff." (4:2)

So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. (4:3)

So he put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. (4:6)

So he put his hand into his bosom again; and when he took it out of his bosom, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. (4:7)

Then Moses said to Jehovah, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." (4:10)

But he said, "Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever Thou wilt." (4:13)

Clearly, Jehovah had chosen Moses and no one else for the role of deliverer. Even when *Then the anger of Jehovah burned against Moses*, Moses still was the one that Jehovah was commissioning to that role. Throughout the Scriptures God is pictured as choosing a particular person for a special role (Abram, Saul, David, Peter, etc.). Why God chooses this one and not that one rests within God Himself.

Two things catch our attention in Exodus 4:14-17

"Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. ¹⁵ "And you are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do. ¹⁶ "Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and it shall come about that he shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be as God to him. ¹⁷ "And you shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs."

- Aaron will be Moses' spokesman, and Aaron will speak what Moses tells him to speak.
- The staff that Moses held in his hands at that time would be the instrument used to work most of the miracles. Usually, the staff would be given to Aaron to use in that manner, but sometimes, Moses himself would use the staff.

With the death of Thutmose III (Moses' adopted brother who was the Pharaoh when Moses fled to Midian), no one was seeking to kill Moses.⁵⁵ The new Pharaoh was Amenhotep II, who had continued the grueling enslavement of the Israelites.

With the approval of his father-in-law, Moses and his family, with the rod of God, set out for Egypt. Along the way, Moses suddenly experienced a violent illness at the hand of God – a dramatic reminder that God expects explicit obedience to the conditions of His covenant – Moses had neglected the rite of circumcision. Zipporah's behavior on this occasion seems to be that of abject revulsion.

Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that Jehovah met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, "You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me." So He let him alone. At that time she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood" -- because of the circumcision.⁵⁶

We have to wonder how Moses and Zipporah knew that circumcision was the issue that caused Moses' illness. No answer is given, but in all probability Jehovah brought to Moses' mind what his mother had taught him concerning the covenant made with Abraham. There is no other element in the account of Moses' life that presents an alternative to this view.

At some point, Zipporah took the boys and went back home to her father. This incident is probably when Zipporah and Moses were separated. Exodus 18:2 seems to say that Moses sent her back to her father. She and the boys were not restored to Moses until the Israelites achieved the victory over Amalek, near Mt. Sinai. At that time, Moses father-in-law joined Moses and brought Zipporah and the boys with him.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Exodus 4:19

⁵⁶ Exodus 4:24-26

⁵⁷ Exodus 18:1-5

Jehovah instructed Moses' older brother, Aaron, to go into the wilderness and meet Moses, as Moses journeyed toward Goshen. They met near the Mount of God, where, some months in the future, the Ten Commandments and other elements of the Mosaic Covenant would be imparted. They enjoyed a time of reunion and fellowship, then proceed to the company of their people.

Moses and Aaron found a ready acceptance by the Israelites, who responded with a display of devout worship.⁵⁸

Exodus Chapter Five records the efforts of Moses and Aaron to obtain Pharaoh's permission to take the Israelites three days journey into the wilderness. The first step was to gain an audience with Pharaoh. At this period, Pharaohs were regarded as offspring of the sun, therefore, God personified. Thus, gaining an audience with Pharaoh was a major undertaking. Such an audience was granted and Moses and Aaron made their plea.

And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says Jehovah, the God of said, "Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know Jehovah, and besides, I will not let Israel go."³ Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to Jehovah our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."⁵⁹

Pharaoh's response was harsh. He accused Moses and Aaron of wanting to draw the Israelites away from their labors. His attitude was, if they have time to listen to the likes of Moses and Aaron, then they have too much time on their hands. He ordered increased burdens on the Israelites. Prior to this time, Egyptians had been bringing straw to the Israelites to use in making bricks. Pharaoh ordered the Egyptians to stop supplying the straw, but to compel the Israelites to forage for straw, themselves, and at the same time keep producing the quotas that had been imposed on them.

Egyptian brickmaking

An interesting insight into the Israelites brickmaking activities is supplied by the discovery of the tomb of Rekhmire, near Thebes. Rekhmire was the vizier (supervisor) who oversaw many of the building projects of Thutmose III – who was the Pharaoh when Moses fled into the wilderness. In one of the representations on Rekhmire's tomb, he leans upon his staff and inspects stonecutters, sculptors, brickmakers, and builders who toil around him.

A portion of the tomb pictures brickmakers. Brickmaking in ancient Egypt was a process which involved breaking up the Nile mud with mattocks, wetting it water, mixing it with sand and chopped straw. It then was formed in molds and baked in the sun. Semitic foreigners are significantly found among the brickmakers and bricklayers depicted on Rekhmire's tomb. The accompanying inscription refers to "captives brought by his majesty for the works of the temple of Amun." The taskmakers warn the laborers, "The rod is in my hand; be not idle."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Exodus 4:29-31

⁵⁹ Exodus 5:1-3

⁶⁰ Unger, page 143

With the added task of obtaining their straw, the Israelite laborers could not make their daily quota of bricks. The Israelite laborers were overseen by Israelite foremen, whom the Egyptians had set over them. When the quotas were not met, the Egyptian taskmasters beat the Israelite foremen. A typical Egyptian procedure was to beat the victim with a rod on the soles of his feet.⁶¹

The Israelites found their troubles greatly multiplied by the intervention of Moses and Aaron. The leaders of the Israelites were able to get an audience with Pharaoh and they appealed to him to reduce his harsh demands. Their appeal was firmly rejected and so the Israelite leaders charged Moses with the responsibility for their troubles.

Moses was chastened and humbled. He fled to the presence of Jehovah and in a pathetic plea cried out to God. Moses was learning that undertaking to obey the call of God does not mean that God will guarantee His servants a life of unchallenged ease.⁶²

Jehovah responded to Moses' cries in a magnificent manner. He again revealed himself as Jehovah, stating that even though he had appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he had appeared to them as *El Shaddai*, "God Almighty," but that he had not appeared to them as Jehovah, His personal Name, that He had revealed to Moses and the Israelites. Jehovah told Moses that He was going to fulfill the covenantal promises that He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – to give them the land that He had sworn to the patriarchs.

Moses was told to recite this promise to the Israelites. He did this, but because of their despondency, they did not listen to Moses.

God then instructed Moses to return to Pharaoh and to give a charge, both to Pharaoh and to the people of Israel to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt.⁶³

Moses, again, objected. His terminology is interesting. *But Moses spoke before Jehovah, saying, "Behold, the sons of Israel have not listened to me; how then will Pharaoh listen to me, for I am unskilled in speech?"*⁶⁴ Literally, the Hebrew reads, *I am of uncircumcised lips*. He seems to be saying that his lips were uncircumcised in the sense of being still in bondage to the natural man and incapable of holy or anointed things. This is the last time that Moses indicated his reluctance to fulfill the commission that God had given to him.

Exodus 6:14-30 gives the genealogy of Moses and Aaron, who by virtue of their family ties are descendants of Levi – the priestly tribe of Israel.

Exodus Chapters 7 – 19: The Story of the Deliverance

God recommissioned Moses and stated that Moses would be as a God to Pharaoh and that Aaron would be Moses prophet. There was a chain of command: God would speak to Moses, Moses would pass on God's word to Aaron, and Aaron would speak that word to Pharaoh. Moreover, Pharaoh would not heed God's word and as a result Jehovah would work great judgments on

⁶¹ Holdcroft, page 57

⁶² Exodus 5:22-23

⁶³ Exodus 6:10-13

⁶⁴ Exodus 6:12

Egypt. Because of these judgements, when Israel finally is released from Egypt, the Egyptians will know that Jehovah is God.

In this passage that we encounter for the second time, the statement that God will harden Pharaoh's heart.⁶⁵ In some passages of Exodus, the statement is made that God will harden Pharaoh's heart and in some the statement is made that Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

- The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is attributed to God: 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1; 10:20; 10:27; 11:10; 14:4; 14:8; 14:17.
- The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is attributed to Pharaoh himself: 7:13; 7:14; 7:22; 8:15; 8:19; 8:32; 9:7; 9:34; 9:35; 14:5 (in some of these, the statement is made that Pharaoh's heart was hardened, but no clear statement is made that Pharaoh himself was the one who hardened his heart – since no statement is made in a few passages that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, it is assumed that in these passages where neither God nor Pharaoh are mentioned as the actor, the implication is that Pharaoh hardened his heart).

Concerning God's hardening the heart of Pharaoh, the axiom frequently is quoted, "The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay." In other words, the character of Pharaoh's heart was such that he responded to God accordingly – with a hardened heart. This is contrasted, for example, with the king of Nineveh who repented at the preaching of Jonah.⁶⁶ God knows the end from the beginning and he knew how Pharaoh would respond/react to the message that was delivered by Moses and Aaron.⁶⁷

This brings to mind Paul's statement in II Corinthians 2:14-17

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.¹⁵ For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;¹⁶ to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?¹⁷ For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.

The truth of God, a God-centered life, is life for some whom we encounter. For others, to whom that fragrance is odious, the fragrance is a fragrance of death – because they are repulsed by that aroma, they are destined for destruction.

When Moses and Aaron did as God commanded and delivered to Pharaoh the message of Jehovah, "let the sons of Israel go out of this land." It is at this time that the staff which God told Moses would be used as the instrument to perform miraculous signs, first was used in that fashion. It seems that Moses had given to Aaron the word to be spoken and had given him the staff. When Pharaoh asked for a miracle, as God had directed, Aaron threw down the staff and it became a serpent. Pharaoh called for his magicians and each of them threw down their staffs and

⁶⁵ The first time that Jehovah made this statement is recorded in Exodus 4:21. Here, in Exodus 7:3, the statement is recorded for the second time.

⁶⁶ Jonah 3:6-9

⁶⁷ Isaiah 46:9-10

they became serpents. The staff that Aaron had thrown down, immediately swallowed the other serpent/staffs.

Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, named these magicians, Jannes and Jambres.⁶⁸ The magicians could have been working by Satanic power, or they could have been cleverly using slight of hand.

Pharaoh was unimpressed by the miracle, no doubt concluding that Aaron was just more clever than his magicians.

Jehovah instructed Moses and Aaron to go out the next morning and station themselves on the bank of the Nile. It seems that was Pharaoh's custom to go to the Nile each morning. When Pharaoh arrived at the Nile, he was met by Moses and Aaron. Once again, the command to Pharaoh was, "Let my people go." He was told that Jehovah was going to strike the Nile and all of the water would be turned to blood – not only in the Nile but all of the water in Egypt – in pools, streams, reservoirs, vessels of wood, vessels of stone. All of the fish in the Nile would die and the Nile would become foul. Indeed, as Moses instructed him to do, Aaron lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile and immediately, the water turned to blood and the fish began to die.

Once again, the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts and Pharaoh went into house with no concern for these matters. There was a difference between the Moses/Aaron miracle and the work of the magicians. Surely, the magicians were not able to cause all of the water in Egypt to become blood. Furthermore, the Egyptian magicians could imitate the miracle, but they could not reverse it. It seems from Exodus 7:24 that well water remained uncontaminated, which was the only means whereby the Egyptians could survive. This condition lasted for seven days.

Again, Moses and Aaron spoke to Pharaoh that he should let God's people go, or else God would send a plague of frogs on the land.

"And the Nile will swarm with frogs, which will come up and go into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed, and into the houses of your servants and on your people, and into your ovens and into your kneading bowls."⁶⁹

Indeed, this happened, but the Egyptian magicians, with their secret arts were able to duplicate this phenomenon. However, they could not get rid of the frogs. So, the situation became so miserable that Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron to plead with Jehovah to remove the frogs and if that happened, he would let the Israelites go into the wilderness to worship. Moses, emphasizing that Jehovah would be the actor, told Pharaoh to pick the time that the frogs should be removed. Pharaoh said that Moses and Aaron should entreat Jehovah to remove the frogs the next day. They told Pharaoh that it would be done accordingly, but that the frogs would remain in the Nile – evidence that Jehovah is Lord of all things.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ II Timothy 3:8

⁶⁹ Exodus 8:3

⁷⁰ Exodus 8:8-13

The removal of the frogs did take place as requested, but then Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.⁷¹

Next Aaron was instructed to strike the earth with his staff and when he did so, a plague of gnats (or lice) came upon all humans and animals. The magicians tried to duplicate this miracle and they could not do so. They told Pharaoh that this miracle was the “finger of God.” Even so, Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and he would not listen to the magicians.⁷²

Once again, Moses and Aaron were instructed to confront Pharaoh as he went to the Nile for his morning ritual. Once again, the message, “Let My people go,” with the threat that a plague of insects would be released on the land. Pharaoh was told that this plague would not reach Goshen, where the Israelites lived. Indeed, it was as foretold – a great swarm of insects so filled the land that the land was laid waste. There were insects everywhere.⁷³

Pharaoh relented, once again, telling Moses and Aaron to lead the Israelites in worship of Jehovah, but to not go anywhere to do so – they were to worship Jehovah “within the land.” Moses told Pharaoh that such was not what Jehovah had commanded – they had to go three-days journey into the wilderness. Pharaoh agreed, only he said that they should not go very far away, and he asked that Moses and Aaron make supplication for him. The brothers made supplication to Jehovah, and the swarms of insects were removed, then Pharaoh hardened his heart once again and did not let the people go.⁷⁴

Again, Moses and Aaron were commanded by God to appear before Pharaoh with the message, “Let My people go that they may serve Me.” The threatened plague was the death of all livestock of any sort. However, this plague would not come on the Israelites. Pharaoh was told that at a definite time – tomorrow – this would happen. Indeed, when the plague came, all livestock in Egypt died, but not one animal died in Goshen. Pharaoh confirmed that no Israelite livestock had died, but he hardened his heart and did not let the people go.⁷⁵

Next, Moses and Aaron were instructed by Jehovah to take handfuls of soot from a kiln and Moses was to throw it into the air, in the presence of Pharaoh. This was done and as a result fine dust was spread all over Egypt, resulting in boils on humans and beasts. The boils were so horrible, that the magicians could not stand before Moses. Again, Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and he did not let the people go.⁷⁶

Moses then was told to go to Pharaoh and tell him that God had been merciful to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, in that He had not struck them with pestilence, of such a nature that they would have been cut off from the earth. He told Pharaoh that in spite of this Pharaoh had continued to stubbornly refuse to let the Israelites go. As a result, Jehovah promised to send a hail storm of such a severity that all who were out of doors would be killed. Moses was instructed to hold the staff toward the sky, and when Moses did so, hail rained down on Egypt. All who had heeded

⁷¹ Exodus 8:15

⁷² Exodus 8:16-19

⁷³ Exodus 8:20-24

⁷⁴ Exodus 8:25-32

⁷⁵ Exodus 9:1-7

⁷⁶ Exodus 9:8-12

Moses' warning, had remained indoors all day, but those who did not – man and beast were stricken, as well as all trees and every crop growing in the field. Once again, Goshen was exempted from this plague.⁷⁷

Again, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and pled with them to intercede with Jehovah to stop the storm. He even declared that he had sinned and that Jehovah was righteous.

Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "I have sinned this time; Jehovah is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones."⁷⁸

He promised to let the Israelites go. So, Moses went outside and spread his hands toward the sky and the storm ceased. Once again, Pharaoh went back on his promise and would not let the people go.⁷⁹

Once again, Jehovah instructed Moses to go to Pharaoh with a plea and a warning. The plea contained a reminder to Pharaoh of all that Jehovah had done up to that point, with a question *How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let My people go, that they may serve me.*⁸⁰

Once again, Jehovah coupled this plea with a threat. Jehovah threatened to send a plague of locusts upon Egypt if Pharaoh did not agree to let the Israelites go three days into the wilderness to worship their God. Although locusts were not unknown to the Egyptians, they were rather rare in Egypt.⁸¹

Pharaoh's servants pled with Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. *And Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve Jehovah their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?"⁸²*

Pharaoh offered to let them go into the wilderness to worship, but he would allow only the men to go. Their families and their livestock would have to remain in Goshen. Of course, Moses and Aaron, knowing that this was not what God had commanded, refused the offer, and so they were thrust out of Pharaoh's presence.⁸³

Jehovah instructed Moses to stretch out his staff, over the land, and in response Jehovah sent an east wind that prevailed over the land all day and all night. The wind brought locusts that covered the entire land. They devoured everything that the hail had not destroyed. Locusts filled houses and covered the land so that it was dark. Nothing like had been seen before, nor was it ever seen again.⁸⁴

⁷⁷ Exodus 9:13-26

⁷⁸ Exodus 9:27

⁷⁹ Exodus 9:28-35

⁸⁰ Exodus 10:3

⁸¹ Holdcroft, page 59

⁸² Exodus 10:7

⁸³ Exodus 10:8-11

⁸⁴ Exodus 10:12-15

Pharaoh hurriedly called for Moses and Aaron and said, *"I have sinned against Jehovah your God and against you. Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and make supplication to Jehovah your God, that He would only remove this death from me."*⁸⁵

Moses immediately went out of the Pharaoh's presence and made supplication to Jehovah. Jehovah responded by sending a very strong west wind, which drove the locusts into the Red Sea. Not a single locust was left in the land.⁸⁶

Once again, Pharaoh went back on his repentance – his heart was hardened and he did not let the sons of Israel go.⁸⁷

Next, Jehovah told Moses to stretch out his hand (the staff in his hand is assumed) toward the sky. Moses did so and there was a thick darkness on the land for three days. This plague did not afflict the Israelites in Goshen, but everywhere else in Egypt, the darkness was so thick that Egyptians could not see one another and as a result, no one left his home, during this time.⁸⁸

Again, Pharaoh called for Moses and offered another compromise. *Then Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, "Go, serve Jehovah; only let your flocks and your herds be detained. Even your little ones may go with you."*⁸⁹

Moses courageously replied, *"You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice them to Jehovah our God. Therefore, our livestock, too, will go with us; not a hoof will be left behind, for we shall take some of them to serve Jehovah our God. And until we arrive there, we ourselves do not know with what we shall serve Jehovah."*⁹⁰

With a hardened heart, Pharaoh reacted, *Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!"*

Moses responded, *"You are right; I shall never see your face again!"*⁹¹

These nine plagues marked the end of Pharaoh's resistance. The tenth plague caused Pharaoh to let the sons of Israel leave the land, even though he did change his mind and try to recapture them and bring them back to Egypt – we will examine that series of events as we come to them.

Given the sequence and variety of the plagues, as well as comments on the time involved, most students of this account estimate the nine plagues to have taken place over a period of about nine months.

A number of interesting things catch our eye as we review these first nine plagues. One thing is the manner in which the plagues divide into groups of three.⁹²

⁸⁵ Exodus 10:16-17

⁸⁶ Exodus 10:18-19

⁸⁷ Exodus 10:20

⁸⁸ Exodus 10:21-23

⁸⁹ Exodus 10:24

⁹⁰ Exodus 10:25-26

⁹¹ Exodus 10:27-28

⁹² Holdcroft, page 59

<p>Group One</p> <p>Plague 1 Water into blood: Warning in the morning</p> <p>Plague 2 Frogs: Pre-announcement</p> <p>Plague 3 Lice: No pre-announcement</p> <p>Each of the plagues in this group may be described as “merely loathsome.”</p>	<p>Aaron used the staff</p>
<p>Group Two⁹³</p> <p>Plague 4 Swarms: Warning in the morning</p> <p>Plague 5 Murrain: Pre-announcement</p> <p>Plague 6 Boils: No pre-announcement</p> <p>Each of the plagues in this group involved pain and the loss to their victims</p>	<p>Staff not mentioned, but assumed</p>
<p>Group Three</p> <p>Plague 7 Hail & Fire: Warning in the morning</p> <p>Plague 8 Locusts: Pre-announcement</p> <p>Plague 9 Darkness: No pre-announcement</p> <p>Each of the plagues in this group involved dramatic upheavals of nature</p>	<p>Moses used the staff</p>

A matter of significant importance is how these plagues addressed the various gods worshipped by the Egyptians. In their pantheism, the Egyptians had assigned a different god to almost every area of being. The nine plagues proved the superiority of Jehovah to the gods of the Egyptians. Jehovah declared that He would execute judgments on the Gods of the Egyptians.⁹⁴

NOTE: The following section re: Jehovah’s defeat of Egyptian gods, is an adaptation of an article, “Divine Judgments on Egypt’s God’s” in the *Bible League Quarterly*, January-March, 1954, No. 216. The article is by the editor. In my opinion, although the point made is a valid point, the writer seemed to reach a bit in order to make this paradigm air-tight.

The Egyptians believed in one great god, self-produced, self-existent, almighty, and eternal. They also believed that this god was too great to concern himself with the affairs of humans. They concluded that this great god allowed the world to fall into the hands of hordes of demons, lesser gods and spirits, who controlled the world in which man lived.

The plagues not only were to deliver the sons of Israel from Egypt, but also to demonstrate to the Egyptians that Jehovah is the true God. As Jehovah said to Moses,

*"And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."*⁹⁵

Before the plagues began, an important event took place – Moses’ staff’s being turned into a serpent. The Hebrew word translated, *serpent*, in Exodus 4:3-4 is, נָחָשׁ (*nachas*), which is the usual Hebrew word for *serpent*.

⁹³ Beginning with the fourth plague, Israel and the Land of Goshen were exempt from the plague

⁹⁴ Exodus 12:12; Numbers 33:4

⁹⁵ Exodus 7:5

Then He said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. But Jehovah said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand and grasp it by its tail"-- so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—

In Exodus 7:9-11, describing the confrontation with the Egyptian sorcerers, a different word is used. That word is, תַּנִּין (*tannin*), which is rendered by a number of meanings (examples: **sea monster**: Genesis 1:21; Psalm 148:7; **sea-dragon**: Isaiah 27:1; **serpent**: Exodus 7:7, 12; Deuteronomy 32:33; Psalm 91:13). Many believe that the word in Exodus 7 should be translated, *crocodile*, but given the behavior of Moses and Aaron, and the nature of the creature in the story, it seems obvious to me that *serpent* is the most appropriate rendering of the word in Exodus 7.⁹⁶

Note: Those who argue that the term in Exodus 7 should be rendered, *crocodile*, present the following in an effort to show how Jehovah was superior to the Egyptian gods.

In turning the rod into a serpent, Jehovah was shown to be superior to two Egyptian gods – Apep and Sabek. Both of these gods often were represented in the form of a crocodile. Apep was an evil god who was feared by the Egyptians. In their worship services, the Egyptians would form a crocodile from wax and write, “Apep,” on it. The priest then wrapped the figure in papyrus and wrote, “Apep,” on the wrapper. The wrapped figure was placed on the floor, set on fire, filthy water was poured on it and the worshippers stamped on it in an attempt to defeat the power of this evil god.⁹⁷

Exodus 7:14-25

Water turned to blood

One of the chief Egyptian deities was Hapi, the God of the Nile. Often Hapi was represented as a man with the breasts of a woman. Hapi, the Nile was considered to be the source of life. This form of Hapi represented fertility and life. The turning of water into blood was a special affront to Hapi. The river, which supposedly was the source of life, became the carrier of death. The frogs and fish in the river died and stank. All Egyptians, including the priests, had to be ceremonially clean before they could enter a temple. Outside of many of the Egyptian temples were lakes in which Egyptians washed before entering the holy area. When all of the water in Egypt was turned into blood, the ceremonial washing was impossible.

It should be noted that this plague as more than just changing the color of the water. Furthermore, it wasn't just the Nile, but all of the water in all vessels in Egypt became blood.⁹⁸

Exodus 8:1-15

The frogs

One of the most important Egyptian deities was the goddess, Heqit. Heqit frequently was portrayed as a woman with the head of a frog. She also is seen in the form of a frog held in the arms of the Nile god Hapi. Heqit was the goddess of fertility and rebirth. She was the patroness of the midwives. There is a picture of Heqit on her knees attending the birth of Hatshepsut.

⁹⁶ The modern Hebrew word for crocodile תַּנִּין הַנְּהַר (*hannahar tannin*) is translated, *serpent of the river*

⁹⁷ In loc: *Bible League Quarterly*

⁹⁸ Note that the third sign that Jehovah gave to Moses to display before the Israelites, so that they would know that Moses had a commission from Jehovah, was to take some water from the Nile, and pour it on the dry ground – the water thus poured would become blood (Exodus 4:9)

The first two plagues, thus, were inflicted on the river and the goddess of the midwives. The river and the midwives were the two agents that Pharaoh sought to use in his efforts to destroy the Israelites, through the murder of all new-born males.

Exodus 8:16-19

The lice

Geb was the god of the earth. All things that came from the earth were dedicated to Geb. This plague of lice (or sand fleas, or gnats) would make many of the priests unclean and unable to officiate before some of the gods.

Exodus 8:30-34

The flies

This plague was a slur against Khepri, the beetle god. Flies probably is a poor translation. The Hebrew does not say, *flies*, but rather, *swarms*. The beetle probably is the insect implied. The beetle was sacred. It could not be destroyed. The Egyptians noted that beetle eggs hatched in the shell of dead beetles (beetles laid their eggs in the carcass of a dead beetle). Therefore, they came to associate the beetle with a resurrection. The beetle was believed to push the sun across the sky. After the sun had died, it resurrected the next morning, pushed by a beetle.

Exodus 9:1-7

Murrain of cattle

Murrain, means, *the destruction*, or *death*. The bull was one of the Egyptians most important religious symbols. The famed Bull of Memphis was considered to be the incarnation of the god, Osiris. Hathor, the goddess of beauty, fertility, and love, was symbolized by a sacred cow. Frequently, the sun-god, Ra was personified as a donkey. Khnem and Amen were symbolized by sheep. Note that even though all of the livestock suffered from the murrain, not all died as a result. This is apparent because many of the survivors of the murrain died when the hail and fire fell (plague 7).

Exodus 9:8-12

Boils and blains

The Hittites had a god named, *Typhoon*, or *The death*. They worshipped this god by throwing into the air the ashes of their sacrifice victims. The Egyptian god, Set, was the Egyptian form of Typhoon. Set was the god of all calamity and destruction in the desert. Although the Egyptians were advanced in medicine (they divided the body into 36 parts, with 36 "cures"). In practicing their medicine, they appealed to one of the 36 healing gods, the one appropriate for the part of the body being treated. When they prescribed these cures, giving the patient instruction for healing, they began the prescription with the name of the god involved with that part of the body. Some medical historians claim that the Rx on physicians' prescriptions originated in the Egyptians' asking Ra the sun god, to bless the healing. They had no effective treatment for boils.

Exodus 9:18-35

Hail and fire

This plague touched the realm of many gods. The dreaded Apep; Shu, the god of space between earth and sky; Nut, the sky goddess; the sacred trees and the many goddesses of the temple; all of these were brought down by hail and fire.

Exodus 10:12-20

Locusts

The locusts destroyed all of the fields. Hapi the goddess of life, was helpless before the locusts.

Exodus 10:21-23

Darkness

The chief god of the Egyptians was Ra, the sun god. He was defeated by the darkness. Ra, the sun god of Heliopolis was the most esteemed of all of the Egyptian gods. The moon gods, Khensu and Hathor, also were overthrown by the darkness. Shu the god of space between earth and sky, lost prestige, once again. The Egyptians would have considered this to be the greatest disaster, because only Ra could guide the dead and only Ra could guide the living.

Exodus 11:1-10; 12:29-33

The death of the first-born

The Pharaoh and his first-born were considered to be the first-born of Ra. Thus, Pharaoh and his first-born were considered to be gods. This was symbolized by the hooded serpent on Pharaoh's hat. No one could touch Pharaoh without being destroyed by the serpent. The Pharaohs were boastful and proud. Often, they represented themselves by bulls, showing both their power and their deity. Now, the greatest Pharaoh of all Pharaohs was humbled. Not only was the first-born in the humblest Egyptian home slain, but also the first-born of Pharaoh – and the first-born of the sacred bull.

We recall the words of Pharaoh at the beginning of the plagues,

But Pharaoh said, "Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know Jehovah, and besides, I will not let Israel go."⁹⁹

The Final Plague and the Passover

Exodus 11:1 - 12:30

Jehovah told Moses that He would inflict one final plague on the Egyptians and that after this, not only would Pharaoh let the descendants of Jacob¹⁰⁰ leave Egypt, but he would *drive you out from here completely*.¹⁰¹

In preparation for this plague, Moses was instructed, once again to broadcast to the Israelites Jehovah's command,

"Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold."¹⁰²

Note that initially the command to ask Egyptians for articles of silver and gold was given only to the women¹⁰³ but now He extended the command to both the men and the women.

⁹⁹ Exodus 5:2

¹⁰⁰ Note that in this section, the term, *the people*, is used to describe the Israelites, distinguishing them from, *the Egyptians* (Examples: 11:2, 3)

¹⁰¹ Exodus 11:1

¹⁰² Exodus 11:2 The KJV consistently translates the Hebrew term, לַצִּי as, *borrow*, which is not a good rendering of the term in this setting. For example, this is the term used when Solomon asked for wisdom (II Chronicles 1:11) and when Sisera asked Jael for water (Judges 4:9).

¹⁰³ Exodus 3:21-22

By now Moses had achieved a degree of notoriety in Egypt, not only among the people of Israel, but also even among Pharaoh's servants.¹⁰⁴

There is no clear statement that Moses appeared before Pharaoh with the warning concerning the tenth plague, but verse 8, *and he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger*, leads to the conclusion that the words of Moses, recorded in 11:4-8 were spoken in Pharaoh's presence,

And Moses said, "Thus says Jehovah, 'About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt,⁵ and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the first-born of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the first-born of the cattle as well.⁶ Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again.⁷ 'But against any of the sons of Israel a dog shall not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how Jehovah makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.'⁸ "And all these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, 'Go out, you and all the people who follow you,' and after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

The death of the firstborn of both man and beast would give evidence that Jehovah had the power to destroy the entire nation.

Also, the manner in which Jehovah would distinguish between the Egyptians and the people of Israel would further enforce the truth that Jehovah God knows no limitation.

Jehovah told Moses that because Jehovah had made provision for Israel's exemption from the plague, Jehovah claimed ownership of every Israelite firstborn male, whether of man or beast.¹⁰⁵ In future generations the firstborn of some creatures were to be slain as a blood sacrifice; some were to be redeemed, by a prescribed means. These details were not spelled out until Jehovah gave the Law to Moses.¹⁰⁶

Immediately before the Passover and the Exodus, Jehovah established the Hebrew liturgical calendar. This calendar and the liturgical events associated with the assigned dates is one of the things that established Israel as a nation.¹⁰⁷

"This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you."¹⁰⁸

Immediately after declaring the lunar month which existed at that time, the *first month of the year*, Jehovah then instructed Moses and Aaron concerning what special thing should be done on the tenth day of that month, on the fourteenth day of the month, and on the twenty-first day of the month.

NOTE: Exodus 12:43-49 fits, chronologically, between Exodus 12:20-21.

Here is summary of the instructions given concerning the activities prescribed for these days.¹⁰⁹

- On the tenth day, they were to select from their flock a one-year-old, perfectly formed, male lamb.

¹⁰⁴ Exodus 11:3

¹⁰⁵ Exodus 13:1

¹⁰⁶ Examples are Numbers 3:13; 8:17-19; 19:13-16

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of the Hebrew calendar, see ADDENDUM B

¹⁰⁸ Exodus 12:2

¹⁰⁹ Exodus Chapter 12

- They were to keep that lamb set apart from the rest of the flock until the fourteenth day of the month.
- Each household should have a lamb for itself, but if the household is small, then two households could go together and share the lamb between them.
- A holy assembly shall be held on the fourteenth day.
- A Feast of Unleavened Bread shall be observed from the fourteenth until the twenty-first day of the month.¹¹⁰ No leaven is to be allowed into the house, during this period. Anyone who eats leaven during this period *shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is an alien or a native of the land.*¹¹¹ No work can be done on that day, except for the preparation of meals. This is an ordinance to be observed throughout their coming generations, as a reminder that it was on this fourteenth of the month day that Jehovah brought the Israelites out of Egypt.
- At twilight, on the fourteenth day, the lamb is to be killed and the blood from the lamb is to be caught in a basin.
- A bunch of hyssop was to be dipped in the blood and, using the hyssop, the blood was to be applied to the lintel and the doorposts of the house. Out of respect for the blood, none is applied to the threshold.
- The flesh of the lamb is to be roasted and those in the household are to eat meat, that night, along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Special caution is given to not boil the meat or eat it raw, but to roast it, including the head, legs, and entrails.
- The lamb's bones must not be broken.
- Only the circumcised could partake of the Passover meal.
- No meat should be left until morning. What could not be eaten should be burned with fire
- The meal should be eaten with all participants fully dressed for travel – fully clothed with sandals on their feet and their staffs in their hands.
- The meal should be eaten in haste.
- No one should leave the house until morning, because the death angel was going to pass over Egypt and only those in houses with the blood on lintel and doorposts would escape the tragedy of the death angel's visit.
- On the twenty-first day, another holy assembly is to be held, a day on which no labor can be performed except the preparation of meals.

This ritual was to be repeated as a memorial throughout all of Israel's future generations,¹¹² with some additional things and slight adjustments in future observances.¹¹³

As an interesting aside concerning the requirement of circumcision, i.e., that only the circumcised were allowed to partake of the Passover.¹¹⁴ A mixed multitude had left Egypt with the Israelites. Were the Egyptians traveling with them circumcised prior to the Passover? Did they partake of the first Passover? Allowance was made for slaves and foreigners to be circumcised and thus allowed to partake of the Passover meal.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ According to the Jewish reckoning, the day ends and another begins at sunset.

¹¹¹ Exodus 12:19

¹¹² Exodus 12:14, 26ff, 42; 13:3ff, etc.

¹¹³ For example, in future years it became a tradition to have one lamb for every ten individuals.

¹¹⁴ Exodus 12:48

¹¹⁵ Exodus 12:43-44, 48-49

Perhaps the nine plagues that preceded the tenth plague had caused many Egyptians to seek Jehovah and these were some (perhaps all) of the mixed multitude that traveled with the Israelites. The fact that they walked out of Egypt the night of the tenth plague (the fourteenth day of the month) disallows any assumption that they had been circumcised shortly before the arrival of the death angel. However, they might have submitted to circumcision when the announcement of the plague was given on the first day of Nissan (Abib). If that were done, they would have had fourteen days to recuperate before the Exodus.

At midnight, on the fourteenth day, Jehovah struck all of the first-born in Egypt.

*Now it came about at midnight that Jehovah struck all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle. And Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead.*¹¹⁶

Of significant of interest is the fact that the Pharaoh at this time was Amenhotep II. When he died, he was not succeeded by his eldest son, but by his second son. His eldest son had died – which fits the description quoted above.

The heavy hand of Jehovah had been felt throughout the land and Pharaoh admitted defeat. Pharaoh's earlier discounting the pleas of his servants to let the Israelites go had been ignored,¹¹⁷ but now, he and all of the Egyptians virtually thrust the descendants of Jacob out of Egypt. They were told to leave and take with them everything associated with them and their families. Pharaoh even asked Moses and Aaron to bless him in their worship of Jehovah.

Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, "Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship Jehovah, as you have said. Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also."

*And the Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, "We shall all be dead."*¹¹⁸

As God had commanded, the men and women had asked the Egyptians for articles of silver, gold, and clothing, and the Egyptians had given these items to the people – thus, they plundered the Egyptians.¹¹⁹

The people were ready to go, since they had been instructed to be fully clothed, with their sandals on their feet, standing with staff in hand, and to eat the Passover meal with haste. Their departure was immediate.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Exodus 12:29-30

¹¹⁷ Exodus 10:7-11

¹¹⁸ Exodus 12:31-33

¹¹⁹ Exodus 12:35-36

¹²⁰ Exodus 12:34, 39

Joseph had made his sons solemnly swear that they would take his embalmed body¹²¹ with them when they left Egypt. He had an assurance that Jehovah would lead his descendants back to the land that had been promised to them, beginning with Abraham.¹²²

They immediately were led by a pillar of cloud, during the day, and a pillar of fire by night. During the first portion of their journey, they traveled both day and night.¹²³ The most immediate route to Canaan would have been through Philistia. However, God did not lead them through the land of the Philistines because the people were not ready for conflict.

Now it came about when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "Lest the people change their minds when they see war, and they return to Egypt."¹²⁴

Note: Numbers Chapter 33 gives a detailed account of the journey and every stop along the way.

When their journey was fully underway, they were led south, by the way of the Red Sea. It should be noted that *Red Sea* is a poor translation of the Hebrew, יַמ־סוּף (yamma ssup). A correct rendering is *Reed Sea*.

Initially, they departed from the city of Ramses (Zoan) and marched to Succoth. They did not camp at Succoth, but proceeded on to Etham, where they began to encamp.¹²⁵

At this point, Jehovah executed a maneuver to deceive the Egyptians. Rather than leading the Israelites further south, He led them to turn around and head due north. They were told to leave Succoth and camp at Pihahiroth, in front of Baal Zephon. This maneuver caused Pharaoh to think that the Israelites were wandering about aimlessly, with no sense of direction.¹²⁶

Pharaoh's heart was hardened, once again, as well as that of his servants. They began to realize that by the departure of the Israelites, they had lost their major slave-labor force.

Pharaoh immediately put together an impressive military force to pursue the Israelites. The army consisted of 600 select chariots, plus other chariots of Egypt. Experienced officers were in charge of these units. He also had cavalry and foot soldiers.¹²⁷

When the Israelites saw the Egyptians off in the distance, they began to complain to Moses and Aaron – they accused Moses and Aaron that they had brought them to this place to die.¹²⁸ On either side were mountains and desert. Before them was the Red Sea. At this moment, Moses made one of his most dramatic speeches:

¹²¹ Genesis 50:24-26

¹²² Exodus 13:19

¹²³ Exodus 13:21-22

¹²⁴ Exodus 13:17

¹²⁵ Exodus 13:20

¹²⁶ Exodus 14:1-3, Map #1

¹²⁷ Exodus 14:6-7, 9

¹²⁸ Exodus 14:10-12

But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of Jehovah which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. ¹²⁹ "Jehovah will fight for you while you keep silent. ¹²⁹

The Egyptians quickly arrived at the Israelite encampment, but Jehovah put up a barrier between the Egyptians and the Israelites. The cloud that had been leading the Israelites, surrounded them so that the cloud separated them from the Egyptian army. At night, rather than the pillar of fire, the cloud itself manifested light. For the time being, the Egyptians were kept at bay.¹³⁰

Jehovah gave the “forward march” order to Moses. Moses was told to lift up his staff and stretch out his hand toward the sea and that the sons of Israel would cross the sea on dry land. The Israelites were ordered to go forward.

Moses obeyed God’s command and a strong east wind began to blow and continued to blow throughout the night. Clearly, the wind was a part of God’s actions, but it could not have been the single cause. A strong wind will influence the ebb and tide of water, but not “divide” it. The water is described as being a wall on either side of the Israelites.¹³¹ Psalm 78:13, declares, *He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; And He made the waters stand up like a heap.*

Another interesting aspect to their crossing is that they crossed on dry land.¹³² Being the bottom of a sea, we would expect mud, not dry land, to be the terrain on which they travelled.

The crossing must have been at night, because they completed their crossing before the “morning watch.”¹³³ At the morning watch, Jehovah caused the Egyptian chariots to stall and swerve – possibly because the seabed had turned to mud. The Egyptians were filled with fear – once again they had encountered the Jehovah who had brought the ten plagues upon their nation. They cried out, *"Let us flee from Israel, for Jehovah is fighting for them against the Egyptians."*¹³⁴

At daybreak, Jehovah commanded Moses to stretch out his staff over the sea, once again, and when he did so, the waters came back over the Egyptians. By this time, the entire army was in the sea bed and not a single one of them escaped.¹³⁵

Before long, the bodies of the Egyptians littered the shore¹³⁶ and Josephus states that the Israelites armed themselves with weapons that were salvaged, thus preparing themselves for some of the future battles that would be forced upon them.¹³⁷

The exact location of the crossing cannot be determined. There are lakes in the area, today. Also, the Suez Canal has changed the terrain dramatically. Of significance is the fact that the

¹²⁹ Exodus 14:13-14

¹³⁰ Exodus 14:19-20

¹³¹ Exodus 14:22, 29

¹³² Exodus 14:22

¹³³ Exodus 14:24

¹³⁴ Exodus 14:25

¹³⁵ Exodus 14:26-28

¹³⁶ Exodus 14:30

¹³⁷ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities II*, 16:6 (Grand Rapids, Kregel Publications) 1981, page 65

correct name of the sea is the *Reed* sea. The term refers to the reeds used in parchment. In order to accomplish the destruction of the Egyptian army, it would be necessary for the body of water to be several miles wide. In all probability, the Gulf of Suez was extended several miles to the north in Old Testament times and this was the location of the crossing.¹³⁸

With the crossing of the sea, the former slaves became a nation of freed men – standing on the far shore of the sea, they were on a new continent and had a new identity. Another change was an increased fear of Jehovah and trust in His servant, Moses.

The next event recorded in the narrative is the song of praise and thanksgiving, called, *The Song of Moses*, which was sung by Moses and the sons of Israel, as they stood on the far shore.¹³⁹ This is the first major song in the Bible, and one of the oldest poems in existence.¹⁴⁰ Given the composition and complexity of this song, obviously it was not sung spontaneously. Moses probably composed it, and it was sung antiphonally.

The song mainly is occupied with God, not man. As well as breathing praise and worship of their Deliverer, it also is prophetic, and declares that God will repeat His conquering act. Note that the song is arranged into long and short stanzas. The long stanzas refer to Jehovah and His ransomed people. The short stanzas refer to their defeated or dismayed opponents. It begins and ends with a long stanza.

It is possible that the song was sung by the men, because at the conclusion of the song,

And Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing.²¹ And Miriam answered them, "Sing to Jehovah, for He is highly exalted; The horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea."¹⁴¹

Leaving the eastern shore for a short distance, they were in the wilderness of Shur. They traveled for three days on a southward trek. Their water supply was exhausted when they came to Marah, where they found water, but it was so bitter that they could not drink it. Once again, they grumbled at Moses, accusing him of bringing into the wilderness to die.

Once again, in response to Moses' cry Jehovah showed Moses a particular tree which he was to throw into the water. Moses did so and the water became sweet.

At this time, Jehovah made *a statue and regulation, and there He tested them.*¹⁴²

The regulation and test was two sided:

- Israel's side: *"If you will give earnest heed to the voice of Jehovah your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes,*

¹³⁸ Maps 1 & 2, are constructed on this assumption. Map #3 assumes an alternate route, based on an alternative view of the location of Sinai.

¹³⁹ Exodus 15:1-18

¹⁴⁰ Perhaps the Song of Lamech was a poem, but it is very brief (Genesis 4:23)

¹⁴¹ Exodus 15:20-21

¹⁴² Exodus 15:25-26

- Jehovah's side: *I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, Jehovah, am your healer.*¹⁴³

Throughout the rest of the history of the nation, this "if" condition was insisted upon by Jehovah, and frequently violated by Israel. Although the consequence of the disobedience often was delayed, inevitably the negative consequence did come about.

From Marah they continued further south to Elim where there was an oasis, containing twelve springs and seventy date palms. Here they camped and rested.¹⁴⁴

Led by the cloud, they left Marah and journeyed further south and inland. They had entered an area known as the wilderness of Sin. They had been traveling for about thirty days¹⁴⁵ and they had run out of food.

Even though they had been prepared for a hasty exit from Egypt, they had not made preparation for food for the journey. Note how their hasty exit is described,

*So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders.*¹⁴⁶

For thirty days, they had survived on the bread prepared from the dough that they had carried with them at the time of departure from Egypt. Perhaps there may have been some efforts at hunting, but there is no record of their doing so and the account would lead us to believe that they had not done so.

Once again, they grumbled, saying that they would rather be slaves in Egypt with full stomachs than be free men who are starving to death.¹⁴⁷

Once again, Jehovah responded with provision and an accompanying test. They were told to look toward the wilderness (which would have been toward Sinai) and when they did so, the cloud that had been leading them was filled with the glory of Jehovah. They were told that at twilight they would have meat and in the morning bread and by this, once again, they would know that Jehovah is God.¹⁴⁸

In evening the quails came upon the camp, covering it. In the morning, there was a layer of strange dew around the camp, which, when it evaporated, it left a fine flake-like thing, covering the ground like frost. The Israelites didn't know what it was and they called it *manna*, meaning, "what is it?" Moses told them that this was the promised bread.

¹⁴³ *Jehovah Rapha* – Jehovah who heals

¹⁴⁴ Exodus 15:27 An oasis known as Wady Ghurundel currently exists at this location. The present oasis not only supports palm trees, but also tamarisks and acacia.

¹⁴⁵ They left Egypt on the 14th day of the first month, and their arrival in the Wilderness of Sin was on the fifteenth day of the second month (Exodus 16:10)

¹⁴⁶ Exodus 12:34

¹⁴⁷ Exodus 16:3

¹⁴⁸ Exodus 16:10-12

They were told to gather an omer,¹⁴⁹ every morning, for each person in their household. They were told to only gather what could be eaten in one day and not have any leftovers. This was one of God's tests of obedience and some violated the command. What they kept as leftovers and in the morning was full of worms and was foul. Moses became quite angry with those who had not followed orders.

According to Numbers 11:8, the manna was ground in mills or beaten in a mortar and baked in pans.

Then God announced a more severe test. The Sabbath was to be enforced and the manna ordinance was a means of testing Israel in its observance of the Sabbath. This is the first time that the term, *Sabbath*, is used in Scripture. In the Genesis creation account, the term is, *Seventh Day*.

then he said to them, "This is what Jehovah meant: Tomorrow is a Sabbath observance, a holy Sabbath to Jehovah. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning."

So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul, nor was there any worm in it.

And Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to Jehovah; today you will not find it in the field. "Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none."¹⁵⁰

Once again, some of the Israelites failed the test. They went out on the Sabbath to gather manna, but they found none. Jehovah was provoked to anger by their disobedience. The instructions then were given rather firmly, that on the Sabbath no one was to leave his dwelling.¹⁵¹

One thing that this episode indicates is that even prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath was known and observed.

Jehovah commanded that an omer of manna be placed in a jar to be kept as a testimony for future generations. According to Hebrews, 9:4, the manna was placed into a golden jar, which later was placed into the Ark of the Covenant. Of course, this jar of manna did not spoil.¹⁵²

The next stop was at Rephidim. Once again, they were out of water and there were no springs at Rephidim. So, once again, they began to blame Moses,

But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"¹⁵³

Moses first response was to accuse them of testing Jehovah, but then he realized that his life was in danger and he cried out to Jehovah. Jehovah's response was immediate. Moses was to have some of the elders of the people accompany him before the people and approach a rock at Horeb.

¹⁴⁹ An omer is about 2 ½ pounds or 3 ½ quarts

¹⁵⁰ Exodus 16:23-26

¹⁵¹ Exodus 16:29

¹⁵² Exodus 16:32-34

¹⁵³ Exodus 17:3

He was told that the Angel of Jehovah would stand before him at the rock, and that he was to strike the rock with the staff that he had used throughout all of the miracles. Moses did so and water came forth from the rock.¹⁵⁴

Moses named this place, Massah (test) and Meribah (quarrel), because the people had quarreled and tested Jehovah.¹⁵⁵

While encamped at Rephidim, the Israelites were attacked by the marauding Amalekites.¹⁵⁶ This is the first time that the Israelites had to engage in battle. No doubt the weapons salvaged on the sea shore after the death of the Egyptians were put to use in this battle. This also is the first time that Joshua is mentioned in the narrative.¹⁵⁷ Josephus comments that Joshua was 45 years old at the time, and most scholars are inclined to accept this as his age.

As had been true in every past threat, Jehovah was involved. Moses went on top of the nearby hill and when he held up the staff, Israel prevailed in the fight. When he lowered the staff, Amalek prevailed. Because Moses became too weary to keep holding up the staff, Aaron and Hur supported his hands and thus his hands were steady for the rest of the day. The victory was Israel's.¹⁵⁸

Amalek's attack against the Israelites was the beginning of a long series of harassments by these people against the people of Jehovah. Indeed, Jehovah indicated that there would be sustained battles with Amalek and that eventually, He would destroy the Amalekites. They were not fully subdued until David's rule.¹⁵⁹

While Israel was encamped at Rephidim, Moses' father-in-law Jethro came to the camp with Moses wife, Zipporah, and his two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. Moses told him the story of all that had taken place, from the time of the plagues, up to that moment. Jethro was deeply impressed, and offered burnt sacrifices unto Jehovah. Aaron and all of the elders of Israel joined Moses and Jethro to eat a meal before Jehovah.¹⁶⁰

Up to this time, Moses had been the only judge and arbiter in matters that required some sort legal disposition. Jethro saw Moses sitting in this role from morning to evening, and it seems that even with these long days he was not able to fulfill adequately the duties of judge and one who communicated to the people the will of God. Jethro made a very practical suggestion.

- First, that Moses should devote himself to teaching the people the statutes and laws, so that they wouldn't have to keep asking.
- Second he suggested that Moses should appoint some deputies to handle routine cases and only the most difficult would be referred to Moses.

¹⁵⁴ Exodus 17:5-6

¹⁵⁵ Exodus 17:4-7

¹⁵⁶ Genesis 36:12 names as Esau's grandson

¹⁵⁷ Exodus 17:9

¹⁵⁸ Exodus 17:8-13

¹⁵⁹ Exodus 17: 14-16; II Samuel 8:12

¹⁶⁰ Exodus 18:1-9

Moses took Jethro's advice and appointed rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.¹⁶¹ This effectively relieved Moses of detail work. After Jethro saw this plan put into place, he departed for his home in Midian.

Jehovah later made a modification to this system by the appointment of seventy elders (Numbers 11: 16,17).

From Rephidim, the cloud led the Israelites to the wilderness of Sinai. This happened on the first day of the third month after they had left Egypt.¹⁶² Since they had left Egypt on the fourteenth day of the first month, and there were five days of preparation before the Law was given at Sinai, there would have been exactly fifty days between the Exodus and the giving of the Law.¹⁶³ Evidently, the Law was given on the day later known as, *Pentecost*, i.e. fifty.

Having entered the wilderness of Sinai, the Israelites camped at the foot of the mountain, from which Jehovah would give the Law to Moses.¹⁶⁴ Two areas have been put forth as the place of the encampment: El Rayah to the north of the mountain and El Sabayeh to the south. Given the number of people in the encampment, only El Sabayeh, the southern site, is big enough to accommodate the number of people in the encampment. This site is between 1400 feet and 1600 feet wide, and four miles long.

Ancient Codes and Laws

In the Twentieth Century, significant archaeological discoveries shed light on the Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, and Canaanite laws and codes – many predating the Ten Commandments. The one that has received the most attention is the Code of Hammurabi, which predates the Ten Commandments by approximately three centuries. The Eshnunna Code (Eshnunna was a city northeast of Baghdad), which predates Hammurabi by almost two centuries, contains the first discovery of an exact parallel to the biblical law, i.e. the division of oxen after a fatal combat between the animals.¹⁶⁵

The Code of Hammurabi has elicited the most interest – it describes the legal provisions of the moral, legal, and commercial life of the Babylonians during the period of Hammurabi (1728 – 1676 BC).

¹⁶¹ Exodus 18:13-26

¹⁶² Exodus 19:1

¹⁶³ See ADDENDUM B The first month was 30 days in length and the second month was 29 days in length = 59 days. They left Egypt on the fourteenth day of the first month: $59 - 14 = 45$. Five days after their arrival, the Law was given: $45 + 5 = 50$. (NOTE: It must be remembered that the Hebrew day began and ended with sunset. After they camped before the mountain, Moses apparently made two trips up the mountain to meet with Jehovah. He was instructed to consecrate the people and after three days of preparation, the Law was given. The two trips that Moses made up the mountain probably took two days, which preceded the three days of preparation. Thus, five days after they entered Sinai, the Law was given).

¹⁶⁴ This mountain is named, *Sinai*, thirty-five times in Scripture and *Horeb*, seventeen times. No effort seems to have been made to distinguish between these two names. See MAPS

¹⁶⁵ Exodus 21:35

The discovery of these many codes has deflated those who argue that the Mosaic Covenant could not have been written during the period of the Exodus, arguing that such codes did not come into existence until centuries later. Indeed, many such codes have been founded pre-dating the Mosaic Law. Others have contended that Moses just copied some of these earlier codes. However, a comparison of the Law of Moses with all of the other codes displays such a dramatic difference in the concerns, the institutions, and the procedures described that no honest person could argue in favor of this view. The Mosaic Law contains those features that met Israel's special need as a theocratic nation.

Alfred Jeremias summarizes the essential difference in spirit between the Israelite Torah and the Babylonian Code. In the Babylonian Hammurabi Code:

1. There is no control of lust
2. There is no limitation of selfishness through altruism
3. There is nowhere to be found the postulate of charity.
4. There is nowhere to be found the religious motif which recognizes sin as the destruction of the people because it is in opposition to the fear of God. In the Hammurabi Code, every trace of religious thought is absent; behind the Israelite law stands everywhere the ruling will of a holy God; it bears throughout a religious character.¹⁶⁶

As preparation for the giving of the Law, Jehovah called Moses into His Presence, and instructed him to make clear to the people the nature of the covenant which He was about to impose. The covenant had a great blessing attached to it, but also a conditional clause.

'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.'⁵ 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine;⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."¹⁶⁷

As in the promise concerning Israel's exemption from the diseases of Egypt,¹⁶⁸ God began the covenant declaration with an "if." All of God's covenants contain an "if."

Another point to be considered is the promise to make the Israelites a *kingdom of priests and a holy nation*. A priest stands between God and man. Thus Israel was being called to be a holy nation that would stand between God and the nations.

This is in line with what Peter declared to be a role for Christians,

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Alfred Jeremias, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East* Volume II (New York, G. P. Putnam's sons) 1911, page 112

¹⁶⁷ Exodus 19:4-6

¹⁶⁸ Exodus 15:26

¹⁶⁹ I Peter 2:9

God's ultimate purpose in choosing Israel and the giving of the Law was so that they might be a priestly people – mediators to all mankind. It was not God's purpose for them to become a narrow and selfishly exclusive nation as was done in later years.

Another important point is that Jehovah declared that *all the earth is mine*. Jehovah was not just the God of the Hebrews (most nations had their own god), but He was/is the God/Owner of all of the earth and rightful Owner of all nations.

Moses went from the Presence of Jehovah and called together the elders of the people and communicated to them what Jehovah had commanded him to speak.¹⁷⁰ Interestingly, Moses called the elders of the people together and set before the elders all that God had said. There is no mention of Moses gathering all of the people together.

Because of this statement, it is reasonable to assume that the elders communicated these things to the people. This is a reasonable conclusion because it would be difficult for more than a million people, gathered in a single assembly, to hear clearly what the speaker was saying. The elders could have gathered their individual groups and communicated the word to them in an efficient and clear manner.

A possible challenge to that view is the statement,

*And all the people answered together and said, "All that Jehovah has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to Jehovah.*¹⁷¹

Does, *all the people answered together*, require that they were all listening to the same speaker at the same time, or could it be that the elders delivered the message to their groups, simultaneously, and the response came forth from the groups, as if in unison.

This is an interesting question which we must admit allows for more than one understanding of how the communication of the message took place.

Because of their behavior, immediately following this exchange, some are of the opinion that the people answered Moses glibly, without counting the cost of such a commitment.¹⁷²

Given the sequence in the narrative, it appears that Moses had another conference with Jehovah. In this confrontation, Jehovah stated that one of the reasons for the coming fearful manifestations was to convince the people that Moses had spoken to Jehovah and that from that time onward, the people would believe Moses forever.

*And Jehovah said to Moses, "Behold, I shall come to you in a thick cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe in you forever." Then Moses told the words of the people to Jehovah.*¹⁷³

Jehovah then gave specific instructions for a three-day preparation before the Law was given.

¹⁷⁰ Exodus 19:7

¹⁷¹ Exodus 19:8

¹⁷² Holdcroft, page 67

¹⁷³ Exodus 19:9

All were told to be spiritually and physically clean. They were to be “consecrated.”

*Jehovah also said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments;"*¹⁷⁴

One has to wonder how the term, *people*, is used in this passage because in verse 15, we read,

*And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman."*¹⁷⁵

Based on this terminology, one could conclude that the expression, *the people*, refers only to men, but most understand this expression, *do not go near a woman*, to be a euphemism for conjugal intercourse, not just something directed to the men.¹⁷⁶

All of the instructions were given with the intention of impressing upon the Israelites the fearful holiness of the Presence of God. Bounds were to be set around the mountain and that any man or beast that violated those bounds and touched the mountain was to be slain. The responsibility for executing this death penalty was put on the people. The person violating this rule was to be considered so vile that no one was to touch him – he was to be killed by stoning or shot with an arrow.¹⁷⁷

On the morning of the third day, thunder, lightning, and a thick cloud began to be displayed on the mountain. Suddenly, there was a very loud blast of a trumpet – so loud that the people trembled.

Moses led the people to the foot of the mountain and when they assembled themselves before the mountain, there was a severe earthquake and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Moses spoke and Jehovah answered with thunder.¹⁷⁸

Jehovah called Moses to a rendezvous on the top of the mountain to give further warning concerning importance of observing the boundaries. Jehovah recognized that the curiosity of many people would drive them to break through in an effort to see everything. Special warning was given to the priests – they should consecrate themselves, or else risk Jehovah’s breaking out against them.¹⁷⁹

A question immediately presents itself to us – “Who were these priests?” The institution of the priesthood under the Mosaic Covenant, was yet to be established. This question cannot be answered with certainty. Clearly, there were priests who served Jehovah in some fashion prior to the Covenant. The two most immediate examples are Ruel, Moses father-in-law, whom we met in our earlier study, and the mysterious Melchizedek.¹⁸⁰ Even so, this is the first time that priests are mentioned as being a part of the Israelite nation. When Moses objected to Pharaoh’s willingness to allow the Israelites to go into the wilderness to worship Jehovah, if they would leave their livestock in Egypt, Moses objected because he said that they did not know whether or

¹⁷⁴ Exodus 19:10

¹⁷⁵ Exodus 19:15

¹⁷⁶ C. F. Keil, and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, The Pentateuch*, Volume I (Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson Publishers) 1989, page 101

¹⁷⁷ Exodus 19:12-13

¹⁷⁸ Exodus 19:16-19 The word rendered, *thunder*, is קול (qôl) which has a variety of meanings, all referring to some sort of sound.

¹⁷⁹ Exodus 19:20-22

¹⁸⁰ Genesis 14:18-20; Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6, 10; Heb. 6:20; Heb. 7:1, 10f, 15, 17

not they would need animals to offer as sacrifices. Were there priests among them who would be the ones offering these sacrifices? This is another one of those questions that we must admit cannot be answered with certainty.¹⁸¹

Moses then was instructed to descend and repeat this warning to the people, and then to return to the mountain and to bring Aaron with him.

Exodus 20:18-21 seems to be a flashback to the reaction of the people before the giving of the Ten Commandments.

And all the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance.¹⁹ Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, lest we die."²⁰ And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin."²¹ So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.

To quote Keil and Delitzsch,

“There is not a syllable in Chapter 20:18 about the thunder, lightning, and trumpet blast bursting forth afreash after the proclamation of the ten commandments. There is simply an account of the impression, which the alarming phenomena, mentioned in Chapter 19:16-19 as attending the descent of Jehovah upon the mountain (ver. 20), and preceding His speaking to Moses and the people, made upon the people, who had been brought out of the camp to meet with God.”¹⁸²

Deuteronomy 5:21ff describes this scene in more precise detail. The elders and heads of their tribes approached Moses with the request that he, not they, be the one to draw near to Jehovah. They asked that Jehovah might speak to Moses and he in turn would deliver the words to them.

At this point in the narrative, we enter one of the most significant portions of Scripture. The giving of the Ten Commandments and the details of the Mosaic Covenant, by which Israel was to conduct itself as a holy nation.

THE GIVING OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments, also known as *The Decalogue* (Greek, δεκαλόγος - *dekalogos*, i.e. ten words), are given in Exodus 20:1-17. Some of the commands are accompanied by an elaboration and some are just the straightforward command.

¹⁸¹ Those who advocate the Documentary Hypothesis cite this as evidence that the Pentateuch was written by several different authors over several centuries and that this verse was added by one of the later authors – the “priestly author.” See ADDENDUM A

¹⁸² Keil & Delitzsch, page 104-105

We note that after the commands were given that Jehovah inscribed them on two tablets of stone, written on both sides (i.e., front and back).¹⁸³

Now Jehovah said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction."¹⁸⁴

And when He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.¹⁸⁵

Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets which were written on both sides; they were written on one side and the other.¹⁸⁶

"These words Jehovah spoke to all your assembly at the mountain from the midst of the fire, of the cloud and of the thick gloom, with a great voice, and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me."¹⁸⁷

We note that Jehovah, Himself, inscribed the commandments on the initial tablets of stone.

Deuteronomy is Moses' valedictory address, given before he ascended Mt. Nebo, where he died, prior to Israel's entering the Promised Land. In that address, he recounts the experiences of Israel from the time of their deliverance from Egypt up to their arrival at Nebo. In Deuteronomy 5:6-21 he recounts the giving of the Ten Commandments. It should be observed that although the same material is found in both accounts, some of the wording is different and the sequential order of some sentences are different. Also, the Deuteronomy account has some added commentary on the commandments.

Many early authorities (Josephus, Philo, rabbis, and early Christian writers) described the tablets as containing five commandments on each tablet. Augustine originated the more recent tradition which place three on the first tablet (or left column of a single tablet) and seven on the second. Augustine's view was that the first three commandments specifically refer to Jehovah's being God, and the remaining seven refer to other behavioral aspects of the commandment.

¹⁸³ Note that in recent years it has become the custom to present the Ten Commandments on a single tablet, divided down the center, with all commandments on one side of the tablet.

¹⁸⁴ Exodus 24:12

¹⁸⁵ Exodus 31:18

¹⁸⁶ Exodus 32:15

¹⁸⁷ Deuteronomy 5:22

EXCURSUS

Roman Catholicism “elides” the Second Commandment, making it a subset of the First Commandment. As a result, the prohibition concerning graven images is not set apart as a separate commandment. Thus, in Roman Catholicism,

- the Second Commandment refers to taking the name of Jehovah in Vain;
- the Third Commandment refers to Sabbath keeping;
- the Fourth Commandment, refers to respect of one’s parents;
- the Fifth Commandment refers to murder;
- the Sixth Commandment refers to the sanctity of marriage;
- the Seventh Commandment refers to the enslavement of free Israelites by force;
- the Eighth Commandment refers to perjury.
- Roman Catholicism divides Exodus 20:17 into two commandments, tending the follow the wording of Deuteronomy 5:21 rather than the wording in Exodus.
- Thus, the Ninth Commandment refers to coveting a neighbor’s wife and
- the Tenth Commandment refers to coveting a neighbor’s belongings.¹⁸⁸

In the following commentary we will present the traditional non-Roman Catholic understanding of the Commandments.

FIRST COMMANDMENT: *"You shall have no other gods before Me."*¹⁸⁹

Comment: The Ten Commandments begin with the assertion that Jehovah is the God that brought them out of Egypt. *Then God spoke all these words, saying, "I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."*¹⁹⁰

It is on this basis – that God is God - that the commandments are given.

SECOND COMMANDMENT: *You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth.*

*You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I Jehovah your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.*¹⁹¹

Comment: The Hebrew text contains a double accusative, which the literal rendering would be, *make as a likeness and any form that which is in heaven, etc.*¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ John E. Huesman, S.J. “Exodus,” *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Editors: Raymond E. Brown, S.S.; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J.; Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc.) 1988, page 57

¹⁸⁹ Exodus 20:3 עַל-פְּנֵי (al-pänäya) literally, *beyond me* or *in addition to me*.

¹⁹⁰ Exodus 20:1-2

¹⁹¹ Exodus 20:4-6 (TNK Version) – the TANAKH is a 1985 Jewish Bible contemporary English translation of The Holy Scriptures according to the traditional Hebrew text (Masoretic).

¹⁹² Keil & Delitzsch, page 114

Relative terms:

- Image: a visible representation of a supposedly divine being or power
- Idol: usually considered to be the deity himself or his permanent abiding place
- Fetish: any object given a magical or divine power
- Relic: a revered object kept because of its former association.

In Deuteronomy 4:15-18, Moses comments on this commandment, giving emphasis to the fact that they should not make themselves an image in the form of any sculpture, for this reason: *since you did not see any form on the day Jehovah spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire*¹⁹³

It must be emphasized that the second commandment was not an injunction against artistic endeavors – such as painting and sculpture – but that it was an injunction against idolatry. Evidence that this injunction does not forbid artistic endeavor is seen in God’s instructions for both the Tabernacle and later, the Temple.

In the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the Covenant. On top of the Ark were two cherubim, sculptured from gold.¹⁹⁴ These clearly were images of heavenly beings. Moreover, God called a man named Bezalel, *“And I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze,”*¹⁹⁵

In the Temple, there was extensive artwork.¹⁹⁶ Detailed description is given of the extensive artwork of Hiram, who was *filled with wisdom and understanding and skill for doing any work in bronze. So he came to King Solomon and performed all his work.*¹⁹⁷

Humans seem to crave a visible form of expressing worship and religious concepts and these easily become more than just an aid, but become objects of trust and worship. The wearing of a cross as a necklace or lapel pin may be innocuous, perhaps a declaration of one’s being a Christian, but for some, there is a belief that there is spiritual power in such objects.

An example of this tendency is the history of the bronze serpent. On one occasion, when the people repeated one of their incessant grumblings, Jehovah sent serpents among them. Many died from these bites. The people implored Moses to beg Jehovah to remove the serpents. Jehovah did not remove the serpents – the people still had to deal with being bitten – but instead gave them an opportunity to express their faith through obedience. Jehovah instructed Moses to make a serpent out of brass and to place it on a tall pole. When anyone was bitten, if they would look to that serpent, they would live.¹⁹⁸

When the Israelites entered Canaan, after a time, they began to violate Jehovah’s precise instructions concerning sacrifices and worship. They built “high places” to worship Jehovah, as substitutes or in addition to what Jehovah had commanded be done in the Temple. They built

¹⁹³ Deuteronomy 4:15

¹⁹⁴ Exodus 25:18-20

¹⁹⁵ Exodus 31:3-4

¹⁹⁶ I Kings Chapters 6 & 7

¹⁹⁷ I Kings 7:14

¹⁹⁸ Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14

altars to substitute for the ones commanded by Jehovah. The brass serpent had been kept as a reminder of God's deliverance, but it had become an object of worship – the people burned incense to it. When Hezekiah became king, he destroyed the high places, the altars, and the brass serpent, because it had become an idol.¹⁹⁹

The apostles felt the need to address this universal tendency in their writings.²⁰⁰

THIRD COMMANDMENT: *"You shall not take the name of Jehovah your God in vain, for Jehovah will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain."*²⁰¹

This is one of the reasons that the Jews, out of fear of reciting the name of Jehovah irreverently, chose to use the word, *Lord*, rather than *Jehovah*, when speak of God or to God. Sadly, such reverence for God is lacking in much of Christendom today and one manner in which this is manifested is irreverent speech. Our speech betrays our inner heart.²⁰²

FOURTH COMMANDMENT: *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

⁹ "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath of Jehovah your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. ¹¹ "For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore Jehovah blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."²⁰³

In this passage, the emphasis is upon the Genesis account.

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. ² And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested²⁰⁴

Moses' recounting the giving of the Law, as recorded in Deuteronomy, indicates that Sabbath keeping for the Israelites had a special significance: it was to be a day of remembrance. They were slaves in Egypt and they were not given rest, but now they were to have such a day of rest.

'Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath of Jehovah your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ 'And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Jehovah your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore Jehovah your God commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.'²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁹ II Kings 18:1-4, 22

²⁰⁰ Galatians 5:19-20; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5; I Peter 4:3

²⁰¹ Exodus 20:7

²⁰² Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12

²⁰³ Exodus 20:8-11

²⁰⁴ Genesis 2:1-3

²⁰⁵ Deuteronomy 5:13-15

This is in line with Mark's record of Jesus' reply to those who criticized his picking heads of grain as they walked through the field on the Sabbath. *And He was saying to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."*²⁰⁶

Following Pentecost, the Church consistently met on the first day of the week, rather than the seventh. The failure to keep the Sabbath was one of the controversial issues in the early church. Paul addressed this issue in Galatians 4:10 and Romans 14:5-6. The Romans passage states that whether or not one keeps the Sabbath depends on a person's conscience and that whether or not one chooses to keep the Sabbath, the choice should be made on the basis of glorifying God.

In the ancient sense, the Sabbath is blessed even today, because of the declaration made in Genesis 2:1-3. God does intend for humans to have a day of rest. During the French Revolution, in an effort to remove religious trappings and older monarchical traditions, the week was changed from seven to ten days. This quickly became unpopular because the workers were forced to work ten hours each day for nine consecutive days, with only one day of rest in ten. It is reported that even the horses began to suffer from being required to work this schedule.

It is worth noting that in the teachings of Jesus and the writings of the apostles, all aspects of the Ten Commandments not only are reinforced, but even deepened²⁰⁷ – except for keeping the Sabbath. This is the only one of the commandments that is not a part of the teaching of the New Covenant.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT: *"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which Jehovah your God gives you."*²⁰⁸

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul points out that this is the first command with a promise.²⁰⁹

Later decrees enforced this tenet.

*"And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death."*²¹⁰

*"And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death."*²¹¹

*"If there is anyone who curses his father or his mother, he shall surely be put to death; he has cursed his father or his mother, his bloodguiltiness is upon him."*²¹²

There are situations in which a believer may have to digress from a parent's demands and beliefs.

*"Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven."*³³ *"But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven."*³⁴ *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."*³⁵ *"For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household."*³⁷ *"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not*

²⁰⁶ Mark 7:27

²⁰⁷ Matthew 5:21-45, etc.

²⁰⁸ Exodus 20:12

²⁰⁹ Ephesians 6:2

²¹⁰ Exodus 21:15

²¹¹ Exodus 21:17

²¹² Leviticus 20:9

worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.³⁸ "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.³⁹ "He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it."²¹³

Also coming into play is the condition that Paul puts on obedience to parents, *Children, obey your parents in Jehovah, for this is right.*²¹⁴ One might argue that the expression, *in Jehovah*, implies parental values that are consistent with Jehovah's teaching and thus exempts the child from obedience to those demands that are contrary to Jehovah's teaching. An opposite point of view is that the expression means that since the child is in Jehovah, that he/she should be obedient to the parents.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT: "*You shall not murder.*"²¹⁵²¹⁶

The King James Version renders the command as, *Thou shalt not kill*. The term rendered, *kill*, in the KJV, is rendered as, *murder*, in most other versions. The term is, **רצח**

Given the fact that certain killings (execution for certain crimes) and Jehovah's ordering the killing of certain populations,²¹⁷ as well as the setting of other passages of Scripture in which this Hebrew term is used,²¹⁸ it is evident that the prohibition is against murder and not against all killing.

Under the New Covenant, not only the act, but also the murderous heart also is condemned.²¹⁹

SEVENTH COMANDMENT: "*You shall not commit adultery.*"²²⁰

This commandment affirms the sanctity of the marriage covenant.

- Adultery is a married person's having sexual activity with someone other than the married person's spouse.
- Fornication is sexual activity between unmarried individuals.

Both adultery and fornication are sins that damn one's soul.

*Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators,²²¹ nor idolaters, nor adulterers,²²² nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,...*²²³

*Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*²²⁴

²¹³ Matthew 10:32-39

²¹⁴ Ephesians 6:1

²¹⁵ Exodus 20:13

²¹⁶ I Corinthians 6:9

²¹⁷ I Samuel 15

²¹⁸ Numbers 35:6ff; I Kings 21:19; II Kings 6:32; Judges 20:4; Proverbs 22:13; Isaiah 1:21; Hosea 6:9; Psalm 94:6

²¹⁹ Matthew 5:21-22

²²⁰ Exodus 20:14

²²¹ Πόρνος

²²² Μοιχός

²²³ I Corinthians 6:9

²²⁴ Hebrews 13:4

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT: *"You shall not steal."*²²⁵

The meaning of this commandment is quite obvious. Stealing can be manifested in many ways, i.e., refusing to pay what one owes, keeping something that is borrowed, taking something that does not belong to the taker, etc.

NINTH COMMANDMENT: *"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."*²²⁶

Reaffirming this commandment:

The Psalmist wrote: *I hate and despise falsehood, But I love Thy law.*²²⁷

The wisdom of Proverbs reminds us, *A righteous man hates falsehood, But a wicked man acts disgustingly and shamefully*²²⁸.

Concerning those who will be barred from heaven but will find their place in hell:

*Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.*²²⁹

*and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*²³⁰

*"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*²³¹

TENTH COMMANDMENT: *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."*²³²

Covetousness is an inordinate desire to have more than one possesses. Paul declared covetousness to be idolatry.²³³ He also warned, *For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.*²³⁴

Some Scriptural examples of the danger of greed and covetousness:

1. Demas love of this world caused him to depart from Paul's company (II Timothy 4:10)
2. Gehazi's lying to get money from Naaman (II Kings 5:21-22)
3. The disobedience of Achan that cost the lives of thirty-six Israelite soldiers (Joshua 7)
4. Domestic troubles (Proverbs 15:27)
5. Oppression and murder (Ezekiel 22:12)
6. Many foolish and hurtful lusts (I Timothy 6:9-10)

²²⁵ Exodus 20:15

²²⁶ Exodus 20:16

²²⁷ Psalm 119:163

²²⁸ Proverbs 13:5

²²⁹ Revelation 22:15

²³⁰ Revelation 21:27

²³¹ Revelation 21:8

²³² Exodus 20:17

²³³ Colossians 3:5

²³⁴ I Timothy 6:10 He also wrote to the Thessalonians that when he came to them he did not come with flattering speech as a means of hiding greed.

After the giving of the Ten Commandments, Jehovah gave instructions for the type of altar that was to be used in making sacrifices. The altar was to be made either of earth, or of uncut stones. If they cut the stones, the fact that a tool touched the stones would make the altar profaned. In other words, no human creative activity was to be displayed in the simple altars that were to be used at this time. No steps should be required for approaching the altar.²³⁵

Later, Jehovah designed altars for use in the Tabernacle and Temple.

One of the somewhat complicated matters of the Sinai narrative is Moses' comings and goings. What happened on the mountain and what happened in front of the people at the bottom of the mountain? Here is brief summary of this scenario as presented in Exodus 19:1 – 33:1

Exodus 19:3-6 Moses on the mountain.

From the time of his being commissioned at the burning bush, Moses had expected to serve God on this mountain (Exodus 3:12). After the Israelites had established their camp at the base of the mountain, Moses ascended Mt. Sinai. He probably ascended to a plateau, below the mountain peak, whereas, the presence of Jehovah was at the summit. Jehovah communicated two things to Moses, which he was to relay to the people.²³⁶

- If the people would obey Jehovah's voice and keep the covenant, then they would be God's people.
- It was Jehovah's intention for the nation to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Moses descended from the mountain and relay God's words to the people.

Exodus 19:8b-13 Moses on the mountain

Jehovah instructed Moses to tell the people:

- He, Jehovah would speak to Moses from the midst of a dark cloud and that the people would hear what Jehovah was saying.²³⁷
- The people were to have a three-day preparation for their encounter with Jehovah²³⁸
- A boundary (fence?) was to be erected at the base of the mountain and no one was to cross that boundary and anyone who violated the boundary should be put to death.²³⁹

Moses descended from the mountain, communicated the instructions, and fulfilled the instructions given by Jehovah.

²³⁵ Exodus 20:24-26

²³⁶ Exodus 19:5-6

²³⁷ Exodus 19:9

²³⁸ Exodus 19:10-11

²³⁹ Exodus 19:12-13

Exodus 19:20-25 Moses on the Mountain

Jehovah called Moses to the top of the mountain to give another more intense warning concerning the importance of not violating the boundary. He especially gave warning to those whose curiosity might motivate them to slip past the boundary,²⁴⁰ and a special warning was given to the priests, who were accustomed to approaching Jehovah when presenting an offering.²⁴¹

Moses descended from the Mountain and communicated these things to the people.

Exodus 20:1-22 Moses at the base of the mountain.

God spoke the Ten Commandments to Moses and the people while they were at the foot of the mountain. The people stood at a distance, while Moses drew close.²⁴² After giving the Ten Commandments, Jehovah immediately communicated two more things:

- He reiterated the warning against making idols.²⁴³
- He gave instructions that any altar built for the purpose of offering sacrifices to Him should either be made of earth or uncut stones. Also, the altar should not be of such a height that steps would be required to ascend it.²⁴⁴

Exodus Chapters 21-23 Moses at the base of the mountain.

While the people continued to stand at a distance, and Moses was close to the thick cloud-covered mountain, Jehovah pronounced a lengthy list of legal ordinances concerning both civil and criminal matters.

Exodus 24:3-8 Moses at the base of the mountain.

After Jehovah had concluded the impartation of the ordinances, Moses responded by:

- Repeating the ordinances to the people and writing down the ordinances.²⁴⁵
- Building an altar at the foot of the mountain, surrounding it with twelve stone pillars, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. He commissioned young men to sacrifice young bulls on the altar, burnt offerings, as a “peace offering” to Jehovah.²⁴⁶
- The blood from the bulls was captured in basins.²⁴⁷
- Moses took half of the blood and waved it upon the altar.²⁴⁸
- Moses read the ordinances that he had written and the people responded with a commitment to keep the ordinances.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁰ Exodus 19:21

²⁴¹ Exodus 19:22

²⁴² Exodus 20:21; Deuteronomy 5:4, 24

²⁴³ Exodus 20:23

²⁴⁴ Exodus 20:24-26

²⁴⁵ Exodus 24:3-4

²⁴⁶ Exodus 24:4-5

²⁴⁷ Exodus 24:6

²⁴⁸ The idea behind the Hebrew term קָרַף is to “wave” or “scatter.”

²⁴⁹ Exodus 24:7

- Moses sprinkled the other half of the blood on the people, declaring, "*Behold the blood of the covenant, which Jehovah has made with you in accordance with all these words.*"²⁵⁰

Exodus 24:1, 9 – 11 Moses at the mountain.

Jehovah instructed Moses to come up to him, and to bring with him Aaron, Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel (one of them being, Joshua).

- This group crossed the boundary at the base of the mountain, where they were given a visual manifestation of God.²⁵¹
- Because God had called them to this place, beyond the boundary, He did not destroy them. They had a meal in the presence of God.²⁵²

Exodus 24:12-17 Moses on the mountain.

Jehovah called Moses to climb the mountain, where he would be given the tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments.

- Moses and Joshua began the ascent.²⁵³
- The elders were told to remain at the bottom of the mountain. Moses appointed Aaron and Hur to deal with legal matters while he was on the mountain.²⁵⁴
- At some point, Moses left Joshua and went further into the cloud.²⁵⁵
- The glory of Jehovah rested on Mt. Sinai, while the cloud continued to cover the mountain.²⁵⁶
- On the seventh day after Moses had entered the cloud, Jehovah spoke to him.²⁵⁷

Exodus 24:18-31:18 Moses on the mountain.

Moses remained on the mountain for forty days and forty nights. During this session, Jehovah gave precise instructions concerning:

- The offerings that the people should make in order to provide the materials and finances for the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings.²⁵⁸
- The pattern of the Tabernacle and its furnishings.²⁵⁹
- The design of the garments and adornments for the high priest.²⁶⁰
- The design of the garments and adornments for the general priests.²⁶¹

²⁵⁰ Exodus 24:8

²⁵¹ Exodus 24:10

²⁵² Exodus 24:11

²⁵³ Exodus 24:13

²⁵⁴ Exodus 24:14

²⁵⁵ We know that Joshua remained on the mountain path, because when Moses began his descent from the mountain, Joshua commented on the noise he heard from the camp below (Exodus 32:17)

²⁵⁶ Exodus 24:16

²⁵⁷ Exodus 24:16

²⁵⁸ Exodus 25:1-10

²⁵⁹ Exodus 25:11-27:21; 30:1-10, 17-21

²⁶⁰ Exodus 28:1-39

²⁶¹ Exodus 28:40-43

- The ceremonies for consecrating Aaron and his sons as priests.²⁶²
- The daily sacrifices that are to be conducted perpetually by the priests.²⁶³
- The “tax” that each male over twenty years of age shall pay to finance the operation of the tabernacle of meeting.²⁶⁴
- The ceremonial cleansing which the priests should practice each time they enter the tabernacle.²⁶⁵
- The recipe for the holy anointing oil to be used in sanctifying the priests, the tabernacle and the elements within it.²⁶⁶
- The recipe for the incense to be used in the tabernacle.²⁶⁷
- The identity of the workmen chosen to make the tabernacle and its furnishings.²⁶⁸
- A repetition of the command to keep the Sabbath.²⁶⁹

At the conclusion, Jehovah gave Moses the two tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments.²⁷⁰

Exodus 32:1-29 Moses descends the mountain.

Aaron, in response to the people, created the golden calf. After forty days and nights, Moses descended from the mountain and found the people worshipping the calf. In anger, he threw down the tablets, shattering them. When he reached the bottom of the mountain, Moses took action.²⁷¹

- He destroyed the golden calf.²⁷²
- Moses, and the sons of Levi, executed three thousand people, in an effort to expunge the sin from the nation.²⁷³

Exodus 32:30-35 Moses on the mountain.

Moses returned to the mountain and interceded with Jehovah on behalf of the people.

- Moses sought to deflect Jehovah’s anger against the people by asking God to forgive them, and if not for Jehovah to remove Moses’ name from the Book of Life. Jehovah responded that he would not remove Moses’ name, but would remove from His Book the names of those who had sinned.²⁷⁴
- Moses was told to lead the people forward, as the angel went before them.²⁷⁵

²⁶² Exodus 29:1-28

²⁶³ Exodus 29:29-46

²⁶⁴ Exodus 30:11-16

²⁶⁵ Exodus 30:19-21

²⁶⁶ Exodus 30:23-33

²⁶⁷ Exodus 30:34-38

²⁶⁸ Exodus 31:1-11

²⁶⁹ Exodus 31:12-17

²⁷⁰ Exodus 31:18

²⁷¹ Exodus 32:19

²⁷² Exodus 32:20

²⁷³ Exodus 32:26-29

²⁷⁴ Exodus 32:31-33

²⁷⁵ Exodus 32:34

- Jehovah did smite the people because of what they had done in worshipping the calf.²⁷⁶

Legal Ordinances Given to Moses after the Giving of the Ten Commandments

The ordinances imparted to Moses concerning civil law and right relations between humans are quite detailed. Below is a grouping of those laws.

1. Laws regarding slavery (Exodus 21:2-11; 21:20-21)
2. Laws regarding murder and accidental homicide (Exodus 21:12-14)
3. Laws regarding respect of parents (Exodus 21:15, 17)
4. Laws regarding kidnapping (Exodus 21:16)
5. Laws regarding fighting and its results (Exodus 21:18-19)
6. The Law of retaliation and restitution (Exodus 21:20-32)
7. Laws regarding animals
 - Injuries done to animals (Exodus 21:33)
 - Injuries done by animals (Exodus 21:33-36)
 - Theft of animals (Exodus 22:1-4)
 - Kindness to strayed animals or overloaded animals (Exodus 23:4-5)
 - Laws against sexual activity with animals (Exodus 22:19)
8. The law regarding arson (Exodus 22:6)
9. Laws regarding trust of another's possessions (Exodus 22:7-15)
10. Law condemning sorcery (Exodus 22:18)
11. Laws concerning the treatment of strangers (Exodus 22:21; 23:9)
12. Laws respecting widows and orphans (Exodus 22:22-24)
13. Laws regulating lending (Exodus 22:25-27)
14. Laws concerning false witness and perjury (Exodus 23:1-3, 6-9)
15. Laws concerning marriage especially relating to slaves (Exodus 21:2-11)
16. The law concerning sexually violated virgins (Exodus 22:16-17)

The Establishment Religious Institutions Given to Moses after the Giving of the Ten Commandments

1. The Sabbatical Year (Exodus 23:10-11)²⁷⁷
2. Three annual feasts: Passover [Feast of Unleavened Bread], Pentecost [Feast of Weeks], Tabernacles [Feast of Ingathering] (Exodus 23:14-19; 34:18, 22-24,26)
3. The Sabbath (Exodus 23:12)
4. Laws of leaven as related to an offering (Exodus 23:18; 34:25)
5. The Law of first fruits and first-born (Exodus 22:29-30; 23:19)

The Construction of the Tabernacle

²⁷⁶ Exodus 32:35

²⁷⁷ Later, when Jehovah gave more detailed religious and civil laws, in Leviticus, He established the Year of Jubilee. After every seventh Sabbatical Year, there is to be a year of Jubilee i.e., every fifty years (Leviticus 25:10ff)

The English term, *tabernacle*, is the Anglicization of the Latin term, *tabernaculum*, meaning, “tent.” When Jerome translated the Vulgate Version (Hebrew and Greek into Latin), this is the term he used to render the Hebrew term, מִשְׁכָּן (*miškān*) which refers in general to a dwelling place. It seems that this Hebrew term refers to the entire complex.

About six centuries before Jerome produced the Vulgate, the Greek speaking Jews of Alexandria translated the Old Testament Hebrew into Greek (The Septuagint). They used the Greek term for “tent”, σκηνή (*skene* – “e” pronounced as a long “a”), with which to render the above cited Hebrew term.

One has to wonder if the Septuagint’s Greek influenced Jerome’s translation of the Hebrew, since there is another Hebrew word, אוהל (*ohel*), that means, “tent.” That term is used in Exodus 26:11, which describes that portion of the complex which is the sacred tent – the location of the Holy Place (containing the Altar of Incense, the Table of Showbread, and the Lampstand) and the Holy of Holies (where the Ark rested). The Brazen Alter and the Laver were located in the enclosed yard outside of the tent.²⁷⁸

In the New Testament, the Greek term for tent (σκηνή) always is used when referring to the Old Testament Tabernacle. This New Testament language might have been another thing that influenced Jerome in his choice of the Latin term, *tabernaculum*, when rendering the Hebrew term.

Scripture makes a point of the fact that the Tabernacle was instituted by Jehovah and therefore no deviation should be allowed in following the pattern and instructions concerning its construction. The writer of Hebrews declares the Divine origin of the complex: *the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which Jehovah pitched, not man.*²⁷⁹

Moses was commanded to be precise in following the pattern that Jehovah had given to him.

*"And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain.*²⁸⁰

The entire enclosure measured:

- 150 feet in length
- 75 feet wide
- The entrance was 30 feet wide

The entrance was on the eastern side of the enclosure.²⁸¹

The dimensions of the sacred tent within the enclosure were 15 x 45 feet. The tent was divided into two rooms:

- The Holy of Holies, wherein rested the Ark, was 15x15 feet square
- The Holy Place, wherein rested the Altar of Incense, the Lampstand, and the Table of Showbread, was a 30 x 15 feet rectangle

²⁷⁸ See ADDENDUM C

²⁷⁹ Hebrews 8:2

²⁸⁰ Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 8:5

²⁸¹ See ADDENDUM C

Initially, a half-shekel atonement tax was imposed on every male over twenty years of age. The atonement tax was paid only once and the amount was the same for both the rich and the poor. This atonement money was to be used for the service of the Tabernacle.²⁸² All of the materials to be used in the construction of the Tabernacle and its appointments were to be given as voluntary offerings by the people. Jehovah specified what materials were to be given for the construction and the people were careful to give only those which Jehovah had specified. The description of the construction of the Tabernacle is spread over several chapters of Exodus (Exodus Chapters 25-27, 30, 36-39). The following is a compilation of the contents of these verses.²⁸³

The Ark

Exodus 25:10-22; 37:1-9

The description of the Tabernacle begins from the inside and proceeds outward. The Ark of the Covenant is the first article of furniture described. The Ark was the most important element in the Tabernacle. The Ark was a trunk within which the two tables of the law would be preserved.

Assuming that a cubit is eighteen inches long, the Ark would have been

- three feet nine inches long
- two feet three inches wide
- two feet three inches deep

The Ark was made of shittim wood (*acacia vera*, popularly known as acacia). It was covered with an overlay of pure gold, both inside and out. Although other items of furniture in the Tabernacle were covered with an overlay of gold, this is the only piece that was lined with gold.

The top, or lid, of the Ark, was a slab of pure gold. This was known as the mercy seat. There was a golden rim that surrounded the top and at each corner there was a golden ring through which the carrying poles were thrust. Two cherubim were placed on top of the golden slab, facing each other, with their wings over the mercy seat.

Based on I Kings 8:9 and II Chronicles 5:10, it seems that when the Temple was constructed and the Ark installed in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, only the two tables of the Law were in the Ark.

*There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where Jehovah made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.*²⁸⁴

*There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets which Moses put there at Horeb, where Jehovah made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.*²⁸⁵

However, Hebrews 9:4 indicates that the contents of the Ark in the Tabernacle included the tables of the Law, Aaron's rod, and the golden jar of manna.

²⁸² Exodus 30:11-16

²⁸³ For depictions of the various elements associated with the Tabernacle, see ADDENDUM D

²⁸⁴ I Kings 8:9

²⁸⁵ II Chronicles 5:10

*having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant.*²⁸⁶

Because of these two contradicting statements, we would assume that when the Ark was a part of the Tabernacle, the Ark contained the golden jar of manna, Aaron's rod, and the tables of the covenant. However, when the Ark was placed in the Temple, its intended permanent resting place, the manna and Aaron's rod, which had been important during the Tabernacle period, where/had been removed. Of course, honesty requires us to admit that this is a possibility and the answer cannot be known for certain.

The Table of Showbread Exodus 25:23-30; 37:10-16

In the 1611 AD language of the King James Version, this item of furniture is called the Table of Shewbread, because that is how the word, "show," was spelled in 1611. The Showbread also was known as *the bread of His Presence*.

The Table was coffee table size

- three feet long
- one foot, six inches wide
- two feet, three inches tall

The table was made of the same material as the Ark, i.e., desert acacia wood, covered with a layer of gold. Around the top it had a rim, also of gold. At each corner, there was a ring through which the carrying poles were inserted.

The table served to display twelve small, flat, round loaves, that were laid out in orderly fashion so that they could be shown, then they were sprinkled with frankincense. Each Sabbath Day, the loaves were replaced with fresh loaves and the priests were entitled to eat the old loaves if they chose to do so. If they did choose to eat the old loaves, they could not leave the room to do so, they had to eat them in the Holy Place, the portion of the Tabernacle where the Table sat.

Also on the Table, there were dishes (bread plates), spoons (to sprinkle the frankincense), covers (literally, "cups," or "flagons," which probably were containers for liquid offerings), and bowls (vessels containing frankincense).

The Golden Lampstand Exodus 25:31-40; 37:17-24; Numbers 8:1-4

In recent years, this item of furniture has been called the *menorah*, because this is the Hebrew word that Scripture uses for this object. Although usually described as a candlestick, this item really was a lampstand. *Menorah*,²⁸⁷ literally means, "light-holder." There were no candles used in the Tabernacle. The Lampstand was designed to use oil for fuel, with a wick for each of the seven flames. The Lampstand was made of one talent of gold which was tempered by beating.²⁸⁸ It weighed well over 100 pounds. According to tradition, it stood over four feet six inches tall.

²⁸⁶ Hebrews 9:4

²⁸⁷ מְנוֹרָה

²⁸⁸ This type of beaten work in metal is known as repousse'

There was some debate, early-on, concerning the exact appearance of this item. Some contended that the branches would have been steeped, with the central light socket being the tallest. However, archaeologists have found representations of the lampstand and in the representations discovered, all of the sockets are of the same height, which is how this item is depicted and displayed today.

Each arm and socket was formed attractively, giving the appearance of a flowering and fruit-bearing almond branch. The bowls, knobs, and flowers suggest the suggestive stages in the process of developing almonds. The Lampstand was kept burning, perpetually.

Auxiliary equipment used with the Lampstand included

- golden tongs, used to trim and adjust the wicks
- golden snuffers to extinguish the flame during the brief period each day when the individual sockets were refueled and the wicks trimmed.

The Curtains of Linen

Exodus 26:1-6; 36:8-13

Ten fine-twined linen curtains lined the tent (the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies). The ten linen curtains were held by hooks and clasps so that they formed both the ceiling and the inside covering of the walls of the tent. They hung down to within eighteen inches above the ground. When all ten were hung side by side, the composite curtain was sufficient to cover the north wall, the south wall, and the back (west) wall. When a priest was in the Tabernacle, this is most of what he saw. The gold planking would have been visible below the curtains.

The Curtains of Goat's Hair

Exodus 26:7-13; 36:14-18

The goat's hair covering consisted of eleven sections, rather than the ten of the linen curtains. They were 36 inches longer than the linen curtains. The extra material was arranged on top of the linen curtains so that it would overhang the area. The goat's hair covering was visible from outside of the tent. Since most goats of that area are black, this covering probably was black.

The Skin Coverings

Exodus 26:14; 36:19

Two additional coverings topped off the covering of the tent. One was of ram skin, dyed red. The other was of badger skins, which were on top of all of the other coverings, were natural color. The term, *badger skin*, is a guess of the translators. No one knows for certain the identity of the animal whose skin was used for this material. Many students of this subject suggest that a plausible alternative for *badger skin* is *dugong skin*.²⁸⁹ The dugong, also known as, *sea cow*, is an animal similar to a dolphin or porpoise which lives in the coastal waters of the Red Sea. It grows up to nine feet long and has a fine waterproof hide which would have been a protection from rain. The Israelites used this material for their shoes, as do contemporary beduins.²⁹⁰

The Boards and Sockets

Exodus 26:15-30; 36:20-34

²⁸⁹ Holdcroft, page 74, Keil and Delitzsch, page 163

²⁹⁰ Keil and Delitzsch, page 163; Holdcroft, page 74; Cf Ezekiel 16:10

The sides of the tent consisted of twenty wide planks, standing on end. The back of the tent had six planks. Each plank rested on two sockets made of silver. The planks were made of acacia wood. Five horizontal bars were attached to the planks to hold them together. The center bar ran the full length of the tent – it either passed through rings attached to the planks, or passed through a hole in each plank (thus, being invisible, if this were the arrangement). Both the planks and the bars were overlaid in gold.

The silver sockets were made of half shekel of atonement money, the tax that had been laid on every male over twenty years of age.²⁹¹ Since the tax had been levied on more than 600,000 males, the estimated weight of the silver sockets would have been more than five tons.²⁹²

The Inner and Outer Veils of the Tent

Exodus 26:31-37; 36:35-38

The inner veil separated the tent into two rooms: the Holy of Holies (wherein dwelt the Ark) and the Holy Place (which contained the Table of Showbread, the Altar of Incense, and the Seven Branched Lamp Stand). The inner veil was supported by four gold-covered acacia wood pillars and held by golden hooks. These four pillars rested upon sockets of silver.²⁹³ This veil was made of finely spun linen with figures of cherubim woven into the fabric, in colors of blue, purple, and scarlet.

The outer veil hung at the front of the tent. It also was made of finely-spun linen in colors of blue, purple, and scarlet, but it was ornamented with embroidery rather than interwoven design. It was supported on five pillars and held in place by golden hooks. These pillars also were acacia wood, overlaid with gold, and set in sockets of brass.

The Brazen Altar

Exodus 27:1-8; 38:1-7

The Brazen Altar was made of acacia wood, covered with plates of brass. It was placed in the courtyard between the door of the court and the outer veil of the tent. It was 7 ½ wide and 7 ½ feet long, with a height of 4 ½ feet. At its base was a ledge on which the priests stood when offering a sacrifice. The Altar had a brass grate upon which sacrifices were placed. It had four brass rings at its four corners through which passed the poles that were used to carry the Altar when the Israelites were on the move. On each corner were horns, that appeared to be growing out of the Altar – probably modeled after the horns of a bull.

²⁹¹ Exodus 30

²⁹² Holdcroft, page 75

²⁹³ The Temple duplicated this arrangement and the veil that was torn from top to bottom at the moment of Christ's death, was this veil in the Temple. (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45)

Altar accouterments, made from brass, were:

- pans, used to cleanse it of the ashes formed from the burning of the sacrifices
- shovels
- tools used for the sprinkling of blood
- flesh-hooks
- coal scoops

The Court and the Gateway

Exodus 27:9-19; 38:9-20

The courtyard of the complex was enclosed by a fence consisting of linen hangings supported by sixty pillars set in sockets of brass. Although the material from which the pillars were made is not specified in Scripture, they probably were made from acacia wood. The top of each pillar was ornamented with a silver band or fillet which had been provided by the atonement tax.

The linen hangings were white and were 7 ½ feet in height, so that they effectively protected the court from the gaze of curious outsiders.

The gate consisted of draperies made of finely spun linen, embroidered with blue and scarlet. The pattern of the embroidery is not specified, but it probably echoed that of the inner veil. The draperies were suspended on four pillars. The gate was 30 feet wide and 7 ½ feet high. The draperies were either raised or parted when the priest entered the courtyard.

The Oil for the Lamp

Exodus 27:20-21

The fuel for the lamp was to be pure olive oil, which had been beaten rather than pressed from the olives. Beaten oil is said to be of finer quality and lighter color than pressed oil. Because the fuel constantly was replenished, the lamp burned continually (except for the few moments when the wicks were being trimmed and the oil replenished).

The Altar of Incense

Exodus 30:1-10; 37:25-28

The Altar of Incense was made of acacia wood, overlaid with gold. As with the other articles of the Tabernacle, rings were attached to its corners, so that poles could be inserted for carrying the Altar. The Altar of Incense was three feet tall and 1 ½ feet square. Its square top was rimmed with a crown of gold and it, like the Brazen Altar, had horns at each corner. Incense was kept burning on this altar at all times and once a year, the blood of atonement was sprinkled upon it.

The Laver

Exodus 30:18-21; 38:8

The laver was the last vessel to be made and it is unique in that Scripture describes neither the measurements nor its physical appearance, other than it was to be made of brass. The laver contained the water needed for the priests to cleanse themselves before performing their priestly duties. Scripture expressly mentions the foot of the Laver and that it also should be made of brass. There is some speculation as to whether the foot was a pedestal on which the vessel stood, or a smaller, separate basin, into which water from the main vessel was poured for the purpose of priestly washing. Most consider the term to refer to a pedestal, although Keil and Delitzsch argue for the idea of a separate basin.²⁹⁴

The metal used to construct the laver came from the polished brass mirrors used by the ladies of Israel. The presentation of these brass mirrors would have represented a significant sacrifice.²⁹⁵

The Anointing Oil and the Incense

Exodus 30:22-38; 37:29

Jehovah gave specific recipes for both the holy Anointing Oil and the Incense. The stacte was a gum from the myrrh tree, onycha was a Red Sea shellfish, galbanum was a resinous gum used to give body to the other fragrances, and frankincense was the fragrant gum of a tree. Even though the ingredients are given, the manner of preparing them is not given. In all probability, some sort of boiling or grinding process was used.

- The Oil was to serve in the consecration of the furnishings of the Tabernacle and of the priests.
- The Incense was used for the perpetual offering upon the golden Altar of Incense.

These were sacred elements and Jehovah commanded that these recipes should not be used for any oil or incense other than those used in the Tabernacle.

The Garments of the Priest²⁹⁶

The garments of the High Priest and the other priests cover several portions of Exodus Chapters 28 – 39. We will cite each of these as we look at each individual piece.

The Ephod (Exodus 28:6-14; 39:2-7)

The Ephod was a semi-outer garment in the style of a tunic or pinafore. It was made of linen, colored blue, purple, and scarlet. Golden threads were woven into the garment. It was made of two pieces, joined together at the shoulder with golden clasps. Each clasp was set with engraved onyx stone. The front and back of the ephod were held together around the priest's body by a sash tied at the waist. The sash also was blue, purple, and scarlet. An euphemism for a fully clothed priest was "to be girded with his sash," and thus, ready for service.

According to Josephus, the engraved onyx stones on the shoulder were designed so that the names of the six eldest sons of Jacob were engraved on the right shoulder and the names of the six youngest sons were on the left shoulder.

The Breastplate (Exodus 28:15-29; 39:8-21)

The Breastplate was a piece of elaborately finished cloth of the same material as the Ephod. It was a strip twice as long as it was wide, and it was folded back upon itself to form a square bag into which the Urim and Thummin were held. The Breastplate was held in place by golden chains attached to the onyx shoulder clasps and also by blue lace ribbons which attached the Breastplate to the Ephod.

²⁹⁴ Holdcroft, page 77; Keil and Delitzsch, page 213

²⁹⁵ Many such brass mirrors, coming from the period of the Exodus, have been discovered in Egypt. (Holdcroft, page 77)

²⁹⁶ For a sketch of the High Priest's garments, see ADDENDUM E

The Urim and Thummim (Exodus 28:30, Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8; Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65)

The mysterious Urim and Thummim usually are considered to have been two precious stones which were used to reveal the will of God. Since Scripture explicitly states that they were placed inside of the Breastplate, they obviously were different from the twelve stones mounted on the outside. The name, *Urim*, means, “light.” *Thummim*, means, “perfection.” It is speculated by most that these stones flashed in some manner to indicate a “yes” or a “no,” when some decision from Jehovah was being sought. Keil & Delitzsch accurately describe the situation, “We can draw no other conclusion than that the Urim and Thummim are to be regarded as a certain ediu, given by Jehovah to His people, through which, whenever the congregation required divine illumination to guide its actions, that illumination was guaranteed.”²⁹⁷

During this period of Israel’s history, they did not have the Scriptures – they were just beginning to be written. Therefore, some other means of knowing the Divine Will was given to them, i.e., the Urim and Thummim.

When Jehovah was displeased with His people, in later history, He refused to permit the Urim and Thummim to function as a means of guidance.²⁹⁸

The Robe of the Ephod (Exodus 28:31-35; 39:22-26)

The robe of the Ephod was a plain blue sleeveless garment worn directly beneath the Ephod and probably extending several inches below it. Apparently there was a row of pomegranates embroidered upon the hem (see 39:24), which were interspersed with tinkling golden bells which sounded as the priest walked.

The robe was the first garment donned by the priest and served as an undershirt.

The Mitre and Crown (Exodus 28:36-38; 39:30-31)

The Mitre was made of fine linen and was bound around the head like a turban. On the front of the Mitre, Aaron’s forehead, attached by a blue lace ribbon, was a golden plate, engraved with “Holiness to Jehovah.”

Ordinary Garments of the Priests other than the High Priest (Exodus 28:40-43; 39:27-29)

The ordinary garments of the priests consisted of the embroidered coat, a sash, breeches, and a linen hat. These vestments all were made of fine linen and the sash was attractively decorated in blue, purple, and scarlet. The brodered coat was similar to an ankle-length dressing robe with generous sleeves. An interesting tradition states that the old worn-out garments of the priests were unraveled and woven into wicks for the Lampstand.

²⁹⁷ Keil & Delitzsch, page 199

²⁹⁸ I Samuel 28:6

The Consecration of the Priests

Exodus 29

Jehovah vested the Israelite priesthood in the tribe of Levi, and specifically in Aaron and his descendants. Thus one could become a priest only by inheritance. The first priests were Aaron, and his sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.²⁹⁹

Jehovah ordained specific ceremonies and sacrifices for the consecration of priests. The entire process took place over a period of seven days. The following is a description of the events in the order of their occurrence:

- Aaron and his sons were brought to the doorway of the tent of meeting,³⁰⁰ where they were washed with water.
- Attendants were to dress Aaron in his priestly garb, and then anointing oil was to be poured on his head.
- Attendants next dressed Aaron's sons in their appropriate priestly garments.
- A basket was to be brought to the tent of meeting. The basket was to contain three things: unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil.
- A bull was brought to the doorway of the tent of the meeting, and Aaron, along with his sons, were to lay their hands on the head of the bull, signifying that the bull was to be a sin offering in their behalf. The bull was to be slaughtered and its blood caught in a basin. The priests were to dip their fingers in the blood and smear the horns of the altar with that blood, then they were to pour the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. The fat on the inner organs of the bull were to be burned upon the altar, but the flesh, the hide, and the rest of the carcass were to be taken outside of the camp and burned.
- An unblemished ram was brought before Aaron and his sons – they were to lay their hands on the ram's head. The ram then was slain and its blood sprinkled around the altar. The entire ram then was to be offered as a burnt offering upon the altar.
- A second unblemished ram was to be presented to the priests, who would lay their hands on its head. This ram then was slain and some of its blood was smeared on the lobe of each priest's right ear, then the same to be done on the thumbs of their right hands and the big toe on each priest's right foot. The rest of the blood then was sprinkled on the altar.
- Some of the blood on the altar mixed with the anointing oil was sprinkled on the priests and their garments.
- The fat from the internal organs of this ram, plus the fat on its right thigh, along with unleavened bread mixed with oil, plus a wafer from the table of showbread, were to be given to the priests who then would wave them before Jehovah. These items then were to be burned on the altar as an offering of fire to Jehovah.
- The breast of this second ram was waved before Jehovah, along with the thigh (from which the fat had been removed in the previous wave offering) of the second ram. The flesh of this ram was to be boiled in the Holy Place. The boiled flesh and the bread in the basket that had been placed at the door of the tent, was to be eaten by the priests.
- These items were considered holy and thus, no one but one of the priests was to eat them.
- For seven consecutive days, a bull was to be offered as a sin offering.
- From this time forward, the priests were to offer a one year-old lamb upon the Brazen Altar each morning and each night. Along with the lamb, there also was to be offered bread mixed with beaten oil, and, as a libation offering, a measure of wine.

The Atonement Money
Exodus 30

Jehovah ordered Moses to take a census of the men. Each male over twenty-years of age was required to pay an atonement tax of ½ shekel. This was a *contribution to Jehovah*, which was to be considered as a ransom, so that there would be no plague upon them.³⁰¹ As noted earlier, this collection of silver was used for the sockets, the hooks, and catches used in assembling the Tabernacle coverings.

This chapter also describes the Altar of Incense, the Laver, and the method of compounding the incense and anointing oil. These matters have been discussed in preceding sections.

The Craftsmen and a Reiteration of the Importance of the Sabbath
Chapter 31

The instructions concerning the Tabernacle and those matters pertinent to it, concluded with a naming of the craftsmen who were to be the artists and craftsmen involved in the construction of the Tabernacle.

Now Jehovah spoke to Mosees, saying,

*"See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah
"And I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship.*

"And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill,

that they may make all that I have commanded you:

the tent of meeting, and the ark of testimony, and the mercy seat upon it, and all the furniture of the tent, the table also and its utensils, and the pure gold lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering also with all its utensils, and the laver and its stand, the woven garments as well, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, with which to carry on their priesthood; the anointing oil also, and the fragrant incense for the holy place, they are to make them according to all that I have commanded you."³⁰²

As a final shot, the importance of observing the Sabbath is once again stated. The Israelites were commanded to execute any Sabbath-breaker. Interestingly, no method of worship is specified for the Sabbath. It was presented as a time of physical rest, rather than a day of worship.³⁰³

²⁹⁹ Exodus 6:23

³⁰⁰ Note: before the erection of the Tabernacle, Moses set up a tent outside of the camp, where he inquired of God. He called this tent, *The Tent Of Meeting*. (Exodus 33:7-11). It could be argued that this was the tent referenced in the instructions for the consecrations of the priests. However, since these instructions were given in conjunction with the instructions for the building of the Tabernacle, we naturally assume that the Tabernacle is the entity being spoken of in these instructions.

³⁰¹ Exodus 30: 12-15

³⁰² Exodus 31:1-11

³⁰³ Exodus 31:17

The Presentation of the Tablets

At the conclusion of the forty days, when all of the above instructions had been given, Jehovah then presented Moses with two tablets containing the Ten Commandments that Jehovah earlier had spoken to the entire nation at the base of the mountain (see pages 45-51, and page 53 above).

Israel's Rebellion and Sin Exodus 32

Near the end of Moses' forty days and forty nights upon the mountain, the people became impatient in their waiting for his return. They gathered around Aaron and, in essence, requested that he assume the leadership role. This was the fourth time that they had murmured about their situation, since leaving Egypt.³⁰⁴

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us a god³⁰⁵ who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."³⁰⁶

Aaron gave into their pleas and his weakness, combined with their impatience, resulted in a grievous sin that clearly violated the first two commandments and remotely, the third commandment, which were written on the tablets of stone that Moses was bringing down from the mountain:

- They had another god
- They had made a graven image of their god
- They had taken the name of Jehovah in vain (Aaron declared a feast to Jehovah [v4], which became a bacchanal)

Aaron told them to remove all of their gold earrings and give them to him. This they did and Aaron fashioned a golden calf. He must have formed some sort of a mold (probably from the soil, since that still is a common mold used in foundries) and melted the earrings and poured the melted gold into the mold, then, with some sort of a graving tool, put the finishing touches on the statue.

Sadly, there is not a single mention of Aaron's attempting to call the people away from their folly. Some have speculated that he hoped that by showing them the ridiculousness of their request that when they saw the golden calf and the absurdity of worshipping it that they would reject it. There are no grounds for such an explanation. On the other hand, it seems that Aaron all too willingly went along with the request.

Aaron then further humored the people by building an altar before the golden calf and then declared a day of dedication for the altar and calf – calling it a “feast to Jehovah.” The bull calf was a symbol used in ancient cultures to represent power, and, from time to time, was used to represent the power of a god – regardless of the identity of the God. Thus, it would seem that, in

³⁰⁴ Exodus 15:24ff; Exodus 16:2ff; Exodus 17:3ff

³⁰⁵ As a point of interest, both the original Hebrew and the Greek Septuagint use the plural, *gods*, rather than the singular, *god* (Hebrew: אֱלֹהִים [plural absolute]; Greek: θεούς [plural accusative])

³⁰⁶ Exodus 32:1

theory, they were worshipping Jehovah through the golden calf. If that were the case, this was an instance of perverted Jehovistic worship – choosing to worship Jehovah in a manner other than that which He had decreed.

Furthermore, even though, in theory, the worship might have been directed toward Jehovah, such physical, visual, symbols tend to become the object of adoration and worship, rather than the unseen God whom they supposedly represent (see page 47). In this episode, such is what happened, because they *worshipped it*.³⁰⁷

Jehovah knew what was happening at the bottom of the mountain and He described the scene to Moses. He then put the proposition to Moses,

*"Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation."*³⁰⁸

This was a test for Moses. He was given the opportunity to be the father of a great nation which would be God's chosen people – the Mosesites, rather than the Israelites. Moses passed the test. He pled with Jehovah.

Then Moses entreated Jehovah his God, and said, "O Jehovah, why doth Thine anger burn against Thy people whom Thou hast brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?"¹² "Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Thy burning anger and change Thy mind about doing harm to Thy people."¹³ "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants to whom Thou didst swear by Thyself, and didst say to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'"³⁰⁹

Although the English text states that Jehovah "changed His mind," the Hebrew term is *naham*,³¹⁰ which conveys the idea of sorrow, compassion, grief. It seems that a better rendering is that *Jehovah grieved about the harm that He said that he would do to His people*.

Psalm 106:45, speaking of this episode, states, *And He remembered His covenant for their sake, And grieved*³¹¹ *according to the greatness of His lovingkindness*.

Of course, Jehovah knew the end from the beginning,³¹² but that did not keep Him from sorrowing over the situation that caused His anger. As stated above, His statement to Moses was a test for Moses which Moses passed with flying colors. For that matter, Jehovah did not destroy the people, but He did smite them because of this sin.³¹³

³⁰⁷ Exodus 32:8

³⁰⁸ Exodus 32:10

³⁰⁹ Exodus 32:11-15

³¹⁰ נחם

³¹¹ Young's Literal Translation of Psalm 106:45 states, *and is comforted according to the abundance of His kindness*.

³¹² Isaiah 46:10

³¹³ Exodus 32:35

Jehovah handed Moses the tablets of stone, containing the Ten Commandments, written by the finger of God and Moses began to descend the mountain.³¹⁴ Along the path of descent, he met Joshua who had been waiting at a lower level on the mountain. At this level, the sound of the people could be heard and Joshua thought that it was the sound of a battle. Moses, who already had been alerted by Jehovah concerning what was going on at the bottom of the mountain, responded,

But he said, "It is not the sound of the cry of triumph, Nor is it the sound of the cry of defeat; But the sound of singing I hear."³¹⁵

When Moses drew near the camp and with his own eyes saw the calf and the dancing, he became so angry that he lost control of himself – he threw down the tablets that Jehovah had given him, shattering these sacred items. He burned the calf, ground the remains into powder, scattered the powder over the surface of their drinking water and made the people drink it.

We can hear the fear in Aaron's voice when Moses confronted him,

Then Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you, that you have brought such great sin upon them?"²² And Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil."²³ "For they said to me, 'Make a god for us who will go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'²⁴ "And I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."³¹⁶

Thus, Aaron compounded his sin by violating the ninth commandment, i.e., bearing false witness.

Seeing that the people were out of control, rather than calling them to settle down, Moses, standing at the gate of the camp, cried out, *"Whoever is for Jehovah, come to me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him.*³¹⁷

Moses then gave firm instructions,

And he said to them, "Thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel, 'Every man of you put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.'"³¹⁸

Thus, Moses, in obedience to Jehovah, ordered the Levites to go through the camp and slaughter as many men as they could slaughter, regardless of what human relationships might exist between those wielding the sword and their victims. The Levites did as commanded and about 3000 were slain that day.

Jehovah viewed the worship of the golden calf as a capital crime and the Levites were called upon to be indiscriminate executioners. What the Levites did was an act of obedient faith

³¹⁴ Exodus 32:

³¹⁵ Exodus 32:18

³¹⁶ Exodus 32:21-24

³¹⁷ Exodus 21:26

³¹⁸ Exodus 32:27

without either the fear of man or regard of the person. Rather than destroy the entire population of 600,000 men, Jehovah exacted a lesser number of 3000 men. Over and over again, Jehovah made the point to the Israelites, that He expects explicit obedience and those who choose to disregard His commands and thus His Divine Personhood, do so at their peril.

At the close of the day, Moses gave this command to the Levites,

Then Moses said, "Dedicate yourselves today to Jehovah-- for every man has been against his son and against his brother-- in order that He may bestow a blessing upon you today."³¹⁹

The Hebrew, in the phrase, *Dedicate yourselves today to Jehovah*, literally states, *fill your hand today for Jehovah*.³²⁰

This verse, along with the preceding, expresses the thought, "Provide for yourselves a gift for Jehovah, today and in the same manner that you demonstrated in your obedience, by not showing preference to son or brother, consecrate yourself to Him. Do this so that He may bestow a blessing upon you today."

The next day, Moses declared to the people that they had committed a great sin and that he was returning to meet Jehovah on the mountain in the hopes that he could make atonement for their sin.

In Moses' effort at atonement, he pled with Jehovah to forgive the people's sins and if Jehovah would not, then Moses' asked that his own name be removed from Jehovah's book of life. He was offering himself as a substitute sacrifice for the Israelites.

Jehovah rejected the offer and said that he would blot out the name of those who had sinned against Him. Then he told Moses to proceed to lead the people, as directed by the angel and that there would come a day in which Jehovah would punish the people for their building the golden calf.

Jehovah renewed Moses' commission to lead the people, and He promised to send His angel before them and that He would fulfill His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – He would drive out the inhabitants of Canaan and it would become the very productive home of the Israelites.³²¹

Even though He had spared the people, Jehovah declared that their flagrant sin caused a separation between them and Jehovah. He stated that He would not dwell in their midst, but that His angel would lead them.

The people were moved to great mourning when this was announced. Jehovah instructed them to express their mourning through the removal of all jewelry and other ornaments.

³¹⁹ Exodus 32:29

³²⁰ The Greek of the Septuagint has the same wording as the Hebrew

³²¹ Exodus 32:30 – 31:3

*For Jehovah had said to Moses, "Say to the sons of Israel, 'You are an obstinate people; should I go up in your midst for one moment, I would destroy you. Now therefore, put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what I will do with you.'"*³²²

From that time onward, during their journey to Canaan, they did not wear ornamental jewelry.

Prior to the erection of the Tabernacle, Moses set up a tent outside of the camp, where he inquired of God. He called this tent, *The Tent Of Meeting*. When Moses went to this tent to inquire of Jehovah, every Israelite would stand outside of his personal family tent and gaze after Moses, as he entered the Tent of Meeting. When Moses entered the tent, a cloud would stand outside of the tent and Jehovah would speak to Moses, *face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend*. Joshua was posted at the tent and he remained there, when Moses was absent.³²³

Moses' spiritual longing led him to petition Jehovah for a vision of Himself. Moses asked that he might be privileged to see Jehovah's glory. Jehovah stated that no human could see Him and live. Because of his special relationship with Moses, Jehovah said that he would grant Moses the privilege of receiving a manifestation of Himself. This would happen the next time that Moses was called to ascend the mountain. At that time, Moses would be instructed to stand on a particular rock, then Jehovah would put Moses in the cleft of the rock, cover the rock with His Hand, and Moses would be privileged to see *My back parts*, but this would be a reflected glory.³²⁴

The Tablets Restored

As noted earlier, in his anger at the people because of their worshipping of the golden calf, Moses had thrown down the two tablets of stone that Jehovah had given him. When he did so, these tablets, containing the Ten Commandments had been shattered.

Before anything further was to take place, Jehovah intended to replace the shattered tablets. This time, however, Moses was not presented with tablets formed by Jehovah. Moses was instructed to cut from a stone two tablets of stone, identical to the ones that Jehovah had given him earlier. Jehovah told Moses that He, Jehovah, would write on these tablets what He had written on the original ones. The next day, He called Moses to ascend the mountain and that no one was to accompany him (Joshua had accompanied Moses the last time that he had ascended the mountain). Not only that, not even the livestock were to be allowed to graze in front of the mountain. Jehovah's revealing His glory to Moses was to be a very sacred event – it was to be an experience for Moses' and for no other created being.³²⁵

Moses followed these instructions and, with the stone tablets in his arms, he ascended the mountain. The promised experience of Jehovah's manifestation took place, which produced in Moses a spirit of deep reverence, but still he pled with Jehovah for his Presence to be in the midst of the people and not separated from them. Jehovah responded by a repetition of promises made earlier that He would give to Israel the promised land, but that in response they would have to destroy all of the manifestations of idol worship that existed in Canaan. Moreover, they were

³²² Exodus 33:5

³²³ Exodus 33:7-11

³²⁴ Exodus 33:18-23

³²⁵ Exodus 34:3

not to make any covenant with the Canaanites, because if they did, then idolatry would begin to seep into the religious life of Israel.³²⁶

Jehovah then reiterated some of the commandments concerning the need to redeem the first-born, annual feasts, the Sabbath, and other regulations concerning offerings. Moses was instructed to write these things – which he later did.

For the second time, Moses was on the mountain with Jehovah for forty days and forty nights, neither eating nor drinking. At the conclusion, Jehovah wrote the Ten Commandments on the tablets that Moses had brought with him.

EXCURSUS

Exodus 34:28 states, *So he was there with Jehovah forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.*

The syntax pattern would lead the casual reader to understand that Moses wrote the words of the Covenant on the tablets of stone. If this were true, then this would contradict what Jehovah said that He would do, when Moses presented Him with the tablets.

Now Jehovah said to Moses, "Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered."³²⁷

Furthermore, as recorded in Deuteronomy 10:2, 4, Moses stated that Jehovah is the one who wrote the Ten Commandments on the tablets that Moses had brought to the mountain.

With these facts before us, we must understand Exodus 34:28 in the following manner: *So he was there with Jehovah forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And He (Jehovah) wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.*

Thus, both on the original tablets and the second set of tablets, Jehovah was the transcriber.

When Moses descended from the mountain with the tablets in his arms, the skin on his face shown with great brilliance – the result of his speaking with Jehovah and being granted the privilege of seeing a reflection of Jehovah's glory. From that time onward, Moses put a veil over his face, each time that he came from the tent of the meeting, where he spoke to Jehovah – because from that time onward, each time he conversed with Jehovah, the result was a shining face.

Immediately Moses called the people together and reiterated for them what Jehovah had reemphasized concerning the covenant.

³²⁶ Exodus 34:11-17

³²⁷ Exodus 34:1

The Construction of the Tabernacle and the Priestly Garments Exodus 35-39

The content of these chapters has been considered in the preceding sections.³²⁸

Jehovah specified the particular items that should be given to use as materials in the Tabernacle and the people gave so freely that they eventually had to be restrained.

*And they received from Moses all the contributions which the sons of Israel had brought to perform the work in the construction of the sanctuary. And they still continued bringing to him freewill offerings every morning. And all the skillful men who were performing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work which he was performing, and they said to Moses, "The people are bringing much more than enough for the construction work which Jehovah commanded us to perform." So Moses issued a command, and a proclamation was circulated throughout the camp, saying, "Let neither man nor woman any longer perform work for the contributions of the sanctuary." Thus the people were restrained from bringing any more.*³²⁹

Not only did the two specified artist/craftsmen, Bezalel and Oholiab, do the work, but every skillful person in whom Jehovah had put skill put their talents and gifts to the task, including women who spun the fabrics.³³⁰

After all of the work had been completed, Moses examined everything and determined that all had been done exactly as Jehovah had directed.

The Tabernacle is Erected Exodus 40

The Tabernacle was erected on the first day of Abib (Nisan), which would have been two weeks shy of a year from the night of the Exodus from Egypt.³³¹ The structure had required about six months to complete. After all of the furnishings had been put in place, everything in the Tabernacle complex was anointed with the anointing oil, including Aaron and his sons, thus consecrating all components to the service of Jehovah.

When this had been done, the cloud covered the Tabernacle and the glory of Jehovah filled the Tabernacle. The cloud and the glory of Jehovah were so intense that Moses could not enter the Tabernacle.

From this time onward, throughout their journeys, the cloud was over the Tabernacle during the day and a fire was over it at night. When Jehovah wanted the Israelites to move to another location, the cloud lifted and led them to their next destination.³³²

³²⁸ See pages 57-66 of these notes

³²⁹ Exodus 36:3-6

³³⁰ Exodus 35:25-35

³³¹ Exodus 40:1-2, 17ff

³³² Exodus 40:34-38

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

The name of the portion of the Pentateuch that we know as *Leviticus*, was first given that name in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. In the Septuagint, this section of Scripture is designated, *LEUITIKON*, meaning, “that which pertains to the Levites.” When Jerome produced the Latin version of the Bible, the Vulgate, he followed the Septuagint and called this section of Scripture, *Liber Leviticus*, i.e., “Book of Leviticus.” Thus, it is directly from the Vulgate that we have this title in our English Bibles. Leviticus has very little to say about the Levites, as “Levites.” However, it does have a huge amount of information concerning instruction for priests – all of whom of necessity, were Levites. Even so, the book was not written just for priests, because a considerable amount of the book contains instructions for the laity.

As was their custom, the Hebrews originally titled this section of Scripture by its opening words, *And He called* (1:1).³³³ The term, *and*, or, *then*, is a conjunction indicating that what follows is a continuation of the narrative of Exodus. Thus, there is no break in the flow of thought between the second and third book of the Pentateuch (The Torah – the Law). In the Jewish Talmud, the book is called, *The Law of the Priests*, and *The Law of the Offerings*.

The Book of Leviticus does not provide information as to when the impartation of the content of the book laws took place. The only dated material is a brief section of chapters eight, nine, and ten, plus some incidental episodes (e.g. 24:10-13). The book is topical, rather than chronological. Most consider the book represents one month of historical time, probably the month following the erection of the tabernacle, while the Israelites were still camped at the base of Mount Sinai, following the erection of the Tabernacle.

Leviticus is a very concise and very detailed record of the requirements that Jehovah gave to the people who were to worship Him. The Tabernacle had been erected and so it was necessary for the people to be instructed in the correct manner in which to approach Jehovah.

Jehovah not only imparted the principles of sacrifice and tabernacle ritual, but also correct dietary principles, treatment of diseases, observance of feasts, set times, and a number of other matters whereby God’s people must live if they were to do so in a God-glorifying manner.

The book places very special stress on personal and ceremonial holiness.

- The word, *holy*, and its derivatives, occurs 131 times in the book.
- The word, *clean*, and its derivatives, occurs 186 times.

The Divine origin of the book is made evident by the frequent expression, *Jehovah spoke unto Moses*. Twenty of the twenty-seven chapters begin with that with that statement or a variation of it.

³³³ וַיִּקְרָא (pronounced, *wayyiqra*)

General Outline of the Book of Leviticus

- I. Laws concerning the public worship of the Israelites (Chapters 1-10)
 - A. Laws of sacrifices (Chapters 1-7)
 - B. The Consecration of the priests (Chapters 8-10)
 - II. Laws concerning ritual uncleanness and purification (Chapters 11-15)
 - III. The annual atonement (Chapter 16)
 - IV. Laws concerning maintaining fellowship with Jehovah (Chapters 17-26)
 - A. Food, morals, and marriage (17-20)
 - B. Holiness of priests and offerings (21-22)
 - C. Feasts and daily worship rituals (23-24)
 - D. The Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee (25-26)
- Conclusion: The laws of vows (Chapter 27)

In Leviticus several types of offerings are described. The common term for all offerings was, *corban*, meaning, *gift*, or, *presentation*. The offerings or sacrifices were divided into two classes: bloody and unbloody.

- Bloody sacrifices consisted of clean, tame animals (the herd, the flock), and birds (turtle doves and pigeons)
- Unbloody sacrifices consisted of meal, cakes, toasted grain, ears of corn, and wine. Oil and incense frequently were added to these sacrifices, but never leaven or honey

The five categories of offerings (Chapters 1-7)³³⁴

- Burnt offerings (Chapter 1): The burnt sacrifice was considered to be an ascending offering, in that it was consumed, entirely, by fire. It ascended as an incense or a perfume to Jehovah.

The burnt offering could be a young bull from the herd, an unblemished male sheep or goat, or a bird (a turtle dove or a pigeon).

- If the offering were a bull, the person offering the sacrifice began the process by putting his hands on the head of the animal, indicating that he is transferring his sin to the animal, which is to be his atonement. This is to be done at the doorway of the Tabernacle complex, where he then will kill the bull. The priests will take the blood of the bull and sprinkle it on the brazen altar. The person bringing the sacrifice must skin the bull and butcher it into manageable pieces. He shall wash the entrails and the legs with water. The priest will arrange wood on the altar and place the pieces of the butchered bull on the altar and burn it. It will be as a soothing aroma to Jehovah.
- If the offering were an unblemished male sheep or a goat, the one bringing the sacrifice is to take it into the complex, to the north side of the altar, and kill it there. All of the other details are the same as that with the bull (described above).

³³⁴ For a summary chart of the sacrifices, see ADDENDUM F

- If the offering were a turtle dove or a pigeon, the priest shall take the bird from the petitioner's hands and take it to the altar where he will wring its neck, removing the bird's head. Its blood will be squeezed out upon the altar. The birds crop and feathers shall be removed, and these shall be cast on the ash heap between the altar and the door of the Tabernacle (the east side of the altar). The wings then are to be torn (some understand this to be an incision at the base of the wings), but not removed from the body. The bird then was burned on the altar.
- The meal offering (2:1-16; 6:14-18)³³⁵: Because the meal offering was bloodless, it normally was observed as an element in other offerings. The term used for this category of offerings, *korban minchah*,³³⁶ literally means, "offering of a gift."

These offerings consisted of fine wheat flour (2:1-3) or cakes of such flour (2:4-6), and corn (2:14-16). To all of them were added oil (2:1, 4-7, 15) and salt (2:13). Incense also was added to those which consisted of flour and grains (2:1, 15). No leaven or honey should be allowed in the recipe.³³⁷ Only a handful of a meal offering was burnt upon the altar. The remainder was handed over to the priest for priestly consumption – it was classed as, "a most holy thing."

- The first kind of a meal offering was fine unleavened flour.
- The second kind was a pastry made of fine unleavened flour and oil, prepared in different forms (oven-baked pastry, pancakes cooked in a pan, cakes boiled in oil)
- The third kind was the meal offering of first-fruits, i.e. of the first ripening corn. The ears of corn were to be parched or roasted by fire, prior to the supplicant's bringing them for an offering.
- The peace offering – also known as the thank offering (3:1-17; 7:11-34; 17:5): The Hebrew term which we render as *peace*, carries the idea of reconciliation or a peaceful relationship. Peace offerings were associated with occasions such as, harvest thanksgiving (7:11- 12), fulfilling a vow (7:16), or simply seeking fellowship with God (7:16). In this offering, as well as in the trespass offering (noted below), all of the fat is to be burned, as well as what we would call the "rump."³³⁸ In most respects, the procedure was identical to the procedure followed in the burnt offering. One difference is that the offering may be either an unblemished male or an unblemished female animal. The peace offering, in some instances, was a wave or heave offering. When this was done, a portion of the offering was lifted up and waved in the air, before Jehovah. The heave shoulder should always be the right shoulder of the animal, and this then was to be given to the priest for his food.
- The sin and trespass offering (4:1-5:13): The difference between the sin offering and the trespass offering is a bit difficult to distinguish. The amount of evidence contained in the

³³⁵ The King James Version uses the term, "meat offering," for this group. Because all of these offerings consist of flour or grain, the term, "meal offering," is more appropriate.

³³⁶ קָרְבַּן מִנְחָה

³³⁷ The loaves of the first-fruits in the Feast of Weeks were leavened, but they were assigned to the priests and not burned upon the altar (Leviticus 7:13).

³³⁸ This portion of the broad-tailed sheep was considered to be a delicacy.

early chapters of Leviticus discourage a too rigorous distinction between sin and trespass, but there is a distinction to be made:

- “Sin,” in this category of sacrifices refers to matters that are the result of the inherent fallen nature of humanity.
- “Trespass,” refers to sacrifices required for disobedience to a known command from Jehovah (Leviticus 4:27).

Three classifications of individuals are described in relation to the sin offering. The identification of these individuals governed the type of animal sacrificed, the sprinkling of the blood, and what was done with the flesh of the animal. The classifications are:

- The anointed priest (4:2-12)
- The whole congregation of Israel (4:13-21)
- The ruler (4:22-26)
- The common individual (4:27-5:13)

Consideration of one’s ability to provide an offering was extended to members of the last group. A less expensive sacrifice could be brought by those who were less affluent. This especially was true of lighter offenses.

No provision was made for willful sin. Only sins committed unintentionally, could be expiated by a sin-offering. Any sins committed in a high-handed or willful manner were not to be forgiven, but such individuals were to be “cut off” (Numbers 15:27-31).³³⁹ This is similar to the statement made in Hebrews 10:26-27.

- When the “anointed” priest sins, as the nation’s official representative before Jehovah, he has brought the guilt of sin upon the nation. He was to sacrifice unblemished ox (the largest of any animal that could be offered in a sacrifice) as his sacrifice. The procedure was the same as the other offerings (Chapter 1), with these differences: (1) he was to take portion of the blood and carry it to a place before the veil that stood before the Holy of Holies; (2) he was to dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before this veil; (3) after that, he was to put some of the blood on the altar of incense; (4) he then poured the great mass of the blood at the bottom of the Altar of Burnt Offering (the Brazen Altar).
- The sin of the entire congregation, was a sin that the nation had committed, which was a real sin, although at the time the congregation was not aware of the fact that it was a sin – it was recognized as such only in retrospect. The elders of the congregation were to offer a young ox, following the same procedure prescribed for the priest in his offering.
- The sin of a ruler (i.e. the head of a tribe or the head of a tribal division) consisted of a ruler’s unconscious sinning. When someone brought to his attention the fact that he had transgressed a commandment of God, the ruler was to bring an unblemished male goat, lay his hand upon it, and slay it before the Altar of Burnt Offering. The priest then put some of the blood of the sacrifice upon the horns of the altar and poured the rest of the blood at the foot of the altar. He then burned the whole of the fat as in the case of the Peace Offering.

³³⁹ Most understand this expression in verse 31 to refer to capital punishment

- The sin of a common Israelite was to be expiated by offering a shaggy female goat or a female sheep. The ceremony was the same as that which took place in the offering for the sin of a ruler. Allowance was made for a person in needy circumstances. A pair of doves could be offered, or in a case of extreme poverty, a tenth of an ephah of fine flour could be offered.

Specified sins of individuals were:

- (1) knowing of a criminal act for which there had been a public appeal by the court for witnesses, and failing to come forth as a witness.
- (2) Unknowingly touching something that was unclean (the carcass of an unclean animal for example) and, because he was unaware of what he had done at the time, he had not sought the prescribed rites of purification. When he did become aware of this he was to bring forth the appropriate sacrifice.
- (3) Idly swearing something in thoughtless conversation, and later realizing that he had sinned, he must bring the appointed sacrifice.

Three kinds of offenses are described as requiring trespass offerings.

- *"If a person acts unfaithfully and sins unintentionally against Jehovah's holy things, then he shall bring his guilt offering to Jehovah: a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation in silver by shekels, in terms of the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering."³⁴⁰*

There are a variety of ways in which one could act unfaithfully and sin against Jehovah's holy things. For example, idolatry, and thus withholding from Jehovah the honor due only to Him.³⁴¹ Also, taking something that rightfully belonged to Jehovah, such as withholding the tithe, or the sacrifices and gifts that Jehovah had commanded for the maintenance of the priests.³⁴² In Joshua 7:1 and 22:20 fraud concerning that which was put under the ban, is classed as a trespass.

The sacrifice required for such a trespass is not only the sacrifice of a ram, but also financial restitution – not only the value of the holy thing violated, but also a 20% penalty.

"And he shall make restitution for that which he has sinned against the holy thing, and shall add to it a fifth part of it, and give it to the priest. The priest shall then make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and it shall be forgiven him."³⁴³

- The second category is rather vague, but because the sacrifice required is different, it obviously refers to another category than the first.

"Now if a person sins and does any of the things which Jehovah has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware, still he is guilty, and shall bear his punishment. "He is then to bring to the priest a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his error in which he sinned unintentionally and did not know it, and it shall be forgiven him."³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ Leviticus 5:15

³⁴¹ Leviticus 26:40; Deuteronomy 32:51; Joshua 22:16

³⁴² Leviticus 21:22

³⁴³ Leviticus 5:16

³⁴⁴ Leviticus 5:17-18

Because this category is linked to the previous one, without any intervening material, leads us to understand that this category refers to an invasion of Jehovah's rights with regard to Israel, i.e., someone legislating something, or presenting something, religiously, other than that which Jehovah has commanded – a role that belongs only to Jehovah.

- The third category is one in which unfaithfulness to Jehovah is demonstrated by violating the rights of a neighbor.

"When a person sins and acts unfaithfully against Jehovah, and deceives his companion in regard to a deposit or a security entrusted to him, or through robbery, or if he has extorted from his companion, or has found what was lost and lied about it and sworn falsely, so that he sins in regard to any one of the things a man may do,"³⁴⁵

It is significant to note that such sins against one's neighbor is a sin against Jehovah.

When such a trespass has been committed, then what has been taken shall be restored, or the value of that object, plus a 20% fine is to be paid to the one injured by the sin.³⁴⁶

The sinner then must bring an unblemished ram worth as much as was illicitly taken, and the ram shall be sacrificed as an atonement. This results in forgiveness for the actions that have incurred the guilt.³⁴⁷

Special instructions given to the priests, concerning the conduct of sacrifices.
Chapters Six and Seven

The Law of the Burnt Offering is given in 6:8-13.

Wood is to be replenished on the altar, regularly, so that the fire never goes out.

A burnt offering is to be left on the altar overnight

A priest is to don his priestly attire and remove the ashes that have accumulated overnight. He is to place these ashes beside the altar, then remove his priestly garb and don common clothing. After changing clothes, he is to take the ashes outside the camp to a clean place and deposit them there.

The Law of the Grain Offering is given in 6:14-18.

The regulations in verses 14 and 15 are merely a repetition of what had been given earlier in 2:2-3. In verses 16-18 new instructions are given concerning what was to be done with anything that was not burned upon the altar. The left-overs were to be food for the priests. It could be baked, but not with leaven and it had to be eaten in the court of the Tabernacle. Emphasis was given to the fact that these left-overs were holy and could only be eaten by a priest.

Any layman who touched these items became "consecrated." The idea being that from that time forth, even though such a person did not have the privilege and responsibility of serving in the Tabernacle, as a priest, from that time forth he had to guard against the defilement in the same manner as a sanctified priest³⁴⁸ – which would cause some significant interference in his daily family life.

³⁴⁵ Leviticus 6:2-3

³⁴⁶ Leviticus 6:4-5

³⁴⁷ Leviticus 6:6

³⁴⁸ Leviticus 21:1-8

The Law of the Meal Offering of the priests 6:19-23

Here is inserted a new law concerning a meal offering that the priest offers for himself. On the seventh day after he had been anointed as a priest,³⁴⁹ the newly anointed priest was to begin the daily ritual of offering each morning and each evening a personal meal offering. The offering was to consist of a tenth of an ephah of fine flour, that had been roasted in a pan with oil. One half was to be presented in the morning and one half in the evening. This was to be completely burned upon the altar – none was to be eaten. This ritual was to be done as long as the priest occupied the office.

The Law of the Sin Offering gives more precise instructions concerning the procedures to be followed in conducting the sin offering for laity (6:24-30)

The killing of the sacrifice was to be carried out according to the instructions given earlier (4:24). The offering was to be eaten by the priests in the courtyard of the Tabernacle. The same rule concerning any layman's touching the sacrifice are the same as that of the Meal Offering. If any of the sprinkled blood of the offering landed on anyone's clothes, the garment must be washed in a holy place, so that the holy blood will not be carried out of the Tabernacle. If the vessel used to boil the sacrifice so that the priests could eat it were an earthen vessel, it was to be broken; if it were a bronze vessel, it was to be scoured and thoroughly rinsed.

Although the flesh of the sin offering for laity was to be eaten by the priest, none of the flesh of the sin offering of the high priest nor that offered as a sin offering for the congregation (4:1-21) was to be eaten; all of these offerings should be completely burned outside the camp.

The Law of the Trespass Offering (7:1-10)

Much of the material in this section is similar to that given concerning the Burnt Offering and the Meal Offering. Added to this information, is the instruction that the skin of the animal sacrificed in the Burnt Offering is to be given to the officiating priest, as payment for his services. The same probably was true for the sin-offering and the trespass-offering of the laity, but the skin of the animal offered in a Peace Offering belonged to the owner of the animal. Instructions also are given concerning the portions of the offerings that were to be for meal for the priests.

The Law of Peace Offerings (7:11-36)

Three types of Peace Offerings are designated: (1) praise to God for blessings received; (2) vow offerings; (3) free-will offerings. If a blood offering were presented, it was to be accompanied with unleavened cakes, mixed with oil, or spread with oil.

Along with these offerings, the offerer was to present the officiating priest cakes of leavened bread (round leavened bread-cakes). A leavened cake for each of the other elements in the sacrifice should be given to the priest.

Flesh of a praise offering must be eaten on the day that it is offered.

Flesh of a free-will offering must be eaten either on the day of its offering or the next day. Any left after that was to be burned.

³⁴⁹ *On the day of his anointing* (vs. 20) is understood to mean the day that his anointing has been completed – the anointing occupied seven days.

General Restrictions concerning what is forbidden as food.

As a part of these instructions, comment is made on what should not be eaten, by either priest or common Israelite.

- nothing should be eaten that has touched anything declared unclean;
- no one who has touched something unclean should eat of the sacred offerings;
- no fat from an ox, a sheep, or a goat should be eaten;
- no animal that dies naturally or one torn by a beast shall be eaten;
- no blood should be eaten.

General instructions concerning what portion of the offering belongs to the priests.

The breast of a wave offering and the thigh of the peace offerings belong to the priests.

The First Consecration of Priests

Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight describes the consecration of the priests, in which Moses carried out the instructions given in Exodus 29

The Consecration of the People

Chapter Nine

Chapter Nine describes the consecration of the people. This is the first time after their ordination that the Aaronic priesthood functioned in their new role. Sacrificial animals and grain offerings, according to instructions given by Moses, were offered before Jehovah. The entire congregation gathered to witness these offerings. Moses said that these things were to be done *so that the glory of Jehovah may appear to you.*³⁵⁰

Aaron and his sons made offerings in behalf of themselves, then proceeded to offer the sacrifices in behalf of the people. Aaron then lifted up his hands and blessed the people.

Following this ceremony, Moses, for the first time, introduced Aaron to the tent – to the first room in the tent, the Holy Place, since the High Priest was forbidden from entering the Holy of Holies except for the his service rendered on the Day of Atonement. When they came out of the Tabernacle, they blessed the people and the glory of Jehovah appeared to all of the people. Fire then came from Jehovah, consuming the offerings that were upon the altar. All of this was done in the sight of the people.

A Tragic Failure of the Priests

Chapter Ten

Chapter Ten is a tragic chapter. It records a tragic failure on the part of Aaron and his priestly sons.

In their excitement over the manifestation of the glory of Jehovah and the Divine fire that devoured the offerings, Nadab and Abihu grabbed their respective fire pans (censers) and offered *strange fire before Jehovah, which He had not commanded them.*

Immediately, fire came from the presence of Jehovah and killed them.

³⁵⁰ Leviticus 9:4, 6

Moses quickly said to their father, Aaron, *"It is what Jehovah spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.'" So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.*³⁵¹

We must ask, what is meant by the expression, *strange fire*? Two possibilities present themselves, and it is not beyond reason to consider the possibility that both of these were involved in the infraction.

- First, Jehovah had given clear instructions as to the recipe that was to be used in making the oils and incense that were to be used as a part of Tabernacle worship.
- Second, the offering of incense was to take place at the time of the morning and evening sacrifice.

As Keil and Delitzsch state, "it is perfectly obvious from vers. 12 sqq. And 16 sqq. that it occurred in the interval between the sacrificial transaction in chapter nine and the sacrificial meal which followed it, and therefore on the day of their inauguration"³⁵² i.e. mid-day, rather than at the morning and evening prescribed times.

The fact that Exodus 30:9 describes incense prepared by a formula other than that prescribed by Jehovah as, "strange incense," adds strength to the view that the strange fire consisted of incense not composed according to Jehovah's strict recipe.

Regardless of clear definition of the offense, the point of this episode is clear - Jehovah expected exact obedience and anything other than exact obedience was not recognizing Him as God. Moses comment on the episode emphasized this truth.

*Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what Jehovah spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.'" So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.*³⁵³

Moses instructed Aaron's cousins, Mishael and Elzaphan, to take up the bodies of Nadab and Abihu and remove them to a place outside of the camp. Moses told Aaron and his two remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar that they were forbidden from mourning the deaths of these two men. The people of Israel could mourn, but not the family, because they were priests of Jehovah.³⁵⁴

Aaron and his two surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, were told that for the time being, they could not even leave the environs of the Tabernacle. They had to complete the ceremony that had been interrupted by the fire from heaven.³⁵⁵

Jehovah then spoke directly to Aaron, rather than speaking to him through Moses. Jehovah's message to Aaron concerned the gravity of the priestly role.

³⁵¹ Leviticus 10:3

³⁵² Keil & Delitzsch, page 351

³⁵³ Leviticus 10:3

³⁵⁴ Leviticus 10:4-6

³⁵⁵ Leviticus 10:7, 12-15

"Do not drink wine or strong drink,³⁵⁶ neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you may not die-- it is a perpetual statute throughout your generations-- and so as to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean, and so as to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which Jehovah has spoken to them through Moses."³⁵⁷

Note that the consumption of wine was not banned for routine consumption, but it was considered to be one of God's blessings.³⁵⁸ However, one way that the priests were to illustrate that there was a difference between the holy and the common, was their foregoing the consumption of this common beverage before entering the Tabernacle to perform priestly duties.

The rash act of Nadab and Abihu is the background of the prohibition against the consumption of wine and strong drink before performing their duties in the Tabernacle. Clear and calm reflection was required for the priests to discern accurately the correct decision when there was a question related to spiritual matters. Although moderate consumption of wine might not cause intoxication, the possibility of any impairment of judgement must be avoided.

Spiritually unclean things were rather obvious, since Jehovah had given such a detailed list. However, that which is common and appropriate for daily use, may not be appropriate for the Tabernacle. Priests needed to be clear headed when required to consider these matters. Furthermore, by their example, as well as their oral instruction, they would teach the statutes that Jehovah had given to Moses.

The portion of the sin offering yet to be completed was the priests' eating of the thigh and breast of the sin offering as well as the meal and oil remaining from the offered sacrifice. The goat, which had represented the sins of the people, was the designated sin offering and the thigh and breast were to be eaten by the priests.³⁵⁹

Moses instructed Aaron and his surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, to complete the offering by devouring these items – which had to be consumed in the courtyard of the Tabernacle.³⁶⁰ This act was an important part of removing the sin for which the offering had been made. As the priests consumed this portion of the offering, they were consuming the sins of the people and when they did this, by their priestly office they were removing completely the sins of the people.

³⁵⁶ The distinction between wine (יַיִן - *yayin*) and strong drink (שֵׁכָר - *shekhar*) is presented consistently in the Old Testament. The juice from the vineyard, when fermenting by natural process, will not achieve an alcoholic content beyond 13% - some as low as 8%. Strong drink is either wine fortified by the addition of other elements, or a fermented beverage made from something other than grape juice. For an interesting article, see, "Drink, Strong," *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Volume II, James Orr, General Editor (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing) 1939, page 879

³⁵⁷ Leviticus 10:9-11

³⁵⁸ Deuteronomy 7:13; 11:14; etc

³⁵⁹ Leviticus 4:23, 27-31; 7:30-34; Numbers 18:11; these instructions could be seen as in conflict with the law concerning a sin offering for a priest and the sin offering for the congregation in 4:1-21. The difference is in the item offered (a bull versus a goat) and the purpose. 4:1-21 speak of sin offerings for known and confessed sins. Chapter 10 speaks of a liturgical sin offering for unspecified sins.

³⁶⁰ Leviticus 6:24-30

To Moses' consternation, these items could not be found – they had been burned up, rather than saved for the priests' consumption. In anger, Moses exploded,

*"Why did you not eat the sin offering at the holy place? For it is most holy, and He gave it to you to bear away the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before Jehovah. Behold, since its blood had not been brought inside, into the sanctuary, you should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary, just as I commanded."*³⁶¹

In essence, Moses was saying, "do you still not get the point – Jehovah expects explicit obedience!"

Aaron, excused his sons and himself, by saying,

*But Aaron spoke to Moses, "Behold, this very day they presented their sin offering and their burnt offering before the Jehovah. When things like these happened to me, if I had eaten a sin offering today, would it have been good in the sight of Jehovah?"*³⁶²

The judgment upon Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, seemed to have caused Aaron to question whether or not he and his remaining sons had the holiness appropriate required for the eating of the general sin offering. Even after they had offered their sin offering, they felt unworthy to proceed.

Moses accepted this as a worthy answer.³⁶³

Clean and Unclean Animals

Chapter 11

Even in the time of Noah, God's people had distinguished between clean and unclean animals.³⁶⁴ Yet, it was not until the Mosaic Law that this distinction became a part of the redemptive law. Israelites could eat those that were "clean," but were forbidden from eating those that were "unclean." They were forbidden even to touch the carcass of an unclean animal.³⁶⁵

- The law required that for an animal to be clean, it must have a cloven hoof and chew the cud. In the giving of this law, examples are given of both clean and unclean animals.³⁶⁶
- Aquatic life that was clean were those creatures that had fins and scales.³⁶⁷
- A list of unclean birds is given – the distinction seems to be that unclean birds are those that are carnivorous, carrion, or a predator.³⁶⁸
- Insects that may be eaten were those that are winged, walk on all four jointed legs, and leap upon the earth.³⁶⁹

³⁶¹ Leviticus 10:17-18

³⁶² Leviticus 10:19

³⁶³ Leviticus 10:20

³⁶⁴ Genesis 7:2ff

³⁶⁵ Leviticus 11:8

³⁶⁶ Leviticus 11:2-7 Note: some have made an object of scorn the statement in verse 6 that a rabbit chews the cud. No one knows for certain the meaning of the Hebrew term rendered as, *rabbit*, or *hare*. The translators assumed that the Hebrew word, *arnebeth* (אַרְנֶבֶת) means, "hare," but no one knows for certain the creature indicated by this word.

³⁶⁷ Leviticus 11:8-12

³⁶⁸ Leviticus 11:13-19

³⁶⁹ Leviticus 11:20-23

- Specific mention is made of the fact that animals with paws are unclean.³⁷⁰
- Rodents and reptiles are unclean.³⁷¹
- Anything that crawls on its belly or has more than four feet is unclean.³⁷²

Provision was made for purification of individuals as well as items that were touched by certain unclean animals. A person who touched an unclean animal is considered to be unclean for the rest of the day. Anyone who picks up the carcass of an unclean animal, not only was unclean for the rest of the day, but also must thoroughly wash his clothes to remove the uncleanness.³⁷³

Articles on which an unclean dead creature had fallen, was unclean and various things might be done to remove that uncleanness.

- Wooden articles, clothing, hides, sacks – shall be immersed in water and be considered unclean for the rest of the day.³⁷⁴
- Any earthen vessel into which a dead unclean creature falls shall be shattered.³⁷⁵
- Any food or drink into which such an animal might fall is unclean.³⁷⁶
- Even if a piece of the unclean creature's carcass falls on an object, that object is unclean.³⁷⁷
- Springs and cisterns are not made unclean by the unclean animal's falling into the water, but the one who removes the carcass from the water is unclean.³⁷⁸
- Any seed for sowing on which an unclean carcass falls is clean, unless water has been put on the seed prior to the encounter with the unclean animal.³⁷⁹

Purification after Childbirth

Chapter 12

If a woman gave birth to a male child, she was considered unclean for seven days. On the eighth day, the child was to be circumcised. After this, she was to continue in a state of uncleanness for thirty-three more days. During this period, she could not enter the Tabernacle. At the conclusion of forty days after the birth of the boy, the mother should bring to the doorway of the tent, a one year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a pigeon or turtle dove for a sin offering. These she will present to the priest who will offer them before Jehovah, according to the procedures appropriate for these offerings. If she cannot afford a lamb, she shall take two pigeons or two turtle doves, the one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. After this ceremony, the uncleanness of removed.

If she gave birth to a female child, the uncleanness continued for eighty days. At the conclusion of the eighty days, the same cleansing ceremonies were followed as outlined above, after the birth of a male child.

³⁷⁰ Leviticus 11:24-27

³⁷¹ Leviticus 11:29-30

³⁷² Leviticus 11:41-42

³⁷³ Leviticus 11:24-28, 39-40

³⁷⁴ Leviticus 11:32

³⁷⁵ Leviticus 11:33

³⁷⁶ Leviticus 11:34 i.e., if such an animal should fall dead upon the food or into the drink. See Keil & Delitzsch, page 371

³⁷⁷ Leviticus 11:35

³⁷⁸ Leviticus 11:36

³⁷⁹ Leviticus 11:37-38

The Test for Leprosy and the Ceremony of Cleansing for a Leper
Chapter 13

At least four types of leprosy are described in this chapter:

- *"When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling or a scab or a bright spot, and it becomes an infection of leprosy on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest, or to one of his sons the priests."³⁸⁰*
- *"But if the bright spot is white on the skin of his body, and it does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and the hair on it has not turned white, then the priest shall isolate him who has the infection for seven days."³⁸¹*
- *"But if the priest looks at it, and indeed, there is no white hair in the bright spot, and it is no deeper than the skin, but is dim, then the priest shall isolate him for seven days,"³⁸²*
- *"But if the priest looks at the infection of the scale, and indeed, it appears to be no deeper than the skin, and there is no black hair in it, then the priest shall isolate the person with the scaly infection for seven days."³⁸³*

Not only individuals, but clothing and other items associated with leprosy are described.

"When a garment has a mark of leprosy in it, whether it is a wool garment or a linen garment, ⁴⁸ whether in warp or woof, of linen or of wool, whether in leather or in any article made of leather, ⁴⁹ if the mark is greenish or reddish in the garment or in the leather, or in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, it is a leprous mark and shall be shown to the priest. ⁵⁰ "Then the priest shall look at the mark, and shall quarantine the article with the mark for seven days."³⁸⁴

"When you enter the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a mark of leprosy on a house in the land of your possession, ³⁵ then the one who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, 'Something like a mark of leprosy has become visible to me in the house.'"³⁸⁵

Whether a person, a garment, or any other thing that is suspected of leprosy, that leprous suspect shall be isolated. The priest shall examine the situation. If the condition is certain, there would be an immediate pronouncement, "unclean." The person or item declared unclean would have to be isolated from that time forward.

If the condition is uncertain, then a quarantine of seven days is imposed. When the seven days have elapsed, the priest will examine the case and determine if leprosy is indeed present. If the priest determines that there is no leprosy, then the quarantine is removed. If leprosy is confirmed, then permanent isolation is the result.

³⁸⁰ Leviticus 13:2

³⁸¹ Leviticus 13:4

³⁸² Leviticus 13:26

³⁸³ Leviticus 13:31

³⁸⁴ Leviticus 13:47-50

³⁸⁵ Leviticus 14:34-35

Laws Concerning the Restoration of Healed Leper

Chapter 14:1-32

Should a leper be physically recovered from the disease, he must undergo an inspection by a priest to verify his healing. A spiritual cleansing was required for the leper to be restored to social contact. This required two birds.

1. One bird is slain in an earthenware vessel over running water.
2. Cedar wood, a scarlet string, hyssop, and the live bird shall be dipped in the blood of the bird that was slain.³⁸⁶
3. The one who is being declared cleansed from the leprosy is sprinkled seven times.
4. The live bird shall be released.
5. The former leper may enter the camp, but he cannot enter his tent – he must remain outside for seven days.
6. At the conclusion of seven days, the former leper shall shave off all of the hair on his body, including his eyebrows. He then shall wash all of clothes and then bathe himself. He then can enter his tent.
7. On the eighth day, he shall bring to the priest two male lambs and a one year-old female lamb, and three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil and one log³⁸⁷ of oil.
8. One male lamb is slaughtered, and offered as a wave offering – this becomes the property of the priest.
9. Next, the other lamb is slaughtered as a guilt offering.
10. Some of the blood from the guilt offering will be put on the lobe of the right ear of the one being cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot.
11. The priest shall pour some of the log of oil into the palm of his left hand, dip his right-hand finger into the oil in his palm, and sprinkle some of the oil seven times before Jehovah.
12. The priest then shall take some of the oil and put on top of the blood that had been put on the right ear lobe, the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot, of the person being cleansed.
13. The oil remaining in the priest's palm shall be put on the head of the one being cleansed.
14. The priest then proceeded to make expiation for the supplicant by slaughtering the female lamb and offering it as a burnt offering.
15. If the supplicant is too poor to afford two male lambs and one female lamb, then he can bring one male lamb, one-tenth of an ephah of flour mixed with oil, a log of oil, and two turtle doves or two pigeons. The procedure of offering these is the same as if he had brought two male lambs and one female lamb.

Cleansing a leprous house

Chapter 14:33-53

There is no suggestion that a leprous house received its condition from leprous occupants. Jehovah describes Himself as being the source of the mark.

³⁸⁶ This section does not give instructions concerning what was to be done with the body of the dead bird, nor what was to be done with the cedar wood, the hyssop, and the scarlet thread. From descriptions of other sacrifices, we assume that the four items were burned on the altar (for example, see Numbers 19:6)

³⁸⁷ About one pint

"When you enter the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a mark of leprosy on a house in the land of your possession, then the one who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, 'Something like a mark of leprosy has become visible to me in the house.'³⁸⁸

The priest was to begin his inspection by telling all of the occupants of the house to step outside. The priest would enter the house and inspect the mark. If the mark consisted of greenish or reddish depressions and appeared to be deeper than just the surface, the priest must quarantine the house for seven days.³⁸⁹

On the seventh day, the priest will return for another inspection. If the mark had spread, then all of the stones with the mark on them will be removed and thrown away at an unclean place outside of the city. The plaster shall be scraped off the walls and the plaster disposed of outside the city in an unclean place. New stones will be placed in the walls and the house will be replastered. If the mark breaks out on the new stones and in the new plaster, then the house is to be torn down.

If the mark does not appear on the new stones and new plaster, then the priest will conduct a cleansing ceremony, using two birds, cedar wood, scarlet string and hyssop. The ceremony is the same as steps 1 – 4, above, in restoring an individual who has been healed of leprosy.

Uncleanness Resulting from Bodily Discharge Chapter 15

The matters discussed in this section are:

1. A running issue from a man (verses 2-15)
2. Involuntary emission of semen and the emission of semen in intercourse (verses 16-18)
3. The menstrual period of a woman (verses 19-24)
4. A diseased issue of blood from a woman (verses 25-30)

Thus, these consist of two diseased secretions and two natural secretions from the organs of procreation.

In all of the above listed instances, not only the person with the described condition is unclean, but also items that they touch during their uncleanness – the bed, the chair, the saddle, etc. If a man is unclean because of conditions 1 or 2, and he touches someone without first washing his hands, the person whom he touched is unclean for the rest of the day.

Anyone who touched a man who was unclean, or even touched anything associated with an unclean man, must wash his clothing and bathe himself, he then would have the uncleanness removed at sunset.

When a man recovered from the condition in #1, he was to wait seven days, then wash his clothes and bathe in fresh water. On the eighth day, he was to bring two turtledoves or two pigeons to the priest to be offered – one for a sin offering and one for a burnt offering.

³⁸⁸ Leviticus 14:34-35

³⁸⁹ Leviticus 14:36-38

When involuntary emission occurred during sexual intercourse, both the man and the woman must bathe themselves and wash all items that were polluted by the emission. The man and the woman will be unclean until sunset.

During a woman's menstrual period, she was considered unclean for seven days. All who touched her or items that had touched her during this period, were unclean for the rest of the day. Those unclean from touching a woman during this period, must wash their garments and bathe, in order to have their unclean state removed at sunset.

If a woman had an issue of blood after her menstrual period, or apart from it, she was unclean as long as the condition persisted. When it ceased, she was to purify herself in the same manner prescribed for a man who was recovered from condition #1, above.

The Day of Atonement³⁹⁰

Chapter 16

In this chapter, we find instructions for one of the two most significant days in the redemptive calendar of the Mosaic Covenant. The Passover was in the spring, the Day of Atonement was in the fall. Jehovah declared the tenth day of the seventh month³⁹¹ to be the day of atonement – the day on which the high priest entered the sacred room to enact the portion of the atonement ceremony prescribed for that room.

The instructions concerning the Day of Atonement, began with an introduction emphasizing the importance of honoring God as God and that one way to do that was by careful obedience to His commands. It is noted that these instructions were given after the episode involving the unthinking actions of Nadab and Abihu and their resulting deaths. The appropriate fear of God was emphasized further by a stern warning concerning the sacredness of the Holy of Holies.

Now Jehovah spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of Jehovah and died. And Jehovah said to Moses, "Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat."³⁹²

After the Tabernacle was set up, Jehovah's presence was manifested as a cloud (often known as Shekinah Glory), over the mercy seat, i.e., the lid of the Ark, beneath the two cherubim. Anyone who sought to enter the Holy of Holies would be struck dead. The only exception, was the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest entered this sacred room to perform the atonement ceremony, as prescribed by Jehovah.

No one was allowed into the Tabernacle courtyard while the High Priest was involved in the Day of Atonement ceremonies. All had to wait outside the enclosure.

³⁹⁰ The term, "atonement," means, to cover, to appease or to cover the face. Although sin was covered, it was not removed until Jesus went to the cross.

³⁹¹ Tishri (Babylonian name); Eitanim (Hebrew name)

³⁹² Leviticus 16:1-2

The day began with the High Priest's entering the outer court of the Tabernacle with a bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He was to bathe himself in the laver and then put on special priestly garb. The garb for this ceremony was not the normal garb of the high priest, nor the garb of an ordinary priest. It was white linen.³⁹³

The congregation then should present two goats for a sin offering and ram for a burnt offering. The two goats were to be presented to Jehovah at the doorway of the Tabernacle. Lots were cast for the goats - one would be sacrificed as a sin offering and the other one would be the "scapegoat."

Aaron then was to slaughter his bull and offer it upon the altar as his personal sin offering making atonement for himself and his family.

He then took a firepan (censer) of coals from the fire on the altar, and two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense. He entered the Holy of Holies with these in his hand. He was to place the firepan on the floor in front of the Ark and put the incense on the fire. This resulted in a cloud of incense which became a protective barrier between Aaron and the mercy seat atop the Ark, thus preventing Aaron's being slain for entering the Holy Presence (the cloud over the mercy seat). Incense in the Tabernacle always was a symbol of prayer and so this incense offering was a prayer to God, resulting in God's receiving the ministry being offered to Him.

Aaron then had to leave the Holy of Holies and obtain from the altar some of the blood of the bull that he had sacrificed for himself. He returned to the Holy of Holies and sprinkled some of the blood on the east side of the mercy seat, then sprinkled, seven times, some of the blood on the floor in front of the mercy seat.

All of this was done to make atonement for the High Priest and his family.

Next he returned to the courtyard and slaughtered the goat which had been chosen by lot to be the sin offering for the congregation. He took some of the blood from the goat and reentered the Holy of Holies and sprinkled the goat's blood in the same pattern as he had done with the blood of the bull.

He then left the Holy of Holies and went to the altar in the courtyard. He took some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat and put blood on all four horns of the altar. He then sprinkled some of the blood on the altar, seven times.

All of these ceremonies were for the cleansing of the tent, the various articles of furniture, even the Holy of Holies itself.

Next, the High Priest stepped out of the courtyard of the Tabernacle. Standing before the door of the courtyard was the goat that had been chosen as the scapegoat. He laid both of his hands on the head of the live goat and confessed the sinfulness of God's people – thus laying the sins on the head of the goat. A man stood in readiness to take the goat from the Tabernacle complex into the wilderness. As soon as the priest finished the ceremony he handed the goat over to the appointed individual who then took the goat into the wilderness – to a place from which it could not find its way back into the camp.

Aaron then went back into the courtyard, took off the white linen garments, and left them on the ground in front of the altar. He bathed himself in the laver, put on his High Priestly garments,

³⁹³ The Hebrew term used here is *bad* (בד) which is understood to refer to white linen.

and then offered as a burnt offering, the ram that he had brought for himself and the ram that the congregation had brought for itself. This act was done to make further atonement for himself and the congregation.

He completed the ceremonial portion of the Day of Atonement by burning the fat of the sin offering (his bull and the congregation's goat). The bodies and flesh of these two creatures were to be taken outside of the camp burned up.

Both the person who took the scapegoat into the wilderness, and the one who burned the carcasses of the sin offerings, were required to wash their clothes and bathe themselves before they could return to the camp.

On the Day of Atonement, no one is to do any work – whether an Israelite or a sojourner who is visiting them.

These ceremonies were to be repeated each year, exactly as commanded and described herein.

The Appropriate Place for Sacrifice and the Holiness of the Blood Chapter 17

The Israelites had brought from Egypt the superstition and idolatry that related to the offering of sacrifices to goat demons.³⁹⁴ It was a custom in the ancient world to pour out the blood as a drink offering to some god. Jehovah took strict measures to put an end to such practices. Any animal that they were accustomed to slaying either in the camp or in the field, from this time forward, they were to slaughter that animal only at the doorway of the Tabernacle. The priest was to take some of the blood from that slaughtered animal and sprinkle it on the “altar of Jehovah.” Here the altar is labeled in this manner to emphasize Jehovah's altar, in contrast to the goat demons' place of sacrifice. Thus, every animal slain for a meal, also was to be a sacrifice to God. It was a feast and an offering.

It would appear that this requirement was repealed when the Israelites established themselves in the Promised Land. After the tribes had been dispersed to their widespread locations, the bringing of all animals to the Tabernacle would not have been feasible. The Divine announcement of this change is in Deuteronomy 12:15.

"However, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your gates, whatever you desire, according to the blessing of Jehovah your God, which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and the deer.

The sacredness of blood is emphasized. No one, either Israelite or sojourner among them, was allowed to eat blood. Two reasons are given.³⁹⁵

1. The life is in the blood and all life is dedicated to God
2. The blood, signifying life, is the means of atonement.

Thus, any creature that is eaten, first must thoroughly bleed. Should someone find a dead animal – either one that seemed to die of natural causes or was killed by a predator – and eat it, that

³⁹⁴ Leviticus 17:7

³⁹⁵ Leviticus 17:11

person was declared unclean, because the blood had not first been drained from the carcass. Such a person should bathe, wash his clothes, and then be considered unclean until sunset. If he does not bathe and wash his clothes, then he is to be considered guilty of sin and a sin offering would be required.

Unholy Relationships Chapter 18

This section begins with a renewed emphasis on being strictly obedient to all that Jehovah commanded and to not be guided by the traditions and practices of surrounding nations.

Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,

"Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'I am Jehovah your God.

'You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes.

'You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them;

I am Jehovah your God.

'So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am Jehovah.³⁹⁶

Jehovah then launched into prohibitions against certain sexual practices.

- Verses 6-18 prohibit any type of incest. Specifically mentioned are eleven incestuous prohibitions:
 1. With a mother
 2. With a step-mother
 3. With a sister or half-sister
 4. With a granddaughter
 5. With the daughter of a step-mother
 6. With an aunt
 7. With the wife of an uncle on the father's side
 8. With a daughter-in-law
 9. With a sister-in-law
 10. With a woman and her, or a woman and her granddaughter
 11. With two sisters at the same time.

Anyone violating the prohibitions described in 1, 2, 3, 8, and 10, were too be punished by death.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁷ Leviticus 20:11, 12, 14, 17

- Verses 19-23 prohibit other types of unchastity and other unnatural acts:
 1. Intercourse with a woman is prohibited during her menstrual period and during the period immediately after childbirth. Those who violate this commandment are to be punished by death.³⁹⁸
 2. Impregnating a neighbor's wife is a defilement and is to be treated as adultery. Both the man and the woman are to be stoned.³⁹⁹
 3. Spiritual adultery, demonstrated by the sacrificing of children to Moloch. Such a crime was to be punished by stoning.⁴⁰⁰
 4. Homosexual acts are banned and death is the penalty for such acts.⁴⁰¹
 5. Sexual acts with animals are prohibited. Anyone, male or female, who commits such acts shall be killed. The animal also shall be killed.⁴⁰²

The chapter closes with a repeated warning concerning the consequences of any of these acts, as well as a repeated statement, *I am Jehovah, your God.*⁴⁰³

Holiness of Behavior Toward God and Man Chapter 19

The theme of this chapter is verse 2:

"Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I Jehovah your God am holy.

Thus, even though this chapter seems to present a cafeteria of topics, without a logical connection between them, all are related to this theme. Some of the items are a repetition of commandments, given earlier.

1. Honor of father and mother
2. Honoring the Sabbath
3. Prohibition against idols and the making of molten images
4. A repetition of the commandments given earlier respecting peace offerings
5. When harvesting, do not glean the fields, do not pick up the grapes that have fallen from the vine, do not thoroughly gather up everything from the corners of the field. These are to be left for the poor and for any strangers wandering through the land..
6. A repetition of the commandments prohibiting stealing and lying
7. A hired man is to be paid at the end of his work day
8. Cursing a deaf man or putting a stumbling block in front of a blind man is a demonstration of irreverence toward God.
9. Impartiality shall be shown in judging between a poor man and a rich man
10. Slander is prohibited
11. One may reprove his neighbor, but he must not hate his neighbor.

³⁹⁸ Leviticus 20:18 The expression, *cut off from their nation*, is generally understood to refer to death

³⁹⁹ Leviticus 20:10

⁴⁰⁰ Leviticus 20:3

⁴⁰¹ Leviticus 20:13

⁴⁰² Leviticus 20:15-16

⁴⁰³ Leviticus 18:24-30

12. Taking of vengeance or bearing a grudge is prohibited, but each one should love his neighbor as himself.
13. Mixed breeding of cattle and mixing seed, as well as wearing a garment made of two kinds of material are prohibited.
14. The personal rights of slaves were to be protected. If a man had sexual intercourse with a slave who was betrothed, but not had not been redeemed, then the perpetrator was to be whipped and then he must present a trespass offering as expiation for his sin
15. All garden fruit was to be sanctified to Jehovah. When the Israelites entered Canaan, they were to consider fruit trees to be uncircumcised for the first three years after their planting, and thus, fruit from these trees was not to be eaten until the fourth year.
16. Prohibitions are repeated concerning eating blood
17. Fortune tellers are banned
18. Beards were not to be cut in a circle, from one temple to the other, as was done by some Arab tribes.
19. Cuttings on the flesh and tattoos were banned. These were practices associated with idolatrous nations.
20. A man should not put forth his daughter into prostitution, for to do so would promote widespread lewdness
21. Another emphasis on keeping the Sabbath and reverencing the Tabernacle.
22. Another warning against mediums and spiritists
23. Another command to respect the aged
24. Strangers and aliens must be treated as if they were citizens – to be loved as one loves himself.
25. All measures and weights must be accurate.

Throughout this section, the emphasis is repeated, time and again, that Jehovah is God and that He does not allow any deviation from these commands.

Punishments for the Vices and Crimes Prohibited in the Previous Chapters

Chapter 20

Most of the material in this chapter has been noted in the earlier lists. The death penalty is prescribed, repeatedly, for violation of these commands. The mode of execution was stoning. Since the one being executed usually was stunned early in the process, this probably was a humane as any, except, possibly, beheading.

God's purpose in the various provisions is repeated,

*'Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I Jehovah am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.'*⁴⁰⁴

Regulations for the Priests

Chapters 21 and 22

The priests were identified as being of one nature with their offerings. Thus, as the offerings had to be perfect, so also the priest. As an expression of that, some special regulations were enumerated for priests.

⁴⁰⁴ Leviticus 20:26

A priest is to avoid the body of a dead person. However, this rule is suspended for all priests, except the High Priest, if the dead were one of his close relatives. Even when the rule is suspended, he is not to express his grief in the manner that was customary in that culture, i.e., shaving the head, shaving the beard, and cutting one's flesh.

The High Priest could not defile himself by approaching the body of a dead person, even the dead were his father or mother.

Priests could marry only virgins from their own people and must maintain a spotless marriage.

If a daughter of a priest became a harlot, she had profaned her father, and she shall be burned by fire.

No one with any physical defect, or illness, may serve as a priest. However, if one would have been qualified to be a priest, if he had not experienced the disqualifying physical condition, he may eat the bread and participate in other benefits granted to the priestly family.

No priest who had become unclean, for any reason, was allowed to touch or partake of sanctified items. Also, no one who was not a member of a priestly family was allowed to partake of sanctified items.

Any visitor to priest's home was not allowed to eat of sanctified items. On the other hand, a slave whom a priest had purchased, was permitted to eat sanctified items.

If a priest's daughter marries someone who is not a priest, she cannot partake of sanctified items. However, if her husband dies and she returns to her father's house, she can partake.

The priest was to take responsibility for the acceptability of every sacrifice brought to the altar. Every animal brought for offering must be unblemished. No animal shall be brought for a sacrifice that is less than seven days old. An animal and its offspring cannot be killed the same day.

As with most other sections, this section closes, with a repeated declaration of Jehovah's Divinity and the requirement of absolute obedience to what He has commanded.

Laws Concerning Feasts⁴⁰⁵ Chapter 23 & 24

This section begins with another exhortation concerning the importance of keeping the weekly Sabbath, then follows instructions concerning the seven annual feasts.

The Hebrew term translated, *feast*, in most English Bible translations, is a translation of two different words. One means, *appointed time* or *season*, the other meaning, *festival*. Of the seven annual feasts, only three were in actuality, feasts: Unleavened Bread, Passover, and Tabernacles. The others were appointed times. Only on the Day of Atonement was fasting prescribed.

⁴⁰⁵ For a chart of the feasts, see ADDENDUM H

Three times each year (Pentecost, Passover, and Tabernacles), all male Israelites were to make a pilgrimage to the center of worship. As noted earlier, it was not until the establishment of the synagogue (586 BC) that the Israelites began the practice of meeting together on the Sabbath.

All feast days were to be observed as a Sabbath, no work was to be done on these days.

In the first liturgical month of the year, Nissan or Abib, three feasts were held:

- Passover on the 14th day of the month
- Unleavened Bread on the 15th day of the month
- First Fruits on the 16th day of the month

In the third liturgical month of the year, Sivan, Pentecost (Six Weeks) was held

In the seventh liturgical month of the year, Tishri or Eithan, three feasts were held:

- Trumpets on the first day (this was the civil new years day)
- Atonement on the 10th day
- Tabernacles on the 15th day

Comments on the Passover and Unleavened bread are but repetitions of what had been given earlier in Exodus.

The Feast of First Fruits was something that was to begin after they entered Canaan. The first sheaf of the harvest was to be brought to the priest as a wave offering. A male lamb, without blemish, also should be offered at that time. This was to be accompanied by a grain offering consisting of two-tenths of an ephah of flour mixed with oil as an offering of fire and a gallon of wine.

Seven Sabbaths after the first Sabbath after the Feast of First Fruits, shall be the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost). On this day, a new grain offering was to be presented to Jehovah. It consisted of two loaves of bread for a wave offering, seven one-year-old male lambs, a bull, and two rams. All of this is a burnt offering. There also shall be presented one male goat for a sin offering and to one-year-old male lambs for a peace offering. The peace offering was a wave offering and it became the property of the priests.

The Feast of Trumpets was another day of rest, in which trumpets shall be blown and an offering by fire was to be given to Jehovah.

The description of the Day of Atonement in this section is a repeat of the earlier instructions for this day.

The Feast of Booths (Tabernacles) consisted of living in make-shift shelters for a week. This was a commemoration of the years in which Israel lived in make-shift dwellings during the Exodus. This event took place after the fall crops had been harvested. On the first day, they were to make the brush arbor dwellings, and for the rest of the week, they were to feast and celebrate the blessings of God. Each day, they presented to Jehovah an offering by fire. On the eighth day, they had a special assembly and present an offering by fire – that day was to be observed as a Sabbath.

Preparation of the Lamps and the Showbread

Chapter 24:1-9

This is a repetition of the instructions given earlier in Exodus.

The Punishment of a Blasphemer

Chapter 24:10-23

Two men were involved in a petty scuffle. One was a half-breed Israelite – his father was an Egyptian, but his mother was an Israelite woman, named Shelomith, of the tribe of Dan. The other man was a man of Israel. In the midst of the scuffle, the son of Shelomith cursed, blaspheming the name of Jehovah. His curses were heard by bystanders and so, the man was put in custody, until it became clear what might be Jehovah's command concerning what to do about such behavior.

Jehovah spoke to Moses, instructing him to take the man outside of the camp and everyone who heard him curse, should lay their hands on him, then the congregation should stone him. Jehovah then reiterated earlier commands that this act was confirming. The Israelites obeyed and the man was stoned as Jehovah had instructed. This incident served as a pattern for all of Israel's later dealings with blasphemers.

The Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee

Chapter 25:1-34

Some of the material in this chapter is a repetition of that given earlier. This brings to a close the laws given to Moses by Jehovah at Mount Sinai.

The first regulation is the law of the Sabbatical Year. When the people had settled in the land of Canaan, they were to sow fields and harvest for six years. In the sixth year, Jehovah would cause the land to produce as much as would be produced in a normal three years.⁴⁰⁶ Then, on the seventh year, the land was to lay fallow. In that year, there was to be no planting or harvesting of either the field or the vineyard. The people were to live on what they had stored up from the amazing harvest of the sixth year. The cattle and other domestic animals were allowed to graze in the fields during the Sabbatical Year.

Every seven Sabbatical years (i.e., forty-nine years) was to be a year of jubilee. This year was announced by the blowing of a ram's horn (a shofar) on the Day of Atonement (the tenth day of the seventh month). At the blowing of the ram's horn, each person was to return to his hereditary home and family. At this time, those who had bought property from another Israelite, must sell it back to its original owner, the price being calculated by the number of years since the sale – the annual worth of the property was determined by the amount of produce that had been produced on the land since the sale. Jehovah emphasized that the land could not be sold permanently, because the land belonged to Jehovah. Should someone not be able to come up with the money to buy back his land, then in the Jubilee year, it would revert back to him, anyway.

Similar laws applied to houses in walled cities and houses in villages.

⁴⁰⁶ The sixth year, itself; the seventh Sabbatical Year; the next year when planting took place, but a harvest was not realized until the fall.

Laws Respecting Slavery and Care of the Poor
Chapter 25:35-55

If a countryman became so poor that he could not survive, then those about him must sustain him. Lending him money with interest or giving him food as a loan to be repaid with interest was not allowed. Should a countryman become so poor that he sells himself as a slave to another Israelite, he shall be treated like a hired hand, not like a slave. The one to whom he sold himself cannot sell him in a slave sale, and the one who bought him may not rule over him with severity. In the Year of Jubilee, he shall be released from slavery and go back to the property of his forefathers.

Male and female slaves may be acquired from both the pagan nations that surrounded them in Canaan, as well as from the sojourners that lived as aliens among the Israelites. These individuals were considered to be possessions that may be passed on to one's heirs.

Should an Israelite become poor and sell himself to one of the sojourners, he may be redeemed at any time, either by a relative or, if he finds some means of prosperity, he may redeem himself. The cost of redemption shall be the number of years between the time of redemption and the next Year of Jubilee, since he must be set free in that year regardless of any other circumstance. The purchaser of the slave and the slave himself shall confer and decide what that cost of redemption would be, based on what the annual wages would be, if the man were not a slave and how many years remain before the Year of Jubilee. During the time of his service to the one who purchased him the Israelite cannot be treated with severity.

The Blessing and the Curse
Chapter 26

Once again, Jehovah affirmed the principle that the Israelites would be blessed for obedience and likewise, cursed for disobedience. Special mention is made of the evil of idolatry, the necessity of keeping the Sabbath, and reverence for the Tabernacle – especially the Holy of Holies.

This section is punctuated time and again with the phrase, *I am Jehovah your God*.

Blessings listed are:

1. Rains in their season, resulting in abundant produce from the land and fruit from the trees. The harvest of field will last until the fall gathering of the grapes, and the gathering of the grapes will last until time to sow the fields. Hunger will be unknown in the land.
2. Safety and peace will be assured. Neither fearful wild animals nor violent invaders will be permitted to disturb their peace.
3. Israel will put to flight any enemies who seek to conquer them. Five Israelites will be able to chase a hundred threatening invaders and one-hundred Israelites will be able to put to flight ten-thousand.
4. Jehovah would make His dwelling among them, *'Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.'*⁴⁰⁷

Curses are given in more detail. *'But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant, I, in turn, will do this to you: ...'*⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁷ Leviticus 26:11-12

⁴⁰⁸ Leviticus 26:14-16a

Each of the dire calamities that Israel would experience because of disobedience had as their aim, bringing the nation back into obedience. Each calamity is followed by a warning that if the calamity did not cause them to repent and return to a state of obedience, then the next calamity would befall them. Each one was worse than the last. Promised calamities were:

1. Jehovah would send upon the nation horrible diseases – fever that causes blindness and brings a depression of the soul. Because of this sickness, they will not be able to harvest the fields that they planted, but helplessly they would watch their enemies harvesting their fields.
2. They shall be struck down by their enemies and those who hate them shall rule over them. They will become so fearful that they will imagine that they are in danger; they will flee, even when no one is pursuing them.
3. The sky will become like iron to them and the earth like bronze, i.e., no rain will come upon the land. All of their efforts to grow crops will be wasted.
4. Beasts of the field will be unleashed upon them. These beasts will kill both their children and their cattle. The population will be so reduced by the beasts that much of the land will be vacant.
5. A pestilence will be unleashed upon them that will make them so weak that their enemies will have no problem possessing their land. Coupled with this, there will be a famine so severe that food will be rationed.
6. Jehovah will cause things to become so desperate, that adults will begin to eat the flesh of children. Jehovah will destroy their high places of worship, cut down their incense altars, and pile the bodies of Israelites on the rubbish of these places and items of worship. The offerings that will be presented in the Tabernacle, in an effort to appease Jehovah will be rejected by Him. The land will become so empty that their enemies will be appalled. Their enemies will cause them to be scattered among the nations.
7. Those who are alive, and scattered among the enemy nations, will live in fear. Many will die in this exile.

Should repentance result from any of these calamities, and the Israelites confess their sins and return to obedience of Jehovah, recognizing Him as God, then Jehovah will remember the covenant that He made with their forefathers.

'But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am Jehovah.'"⁴⁶ These are the statutes and ordinances and laws which Jehovah established between Himself and the sons of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai.⁴⁰⁹

The Law of Vows Leviticus 27

Jehovah prescribed that when anyone, in a moment of deep devotion, gave something to Jehovah, that thing was to remain as Jehovah's. However, provision was made whereby a person could buy back that devoted thing. There was no requirement compelling someone to make a vow – it was an act of devotion on the part of the giver. A person, through a vow, could give himself to Jehovah. There was strict compulsion about keeping the vow, once it was made.

⁴⁰⁹ Leviticus 26:45-46

Provision for recovering a devoted person was based on the following evaluation:

1. A male, between twenty and sixty years of age, could be redeemed by giving to the Tabernacle treasury, fifty shekels of silver.
2. A female of these years could be redeemed for thirty shekels of silver.
3. A male, between one month, up to five years old, could be redeemed for five shekels of silver.
4. A female between one month, up to five years old, could be redeemed for three shekels of silver.
5. A male over sixty years old could be redeemed for fifteen shekels
6. If the one seeking redemption is poor and does not have the means to pay the stipulated amount, then the priest shall investigate the situation and set a price that the person can afford.
7. A clean animal given to the Tabernacle as a part of a Tabernacle herd, cannot be redeemed
8. An unclean animal given to the Tabernacle can be redeemed by paying what it is worth, plus a fee of 20% of its value.
9. A house given to Jehovah can be redeemed for its value, plus 20%
10. Fields dedicated to Jehovah can be redeemed for what the value of the seed produced upon it would be, for as many years prior to the Year of Jubilee.
11. If a person sells a consecrated field to someone else, in the Year of Jubilee, that field will not be returned to the original owner, but it will become the property of the High Priest.
12. The firstborn of all clean cattle and tithes cannot be dedicated to Jehovah – they already are His. The firstborn of clean cattle may not be redeemed. However, a tithe of the land may be redeemed, by paying the value of the land, plus a penalty of 20% and may not be redeemed
13. The firstborn of unclean animals may be redeemed for the value determined by the priest, plus 20%
14. A tithe of the land may be redeemed

The Book of Leviticus closes with this statement:

*These are the commandments which Jehovah commanded Moses for the sons of Israel at Mount Sinai.*⁴¹⁰

⁴¹⁰ Leviticus 27:34

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

The Hebrew name for this book is *Bemidhbar* (בְּמִדְבָּר), meaning, “in the wilderness.” The Greek speaking Jews who produced the Septuagint named this book, *Arithmoi* (ἀριθμοί). Jerome took the Greek term and rendered in the Latin Vulgate as *Numeri*. English translators adopted Jerome’s Latin term and thus, we have the Book of Numbers.

Numbers describes Israel’s history for almost the entire forty years that the Israelites spent in the wilderness. It is almost equally divided between history and legislation, but when legal pronouncements are given, they were given because the situation of the people made some new legislation necessary. For the most part, Numbers is chronological, but there are some incidents that are placed out of context in order to provide a smoother literary composition.

The narrative in Numbers begins exactly one month after the Tabernacle had been erected – one year and a month after the exodus from Egypt.⁴¹¹ For practical purposes, Numbers may be considered as the history of events that transpired from the close of the Book of Exodus to the close of their journey, east of the Jordan River – a period of approximately thirty-nine years.⁴¹² Only two of these years are reported in any detail and the rest are quickly passed over. Most consider there to be a historical gap between Chapters 19 and 20

The People Numbered Chapter 1

Earlier the people had been numbered so that the census tax for the Tabernacle could be assessed. On that occasion, the number of men twenty years of age and upward was 603,550, not counting the Levites.⁴¹³ The numbering conducted on this occasion resulted in the same number.⁴¹⁴

The purpose of this census was to determine the number of males, over twenty years of age, who would be available for military service.⁴¹⁵ Jehovah designated one man from each tribe to assist Moses and Aaron in taking the census. The format of the census was involved carefully checking the genealogy of each person, to make certain that each one counted had the appropriate pedigree to qualify him for service in the Israelite army.⁴¹⁶ Those who had an uncertain pedigree were barred from fighting Jehovah’s battles as a part of the army of Israel.

Interestingly, the Hebrew terms used throughout this chapter that most English versions render as, *number them*, literally means to *muster them* – language used to call forth an army.

⁴¹¹ Exodus 40:2; Numbers 1:1

⁴¹² Deuteronomy 1:3

⁴¹³ Exodus 38:26

⁴¹⁴ Numbers 1:46

⁴¹⁵ Numbers 1:3

⁴¹⁶ Numbers 1:18

Here is a listing of the tribes and the number of men in each tribe who qualified for military service in the Israelite army:

Reuben:	46,500
Simeon:	59,300
Gad:	45,650
Judah:	74,600
Issachar:	54,400
Zebulun:	57,400
Joseph:	72,700
Ephraim	40,500
Manassah	32,200
Benjamin:	35,400
Dan:	62,700
Asher:	41,500
Naphtali:	53,400

Total men qualified for the army: 603,500

As was true in the earlier numberings, the Levites were not counted in this numbering. They were not eligible for military service, but their task was to continually care for the Tabernacle and to perform the duties related to it. When it was time to break camp, the Levites were to take down the Tabernacle and carry both the Tabernacle and its furnishings to the next encampment. When the next encampment was established the Levites would set up the Tabernacle. A separate counting was undertaken for the Levites.

The Organization of the Camp⁴¹⁷ Chapter 2

Jehovah designated where each tribe was to be encamped. The Tabernacle always was in the center of the camp, with each tribe camping in an appointed place around the Tabernacle. This pattern was the same pattern designated for how the Israelites were to march from place to place.

- First was Judah's standard
- Second, Reuben's standard
- Third, Levites and the Tabernacle
- Fourth Ephraim's standard
- Fifth Dan's standard
- The other tribes followed the standard of one of the four standards, depending on their relationship with one of these designated standards, when encamped.

Apparently this marching order put the strongest divisions at the head of the march and at the rear of the march. It is worth noting that in coming centuries Judah, who had the most prominent place, both in the encampment and during the travels, would become increasingly important since it was the tribe through which the Messianic promises were fulfilled.

⁴¹⁷ For a diagram of the encampment see ADDENDUM I

The Numbering of the Levites
Chapter 3

In this chapter, the Levites are numbered according to their genealogy.⁴¹⁸ It is noted at the beginning of the chapter that Nahab and Abihu *died before Jehovah when they offered strange fire before Jehovah in the wilderness of Sinai; and they had not children.*⁴¹⁹

The choice of the Levites to be Jehovah's priestly tribe could not have been predicted by the Israelites. When Jacob, the patriarchal founder of the nation, was near death, he called his sons before him and pronounced a blessing upon each one. There was a prophetic edge to his pronouncements. On that occasion, Jacob condemned Levi and his brother Simeon⁴²⁰ because of the deceitful and violent manner in which Levi and Simeon had responded to the rape of their sister, Diana.⁴²¹

*"Simeon and Levi are brothers; Their swords are implements of violence. Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; Because in their anger they slew men, And in their self-will they lamed oxen. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob, And scatter them in Israel."*⁴²²

Thus, the choice of the Tribe of Levi to be Jehovah's priestly tribe clearly was a sovereign choice.⁴²³ As noted earlier, the Levite's role was caring for the Tabernacle – both serving in priestly roles and in being physically responsible for the Tabernacle.⁴²⁴

The census of the Levites was done in the same manner as was done when mustering the other tribes to form the Israelite army, the Levites were counted by each family. One difference was that rather than a census being taken of every male over twenty years of age, as was done with the other tribes, the Levite census counted every male a month old and upward.

Levi's three sons were Gershom, Kohath, and Merari.

- At the time of the Exodus, the two families that were descended from Gershom were the Libnites and the Shimeites. The total counted in these families was 7,500.

They were instructed to camp behind the tabernacle, on the west side.

Gershom's descendants were responsible for the tent covering, the veil at the doorway of the tent, the hangings that surrounded the courtyard, the doorway to the courtyard, the cords used in these hangings and maintaining these items. Eliasaph was chosen to oversee the Tabernacle responsibility of these families.

⁴¹⁸ For a chart of the Levitical line of descent, re: the priesthood, see ADDENDUM G

⁴¹⁹ Numbers 3:4

⁴²⁰ Simeon, Levi, and Dinah were Jacob's offspring through Leah – Genesis 34:1, 25

⁴²¹ Genesis 34

⁴²² Genesis 49:5-7

⁴²³ Numbers 3:12-13

⁴²⁴ Numbers 3:5-8

- At the time of the Exodus, the four families that were descended from Kohath were the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites. The total descendants of Kohath 8,600.

They were instructed to camp on the south side of the Tabernacle.

Kohath's descendants were responsible for the most sacred items: Ark, the Table of Showbread, the Lampstand, the altars, the utensils used in the ministry of these items, and the veil in front of the Holy of Holies. Elizaphan was the overseer of the responsibilities of these families.

- At the time of the Exodus, the two families that were descended from Merari were the Mahlites and the Mushites. The total descendants of Merari were 6,200.

They were instructed to camp on the north side of the Tabernacle.

Merari's descendants were responsible for the wooden frames of the tent, the bars, the pillars, sockets, the pillars around the courtyard, with their sockets, pegs, cords, and all of the equipment and service related to these items. Zurriel was the overseer of the responsibilities of these families.

Moses and Aaron and their families were to camp on the east side of the Tabernacle. These were responsible for performing the duties of the sanctuary.

After this census, according to the above tabulations, the total number of male Levites was 22,300. However, 3:39 declares that the number was 22,000. Various explanations have been given for this discrepancy. Some have said that 22,000 is given as a round number. Some have sought to explain it as a textual error (Moffat states that the total number of Kohathites should read, 8,300). Others have said that 300 of the Levites were firstborn and thus not eligible for exchange (see next paragraph).

Moses and Aaron next were instructed to count the number of firstborn males in Israel, from a month old upward. They were told to make a list of their names. From the time of the Passover onward, Jehovah had declared that the firstborn belonged to Him. Some firstborn were to be redeemed, by one means or another and some were to be sacrificed. On this occasion, Jehovah declared a special role that Levites played in this arrangement.

Since Jehovah had declared that the Levites and their cattle to belong to Him, and since they were Israelites, he would consider each Levite to be taking the place of one firstborn among the other tribes. The same was true of cattle – one Levite animal for every firstborn animal of the other tribes.

When Moses and Aaron counted the one year-old and upward of the firstborn males in Israel, the total was 22,273. This meant that (according to 4:39) there were 273 more firstborn than there were Levites. The excess were to be ransomed by giving five shekels for each of the 273 excess of firstborn. This money was to be given to Aaron and his sons. As instructed, Moses collected the ransom (a total of 1,365 shekels) and gave it to Aaron as his sons.

Given that the total population was 605,550, that meant that one in twenty-seven was a firstborn. Various theories have been advanced by those who have considered this to be too low a number. For example, if a father of a family were a firstborn was he included in the count as well as the firstborn of his children? Another possibility presented by some is, the total on this occasion did not include those who also had been counted in the earlier census (those over twenty years of age)? This problem is of no concern except to those who question the seemingly low figure.

The Work of the Levites Chapter 4

Chapter four details how each segment of the Levites was to complete its responsibilities. The males who are to do the work must be more than thirty years of age and not older than fifty. In all of these responsibilities, Aaron will be on hand to supervise and assign specific duties.

Kohath

Moses and Aaron were descendants of Kohath. When it is time to break camp, Aaron and his sons will go into the Tabernacle and proceed to the Holy of Holies. It seems that the Shekinah cloud was removed when it was time to travel. Aaron and his sons will take down the veil in front of the Holy of Holies and cover the Ark with this veil. They shall lay a covering of porpoise skin on top of that and then lay a blue cloth covering over that. They shall insert the poles into the rings at the corner of the Ark.

They shall then proceed to the Table of Showbread and spread a blue cloth covering over the table. On top of that they will place all of the utensils associated with the table as well as the loaves of unleavened bread. Over these will be placed a covering of scarlet cloth, then a covering of porpoise skin. They then will insert the poles on the rings at the four corners of the table.

Next, they take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand and all that is associated with it and put it and all of its utensils in a porpoise skin and put this on a travois with its carrying bars.

The Altar of Incense receives their next attention. The first covering of the Altar will be a blue cloth, then a porpoise skin, and then the carrying poles will be inserted into the rings at the corners of the Altar.

All the remaining utensils used in the Tabernacle will be wrapped in blue cloth, then covered with porpoise skin and put on a travois with its carrying bars.

The ashes shall be removed from the Brazen Altar and a purple cloth will be spread over the altar. On top of the cloth covering they will place all of the utensils used in the administration of the sacrifices offered upon this altar. They will cover all of this with a porpoise skin and then insert the carrying poles in the rings at the corners of the altar.

All of the items from the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place had been covered so that no one could touch them. Not only that, Jehovah warned that if anyone other than Aaron and his sons saw the holy objects that normally were in the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, that they would die. After all of these preparations, Kohathites to whom the assignment had been given would come to carry these sacred items in the Israelite march to the next encampment.

Gershon

The Gershonites shall wrap in blue cloth the items that they are assigned to carry, as listed in Chapter 3 – the curtains of the Tabernacle, and the curtains that are a part of the sacred tent, the first veil of the Holy Place, the hangings of the courtyard and the draperies that formed the door of the courtyard and the items that were instruments for hanging the curtains.

Merari

The descendants of Merari will carry the items listed earlier, as being their responsibility – the boards of the Tabernacle, its bars, pillars, sockets, the pillars from around the courtyard and their pegs, sockets cords, etc.

Laws Concerning Uncleanness, Liability, and Jealousy

Chapter 5

Jehovah once again emphasized that an unclean person should be put out of the camp. Israel, which up to this point evidently had not taken any action concerning unclean persons, obeyed the order and put anyone who was unclean outside of the camp.

If someone should harm a person or a person's family, then confession of sin is required and restitution made to the one who was wronged or to his family. In addition to the restitution, the usual fine of 20% is imposed. If the one who was wronged had died in the meantime, and if there are no heirs, then the restitution and the penalty is given to the priest and it becomes the priest's property.

Should a man suspect his wife of unfaithfulness, he man shall bring his wife to the priest and shall bring as an offering one-tenth of an ephah of barley.⁴²⁵ No incense or oil is to be poured on this offering. The priest then will take some water from the laver and dust from the floor of the Tabernacle courtyard. He shall place the dust into the water. The woman will untie her hair – it must hang loose. The grain offering is placed into her hands while the priest holds in his hands the water. The priest shall have her take an oath, stating,

"If no man has lain with you and if you have not gone astray into uncleanness, being under the authority of your husband, be immune to this water of bitterness that brings a curse; if you, however, have gone astray, being under the authority of your husband, and if you have defiled yourself and a man other than your husband has had intercourse with you" (then the priest shall have the woman swear with the oath of the curse, and the priest shall say to the woman), "Jehovah make you a curse and an oath among your people by Jehovah's making your thigh waste away and your abdomen swell; and this water that brings a curse shall go into your stomach, and make your abdomen swell and your thigh waste away." And the woman shall say, "Amen. Amen."⁴²⁶

The priest then will write this curse upon a scroll, then wash the words off the scroll into the water in the vessel that he is holding in his hands. The woman then is given vessel containing the water.

The priest then will take the offering from the woman's hand and wave it as a wave offering and then throw a handful of the grain offering onto the altar.

The woman then will drink the water and if her abdomen begins to swell and her thigh wastes away, she shall be considered a curse among her people. If these things do not happen, then she is declared to be falsely accused and she will be free to continue with her life and give birth to children.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ About one bushel

⁴²⁶ Numbers 5:19-22

⁴²⁷ If the woman proved to be unfaithful, then the man with whom she had committed adultery would be found and both of them would be executed (Leviticus 20:10)

The Order of Nazarites Chapter 6:1-21

The Nazirite was a person who had dedicated himself to Jehovah. The term comes from the Hebrew, *Nazir*.⁴²⁸ The term means, “a devoted or consecrated one.” A Nazirite is one who voluntarily makes a vow that he will be devoted to Jehovah. Some are Nazirites for life, but most were for a specific period of time.

The Bible records three lifetime Nazirites: Sampson, Samuel, and John the Baptist. These three were consecrated as a result of a vow made by their of the parents – Sampson and John the Baptist were consecrated by their parents in response to instructions by God.

Rules applying to a Nazirite included:

- He was not to partake of anything that came from a grapevine⁴²⁹
- His hair was to remain uncut⁴³⁰
- He was to be separated from the dead⁴³¹

If someone died suddenly beside a Nazirite, the Nazirite was defiled. For seven days he would be considered to be defiled. On the seventh day he is to shave his head, and on the eighth day bring two turtledoves or two pigeons to the priest and these will be offered, one for a sin offering and one for a burnt offering. On that day, he will reconsecrate himself. A male lamb then will be presented for a guilt offering. He then must begin to fulfill the vow as if he had spent the previous time as a Nazirite (i.e., if he had consecrated himself for ten years, and the defilement happened in the fifth year of his vow, he must start over and dedicate the following ten years to being a Nazirite – he does not get any credit for the years spent prior to his being defiled by the one who died beside him).

When the days of his vow have been fulfilled, he will bring a year-old male lamb for a burnt offering, one female lamb for a sin offering, and a ram for a peace offering. In addition, he will bring a basket of unleavened cakes made of flour and oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil, along with grain offering and libations. These shall be offered according to the proper procedures outlined earlier. The Nazirite then will shave his hair and place it on the fire with the peace offerings. The priest then shall take the ram’s shoulder, one unleavened cake, and one wafer, and rest them in the palm of the Nazirite, then wave them as a wave offering. Following this ceremony, the Nazirite is released from his vow and he may drink wine.

The Benediction Composed by Jehovah Chapter 6:22-27

Jehovah gave Moses instructions for Aaron concerning the prayer that he should use, when blessing the people. The prayer was one that Jehovah Himself had composed.

"Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them:

⁴²⁸ נָזִיר

⁴²⁹ Numbers 6:3-4

⁴³⁰ Numbers 6:5

⁴³¹ Numbers 6:6-8

*Jehovah bless you, and keep you;
 Jehovah make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you;
 Jehovah lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.'*

"So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them."⁴³²

The Offerings Presented by the Tribal Leaders for the Service of the Tabernacle Chapter 7

After the dedication of the Tabernacle, as an act of sincere devotion to Jehovah, the tribal leaders brought offerings to be used in Tabernacle service and gifts for the Tabernacle treasury. The offerings were brought for twelve days, each day a representative of one tribe came to the Tabernacle with his gifts. The total offerings consisted of:

- six wagons
- twelve oxen
- twelve silver serving platters
- twelve silver bowls
- twelve golden spoons
- twelve bulls
- seventy two each of rams, lambs, goats, and twenty-four additional oxen

The animals were presented for burnt offerings, peace offerings, and sin offerings. Each of the leaders made an identical personal offering.

The wagons were given to the Levite clans that had to haul the heavier portions of the tabernacle:

- Merari received four wagons
- Gershon received two wagons
- Kohath did not receive any wagons because the requirements for transporting the sacred elements that they transported had to be carried by the poles resting on the shoulders of those who transported them

The Consecration of the Levites Chapter 8

The Levites were given to the priests to assist them in practical matters. For example, bringing firewood for the altar and disposing of the ashes from the altar. As described earlier, one role of the Levites was to set up and take down the Tabernacle.

A special ceremony was ordered to consecrate the Levites for this service. The ceremony included ceremonial cleansing and the presentation of sin offerings, burnt offerings, and meal offerings. As a part of the ceremony, each Levite was required to shave his entire body, and bathe. Representatives from the tribes laid hands on the Levites, signifying their acceptance of them in their assigned roles.

Levites could begin service at the age of twenty-five (8:24), but it seems that active service did not begin until age thirty (4:3). It could be that the first five years were years of training.

⁴³² Numbers 6:23-27

Levites were to retire from active service at the age of fifty. After the age of fifty, they may help the younger Levites, probably as instructors.

Instructions Concerning the Passover

Chapter 9:1-14

Much of this chapter is a repetition of earlier material. One additional bit of information is that those who, for reasons beyond their control, could not be present at the Tabernacle for the Passover on the assigned day, could observe the Passover one month later. Anyone who deliberately ignored the Passover was to be cut off from his people.

The Guidance of the Cloud

Chapter 9:15-23

Again, some repetition of previous material. During the day, the cloud rested above the Tabernacle from the first day that it was erected and dedicated. At night, a column of fire rested over the Tabernacle. When it was time for the Israelites to move to another location, the cloud lifted and evidently the shekinah over the Ark also was removed. The cloud then led them where Jehovah would have them go.

The Trumpets of Silver

Chapter 10:1-10

Jehovah instructed that two trumpets should be made of silver. These were straight tubes flared at one end. They had the following use:

- A blast of both trumpets – the congregation was to assemble
- A blast of one trumpet – the leaders were to assemble
- A fanfare of several notes - the camp was to move
- Certain melodic patterns were used to call the people forward into battle

Departure from Sinai

Chapter 10:11-36

After the Israelites had been at the foot of Mt. Sinai for eleven months and six days,⁴³³ the cloud lifted, indicating that it was time for them to move to another location. The people moved forward encouraged by Moses' rallying prayer,

Then it came about when the ark set out that Moses said, "Rise up, O Jehovah! And let Thine enemies be scattered, And let those who hate Thee flee before Thee."⁴³⁴

Moses invited his in-law, Hobab, to accompany the Israelites. The Hebrew term, *father-in-law*, can mean little more than the status of being related by marriage. Thus, Hobab probably was Moses' brother-in-law, since his father-in-law was known as Ruel or Jethro. Hobab was a Midianite who knew the desert and although it is not recorded that he did accompany the Israelites, most believe that he did, given the fact that his people were with Israel when they settled in the Promised land.⁴³⁵

Taberah and Kibroth-hattaavah

Chapter 11

⁴³³Exodus 19:1-14

⁴³⁴Numbers 10:35

⁴³⁵Judges 1:16; 4:11

Two tragedies occurred during this portion of the journey. Some of the people began to complain about the rigors of the travel and evidently lagged behind the company. This was the fifth time that people had murmured against Moses' leadership. A fire fell and consumed the outskirts of the camp.

The rabble among the Israelites (probably some of the mixed multitude that had accompanied them) began to complain about the food. Their complaints were a contagion that began to spread among the Israelites. They began to remember the food that they had eaten in Egypt and complained about the boring, unflavorful manna. They seemed to have forgotten the quail that Jehovah had sent to them at the base of Sinai.⁴³⁶

Moses was so upset that he went before Jehovah and to some measure exaggerated his role. He went so far as to say that if Jehovah did not lift a part of Moses' responsibility, then he, Moses, would rather die.

So Moses said to Jehovah, "Why hast Thou been so hard on Thy servant? And why have I not found favor in Thy sight, that Thou hast laid the burden of all this people on me? Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth, that Thou shouldest say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant, to the land which Thou didst swear to their fathers '?"

"Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me, saying, 'Give us meat that we may eat!'

"I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me. So if Thou art going to deal thus with me, please kill me at once, if I have found favor in Thy sight, and do not let me see my wretchedness."⁴³⁷

Jehovah's response was to appoint seventy elders to assist Moses. These men were listed by name. Moses called these men to surround the Tabernacle. Each of them received a portion of the anointing that rested on Moses. The elders began to prophesy, but it seems that they did so only on this occasion. Even though they had been named, and were designated as a part of the company of elders, two men, Eldad and Medad, had failed to join the rest in surrounding the Tabernacle. Even so, they received the anointing and began to prophesy among the people. Joshua became upset and urged Moses to stop them. Evidently, Joshua saw the activities of these two as a threat to Moses' leadership. Moses disagreed with Joshua and stated that he wished that such spiritual manifestations would take place throughout God's people.⁴³⁸

The Rebellion of Aaron and Miriam

Chapter 12

Miriam and Aaron began to speak bitterly against their younger brother, Moses. It would seem that their primary motivation was jealousy. One thing that they complained about – evidently in an effort to discredit Moses – was the racial identity of his wife.

⁴³⁶ Exodus 16:13

⁴³⁷ Numbers 11:11-15

⁴³⁸ Numbers 11:26-30

Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman).⁴³⁹

There is uncertainty concerning the identity of the woman to whom they referred. First, is the term describing her racial identity. Some argue that the term, *Cushite*⁴⁴⁰ should be understood as referring to an *Ethiopian*. Who was this woman? It is possible that the complaint could have been against the mother of Moses' children, Zipporah. The Ethiopia of Moses day was not only a country of Africa, but possibly could include a territory of the Kenites, from which Zipporah came.⁴⁴¹ Others put forth the idea that Zipporah had died and that the widower Moses had married a Cushite. We must admit that this is not a matter on which a firm stand can be taken, but whoever the woman might have been, Miriam and Aaron sought to use Moses' marriage as a tool to discredit him.

The second thing that they put forth that Moses was not the only one through whom Jehovah had spoken.

and they said, "Has Jehovah indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" And Jehovah heard it.⁴⁴²

The comment made concerning Moses' character must be Jehovah's words, even though Moses recorded them, *(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.)⁴⁴³*

Jehovah called the three of them to before the Tabernacle and in the form of a cloud, descended on the door of the Tabernacle. Jehovah spoke a strong rebuke to Miriam and Aaron declaring that Moses was different from any prophet or any other human to whom and through whom Jehovah spoke.

He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, Jehovah, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. ⁷ "Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; ⁸ With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of Jehovah. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant, against Moses?"⁴⁴⁴

Immediately, Miriam became leprous. Aaron was shocked and remorseful. He pled with Moses to do something. Moses interceded with Jehovah, in behalf of his sister. Jehovah's response was that Miriam would have to be a leper for seven days and had to be shut out of the camp until her leprosy left her.

⁴³⁹ Numbers 12:1

⁴⁴⁰ *Cushi* כּוּשִׁי

⁴⁴¹ Holdcroft, page 106

⁴⁴² Numbers 12:2

⁴⁴³ Numbers 12:3

⁴⁴⁴ Numbers 12:6-8

Events at Kadesh
Chapters 13-14

When the Israelites arrived at Kadesh, they were able to look north toward Canaan – not so far distant. At Jehovah's instructions, twelve men (one from each tribe) were sent into Canaan to look it over and bring back a report to the Israelites the nature of that which God had promised to them. Two of these were Joshua and Caleb, representing the tribes of Ephraim and Judah.

The spies returned with huge clusters of grapes and some pomegranates and figs. All of them were enthusiastic in reporting Canaan as being a land that indeed flowed with milk and honey. However, ten of the spies were overwhelmed by the strength of the inhabitants. They brought a report that was designed to deter even the bravest of their audience. Only Caleb, with Joshua as his silent supporter, disagreed. He urged immediate conquest.

The other ten spies drowned out Caleb's words and spread such despair among the people that, once again, they complained that Moses had brought them into the wilderness to die – stating, once again, that they would have been better off to die in Egypt. This the seventh time that the people had murmured against Jehovah and Moses. They even went so far as to elect a new leader to lead them back to Egypt.⁴⁴⁵

Moses, Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua fell down before the people, tore their clothes in anguish, and pled with the people to abandon their rebellion. In response the people planned to stone Caleb and Joshua – only the appearance of the Glory of Jehovah restrained the people in their rebellious reaction.

As he had done on the occasion of the golden calf at the base of Sinai, Jehovah once again stated that He was ready to destroy the people and begin a new nation which would consist of descendants of Moses.⁴⁴⁶ As he had done on the previous occasion, Moses pled with Jehovah to not do this. Jehovah declared that he would not bring about the destruction of the people at this time, but that all of that generation would die in the wilderness. None of this group, except Caleb and Joshua, would live to enter the Promised Land.⁴⁴⁷

The following day, the people realized their folly and hastily attacked the inhabitants of Canaan. They were ready to begin the conquest of the Promised Land. Moses warned them that they would fail, but they did not heed his warning. The outcome was a sorry defeat before the hordes of Amalekites and Canaanites.⁴⁴⁸

Sundry Legislation and the Lesson of the Sabbath Breaker
Chapter 15

The first thirty-one verses of this chapter repeats instructions given previously concerning offerings.

Verses thirty-two through thirty-six are an account of a man who was found violating the Sabbath by gathering sticks on this sacred day. Being a bit uncertain as to what they should do,

⁴⁴⁵ Numbers 14:4; Nehemiah 9:16-17

⁴⁴⁶ Exodus 32:10

⁴⁴⁷ Numbers 14:22-31

⁴⁴⁸ Numbers 14:40-45

they held the man in custody until Jehovah could give directions. Jehovah said that the man be stoned. In obedience to Jehovah's order, the execution was carried out.

Verses thirty-seven through forty-one contain Jehovah's instructions concerning the unique adornment that all Israelites should wear. They were to wear ribbon of blue tassels on the border of their garments to remind them of their special relationship with Jehovah and as a reminder to keep all of the commandments.

Korah's Rebellion

Chapter 16

Korah was a Levite of the honored Kohath family. He was the ringleader of a group that rose up in rebellion against Moses. Others who led the rebellion were Dathan, Abiram, and On. These three were of the tribe of Reuben. Two hundred fifty rebels followed them. The rebellion not only was against the leadership of Moses, but also against the priesthood of Aaron. Among other things, they accused Moses of deceit.⁴⁴⁹ They declared that all of Israel was holy unto Jehovah and that Moses and Aaron were being arrogant by putting themselves in roles of leadership over the tribes.

Moses challenged Korah and his associates to fill their censers with fire and join him and Aaron before the Tabernacle and let Jehovah show who He has chosen. Dathan and Abiram refused to come to the Tabernacle – they replied that Moses had no right to tell them what to do and so they would not come to the Tabernacle.

Moses' anger was evident when Korah and his two hundred fifty followers boldly came to the Tabernacle with their censers. Not only that, Korah was able to gather the entire congregation before the Tabernacle to watch the discrediting of Moss.

Jehovah told Moses and Aaron to get away from the congregation so that He could destroy the Israelites. Moses quickly pled with Jehovah to not destroy the entire nation because of the sin of a few. Jehovah then told Moses and Aaron to tell the congregation to get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. The congregation did so while the three ringleaders stood in front of their tents with their families.

Moses said to the congregation, if these three men die normal deaths, then I am not sent from God. However, *“if Jehovah brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned Jehovah.”*⁴⁵⁰

Indeed, this is what happened. Just as Moses finished speaking,

the ground that was under them split open;³² and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah, with their possessions.³³ So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ Numbers 16:14

⁴⁵⁰ Numbers 16:30

⁴⁵¹ Numbers 16:31-33

The people began to flee in fear and a fire from heaven came down and destroyed the two-hundred fifty followers of Korah. Moses then told Eleazar to take the censers of these men and throw the fire abroad, then take the censers themselves and hammer them into metal sheets for plating for the altar. These plates will be a reminder to the Israelites that they should not come near the altar to burn incense.

The people then began to blame Moses and Aaron for these deaths. In response, Jehovah sent a plague on the people and many quickly died. Aaron rushed among the people with a censer and stood between the living and the dead. Aaron's action ended the plague, but even so, 14,700 were slain in the plague.

The Priesthood of Aaron Confirmed

Chapter 17

God immediately chose to confirm His choice for the Aaronic priesthood. At Jehovah's instruction, each tribal leader was to bring a rod and the twelve rods were placed in front of the Holy of Holies. Aaron's rod was the rod representing the tribe of Levi. Each man wrote his name on his rod. The next day, the rods were withdrawn and Aaron's rod had not only budded, but also had produced blossoms and fruit. Thus, the validity of the Aaronic priesthood was settled beyond question.

Given the series of events that had just transpired, the people of Israel were fearful and depressed.

The Duties of the Priests and Their Support

Chapter 18

This chapter repeats some of the earlier material but also gives more complete information concerning the financial support of the priests. The Levites were to be supported by the tithes of the people. The priests were to be supported by the tithes of the Levites plus free will offerings and portions of sacrifices brought to the altar. There is no statement that the priests were to tithe.

The Waters of Purification

Chapter 19

Special provision was made for those who were made unclean by touching a dead body in warfare or by touching a defiled vessel. A red heifer was to be slain and a priest was to burn the entire animal at a location outside of the camp. Cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet thread shall be thrown on the burning carcass. The ashes of the heifer were to be collected and stored up for future use by those needing cleansing. When a cleansing ceremony was needed, running water shall be collected in a vessel and ashes from the heifer were to be added to the water. This concoction was known as the *waters of separation*.

The waters of separation were sprinkled on the unclean person on the third and seventh days to accomplish a ceremonial cleansing.

NOTE: Most commentators consider a gap of thirty-seven years to occur between Chapters 19 and 20.

Kadesh in the Fortieth Year Chapter 20

With the exception of the scant material in Chapter 33, Scripture passes over the journey of Israel between the time of the defeat at Kadesh (when Israelites impulsively tried to invade Canaan) and the arrival of a new generation at Kadesh in the fortieth and final year of their wilderness exodus. This chapter takes up the story at this point.

We know that Chapter 20 takes up the record beginning in the 40th year because of the dating of the death of Aaron.

- Israel arrived at Kadesh in the first month of the year.⁴⁵²
- Aaron was with Israel when the nation arrived at Kadesh
- The narrative of the time spent at Kadesh and the following events do not allow for an extended time between the arrival at Kadesh and the death of Aaron.⁴⁵³
- Aaron died the first day of the fifth month of the fortieth year.⁴⁵⁴

Miriam died not long after their arrival at Kadesh.

When the Israelites arrived at Kadesh, the congregation consisted of the second generation of Exodus travelers. Because of their rebellions, Jehovah had declared that none of the first generation (with the exception of Caleb and Joshua) would enter the Promised Land. By the time the nation had reached Kadesh, the first generation had died.

Sadly, the members of the younger generation demonstrated the same traits that had been seen in their parents. They manifested the same behaviour that their parents had demonstrated thirty-eight years before, when there was a shortage of water at Rephidim.⁴⁵⁵ Once again, Moses faced the challenge of discontented people.

And there was no water for the congregation; and they assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron. The people thus contended with Moses and spoke, saying, "If only we had perished when our brothers perished before Jehovah! Why then have you brought Jehovah's assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here? And why have you made us come up from Egypt, to bring us in to this wretched place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there water to drink."⁴⁵⁶

Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in front of the veil before the Holy of Holies and the glory of Jehovah appeared to them. Jehovah told Moses to take the rod that had been used for so many miracles, and then, he and Aaron should call the congregation to assemble before a certain rock. Moses then was to speak to the rock and water would spring forth.

⁴⁵² Numbers 20:1

⁴⁵³ Numbers 20:2-22

⁴⁵⁴ Numbers 20:22-29; 33:38

⁴⁵⁵ Exodus 17

⁴⁵⁶ Numbers 20:2-5

After Moses and Aaron had assembled the congregation before the rock, Moses displayed his anger.

and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, "Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank.⁴⁵⁷

Immediately, Jehovah spoke a word of severe rebuke to Moses and Aaron

But Jehovah said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."⁴⁵⁸

Exactly what Moses and Aaron did that was not believing Jehovah or not treating Him as holy is not clear. A number of suggestions have been made:

- Moses struck the rock, whereas he had been told to speak to it
- Moses claimed that he and Aaron were causing the miracle
- Moses spoke to the people, rather than to the rock
- Moses had lost his temper
- Moses had faith in the rod, rather than in Jehovah

Whatever the offense might have been, it would have been something that Moses, upon reflection, would have understood as a transgression. From that time forward, Moses and Aaron knew that their remaining years of leadership were coming to an end.

As Moses contemplated the route to Canaan, along the route that God has described, it was apparent to him that the shortest route would be eastward and then north through Edom.⁴⁵⁹ Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom asking permission for the Israelites to pass through his land. Moses addressed the king as "your brother," because the Edomites were descended from Esau, the brother of Isaac, Israel's ancestor.

Moses assured the king that the Israelites would confine their travel to the king's highway, pledging to not depart from the roadway. The king refused to grant permission for the Israelites to pass through his country. A second appeal was made to which the king responded by amassing a sizeable group of people to block Israel's passage through the country.

Israel then traveled east and south, skirting the borders of Edom, making their next encampment at the base of Mt. Hor. Jehovah then said that this was as far as Aaron was to travel. The time of his death had come. Jehovah instructed Moses, Aaron, and Eleazar to ascend a short distance up the mountain – to a point where the people still could see them. In obedience to Jehovah, Moses removed the High Priestly garments from Aaron and placed them on Eleazar. Shortly thereafter, Aaron died on the mountain.

The nation spent thirty days mourning the death of Aaron.

⁴⁵⁷ Numbers 20:10-11

⁴⁵⁸ Numbers 20:12

⁴⁵⁹ There is no mention of the Divine Cloud's leading them at this time.

A Successful Defeat of Canaanites

Chapter 21:1-3

When the Canaanite king of Arad saw the trajectory of the Israelites, he decided to attack them. He launched an attack and took some Israelites captive. Interestingly, this encounter was near the spot where Israel thirty-eight years earlier had experienced an ignominious defeat at the hand of Canaanites.⁴⁶⁰

The Israelites asked Jehovah to enable them to defeat these Canaanites and if He did so, they would destroy all of the Arad cities. Jehovah enabled them to have total victory in the campaign and all of the cities of this people group were destroyed.

The Firery Serpents

Chapter 21:4-9

When the people left Mt. Hor, they traveled near the shore of the Red Sea, avoiding the land of Edom. Once again, the people became impatient with the journey and began to complain. In response Jehovah caused a plague of “fiery serpents” to come among the people and many Israelites were bitten and died.

The people acknowledged that in their grumbling they had sinned. They begged Moses to intercede for them. He did so and Jehovah responded by instructing Moses to make a serpent of brass and erect it on a tall pole. Jehovah did not remove the serpents, but promised that when anyone was bitten by a serpent, if he would look at the brazen serpent he would be healed.

The Journey to Pisgah and Subsequent Conquests

Chapter 21:10-35

The Israelite continued their journey north, camping at a number of places along the way. When they arrived at Pisgah, they established an encampment there. From this site, they began their conquest of the nations east of the Jordan river.

- They first defeated Sihon, king of the Amorites. This victory gave the Israelites a significant possession and they began to occupy all of the cities of the Amorites.
- Next, they defeated Og, king of Bashan, whereby they gained another large territory.

Balaam and Balak

Chapters 22-24

The Israelites next camped in the plains of Moab, east of the Jordan River, near Jericho’s west-bank location. When Balak, king of Moab, saw the military might of Israel and how one nation after another was being overrun by God’s chosen people, he sought the assistance of the prophet Balaam. It was his hope that Balaam would pronounce a curse on the Israelites. Balaam was one of those ill-defined figures who seemed to have received communications from Jehovah, but also demonstrated traits of a Babylonian soothsayer.

Balak recruited the assistance of Midianite elders in the effort to obtain the services of Balaam. They went to Balaam and offered him money to pronounce a curse on Israel. Balaam told them that he would seek Jehovah overnight and see if Jehovah would allow such a curse. When Balaam sought Jehovah’s word, Jehovah prohibited him from pronouncing such a curse.

⁴⁶⁰ Numbers 14:40-45

Balak sent another delegation consisting of more elders and people of more distinguished roles. They promised Balaam that he could have whatever he asked, if he would but pronounce the curse. Balaam strongly responded,

"Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, either small or great, contrary to the command of Jehovah my God."⁴⁶¹

Again, Balaam said that he would seek Jehovah overnight to learn His response to Balak's appeal. Jehovah gave him the release to go, but made it clear that Balaam could only speak what He, Jehovah, would give him.

Even though Jehovah gave Balaam permission to go to Balak, it is clear that Jehovah did not approve of Balaam's decision to make the trip; He was allowing Balaam to follow his inclinations. This we know from the subsequent events. As Balaam was riding his donkey on the way to meet Balak, the angel of Jehovah stood in the way and the donkey left the path and went into the field. Balak beat his donkey to turn her back to the path, but every time they began to travel, the angel appeared and the donkey misbehaved. Finally, the donkey just lay down.

As Balaam began to beat the donkey, Jehovah gave the donkey the ability to speak and after several verbal exchanges, Jehovah enabled Balaam to see the angel. When Balaam saw the angel he fell down in awe. The angel told Balaam to go to Balak, but reinforced the importance of speaking only what Jehovah gave him to speak.

When Balaam did arrive at his destination, Balak shortly thereafter took him to one of the high places where Baal was worshipped. From that vantage point, Balaam was able to see some of the Israelites. Following Balaam's instructions, seven altars were constructed and seven bulls and seven rams were offered. Balaam walked a short distance away, hoping to hear from Jehovah. Indeed, he did hear from Jehovah, but what he received was a blessing on Israel, not a curse.

Balak was quite upset, but decided that if they tried another location the result might be different. So they went to a field on the top of Mt. Pisgah, from which a major portion of Israel could be seen. The erection of altars and offerings was repeated. The result was the same as before – Jehovah pronounced a blessing on Israel, rather than a curse.

They then went to another location and repeated the procedure, with the same result – a blessing, not a curse. Balak was very angry with Balaam because a blessing for Israel had come forth from Jehovah three times. Balaam prepared to go back home, but before he did, he gave a prophecy of what Israel would do to Balak's people – it was a prophecy of Israel's victory over many nations.

⁴⁶¹ Numbers 22:18

Balaam's Ploy, Resulting in Israel's Sin at Peor
Chapter 25

Although this chapter does not give information concerning Balaam's role in this tragedy, other portions of Scripture indicate that he was the one behind it.⁴⁶² His advice to Balak seems to have been, "If we can't curse them, and if you can't defeat them, then seduce and pervert them"

Acting on Balaam's advice, the women of Moab and the women of Midian began to seduce the men of Israel and draw them into the worship of *Baal-Peor* (as the god of war, he was known as *Chemosh*). This particular system of idolatry involved adulterous fertility rites. It was a very perverted and vicious religion.

At Jehovah's instructions, Moses dispatched elders to go throughout the camp and execute all who had participated in the evil worship. The Hebrew terms in verse 4 are accurately translated in the King James Version, *hang them up before Jehovah against the sun*,⁴⁶³ This is a description of a custom of that era, whereby a person was executed by first being killed, and then the body was placed on a stake for all to behold as a warning against crimes such as the one committed by the executed criminal.

While the people were surrounding the Tabernacle courtyard and weeping over the Divine wrath, a man who was a prince of the tribe of Simeon brought a Midianite woman into the camp, no doubt intending to commit adultery with her in his tent.⁴⁶⁴ Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, who later became the High Priest, was so incensed by this brazen act that he grabbed a spear and pierced both the man and the woman.⁴⁶⁵

Jehovah had brought a plague upon the people, because they had been committing harlotry with Baal-Peor. Phinehas's zeal caused the plague to cease, but 24,000 Israelites died before it had ceased.⁴⁶⁶

Because of his zeal, Phinehas was promised that future High Priests would descend from him.

Jehovah then instructed Moses to urge the Israelites to have the same zeal as Phinehas had demonstrated and to be hostile to the Midianites and to strike them with force, because they had tricked Israel into the practices that resulted in the tragedy of Peor.

⁴⁶² Numbers 31:16; Revelation 2:14

⁴⁶³ יהוֹקֵעַ אוֹתָם לַיהוָה נִגְדָה הַשָּׁמַיִם

⁴⁶⁴ The man's name was Zimri, whose father was a leader of the Simeonites. The woman was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, who was a Midianite leader (Numbers 25:14-15)

⁴⁶⁵ Because he pierced both of them through the belly (קִבְדָּה - i.e. belly) they probably were in the act of intercourse when he slew them.

⁴⁶⁶ I Corinthians 10:8 states that 1000 of these died in a single day.

Another Census Chapter 26

Thirty-eight years had passed since the census was taken to determine the size of the Israelite army. Now, Jehovah commanded Moses and Eleazar (the successor to Aaron) to take a census of the same type as had been done at Sinai before the left that encampment.⁴⁶⁷ In the first census, men above the age of twenty who were available for military service numbered 603,550.⁴⁶⁸ In this census, the number was 601,730⁴⁶⁹

Thus, as they neared the time to conquer the Promised Land, there were 1,820 fewer warriors than when they left Sinai. All who had begun the journey at Sinai had died, with the exception of Caleb, Joshua, and Moses.

A Question of Inheritance Chapter 27:1-11

The daughters of Zelophehad were the only heirs of their family. Their father had died somewhere along the way and he had no sons, only five daughters. No one had settled the question concerning the right of females to hold property and so they came to Moses to present their situation to him.

Moses sought Jehovah's ruling and Jehovah decreed that if there were no male heirs, then daughters were to receive the inheritance. If a man died without sons or daughters, then the inheritance will go to the nearest relative.

Further ruling on this matter is given in Chapter 38. The daughters are free to marry any Israelite who is of the same tribe as their father. No inheritance of the sons of Israel was to be transferred from one tribe to another.

Moses Was Informed Concerning His Death and the Anointing of Joshua Chapter 27:12-23

After these instructions concerning heritage of the land, Jehovah announced to Moses that he was near the end of his life. He was informed, once again, that because of the sin he committed at Meribah, in Kadesh, he would not enter the Promised Land. Jehovah instructed him to ascend the mountain, Abarim. Abarim was the name of the mountain range. Nebo was the mountain in the mountain range that was directly east of Jericho. Pisgah was the peak of Mount Nebo.⁴⁷⁰ Jehovah told him to ascend the mountain view the Promised Land, but would die upon the mountain, even as Aaron had died on Mt. Hor.

Moses then appealed to Jehovah to appoint a leader to succeed him, otherwise the people would be like sheep without a shepherd. Jehovah told Moses to lay his hand on Joshua in whom was the Spirit, and have him stand before the High Priest, Eleazar, in the sight of all the people. Jehovah said that in the future, Eleazar, through inquiring of the Urim, would discern the will of God for Joshua. This indicated that Joshua would be inferior to the priesthood, whereas Moses had been superior to it. Thus, Joshua was commissioned before the entire congregation.

⁴⁶⁷ Numbers 1:2ff

⁴⁶⁸ Numbers 1:46

⁴⁶⁹ Numbers 26:51

⁴⁷⁰ Deuteronomy 32:48-52

Laws Repeated and Reinforced
Chapters 28-30

In these chapters many of the laws and ordinances commanded in previous sections are rehearsed, along with strong exhortations to abide by them.

War Against the Midianites
Chapter 31

The events of this chapter are an aftermath of the episode at Peor. This was a holy war against the Midianites. With the exception of his valedictory address recorded in Deuteronomy, this was Moses' last official act. The army sent against the Midianites consisted of 1,000 warriors from each tribe – 12,000 men. Phinehas went with the army and took with him the trumpets to stir the zeal of the army. This was to be a war of annihilation.

Israel was overwhelmingly victorious over the Midianites. Special mention is made of the death of Balaam who had sought to find ways to outmaneuver Jehovah. The Israelite army killed all male Midianites, but took captive the women, the children, and took as spoil the flocks, the herds, and other loot. They then burned all of the Midianite cities.

When the victorious army returned to the Israelite encampment, Moses and the High Priest, Eleazar, along with the elders, went out to meet them. Moses immediately was angered with the officers of the army because they spared the women.

And Moses said to them, "Have you spared all the women? "Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against Jehovah in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of Jehovah.

*Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man intimately.*⁴⁷¹

Two things stand out in this command:

- The women of Midian had been willing instruments in seducing the Israelites into their idolatry and harlotry. Therefore, any woman who was not a virgin might have been one of the seducers and so all non-virgins among the Midianite women were to be killed.
- War was intended be a war of annihilation of the Midianite nation. It was to be a genocide. Any male child could have perpetuated the Midianite nation. Virgin females could not have perpetuated the nation.

The virgin Midianite women could become wives or slaves of the Israelite warriors.

Because the warriors had touched dead bodies in their battles, they had to remain outside of the camp for seven days so that the third and seventh day ceremonies for cleansing could occur (as per the offering of the ashes of the red heifer, etc. outlined in Chapter 19).

Instructions were given concerning the clean and unclean items taken as booty, as well as the process whereby some items were to be purified. The spoils were divided with the warriors and the people sharing equally. In addition to the sharing with the common Israelite, the priests were to receive one five hundredth of that given to a warrior and the Levites received one fiftieth of a portion assigned to a common person.

⁴⁷¹ Numbers 31:15-17

Two and One-Half Tribes Choose Transjordan for their Inheritance Chapter 32

All of the Transjordan region had become Israel's possession. The land was ideally suited for raising cattle and sheep. The tribes of Rueben and Gad had large herds and flocks and so these two tribes asked that the Transjordan be given to them as their inheritance. Moses agreed to this request, giving this region to Rueben, Gad, and Manasseh (considered to be a half tribe, since Manasseh was but one of Joseph's sons, the other being Ephraim⁴⁷²).

Moses insisted that, even though they had been given this territory, they had an obligation to join the other tribes in conquering Canaan, "*But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against Jehovah, and be sure your sin will find you out.*"⁴⁷³

These three tribes agreed; they would leave their wives, children, and livestock in the Transjordan while all of their warriors would continue with the rest of the Israelites in the conquest of the Promised Land.

A Summary of the Journey Chapter 33

Chapter thirty-three is a recounting and summary of Israel's travels and encampments. Although this chapter does mention some of the locations of camps that are not described in the earlier narrative, some portions of the earlier journey are omitted. Twenty-four of the encampments mentioned are the same as mentioned in Exodus. This rather barren record is the only information given concerning the years between the two visits to Kadesh (the gap between chapters 19 and 20).

The Cities of Refuge Chapter 35⁴⁷⁴

Jehovah commanded that the Levites be given forty-eight cities and their suburbs. The size of the pasture lands outside of the walls of the cities was prescribed by Jehovah.⁴⁷⁵ Six of these cities were designated, *cities of refuge*.⁴⁷⁶

The code of the vendetta was prevalent throughout this culture. If a man killed someone, unintentionally, the family of the one slain claimed the right – even felt obligated – to chase down and kill the one who had slain their relative.⁴⁷⁷ The cities of refuge were designed to assure justice before such a vendetta could take place.

These cities did not provide refuge for someone who deliberately had committed murder. Specific instruments used to kill someone were listed, the use thereof clearly indicated that the

⁴⁷² Genesis 48:8-20

⁴⁷³ Numbers 32:23

⁴⁷⁴ See Deuteronomy 19:1-3; Joshua 20:1-9

⁴⁷⁵ Numbers 35:1-5

⁴⁷⁶ Numbers 35:6

⁴⁷⁷ Numbers 35:19

wound was inflicted deliberately.⁴⁷⁸ Also, specific acts done in the killing would indicate that the murder was intentional.⁴⁷⁹

If the one who had killed someone accidentally (manslaughter) did not flee quickly, the avenger might overtake him and kill him. Also, the one accused of the killing was safe only as long as he abode in the city. Should he leave, he would be at risk of being killed by the avenger.⁴⁸⁰ If the nature of the death were in dispute, these cities provided a place of safety until a fair trial could be held.⁴⁸¹

A Final Word on Marriage and Inheritance

Chapter 36

The information in this chapter is included in the discussion of Chapter 27.

THUS CLOSES THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

⁴⁷⁸ Numbers 35:16-18

⁴⁷⁹ Numbers 35:20-21

⁴⁸⁰ Numbers 35:26-27

⁴⁸¹ Numbers 35:29

THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

The Hebrew name of this book is *devarim*, meaning, *words*. It is so named because of the opening phrase, “these are the words.”⁴⁸² The English name for this book is derived from the Septuagint’s rendering of Deuteronomy 17:18. In the English, this verse reads, ...*a copy of this law*... The Septuagint render these words as, *to deuteronomion touto* (τὸ δευτερονόμιον τοῦτο), “this second law.” Thus, translators adopted the key word of this phrase as the title for the entire book. The term, *deuteronomion*, standing alone, simply means, *second law*. To a degree, this is an appropriate name, because most of the book is a retelling of material in the three other books of the Exodus.

Deuteronomy is a series of oratorical addresses that Moses made to the Israelites just before his death. Students and commentaries of Deuteronomy disagree as to how many speeches – where one address ends and another begins. In some of Moses’ recounting, he occasionally adds a detail that was not included in the original account. We noted most of these additional details when studying the three earlier books.

A very appropriate name for this book would be, *Moses’ Valedictory Address*.

The introductory verses of Deuteronomy provide the setting for these sermons.

These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel across the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel and Laban and Hazeroth and Dizahab.

It is eleven days’ journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea.

And it came about in the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel, according to all that Jehovah had commanded him to give to them, after he had defeated Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth and Edrei.

*Across the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound this law, saying, ...*⁴⁸³

All adults who had begun the journey out of Egypt, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, had died, or were about to die. It was important for the new generation to hear from the lips of the departing Moses a rehearsal of the Law and an accurate statement concerning God’s dealings with the nation. The audience was “all Israel,” because Jehovah considered it to be important for the entire population to hear this farewell address. The new generation was to hear the moral and spiritual lessons that had been taught through the experiences in the wilderness.

The key word of this book is, *obedience*.

The expression, *Jehovah our [or your or thy] God*, is found 300 times in Deuteronomy and less than 50 times in the rest of the Pentateuch.

The expression, *which I am commanding you* is found 30 times in Deuteronomy and only once elsewhere.⁴⁸⁴

Some key verses in Deuteronomy, reflecting the theme of obedience are:

⁴⁸² אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים

⁴⁸³ Deuteronomy 1:1-5

⁴⁸⁴ See Holdcroft, page 118

'Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!⁴⁸⁵

"And now, Israel, what does Jehovah your God require from you, but to fear Jehovah your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul,⁴⁸⁶

"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of Jehovah your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of Jehovah your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.⁴⁸⁷

"The secret things belong to Jehovah our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.⁴⁸⁸

From Horeb to Kadesh and Events at Kadesh

Chapter 1:6-46

These verses recount in summary fashion the events recorded in Numbers 10:11-14:45. It begins with the moment when the cloud lifted from over the newly constructed tabernacle at Sinai, and concludes with the account of the spies that went into the promised land, followed by Israel's abortive attempt to conquer Canaan.

The only significant new detail in this section is the statement that the people had requested Moses to send the spies. Moses, being pleased with this idea, presented it to Jehovah who gave the command to do so.

The Wandering in the Wilderness to the Conquest of the Kingdoms of Sihon and Og and Reaffirmation of the Word that Moses Would Not Enter the Promised Land

Chapters 2-3

Moses, in a very summary fashion, recounted the events of the thirty-eight years of wandering after they left Kadesh. New information given in this account is that the sparing of Edom, Moab, and Ammon was in obedience to a Divine command. They were not to engage in battle with Edom because, as noted earlier, the Edomites were descendants of Esau. Moab and Ammon were spared because of they were descendants of Lot.

He mentions that although the rulers of Edom had resisted the Israelites, some of the residents of Edom's borders were willing to sell food and water to the Israelites.

The fate of Sihon, whereby *Jehovah Thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, in order to deliver him into your hand...* is reminiscent of the Pharaoh, during the deliverance from Egypt.

Another interesting detail is that when Moses described Israel's victory over the very formidable nation of Bashan, with its sixty cities, he concludes by describing the iron bedstead of Bashan's king, Og. Og's iron bedstead was nine cubits long and four cubits wide (13 ½ feet x 6 feet). The implication was that if Israel could defeat even the great Og, when physical prowess was so important in hand-to-hand combat, then Israel need fear nothing in the future.

⁴⁸⁵ Deuteronomy 5:29

⁴⁸⁶ Deuteronomy 10:12

⁴⁸⁷ Deuteronomy 11:26-28

⁴⁸⁸ Deuteronomy 29:29

Moses closed this portion of his oration by giving new information his being forbidden to enter the Promised Land. He told the congregation that he pled with Jehovah to let him enter the Promised Land, but Jehovah refused, because of the sin that Moses had committed at Meribah.⁴⁸⁹ His pleading with Jehovah was not mentioned earlier. In his telling of this episode he presented God as being holy and just on the one hand, but also tender and gracious on the other.

Application of the Narrative

Chapter 4

Moses concluded this portion of his speech by reminding the Israelites how greatly blessed they were, having witnessed both the Law and the acts of God. Because of this, he reemphasized the importance of obedience.

A Restatement of the Ten Commandments

Chapter 5

The recitation of the Ten Commandments is almost identical to their presentation in Exodus 20, except that the observance of the Sabbath is linked to the commemoration of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt.

The nuances on this recitation are those that make it clear that not only are the Ten Commandments a general pronouncement of God's standards, but they especially are applicable to Israel. One means whereby this was emphasized is Moses recounting in vivid detail the events associated with the giving of the Commandments.

An Exhortation to Keep the Law

Chapter 6

Moses emphasized that since the people had the Law, they were to observe it carefully and rigidly, and to teach their children to do likewise.

Jews have adopted 6:4 as the epitome of their entire distinct religious doctrine. They label this verse, the *Shema*, the Hebrew word for, *hear*.⁴⁹⁰

"Hear, O Israel! Jehovah is our God, Jehovah is one!"⁴⁹¹

When Jesus was questioned about the first and greatest commandment, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 and coupled it with a portion of Leviticus 19:18.⁴⁹²

"And you shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

"...you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am Jehovah.

Verses 6-8 emphasize the importance of keeping the words of the Law constantly in their minds and on their hearts.

⁴⁸⁹ Numbers 20:1-13

⁴⁹⁰ שמע

⁴⁹¹ Holdcroft (page 120) makes this statement concerning the terminology of this verse, "...even though this is a clear statement of monotheism, it does not rule out a triune deity. The word, 'God,' is *Elohim*, which actually is plural, and the word, 'one' is *echod* in the Hebrew. *Echod* means a compound unity, as contrasted with *yochid*, which means a single one."

⁴⁹² Matthew 22:36ff; Mark 12:28ff; Luke 10:25ff

"And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. "And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

In later generations, the Jews took these exhortations literally and wore on their foreheads phylacteries (small pouches) with portions of scripture inside, wristlets inscribed with portions of the Law, and pouches on their door frames containing Scripture.

Of note is the fact that writing, as presented here and later, in reference to divorce proceedings (24:1), and that their ruler was to write, for himself, a copy of the Law, is evidence that writing was common among the Israelites of this period.

Life and Prospects in the Promised Land Chapters 7-8

It was the will of Jehovah that Israel's conquest of the Promised Land result in the total destruction of the Gentile nations that occupied the land. These nations are named: Hittites, Gergashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, *seven nations that are greater and stronger than you.*⁴⁹³ Four centuries earlier, when God gave the covenant promises to Abram, He foretold the growth of Abram's descendants, their years of slavery in Egypt, and their ultimate possession of Canaan. He told Abram that the land could not be his during his lifetime, because the iniquity of these nations had not reached its limit.⁴⁹⁴ Now, as Israel prepared for the conquest, Jehovah indicated that the iniquity had reached its limit and that these peoples must be eradicated.⁴⁹⁵

The national groups that inhabited Canaan had developed systems of worship that consisted of the most degrading acts of sexual immorality. They sacrificed their children by burning them alive. Their moral life was so corrupt that Jehovah decreed their removal from the earth. Israel was God's agent chosen to accomplish this cleansing of the land. Not only the destruction of the people of Canaan, but also the destruction of their altars, their idols, and their places of worship were to be destroyed. A special warning was given against intermarrying with these nations.

Lest the Israelites begin to boast, Moses declared,

"Jehovah did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because Jehovah loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, Jehovah brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Know therefore that Jehovah your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments;

but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face."⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹³ Deuteronomy 7:1

⁴⁹⁴ Genesis 15:16

⁴⁹⁵ Deuteronomy 7:2ff

⁴⁹⁶ Deuteronomy 7:7-10

Moses then charged the people to not fear their enemies – that Jehovah would fight with them and for them, even sending hornets against their enemies.

Moses stated the purpose of the wilderness wanderings,

"And you shall remember all the way which Jehovah your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not."⁴⁹⁷

Moses declared that even the provision of manna was to teach the people the importance of relying on God's integrity and thus, trusting his Word.

"And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of Jehovah."⁴⁹⁸

Moses promised the people an abundant and prosperous existence if they would obey, faithfully, all that Jehovah commanded.

Another Exhortation to Honor God's Requirements and Blessings Chapters 9-11

Moses faithfully pointed out the shame of the people's failures and that they had no real basis for claiming to be righteous.

"It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."⁴⁹⁹

"You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day I knew you."⁵⁰⁰

Moses then retold the story of his having to cut out two stones for Jehovah to use in replacing the original slabs that had contained the Ten Commandments and a few words concerning the construction of the Ark.

Throughout this section, over and over again, the emphasis is on obedience, with illustrations of their past history used to reinforce the importance of obedience, and the blessings of God bestowed upon those who obey Him.

A summary of this section is found in 10:12

"And now, Israel, what does Jehovah your God require from you, but to fear Jehovah your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

⁴⁹⁷ Deuteronomy 8:2

⁴⁹⁸ Deuteronomy 8:3

⁴⁹⁹ Deuteronomy 9:5

⁵⁰⁰ Deuteronomy 9:24

Laws of Worship Chapters 12-13

This section contains a litany of warnings against Idolatry and the need to eradicate any residue of idolatry in the land that they will occupy.

Moses declared that when they were settled in the land that Jehovah would choose a location for the center of worship. It was not until the time of David, five hundred years later, that Jehovah chose Jerusalem for that location.⁵⁰¹

A warning was given, concerning the seriousness of subtracting from or adding to God's words.

Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.
⁵⁰²

The people were to resist any agency that would influence them to turn from God. A warning was given concerning three agencies that might lead people into idolatry:

- False prophets (13:1-5)
- One's family (13:6-11)
- One's neighbors (13:12-18)

The Required Separation of the People Chapters 14:1-16:17

Jehovah intended that His people clearly be different from their neighbors – both in behavior and in appearance. Whereas the heathen often cut themselves and shaved their heads in religious expression (especially in necromancy), Israelites were forbidden from manifesting any of these practices.

As a reminder, Moses rehearsed the dietary laws, concerning what could be eaten and what could not be eaten.

Moses reiterated the law of the tithe with some interesting additions. For example, if the farmer desires to tithe his crop, as he should do, but the distance to the place of worship is too great for him to transport the tithe, then the produce should be sold. The farmer then is to take the money to the place of worship and buy anything that he wants to eat or drink and have a feast in that place, giving praise to God.

Another addition is that every third year, the tithe of the produce for that year is to be brought to the town where the farmer lives. The Levites, the aliens, the orphans, and the widows that live in that town should come and feast upon this tithe.

An exhortation is given concerning the Sabbatical year.

Moses briefly exhorted the people to be generous and charitable and to be scrupulous in their observance of the annual festivals and religious days.

⁵⁰¹ II Samuel 5:7

⁵⁰² Deuteronomy 12:32

Civil and Religious leaders
Chapters 16:18 -18:22

Moses explained the Divine plan of civil and religious administration of the nation that should be implemented when they occupied the Promised Land.

Because the government was to be God's means of both instructing the people and administering His Law, its nature was vital to Him. The authority in the new land was to be in the hands of Judges and officers appointed in each town. Strong warnings were given against authorities' taking of bribes or distorting judgment in any form.⁵⁰³

Idolatry was to be looked upon as treason and any practice that had even the slightest hint of false religion or a distortion of the true faith were to be shunned.⁵⁰⁴ Because groves of trees were frequently associated with the worship of Ashtaroah, planting groves of trees was prohibited. A custom of the residents of Canaan was to erect a wooden symbol of the female deity, Asherah, near a religious site. The Israelites warned against doing this beside the altar of Jehovah.⁵⁰⁵

The authority of the judges and officers of the land was subordinate to that of the priests and Levites. Should there be some appeal to the ruling of one of the judges, or if a judge could not decide a case, these were referred the religious leaders.⁵⁰⁶

Should anyone begin to worship anything or anyone other than Jehovah, and it is found out, and there are two or three witnesses to the deed, then the judges shall investigate the accusation. No one is to be convicted on the word of a single witness. If the accusation proves to be true, then the culprit shall be stoned to death. The witnesses must cast the first stones and then the entire population of the area should join in and cast stones.⁵⁰⁷

If a judge or a priest rules in a case, and someone acts presumptuously, and will not abide by the judgment, that person shall be executed as an example to everyone. This will put fear in the people so that others will not act presumptuously toward the ruling of a priest or a judge.⁵⁰⁸

Jehovah prophesied through Moses that after the Israelites had been in Canaan for a season that they would seek to have a king, like all of the other nations. Jehovah will allow that, but restrictions were to be put on this king: he shall not multiply horses for himself, he shall not multiply wives for himself, nor shall he multiply gold and silver for himself. In the presence of the Levites he shall write on a scroll a copy of the law, which he shall read all of his life in order to live in fear of Jehovah. If he does this, he and his sons will have a long life in the midst of Israel.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰³ Deuteronomy 16:18-20

⁵⁰⁴ Deuteronomy 18:9-14

⁵⁰⁵ Deuteronomy 16:21-22

⁵⁰⁶ Deuteronomy 17:8-9

⁵⁰⁷ Deuteronomy 17:2-7

⁵⁰⁸ Deuteronomy 17:10-13

⁵⁰⁹ Deuteronomy 17:14-20

Moses reiterated the rules concerning the support of the Levites by the tithes of the people, along with some instructions concerning food for the Levites. Should a Levite leave his home in a Levitical city to serve at the Tabernacle, he would be supported by portions from the sacrifice.⁵¹⁰

One of the basic Messianic promises is contained in 18:15-16

Jehovah your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.

This verse could mean that in every generation Jehovah would have His prophet to represent Him before the people. However, Orthodox Jews regard this verse as a prophecy of the coming Messiah and it is so referenced twice in the New Testament.⁵¹¹ A strong warning was given that anyone who does not listen to the words of this prophet, he will have to answer to Jehovah.⁵¹²

A warning was given concerning false prophets. Any prophet speaks something in the name of God that God has not given him, shall die. A prophet who speaks in the name of any false God shall die. The test of the validity of a prophetic word given in the name of Jehovah is whether or not the word comes to pass – if it does not, then Jehovah did not say it.⁵¹³

Sundry Statements Concerning Manslaughter, War, and Murder Chapters 19:1-21:9

Moses reiterated the laws concerning manslaughter and the cities of refuge. He gave some examples of things that would be manslaughter. In addition to the three initial cities of refuge, as Israel's territory grew, they should add three more. These were to be centrally located in each region and roads to these cities should be well maintained. Anyone guilty of murder to fled to a city of refuge, and his case was determined to be murder, then the elders of the city should hand him over to the "avenger of blood," i.e., the relative of the slain person who then will kill the murderer.

Anyone who brings false testimony to a judge, the perjurer shall receive as punishment that which he sought to have imposed on the person against whom he gave false testimony. No pity shall be shown to such a person, but, "life for life, eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, hand for hand, and foot for foot," shall be the rule.⁵¹⁴

Before a battle, a priest shall speak to the troops, assuring that regardless of how strong the enemy seems, they should have no fear, because Jehovah, their God, will go to battle with them.

⁵¹⁰ Deuteronomy 18:1-8

⁵¹¹ Acts 3:22, on the occasion of the healing of the lame man in the name of Jesus; Acts 7:37, in Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin.

⁵¹² Deuteronomy 18:19

⁵¹³ Deuteronomy 18:20-22

⁵¹⁴ Deuteronomy 19:15-21

Generous provision was made for certain things that would exempt a person from military service, when a particular campaign was planned:⁵¹⁵

1. Someone who has just built a house and not dedicated it – lest he die in battle and someone else dedicate it
2. Someone who has just planted a vineyard and not harvested it – lest he die in battle and another man partake of its fruit
3. Someone who is engaged to a woman and not married her – lest he die in battle and another man marry her
4. Someone who is fainthearted and afraid – who might influence others to be afraid

When approaching a city, terms of peace should first be offered. If the city makes peace, then its inhabitants shall become forced laborers to the Israelites. If it does not make peace with the Israelite army, then the city shall be taken. No fruit trees should be cut down, but all other trees can be cut down and used as siegeworks. All of the men in the city shall be slain, but the women, children, animals, and all that is in the city shall be booty for the army of Israel – to be distributed as outlined in earlier sections.⁵¹⁶

No offer of peace should be given to the cities of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. All inhabitants of these cities are to be slain because of the detestable things that they have done in worshipping their Gods and also so that they will not be able to seduce Israelites into their worship practices.⁵¹⁷

In the event a body is found lying in open country and there is no means of determining whether or not he was murdered, then the elders of the nearest city shall take a heifer to a valley where there is running water, break its neck, place their hands on the head of the slain heifer and declare that they have not shed the blood of the slain person, nor did anyone in their city see it happen. Thus there will be no guilt imparted to the innocent people of that city.⁵¹⁸

Miscellaneous Precepts

Chapters 21:10-26:15

Moses sermon at this point becomes very practical and deals with a variety of matters touching the everyday life and affairs of the people.

Since the section begins with describing how Israel should conduct itself when conquering a city, other than one of the seven nations that should be eradicated, we assume that the rule concerning a captured woman refer to those captured in battles with a nation other than those seven. If an Israelite saw among the captives a woman of beautiful figure and had feelings for her, desiring to have her for a wife, he may take her home and keep her for a month. She was to shave her head and trim her fingernails. Both of these were symbols of her passing out of the state of a slave and of her reception into the fellowship of the covenant nation.⁵¹⁹ She was to remove her prisoner's clothes. During that month, she shall mourn for her parents, then she may be taken as a wife. However, if after the month of having her in his house for a month, the man decides that

⁵¹⁵ Deuteronomy 20:5-8

⁵¹⁶ Deuteronomy 20:10-20

⁵¹⁷ Deuteronomy 20:17-18

⁵¹⁸ Deuteronomy 21:1-9

⁵¹⁹ II Samuel 19:25; Leviticus 15:8; Numbers 8:7 See also Keil & Delitzsch, page 406

he does not want her, she shall be free to go where she pleases. She cannot be mistreated, nor can she be sold for money, because the man, by this action, has humbled her.⁵²⁰

If a man has two wives, and one is loved and unloved, but the unloved gives birth to the first son, then this son must be treated as the firstborn son, with all of the privileges and inheritance due him.⁵²¹

A repetition of the law concerning a rebellious son is given, with some additional details. The parents are to bring the son to the elders of the city and declare his rebellious state. The statements that the parents are to make to the elders concerning their son's conduct would indicate that the rebellious son is at least a teenager. Then all of the men of the city are to stone him to death.⁵²²

Should the body of a convicted criminal be hung on a tree, the body should be taken down before sunset and buried.⁵²³

If the property of a neighbor be found – an animal or any other object – it should be cared for and returned to its owner.⁵²⁴

Neither men nor women should wear garments of the opposite sex.⁵²⁵

Rules are given concerning the action one should take when finding a bird nest blown out of a tree, with a mother bird sitting on eggs or young birds in the nest. All houses should have a parapet around the roof so no one can accidentally fall off. A repetition is given of the rules against sowing two different types of seeds in a vineyard, plowing a donkey and ox together, mixing cloth in a garment. A repetition is given concerning the tassels that are to be on the borders of their garments.⁵²⁶

Laws concerning rape, the rejection of a wife, after marriage, culpability in sexual sin, and other such matters are spelled out in detail.⁵²⁷

Those with certain physical abnormalities, those without legitimate parentage, or those with Ammonite or Moabite ancestry were disqualified as worshippers at the Tabernacle. Those of Egyptian or Edomite ancestry would be permitted to worship at the Tabernacle if they were of the third generation with the Israelites.⁵²⁸

Proper sanitation was to be practiced in military camps.⁵²⁹

Refuge should be given to an escaped slave, rather than return him to his heathen master. Both female and male cult Prostitution is forbidden. Usury is forbidden when the borrower is an Israelite, but usury is permitted when lending to a foreigner. All vows are to be kept, scrupulously.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁰ Deuteronomy 21:10-14

⁵²¹ Deuteronomy 21:15-17

⁵²² Deuteronomy 21:18-21

⁵²³ Deuteronomy 21:22-23

⁵²⁴ Deuteronomy 22:1-4

⁵²⁵ Deuteronomy 22:5

⁵²⁶ Deuteronomy 22:6-12

⁵²⁷ Deuteronomy 22:13-30

⁵²⁸ Deuteronomy 23:1-8

⁵²⁹ Deuteronomy 23:9-14

⁵³⁰ Deuteronomy 23:15-23

If entering a neighbor's field or vineyard, one may pluck heads of grain or grapes and eat them. However, none is to be gathered or taken from the field.⁵³¹

If a man divorces his wife and she marries another, then the man who divorced her in the first place cannot have her as his wife again, whether she becomes single again by being widowed, or divorced by her second husband, or for any other reason.⁵³²

If a man dies, leaving a widow, but no heirs, his brother is obligated to take the widow as his wife and the firstborn of that union will be considered the son of the deceased brother. If the living brother refuses to take the widow as a wife, he shall be an object of shame.⁵³³

A man who takes a new wife cannot be conscripted into the army until after the first anniversary of their marriage.⁵³⁴

Sundry laws concerning the consideration and thoughtfulness by the Israelites in all of their dealings are reemphasized. In a similar spirit, it is noted that the Divine ordinances even provided rights for animals.⁵³⁵

Taking a handmill or an upper millstone in pledge for a loan was prohibited, because the life of the borrower depended on these items. Once again, kidnapping was declared to be punished by death of the kidnapper. Care to avoid the spread of leprosy was emphasized.⁵³⁶

Moses concluded this portion of his oration by stating, *"This day Jehovah your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul."*⁵³⁷

Blessing or Curse Chapters 27-28

Looking forward to the time when the nation will have crossed the Jordan Moses instructed them to erect on Mt. Ebal stones or pillars with the Law of God inscribed on them.⁵³⁸ These stones were to be covered with plaster (probably lime or gypsum) and the inscription would be in the plaster surface. The ceremony of blessings and cursings, which Moses prescribed, probably was a dedication of these pillars with their inscribed laws. The ceremony was to take place on two mountains, Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, and the valley between. These two mountains represented the curses and the blessings. Mt Gerizim represented the blessings and Mt. Ebal represented the curses.⁵³⁹

The tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin were to stand on Mt. Gerizim. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali were to stand on Mt. Ebal.

⁵³¹ Deuteronomy 23:24-25

⁵³² Deuteronomy 24:1-4

⁵³³ Deuteronomy 25:1-10

⁵³⁴ Deuteronomy 24:5

⁵³⁵ Deuteronomy 24:10-22; 25:4

⁵³⁶ Deuteronomy 24:6-9

⁵³⁷ Deuteronomy 26:16

⁵³⁸ Joshua 8:30ff

⁵³⁹ See ADDENDUM J

When Joshua implemented this command, the tribes occupied the mountains as prescribed. The ark was situated in the middle of the valley between the mountains, with the Levitical priests standing beside it. As the curses and blessings were pronounced by the priests, the people responded, *Amen*.⁵⁴⁰

Each of the curses is given in a single sentence. Some of the blessings are given in a single sentence and some have minor elaboration. These were a repetition of curses and blessings pronounced in earlier sections. All of the curses related to the failure to obey, explicitly, the prohibitions given by Jehovah, whereas the blessings related to the faithful obedience.

- The first list of curses related to individuals.⁵⁴¹
- Next were the blessings to be bestowed upon the nation.⁵⁴²
- The section closes with curses that the nation that would experience for disobedience.⁵⁴³

Israel's Title Deed to Canaan Chapters 29-30

As Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land, Jehovah, before they could go forward, they were called to renew the covenant with Jehovah.

*These are the words of the covenant which Jehovah commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb.*⁵⁴⁴

The words spoken through Moses here are often called, *The Palestinian Covenant*, since Jehovah described this recitation as, *besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb*.

Moses told the people that in spite of all that they had seen Jehovah do, He had not given them eyes to see and ears to hear, until this day. From this time forward they would be increasingly responsible for keeping the covenant.

Moses recognized that Israel's possession of the land was unconditional, yet certain things were required for them to occupy the land:

- Israel must be a people of God⁵⁴⁵
- There will be severe judgment on any individual who is apostate⁵⁴⁶
- There will be a national curse and dispersion for national sin⁵⁴⁷
- Obedience is required to the degree that the will of God is known⁵⁴⁸
- There will be restoration upon repentance⁵⁴⁹
- There will be spiritual and material prosperity for a penitent people.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁰ Deuteronomy 27:11-26; Joshua 8:30ff

⁵⁴¹ Deuteronomy 27:14-26

⁵⁴² Deuteronomy 28:1-14

⁵⁴³ Deuteronomy 28:15-68

⁵⁴⁴ Deuteronomy 29:1

⁵⁴⁵ Deuteronomy 29:13

⁵⁴⁶ Deuteronomy 29:14-21

⁵⁴⁷ Deuteronomy 29:22-28

⁵⁴⁸ Deuteronomy 29:29

⁵⁴⁹ Deuteronomy 30:1-4

⁵⁵⁰ Deuteronomy 30:5-10

Moses concluded with a strong exhortation concerning the necessity of keeping the covenant. He reminded them that the covenant was gracious and not impossible for anyone to keep.⁵⁵¹

Moses' Farewell Address and Death Chapters 31-34

This final address was delivered on Moses' 120th birthday, just a few days before Jehovah took the aged warrior to be with Him. Moses acknowledged that physical age was taking its toll and that he no longer was able to *come and go*, as he had been able to do all these years. This does not conflict with the statement in 34:7 *Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated*. This statement is merely an affirmation that he retained the ability to see and the ability to work to the last moment of his life, which does not preclude his noticing the decline of this strength and his approaching death.

The first task to which he set himself on this day was to reassure the people and then to charge Joshua with the task of leadership. The record of the charge given to Joshua at the door of the Tabernacle (Deuteronomy 31:14) is the only mention of the Tabernacle in the entire Book of Deuteronomy.

He instructed the Levites that at each Sabbatical Year, the Law should be read to the people during the Feast of Tabernacles. It was important that adults and children alike have their memories refreshed.

Jehovah revealed to Moses that there would be times in the future when the people would depart from the faith and that His anger would be kindled against them and that they would experience severe calamities.

Moses wrote the words of the Law and told the Levites to place the book that he had written into the Ark of the Covenant.

Jehovah instructed Moses to write a farewell song and teach it to the people. This song would be a song to remind the people of Jehovah's goodness, His Law, and the penalty for disobedience. This song was to be passed down through the generations and it will be a witness against them in the times of their apostasy. Moses composed the song that day and taught it to the people. The lengthy song is recorded in Deuteronomy 32:1-47

That very same day, after Moses delivered the song, Jehovah said to Moses,

"Go up to this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho, and look at the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the sons of Israel for a possession.⁵⁰ "Then die on the mountain where you ascend, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people,⁵¹ because you broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel.⁵² "For you shall see the land at a distance, but you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving the sons of Israel."⁵⁵²

Prior to his ascending the mountain, Moses pronounced a blessing over the nation. The style of the blessing is the same as that displayed by Joseph when he blessed his sons. Each tribe is mentioned with particular statements and blessings for each one. Interestingly, the tribe of Simeon is omitted, but the number is brought to thirteen by including both of the subtribes of

⁵⁵¹ Deuteronomy 30:10-20

⁵⁵² Deuteronomy 32:49-52

Manassas and Ephraim. The reason for the exclusion of Simeon seems to go back to the blessing that Jacob pronounced on his sons, prior to his death. According to Jacob's blessing, he was to be scattered abroad in Israel and lost his identity as a tribe.⁵⁵³ When Israel settled Canaan, Simeon simply received a number of towns within the territory of Judah.⁵⁵⁴ Some suggest that the Simeonites may have been especially guilty in the licentiousness at Baal-peor⁵⁵⁵ and thus had lost their right to a patriarchal blessing, but this is pure speculation.

Beautifully and tenderly written, Chapter 34, describing Moses ascent up the mountain and his death, obviously was written by someone else. Jehovah, Himself, buried Moses and no human knew or knows that exact location. The people mourned Moses' death for thirty days.

Joshua immediately took the role of leader, as Jehovah had commanded.

The closing epithet emphasizes the unique relationship that Moses had with Jehovah.

*Since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom Jehovah knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders which Jehovah sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.*⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵³ Genesis 49:7

⁵⁵⁴ Joshua 19:2-9

⁵⁵⁵ Numbers 25:14

⁵⁵⁶ Deuteronomy 34:10-12

ADDENDUM A

The Authorship of the Pentateuch

By long tradition and on the basis of internal and external evidence, it is generally agreed by Bible believers that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. It may be pointed out that that this does not mean that he wrote every single word. Written records had been preserved for at least 1500 years before Moses birth, so he probably did incorporate some things (especially in Genesis) as he saw fit. Moses was “trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7 :22) and thus would have been able to understand the cuneiform writings of the ancient Near East as well as the hieroglyphics of Egypt. With this understanding, we present the following evidence, that Moses wrote the Pentateuch.

1. Several sections of the Pentateuch state that they came from the pen of Moses.
 - The account of Amalek’s attack (Exodus 17:14)
 - The contents of the covenant (Exodus 24:4; Exodus 34:27)
 - The report of the journeys (Numbers 33:2)
 - The song of Moses (Deuteronomy 31:22)

These passages indicate considerable literary activity by Moses. Thus, it is not a stretch of the imagination to assume that he is the author of the entire account.

It is rather obvious that some portions were written by someone other than Moses. For example, Numbers 12:3, in a parenthetical statement, declares, (*Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.*) If Moses were that humble, he surely would not have described himself in such glowing terms.

Deuteronomy chapter 34 describes the death of Moses. That chapter must have written by someone else. Most consider Joshua to have written this closing chapter of Deuteronomy.

2. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, the Mosaic authorship is affirmed.
 - Joshua, who would have known of any fraud, strictly conformed to the precepts of the Pentateuch and frequently mentioned Moses as the author (example: Joshua 1:7).
 - The writer of Judges stated that the Law had been recorded by the “hand of Moses” (Judges 3:4)
 - David exhorted Solomon to conform to the code of life “as it is written in the Law of the Book of Moses” (I Kings 2:3).
 - The Scripture discovered at the time of Josiah, when they were refurbishing the Temple, is called, “a book of the Law of Jehovah given by Moses.” (II Chronicles 34:14)
 - Ezra twice refers to the Book of Moses (Ezra 2:2; 6:18)
 - Nehemiah 8:1-8 describes the public reading of the, *book of the law of Moses which Jehovah had given to Israel.*
 - Both Daniel (Daniel 9:11, 13) and Malachi (Malachi 4:4) make significant reference to Moses.
 - All in all, fourteen Old Testament books refer to Moses and his connection to the written Law.

3. The New Testament often credits the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

Jesus clearly considered Moses to be the author of the Pentateuch.

Matthew 8:4 *And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."*

Mark 7:10 *"For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death';*

John 5:46-47 *"For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. ⁴⁷ "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"*

When the Jews ascribed the first division of the Old Testament to Moses, Jesus clearly accepted that as being true (Matthew 19:7; Mark 12:19; Luke 20:25; John 9:28)

The Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was unquestionably accepted in Jesus' era and Our Lord endorsed that view point (see Mark 10:5; Luke 20:37; John 7:19; Acts 28:23)

4. Moses possessed the qualifications to write the Pentateuch.

- As noted earlier, he had been taught in all of the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:21). He was an educated man.
- He had the necessary information.
- He had the time to write (during the 40 years in the wilderness).
- His exceptional sermons in Deuteronomy demonstrate his literary ability.
- The mention of Egyptian names and reference to Egyptian customs indicate that the author of this material had knowledge not only of Israelite culture, but also Egyptian culture.

5. Ancient authorities consistently ascribed to Moses the authorship of the Pentateuch. For example, the apocryphal book, *Ecclesiasticus*, written c. 250 BC, declares, "He (Jehovah) made him (Moses) to hear his voice and brought him into the dark cloud and gave him commandments before his face, even the law of life and knowledge..."

Second Maccabees, the Talmud, Philo, Josephus, and others, without exception, mention Moses as the author of this literature.

From the first, both the Jewish and the Christian Old Testament canons included the Pentateuch as "The Law of Moses," and gave it respected status.

Critics of Mosaic Authorship

No one questioned the authorship of the Pentateuch until 1521, when Carlstadt of Bodenstern published a work called, *The Canon of Scripture*. It is he who launched the skeptical attitude toward the Bible. Through the succeeding centuries, various ones followed in his footsteps, seeking to explain the origin of Scripture, apart from Divine revelation. Spinoza, the Dutch philosopher, in 1670, wrote what he called, "Tractatus-Theologico-Politicus," in which he impugned the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. It is he who gave birth to the movement which came to be called, "higher criticism."

The first person to propose the "Jehovistic" and "Elohistic" theories was a French medical doctor and sometimes astronomer named Astruc. Because both of these names (Elohim and Jehovah) are used for God in the Pentateuch, Astruc contended that they were composed by different

authors of different documents and that someone, sometime later, combined into a single document. He put forth his ideas in 1753, and thus opened a new era in Bible criticism. He denied the Divine origin of the book of Genesis, contending that it is full of useless repetitions, disorder, and contradictions.

All of those who followed this path, including present-day advocates of this view, have several things in common. They begin their studies with the following religious pre-suppositions:

1. All of them deny the validity of any miraculous action. None of them believe that God, if there is a God, has the power to perform supernatural works.
2. All of them deny the reality of predictive prophecy. Therefore, they have to find some sort of explanation for those Scriptures that predict events that at the time of writing were well into the future, but did come to pass as predicted.
3. All of them deny the reality of revelation. To them, it is completely unscientific to believe that God, if there be a God, would or could reveal Himself to man.

When these critics weave theories that sometimes border on the ridiculous, and seek to present their theories with an air of dignified and scholarly certainty, it must be remembered that these scholars by their pre-suppositions are forced into this sort of explanation.

ADDENDUM B The Hebrew/Jewish Calendar¹

The "first month" of the Jewish calendar is the month of Nissan (Aviv), in the spring. However, the Jewish New Year is in Tishri, the seventh month, and that is when the number of the year is increased. The names of the months of the Jewish calendar were adopted during the time of Ezra, after the return from the Babylonian exile. The names are Babylonian month names, brought back to Israel by the returning exiles. Most of the Bible refers to months by number, not by name.

Hebrew	English	Number	Length	Civil Equivalent
ניסן אביב	Nissan (Babylonian) Aviv (Hebrew)	1	30 days	March-April
אייר זן	Iyar (Babylonian) Ziv (Hebrew)	2	29 days	April-May
סיון	Sivan	3	30 days	May-June
תמוז	Tammuz	4	29 days	June-July
אב	Av	5	30 days	July-August
אלול	Elul	6	29 days	August-September
תשרי איתן	Tishri (Babylonian) Eitanim (Hebrew)	7	30 days	September-October
חשוון בול	Cheshvan (Babylonian) Bul (Hebrew)	8	29 or 30 days	October-November
כסלו	Kislev	9	30 or 29 days	November-December
טבת	Tevet	10	29 days	December-January
שבט	Shevat	11	30 days	January-February
אדר א	Adar I (leap years only)	12	30 days	February-March
אדר ב אדר	Adar (called Adar Beit in leap years)	12 (13 in leap years)	29 days	February-March

¹ This is an edited version of an article written by Tracey R. Rich (jewfaq.org)

The Jewish New Year begins on the first day of Tishri, which is the first month of the civil calendar, but the seventh month of the liturgical calendar.

The length of Cheshvan and Kislev are determined by complex calculations involving the time of day of the full moon of the following year's Tishri and the day of the week that Tishri would occur in the following year.

Note that the number of days between Nissan and Tishri is always the same. Because of this, the time from the first major festival (Passover in Nissan) to the last major festival (Sukkot in Tishri) is always the same.

Background and History

The Jewish calendar is based on three astronomical phenomena: the rotation of the Earth about its axis (a day); the revolution of the moon about the Earth (a month); and the revolution of the Earth about the sun (a year). These three phenomena are independent of each other, so there is no direct correlation between them. On average, the moon revolves around the Earth in about $29\frac{1}{2}$ days. The Earth revolves around the sun in about $365\frac{1}{4}$ days, that is, about 12.4 lunar months.

The Jewish calendar coordinates all three of these astronomical phenomena. Months are either 29 or 30 days, corresponding to the $29\frac{1}{2}$ -day lunar cycle. Years are either 12 or 13 months, corresponding to the 12.4 month solar cycle.

The lunar month on the Jewish calendar begins when the first sliver of moon becomes visible after the dark of the moon. In ancient times, the new months were determined by observation. When people observed the new moon, they would notify the Sanhedrin. When the Sanhedrin heard testimony from two independent, reliable eyewitnesses that the new moon occurred on a certain date, they would declare the rosh chodesh (first of the month) and send out messengers to tell people when the month began.

The problem with strictly lunar calendars is that there are approximately 12.4 lunar months in every solar year, so a 12-month lunar calendar is about 11 days shorter than a solar year and a 13-month lunar is about 19 longer than a solar year. The months drift around the seasons on such a calendar: on a 12-month lunar calendar, the month of Nissan, which is supposed to occur in the Spring, would occur 11 days earlier in the season each year, eventually occurring in the Winter, the Fall, the Summer, and then the Spring again. On a 13-month lunar calendar, the same thing would happen in the other direction, and faster.

To compensate for this drift, the Jewish calendar uses a 12-month lunar calendar with an extra month occasionally added. The month of Nissan occurs 11 days earlier each year for two or three years, and then jumps forward 30 days, balancing out the drift. In ancient times, this month was added by observation: the Sanhedrin observed the conditions of the weather, the crops and the livestock, and if these were not sufficiently advanced to be considered "spring," then the Sanhedrin inserted an additional month into the calendar to make sure that Pesach (Passover) would occur in the spring (it is, after all, referred to in the Torah as Chag he-Aviv, the Festival of Spring!).

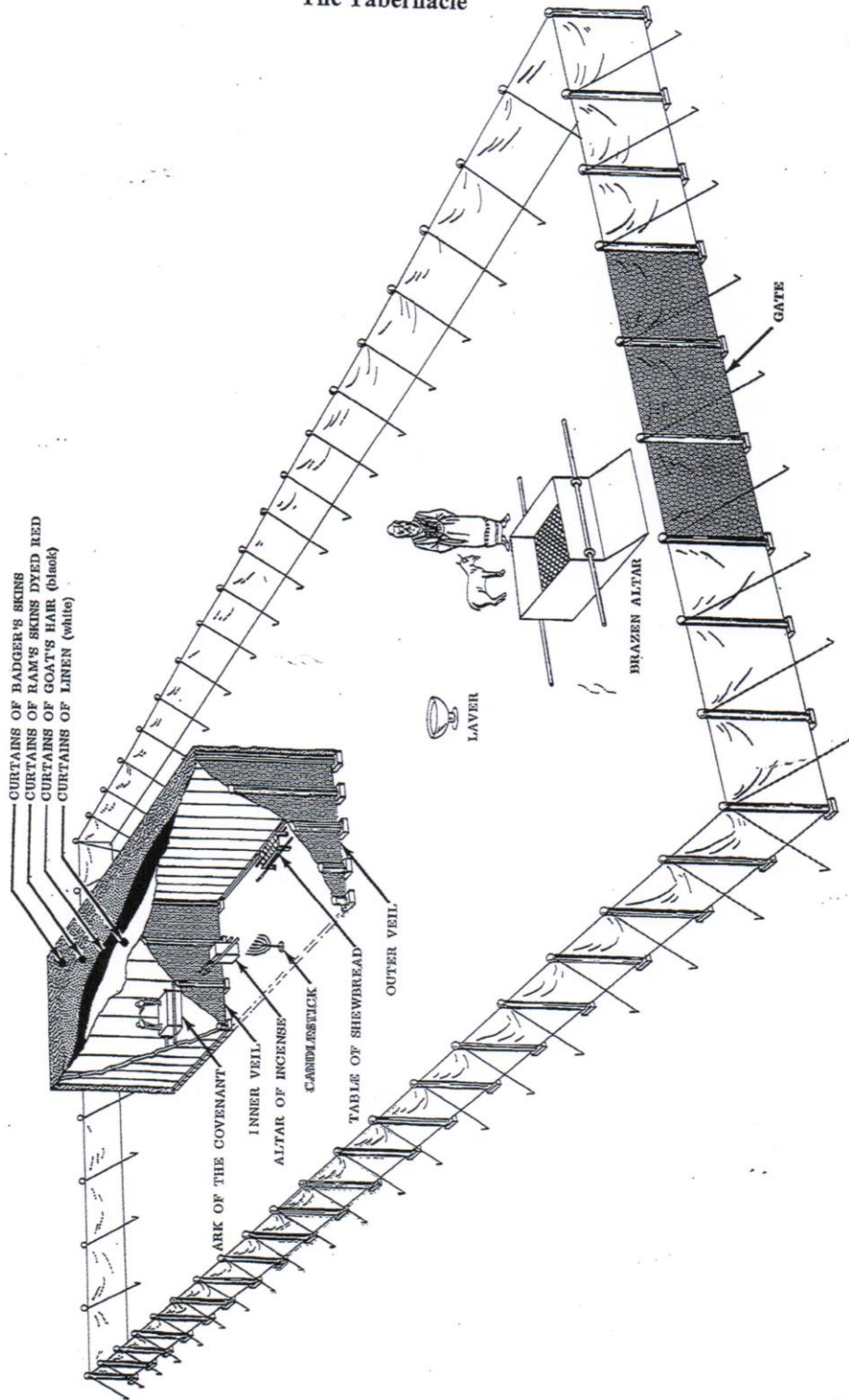
A year with 13 months is referred to in Hebrew as Shanah Me'uberet (pronounced shah-NAH meh-oo-BEH-reht), literally: a pregnant year. In English, we commonly call it a leap year. The additional month is known as Adar I, Adar Rishon (first Adar) or Adar Alef (the Hebrew letter Alef being the numeral "1" in Hebrew). The extra month is inserted before the regular month of Adar (known in such years as Adar II, Adar Sheini or Adar Beit). Note that Adar II is the "real" Adar, the one in which Purim is celebrated, the one in which yahrzeits for Adar are observed, the one in which a 13-year-old born in Adar becomes a Bar Mitzvah. Adar I is the "extra" Adar.

In the fourth century, Hillel II established a fixed calendar based on mathematical and astronomical calculations. This calendar, still in use, standardized the length of months and the addition of months over the course of a 19 year cycle. Adar I is added in the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th and 19th years of the cycle.

In addition, Yom Kippur should not fall adjacent to Shabbat, because this would cause difficulties in coordinating the fast with Shabbat, and Hoshanah Rabbah should not fall on Saturday because it would interfere with the holiday's observances. A day is added to the month of Cheshvan or subtracted from the month of Kislev of the previous year to prevent these things from happening. This process is sometimes referred to as "fixing" Rosh Hashanah.

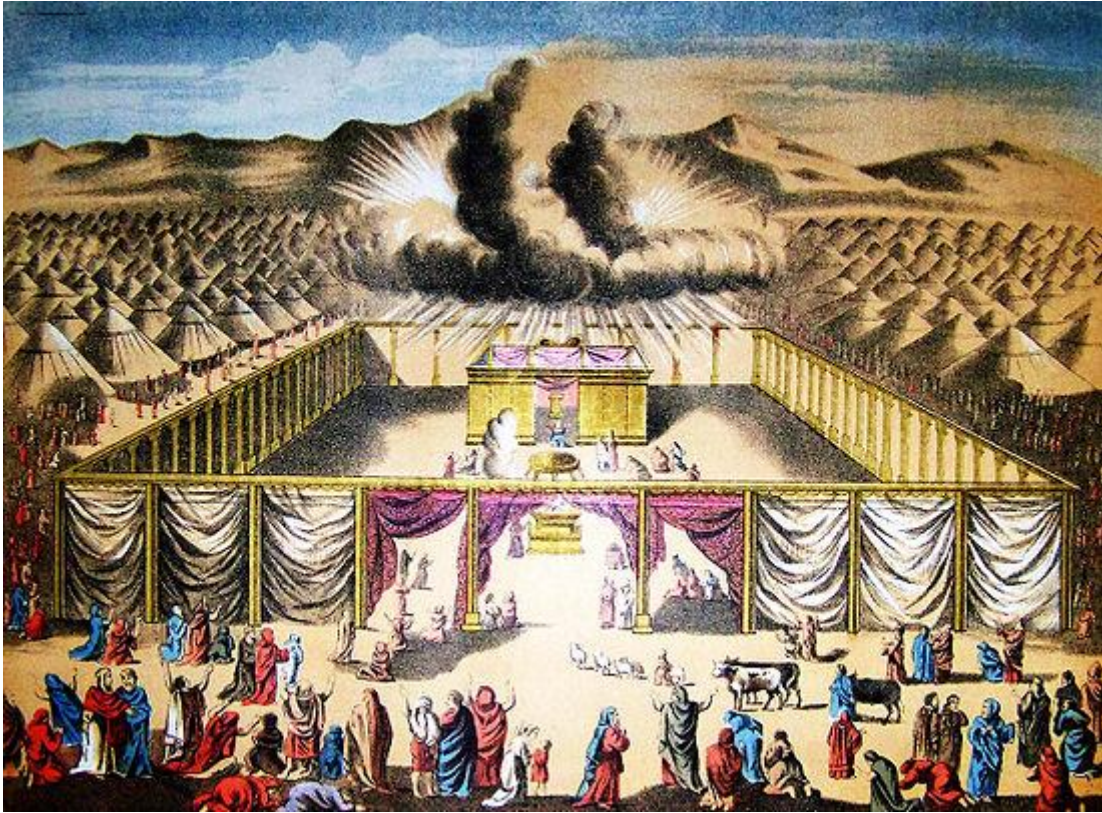
ADDENDUM C

The Tabernacle



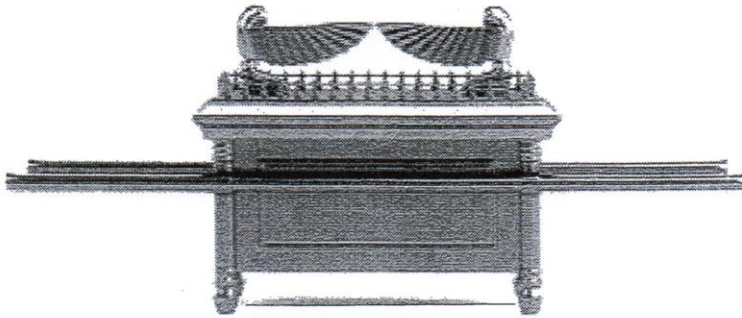
An artist's concept of the Tabernacle in the wilderness

– illustration from 1890 Holman Bible



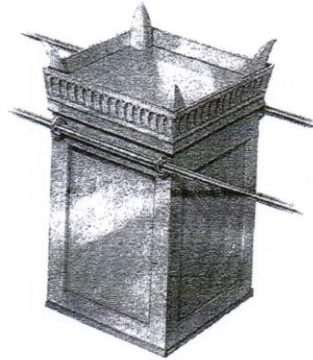
ADDENDUM D

Furniture and Other Elements of the Tabernacle



The Ark of the Covenant

The Altar of Incense

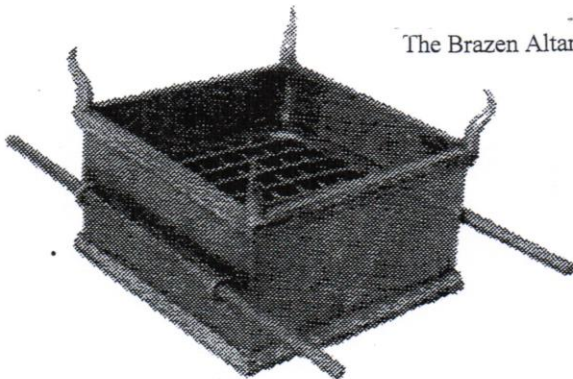


The Table of Showbread

The Golden Lampstand



The Brazen Altar

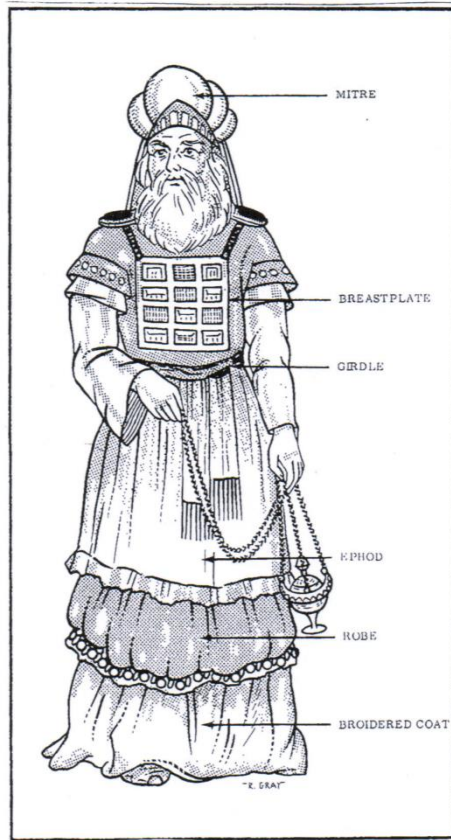


The Laver



ADDENDUM E

The Garments of the High Priest¹



¹ Holdcroft, page 78

ADDENDUM F¹
The Sacrifices in Leviticus

Sacrifice	Purpose	What was offered
Burnt 1:3-17 6:8-13	It signified: (1) Atonement for sin (2) Complete dedication to God	Depending on wealth of offerer: (1) An unblemished bull (2) An unblemished male sheep or goat (3) Turtledoves or pigeons
Meal 2:1-16 6:14-18 7:12-13	It usually accompanied burnt offerings, signifying: (1) Thanksgiving (2) Complete dedication to God	Three types: (1) Fine flour mixed with oil and frankincense (2) Cakes made of flour mixed with oil and baked in a pan, an oven, or in a covered pan (3) Green heads of roasted corn mixed with oil and frankincense
Peace 3:1-17 7:11-21, 28-34	Expressed fellowship with God Three types: (1) Thank offerings for an unexpected blessing (2) Votive offerings expressing gratitude for a blessing in response to a vow (3) Freewill offerings expressing gratitude without reference to a specific blessing.	According to the wealth of the offerer (1) An unblemished male or female from the herd (2) An unblemished male or female from the flock (3) From the goats Minor imperfections were permitted when it was a freewill offering of a bull or a lamb
Sin 4:1-5:13 6:24-30	For atonement for sins committed unintentionally, especially where no restitution was possible. No sacrifice was permitted for willful sin	(1) For the priest, an unblemished bull (2) For the congregation, an unblemished bull (3) For a ruler, an unblemished male goat (4) For an ordinary citizen, and unblemished female goat or lamb (5) For a poor ordinary citizen, two turtledoves or two young pigeons could be substituted (6) For the very poor, fine flour could be substituted
Trespass 5:14-6:7 7:1-7	Atonement for sins committed unknowingly against a clear command of God	(1) For offenses against Jehovah, an unblemished lamb. The priest calculated the amount of restitution on the basis of the value of the offense, plus 20% (2) For offenses against another person, an unblemished ram, plus restitution, plus 20%

¹ Adapted from *The Nelson Study Bible*, Ed. Earl D. Radmacher (Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1997

ADDENDUM G

The Priestly Line of Descent in Exodus & Leviticus

		Uzziel		Nadab	
	Gershom	Hebron	Miriam	Abihu	
Levi	Kohath	Amram	Aaron	Eleazar	Phinehas
	Merari	Izhar	Moses	Ithamar	

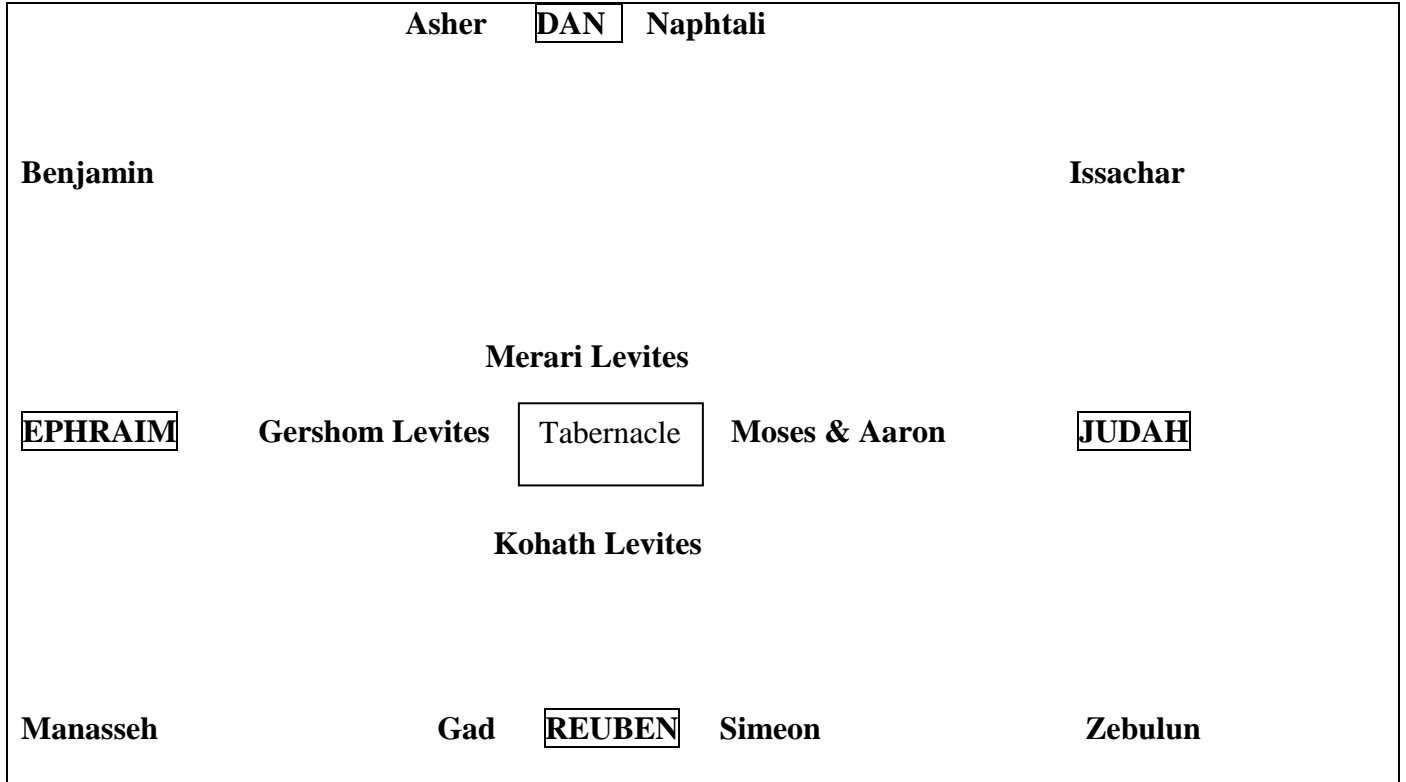
ADDENDUM H ¹
Feasts and Appointed Times of the Mosaic Era

Feast	Procedure	Comments
Passover Leviticus 23:5 Numbers 28:16 Deuteronomy 16:1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lamb slain, roasted 2. Lamb eaten by family 3. Burnt and sin offerings 	A memorial commemorating the Israelite's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Specifically, the visit by the death angel and the death of all firstborn in Egypt
Unleavened Bread Exodus 23:15 Leviticus 15:6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unleavened bread eaten for seven days 2. Barley sheaf waved for two days 3. Daily burnt offerings 4. On the 1st and 7th days there is a holy assembly 	<p>This bread was a part of the Passover Feast.</p> <p>Barley was a part of a farmer's spring harvest.</p>
First Fruits Exodus 23:16 Leviticus 23:10 Numbers 29:26	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Barley sheaf waved 2. Burnt, meal, and drink offerings 3. No first fruits are to be eaten until after this dedication 	An expression of gratitude for the harvest. A sin offering was not necessary for this event
Weeks (Pentecost or Harvest) Exodus 34:22 Leviticus 23:15 Deuteronomy 16:9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wheat loaves waved 2. Burnt, meal, drink, and sin offerings 3. People rested 	This noted the end of the barley harvest and the presentation of the first fruits of the wheat harvest. This is the day on which the Holy Spirit was given in the New Covenant.
Trumpets Leviticus 23:24 Numbers 29:1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trumpets sounded and all work ceases 2. Burnt and meal offerings 	Historically, this was a feat to commemorate Israel's encounter with God at Sinai. Ram's horn trumpets (Shofar) were blown to launch this day
Atonement Leviticus 16:3 Leviticus 23:27 Numbers 29:7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People fast and rest 2. Burnt and meal offerings 3. Slain goat & scapegoat 4. Priest performs ritual within the veil 	This was a day of fasting. Israel's sins for another year were covered. This was Israel's greatest day of the year.
Tabernacles (Ingathering) Exodus 23:16 Leviticus 23:34 Numbers 29:12 Deuteronomy 16:13	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The people dwell in make-shift dwellings for seven days 2. Daily burnt and meal offerings 3. An assembly on the eighth day 	<p>This was a memorial to the tent life that Israel experienced in the wilderness and Jehovah's special visits to them at that time.</p> <p>This event commemorated the ingathering of vine and tree fruits at the end of the year.</p>

¹ Greatly redacted and edited version of Holdcroft, page 98

ADDENDUM I

The designated site of each tribe during encampments



The circumference of the encampment was 12 miles

ADDENDUM J

Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal with the Valley Between Deuteronomy Chapters 27-28



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MAPS OF THE EXODUS ROUTE

Three maps are included in this file:

1. The first map shows the detail of the first part of the journey:
 - Zoan
 - Succoth
 - Etham
 - Baal-Zephron
2. The Second map cites the probable sites along the journey, with Scripture references
3. The third map shows an alternate location of Sinai. This location is the result of some, who for one reason or another, reject the traditional site of the crossing of the Red Sea and consider the traditional site of Mt. Sinai to be incorrect.

Those who hold to view #3 or some adaptation of that view, have a variety of reasons for doing so. For example, some argue that the *consuming fire* that the children of Israel saw on the top of the mount means that Mt. Sinai must be some sort of volcano. Note, however, that it is the *glory of Jehovah* on the mount that impressed the viewers with the sense that they were beholding a consuming fire – it was not some sort of natural occurrence.

And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of Jehovah was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. (Exodus 24:17)

Although many (those cited above) seek some natural explanation for the description, others give different reasons. Even so, from the earliest times, the mountain range cited in maps 1 & 2 have the most ancient testimony. The peak that usually is identified as Sinai is labelled, *Jebel Musa* – “the Mount of Moses.”

The following is an edited/redacted version of a well-documented article, available at https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Biblical_Mount_Sinai

There is evidence that prior to 100 AD, well before the Christian monastic period, Jewish sages had already identified Jebel Musa as Mount Sinai. Graham Davies of Cambridge University offers evidence that early Jewish pilgrimages had already identified Jebel Musa as Mount Sinai and this identification was later adopted by the Christian pilgrims. R. K. Harrison states that, “Jebel Musa . . . seems to have enjoyed special sanctity long before Christian times, culminating in its identification with Mt. Sinai.” In the second and third centuries BCE Nabataeans were making pilgrimages there, which is indicated in part by inscriptions discovered in the area.

Josephus wrote that “Moses went up to a mountain that lay between Egypt and Arabia, which was called Sinai.” Josephus says that Sinai is “the highest of all the mountains thereabout,” and is “the highest of all the mountains that are in that country, and is not only very difficult to be ascended by men, on account of its vast altitude but because of the sharpness of its precipices”.

The traditional Mount Sinai, located in the Sinai Peninsula, is actually the name of a collection of peaks, sometimes referred to as the Holy Mountain peaks which consist of Jebel Musa, Mount Catherine and Ras Sufsafeh. Etheria (circa 4th century AD) wrote, "The whole mountain group looks as if it were a single peak, but, as you enter the group, [you see that] there are more than one." The highest mountain peak is Mount Catherine, rising 2,610 metres (8,550 feet) above the sea and its sister peak, Jebel Musa (2,250 m [7,370 ft]), is not much further behind in height, but is more conspicuous because of the open plain called *er Rachah* ("the wide"). Mount Catherine and Jebel Musa are both much higher than any mountains in the Sinaitic desert, or in all of Midian. The highest tops in the Tih desert to the north are not much over 1,200 m (4,000 ft). Those in Midian, East of Elath, rise only to 1,300 m (4,200 ft). Even Jebel Serbal, 30 kilometres (20 mi) west of Sinai, is at its highest only 2,050 m (6,730 ft) above the sea.

Edward Robinson insisted that the Plain of ar-Raaha adjacent to Jebel Musa could have accommodated the Israelites. Edward Hull stated that, "this traditional Sinai in every way meets the requirements of the narrative of the Exodus." Hull agreed with Robinson and stated he had no further doubts after studying the great amphitheater leading to the base of the granite cliff of Ras Sufsafeh, that here indeed was the location of the camp and the mount from which the laws of God was delivered to the encampment of Israelites below.

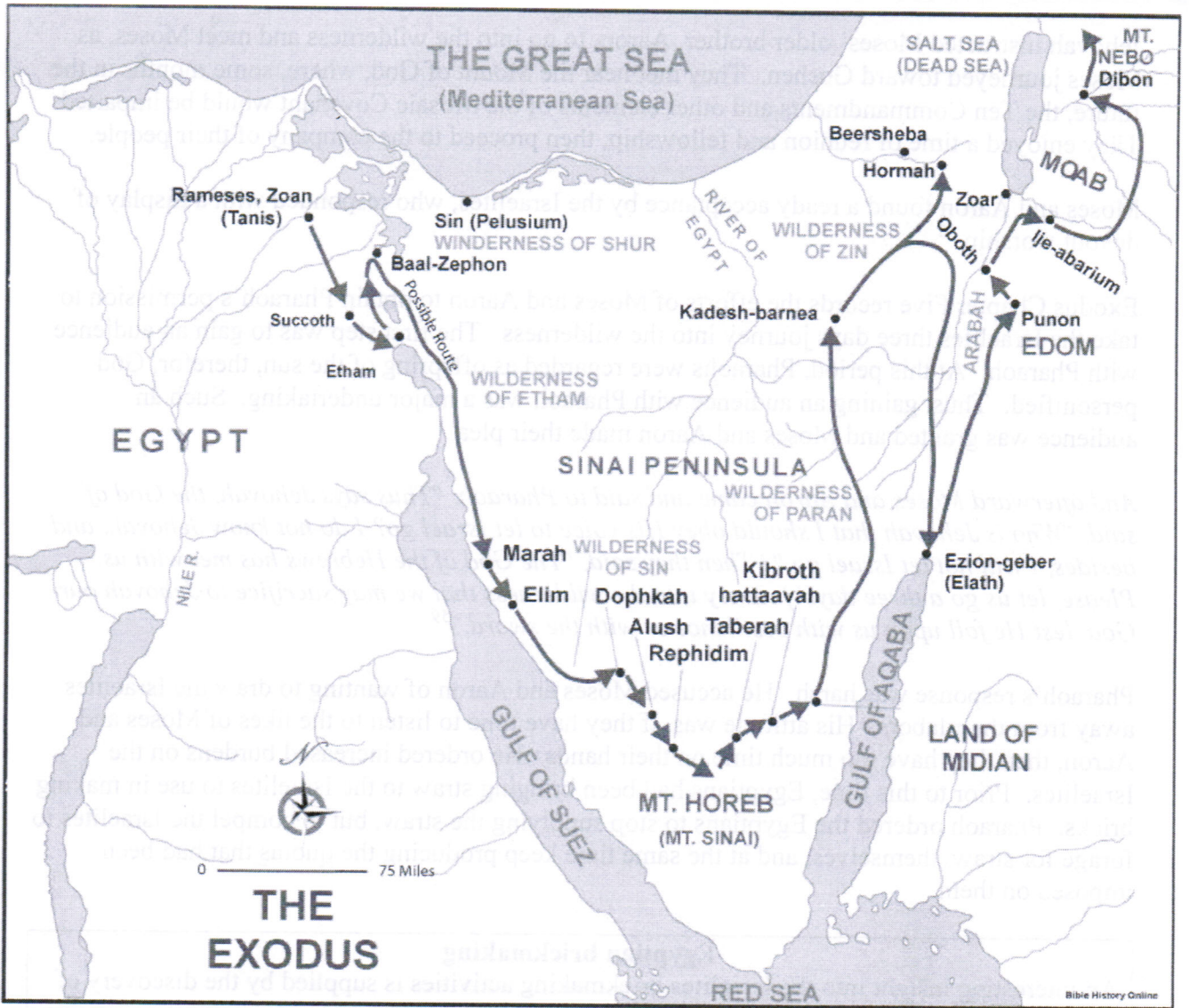
F. W. Holland stated (Recovery of Jerusalem, 524): "With regard to water-supply there is no other spot in the whole Peninsula which is nearly so well supplied as the neighborhood of Jebel Musa . . . There is also no other district in the Peninsula which affords such excellent pasturage."

Calculating the travels of the Israelites, the Bible Atlas states, "These distances will not, however, allow of our placing Sinai farther East than Jebel Musa."¹

Hoffmeier wrote, "None of the encampments of the wilderness wanderings can be meaningful if the Israelites went directly to either Kadesh or Midian ... a journey of eleven days from Kadesh to Horeb can be properly understood only in relationship to the southern portion of the Sinai Peninsula."

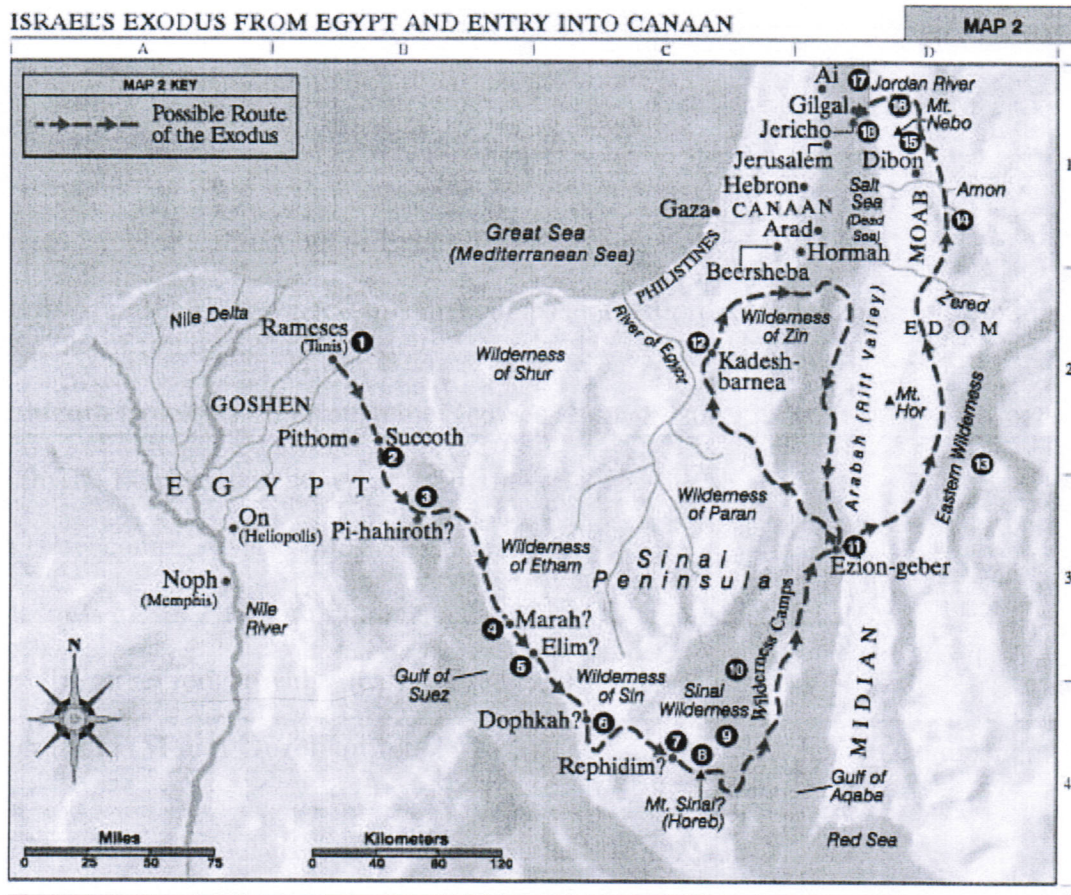
Local Bedouins who have long inhabited the area have identified Jebel Musa as Mount Sinai. In the fourth century AD small settlements of monks set up places of worship around Jebel Musa. An Egyptian pilgrim named Ammonius, who had in past times made various visits to the area, identified Jebel Musa as the Holy Mount in the 4th century. Empress Helena, ca. 330 AD, built a church to protect monks against raids from nomads. She chose the site for the church from the identification which had been handed down through generations through the Bedouins. She also reported the site was confirmed to her in a dream.

Given this history, and how the traditional site of Sinai fits the biblical narrative, there seems to be little need to seek an alternative.



BIBLE MAPS

ISRAEL'S EXODUS FROM EGYPT AND ENTRY INTO CANAAN



1. **Rameses** Israel was thrust out of Egypt (Ex. 12; Num. 33:5).
2. **Succoth** After the Hebrews left this first campsite, the Lord attended them in a cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:20-22).
3. **Pi-hahiroth** Israel passed through the Red Sea (Ex. 14; Num. 33:8).
4. **Marah** The Lord healed the waters of Marah (Ex. 15:23-26).
5. **Elim** Israel camped by 12 springs (Ex. 15:27).
6. **Wilderness of Sin** The Lord sent manna and quail to feed Israel (Ex. 16).
7. **Rephidim** Israel fought with Amalek (Ex. 17:8-16).
8. **Mount Sinai (Mount Horeb or Jebel Musa)** The Lord revealed the Ten Commandments (Ex. 19-20).
9. **Sinai Wilderness** Israel constructed the tabernacle (Ex. 25-30).

10. Wilderness Camps Seventy elders were called to help Moses govern the people (Num. 11:16-17).

11. Ezion-geber Israel passed through the lands of Esau and Ammon in peace (Deut. 2).

12. Kadesh-barnea Moses sent spies into the promised land; Israel rebelled and failed to enter the land; Kadesh served as the main camp of Israel for many years (Num. 13:1-3, 17-33; 14; 32:8; Deut. 2:14).

13. Eastern Wilderness Israel avoided conflict with Edom and Moab (Num. 20:14-21; 22-24).

14. Arnon River Israel destroyed the Canaanites who fought against them (Deut. 2:24-37).

15. Mount Nebo Moses viewed the promised land (Deut. 34:1-4). Moses delivered his last three sermons (Deut. 1-32).

16. Plains of Moab The Lord told Israel to divide the land and dispossess the inhabitants (Num. 33:50-56).

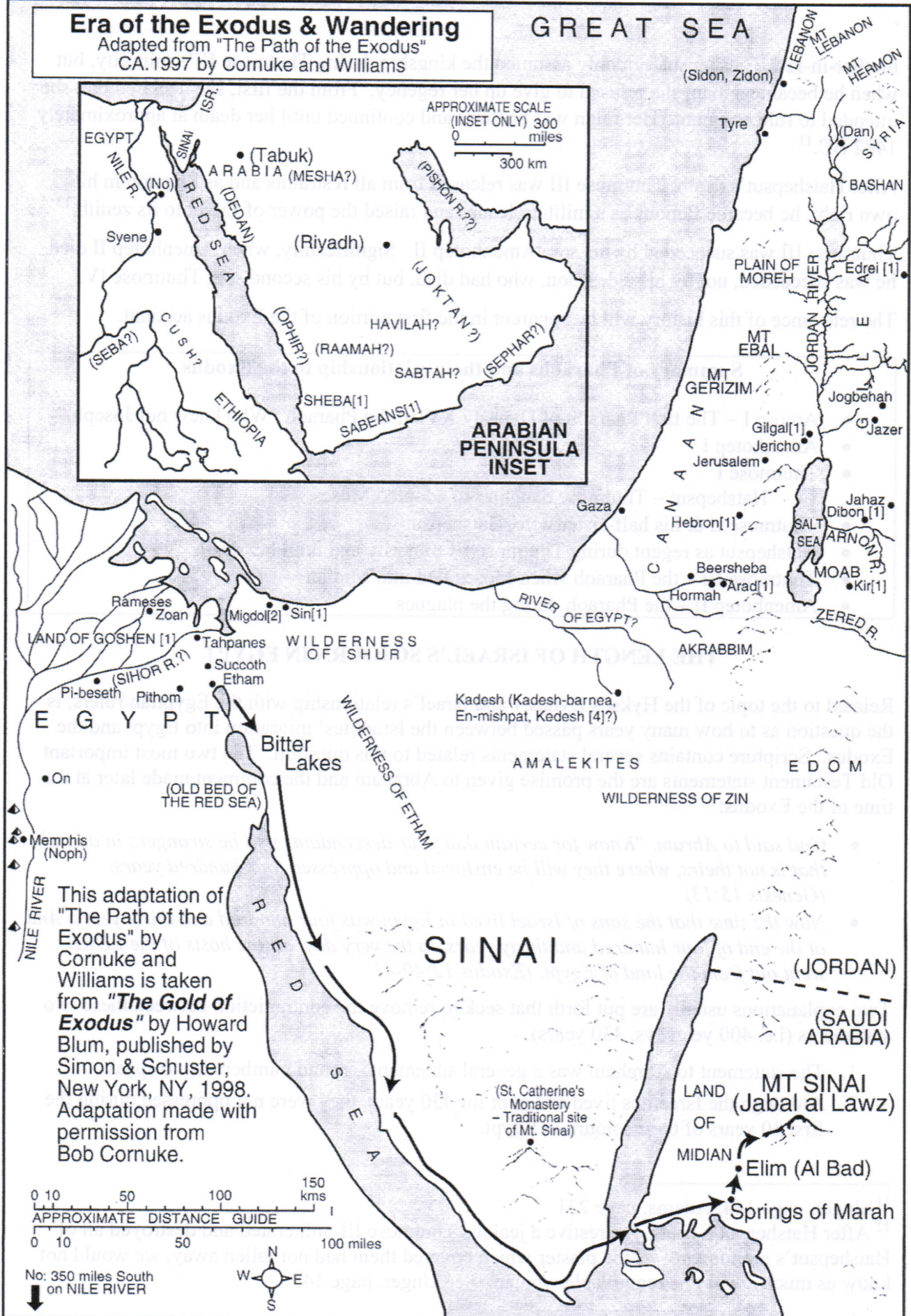
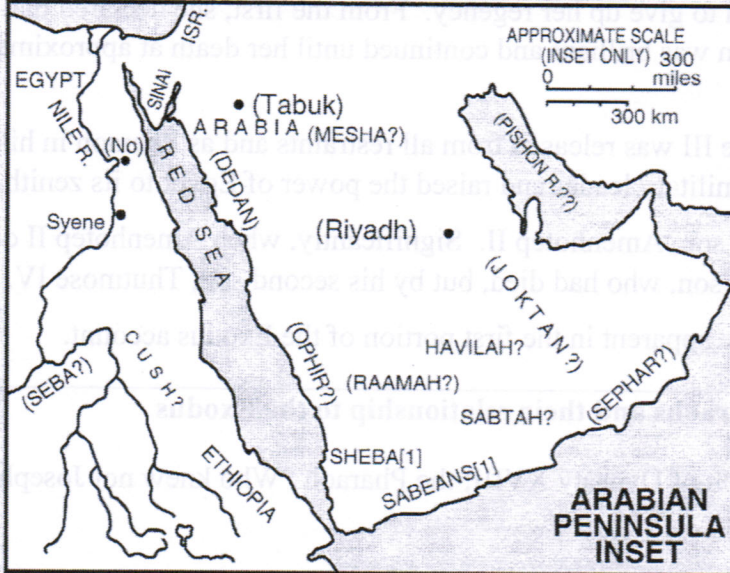
17. Jordan River Israel crossed the Jordan River on dry ground. Near Gilgal, stones from the bottom of the Jordan River were placed as a monument of Jordan's waters being divided (Josh. 3-5).

18. Jericho The children of Israel possessed and destroyed the city (Josh. 6).

New Location of Mt. Sinai

Era of the Exodus & Wandering

Adapted from "The Path of the Exodus"
CA. 1997 by Cornuke and Williams



This adaptation of "The Path of the Exodus" by Cornuke and Williams is taken from "The Gold of Exodus" by Howard Blum, published by Simon & Schuster, New York, NY, 1998. Adaptation made with permission from Bob Cornuke.

