

Exodus

By Dr. Alan Cobb

Background

The traditional Hebrew name for this book is w'eleh sh'moth (וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת) which means “now these are the names of.” “Now” is a conjunction that connects Exodus with Genesis and is intended to continue the story. Exodus is the English title of the book and comes from the major event of the book. “Exodus” comes from a transliteration of the Greek word *exodos* which means “exit” or “departure.” It is the title the translators of the Septuagint gave the book because the Israelites’ departure from Egypt is the main topic.

Date and Author

Moses says within this book that he wrote things in it (17:14; 24:4). The writer of 2 Chronicles (25:4) and Nehemiah (13:1) refer to things written in the “Book of Moses” which are found in Deuteronomy. The first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) are called the Torah by Jewish people and said to be the work of Moses. Moses was born about 1571 BC and lived 120 years (1451 BC). He lived the events written in Exodus through Deuteronomy so this is not only an eye-witness account but, in some ways, an autobiography. That makes it a primary source document for the events described. He could have written most of it during the time the Israelites spent at the foot of Mount Sinai and then finished it as the people approached and camped out on the east side of the Jordan River before he died.

Scope and Importance

Thirty-eight of the forty chapters of Exodus are about the time from Moses discovering a burning bush that is not consumed by fire until the finishing of the construction and consecration of the Tabernacle (8 ½ months). No other book of the Bible is quoted or referred to more in the rest of the Bible than Exodus. Its importance to the Jewish people in showing the Lord’s deliverance of them from their slavery in Egypt approaches the importance of the resurrection of Jesus to believers in showing their deliverance from slavery to sin. That the events described are historical fact are critical for a proper understanding of the rest of the Bible. Another importance of Exodus is its revelation that the sovereign Creator of the universe is a relational God who cares about people and provides deliverance for them from the slavery in which they find themselves. In Exodus, God reveals his relational, covenantal name (YHWH – Yahweh).

Chapter 1

Verses 1 – 14. These verses connect Exodus with Genesis so that anyone having only this book would know enough of the background story about the Israelites being in Egypt to understand where they came from and why they were subjugated as slaves. In Genesis 50:22-26, we learn that Joseph died at age 110 (1636 BC), was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt. Since Joseph had been the most important official in Egypt during the seven years of plenty and seven years of famine and for unnamed following years, it would have been appropriate for him to have received a royal type of funeral, burial and an appropriate inscription on his tomb, but we see none of that in the account in Genesis. We do find that he lived to see the third generation of his son, Ephraim’s, children. Then, some unidentified time later, a new king (pharaoh) came to power that didn’t know Joseph and enslaved the Israelites because they were so numerous and he feared they might join his enemies and fight against him. He put slave masters over them and forced them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses that he would use as cities for storing things. But even under that oppression, the Israelites grew in numbers and spread in the land. As a result, the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites (Hebrews) and made them labor hard making bricks. Not only did they have to make bricks, pharaoh made the Hebrews use mortar to build with the bricks and labor in the Egyptian fields. It is in the midst of this that we learn of Moses’ birth (1571 BC) in Chapter 2. That would be 65 years after Joseph died. God told Abraham that his descendants

would be enslaved but that in the fourth generation those descendants would come back to the Promised Land. That generation would be the one the last one of Ephraim's descendants that Joseph had seen.

What we would like to know is who the pharaoh was whom Joseph served as his most important official and who the pharaoh was who arose who didn't know Joseph. The following excerpt from Chapter 24 of "The New Answers Book 2" by Answers in Genesis about Egyptian chronology, written by Dr. Elizabeth Mitchell, helps us to answer those questions. Some of what she writes will give us insight into the events that occur in later chapters of Exodus.

Predynastic Egypt and Old Kingdom—the Post-Flood World

Most histories begin with the unsubstantiated notion that primitive people slowly developed civilization from rudimentary beginnings. Archaeology around the world has instead revealed advanced ancient technology without discernible periods of evolution. This sudden appearance of cultures possessing advanced technology approximately 4,000 years ago is consistent with the Bible's account of the Flood, the proliferation of intelligent people on the plains of Shinar, and their subsequent scattering from the Tower of Babel.

1. Mizraim's Family

Each group leaving Babel took with it whatever skills its members possessed.

Mizraim, Noah's grandson, founded Egypt around 2188 B.C., a date consistent with both biblical and secular records. The Egyptians, the Sumerians, and the Mayans all retained the technology to build pyramids. Imhotep designed Egypt's first pyramid for third dynasty pharaoh Zoser. The Great Pyramid of Giza, built for Pharaoh Khufu of the fourth dynasty, is "the largest and most accurately constructed building in the world." This pyramid required advanced optical, surveying, mathematical, and construction techniques, an impressive leap beyond the technology demonstrated in earlier pyramids.

2. Abram and Khufu's Pyramid

Abram's visit to Egypt may explain Egypt's sudden advance. Abram grew up in the advanced but idolatrous culture of Ur about three centuries after the Flood. Josephus wrote that Abram "communicated to them arithmetic, and delivered to them the science of astronomy; for before Abram came into Egypt they were unacquainted with those parts of learning; for that science came from the Chaldeans into Egypt." Based on Josephus's statement, Abram's visit to Egypt may well have occurred during the fourth dynasty.

Middle Kingdom—Joseph and Moses

In contrast to the lack of evidence for an Israelite population in Egypt during the New Kingdom of Ramses' time, there is significant evidence of the Israelite presence during the Middle Kingdom. The 12th and 13th dynasties provide the backdrop for the stories of Joseph, the oppression of the Israelites, Moses, and the Exodus. The biblical dates for these events can provide dates for these dynasties (see chart).

1. Joseph as Vizier

Sesostris I of the 12th dynasty had a powerful vizier named Mentuhotep. Mentuhotep held the office of chief treasurer and wielded authority "like the declaration of the king's power."

“Mentuhotep . . . appears as the alter ego of the king. When he arrived, the great personages bowed down before him at the outer door of the royal palace.”

Compare Mentuhotep to Joseph in Genesis 41:40, 43. Furthermore, Ameni, a provincial governor under Sesostri I, had the following inscribed on his tomb: “No one was unhappy in my days, not even in the years of famine, for I had tilled all the fields of the Nome of Mah, up to its southern and northern frontiers. Thus I prolonged the life of its inhabitants and preserved the food which it produced.” Ameni sounds like a man with the inside track on the agricultural forecast! Ameni’s employer, vizier Mentuhotep, may have been Jacob’s son Joseph.

2. Israelite Slavery

The late 12th dynasty reveals evidence for Israelite slavery. Sesostri III, the fifth king of the 12th dynasty, built cities in the delta including Bubastis, Qantir, and Ramses. The building material of choice in the Middle Kingdom was no longer stones but rather bricks composed of mud and straw. A large Semitic slave population lived in the villages of Kahun and Gurob during the latter half of the 12th dynasty. On one papyrus slave list, 48 of the 77 legible names are typical of a “Semitic group from the northwest,” many listed beside the Egyptian name assigned by the owner. The presence of Semitic slaves in Egypt during this time is consistent with the biblical account of the oppression of the Israelites.

3. Moses’ Adoption

Traditional chronology has tried to fit Moses into the 18th or 19th dynasty where there is no evidence of Semitic slavery on a large scale, but Moses’ unusual adoption does fit into the late 12th dynasty. Amenemhet III, the dynasty’s sixth king, had two daughters but no sons. Josephus describes a childless daughter of pharaoh finding a child in the river and telling her father, “As I have received him [Moses] from the bounty of the river, in a wonderful manner, I thought proper to adopt him for my son and the heir of thy kingdom.” Amenemhet III’s daughter Sobekneferu was childless and eventually ruled briefly as pharaoh herself, making Sobekneferu a likely candidate for Moses’ foster mother.

4. Testimony of the Dead

Examinations of cemeteries at Tell ed-Daba and Kahun, areas with high Semitic slave populations, have been particularly supportive of the biblical narrative. Graves at ed-Daba reveal that 65 percent of the dead were infants. This extraordinarily high figure is consistent with the slaughter of Israelite infants ordered by Pharaoh. Also consistent with the prescribed slaughter are “wooden boxes . . . discovered underneath the floors of many houses at Kahun. They contained babies, sometimes buried two or three to a box, and aged only a few months at death.”

Examination of graves in a more recent section, datable to the late 13th dynasty, reveals shallow mass graves without the customary grave goods. These disorganized, crowded burials suggest the need for rapid burial of large numbers of people. The death of the firstborn in the tenth plague would have created just such a situation.

5. The Exodus

In the 13th dynasty, during the reign of Neferhotep I, the Semitic slaves suddenly departed from Tel ed-Daba and Kahun.

Completion of the king's pyramid was not the reason why Kahun's inhabitants eventually deserted [Kahun], abandoning their tools and other possessions in the shops and houses. . . . The quantity, range, and type of articles of everyday use which were left behind suggest that the departure was sudden and unpremeditated.

Furthermore, Neferhotep I's mummy has never been found, and his son Wahneferhotep did not ever reign, Neferhotep being succeeded by his brother Sobkhotep IV. The sudden departure of the Semitic slave population fits the biblical account of the Hebrew slaves' sudden exodus from Egypt after the tenth plague. The pharaoh's mummy is missing because he died in the Red Sea with his army when he pursued the slaves, and his son never ruled because he died in the tenth plague.

6. The Hyksos

Just a few years after the Exodus, the 13th dynasty ended, and the Second Intermediate Period, the time of Hyksos rule, began. The Hyksos have puzzled scholars, and everyone has a pet theory as to the Hyksos's identity. Manetho reported:

Men of ignoble birth out of the eastern parts . . . had boldness enough to make an expedition into our country and with ease subdue it by force, yet *without our hazarding a battle with them*. . . . This whole nation was styled Hycsos (emphasis added).

Manetho places this conquest at the end of the 13th dynasty.

Since no evidence of chariots had been found in pre-Hyksos Egypt, tradition has held that the Hyksos were able to defeat Egypt because they possessed chariots. Therefore, since Exodus 14 describes Pharaoh's pursuit with chariots, many have thought that the Exodus occurred after the Hyksos conquest. However, discoveries in recent years have confirmed the use of horses and chariots in the 12th and the 13th dynasties, prior to the Hyksos invasion. For example, an engraving from the 13th dynasty shows Khonsuemmwaset, a pharaoh's son and army commander, with a pair of gloves, the symbol for charioteer, under his seat.

The drowning of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea explains the conquest of the powerful nation of Egypt without a battle. Some have hypothesized that the Hyksos were Amalekites. Whoever the Hyksos were, they ruled Egypt from Avaris in the delta as the 15th and 16th dynasties, while their puppets in the 17th dynasty ruled from Thebes nearly 500 miles to the south. The 17th dynasty overthrew the Hyksos and began the New Kingdom.

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Table of Biblical and Egyptian Synchronisms

Date B.C.	Bible	Egyptians	Dynasty
4004	Adam		
2348	Noah's flood		
post-Babel	Mizraim		
late 1900s	Abraham	Khufu	4
1706	Joseph; Jacob to Egypt	Sesostris I	12
1635	Joseph dies		
after 1635	enslavement	Sesostris III	12
1571	Moses born	Amenemhet III	12
1491	Exodus	Neferhotep I	13

Verses 15 – 22. When slavery and hard work didn't cause the Hebrews to reduce in numbers, Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill all the boy babies as they were born (that would make it look like the boys had died while being birthed and it wouldn't look so bad on him). Since there are two midwives mentioned by name, it is likely that they were considered leaders of the midwives and that there were many more. But the Hebrew midwives feared God more than Pharaoh and let the boys live. Genesis 1:28 commanded humans (Adam and Eve as the first) to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. So to obey Pharaoh and commit genocide would be disobeying God. When Pharaoh confronted them about them letting the boys live, they answered that the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women and are so vigorous giving birth that the babies are born before the midwives can arrive. They were very brave to say something that would be a put down to the Egyptians. Because of the midwives' trust in God, he blessed the Hebrew people and they became even more numerous (as he had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and he gave the midwives their own families (children) even though they lied to Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh ordered that every Hebrew baby boy must be thrown into the river (Nile) while the girl babies were to be allowed to live. As we saw from the writing quoted above, the Pharaoh at this time would have been Amenemhet III.

Chapter 2

Verses 1 – 10. Here we learn the genealogy of Moses. His father was Amram, and later in Exodus 6:20 we learn that his mother was named Jochebed. In 1 Chronicles 6:1-3, we learn that Levi was the great grandfather of Moses, and Kohath was his grandfather. Since Levi was part of the generation that went to Egypt with Jacob, Moses is then part of the third generation and his son, Gershom whom we will hear about later in this chapter, is the fourth generation. Remember in Genesis 50:22 – 23 that Joseph saw the third generation of his son Ephraim's children and that would make that generation the fourth after Joseph went down to Egypt. This fourth generation is the one God told Abraham (Gen 15:16) would come out of their slavery.

Jochebed gave birth to a son and hid him for three months to keep him from being thrown into the Nile River so he would drown. When she could no longer safely hide him, she took a papyrus (reed) basket, covered it with tar and pitch (to seal it so it would float in water), put the boy in it and floated it among the reeds along the Nile River. Then she left her daughter (Moses' sister Miriam) to see what would happen to her baby boy. The Hebrew word which is translated a papyrus basket is "tehvah" and it is the same word used in Genesis 6:14 and there it is translated as "ark" referring to the boat Noah built to save his family and the animals through the flood. Here, Jochebed was making an ark in hopes of saving her baby boy.

We learn that Pharaoh's daughter came down to the Nile to bathe and as she and her attendants were walking along the river bank she saw the basket among the reeds and sent an attendant to get it. When she opened the basket and saw a baby boy, she said it was one of the Hebrew babies and felt sorry for him. As we read in the writing excerpt above, Amenemhet had two daughters but no son. Sobekneferu, one of Amenemhet's daughters, was childless and, according to Josephus, received a son from the river and adopted him as her own and heir of the kingdom. So she is likely the daughter mentioned in this passage.

At this point, Miriam steps out from where she has been watching and asks Pharaoh's daughter if she would like her to go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby. Of course, she is thinking of her own mother to nurse the baby which is her own child. Although we are not told what Jochebed's plan was in putting her son in the basket and putting it in the reeds, but it likely was just this event that she hoped would happen. Pharaoh's daughter agreed, so the baby was taken to Jochebed and she nursed him until he was weaned (possibly three to five years old) and then he was returned to Pharaoh's daughter to become his son. She named him Moses which sounds like the Hebrew for "draw out" because she said "I drew him out of the water."

As the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses would have been trained in all the literature, mathematics, science, and warfare of the Egyptians because he would be expected to become the next Pharaoh after Amenemhet III. Stephen's speech in Acts 7:22 says "Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action." According to Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 2:10:1), Moses was a

general in the Egyptian army and part of the campaign that defeated the Ethiopians. He also says that Moses married the daughter of the Ethiopian king. The name Moses may be Egyptian as it is part of other Egyptian royal names as in Ahmose (Ahmoses) and Thutmose (Thutmoses). Josephus quoted the Egyptian historian, Manetho, (*Against Apion*, 1:28) that Moses was born in Heliopolis, was named Osarsiph (after Osiris, the god of Heliopolis), but that he changed his name to Moses. Manetho may not have been the most accurate historian, but that Josephus quoted him gives credence to this information. All of this shows that Moses was well educated, well trained, and part of the Egyptian royalty during his early years and that he knew his true origin as the son of a Hebrew family.

Verses 11- 15. This passage begins after Moses is grown and says that he went out to where his own people were working and saw them at hard labor. For Moses to know that his own people were the Hebrews means that during the time Jochebed was nursing him (possibly until age five) that he was taught about his heritage and taught about God and therefore the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As Moses observes the Hebrews working, he sees an Egyptian beating a man. Looking around and seeing nobody, he killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand. (We know from later chapters that Moses has a problem with his temper so this is probably the first example of that.) When he went out the next day and saw two Hebrews fighting, he asked the man who was doing wrong why he was hitting a fellow Hebrew. The man replied by asking who made him ruler and judge over him. Being Pharaoh's adopted son Moses had the right to be the man's ruler and judge, but the man apparently thought he could oppose Moses because he had seen him kill the Egyptian. So the man then asks if Moses is going to kill him like he did the Egyptian yesterday. This caused Moses to fear that what he had done had become known and Egyptians hearing about it could be hostile toward him.

It doesn't take long for Pharaoh to hear what has happened and Moses' fears come true as Pharaoh tries to kill him. But Moses fled through the Sinai to escape Pharaoh. Acts 7:23 informs us that Moses was 40 years old when he fled from Pharaoh. When Moses arrived in Midian, he stopped at a well. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham and Keturah (whom he took as his wife after Sarah died see Gen 23 and 25:1-4). Seven daughters of a priest of Midian came to the well to water their father's flock. Then some shepherds came and drove them away so Moses got up and came to their rescue by watering their flock. When the girls returned home to their father Reuel, he asked why they were so early. Reuel (Jethro) and Moses were possibly fourth or fifth cousins. The girls replied that an Egyptian had rescued them from shepherds and even watered their flock. So Reuel asked where the Egyptian was and why they left him. He told them to invite him to have something to eat. As a result of this meeting, Moses agreed to stay with Reuel and even married his daughter Zipporah. She gave birth to a son and Moses named him Gershom, which sounds like the Hebrew for "an alien there" because he said he had become an alien in a foreign land.

We are told in verse 23 that during that long period of time, the king of Egypt (Pharaoh) died. We don't know how long it took Moses to travel across the Sinai or how long before Moses married Zipporah and she gave birth to their son, but it probably wasn't more than two to three years and that wouldn't be considered a long time. So this is a summary statement, along with verses 24 and 25 which will lead us into chapter 3. Acts 7:30 informs us that Moses was 80 when he saw the burning bush and was told to go back to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let the Hebrew people leave. So this long period of time is 40 years and during that time the Pharaoh whose daughter adopted Moses died and others succeeded him as Pharaoh. From the excerpted information above, it is possible that the Pharaoh that came to power near the end of this forty year period was Neferhotep I. During the forty years, the Hebrew people groaned under their slavery and their cry for help was heard by God and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to bring the people out of their slavery.

Chapter 3

Verses 1 – 10. At 80 years old, Moses is still tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro (apparently another name for Reuel). He has taken the flock to the far side of the desert to a place called Horeb which is then identified as the mountain of God. Likely, at the time of this event that we shall be told about, the mountain is not known as the mountain of God. Horeb means "desolate place" and is usually associated with the Sinai

Peninsula. At that time it may have been used to indicate a range of mountains and not a particular mountain. Later, after God met with the Israelite people and spoke the Ten Commandments to them while they were at the foot of a mountain, a particular mountain in the range probably became known as the mountain of God and was then often referred to as Mount Horeb or Mount Sinai. The traditional location of this mountain is in the southern portion of the Sinai Peninsula, but, according to some scholars, the references in Deut 33:2 and Gal 4:25 could indicate that it was located on the eastern side of the Gulf of Aqabah in modern day Saudi Arabia. This leads to differences in opinion about the route of exodus of the Israelites and what body of water was being referred to as the Red Sea that was parted so they could cross on dry ground to escape from the Egyptian army that was chasing them. We'll look some more about those theories in later chapters.

At this mountain, Moses writes that the angel of the Lord appeared in flames of fire from within a bush that wasn't consumed by the fire. As we can tell from the rest of Moses' account of the event, this was not just an angel of the Lord, but the Lord God himself. When Moses saw the bush and that it wasn't burned up by the fire, he thought that he would go over and look at the strange sight and why it doesn't burn up. God sees that Moses has stopped to look and is approaching the place of the burning bush so he calls out to Moses, by name, from within the bush. Moses' reply is "Here I am." God then tells him not to come any closer and to take off his sandals because the place upon which he is standing is holy (sacred) ground. Then God identifies himself as the God of your father (Amram), the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. When Moses hears who is talking, he hides his face because he is afraid to look directly upon God.

God then informs Moses that he has seen the misery of his people (descendants of Jacob) in Egypt, heard their crying because of their treatment by the slave drivers, and is concerned about their misery. So he has come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and bring them into a good land flowing with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Then he tells Moses that he is sending him to Pharaoh to bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

Verses 11-22. When God tells Moses that he is sending him to Pharaoh to bring his people (Israelite descendants) out of Egypt, Moses responds with a question. He wants to know why he is so special that he should be the one to do this. God tells Moses that he will be with him and as a sign, when he has brought the people out he will return to his mountain to worship. So Moses knows the people are to come to the Mountain of God (Horeb – Sinai) to worship God. So Moses poses the situation that when he goes to the people and tells them that the God of their fathers (the patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) has sent him to them that they might ask what is the name of God. So, he asks what he should tell them. He is asking how he can prove that the same God who had appeared and spoken to the patriarchs but has not appeared or spoken to anyone since is the God who has sent him to the people. God says "I am who I am." Moses must tell the people "I am" (YHWH) has sent you. God also says that is the name by which is to be remembered from generation to generation.

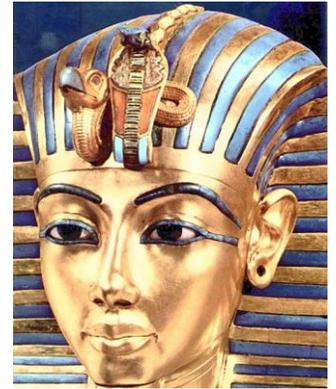
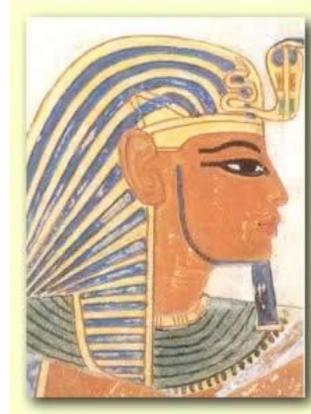
Then God tells Moses to assemble the elders of Israel. These would be the leaders given the birthright blessing down through the four generations of descendants of the children of Jacob. An example of this can be seen from the descendant list of Judah given in Matthew 1:3-4 and the leaders of the tribes that God told Moses to help him take a census of the people in Numbers 1:7. Matthew gives the descendants of Judah as Perez, Hezron, Ram, Aminadab, and Nashon. Perez was born before Jacob and family moved to Egypt and Nashon is part of the fourth generation of those born in Egypt (Gen 15:16). Numbers gives Nashon, the son of Aminadab, as the one from the tribe of Judah to help numbering the people. Aminadab was probably alive and the leader of the tribe but an old man, so Nashon, his son and younger, was chosen by God to do the numbering. Moses is to tell those elders that God has been watching over them, has seen what has happened to them in Egypt, and remembers his promise to bring them up out of their misery in Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amrites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites which is a land flowing with milk and honey.

Moses is told that the elders will listen to him and then he is to go to Pharaoh and request that the Hebrew people be allowed to take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the Lord, the God of the

Hebrews. Pharaoh would recognize this would take the Hebrew slaves outside of his territory and he would have no claim to make them return, so he would effectively setting them free. God says that Pharaoh won't agree unless a mighty hand compels him, so God will strike the Egyptians with wonders and afterwards Pharaoh will let them go. Then God tells Moses that he will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward his people so that they will not leave empty handed. Every woman is to ask their neighbor and every woman living in the house for articles of silver, gold, and clothing and thus they will plunder the Egyptians. This is a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:14.

Chapter 4

Verses 1 – 9. Now Moses poses another problem. What if the people don't listen to him or believe God has appeared to and spoken to him. So God gives him a sign. God asks Moses what is in his hand (it is a staff like shepherds carrying when tending their flock) and tells him to throw it on the ground. When Moses complies, it becomes a snake which Moses runs away so it can't strike him. Then God tells him to take the snake by the tail. We can imagine the fear Moses would probably have about doing such a thing. But he obeys and when he grabs it by the tail it becomes a staff in his hand again. God tells him that "this is so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of the fathers ... has appeared to you." So this is something that Moses can do whenever necessary to prove to the people that God has appeared and talked with him. This miracle will show that God has the power over snakes and anything considered a deity. That is important because a symbol on Egyptian royal head pieces was a cobra (see painting and picture at right).



Then God tells Moses to put his hand inside his cloak. When he obeys and then takes the hand out he sees that it has become leprous, like snow. This doesn't necessarily mean he had leprosy because other diseases of the skin could also be called by that name. The point is that the skin looked white rather than the normal Bedouin browned skin. God told him to put his hand back in his cloak and when he obeyed and took his hand out it was returned to its normal look. This second miracle showed that God had the power over dread diseases and could cause or heal them at his pleasure.

The God says if the people don't believe or pay attention with the first sign, perhaps they will with the second sign. But if they don't believe with both of the signs, Moses is to take water from the Nile and pour it on dry ground and the water will become blood on the ground. This miracle showed that God has the power over something the Egyptians considered a divine source of life – the Nile – and that God could spoil (change) it whenever he desired.

Normally, it is necessary to have two witnesses to confirm something. Here God is providing Moses with three "signs" (witnesses) that he is the Creator of everything, that he has power over everything, and that he has given Moses the authority over these things.

Verses 10 – 17. Rather than being confident to proceed with what God has told him to do, Moses now comes up with another excuse for why he shouldn't be the one to do it. His first excuse was he is not important enough, to which God said "I will be with you." Moses' second excuse was that the people wouldn't listen to him and believe that God had spoken to him, to which God gave him three "signs" to prove the Creator of the universe had not only spoken with Moses but that he had given him power to perform miracles. So now Moses claims that he is not eloquent and is in fact slow of speech and tongue. That can hardly be true since he was trained to become a pharaoh and was the general of the Egyptian armies. This was his way of saying he didn't feel he could speak and convince the elders and Pharaoh to do what God was telling him to do. This is the same

thing we often do when God calls us to do something for him. So God assures Moses that as Creator he gave man his mouth and has the power not only to make him be deaf or dumb (speechless) and to give him sight or take it away. So he tells Moses to go and he will help him speak and teach him what to say.

So now, Moses gets down to the heart of his excuses. He just doesn't want to be the one and asked God to send someone else. Perhaps he thinks the Pharaoh who tried to kill him is still on the throne. Perhaps he thinks some of his people will still remember he killed an Egyptian and tried to tell them not to fight their brothers so that will make them against him. But his real reason is that he just doesn't want to obey. God had answered all of Moses' objections (excuses) so he was angry that Moses didn't want to obey, but he would not let his chosen servant get out of doing what he was told to do. (Remember the story of Jonah and how God would not let him escape going to the Ninevites and telling them God's message.) So God provided someone to speak for Moses. God obviously knew how Moses was going to act because he already had his brother Aaron, the Levite, traveling on his way to meet him. God says Moses can speak to Aaron and put words in his mouth and he will speak to the people for him. Not only that, God says he will help both of them speak and teach them what to do. God says it will be as if he were Moses' mouth and as if Moses was God to Aaron. And then he reminds Moses to take the staff so he can perform miracles with it.

Verses 18 – 23. After speaking with God, Moses returns to Jethro's house and asks permission to go to Egypt to see if any of his people are still alive. This may simply be a polite way of saying he is going to Egypt, but it could also be a reluctance on Moses' part to tell Jethro what had happened on the mountain as he was tending Jethro's flock. Jethro gives his blessing to Moses going to Egypt.

Then we discover that God has told Moses (we don't know when, but possibly after he returned from the burning bush experience) that all the men who wanted to kill him are dead (Pharaoh and any other Egyptians). So Moses puts his wife (Zipporah) and his sons (Gershom and one or more for whom we don't know the names) on a donkey and starts to go to Egypt with the staff that God has told him to take in his hand. God tells Moses that when he arrives in Egypt to be sure to perform all the wonders (miracles) he has given him the power to do, but that Pharaoh's heart will be hardened and he will not let the people go. When this happens, Moses is to tell Pharaoh God has said that Israel is his first-born son and since he will not let him go that God will kill Pharaoh's first-born son. When God says that he will harden Pharaoh's heart, it doesn't mean Pharaoh doesn't have the freedom to choose whether or not to obey what God wants him to do, but only that God will progressively make Pharaoh's heart harder every time he refuses to obey. This same type or hardening of a person's heart is seen in Romans 1: 21 – 32 where it says God gave them over to the sinful desires of their hearts.

Verses 24 – 26. Here we learn that Moses apparently had not circumcised at least one of his sons as Abraham had been told to do and to have his descendants continue to do as a part of their covenant with God. Since Moses had been living in Midian, it seem likely that he had been following the practice of the Midianites and other Arabian peoples who did not circumcise infants but performed that as a right of passage into manhood or upon a groom before his marriage. So the Lord was angry with Moses for not obediently circumcising his son (or sons) and made him deathly sick. Zipporah somehow understood what the problem was and circumcised the boy (boys) and touched Moses' feet with the foreskin to show his obedience. The phrase "bridegroom of blood" in reference to circumcision would indicate the Midianite practice of circumcising a groom before his wedding. Some people think Zipporah did the circumcision at Moses' insistence but did not approve of it and therefore threw the foreskin at his feet. Other people believe that the phrase means she regarded what she had done as the factor that removed God's hand of judgment against Moses and that because of this she had abandoned her claim over him and dedicated him to God's service.

Verses 27 – 31. Since Aaron was told by God to go into the desert to meet Moses, it appears that he was in Egypt at the time. God must have also directed him to meet him at the mountain (Horeb / Sinai / the mountain of God) or they could have easily passed by each other in the desert and not met. Moses tells Aaron all about the "signs" and when they gather the elders, they also believe when they see the "signs." And the elders bow down in worship of God who has seen their misery and care about them. This was an expression of faith.

Chapter 5

Verses 1 – 9. After the Israelite people had believed the miracles God gave Moses to do and worshipped, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh with God's message: "Let my people go so that they may hold a festival to me (worship) in the desert." Pharaoh (who considers himself to be god) asks who this is "god" that I should obey him? Since he doesn't recognize anyone powerful enough to make him let the Hebrew people go, he will not do what Moses says God has asked him to do. He knows full well that if he lets the people go into the desert of Sinai they will be beyond his control and won't return. So, even though the Egyptians despise them, he doesn't want to lose their slave labor. Again, Moses asks Pharaoh to let his people go into the desert to worship or God might strike us with plagues or with the sword. Of course that means the Egyptians would suffer the plagues or warfare and not just the Hebrews. Pharaoh replies that Moses is taking the people away from their work and he should just let them get back to doing their work. After dismissing Moses and Aaron, Pharaoh gave orders to his slave drivers and foremen to no longer supply straw for the slaves to make the bricks but to make them get their own straw. And they are not to reduce the numbers of bricks that they are required to make. Pharaoh says that the slaves are lazy and that is why they are crying to be allowed to leave the country. So he tells the slave drivers and foremen to make them work harder so they won't listen to the lies of Moses and Aaron.

"Exodus 5:1-5 introduces another aspect of labour in Egypt: claims for time off work, and specifically for worship or religious holidays. On this topic, useful background comes from the extensive, fragmentary and often very detailed records kept for the activities of the royal workmen (who lived at the Deir el-Medina village), who cut the royal tombs in the Valleys of the Kings and Queens in Western Thebes, c. 1530–1100 B.C.

"Daily notes were kept for the men's attendances at work or of their absences from it. Sometimes reasons for absence are given. . . . The entire workforce might be off for up to 8 or 14 days, especially if interruptions, official holidays and 'weekends' came together. In Ancient Egypt—as elsewhere—major national festivals (usually main feasts of chief gods) were also public holidays. Then, each main city had its own holidays on main feasts of the principal local god(s). Besides all this, the royal workmen at Deir el-Medina can be seen claiming time off for all kinds of reasons, including 'offering to his god,' '(off) for his feast'; even 'brewing for his feast' or for a specific deity. Not only individuals but groups of men together could get time off for such observances. And a full-scale feast could last several days.

"What was true in Thebes or Memphis would apply equally at Pi-Ramesse (Raamses). So, when Moses requested time off from Pharaoh, for the Hebrews to go off and celebrate a feast to the Lord God, it is perhaps not too surprising that Pharaoh's reaction was almost 'not another holiday!'"

(Kenneth Kitchen, "Labour Conditions in the Egypt of the Exodus," *Buried History* (September 1984):47-48. Quoted by Dr. Thomas Constable in his Notes on Exodus.)

Verses 10 – 21. The slave drivers and foremen go out and tell the slaves that Pharaoh will not give them straw any longer so they will have to seek it anywhere they can, but their work (daily quota) will not be reduced. So the slaves had to look all over Egypt for stubble they could use for the bricks. Stubble is what is left in the field after the grain is harvested and this means they had to go into the fields to strip them of that stubble in addition to chopping it up to put in the bricks. No only that, but the Hebrew foremen the slave drivers had appointed to give orders to their own people were beaten when the people didn't fulfill each day's quota. Because of the way they are being treated, the Israelite foremen go to Pharaoh and plead their case that they are good servants but are being mistreated and it is the fault of the Egyptian people (slave drivers and foremen). Accusing the Egyptians was not a good defense because it would just make Pharaoh angry. Pharaoh shows that anger by telling them directly that they are lazy and therefore must gather their own straw and still produce their daily quota of bricks. Then the Israelite foremen realize that they are in trouble. When they leave they find Moses

and Aaron waiting for them so they accuse them of causing all the hardships that are befalling them and say that the Lord (God) should look upon them and judge them.

Verses 22 – 23. Moses then asks the Lord why he has brought this trouble upon the people. He proclaims that ever since he has gone to Pharaoh to speak in the name of God, Pharaoh has brought trouble upon the people and it is God's fault for not rescuing the people.

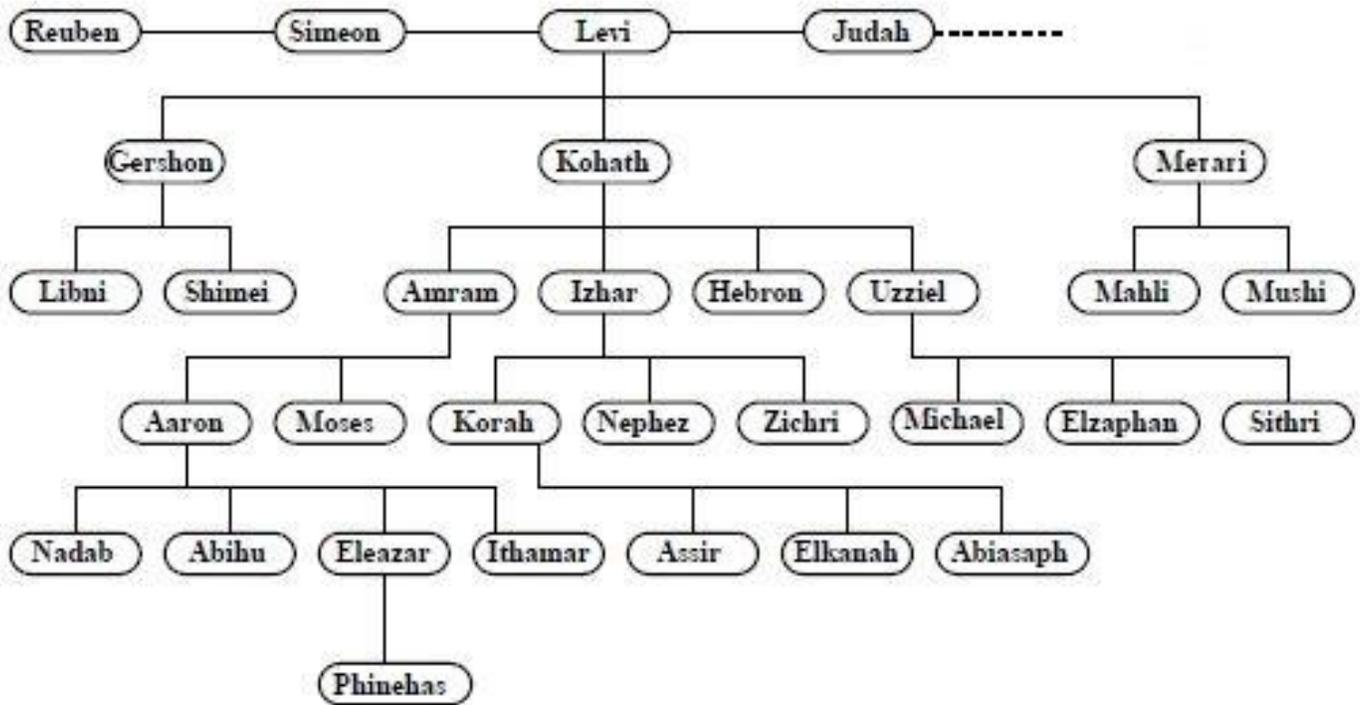
Chapter 6

Verses 1 – 13. God answers the accusation of causing the trouble and not rescuing the people by saying that now Moses will see what he will do to Pharaoh by his mighty hand and that Pharaoh will drive the Israelite people out of the land. God continues to remind Moses that he appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the Lord Almighty (El Shaddai) but not by the name YHWH, by which he revealed himself to Moses. He also reminded Moses that he established his covenant with them to give their descendants the land of Canaan where they had lived as aliens. He says that he has heard the groaning of the Israelites (those descendants for whom the covenant promises were made) who are now enslaved by the Egyptians and remembers his covenant. Therefore, Moses is to tell the Israelites that he (God – YHWH) will free them from their enslavement by the Egyptians with mighty acts of judgment by his outstretched arm. God says he will take the Israelites as his people and will be their God. Then they will know that he is God, has brought them out of their slavery, and will bring them to the land he swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and it will be their possession. This was a three-fold promise to the Israelite descendants of Jacob. First, God would completely deliver them from their bondage and the burdens of the Egyptians and he would do it through great judgments. Second, God would adopt them as his nation and they will serve him as their God. Third, God would bring them into the land that he swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This will be the fulfillment of the promise God gave Abraham in Genesis 15:13-16.

Moses reported all this to the Israelites but they wouldn't believe him because of their discouragement caused by their cruel bondage. The God told Moses to go again to Pharaoh and tell him to let the Israelites out of his country. Note that this time it was not a request to let them leave to go worship but just to let them leave. But Moses drops back to one of the excuses he gave God at the burning bush and says if the Israelite people wouldn't listen to him why would Pharaoh since he has faltering lips (stutters). Then we are told that God spoke to Moses and Aaron about the Israelites and Pharaoh and commanded them to bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

Verses 14 – 27. This passage is intended to give us the descendants of Levi but starts by telling us the sons of his two older brothers, Reuben and Simeon. It tells us that Levi had three sons named Gershon, Kohath and Merari and that Levi lived 137 years. Since Levi was born about 1750 BC while Jacob was living in Paddan Aram (Haran) that would mean he died about 1613 BC. Jacob and his family moved to Egypt in 1706 BC and Levi would have been 44 years old. We don't know exactly when Gershon, Kohath and Merari were born but they all three went into Egypt with Jacob in 1706 (Gen 46:11) so probably when Levi was 30 to 43 years old. We are told Gershon and Merari each had two sons and that Kohath had four and lived 133 years. If Kohath was born when Levi was about 40 years old that would be about 1710 BC and his death would be about 1577 BC. Amram was the oldest of Kohath's sons and could have been born when Kohath was about 60 years old or about 1650 BC. Amram married Jochebed, his father's (Kohath's) sister and they had two sons, Aaron and Moses, and one daughter, Miriam. Amram lived 137 years so he would have died about 1513 BC. Aaron was probably the oldest and born when Amram was about 60 years old which could be about 1590 BC. Moses being born last in 1571 BC would make Amram 79 years old at his birth. We are also told the names of the sons of Amram's brothers (Izhar, Hebron, Uzziel) are Korah, Nephez, Zichri, Michael, Elzaphan, and Sithri. Aaron married Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab who was a descendant of Judah (Matt 1:4), and bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. The sons of Korah are Assir Elkanah and Abiasaph. The son of Eleazar is Phinehas. These are all names that will be seen again during the rest of the account of the Exodus. We are told that this Moses and Aaron are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh and brought the people out of Egypt.

MOSES' FAMILY TREE (EXOD. 6:14-27)



Verses 28 – 30. These are really a part of the story that continues in chapter 7. We are again told that God tells Moses to say to Pharaoh everything that he has said to him and again we are told that Moses asks why Pharaoh would listen since he speaks with faltering lips (stutters).

Chapter 7

Verses 1 – 13. After Moses used an old excuse for not wanting to do what God told him to do, God speaks to him and tells him he has made him like God to Pharaoh and Aaron will be his prophet. Since Moses is to be like God that means he has been given the power from God to accomplish what God wants done. As his prophet, Aaron will speak what Moses tells him just as the prophets would do for God. Then God tells Moses to say everything he commands him and Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of the country. Leave means to exit the country and not return. When God says he will harden Pharaoh's heart it doesn't mean God will override Pharaoh's free will so that he can't choose to let the Israelites go. It means that each time Pharaoh refuses to do God's will God will allow his heart to become harder against obeying. God says that even though miraculous signs and wonders are multiplied in Egypt Pharaoh will not listen to what Moses and Aaron say. So God says he will lay his hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment he will bring the Israelites out and the Egyptians will know that he is the Lord.

So Moses at age 80 (born 1571 BC) and Aaron at age 83 (born 1574 BC) go to speak to Pharaoh. God tells them that when Pharaoh commands them to do a miracle then Moses is to tell Aaron to take his staff and throw it on the ground and it will become a snake before Pharaoh. Then they go before Pharaoh and do just what God said to do and the staff becomes a snake before Pharaoh. So Pharaoh calls his wise men, sorcerers and the Egyptian magicians and they did the same thing with their staffs by their secret arts. Their "secret arts" means they called upon the power of Satan to perform the transformation of their staffs. But after their staffs became snakes, Aaron's staff swallows up their staffs. This shows the power and glory of God. Pharaoh sees this but his hard became hard because he would not listen to them and obey. The Jews preserved the names of

Pharaoh's magicians and handed those names down through the centuries even though they are not recorded here in Exodus. Paul tells us in 2 Tim 3:9 that their names were Jannes and Jambres and they were able to do miracles by the power of Satan as we are told people can do in Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10; and Revelation 13:13-14.

Verses 14 – 24. After Pharaoh watched the staff become a snake and still would not listen to Moses, God told Moses that the next day he was to take the staff that became a snake and meet Pharaoh on the bank as he went down to the Nile. Then he was to let Pharaoh know that God has said to let his people go into the desert to worship, but since Pharaoh has refused the Nile will be turned into blood so that the fish die, the river will stink, and the people will not be able to drink the water. In this way Pharaoh will know that God is the Lord, meaning he has the power to change things physically and power over life. Then God tells Moses to take Aaron with him and tell Aaron to use his staff to accomplish what God has commanded so that water in the streams and canals, in the ponds and reservoirs and even in the wooden buckets and stone jars will all change into blood. When Moses and Aaron do just as God has commanded, all the water in Egypt turned into blood and the Egyptians had to dig along the banks of the Nile to get water to drink. Pharaoh called for his magicians and they were able to do the same thing using their "secret arts" (power of Satan). So, instead of listening to Moses and obeying God, Pharaoh's hard became harder.

Some people may try to explain this by saying the Nile just appeared to turn into blood just like they claim the statements in Joel 2:31 and Rev 6:12 must be figurative rather than literal. But there is nothing in this passage to indicate that this is other than literally happening, especially since this is historical narrative literature.

"It was appropriate that the first of the plagues should be directed against the Nile River itself, the very lifeline of Egypt and the center of many of its religious ideas. The Nile was considered sacred by the Egyptians. Many of their gods were associated either directly or indirectly with this river and its productivity. For example, the great Khnum was considered the guardian of the Nile sources. Hapi was believed to be the 'spirit of the Nile' and its 'dynamic essence.' One of the greatest gods revered in Egypt was the god Osiris who was the god of the underworld. The Egyptians believed that the river Nile was his bloodstream. In the light of this latter expression, it is appropriate indeed that the Lord should turn the Nile to blood! It is not only said that the fish in the river died but that the 'river stank,' and the Egyptians were not able to use the water of that river. That statement is especially significant in the light of the expressions which occur in the 'Hymn to the Nile': 'The bringer of food, rich in provisions, creator of all good, lord of majesty, sweet of fragrance'." (James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 272. Quoted by Dr. Thomas Constable in his Notes on Exodus, p 51)

"Each year, toward the end of June, when the waters of the Nile begin to rise, they are colored a dark red by the silt carried down from the headwaters. This continues for three months, until the waters begin to abate, but the water, meanwhile, is wholesome and drinkable. The miracle of 7:17-21 involved three elements by which it differed from the accustomed phenomenon: the water was changed by the smiting of Moses' rod; the water became undrinkable; and the condition lasted just seven days (v. 25)." (Johnson, Philip C. "Exodus." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 58. Edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison. Chicago: Moody Press, 1962. Quoted by Dr. Thomas Constable in his Notes on Exodus, p 52)

Chapter 8

Verses 1 – 15. Seven days pass after the Nile was turned to blood before God again speaks to Moses. This time he tells Moses to go to Pharaoh with a warning. Moses is to tell Pharaoh that if he refuses to let the people go so that may worship God that the whole country will be plagued with frogs coming up from the Nile and into the houses, ovens and kneading troughs but also into the Pharaoh's bedroom and bed. This situation would have been troublesome for all the people to endure but even more troublesome would have been that their

goddess, Heqt, whose image was that of a woman with a frog's head, would be seen as impotent and powerless in the presence of the Hebrew God. Heqt was believed to breathe life into the bodies that her husband, Khnum (the guardian of the Nile), had fashioned from dust on his potter's wheel. After the warning was given to Pharaoh and he obviously refused to listen and obey, God has Moses tell Aaron to stretch out his hand with his staff and cause the frogs to come up from the Nile. Again Pharaoh's magicians did the same thing and caused frogs to come out of the Nile by the power of their "secret arts" (Satan's power). Obviously Pharaoh's magicians could not stop the plague and remove the frogs even though they could duplicate the miracle of producing them. So Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron to ask them to pray to their God to remove the frogs and he would let the people go to make sacrifices. Moses gave Pharaoh the honor of setting the time that the frogs would be removed and Pharaoh picked the next morning. Moses agreed and said that only the frogs in the Nile would remain.

After leaving Pharaoh, Moses cried out to God about the frogs and God responded by killing all the frogs everywhere but in the Nile. This showed that God was in control and could even control the timing of the relief from the plague. The people gathered up the frogs into heaps and the land reeked with the smell. But when Pharaoh saw that the plague had ended, he hardened his heart and would do as he had promised and as God had commanded through Moses.

Verses 16 – 19. The God told Moses to tell Aaron to stretch out his staff and strike the dust of the ground and the dust would become gnats throughout the land of Egypt. Moses and Aaron obeyed God and the dust became gnats. This time Pharaoh's magicians could not duplicate by their "secret arts" the plague that God had commanded. The magicians told Pharaoh that what had happened was "the finger of God" they were confessing that it was of divine origin and not the result of the human ability of Moses and Aaron. This phrase as well as "the hand of God" is used throughout Scripture to indicate the creative omnipotence of God. (See 1 Samuel 6:9, Psalm 109:27, and Luke 11:20.) This plague doesn't seem to be directed at showing the impotence of a particular Egyptian deity but at all of them and in particular, the Egyptian priesthood who were noted for maintaining physical purity. Those priest kept themselves physically pure so that their prayers to the particular deity, represented by the animal mask they wore, would be effective. (The practice of wearing a mask to represent a particular deity is still done by some pagan religions.) Although the magicians confessed that the miracle was of divine origin, Pharaoh would not change and obey what God commanded so his heart became harder.

Verses 20 – 32. Then God told Moses to get up early the next morning and again confront Pharaoh as he goes down to the Nile and tell him that if he does not let God's people go so that they might worship him God will send swarms of flies on all the Egyptians. Then Moses is to tell him that God will make a distinction between the people of God living in Goshen (where Jacob and his family were given to live) and the people of Pharaoh so that it would be known that God is in charge in Egypt. And Moses is to tell Pharaoh that to prove it the plague will happen the next day. This time the plague would happen when God directed without any actions or words by Moses or Aaron. And the next day it happened just as God had said. Dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh's place and into Egyptian houses throughout the land.

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and told them to go and sacrifice to their God here in the land. Pharaoh has now admitted that Yahweh is the God of the Israelites but not that he had an obligation to obey him. Moses told Pharaoh that what he proposed would not be right because the sacrifices they would make would be detestable to the Egyptians (because the animals to be sacrificed would not be cleansed according to the Egyptian procedures and thus it would be an abomination to sacrifice them). For this reason the Egyptians might stone the Israelites. Instead, they must journey three days into the desert to offer the sacrifices as God has commanded. So Pharaoh agrees they can go into the desert but not very far and asks Moses to pray for him (to be freed from the swarms of flies). Moses tells Pharaoh that as soon as he leaves he will pray to God and the flies will be gone the next morning. But he warns Pharaoh not to act deceitfully by not letting the people go to offer the sacrifices. The next morning the flies were gone but Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go as he had promised.

Chapter 9

Verses 1 – 7. Then God told Moses to go to Pharaoh again and tell him to let the people go to worship him and if he doesn't that will bring a terrible plague on the livestock in the field, horses, donkeys, camels, cattle, sheep and goats. God says that this plague will also not affect his people (the Hebrews – that would be the descendants of Jacob along with all their servants) so that no animal belonging to the Israelites would die. God set the next morning as the time the plague would begin. The next day the plague happened just as God had said and all the livestock of the Egyptians died but not one animal of the Israelites died. Pharaoh sent men to investigate this and found that not one of the Israelite animals had died. Even with that information Pharaoh's heart would not yield and he would not let the people go.

Verses 8 – 12. Next God told Moses to take handfuls of soot from a furnace and toss it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh and it would become a fine dust over the whole land of Egypt that would cause festering boils on men and animals throughout the land. Moses and Aaron do as God commanded and immediately boils broke out on all the Egyptian men and animals. Even Pharaoh's magicians could not stand before Moses, but Pharaoh's heart was even more hardened because he would not listen to Moses and Aaron. As Pharaoh continued to resist God and harden his heart, God then brought more judgment upon him. The judgment is actually discipline that is intended to show that God is Sovereign and that Pharaoh should acknowledge that and accept him as Lord over all creation. If Pharaoh would change his mind and bend his knee to God as Lord and let the Israelites leave, then God would be glorified, not just in Egypt but throughout the known world as the news traveled from Egypt, and God would cease any further discipline. This is what happened to Nineveh in Jonah 3.

Verses 13 – 19. Now God tells Moses to go to Pharaoh early in the morning and once again tell him to let the Hebrew people go so they can worship him, but if he doesn't then God will send the full force of his plagues against Egypt so that it will be known that there is none like God in all the earth. Moses is to tell Pharaoh that God could have struck the Egyptians with a plague that would have wiped all of them from the face of the earth, but he has not so that his name would be proclaimed throughout the world. Since Pharaoh has still set himself against God, the next plague will be the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, so Pharaoh should give an order that every living thing and everything the Egyptians have in a field should be brought under a place of shelter or else it will be destroyed (die).

Verses 20 – 26. Pharaoh doesn't issue the order God commanded but some of his officials heard what Moses told Pharaoh so they hurried to bring their slaves and livestock inside. Other officials heard but did not obey. So now we see that some of the Egyptians are beginning to believe in the God of the Hebrews and are willing to obey what he commands. That doesn't mean they are believers – only that they recognize his mighty power and are willing to do what he says so that they will be protected from his wrath. After this warning, God tells Moses to stretch out his hand toward the sky so that it will start the plague of hail and as he does God sent thunder, hail and lightning. This storm was the worst that had ever struck Egypt since it became a nation. The hail struck everything in the fields (not under cover) – men, beasts, everything growing in the fields, and it even stripped the trees (of their leaves). But throughout the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, it did not hail.

Verses 27 – 35. While the hail was falling Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "I have sinned. The Lord is in the right and I and my people are in the wrong. Pray to the Lord, for we have had enough thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don't have to stay any longer." But Moses suspects that Pharaoh and his officials do not really fear (honor) God with that claim and that the request is really just intended to bring about the end of the hailstorm. So Moses says that after he has left the city he will stretch out his hands to God and it will stop the plague of hail, thunder, and rain so that they may know that the earth's is the Lord's. God is showing that he has complete power over everything even though Pharaoh and his officials don't believe it. Then, as a little side information, we are told that the flax and barley were destroyed because they had headed and were in bloom, but the wheat and spelt were not destroyed because they ripen later. Flax was used to make linen cloth which was preferred over wool. Barley was used to make beer and as feed for animals, but poor

people also ate it. Barley and flax bud in late January and early February in the northern (lower Nile delta) region of Egypt so that means this plagues, and the other which occurred within days of this) took place in the early part of the calendar year.

Chapter 10

Verses 1 – 20. Now God tells Moses that he has hardened the hearts of Pharaoh and his officials so that Moses and the Hebrews may tell their children and grandchildren how God has dealt harshly with the Egyptians (for their disobedient unbelief) so that they (the Hebrews' descendants) may know that God is the Lord. Remember that God hasn't kept Pharaoh and his officials from changing their ways, believing in God, and obeying him. He hasn't made it impossible for their hearts to soften, but their hearts have become harder because with each plague (disciple) their disobedience has hardened their hearts toward God. So Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh with the question from God, "How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? If you refuse to let them (the Hebrews) go, I will bring locusts into your country tomorrow." This plague of locusts would cover the ground and fill the houses of the Egyptians. Everything in the fields that has not yet been destroyed will be eaten by the locusts and ever the trees will be devoured (stripped of all vegetation and bark). Pharaoh is even told that this will be something that has never happened since the land has been settled. Then Moses leaves Pharaoh.

Pharaoh's officials respond by asking him how long will Moses be a snare to them. They ask Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go and worship their God. Then they ask if Pharaoh doesn't realize that Egypt is ruined. So Pharaoh has Moses and Aaron brought back into his presence and says they may go but asks who exactly will be going. Moses answers that those going will be the young and the old, the sons and daughters, along with their flocks and herds, because they are to celebrate a festival to the Lord. To Pharaoh, the idea of the women and children leaving with the men meant the Hebrews were plotting to do evil. So he says the men may go since that is what Moses has been asking for. And then he drives Moses and Aaron out of his presence.

So Moses then stretches his hand out over the land and God makes an east wind blow across the land the rest of that day and that night. By morning the wind has blown locusts over all the land of Egypt in great numbers so that the ground appeared black. The locusts ate every bit of vegetation that was left in the land and all the fruit on the trees so that nothing green remained on tree or plant in all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh quickly summons Moses and Aaron and again says that he has sinned against the Lord their God and against them. He asks them to forgive his sin and pray to God to take this deadly plague away from him. When Moses leaves the presence of Pharaoh, he prayed to the Lord and God sent a west wind which drove all the locusts back to the east into the Red Sea so that not a locust was left in Egypt. But again Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he would not let the people leave.

The Egyptians, among their other gods, prayed to one that looked like a locust because they believed the god would protect them from locusts. So this plague, along with the others, showed that God was sovereign over all "so called" gods and over all creation.

Verses 21 – 29. Then God told Moses to stretch out his hand to the sky so that darkness so dark that it could be felt would cover all of Egypt. Moses obeyed and total darkness fell over Egypt for three days. During that time no one could see anyone else or leave their home. But all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived. Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and proposed, as a compromise, that the people could go worship their Lord but that they had to leave their flocks and herds behind. In this compromise Pharaoh would still win because the Hebrews would be leaving the Egyptians with flocks and herds by which they would be able to rebuild their livestock and the Hebrews would be left in the desert without anything by which they could sustain themselves or use as sacrifices to God. But Moses replied that they must take the animals because they would need animals to use as sacrifices and would not know what they were to use. But again Pharaoh would not let them go and orders to leave and not return or he would die. Moses replied that he would never appear before Pharaoh again.

Chapter 11

Verses 1 – 10. Here, we begin with some background information about what God had said to Moses before Pharaoh had summoned him in Chapter 10:24. God had told Moses that he would bring one more plague on Pharaoh and Egypt and after that Pharaoh would drive the Israelites out of the land. God also had told Moses to tell the people that they (men and women alike) should ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold. Then, we are told that God made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the Hebrews and that Moses was highly regarded by Pharaoh's officials and the Egyptian people. This probably means what he had done in leading the Egyptian army in battle against the Ethiopians when he was in charge 40 to 60 years ago was still remembered favorably.

Now, we jump back to before Moses left Pharaoh in Chapter 10:20. Moses tells Pharaoh God has said that at about midnight he would go throughout Egypt and every firstborn son of all the Egyptians, from Pharaoh to the lowliest slave girl, will die and also all the firstborn of the cattle. Consequently, there would be loud wailing throughout Egypt such as has never been and would never be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal. That means that not a man or animal will have any part in the death because it will be accomplished by God's messenger. Then Moses was to tell Pharaoh that God had said all the Egyptian officials would come, bow down before Moses, and tell him to go and take all the people who will follow him. Then Moses tells Pharaoh that when that happens he will leave. We are told that Moses left and was hot with anger. Remembering that Moses killed the Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew 40 years ago because of his anger, we have now seen that Moses has a problem with anger management. Moses' anger could have been a righteous anger because Pharaoh would not accept that God is Lord and in charge of everything, or it could have been his own anger that Pharaoh was not listening and responding to him.

We are told God had told Moses that Pharaoh would refuse to listen to him so that his (God's) wonders would be multiplied in Egypt. Then we have a summary of what has happened since Moses has returned to Egypt. Moses has performed the miracles that God has directed him to do, but Pharaoh's heart was hardened and would not let the Israelites go from the country.

Chapter 12

Verses 1 – 11. Now God gives Moses and the Israelites some instructions for their future. He establishes that this particular month of the year should become the beginning of their calendar. At this time the month was called Abib which means "ear month" because it was when the grain has produced the ear or head. After the Babylonian captivity the month was renamed Nisan and corresponds to about the middle of the present day month of March to the middle of the month of April. The Jewish calendar follows the lunar cycle and the months alternate between 29 and 30 days so that by the end of 12 months it disagrees with the solar cycle by 11 days. So about every three years it is necessary to add an additional month to readjust the calendar to more closely match the solar cycle. The additional month is called Veadar and is added between Adar (February – March) and Nisan (March – April). This was to become the beginning of Israel's religious calendar

God commanded that on the tenth day of this month, the male head of each household should select a lamb for his family, but if a family was too small to eat a whole lamb, he should share with his nearest neighbor so that there would be just enough for all the people to eat. The animal was to be a year old male with defect and could be taken from the sheep or goats. The animal was to be cared for until the fourteenth day to be sure that it stayed without a defect. Then it was to be slaughtered (killed) at twilight and some of the blood put on the sides and tops of the doorframes on the houses where they are to eat the meat of the animal roasted over a fire along with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast. The meat was not to be eaten raw or cooked in water and they were to roast the head, legs, and inner parts. This would mean roasting the lamb without cutting it into pieces and when set upon the table for everyone to eat would present a clear picture of the sacrifice that was made for their protection. They were to eat all of it. If they couldn't eat all of it, the remainder was to be burned so that none of it was still left when morning came. They were to eat it with their cloak tucked into their belt, with

their sandals on their feet, and with their staff in their hand so that they were ready to leave at a moment's notice. This would be known from this time forward as the Lord's Passover. Some ancient rabbis taught that the Passover lamb was to be killed exactly at sunset because of the instruction to slaughter it at twilight in verse 6 and also later in Deuteronomy 16:6. But twilight literally means "between two lights." This could actually be anytime between sun up and sun set. According to Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, the Passover lamb was slaughtered in the mid-afternoon which would be about 3 p.m. This was when Jesus died on the cross outside of the city walls on Golgotha (see Matt 27:45-50; Mark 15:34-37; 1 Cor 5:7).

Verses 12 – 20. Then God told Moses, so that the people would be informed, that on that night after the animal was killed and its blood smeared on the top and sides of the doorframes God would pass through Egypt and strike down all the firstborn of both men and animals and bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. The blood on the doorframes would be a sign and God would pass over that house so this destructive plague would not affect them. They were commanded by God to celebrate this as a festival to the Lord, a lasting ordinance for all the generations to come. Then they are told that for seven days they are to eat bread made without yeast. They are to remove anything with yeast in it from their house because during the seven days anyone who eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from Israel. On the first of the seven days they were to hold a sacred assembly and another one on the seventh day. On these two days of sacred assembly the people were to do no work except to prepare food for everyone to eat. God says they are to celebrate this Feast of Unleavened Bread because on this very day he would bring the people out of Egypt and was an ordinance for all the generations to come. So in this first month, from the evening of the fourteenth day to the evening of the twenty-first day they are to eat bread made without yeast and no yeast is to be found in their house.

Verses 21 – 28. Then Moses assembled the Israelite elders and told them to go select the animals for their families, slaughter the Passover lamb, and with a bunch of hyssop smear some of the lamb's blood on the top and both sides of the doorframe. Then, not one of them should go out of the house until morning so that when the Lord goes through Egypt that night he will see the blood and will Passover their house and not let the destroyer enter and strike a firstborn down. Moses reaffirms that they are to continue to do this when they enter the land God has promised to them and as a lasting ordinance for all generations. When their children or later generations ask why they do this, the answer is to be "It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared out homes when he struck down the Egyptians." The people bowed in worship and then did just what God had commanded through Moses.

Verses 29 – 36. At midnight God struck down all the firstborn in Egypt from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, to those of a prisoner in the dungeon, and to the firstborn of all the livestock. When Pharaoh and his officials got up during the night they heard loud wailing in Egypt because there was not a house without someone dead. So Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and told them to leave, take all the Israelites and go worship the Lord. He told them to take all their flocks and herds and asked that they bless him. All the Egyptians urged the Israelite people to hurry and leave the country or else they would all die. The Israelites took their bread dough before the yeast was added, in their kneading troughs, and wrapped in clothing. As God had said he would, he made the Egyptians favorably disposed to give the Israelites the silver and gold and clothing they had been told to request of their neighbors. So, in this way, the Israelites plundered the Egyptians and thus provided what would later be needed for the construction of the Tabernacle.

Verses 37 – 42. Since Pharaoh commanded the Israelites and all their flocks and leave, Moses took the people and began to leave. It wouldn't have taken them any time to prepare, except to gather the items their neighbors gave them. They began the journey from Rameses and went toward Succoth. We are told that there were about 600,000 men as well as women and children. Many other people from Egypt other than just the Israelites also chose to exit with the Israelites. If three fourths of the men were married that would mean there would be about 500,000 women (wives who were living plus some daughters) and about 400,000 children under the age of 10. That would mean there were about 1.5 million people plus animals and carts loaded with silver, gold, bronze, and cloth that exited Egypt. That was no small caravan for Moses to lead out into the desert. Since the people left in a hurry they did not have time to put yeast in their bread dough, so during the first part of their exodus

they only had unleavened bread to eat.

We are told that the length of time the Israelite people had lived in Egypt (by Masoretic text only says this) and Canaan (Samaritan text and Septuagint, Greek translation of Hebrew, adds this) was 430 years and that they left to the very day (of that 430 years). Since the lamb to protect the Israelites from the death angel was killed on the evening of the fourteenth of Nisan, that means they left Egypt on the fifteenth of Nisan in the year 1491 BC. So the 430 years previous to that was the fifteenth of Nisan in the year 1921 BC. Joseph died at age 110 in 1636 BC so the Exodus began only 145 years after Joseph's death. Jacob and his entire family and servants moved to Egypt in 1706 BC and that was only 215 years before the Exodus. Abraham left Canaan and went to Egypt because of a famine in the land in 1921 BC, so this had to be the beginning of the 430 years. Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 2:15:2) says that the 430 years was from when Abraham entered Canaan. So the Samaritan text and the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew text saying "Egypt and Canaan" would be the best text to use.

Verses 43 – 51. Now Moses tells us the regulations that God gave him for the people to observe as they celebrated the Passover every year. No foreigner, temporary resident, hired worker, or uncircumcised slave (servant) could eat it. For any slave (servant) of an Israelite household to be uncircumcised would mean they were not obeying God's command (Gen 17:9-14). If any foreigner living among the Israelites wanted to celebrate (eat) the Passover he could only if he had all males in his household circumcised. The Passover meal was only to be eaten in the house and none of it taken outside. None of the bones of the Passover lamb were to be broken, so it would have to be roasted whole.

Chapter 13

Verses 1 – 16. These verses command that every firstborn male born to the Israelites is to be consecrated to the Lord because the firstborn were protected from death when the Death Angel passed over them on the night after the sacrificial lamb was eaten. This would have been the night of the fifteenth of Abib (Nisan) since the Israelites followed how the Lord had counted days, saying it was evening and morning (Gen 1).

The verses also reiterate the command to commemorate the Passover every year for all succeeding generations, even after entering the land promised to the descendants of Abraham, then Isaac, and then Jacob, land that was at that time inhabited by Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, and Jebusites. After celebrating the Passover, they are commanded to eat only unleavened bread for seven days and hold a festival to the Lord on the seventh day. After entering the land of the Canaanites the Israelites are to give to the Lord the firstborn (male) of every womb. Then they are to redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey and if they don't redeem it they are to break its neck. They are also to redeem every firstborn son. When questioned about why they do this, they are to explain it is because the Lord killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal, and they sacrifice to the Lord to redeem the first male offspring of every womb, animals and sons. It is to be a sign and remembrance to succeeding generations.

Verses 17 – 22. Moses tell us here that when Pharaoh let the people go, god did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country. That road was along the coast and would have been well traveled by many people and would have been the shortest and fastest route to Canaan. It was also well fortified by the Philistines to protect travelers along the route. Moses tells us that God said if they faced war the people might change their minds and return to Egypt. So he led them by the desert road to the Red Sea. The Hebrew translated as "Red Sea" is *Yam Suph* and literally means "Sea of Reeds" ("yam" means sea and "suph" means reed). Nowhere in the Hebrew Scriptures is the crossing place called the "red sea." That would have to be "adom" or "adam," which means red in place of "suph." It is most likely that "yam suph" is not a proper name but a description. Translating "suph" as red apparently occurred during the time of King James. In Old English, "reed" would be spelled "rede" and from that it is just a short change to "red." 1 Kings 9:26 says that King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber which is near Eloth on the shore of the "yam suph" (sea of reeds) in the land of Edom.

To the Israelites, and even to the Greeks of that era, the entire water area from the shores of West Africa, south of Saudi Arabia and Babylonia, and to the shores of Persia (Iran) was known by one name. Today, we have retained the Israelite name for the water between West Africa and Saudi Arabia and call it the Red Sea. It includes the Gulf of Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez. The water south of the Saudi Arabia is called the Arabian Sea and the water south of Iran is called the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf. At the northern end of the Gulf of Suez was built the Suez Canal linking the gulf with the Mediterranean Sea.



There is much debate by scholars over the years about where the escaping Israelites crossed this “sea of reeds.” Some want to put it at the southern end of the Gulf of Aqaba near a place called the Straits of Tiran or farther north around the middle of the gulf at a place called Nuweiba. Some scholars have placed the crossing at the northern end of the Gulf of Suez near the Port of Suez (an active trading port in that day). This would be unlikely because when Pharaoh saw that the Israelites were seemingly trapped at that location could have easily sent part of his army around the northern part of the port and awaited the Israelites to exit on the east side. Other scholars place the crossing in the neighborhood of the Bitter Lakes and Lake Timsah. The exact place of the crossing of whatever was identified as “yam suph” will probably never be known, but the more likely place is somewhere north of the Port of Suez. This is seen from Genesis 15:22 when Moses leads the people into the Desert of Shur which is identified from previous scripture (Gen 16) as being in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula.

Moses also tells us the people left Egypt armed for battle which means they took what weapons they had with them. Moses also took the bones of Joseph as he had told the people at the time he died to do when they left Egypt for the Promised Land because he knew the Lord would keep the promise he had made to Abraham.

Moses recounts that after they left Succoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert and that by day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light. Thus they could travel both day and night and it was a visible symbol of God’s presence.

The map to the right shows three possible routes the Israelites could have taken on their exodus. The Way to Arabia is a well-traveled way across the Sinai Peninsula to the land of Midian. This was likely the route that Moses took on his escape from Egypt after he



killed the Egyptian and fled from the Pharaoh who wanted to kill him. It was probably the route he travelled when he returned to Egypt with God’s command to the current Pharaoh to let his people leave. The Way of

Shur is a well-traveled route from Canaan to Egypt that runs through the Wilderness (Desert) of Shur and the likely route that Hagar fled from Sara on her way to Egypt when she was pregnant with Ishmael (Gen 16). The Way of the Philistines was a well-traveled trade route for merchants from Canaan and further north and protected by Philistine warriors. It seems unlikely that God would lead this caravan of 1.5 million people along any well-traveled roads like this these.

Chapter 14

Verses 1 – 18. After camping at Etham, God tells Moses to go back and camp near Pi Hahiroth between Migdol and the sea and that the camp should be directly opposite Baal Zephron. The Hebrew literally reads “Tell the sons of Israel and let them return and camp before Pi-hahiroth between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea.” Then God goes on to tell Moses that Pharaoh will think the Israelites are wandering around in confusion and hemmed in by the desert. God says Pharaoh will pursue them but that he will again gain glory through Pharaoh and his army and the Egyptians will know that he is the Lord. So the Israelites obeyed and looked like they were wandering in confusion.



When Pharaoh was told the people fled, he and his officials changed their minds and wondered what they have done by letting them leave because they have lost their services (slave labor). So, Pharaoh had his chariot made ready and took with him 600 of the best chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over them and pursued the Israelites. They overtook the Israelites as they camped at Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephron. The Israelites saw the Egyptians marching toward them and cried out to Moses and God in terror, “was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?” They also said, “Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians?’ It would have been better to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!” They have recently seen the power of God over all the Egyptian gods and people and have experienced his protection from death, and yet this quickly they are fearful of the Egyptians and not trusting God. This is not just a failing of these Israelite people but is a regular failing of God’s people down through the ages to today. Even though we experience God’s power in our life, when faced with a great hardship or something terrifying, we fail to lean on God’s goodness and power to take us through troubling times and bring glory to himself.

Moses tells the people not to be afraid, stand firm, and they will see the deliverance the Lord will bring this day. He goes on to say that the Egyptians that they see today they will never see again. The Lord will fight for them so they only need to stand still. God tells Moses to raise his staff and stretch out his hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. God says he will harden Pharaoh’s heart so he will go in after them and thus God will gain glory from Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen and all the Egyptians will know that he is the Lord.

Verses 19 – 31. Then the angel of God who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army (the people) moved to behind them and also the pillar of cloud (God’s presence) stood behind them between them and the army of Egypt. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the side where the Egyptians were and light to the side where the Israelites were so that neither could go near the other all night. As Moses stretched his hand over the sea, the Lord began a strong east wind (blowing from west to east) which drove the sea back and turned the ground where the sea had been into dry ground. Thus all the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground with a wall of water on their right and left. Obviously the pillar of cloud/fire moved along behind the Israelites as the last of them went through the sea and that allowed the Egyptians to pursue them by going into the opening between the two walls of water. Pharaoh and his officers had to be able to see that the water was walled up on either side of them and yet they were arrogant enough to drive their horses and chariots in after the Israelites. That’s how hard Pharaoh’s heart had become – that he didn’t fear God who had shown him he had power over all creation. In the morning, the Lord looked down from the pillar of cloud/fire and threw the Egyptian army into confusion. He made the wheels of their chariots to come off (alternate translation: jammed the wheels of the chariots) so that they had difficulty driving. Therefore the Egyptians said, “Let’s get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt.” Here we can see that the Egyptian army, but not necessarily Pharaoh finally realize that they are fighting against God. Then God tells Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians, the chariots and horsemen. Moses obeyed and as the water rushed back into place the Egyptians were fleeing toward (or from) it and were swept into the sea. They were covered by the water and the entire Egyptian army that had followed the Israelites into the opening in the sea died there.

When the people saw the Lord’s power displayed in taking them through the sea on dry ground and then killing the Egyptians who pursued them, they feared the Lord and put their trust in God and his servant Moses.

Remember that earlier we determined that the Pharaoh of the Exodus was Neferhotep and his son, Wahneferhotep never reigned as his successor. Instead Neferhotep was succeeded by his brother, Sobkhotep IV. This agrees with the 10th plague and all the Egyptian army (including Pharaoh) who were chasing the Israelites being killed when the parted waters came back upon them.

Chapter 15

Verses 1 – 21. After the Israelites were safe from Pharaoh and his army, Moses sang a song to the Lord. This is his worship for all the Lord has done to keep his promise to bring the Israelites out of their bondage in Egypt. In this song, Moses recounts all the Lord has done, praises his name and power, and proclaims his trust in God to complete his promise to bring them into the Promised Land. Moses says God has hurled Pharaoh's chariots and his army into the sea (Yam Suph) and they have all drowned and sank to the depths. Moses sings that by his power God had shattered the enemy, thrown down those who opposed him, and in his burning anger (righteous anger) has consumed them. He says by God's power the surging waters stood firm like a wall, but when the enemy boasted they would pursue and destroy the Israelites, God blew upon the water and it covered the enemy. Moses asks who is like God, majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, and working wonders. Then Moses changes in the song then to proclaim that God's unfailing love will guide the people to his holy dwelling. He says that nations will hear and tremble because of what the Lord has done. The people of Philistia will be gripped with anguish, the chiefs of Edom will be terrified. The leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling and the people of Canaan will melt away. Moses looks for the Lord to cause the people to be still as the Israelites pass by and God brings them into the land and plants them on the mountain of his inheritance, the place God has made for his dwelling, the sanctuary he has established by his own hands and there the Lord will reign for ever and ever. Apparently God has revealed to Moses that he will have a sanctuary built for himself as a dwelling place on some mountain in the Promised Land and will dwell there forever. Perhaps Moses has heard about this city of God from Abraham's look towards it that was handed down through his descendants.

Moses says after the Lord brought the sea back over Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and horsemen, that the prophetess Miriam who was Aaron's sister (and therefore also Moses' sister) took a tambourine and with all the women following her with tambourines and dancing, sang a song highly exalting the Lord because he has hurled the horse and rider into the sea.

Verses 22 – 27. Now that God has redeemed his people from their slavery in Egypt, he proceeds to lead them and prepare them to be his privileged nation. Moses leads the people for three days in the Desert of Shur. This area is the northwestern part of the Sinai Peninsula and includes some well-traveled trade routes which God has already indicated he didn't want them traveling because of the danger of the people deciding to return to Egypt. So God leads them by his pillar of cloud/fire in parts of the desert where they don't find any water for the three days. When they come to a place that Moses identifies as Marah (which means bitter) they found water but couldn't drink it because it was bitter. So the people grumbled against Moses and asked what they were to drink. So Moses cries out to the Lord for help and God showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water and it became sweet (pure to drink instead of bitter). Then the Lord decreed a law for the people. He said that if they listened carefully to his voice and did what is right in the Lord's eyes by paying attention to his commands and decrees, then he would not bring on them any of the diseases he had brought on the Egyptians. And he calls himself "the Lord who heals" which in Hebrew is "Jehovah Rophe." Then God led the people to a place identified as Elim where there were twelve springs and seventy palm (date) trees. This was an oasis where the people camped near the water and had dates to eat.

Chapter 16

Verses 1 – 3. God now leads the people from Elim into the Desert of Sin. This area is the southwestern region of the Sinai Peninsula. We are told that this was on the 15th day of the second month after they left Egypt. So they have been at Elim for about two months. Now that they people are in a desert again they begin to grumble again against Moses and this time they include Aaron. They claim that in Egypt they sat around pots of meat and ate all the food they wanted but now Moses and Aaron have brought them into the desert to starve the entire assembly to death. They say if only they had stayed in Egypt and died by the Lord's hand. Obviously, they have quickly forgotten their slavery and that it was so bad they cried out to God to save them. They have forgotten all that God did to the Egyptians so that Pharaoh would let them go. And now that they have a little disappointment that they aren't immediately in the Promised Land, they complain.

Verses 4 – 8. The Lord tell Moses that he will rain down bread from heaven for the people. Then he gives instructions about this bread to test them and see if they will follow his instructions. He says that the people are to go out each day and gather enough bread for that day. Then on the sixth day they are to gather twice as much as on the other days. Moses says to the Israelites that in the evening and the next morning they would know that it was the Lord who brought them out of Egypt and they will see the glory of the Lord. Because the Lord has heard their grumbling against him (their grumbling wasn't really against Moses and Aaron but against God who was leading them). Moses tells them that they will know it is the Lord when he gives them meat to eat in the evening and bread in the morning

Verses 9 – 36. Then Moses told Aaron to tell the whole community to come before the Lord because he has heard their grumbling. Aaron does as Moses said and while he was speaking to the people they saw something in the desert. God tells Moses to say to the people that at twilight they will eat meat and in the morning they will be filled with bread. Then they will know that I am Lord. That evening quail came and covered the camp and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes that were like frost appeared on the desert floor. When the people saw it they asked "What is it?" Moses tells them it is the bread the Lord has given them to eat and again he tells them of the Lord's command about gathering only as much as each person needs, an omer (about four quarts) and that no one is to keep any of it until morning. Of course, some of them didn't list to the Lord's command and kept some until morning. But in the morning it was full of maggots and smelled bad. So Moses was angry at them for their disobedience.

Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed and when the sun grew hot, the flakes melted away. On the sixth day they gathered twice as much (2 omers for each person). The leaders of the tribes reported that the people had done as they were told on the sixth day, and Moses told them that the Lord commanded that the next day was to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord, so the people were to bake or boil what they want and they can save whatever is left for the next day. The people did as Moses said and the next day the bread did not have any maggots and did not stink. Moses said that they should eat it that day because there would be none given that day and from then forward, they should gather for five days and on the sixth gather twice as much because the seventh day would be a Sabbath. Still, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather the bread and found none. God asks the people through Moses, how long they would refuse to keep his commands. He tells them he has given them the Sabbath when they should rest and therefore has told them to gather twice as much on the sixth day.

We are told the people called the bread Manna, which possibly means "What is it?" The bread was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. Then Moses says that Lord has commanded that they should take an omer of manna and keep it for generations to come so that they can see the bread he gave them to eat in the desert when he brought them out of Egypt. So Aaron put the manna in front of the Testimony (we are not told at this time what the Testimony is) so it could be kept. Then Moses ends this section of information with words that could only have been written as they waited on the east side of the Jordan River to cross over into the Promised Land. He says they ate manna in the desert for forty years until they reached the border of Canaan. And he says an omer is one tenth of a ephah.

Chapter 17

Verses 1 – 7. Again God leads the people to move and they come to Rephidim to camp but they find no water to drink so again the people quarrel with Moses and tell him to give them some water to drink. Rephidim is on the west side of the mountainous area known as Horeb. As a part of that range is Mount Horeb (Mount Sinai, the Mountain of God).

Moses recognizes that their quarreling with him is putting the Lord to the test and tells them that. But they grumble and ask why he



has brought them out here so that they, their children and livestock will die of thirst. Rather than trusting the Lord to provide as he did with the quail and manna and was still daily providing through the manna, the people wanted what they saw they needed on their own time frame and they expected Moses (and therefore God) to respond to their demands. So Moses cries out to the Lord asking what he is to do with the people because they are almost ready to stone him (that may or may not be an exaggeration). God tells Moses to take his staff with which he struck the Nile and some of the elders and walk ahead of the people to a rock at Horeb where the Lord will stand (the cloud will move and stand there). Then he is to strike the rock and water will come out of it for the people to drink. Moses obeys God and strikes the rock in the sight of the elders and water comes flowing out. Moses calls that place Massah (meaning testing) and Meribah (meaning quarreling) because here the people quarreled and tested God. So God provides water for the people even though they quarreled and tested him.

Verses 8 – 16. Now Moses tells us that the Amalekites come and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. The Amalekites are descended from Amalek, the first-born son of Esau (Jacob's brother). The area in which they lived and traveled is the northern and central part of the Sinai Peninsula and bordered on the west by Egypt and on the east by Edom and Midian. It is most likely that they viewed the Israelites as invading their territory and a large group of people would drain their water sources and thus threaten their existence. So they attacked this large group of wanderers, probably figuring they weren't trained warriors and thus could be easily defeated. Josephus refers to the Amalekites as "... the most warlike of the nations that lived thereabout . . ." (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jeww*, 3:2:1.) Moses tells Joshua to choose some men to go out and fight the Amalekites on the next day while he goes up on the top of a nearby hill with the staff of God in his hand to overlook the battle. Joshua took some men and fought the Amalekites while Moses took Aaron and Hur with him to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his staff the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands because his arms grew weary the Israelites started losing. So Aaron and Hur took a rock and placed it so Moses could sit on it and they (one on each side of Moses) held up his hands so that his hands remained steady until sunset and the Israelites won the battle. So as long as the people trusted God, he provided for them through Moses' raised hands. God told Moses to write this event down because he was going to completely erase the memory of the Amalekites from under heaven. This doesn't mean the Amalekites immediately ceased to exist as a people because we find them in later history opposing the Israelites. But God has decreed that they will eventually be eliminated as a known people group. Moses built an altar on the site and called it *YHWH nisi* which means Jehovah is my banner. This is not a name of God but is a description of how God treats his people. In their travels thus far, the Israelites have faced several crises. First, with the Egyptians pursuing them, God wanted them to learn to look to him for deliverance from their enemies. When they faced bitter water, God wanted them to learn to trust him for healing and health. When they lacked food in the Wilderness of Zin (Sin), God wanted them to learn to trust him for food and guidance. When they faced no water at Rephidim, God wanted them to trust him for water and refreshment. When the Amalekites attacked, God wanted them to learn that he can provide victory over their enemies in battle. In all these difficult situations God was teaching them to turn to him to meet their needs. This is the same lesson he has to teach every new believer and he does it through the difficulties that face them.

Chapter 18

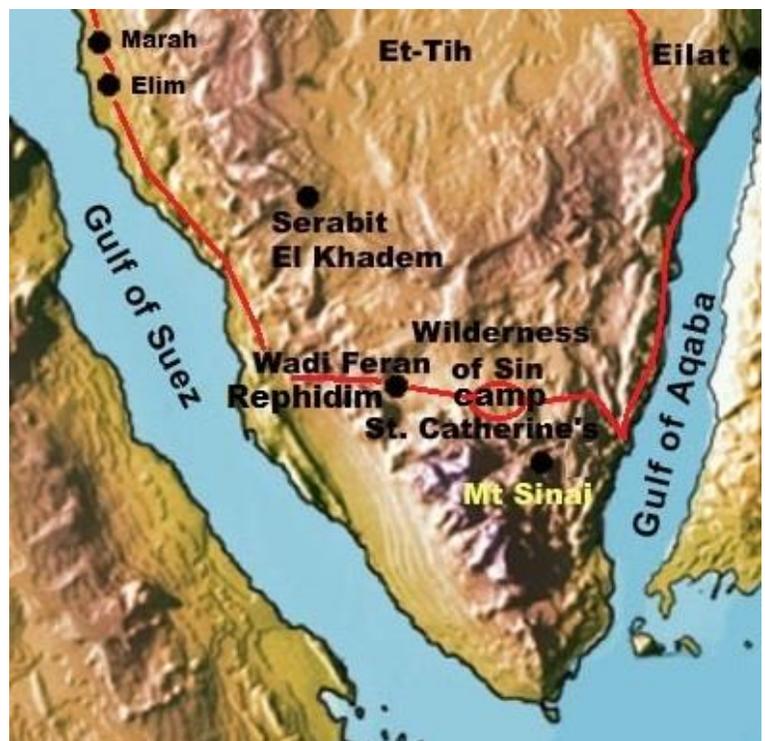
Verses 1 – 12. The Israelites are not too far away from the Midianites where Moses fled after killing an Egyptian and having Pharaoh set out to kill him. That was 40 years ago and now God has led the Israelites in the vicinity of where Moses tended the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law. Jethro was a descendant of Midian, a son of Abraham with his second wife, Keturah (Gen 25:1-2). The Israelites' defeat of the Amalekites has probably reached the hearing of Jethro and he has heard that Moses has led the Israelites out of Egypt so he comes to visit Moses. He brings with him Moses' wife, Zipporah, and his two sons (Gershom and Eliezer) all of whom Moses had sent back to Jethro after Zipporah had circumcised the sons while they were on the way to Egypt. Gershom means "an alien there" because Moses was living as an alien in the land of Midian and Eliezer means "God is my helper." Jethro had sent a message to Moses that he was coming for a visit and bringing his wife and two sons. So Moses went out to meet and greet them and brought them into his tent. Moses explained

to Jethro all that God had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians so that the Israelites could leave and he told him about all the hardships they had encountered along the way to where they are now camped and how the Lord had saved them and provided along the way. Jethro was delighted to hear all the good things God had done and praised God. He also said that now he knows God is greater than all the other gods because of how he has dealt with those who had treated the Israelites arrogantly. Then Jethro brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God. Then Aaron and all the elders of Israel (the head of each clan of descendants of Jacob's sons) came and ate with Jethro and Moses in the presence of God. So after acknowledging that God is supreme, Jethro worships God through sacrifices and then enjoys a fellowship meal with God's people. This is what God desires – that people will acknowledge him as the God of the universe and fellowship together with others who believe and follow him.

Verses 13 – 27. The next day, Moses took his seat to judge all the disputes that the people had, so from morning to evening that is all that he did. When Jethro saw what Moses was doing, he asked why he sat alone as judge while all the people had to stand around all day. Moses replied that it was because the people came to seek God's will to settle disputes between them. Jethro says that what Moses is doing is not good because it will wear him and the people out to do it this way. He tells Moses the work is too heavy (too much) and thus he can't handle it alone. So he advises Moses that he needs to be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him but at the same time teach them God's decrees and laws to show them the way to live according to God's commands. So he should select capable men from all the people who fear God and are trustworthy so that they hate dishonest gain. Then Moses should appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens so that they can serve as judges for the people at all times, but they should bring the difficult cases to Moses to decide or take to God for guidance. In this way those men will share the burden with Moses and the people will return home satisfied because they have their disputes settled quickly. Moses listened to Jethro's advice and decided it was good, so he selected men as Jethro had stated and made them officials to hear disputes. Thus all the simple disputes would be settled quickly and Moses would only deal with the most difficult. Then Moses bid his father-in-law good bye and Jethro returned to his home in Midian. Although Jethro was a Midianite and he fellowshipped with the Israelites, the rest of the Midianite nation did not treat the Israelites favorably.

Chapter 19

Verses 1 – 6. Moses says that in the third month after he led the people out of Egypt they came to the Desert of Sinai. They had set out from Rephidim and camped in the desert in front of the mountain. The mountain is the same mountain where Moses met and talked with God in the burning bush. At that time, God told Moses he wanted him to bring his people out of Egypt and that he should bring them to the mountain where they were talking so they could worship God. (Exodus 3:12) The site of their camp is not known but possibly on the plain just north of the mountain (shown by the circle on the map at the right just a short distance east of Rephidim). Then Moses went up on the mountain and spoke with God who gave Moses a message to say to the people. Moses is to tell the people that they have seen what God did to Egypt and carried them swiftly to meet with him at this mountain. God says if the people will obey him fully and keep his covenant then they will be his treasured possession out of all nations and will be for him a kingdom of priests



and a holy nation (meaning they will serve him). This is a continuation of the third covenant God has made. That covenant was originally made with Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3 and restated again in Genesis 22:17-18 in Isaac's hearing. Then it was again restated to Jacob in Genesis 28:13-14 and now Moses is to restate it to Jacob's descendants. Each statement of the covenant gives us more insight into God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants. The covenant was meant to provide a witness to the entire world of how glorious it can be to live under the government (leadership) of God.

The people are going to remain camped at the base of this mountain for eleven months. The remainder of Exodus, all of Leviticus, and Numbers up to chapter 10:10 record all that happened to them in that location.

Verses 7 – 15. So Moses goes back down the mountain and summoned the elders of the people and told them what God had said. The people responded that they would do all that God had said and Moses went back to God with their answer. God now tells Moses that he is going to appear before the people in a dense cloud so they can hear him speak and so they will always put their trust in Moses. God tells Moses to have the people consecrate themselves, wash their clothes and be prepared for him to come down on Mount Sinai on the third day. He also says that there should be limits around the mountain to protect the people. No one should go up the mountain or even touch it with a foot, not man or animal, because whoever does will be put to death by stoning or shot with arrows without anyone touching them. Only when the ram's horn sounds one long blast may the people go up the mountain. So Moses goes back down the mountain, told them what God had said, and says they should prepare for the third day and abstain from sexual relations. This prohibition against sexual relations was for ritual cleanness, not moral cleanness, so the people would be impressed by the importance of this meeting and focus all their attention on being ready for it.

Verses 16 – 25. On the morning of the third day, the people heard thunder, saw lightning, a thick cloud over the mountain, and then heard a very loud trumpet blast. All of these signs from God that he was present on the mountain caused the people to tremble. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to the base of the mountain to meet the Lord. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because God had descended upon it in fire. Smoke billowed up and the mountain trembled violently and the trumpet sound grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke to God and God answered him, calling him to come up the mountain. When Moses went, God told him to go back down and warn the people not to force their way through or many of them would die. The God says even the priests who approach the Lord must consecrate themselves or he will break out against them. A question arises here as to who these priests are since Aaron and his descendants haven't been designated as the priests yet. The best we can answer is that it must have been the first-born of the clans who in the normal manner were considered the priest for their family, descendants, and servants just like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were considered the priest for their families. Moses responds to God that he was the one who set limits around the mountain so the people, and thus the men acting as priests for their families, could not come up the mountain. So the Lord tells Moses to go down and bring Aaron up with him. So, then Moses went down and told all this to the people.

Chapter 20

Verses 1 – 21. When Moses gets finished telling the people all the Lord had said, God begins to speak from out of the smoke on the mountain and tells them the 10 Commandments which they are to obey as part of the covenant he is making with the people to be their God and they to be his people and a nation which is a witness of how glorious it is to let God be in charge and lead them.

In those ancient times scholars have discovered two basic types of treaties. One type, called a parity treaty, was between two equal parties. The other type, called a suzerainty treaty, was between a sovereign individual (like a king) and his subjects. This treaty between God and the descendants of Jacob is the final statement of God's treaty between himself and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Suzerainty treaties usually had the following sections: a preamble, a historical statement, a statement of general principles, consequences for obedience, and consequences for disobedience. The 10 Commandments basically form a suzerainty treaty but without the

consequences of disobediences being stated. This form of treaty was probably familiar to the people because they had seen something similar during their time in Egypt, so it helped them understand the nature of the relationship they would have with God. The Mosaic Law which begins with the 10 Commandments continues with all that God will deliver to the people through Moses until his death. The totality of the Mosaic Law consist of three types of requirements: those dealing with moral life (the 10 Commandments), those dealing with (governing) religious life (the ceremonial ordinances), and those dealing with (governing) civil life (statues that ordered civil matters). So the Mosaic Law was an expression of God's righteous will (10 Commandments), how Israel's social life would be governed (Exodus 21:1 – 24:11), and how the nation's religious life would function (Exodus 24:12 – 31:18). Leviticus would further develop the laws governing the religious and social life. Rules governing the nation's civil life would be revealed later.

In Dr. Thomas Constable's Notes on Exodus, he paraphrases what J. Dwight Pentecost said in an article he wrote about the purpose of the Law. From that he gives the following ten purposes of the Law:

1. To reveal the holiness of God (1 Peter 1:15)
2. To reveal the sinfulness of man (Gal. 3:19)
3. To reveal the standard of holiness required of those in fellowship with God (Ps. 24:3-5)
4. To supervise physical, mental, and spiritual development of redeemed Israelites until they should come to maturity in Christ (Gal. 3:24; Ps. 119:71-72)
5. To be the unifying principle that made the establishment of the nation possible (Exod. 19:5-8; Deut. 5:27-28)
6. To separate Israel from the nations in order to enable them to become a kingdom of priests (Exod. 19:5-6; 31:13)
7. To make provision for forgiveness of sins and restoration to fellowship (Lev. 1-7)
8. To make provision for a redeemed people to worship by observing and participating in the yearly festivals (Lev. 23)
9. To provide a test that would determine whether one was in the kingdom (theocracy) over which God ruled (Deut. 28)
10. To reveal Jesus Christ.

The Mosaic Law was not given so that the people could be saved. As the Apostle Paul pointed out to the Romans (chapters 1 – 4), no one is saved by works (not even the Law) but by faith in God who gave the Law and promises that all who trust him will be saved.

The 10 Commandments begin with a prologue (v 2) and then the commandments can be divided into two sections. The first section (vv 3 – 11) are vertical, dealing with the relationship with God. The second section (vv 12 – 17) are horizontal, dealing with the relationship with other people.

The first commandment (v 3) is that the people would not have or serve any other gods. This is a statement that there is one and only one God, the Creator of the universe and everything in it.

The second commandment (vv 4 - 6) builds on the first one. God, the Creator of the universe and everything in it, is more powerful and loving than anything that has been or can be created by man from things that are part of God's universe. God has demonstrated that to the descendants of Jacob, the Egyptians, and everyone who heard what he has done for the Israelites. Therefore no idol should be made to take the place of the one and only God and nothing should be bowed to in worship other than that one and only God because God is jealous (protective) of what is his and will punish to the third and fourth generation of those who disobey but will show love to the thousands who obey the commandments. A person disobeying this commandment teaches his children to do the same thing so the effects of the disobedience continue to the third or maybe even fourth generation. But a person obeying this commandment teaches his children to the same and that also continues for not just the third or fourth generation but for many more generations.

The third commandment (v 7) commands that no one should misuse God's name (some translations say take the name of God in vain) because God will not accept (hold) anyone guiltless who misuses his name. The name of God represents his person and also identifies his character as pre-existing, all-powerful, and all-knowing. People were not to use his name in a common way, or for emphasis in their speaking, or in any way that would not bring honor and glory to him. To use his name in any of these ways is to show disrespect, to belittle his power and knowledge, and to scorn his presence. The "name" that is mentioned here in the Hebrew is the tetragrammaton, the four letters Y H W H which means "I am who I am and I am who I will be." This is the name God told to Moses at the burning bush when Moses asked how he should answer the people if (when) they asked who had sent him to lead them out of Egypt. In reality, this commandment doesn't just apply to the tetragrammaton but to all the other words joined with it that would be used to describe God or his character in any way – combinations such as Jehovah Jireh (God, the provider), Jehovah Nissi (God, my banner), and many more. It would also include the name Jesus that was given to God when he came in the flesh and born of a virgin to show people how to live in obedient faith toward God (YHWH) and to die as payment for the sin of everyone who would have faith in him and his death to give them a right relationship with God (YHWH).

The fourth commandment (vv 8-11) remembered all the work God had done in creating the universe and everything in it in six days and that he rested on seventh day, making it (setting it aside as) holy (separated) for God and for man to rest on that day in communion with God. After Jesus' resurrection, proving that he conquered death and made everything right between God and those who would accept it, the Apostles and first believers set aside the first day of the week as a celebration of Jesus' work and the rest that he gives those who believe. The first Jewish believers also continued to observe the seventh day as a Sabbath rest to the Lord, but did not find it necessary to require Gentile believers to observe it because it was given specifically as a commandment to the descendants of Jacob. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not receive this commandment. Again it should be noted that keeping the commandments does not save anyone. Only faith (trust) in God and his work as Jesus dying on the cross as the payment of our sin (disobedience) is the only thing that will save you (give you a right relationship with God).

The fifth through the tenth commandments begin to describe what the relationship between people should be. The fifth commandment specifically tells children to honor their father and mother. This is required because they are God's representatives for the care and instruction of their children and therefore to honor them is to honor God. This commandment is foundational to the remaining five commandments just as the first commandment is foundational for the rest of the first four as well as the remaining nine. This is also the only commandment that includes a blessing for obeying it – "so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."

The sixth commandment (v 13) does not forbid "killing" as such. God himself commanded capital punishment and some wars, and both of these involve killing. The command is "you shall not murder." This specifically means the taking of another human life without divine authorization. This would also include suicide. The intent of the law is to bind mankind together so that persons concerned themselves with the good and safety of others. Thus all violence, injury, or any harmful thing is forbidden to do to others.

The seventh commandment (v 14) is not committing adultery. Adultery refers to sexual intercourse when one or both of the individuals are married (or engaged or even yet to be engaged) to someone else. Adultery destroys the marriage, the home, the purity of the individuals, and the foundations of society. When answering a question about this, Jesus included a person's thought or desire to have sexual relations with someone with whom they were not married as adultery.

The eighth commandment (v 15) is about not stealing. This includes taking anything which does not belong to you. God approves of private ownership and the taking of something that does not belong to you is an injustice against the party from whom it was taken. Everything that a person has in his possession that he has worked to obtain has been given to him by God and is intended for his use. So to steal from someone is to rob God.

The ninth commandment (v 16) forbids giving testimony of a false nature against any other person. Social order depends on people being truthful with each other. Since God is by his nature “truth,” that means he abhors deceit in any form and knows that it will destroy relationships between people.

The tenth commandment (v 17) specifically speaks about not coveting anything your neighbor has in his possession. This does not include a desire to have what someone else has when it will be acquired by a legitimate means. Coveting what someone else has is an attitude of want to take it from them for your own use. In some sense, coveting may be seen as part of all the other commandments because the desire to have what each commandment is addressing is the root attitude which the commandments are speaking against.

These commandments are not given again in the New Testament, but moral intent behind them is given. When asked by the Pharisees which is the greatest of the commandments of the Law, Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.” (Matt 22:37) This statement combines the first four commandments into one with the emphasis on the individual committing his entire self to the honoring of God and putting God first in every area of his life. Following the command as Jesus gave it would eliminate trying to obey the first four commandments with ritual observances. Then Jesus continued to answer the question by saying, “And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” This second statement combines the intent of the last six commandments into one that focuses on putting the welfare of others on the same level as seeking the best for self. Again, following this second command as Jesus gave it eliminates giving “lip service” to caring about others while really seeking the best for self.

Over the centuries since Jesus entrusted to his followers the responsibility and privilege of being salt and light to show the world how to live in a right relationship with God and with other people, the same example the descendants of Jacob were to be to the world, the Ten Commandments and Jesus’ restatement of them, has had a great influence on the Western World. Morality and ethical behavior and the civil laws of the Western World are all based on the commandments and Jesus’ statements. Unfortunately, many philosophers and religious leaders since the beginning of the 19th Century have been trying to undercut or eliminate that influence. Consequently, in many schools and public buildings in the United States, is it now illegal to post a copy of the Ten Commandments because they are considered antiquated and not politically correct by the elite thinkers.

Verses 18 – 21. Now we see the reaction of the people to having God speak his commandments to them from out of a cloud and fire on the top of a mountain that has just been shaken by an earthquake. The people trembled with fear (not awe), stayed at a distance from the mountain (no chance they would push through the limits to go up on the mountain). They want Moses to speak to them and they don’t want to hear directly from God again like he just spoke to them. Moses responds by telling the people not to be afraid. Then we learn why God has spoken to them as he did. Moses says it was to “test” the people so the “fear” (awe) of God would stay with them so they wouldn’t sin. Sin is disobeying God’s commands which means trying to be god for yourself just as Satan tempted Eve and Adam to do by disobeying God and eating of a specific tree. By disobeying God’s command, Satan said they could become like god. While the people remained at a distance, Moses approached the mountain to go up and speak with God for the people.

Verses 22 – 26. The Lord says for Moses to tell the people that they have seen for themselves that he has spoken from heaven (which means he is the all-powerful Creator of the universe) so they should be sure not to have any other gods or make images of gold or silver and treat them as gods. That’s what all the other people of the world are doing and they have seen what happened to all those “so called” gods and the people who worshipped them in Egypt. He says that they should make an altar of earth and sacrifice their burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on it. He says to warn them not to make the altar of stones, especially stones that have been “dressed” (smoothed) with any tool. And he says to warn them not to go up to the altar on steps because they might expose their nakedness when they did. These statements set the stage for what the people will be told in chapters 21 through 23.

Chapter 21

Verse 1. Now God gives Moses some “laws” to give to the people. The Hebrew which some translations call “laws” is *hamish’ patim*. These “laws” are not really laws in the normal sense of “do not” or “do.” They are guides for how the people are to live out the moral laws – Ten Commandments. Some people have called these the people’s “bill of rights.” The Ten Commandments and these guides are not the first rules for people to follow to live in harmony with the ruling government and other people. There was the Laws of Eshnunna for the Akkadian people located in Mesopotamia that was written in the 20th Century BC. There was the Code of Lipit-Ishtar for the Sumerians that was written in the 19th Century BC. There was the Code of Hammurabi for the Babylonian people in the 18th Century BC. The 18th Century BC began in 1800 BC and ended in 1701 BC. The 19th Century BC began in 1900 BC and ended in 1801 BC. The 20th Century BC began in 2000 BC and ended in 1901 BC. As we discovered in our study of Genesis, Abram (Abraham) was born in 1996 BC in Ur of the Chaldeans in Mesopotamia. So Abraham would have known about these codes of conduct (laws). The ancient Egyptians had a code of laws as scholars have determined from court records that have survived but no complete list of the laws has survived. Even though we don’t have a list of the laws, Jacob would have been very familiar with them as would his descendants that made the exodus from Egypt. So having rules of conduct were not new to Moses and the Israelites. Unlike the codes that men in other countries developed, these rules of conduct are directly from God and show how people should live in obedience to the Ten Commandments.

Verses 2 – 11. This rule is about servants (slaves) which was widely practiced throughout the world at that time. These rules would protect them more than in any other nation. The question arises as to why God would even permit slavery or servanthood in any form. Servanthood arises when a person recognizes that he / she cannot for one reason or another take care of their basic needs or the needs of their family. So they are willing to become a slave or servant of someone who can provide for their needs. In the early days of the United States, especially when we were just a collection of colonies, people would willingly become an indentured servant for a period of time so that they could learn a trade, or earn their passage from the Old World to the New World, or earn enough to purchase a parcel of land for their own. Slavery or servanthood is not necessarily bad until their masters or other people disregarded the basic human rights of the slaves / servants. What God does here is protect the rights of the slave. In the New Testament we find Paul writing a slave owner (Philemon who was a fellow believer – Philemon 1:1) about one of his slaves (Onesimus). Paul did not urge him to set the slave free but said he was returning the slave to him. He did urge to treat the slave as a fellow brother (believer) and if the slave owed him anything, then Paul would pay what he owed.

In this rule, a fellow Hebrew who became a slave had to be set free after seven years. If the master provided the slave with a wife and she bore him children, then in the seventh year the slave could go free but his wife and children had to remain with the master. If the slave didn’t want to leave his wife and children, then he could ask the master to let him remain a slave and the master would take him to the doorway of the house and pierce his ear with an awl. Then the slave would remain a slave for life.

We know that females did not have the same rights and freedom as men in much of the Near East of that time. At all times a woman was subject to the authority of her father or husband, if married and she was subject to God under the authority because both of them were under the authority of God. If a father sells his daughter to a man to become his wife and then the man decides he doesn’t want her for his wife, then he must allow her to be redeemed (either by someone else or herself). God says the man who bought the daughter has no right to sell her because he has broken faith with her (the marriage contract). If the man chooses to give the woman to his son to be his wife, he must also grant her the rights of being his daughter. If in either case, if the son chooses to marry a different woman, then the daughter who was bought must not be deprived of her right to food, clothing, and the right to marry. If the man does not provide her with her rights, then the daughter who was bought is to go free without any payment of money. This passage in no way implies that a man could buy a woman to be his wife, have sexual relations with her and then decide he no longer wanted her as his wife and expect to give her to his son to be his wife or expect that she could be redeemed or set free under these provisions.

Verses 12 – 17. This section discusses the treatment of someone who kills someone else. It starts by upholding capital punishment if the death was premeditated. In that case the offender was to be put to death. If the death was not premeditated (unintentional) but God allows it to happen, then the offender was to flee for protection to a place that God would later designate. In other nations and lands, a person could seek sanctuary in a sacred place and would be protected from punishment even if the person had intentionally murdered someone. This passage rejects that way of treating someone who has deliberately killed someone and says to remove the person from God's altar, which means the offender would be killed as prescribed earlier. Then God goes on to say that if a person attacks his father or mother, then he must be put to death. The reason this is so harsh is because by striking his parent he is not honoring his parents and thus was revolting against God's authority. We do not have any examples to show that this punishment was ever carried out. In a similar situation, anyone cursing his parent was to be put to death. And it would be for the same reason as striking a parent.

Kidnapping someone was a capital offense because it was stealing another person's freedom. Anyone who kidnaps another person and either sells him (into slavery) or still has him and is caught with him was to be put to death. This was a premeditated act of disobedience of God's authority by stealing another person's freedom that God had given him.

Verses 18 – 32. This section discusses the treatment of someone who is responsible for the bodily injury of another person. Most of these examples, with noted exceptions, would come under the commandment not to steal if nothing was done to recompense the injured person. The first example is men quarreling and one hit another with his fist or a stone but the man doesn't die. If the injured man gets up and walks around, even with a staff, then the man responsible for the injury must pay the injured man for his loss of time and see that he is completely healed. The second example is a master beating his slave (male or female) with a rod. If the slave gets up after a day or two then he is not guilty of wrong because the slave is his property. But if the slave dies as a direct result of the beating then the master must be punished as specified earlier in verse 12 for the striking and killing of a person. The third example is men fighting again but this time a pregnant woman is hit and she gives birth prematurely. If there is no serious injury (to the woman or the child) then the man who hit her must pay whatever her husband demands and the court allows. Pro-abortion advocates sometimes appeal to verse 22 to support their claim that a baby in the womb is not a person. But when they do this they have to conveniently overlook verse 23 which says if there is a serious injury then the offender is to be punished according to what the serious injury is – life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise. That would mean that if the unborn child is killed that the offender is to be killed. This setting the punishment according to what the injury was is a way of limiting the amount of punishment rather than follow the "law of retaliation" which was prevalent at that time. It prevented excessive revenge such as killing an individual who only caused a minor injury to a person's family member. The fourth example is a man hitting a manservant or maidservant and knocking out a tooth or causing (destroying) an eye. In this case the man is to let the servant go free as compensation for the injury. This example would serve to discourage a master from severely abusing his slave. The fifth example is an individual who has a bull that gores a man or woman to death. In this case, the bull is to be stoned to death but its meat must be eaten and the owner is not responsible. But if the owner is known to have a habit of goring people and the owner has not kept it penned up, then not only is the bull to be stoned but the owner is to be put to death. This case has an exception. If the family of the dead demands payment of the owner then he can pay the demanded sum and redeem his life. If the individual gored to death is a slave, then the bull's owner must pay the master of the slave thirty shekels of silver and the bull is still to be stoned to death.

Verses 33 – 35. This example begins a section about protection of a person's property which will continue in chapter 22. Again, these examples would be breaking the commandment not to steal if nothing was done to recompense the injured party. The first example is that of an inanimate object causing damage. A man digs uncovers a pit or digs one and fails to cover it and then a donkey or ox falls in it and dies. The owner of the uncovered pit must pay the owner of the animal for his dead animal and the dead animal becomes his. The second example continues the case of the man whose bull has a habit of goring. In this case, if the bull gores another man's bull and it dies, then the live bull is to be sold and the money and the dead bull split equally

between the two owners. But if it was known that the bull had a habit of goring and its owner didn't keep it penned up, then the owner must pay the dead bull's owner the price for his bull and the dead bull will become his.

Chapter 22

Verses 1 – 15. The next examples are about stealing something from another person. If the thief steals an ox or sheep, slaughters it and sells the meat, then he must pay the owner five head of cattle for an ox and four sheep for a sheep. If a thief is caught breaking in and struck by the owner and dies, then the defender will not be guilty of bloodshed if it is night, but if it happens after daylight, then the defender is guilty of bloodshed and by commandment six would be put to death. If a thief is caught, he must pay restitution to his victim. But if he has nothing from which to pay, then he is to be sold (into slavery) to pay for his theft. If a stolen animal is found alive in the possession of the thief (ox, donkey, sheep), he must pay double the price of the animal. The next example is a fire that breaks out and burns a man's field. The person who started the fire must pay restitution to the owner of the field of grain. The next example is about one person's private possessions given to another person for safe keeping. If the possession is silver or gold and the one who has it for safe keeping claims it was stolen by a thief and the thief is caught, then the thief must pay back double the value. If no thief is found, then the holder of the property must appear before the judges to determine if he stole it from the other man. In all cases of illegal possession, whether an animal, a garment, or other property, and one party says it really is his, then both parties are to be taken before the judges and the one whom the judges declare "guilty" must pay the other double the values of the property. If a man gives an animal to his neighbor for safe keeping and the animal dies, or is injured, or is stolen when no one is looking, then the matter is to be settled by the one who has it for safe keeping taking an oath before the Lord that he did not lay hands on the other person's property (didn't injure or steal it) and the owner is to accept this as proving the man is innocent. But if the animal was stolen from the neighbor, then he must pay the owner for the animal. If the animal was killed by a wild animal, then he must bring the animal's remains as evidence and he will not be required to pay for the man's animal. The final example is about an animal borrowed from a neighbor. If the animal is injured or dies while the owner is not present, then the borrower must make restitution. If the owner is with the animal, then the borrower will not have to pay. If the animal was hired for a job, then the money paid for the hire is to cover the loss.

Verses 16 – 31. These verses discuss social responsibility in different situations. If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married to sleep with him (have sex), then he must pay the girl's father the bride-price (dowry) and she will become his wife. If the father absolutely refuses to give her to be his wife, then he must still pay the dowry. This example could be considered to come under the commandment not to commit adultery because the man is wrongfully having a sexual relation outside of what God has ordained in Genesis 2, but it definitely would come under the commandment not to steal because he would be stealing the girl's virginity. That being said, he would also be stealing from the father the right to a dowry because it might then be impossible for the father to find a husband for the girl. The next situation is that of a woman who is known to be a sorceress. She is not to be allowed to live. Being a sorceress directly violates the commandment not to have any other gods before the Lord. The next situation is that anyone having sexual relations with an animal (bestiality) is to be put to death. This would come under the commandment not to commit adultery because he is having a sexual relation outside of what was ordained by God in Genesis 2. The next is that anyone who sacrifices to a god other than the Lord is to be destroyed (killed). The next situation is that no alien is to be oppressed because the people were to remember that they were aliens in Egypt (and oppressed). The next situation is about someone taking advantage of a widow or orphan. If that happens, they will surely cry out to the Lord, he will hear their cry, his anger will be aroused and he will kill that person and their wife will become a widow and their children fatherless and become like the ones who are being taken advantage of. To take advantage of a widow or orphan would be breaking the commandment not to steal. The next situation is about taking advantage of one of their fellow Israelites. If lending money to a fellow Israelite they are not to charge him interest. Here again, this would be breaking the commandment not to steal. If an individual takes a neighbor's cloak as a pledge he is to return it by sunset because the cloak is the only covering the person has in which to sleep. If it isn't returned, God will hear because of his compassion. (It isn't specified what the Lord

might do in that case.) This would be breaking the commandment not to steal because it steals the poor man's ability to have a restful sleep since he would be exposed and likely in discomfort all night. The next example is that they are not to blaspheme God or curse the ruler of the nation. This would directly break the commandment not to misuse the Lord's name and it also steals what is rightfully God's. The next situation is that the people are not to hold back their offerings. This would break the commandment not to steal because the offerings are what rightfully belong to God and God alone. The next situation is that the people are to give God the first-born of their sons, cattle and sheep. They are to stay with their mother for seven days, but are to be given to the Lord on the eighth day. We know from Exodus 13:13 that the animals dedicated could be redeemed and that the first-born sons had to be redeemed at that time. To not dedicate the first-born animals and son is a direct violation of part of the commandment God gave in Exodus 13 to consecrate the first-born to him. Thus breaking this commandment is stealing what rightfully belongs to God. The last situation is about the people maintaining their purity as a holy nation, set apart for God, by not eating the meat of an animal torn by wild beasts. Such an animal would be unclean and eating it would not only make the person unclean but could also bring disease upon the person. To do such a thing would be to break the covenant God has made with the people to be their God and they will be his people, set apart for his purposes. So that animal was to be thrown to the dogs for them to eat.

From our look at chapters 21 and 22 we can see that all of the guidelines for how to handle the situations presented all relate back to one or more of the Ten Commandments. Thus it seems unnecessary to continue showing how the guidelines for the remainder of the situations being discussed relate back to the Ten Commandments. All it takes to relate them is to consider the situation and remember that all of them relate back to covetousness if not directly back to one of the other nine commandments.

Chapter 23

Verses 1 – 9. The following situations are about showing justice and mercy toward all people. Don't help a wicked man by lying for him. Do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd or show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit. This says to be truthful in all situations so that justice is provided to both the rich or poor. If you find an ox or donkey wandering take it back to the owner whether he is a friend or enemy. If you see a person's heavily laden donkey that has fallen from the weight, help the man get the animal up whether he is a friend or someone who hates you. This says to be merciful to all people whether a friend or not. Treat the rich and poor alike in their lawsuits by not showing favoritism to one or the other. Be sure not to put an innocent or honest person to death nor acquit the guilty (allow them to go without punishment). Queen Jezebel violated this example when ordering two scoundrels to give false witness against Naboth in public so that he would be taken out and killed and then King Ahab could take his vineyard (see 1 Kings 21:1-17). Don't accept a bribe because those who see it are blinded to what you say even if it is the truth. Don't oppress an alien because you know what it is like to be an alien.

Verses 10 – 13. These verses remind the people of the covenant they have with the Lord and their responsibility to faithfully follow the covenant. The people were to observe a sabbatical year of rest for the land. They could work the land for six years but they were to let it rest and not sow or harvest during the seventh year. Failure to observe this for 490 years was part of the reason that the two southern tribes were allowed to be captured and taken into captivity by the Babylonians for 70 years (See Jeremiah 29:10; Daniel 9:2; and 2 Chronicles 36:20-21). The basic Sabbath principle was that the people were only to work six days and to rest from that work on the seventh day. This applied not only to the descendants of Jacob, the Israelites, but also to their animals, servants (slave), and any aliens living among them so that they all would have their rest. In verse 13, God has Moses reiterate for him that the people were to be careful to do everything that God has said to them (or will say as well) and specifically not to invoke the names of other gods or let those names be heard on their lips. This is a direct reference to the first four of the Ten Commandments. With this being said, it is especially important to note what the Israelites do in chapter 32 while Moses is upon the mountain getting these instructions and the ones we will read about from here to chapter 32.

Verses 14 – 19. Now God stipulates three annual festivals that he wants the people to observe. The first is the Feast of Unleavened Bread which is first mentioned in Exodus 13. In Leviticus 23:5 – 8 God will give more instructions about this feast, indicating that it is to begin on the day after Passover and like here, says they are to eat bread made without yeast (which represents sin) for seven days. In the Leviticus passage he specifies that they are to hold a sacred assembly on the first and the seventh days (beginning and end). And here he says no one is to appear before him empty handed, which means bring an offering. The second celebration is the Feast of Harvest, also called the Feast of First Fruits, at which time they are to bring the first fruits of the crops they have sown in their fields. Although they may have various herbs and legumes (beans) that were harvested at or near this time, the first fruits were to be from the grain (barley and / or wheat) that they had grown. These first fruits of the grain harvest were to be “waved” before the Lord on the day following the Sabbath that occurred during the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (see Leviticus 23:9-14). We will see in Leviticus 23:15 – 21 that fifty days after the Feast of Fruit Fruits they were to celebrate the completion of the grain harvest they were to celebrate the Feast of Weeks (seven sevens plus one) which is also called Pentecost in the Greek. The third celebration is the Feast of Ingathering which was to be celebrated in the Fall of the year at the end of the grain, grape, and olive harvest (Exodus 34:22). This was also called Sukkot (booths) or the Feast of Tabernacles (booths) (See Leviticus 23:33-43). This Feast was also to be celebrated for seven days with the first and seventh days being a day of rest like the Sabbath. For these three feasts, all the men were to make a pilgrimage to appear before the Lord (the women and children often accompanied them). At these feasts (and any time a blood sacrifice was offered to the Lord) they were not to present the blood along with anything containing yeast (yeast was representative of sin). God also said that the fat of these festival offerings was not to be kept until morning. It was either eaten, as the Passover Lamb was, or burned up before daylight. God says to bring the best of the first fruits of the soil to present at the house of the Lord. This would be the Tabernacle that would soon be built and continue there until a temple was built by Solomon. Then God says that a young goat (one of the sacrifices that could be brought) was not to be cooked in its mother’s milk. No explicit reason is given for this but the most popular explanation for this (as mentioned by Dr. Thomas Constable in his *Notes on Exodus* p. 146) is that “this was a pagan practice which showed disrespect for the God-given relationship between parent and offspring.”

Verses 20 – 33. In these verses God explains how he is going to lead the people to the Promised Land, how he is going to give them victory over the present inhabitants of the land, and the extent of the land that will be theirs. He also gives them warnings about obedience and not allowing the people of the land to live among them because their worship of their (pagan) gods will be a snare to the people. In Exodus 13:21 – 22, we learned that the Lord lead the people by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. This pillar of cloud / fire is identified as the angel of God in Exodus 14:19-20. Now God says he will send an angel ahead of them to guard them and bring them to the land he has prepared for them. He warns the people not to rebel against this angel since God’s “Name” is in him and he will not forgive any rebellion. If the people listen carefully to what this angel says and do all that God has said, then he will be an enemy to their enemies and oppose those who oppose them. In 1 Corinthians 10:4, Paul informs us that it was Jesus that led the people in the wilderness. So this “angel” that appears a pillar of cloud / fire is none other than Jesus pre-incarnate. God says that his “angel” will go ahead of the people and wipe the inhabitants of the Promised land out. He warns the people not to bow down before or worship their gods or follow their practices, but to demolish them and break their sacred stones (altars / high places) to pieces. Then God promises that if the people worship him (God) his blessing will be on their food and water and that he will take sickness away from them so that none will miscarry or be barren (their wombs will be fruitful to bear children – also would apply to their animals) and they will have a full life span. God promises to send terror of him before the people so that their enemies will be thrown into confusion, turn their backs and run. God also says he will not drive all their enemies out of the land in one year because that would cause the land to become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for them. He says he will drive the people out little by little until the Israelites have grown enough to take possession of the land. God says he will establish the borders of their land from the Red Sea (Yam Suph) to the Sea of the Philistines (Mediterranean Sea) and from the desert to the River (Euphrates River). He promises to hand the people of the land over to the Israelites and they will drive them out of the land. Then he warns them not to make a covenant with those people or allow them to live with them or they will surely cause the people to sin against God and

because the worship of their gods will ensnare the Israelites. We will discover in chapter 24 that Moses writes all these instructions God has given to him down and reads them to the people and calls this the Book of the Covenant. This Book of the Covenant contains all the “laws” God told Moses to set before the people (Exodus 21:1). Suzerainty treaties normally ended with the Sovereign who was making the treaty explaining the benefits and difficulties his vassals would experience if they obeyed or disobeyed his treaty. This is essentially what God has done from chapter 21:2 through chapter 23:33.

Chapter 24

Verses 1 – 11. These verses show the ratification of the covenant (treaty). God tells Moses to come back with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu (the oldest two of Aaron’s sons), and seventy of the elders (leaders of the tribes). They are to worship at a distance and only Moses is to approach the Lord. All the rest of the people are not to come up the mountain with them. So Moses goes to the people and tells them all of the Lord’s words and “laws.” The people respond “with one voice” (meaning in complete agreement) that they will do everything the Lord has said. Thus they have ratified the covenant by saying that they will obey everything the Lord has commanded. Then Moses writes down all that the Lord had said to him. Early the next morning Moses got up, built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and set up twelve stone pillars to represent the twelve tribes. He sent young men to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice young bulls as fellowship offerings. Moses took half of the blood from the sacrificed bulls and put it in bowls and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. Again the people responded that they will do everything the Lord has said and will obey. So Moses took the blood in the bowls and sprinkled it on the people and said that it is the blood of the covenant that God has made with the people. In this sprinkling ceremony, the blood sprinkled on the altar represented the natural life of the people given up to God which was then infused with his grace and the sprinkling of the blood on the people represented that life being restored to them as life renewed by God’s grace. This sprinkling of the blood was the formal ratification of the covenant. Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders representing the entire gathering of people went up the mountain and saw God. This was not a representation of the presence of God as the pillar of cloud / fire was, nor a burning bush, but they really saw God with something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky, beneath his feet. This would probably be the sea of glass that is mentioned in Revelation 4:6. Even though these leaders of Israel saw God he did not raise his hand against them but they ate and drank. Whether God provided this meal or it was some of the bulls sacrificed as an offering is not specifically said. But this was the conclusion of the ratification ceremony. In Jesus’ death on the cross and his last supper with the disciples, we see God’s ratification of his new covenant with the people who will choose to believe in Jesus and his death to give them a new relationship with God, the Father. And as the new believers are baptized into his death burial and resurrection, we see their agreement to obey how God has said to live in this right relationship with him.

Verses 12 – 18. After the ratification ceremony is completed, God tells Moses to come up on the mountain and stay there with God as he gives him tablets of stone upon which he (God) has written the law and commands (Ten Commandments). So Moses sets out with Joshua, his aide, and tells the elders to wait where they are for him to return. As for the people who may have disputes, they have Aaron and Hur to resolve the disputes. This indicates that Aaron who was with them for the ratification ceremony was to return to the people. When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud (God’s presence) covered it and the glory of the Lord settled on the mountain. The Lord’s glory appeared like a consuming fire on the mountain. For six days Moses waited before the Lord called to him out of the cloud on the seventh day and told him to come on into the cloud. He entered the cloud and stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. We must wonder what Joshua and the seventy elders did for food during those forty days.

Chapter 25

During the 40 days that Moses stayed on the mountain, God gave him specific instructions for the construction of a structure that God would use as his dwelling place among the people with which he has just made a blood covenant that he would be their God and they would be his people. In the new Testament we find that God now

dwells with believers by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit because Jesus ratified a New Covenant between God people who accept that his shed blood gives them a new, right relationship with God, the Creator.

Chapters 25 through 31 give a brief description of the structure and all equipment that would be used or worn by the individuals who would be chosen to minister in that structure.

Verses 1 – 9. The first thing God tells Moses to do is tell the Israelites to bring an offering to God. Each person was to bring what his heart prompts him to bring. God tells Moses the types of offerings that he will receive from the people: precious metals and jewels, cloth, skins from animals, wood, spices, oil, and incense. God says they are to make a sanctuary for him from these materials and to make it according to the pattern he will show Moses. That God is showing Moses a “pattern” of how the sanctuary and its furniture should be built means there was something that Moses was shown, either the actual sanctuary in heaven or a scale model.

This structure that God wants the people to build for him is called by different names. In verse 28 God calls it a sanctuary, which means place of holiness and emphasizes his difference from his people. Then in verse 29 God calls it a tabernacle, which means dwelling place and emphasizes that he will live among his people. It was a tent similar to the tents of the people and had furniture that was similar to theirs but it was of much greater opulence than theirs. Every part of God’s place where he would dwell with his people had a particular significance and meaning unlike their tents and furniture. In later chapters (29:42-43; 35:21) this living place is called the Tent of Meeting where God will meet with Moses and with the Israelites. There is some indication that there was a “tent of meeting” where Moses and the people could meet with God before God’s living structure was constructed. Verses 33:7 – 11 describes a “tent of meeting” that Moses placed outside the camp and which was used as a place where anyone who wanted to ask God about something would go. Some people think that this place continued to exist even after God’s living structure was built and that the living structure was used for worship only, but not as a regular place to meet God. I believe that once the living structure was built that it then became a place where Moses and the people would meet God and ask anything that they wanted. Moses sometimes referred to God’s living place as the Tabernacle (or tent) of the Testimony (Num 9:15; 17:7-8). He apparently does this because the ark which God will describe to Moses next is usually called the Ark of Testimony because that is where God said to place the Testimony (witness) of his covenant with the people (the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments which God will give Moses).

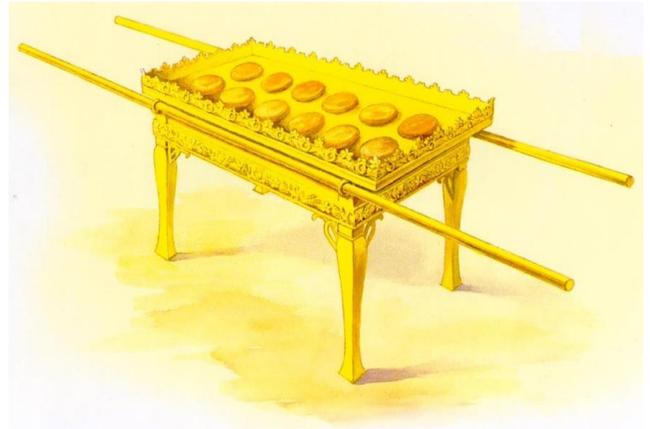
God’s dwelling place with his people is not only a place for them to worship him, it is his way of instructing them about his plan for redeeming people from the sin of disobedience which they have inherited from Adam and Eve which was caused by their disobedience of eating from the tree of which God said not to eat. God promised that a descendant of Eve would make things right between him and people. God’s dwelling place along with all the furniture and the ceremonies the people would conduct there were meant to instruct everyone about how that individual would make it possible for people to have a right relationship with their Creator. The sanctuary on earth being a model of the one in heaven means God’s plan for how mankind would be restored to a right relationship with him was established before God promised a descendant of Eve would make things right.

Verses 10 – 22. God tells Moses to have the people make a chest of acacia wood that is $2\frac{1}{2}$ cubits long, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cubit wide, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ cubits high. A cubit was usually the distance between the elbow and the middle finger and could vary in length from 16 to 21 inches but most conversions between a cubit and inches use a length of 18 inches or $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Using $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet for a cubit would make the ark $3\frac{3}{4}$ feet long by $2\frac{1}{4}$ feet wide, and $2\frac{1}{4}$ feet high. The acacia wood was to be overlaid with pure gold, both inside and outside, and with a gold molding around it. They were to cast and put four gold rings on the four



feet of the chest (two on one side and two on the opposite side) and then put two poles made of acacia wood and covered with gold through the rings so the chest could be carried. God says they are to put the Testimony he will give Moses in the ark. They are also to make a covering for the chest out of pure gold and make two cherubim out of hammered gold to place on the two ends of the cover with their wings spread upward overshadowing the cover. The cherubim are to face each other while looking down upon the cover. God says it is there between the cherubim that he will meet with Moses and give him commandments for the Israelites. The figure on the right shows how the ark might have looked according to the directions given.

Verses 23 – 30. God says the people should make a table of acacia wood that is 2 cubits long, 1 cubit wide, and 1 ½ cubits high (3 feet long, 1 ½ feet wide, 2 ¼ feet high). It is to be overlaid with gold and have a gold molding around it. It is to have a rim around it that is a handbreadth wide (about 3 inches) with molding around the rim. It is to have four gold rings on the corners, close to the rim, so that it could be carried by four poles made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. The people are to make plates, ladles, and pitchers of gold for use with the offerings on the table. On the table was to be placed the bread of the Presence (showbread) to be before God at all times. The figure at the right shows how the table of showbread might have looked.

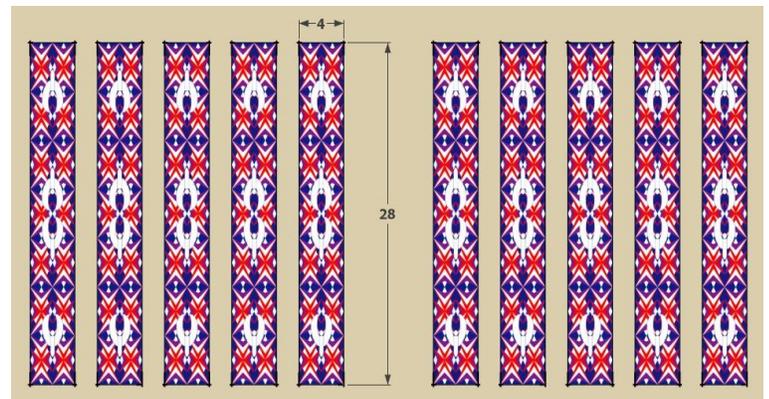


Verses 31 – 40. God says that a lampstand should be made out of 1 talent (about 75 lbs) of pure gold. The base, shaft, cups, buds, and blossoms shall be hammered out and be of one piece. There is to be six branches extending from the lampstand, three on one side and three on the other. Each branch is to have three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms. On the lampstand there is to be four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms; one under each pair of the branches (which would leave one at the top of the shaft). Seven lamps are to be made and set upon the six branches and the shaft so that their light shines on the open space before the lampstand. Also from the talent of gold are to be made wick trimmers and trays to be used with the lampstand. And the lampstand is to be made according to the pattern Moses was shown while he was on the mountain. The figure above shows how the lampstand might have looked.



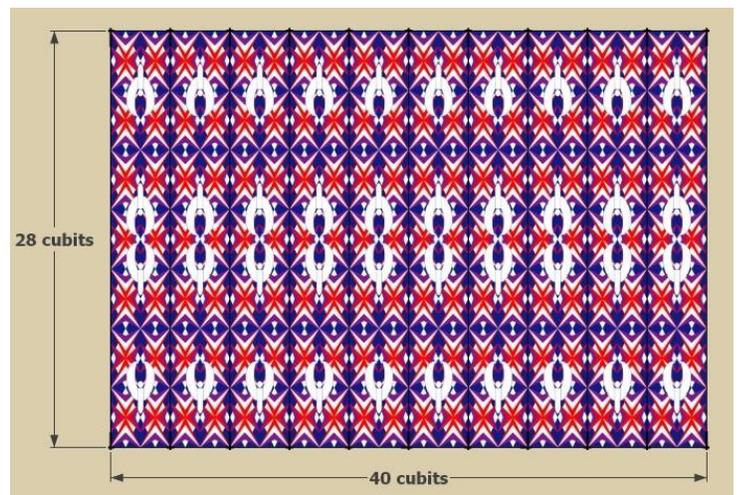
Chapter 26

Verses 1 – 6. God says to make ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn with cherubim worked into them. Each of the ten curtains is to be 28 cubits long and 4 cubits wide (42 feet long and 6 feet wide). Five of the curtains are to be joined together and the same is to be done with the other five. There is to be fifty loops of blue material along one 42 foot length of each of the joined curtains so that they can be joined together with 50 gold clasps to make a unit of the two sets of joined curtains. The 10 individual curtains might

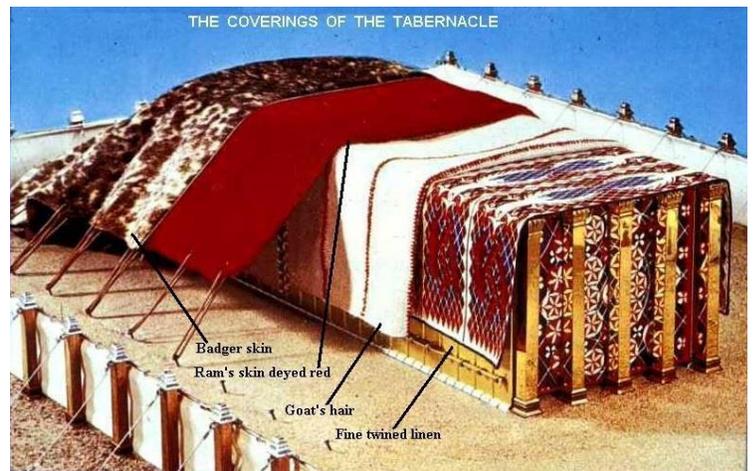


have looked like the first figure and the curtains joined together might have looked like the second figure.

Verses 7 – 14. There was to be eleven curtains of goat hair made, each being 30 cubits long and 4 cubits wide (45 feet long and 6 feet wide). Five of the curtains were to be joined into one set and the other six joined into another set. Then, like for the linen curtain sets, there were to be fifty loops along the edge of one and fifty along the edge of the other so that the two could be joined together with 50 bronze clasps to make it a unit. Since there is one more goat hair curtain than the linen curtains, the extra length is to hang over the back of the tabernacle. They are also to make a covering of ram skins dyed red and a covering made of the hides of sea cows (possibly badger hides). The curtains are to cover the tabernacle in this order: linen, goat's hair, ram's skin, and finally sea cow hides. The four tabernacle coverings might look as shown in the figure at the right.

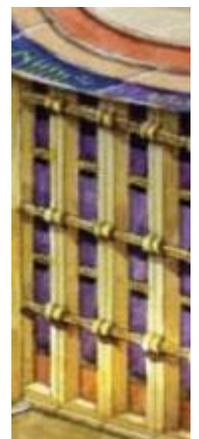


Some scholars commenting on these coverings have speculated that the look of the coverings, the special materials from which they were constructed, and the order of their placement over the frame which will be discussed next have some special significance. There is nothing expressly indicated in the biblical text to show that there is any special significance to the type of material or the order of placement. God may have designated the sea cow hide (badger hide) as the top layer just because it would shed any rain that might fall and would better withstand the weathering from wind and blowing sand.



Verses 15 – 30. The frame of the structure over which the curtains described above are to cover is to be constructed according to the following directions. Make boards of acacia wood to stand upright that are 10 cubits long and a cubit and one-half wide with two projections set parallel to each other. Make 20 boards with 40 silver bases to go under them, one for each projection, for the north side and the same for the south side. Make six boards of the same style for the west end and two additional boards for the corners of the west end that are to be set double with the boards at the corners, and 16 silver bases for the projections. Make crossbars of acacia wood: five for the boards on one side, five for the boards on the other side, and five for the boards on the west side. The center crossbar of each side is to extend from one end of the side to the other at the middle of the boards. Make gold rings to hold the crossbars and overlay the boards and the crossbars with gold.

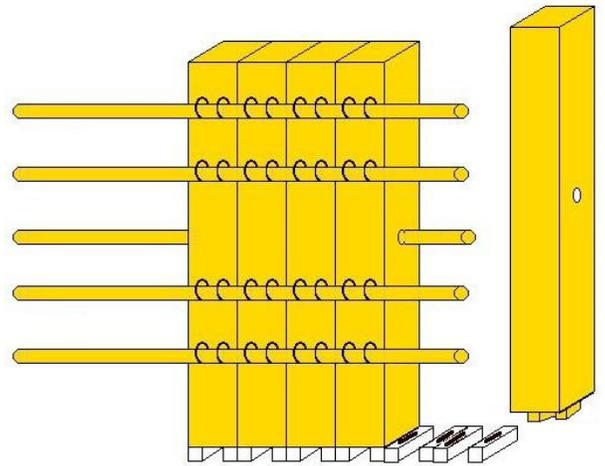
From this description have come different ideas of how the structure looked. Because the Hebrew word "*qeresh*" is translated as "frame" and "frames" in the NIV, one look makes each of the "*qeresh*" hollow so that it looks like the "boards" in the cut-away view at right. This idea puts two of the bars on the outside of the "frames" and three on the inside. It also allows the linen curtain to be seen from the inside along the sides of the sanctuary in addition to being seen when looking at the ceiling of the structure.





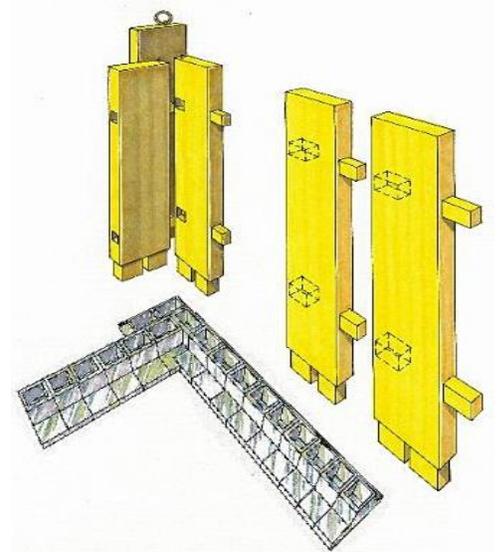
The Hebrew word “*qeresh*” is from an unused root word meaning “to split off” which would seem to indicate the “boards” were a solid planks which might have looked like the diagram at the left.

There are other ideas how the “boards” might have looked even if they are considered to be planks. One of those ideas has the “boards being thick even though the description doesn’t give their thickness. And it depicts one of the “bars” extending through the middle of the “boards” with the other four “bars”

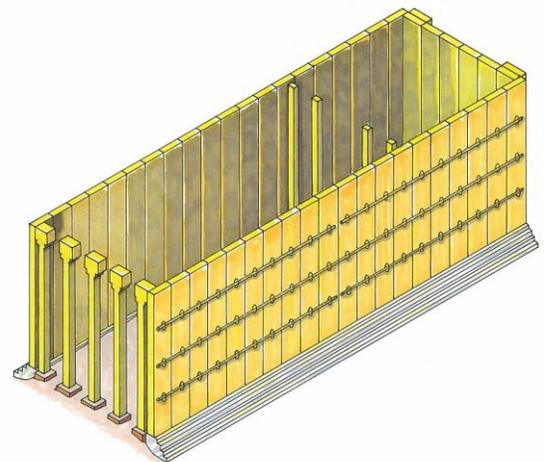


through rings along the side of the “boards.” That idea is shown in the picture on the right.

Another idea for the look of the boards is shown at the right. In this idea the “boards” have projections on the narrow side which fit into matching “holes” on the opposite side. Besides the problem that the projections and “holes” are not mentioned in the description, the end “boards” at the corner was to be two “boards” put together with a golden band unlike what is shown in the picture. In this design there would be no need for the five “bars” on each side which make the whole structure stable. It would also present a problem at the front end of the structure where there are no corner “boards” because the end “board” would have projections that didn’t go into anything. And if that “board” didn’t have the projections then the “boards” wouldn’t all be made alike as specified.



Another idea of the construction of the structure which I believe follows the description that God gave better than the other ideas previously discussed is shown at the right. What isn’t easily seen in this small picture is that the upper and lower “bars” are made of two pieces while the center “bar” is of one length. A problem with this depiction is found with the base of the “boards” being shown as a single piece from front to back. I also doubt that the bases for the “boards” were stair-stepped rounded on the bottom side. I imagine the two individual silver bases for each of the “boards” were probably more like the bronze bases shown under the pillars at the front of the structure.

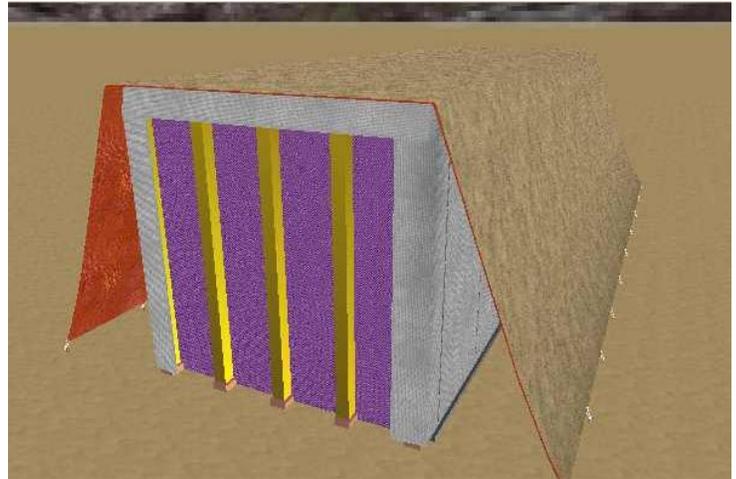


God says to set up the tabernacle according to the plan which he showed to Moses.

Verses 31 – 37. God says to make a linen curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn with cherubim worked into the design of the curtain. It is to be hung with golden hooks on four posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold and set on four silver bases. Behind the curtain they are to place the ark with the testimony in it and the golden lid that is the mercy seat upon it. In the space between the entrance to the sanctuary and the linen curtain behind which the ark is set they are to place the table of showbread on the north side and the lampstand on the south. This curtain is also known as the veil. Being hung between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place with the ark and mercy seat, it served as the entrance into God’s Holy Presence. There are some extrabiblical writings that mention a “second veil” but the Bible is clear that there was only one veil. The interior of the sanctuary would look like the picture to the right.



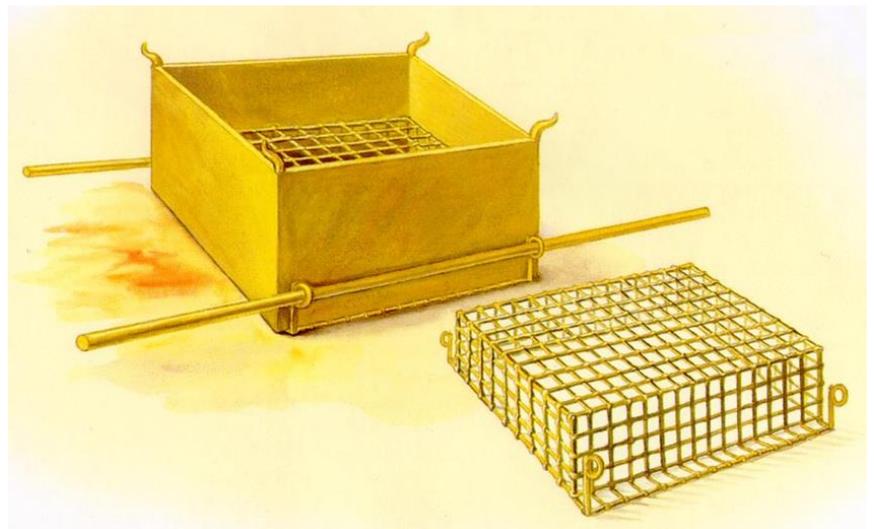
The entrance of the sanctuary was to be covered by a linen curtain made with blue, purple and scarlet yarn and hung on gold hooks set in five pillars made of acacia wood overlaid with gold and set in bronze bases. The front of the sanctuary would look like the picture on the right.



This sanctuary is designed to depict God’s heavenly sanctuary. When Solomon built the first Temple in Jerusalem he constructed it after the pattern of this sanctuary but made it larger and more elaborately adorned within and without.

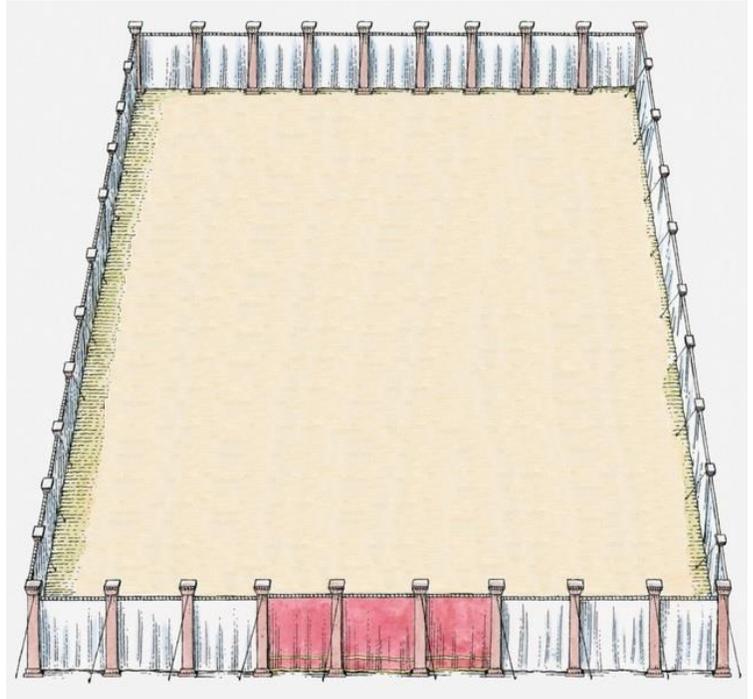
Chapter 27

Verses 1 – 8. God tells Moses the people are to build an altar of acacia wood that is three cubits high and a square of five cubits by five cubits. That would make it 4 ½ feet high and 7 ½ by 7 ½ feet. It was to be overlaid with bronze and there was to be a horn at each of the four corners, also of bronze and of one piece with the altar. They were to make utensils of bronze: fire pans, meat forks, sprinkling bowls, and shovels and pots to remove the ashes. They are to make a bronze grate with a bronze ring at each of the four corners, and put the grate under the ledge of the altar so it is halfway up the altar.



They are to make poles of acacia wood overlaid with bronze to put through the rings so the altar could be carried. It is to be made according to the design God showed Moses on the mountain. It probably looked like the picture to the right.

Verses 9 – 19. God says to make a courtyard for the Tabernacle. It is to be a rectangle, 100 cubits by 50 cubits (150 feet by 75 feet). They are to make 20 posts with bronze bases for each long side and 10 posts with bronze bases for the west end. The east end is to have a total of 6 posts with bronze bases, 3 on either side of an entrance. All of these posts are to have linen curtains between them hanging on silver hooks attached to silver bands around the posts. The curtains on either side of the entrance are to be 15 cubits long (22 ½ feet). They are to make 4 posts with bronze bases for the entrance on the east side. On those posts they are to hang a linen curtain 20 cubits (30 feet) long with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn worked into it. All of the curtains are to be 5 cubits high (7 ½ feet). All of the other articles used in the service of the Tabernacle, no matter what their function, including the tent pegs are to be made of bronze. The courtyard would probably have looked like the picture at the right.



Verses 20 – 21. God says they are to make a clear oil of pressed olives for burning in the lampstand to provide light in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle where the lampstand, table of showbread, and altar of incense (which will be described later) are located. Aaron and his son are to keep the lampstand burning from evening to morning. These instructions are to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.

Chapter 28

Verses 1 – 5. Now God tells Moses that Aaron and his sons (Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar) are to serve as priests to God. Considering what we will learn about Aaron's character in chapter 32, it is unlikely that he was chosen to be the first High Priest because he was the most righteous person among the people. He was most like chosen because he was the brother of Moses, who was the covenant mediator, and mostly because of God's grace. God tells Moses to make garments for Aaron to give him dignity and honor. The garments will be used for Aaron's consecration for his work as a priest. For Aaron and his sons, expert workmen are to make a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban, and a sash. The workmen are to use gold along with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen. The pictures to the right show some ideas how the garments might have looked.



Verses 6 – 14. The ephod was to be made of gold, blue purple and scarlet yarn, and finely twisted linen. It was to have two shoulder pieces attached to it they could be fastened. It was to have a skillfully woven waistband made of the same materials as the ephod and was to be of one piece with it. They were to take two onyx stones

and engrave the names of the twelve sons of Israel (Jacob) on them by order of birth, six on one stone and six on the other. The stones are to be mounted in gold filigree settings as memorials and put on the shoulders of the High Priest garment. They are to make two braided chains of gold, like a rope, and use the chains to attach the ephod to the filigreed settings.

Verses 15 – 21. The breastpiece was to be made like the ephod using gold, blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and finely twisted linen. It was to be square a span long and a span wide (about 9 inches by 9 inches) and folded double. The fold formed a pocket. Then four rows of precious stones were to be mounted on it, one for each of the twelve tribes. The first row was to be a ruby, a topaz and a beryl. The second was to be a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald. The third was to be a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst. The fourth was to be a chrysolite, an onyx and a jasper. Each of the twelve stones was to be engraved with the name of a tribe.

Verses 22 – 28. A gold chain was to be made for the breastpiece, braided like a rope. Two gold rings were to be attached to two corners of the breastpiece and the gold chain attached to them and then to the shoulders of the ephod at the front. Two more gold rings were to be attached to the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod. Two more gold rings were to be attached to the shoulder pieces on the front of the ephod, close to the seam just above the waistband. The rings of the breastpiece were to be tied to the rings of the ephod with blue cord so that the breastpiece would not swing out from the ephod.

Verses 29 – 30. Whenever Aaron would enter the Holy Place he was to wear the breastpiece (also called the breastpiece of decision) with the names of the sons of Israel on it as a continuing memorial before the Lord. They were to also place the Urim and Thummim in the breastpiece (pocket) so they would be over Aaron's heart whenever he entered the presence of the Lord. So Aaron would always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the Lord.

Verses 31 – 43. Now God describes how the other garments that the priests would wear should be made. There was to be a robe made entirely of blue cloth with an opening for the head in its center. They should make a woven edge around like a collar so that it will not tear. They are to make what looked like pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yard for the hem of the robe and put gold bells between each pomegranate. It may have looked like the picture to the right. Aaron must wear this when he ministers so that the sound of the bells will be heard when he enters the Holy



Place before the Lord and when he comes out so that he will not die. There have been many interpretations for what the pomegranates and bells might mean, such as: the pomegranates were a symbol of the spiritually nourishing quality of God's Word, or fruitfulness, or fruits of God's Spirit, or lightning; the bells were a symbol of the sounding or proclamation of God's Word through testimony, or joy, or gifts of God's Spirit, or thunder. No definitive explanation of what they might symbolize can be made.

“A popular Jewish interpretation of 28:35 taught that one end of a long rope should be tied to the high priest's ankle before he entered the Holy Place. Since his slightest movement would cause the bells to tinkle, the people outside would assume that all was well as long as they could hear them. But if the bells fell silent for a time, the people outside would naturally assume that their priest had either fainted or died. They would then tug on the end of the rope to pull him out, making it unnecessary for unauthorized persons to enter the Holy Place in order to remove his body.” (Youngblood, Ronald F. *Exodus*. Everyman's Bible Commentary series. Chicago: Moody Press, 1983. Quoted by Thomas Constable in his *Notes on Exodus*, p 168)

They are to make a plate from pure gold and engrave on it like a seal “HOLY TO YHWH (the LORD)” and fasten a blue cord to it so it can be attached on the front of the turban that is to be made for the High Priest. Aaron is to wear it on his head continually because he bears the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the people consecrate to the Lord so that they will be acceptable to the Lord. The plate may have looked like the picture to the right.



They are to weave a tunic of fine linen and make the turban of fine linen. The sash for the garments is to be the work of an embroiderer. They are also to make tunics, sashes and headbands for Aaron's son to give them dignity and honor. Moses is told that after he puts these clothes on Aaron and his sons, he is to anoint and ordain (consecrate) them so they may serve God as priests.

They are also to make linen undergarments to cover the priest's body from the waist to the thigh (sort of like knickers). Aaron and his sons are to wear these when they enter the Tent of Meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place so that they will not incur guilt and die.

All of this is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants. This means the High Priest in future generations must come from the lineage of Aaron. Some people see that this appears to have had a change in 1165 BC when the High Priest Eli did not protect the holiness of the priesthood and allowed his sons to do many things that were an abomination to God. The result was that Eli and his descendants were cut off from being priests and Samuel who was of the lineage of Ephraim was chosen by God to replace Eli and minister to the Lord in the Tabernacle. (See 1 Samuel 1 – 3) But others believe Samuel was a descendant of Levi based upon 1 Chronicles 6 which lists an Elkanah as a descendant of Kohath who is the second son of Levi. The beginning of chapter 6 (verse 2) gives Kohath's sons as Amram, the father of Aaron and Moses; Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. Then in verses 31 – 38, when listing the individuals David put in charge of music after the ark was brought to Jerusalem, the genealogy of Heman, the musician, is given and followed back through Joel, the son of Samuel, the son of Elkanah, through another individual named Elkanah to Izhar, the son of Kohath. The time frame of this genealogy and the listing of ancestors up to Zuph would indicate a very good possibility that Samuel was really a Levite, but he was not of the lineage of Aaron and therefore not authorized to be the High Priest. But, if he is really a Levite, and not a descendant of Ephraim but only a resident in the land awarded to Ephraim, then he would be authorized to care for the lampstand in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle and even to offer the sacrifices upon the Brazen Altar, morning and evening and for individuals. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, when Eli died and his descendants removed by God from being the High Priest, the office passed to the descendants of Ithamar, the brother of Eli's ancestor, Eleazar. (<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/7689-high-priest>)

From the description of the priestly garments and what explanation is given, we should learn and apply today that anyone whom God selects to minister for him in worship must remember that they represent the holiness of the Almighty God (YHWH) in their activities and way of living.

Chapter 29

Verses 1 – 9. God gives instructions for how Aaron and his sons are to be consecrated for their service to him and to the Israelite people as priests. Moses describes this in more detail in Leviticus 8. Moses is to take a young bull and two rams, all without defect, along with bread made from fine wheat flour and made without yeast, cakes mixed with oil, and wafers spread with oil. He is to put the bread in a basket and present it, along with the bull and rams before the Lord. Then he is to bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting (the entrance in the curtains surrounding the Tabernacle) and wash them with water. Then he is to clothe them with the garments that God has described and told him to have the people make. Then he is to take the anointing oil (which God will describe in chapter 30) and pour some of it on his head. He is also to dress Aaron's sons in the garments described for priests other than the high priest, puts headbands on the sons and tie sashes on all of them. This is how they are to dress when they enter the Tent of Meeting to minister before God. All of this is to emphasize the importance of being purified before ministering before the Lord.

Verses 10 – 14. Moses is to bring the bull to the front of the Tent of Meeting so that Aaron and his sons can lay their hands on its head to symbolize the transferring of their sin onto the bull. Then the bull is to be slaughtered before the entrance, put some of the blood on each of the four horns of the brazen altar with his finger and pour the rest of it on the ground at the base of the altar. All the fat around the inner parts of the bull, the covering of the liver and both kidneys and the fat around them is to be burned on the altar. This made to sacrifice acceptable to the Lord. The rest of the bull, its flesh and its offal (dung) is to be burned outside of the camp because the bull is a sin offering. The burning outside of the camp of everything that is not burned on the altar is not because it is impure but because it is holy to the Lord and the camp is impure. This emphasized that the penalty of sin must be paid so that a person has a right relationship with God before they are ready to minister before the Lord. The pieces of the bull burned on the altar points to Jesus' sacrifice being acceptable to God and his crucifixion outside of the city is like the bull being burned outside the impure camp.

Verses 15 – 18. One of the two rams is to be brought to Aaron and his sons so they can lay their hands on its head setting it apart as sacred to the Lord. Then the ram is to be slaughtered and its blood sprinkled against the altar on all sides. The ram is to be cut into pieces and the inner parts and legs washed. Then all of the ram is to be burned on the altar as a burnt offering that is a pleasing aroma to the Lord. A burnt offering symbolizes a complete surrender to the Lord. It was also a tribute to honor the Lord. It points to the voluntary, complete surrender of Jesus to the Lord's will for him on the cross.

Verses 19 – 37. The second ram was to be brought to Aaron and his son so they could lay their hands on it. Then it was to be slaughtered and some of its blood was to be put on the right ear lobe, thumb of the right hand, and big toe of the right foot of Aaron and his sons. Blood on the right ear symbolized that the priest's ear was consecrated to the Lord's service and to hear the will of God. Blood on the right thumb symbolized that the priest's hand was sanctified to do the Lord's work and thus was empowered and skilled for that work. Blood on the big toe symbolized that the priest's walk was sanctified to the Lord and that it was to be a witness to everyone how they were to walk daily before the Lord.

After the blood was put on Aaron and his sons, some of the blood was to be sprinkled on all sides of the altar. Moses was to take the anointing oil and sprinkle some of it on Aaron and his son and their garments so they and their garments would be consecrated to the Lord.

Then Moses was to take the fat tail of the ram, the fat around the inner parts, the covering of the liver, the kidneys, and the animal's right thigh. Then he was to take from the basket a loaf of bread, a cake made with oil, and a wafer and put them along with the parts of the ram into the hands of Aaron and his sons. They were to wave all of it before the Lord as an offering and then Moses was to take all of it except the right thigh and burn it on the altar with the burnt offering that was already there. Moses was to take the breast of the ram and wave it before the Lord for Aaron's ordination and then it will become Moses' share of the fellowship offering that was to be a covenant meal with the Lord. Then Aaron and his sons are to take the remaining pieces and boil them at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and eat it there with the remaining bread from the basket in a holy place and no one else may eat it because it is sacred. Any of the ram or bread or cakes or wafers that they don't eat are to be burned on the altar before daylight. (See Leviticus 8:31-32)

Aaron and his sons are to have the portion of each fellowship offering that is brought by any of the Israelites. This is a lasting ordinance so it transfers down to succeeding generations. Aaron's garments are sacred and are to pass down to his son that succeeds him so that the son can be anointed and ordained in them and must wear them for seven days. The reason for his wearing them for seven days is the same as it is in verse 35 for Aaron and his sons. Moses is to take seven days to ordain them and a bull is to be sacrificed each day as a sin offering so that the altar will be most holy and whatever touches it will be holy.

Verses 38 – 46. God continues by instructing Moses that he is to offer each day two lambs a year old. One is to be offered in the morning and the other at twilight. Along with each of the lambs, he is to offer a tenth of an ephah (about 2 quarts) of fine flour mixed with a fourth of a hin (about 1 quart) of oil from pressed olives and a fourth of a hin (1 quart) of wine as a drink offering. These offering will be a pleasing aroma to the Lord by fire.

This burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for the generations to come. God says there also will he meet and speak with Moses and also with the Israelites and thus the place will be consecrated by his glory.

God says that in this way he will consecrate the Tent of Meeting, the altar, Aaron and his sons, and that he will dwell among the Israelites and be their God and they will know that he is their God who brought them out of Egypt so that he may dwell among them.

Chapter 30

Verses 1 – 10. Here, Moses gives us God's instructions for building the altar of incense. It was to be made of acacia wood, a square 1 cubit long and wide and 2 cubits high (1 ½ feet square and 3 feet high), and with horns on the corners that were one piece with it. It was to be overlaid all over with pure gold and with a gold molding around it. There was to be two gold rings on opposite sides below the molding so it could be carried with two poles made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. The altar was to be put just before the curtain of the Holy Place which divided it from the Most Holy Place where the Ark of the Testimony with the mercy seat covering sat. Aaron (and thus subsequent High Priests) was to burn incense on the altar every morning when the lamps of the lampstand are being trimmed after burning all night. Then in the evening as the lamps of the lampstand are being lit for the evening, he was again to burn incense on the altar. No other offering, whether burnt, grain, drink and no other incense (except what Moses will be given instructions how to make) is to be offered upon this altar. Once a year, when Aaron is making atonement with a sin offering for the entire community, he is to put blood from the offering on the horns of this altar.

AT this point all of the Tent of Meeting and its articles of furniture have been described.

Verses 11 – 16. Now God gives instructions for every male over the age of 20 to pay a half shekel (about 1/5 of an ounce of silver) offering for the maintenance of the Tent of Meeting. Everyone was to pay the same amount no matter how rich or poor they might be. The offering was to atone for (redeem) their life which by nature was alienated from God. This was to be done when a census of the Israelites was performed. Over time, this became the "temple tax" mentioned in Matthew 17:24-27.

Verses 17 – 21. God now instructs Moses to provide a basin, made from bronze and with a base (stand). It was to be for the priests to use to wash themselves (hands and feet) as they perform their duties. It was to be placed between the Tent of Meeting and the Brazen Altar where the sacrifices were burned as an offering to the Lord. Whenever they approached the Brazen Altar to perform a sacrifice they were to wash their hands and feet. Also whenever they were going to enter the Tent of Meeting they were to first wash their hands and feet. This shows the necessity of being cleansed, even while performing service to the Lord, before entering fellowship with him.

Verses 22 – 33. Now Moses gives the instructions he received for making the anointing oil that was to be used to consecrate all the Tabernacle, the furniture, the serving implements, and even Aaron and his sons for their service. It was to be made from the following spices and oils: 500 shekels (about 12 ½ quarts) of liquid myrrh, 250 shekels (about 6 ¼ quarts) of cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant cane (sweet calamus), 500 shekels of cassia, and one hin (about 4 quarts) of olive oil. It was to be blended together by a perfumer and then used to anoint everything sacred to the Lord. It was not to be poured on the bodies of people and no one was to make any oil with the same formula. This anointing oil was sacred to the Lord so anyone who made a perfume like it (using the same formula) and anyone who put it on someone other than a priest was to be cut off from the people (killed).

Verses 34 – 38. Then God gives Moses instructions for making incense that is to be burned on the altar of incense. He was to have a perfumer make a fragrant blend using equal parts of the following spices: *nataph* (translated as stacte), *sh'cheleth* (translated as onycha), *chel'b'nah* (translated as galbanum) and *ul'bonah* (translated as frankincense). Stacte is a gum resin extracted from the myrrh plant. Galbanum is a gum resin

extracted from the ferula galbaniflua plant. Frankincense is a gum resin extracted from the boswellia plant. Onycha is the horny-like plate which covers a species of mollusks. The ingredients were to ground into a powder to be burned on the altar on incense. Since it is holy to the Lord, anyone who made it to use for their own enjoyment was to be cut off from the people.

Chapter 31

Verses 1 – 11. Now God tells Moses that he has chosen Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, (the son of Caleb) of the tribe of Judah and filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship to devise designs for work in gold, silver, and bronze and in the cutting of stones for settings and in the carving of wood that he may engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. That mean he will be the chief craftsman of the Tabernacle and in charge of all the other workers. God says he has also chosen Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan to help Bezalel in all the work of making everything for the Tabernacle, including the anointing oil and the incense. God says they are to make everything just as he has shown it to Moses.

Verses 12 – 18. God then tells Moses to tell the Israelites the they must observe his Sabbaths because it will be a sign between him and them for the generations to come so that they might know that he is the Lord who makes them holy. Like the rainbow is a sign of the covenant God made with Noah (Gen 9:13) and like circumcision is a sign of the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen 17:11), the Sabbath is a sign to remind Israel and to teach other nations that his chosen people have already entered into a portion of God's Sabbath rest (Gen 2:2-3). Observance of a Sabbath rest from work for that one day each week was unique to Israel so it set them apart from and an example to other nations of God's plan shown in Genesis 2:2-3. Therefore, anyone who didn't observe the Sabbath rest was to be cut off from the people and put to death. The Israelites were to observe the Sabbath for the future generations as a lasting covenant.

The sign of the Sabbath was to continue as long as God continued to work through Israel as his primary instrument of witness to the nations of how people could have a right relationship with God, their Creator. When Jesus came as the Messiah and died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for sin, the need to observe all the rituals of the covenant God made with the Israelites at Mount Sinai (Ex 24) were no longer necessary (Rom 10:4; Heb 9:1-10). Jesus did not command the Church he established to observe the Sabbath but did teach the importance of periodic rest (Mark 6:31).

When God finished speaking with Moses for the 40 days and nights on Mount Sinai, he gave Moses two tablets of stone upon which God had inscribed the Testimony of the covenant made with the Israelites. These tablets were placed in the Ark, making it the Ark of the Testimony, and the Tent of Meeting was therefore also called the Tent of Testimony (Num 9:15; 17:7-8).

Chapter 32

Verses 1-6. Now Moses tells us what was happening in the camp at the base of the mountain while he was on the mountain talking with God. You may remember from chapter 19:1 that the people arrived at the bas of the mountain exactly three months after they left their homes in Egypt. During this three months they experienced the miraculous parting of the Red Sea (Yam Suph) so that they could escape from Pharaoh and his army on dry ground while God stood watch in a pillar of fire behind them. Then they had God in a pillar of smoke to guide them each day through their travel to the mountain. Along the way they encountered bitter water at Marah and God made the water sweet by having Moses throw a stick that he showed him into the water. Then as they arrived at Elim they found that God had led them to a place where there were twelve springs with 70 palm trees. When they left Elim they complained that they didn't have enough food to eat so God provided them with quail and manna. God continued to provide the manna each day for six of the week's seven days and made what they gathered on the sixth day last for two days. When they came to Rephidim in the Desert of Sin, they found no water and complained again to Moses. So God miraculously provided water by having Moses strike a rock and

water flowed out. Then Amalekites came and attacked them at Rephidim and God enabled them to defeat the Amalekites as long as Moses held the staff high that God had used in Pharaoh's court to bring on the plagues which finally resulted in Pharaoh releasing the people. Finally, when they reached the mountain, they heard God speak the 10 Commandments to them from out of the smoke on the mountain. Now, because Moses has been up on the mountain with God for a long time (probably between 20 and 30 days) the people gathered around Aaron (Moses' brother) and asked him to make a god for them whom they can follow since Moses has been gone so long and they don't know what has happened to him. The people and Aaron should readily recognize that what they are asking is a violation of the very first of the 10 Commandments where God said: "You shall have no other gods before me." In chapter 24, after Moses had read the Book of the Covenant to the people, they had agreed to obey everything God had said, and now, in less than 40 days after Moses went back up the mountain to speak with God, they are proposing to Aaron to disobey the Covenant. And Aaron agrees to do what they have asked. He tells the people to take off the gold earrings that they are wearing and bring them to him. Then he takes the gold and casts it into the shape of a calf. Then the people say, these are your gods (Elohim – plural name of YHWH) who brought you up out of Egypt. When Aaron heard this from the people he built an altar in front of the golden calf and told them that tomorrow there would be a festival to the Lord. So the next day the people rose early, sacrificed burnt offerings on the altar and presented fellowship (peace) offerings. Then they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry, which probably means sexual immorality which usually accompanied the pagan feasts with which the people were familiar in Egypt. So now the people are breaking the third Commandment by misusing the Lord's name and the seventh Commandment by committing adultery. In making this golden calf and saying that it represents the gods who brought them up out of Egypt, they are breaking not only the first but also the second of the Commandments. This is the first act of disobedience of the people just like eating of the forbidden fruit by Adam and Eve was their first act of disobedience. We will see at the end of this chapter that God will punish them for the disobedience. It seems from other examples like Achan's disobedience (Joshua 7) and the lying to the Holy Spirit by Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) that God often quickly punishes the first act of disobedience in a new covenant to make a point that such acts are destructive to the covenant and future relationship with him if such acts become the accepted practice of the people.

Verses 7 – 14. Now we return to Moses talking with God on the mountain and Moses tells us that God told him about the corrupt acts of the people which show they have been quick to turn away from what he commanded (and which they had quickly agreed to obey). God says they have made an idol in the shape of a calf, have bowed down to it, sacrificed to it, and proclaimed that it is (or at least represents) the gods (remember that Elohim is the plural name of God) which brought them out of Egypt. God calls the people "stiff-necked" and he tells Moses to leave him alone so his anger may burn against them and so that he may destroy them. Then God says he will make Moses into a great nation (the promise that God had first made to Abraham and then to Isaac and then Jacob). That means God is proposing that he make Moses' descendants so numerous that they become a great nation. Note that God refers to the people as Moses' people in verse 7 and not his people. All people are God's people by virtue of the fact that they were made by him, but only the people who accept him as God and at least attempt to obey him are the ones he calls his people.

Notice Moses' response to God's revelation of what the people have done in disobeying him and to God's pronouncement that he will destroy the people and make a great nation out of Moses' descendants. Moses doesn't hesitate a minute to consider that God is proposing to make him a great nation. He immediately seeks God's favor. Moses asks God why his anger should burn against his (God's) people that he brought out of Egypt with great power and his mighty hand. Then he asks why the Egyptians should be able to say it was with evil intent that God brought them out just to kill them in the mountains. Then Moses asks God to remember his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to make their descendants into a great nation as numerous as the stars in the sky and give them a promised land as their inheritance. Then Moses writes that God relented and did not bring the disaster upon his people that he had threatened. This relenting, which looks like God changing his mind, is just what it appears to be from Moses' perspective. We need to remember that God exists outside of the dimension of time that he created and that because of that fact, God knows everything that will happen before it happens. Therefore none of this was a surprise to God and what appears to be his relenting or

changing his mind is nothing more than God using what he already knows will happen to accomplish his will in the lives of the people and bring about his will in all the earth. Paul writes in Ephesians 1:11 and Romans 8:28 that God foreordains what is going to happen. God gave men free will but he uses all the choices that men make to eventually bring about what he has foreordained will happen. What Paul doesn't write is that God doesn't always reveal how, when, or by whom what he has ordained will come to happen. For Moses, it is a test of whether he will give in to the sin of pride and try to get something great for himself or whether he will seek to glorify God with every part of his life. We see that he chose the latter way of living and urged God to have mercy on his people.

Verses 15 – 24. After pleading with God not to destroy his people that he miraculously brought out of Egypt and to this mountain, Moses begins to go down the mountain to the people. With him he takes the two stone tablets upon which God had written the 10 Commandments which were the testimony of his covenant with the people. On the way down he comes to where Joshua is waiting for him and they continue on down together. When Joshua hears the people in the camp shouting, he says it sounds like the sound of war in the camp. But Moses says it isn't the sound of victory or the sound of defeat but the sound of singing. When they approach the camp close enough to see the golden calf and the people dancing around it, Moses lets his anger get the best of him and he throws the stone tablets which break into pieces at the foot of the mountain. Some people think he did this to show that the people had broken their covenant with God, but clearly it was due to his anger and not a premeditated sign to the people. Then Moses takes the golden calf and burns it in the fire the people had used to offer sacrifices. This would melt the gold, which he then ground into powder (after it would have cooled which would take some time). Then he scattered the powder on water and made the people drink it. This would seem to be a premeditated sign to impress on the people that they had sinned in making the golden calf and the sin was within them.

Then Moses turns to his brother, Aaron, and asks what the people did to him to make him lead them into such a great sin. Aaron tells Moses not to be angry because he knows how prone to evil the people are. He says the people asked him to make gods (Elohim, the plural name of god) to go before them since they don't know what has happened to Moses. So, he says, he told them if anyone had gold jewelry to take it off and give it to him. Then he took the jewelry, threw it into the fire and out came this calf. Does Aaron really think Moses will believe such a blatant lie?

Verses 25 – 29. Moses could see the people were running wild and because Aaron had let them get out of control the people would become a laughingstock to all the other peoples around them. That would mean God would not be glorified by choosing them as his special people. So Moses stands at the entrance of the camp and asks for everyone that is for the Lord (willing to be obedient to God and the covenant) should come to him. All the Levites responded. We haven't been told whether or not some or any of the Levites were a part of the people who offered sacrifices to the golden calf. It is possible that some did follow the crowd but now since the entire tribe rallies to Moses' call it would indicate that had repented of their sin if they had followed the crowd. Then Moses tells them that God's command is that they should each take their sword and go throughout the camp killing their brother, friend, or neighbor. That command may indicate some of the Levites are included in the ones killed by the sword or that other people besides the Levites also responded to Moses' call. Either way, those that responded to the call followed God's command and began going through the camp killing the revelers who had sinned against God. It is most likely that if any of the Levite tribe were part of the revelers that had sacrificed to the golden calf that they were the first people that the Levites obeying God killed. That day about 3,000 of the people died (the total male population was probably 6,000). While that was severe it was also merciful. Moses tells the people who have responded to the call and obeyed God's command that they have been set apart to the Lord and blessed because they followed God rather than following their own sons and brothers. In Numbers 3:6-13 we learn that God chose the Levites to assist Aaron in their priestly duties. Back in Exodus 19:6 God told Moses that all the people were to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation for God. But now, the entire group, except for the Levites, is rejected from priestly duties. In contrast to what happened to the people, everyone now who accepts Jesus' death on the cross to pay for their sin of disobedience are given a place in God's family and made priests in God's service (see 1 Peter 2:5).

Verses 30 – 35. The next day Moses tells the people that they have committed a great sin but that he will go up to the Lord (on the mountain) and perhaps he will be able to make an atonement for it. Then he goes up the mountain and speaks with the Lord. He acknowledges that the people have made a golden god for themselves and committed a great sin. Then he asks God to forgive their sin, but if he won't forgive the sin, then Moses asks God to blot him out of the book he has written. We don't know what book Moses meant from which he was asking God to blot him out. Some think being blotted out of God's book simply refers to physical death, but in Daniel 12:1-3 God indicates he has a book in which are written the names of those who will be delivered at the end of time. And God tells Moses that whoever has sinned against him will be blotted out of his book (See Ezekiel 18:4). So it would appear that God's book contains the names of all those who have faith in him (like Abraham – see Genesis 15:1 and Hebrews 11:6) and will be with him for eternity. So, whether being blotted out of God's book refers to physical death or eternal separation from God, what Moses is proposing to God is that he is willing to give his life for the people if God will allow it. The problem with Moses proposal is that because he is also a sinner he cannot ultimately pay for the sins of others. God prepared for what Moses was proposing when he told Adam and Eve in the Garden that one would come from Eve's seed that would crush Satan's head (Genesis 3:15). This was the promise of a Messiah who would destroy Satan's work and make it possible for people to be restored to a right relationship with him. It is faith in God's promise that enables a person to accept Jesus' work on the cross to restore him to a right relationship with God and receive the Holy Spirit which is a guarantee of the person's future life with Jesus in a new heaven and earth.

God tells Moses to go and lead the people to the place about which he has spoken to him about and he will send his angel to go before him. Moses doesn't tell us at this time the name of the place God has told him to take the people, but we see later that he led them to Kadesh Barnea. Then God says when the time comes he will punish the people for their sin. It was at Kadesh Barnea that ten of twelve men sent to look at the Promised Land rebelled against God's leadership and led the community to wail against God's leadership and say they want to return to Egypt. It was at this time that God punished them for their sin at the mountain (a plague) as well as the disobedience at Kadesh Barnea (staying in the wilderness for 40 years until all over 20 years died – except for Joshua and Caleb). (Num 14:26-38)

Chapter 33

Verses 1 – 6. Now Moses tells us that God told him to take the people up to the land he had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their descendants. God says he will send an angel before them and drive out the peoples of the land, but he will not go with them because the people are stiff-necked and therefore he might destroy them on the way. This did not mean the Israelites were not still God's people but their sin had broken their intimate relationship with him. In a similar manner, when believers disobey God and thereby sin, their sin breaks their fellowship with God but does not end their relationship with him.

Then Moses goes down to the people to tell them what God has said. Moses says that God told him to tell the Israelites "You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you." In response to God's words, the people took off their ornaments there at the base of Mount Horeb (Mt Sinai).

Verses 7 – 11. We are told that Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away which he called the "tent of meeting" for anyone who wanted to inquire something of the Lord. Some people think that since we are told this information right after God says he will not go with the people on their journey anymore that Moses started doing this to show that God had moved away from his people but had not abandoned them. The fact that Moses "used" to do this (past tense) would seem to indicate that this wasn't a result of what God had said to Moses but that it had been his practice up to this point in their journey. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, the people would rise up and stand at the entrance of their tents and watch Moses until he entered the tent. The pillar of cloud would then come and stand at the entrance of the tent while God spoke to Moses "face to face" as a man speaks to his friend. While the pillar stood at the entrance of the tent the people would worship at the entrance to their tents. When the pillar removed from the entrance of

the tent, Moses would come out and return to the camp, but Joshua, who was Moses' aide, would remain outside the tent. This "tent of meeting" fulfilled some of the functions that the Tabernacle they would soon build would fill after it was sanctified, but it was not and did not become a place of worship nor a place for sacrificing offerings to the Lord.

Verses 12 – 23. At one of the times after Moses came back down the mountain from God to the people and he had entered the tent of meeting, Moses says to the Lord that he has heard the command to lead the people but he doesn't know whom God will send with him. He says God has told him: "I know your name and you have found favor with me." So Moses says that if he has found favor with God, he asks God to teach him his ways so he may know God and continue to find favor with him. His request is that God will tell him what he wants from him, plus all his intentions and plans so he can successfully lead the people and continue to be in God's favor. His request that God remember that the nation is his people is a way of saying that God needs to do what he has asked. Since God is sovereign, he does not respond to anyone's request to know all God's ways and his plans. God only reveals what he determines is necessary to whomever he knows needs that information to do what God has asked him to do. So God does not accede to Moses' request. But he does tell Moses that his Presence will go with them and give them rest.

Moses continues to press the request by saying that if God's presence doesn't go with them not to send them away from this place because without his Presence how would anyone (the people) know that God is pleased with him and the people. Also, what would distinguish them from all the other people of the earth. God replies that he will do the very thing Moses has asked (have his Presence go with them) because he is pleased with Moses and knows him by name (showing a close relationship).

Moses continues to press the Lord by asking him to show him his glory. This is not the same as talking with God "face to face" as a man speak with his friend. Moses is asking for something that Moses doesn't see during his talks with God, whether on the mountain or in the tent of meeting. This is asking to see God in the fullness of his glory which God tells him is not possible for anyone to see his full glory and live. This is reasonable to understand because the full glory of God could only be experienced outside of this time, space, and spiritual universe because God exists outside of all of that. Since everyone is a creature of this time, space, spiritual universe, to leave it would mean death (physical and spiritual which is the totality of all creatures). But God says he will cause all his goodness (not glory) to pass in front of Moses and proclaim his name (YHWH) in Moses' presence. God goes on to say that he will have mercy and compassion on whom he will, but Moses cannot see his face (his full glory) and live. God tells Moses about a place nearby where he can stand in the cleft of the rock and as God passes by, he (God) will place his hand over Moses to protect him until he has passed by and then he will let him see his back.

Chapter 34

Verses 1 – 9. After God tells Moses that he will allow him to see his backside, God tells him to chisel out two new stone tablets like the two that he broke upon which God had inscribed the 10 Commandments of his covenant with the people. The next morning Moses is to return up the mountain with the tablets and make sure no people or animals are anywhere near the mountain. When he goes up the mountain, God comes down in the cloud and proclaimed his name is the Lord (YHWH), the same name God revealed to Moses when he first met him at the burning bush on this same mountain (Exodus 3:14). Then God passes in front of Moses (presumably according to the way he said he would in the previous chapter. Moses doesn't tell us what he saw but what he says God spoke as he passed him is very interesting. God proclaims his own name twice which indicates what he is saying is an emphatic truth. God says he is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. God has just announced that because of his love he is so willing for people to be forgiven that he is willing to wait for them to come to him. Then he says, that even though he is willing to wait he will not let the guilty go unpunished and the punishment will extend to their descendants to the fourth generation. When this statement is set beside God's statements in Jeremiah 31:30 and Ezekiel 18:4 where he says the soul who sins will die for his own sin,

then we can understand that God is saying here that a parent's sinning will be learned by their children and future descendants so that they follow that life of sinning. Thus they will be punished for their own sin which is a consequence of learning that way of life from their ancestors. Therefore God is not punishing them unjustly.

Moses' response to God granting his request to see his glory (by passing by so Moses could see his backside) and God's proclamation that he is willing to forgive is to bow to the ground in worship and ask that if he has found favor in God's sight, to forgive the wickedness and sin of the stiff-necked people, go with them, and take them as his inheritance. Moses hears that God will forgive so he asks for forgiveness and even that the people will be accepted in a relationship with God as belonging to him. This is exactly what Jesus (God in the flesh) offers to everyone who will accept that he is God and that his death on the cross for the forgiveness of their sin will give them a right relationship with God. Then those people will be part of God's family for eternity.

Verses 10 – 28. God responds to Moses' request by saying that he is making a covenant with him (actually restoring the covenant the people had broken). God promises to do wonders before the people that have never been done before and that the people that live around them will see the awesome work that he will do for his people. God says he will drive out all the people (living in the land he has promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their descendants). But he says the people must be careful not to make a treaty with the people living in the land or they will be a snare to them (leading them to disobey God and break the covenant again). He says his people must break down the altars, smash the sacred stones, and cut down the Asherah poles of those people (all the ways those people worship something other than the One God, the Creator of the universe).

Then God refers back to some of the ways he has told the people that they should live in obedience to the covenant (Exodus 21 – 23). Not only were they to tear down the false worship structures of the people in the land, they were not to make any idols of their own and only worship him as he had instructed. They were to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover plus seven days of eating unleavened bread). They were to remember that the first-born male of every womb belongs to God and redeem the lives of those men and animals. No one is to come before God empty handed means they are to bring him offerings of what they have when they come to worship. They are to remember that they are only to work for six days and then rest on the seventh even during plowing and harvesting seasons. They are to celebrate the Feast of Weeks (also called Shavuot and Pentecost because it happens 50 days after Passover) which is the beginning of the harvest season with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest. Then (in the fall) they are to celebrate the Feast of Ingathering (also called Sukkot or Tabernacles) which is the end of the harvest season (with the harvest of olives). They are to appear before the Lord three times each year and if they do then God will enlarge their territory and no one will covet their land. They are not to offer the blood of any sacrifice with anything containing yeast (because it represents sin) and they are not to let any of the sacrifice of the Passover Feast remain until morning (it must be eaten or burned before daylight). They are to bring the best of the firstfruits of their soil (anything that grows) as an offering to the Lord. They are not to cook a young goat in its mother's milk (while the mother is still producing milk it is for the benefit of the baby and it would be a sinful act to cook the mother's young in her own milk). God finishes by telling Moses to write down his words because with them he has made a covenant with him and Israel.

Finally, we are told that Moses stayed up on the mountain with God for another 40 days and nights, but this time Joshua was not up on the mountain with him. For those forty days and nights Moses neither ate nor drank anything. This, one again, shows that God is able to accomplish anything he desires within this universe that he created – whether it is creating everything by the power of his own word, creating man from the dust of the earth, creating Jesus as a sinless, perfect human in Mary's womb, and paying the penalty of sin by Jesus' death on the cross as the one and only perfectly pure sacrifice. And during the forty days that Moses was on the Mountain he inscribed the Ten Commandments on the two stone tablets that he had chiseled out and brought up on the mountain as God had commanded.

Verses 29 – 35. When Moses came down from speaking with God on the mountain, he carried the two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments on them. He didn't know his face was radiating the glory of God until Aaron and all the people were afraid to be near him. Perhaps they feared it wasn't really Moses but just

someone that appeared to look like him. They came near when he called to them and then he gave them all the commands the Lord has spoken to him and, when he finished, he put a veil over his face. Moses tells us that whenever he entered the Lord's presence he removed the veil and then when he went out among the people he put the veil back in place. So when he came out from speaking with the Lord, the people would see that had been with the Lord. Thus they would know that what he commanded was from the Lord. Paul wrote to the Corinthians (2 Cor 3:13) that Moses covered his face with the veil to hide the fact that the radiant glow from the Lord's presence was fading between the times he spoke with the Lord.

Chapter 35

Verses 1 – 3. Moses assembled the whole community and told them the things God had commanded them to do, but he emphasized keeping the Sabbath and being sure that they did no work, not even lighting a fire in any of their dwellings on the Sabbath. If anyone breaks that command, they were to be put to death.

Verses 4 – 29. When Moses was on the mountain for the first forty days and nights God gave him the directions for constructing the Tabernacle and all the articles and implements that would be used within it. God told him to take an willing offering from the people to obtain what was necessary for the construction. Now Moses tells the people about the offering God has commanded and how it is to be used to construct the Tabernacle and all the things within it. Chapters 25 – 29 of Exodus give more details about the look and construction of each item. Then Moses tells about the people willingly bringing all the different materials that God had said would be needed. Some of the materials would have been what the Israelites had owned and brought out of Egypt with them, but some of it would have been what they had been given by their neighbors when they asked them to give them something.

Verses 30 – 36. Then Moses tells the people that Bezalel, of the tribe of Judah, has been chosen by God and given the skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze; to cut and set stones; to work in wood; and to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship. Moses says that God has given to Bezalel and also to Oholiab, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others how to do all kinds of work as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers.

Chapter 36

Verses 1 – 7. This continues what Moses was saying in the previous chapter. He continues that Bezalel, Oholiab, and all the people whom the Lord has skilled are to do the work as God has commanded. The people begin bringing the materials needed and they continue daily bringing more and more of the items. Finally, the craftsmen cease their work to come to Moses and tell him that they have all the materials they need for the work. So Moses sends word of a command throughout the camp that no one is to bring anything more items because they already have enough to do the work.

Verses 8 – 38. Earlier, in chapter 26, Moses described how God had told him the Tabernacle should be constructed. Now it looks like he is repeating himself, but he really isn't. While the previous telling described how God told him it should be built, this telling is confirming that the people constructed the Tabernacle exactly as God had said. The order that Moses recounts in chapter 25 to 30 about the description of the Tabernacle and all its additional items of worship is different here in chapters 36 through 39. Some people think that perhaps Moses started with the construction of the tent to show that all the skilled workers were involved before describing those things that only involved the work of Bezalel. He may have wanted to show that it took a lot of skilled workers to make all the things that went together to make the tent, but I'm not sure the other things mentioned later only involved the work of Bezalel. He was given the skill and knowledge for designing and constructing the things from metals and wood, but that doesn't mean he was the only one doing it. He was also given the ability to teach others his skilled crafts (Ex 35:34). Although all the items made are mentioned separately, it is most probably that Bezalel was busy teaching and organizing the work of all the items at the same time and may not have completely made any one item by himself.

Chapter 37

Verses 1 – 9. Here Moses describes that the people constructed the ark that would house the stone tablets of the covenant, from acacia wood just as God had directed, covering it with gold inside and out with two cherubim made of hammered gold that were one piece with the solid gold cover for the ark.

Verses 10 – 16. They made the table for the showbread that would sit in the Tabernacle, from acacia wood and overlaid it with gold and made all the utensils to be used with the table from pure gold.

Verses 17 – 24. They made the lampstand that would stand in the Tabernacle and provide light and all its accessories from one talent of pure gold.

Verses 25 – 29. They made the altar of incense that would stand in front of the veil separating the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) from the Holy Place (rest of the inside of the tabernacle), from acacia wood and covered it with pure gold. They also made the sacred anointing oil and the pure, fragrant incense.

Chapter 38

Verses 1 – 8. They made the altar of burnt offering that would stand just inside the opening in the courtyard curtains, from acacia wood and overlaid it with bronze. They made all the utensils that would be used with the altar from bronze and made the basin that would hold water for the priest to wash their hands and feet before entering the Holy Place, from the bronze mirrors that women had given for the craftsmen to use.

Verses 9 – 20. They made all the posts for the courtyard from acacia wood and bronze stands for each of them so that the courtyard would measure 100 cubits long by 50 cubits wide (150 feet by 75 feet). They made the curtains from finely twisted linen and for the curtain at the entrance they worked in blue, purple and scarlet yarn. They made silver hooks from which to hang the curtains on the posts.

Verses 21 – 31. In these verses Moses describes the amount of materials the people gave and was used to construct everything for the courtyard and Tabernacle. The shekels Moses mentions were not coins but a measure of weight that was about half an ounce. He also includes the silver that was collected from the counting of all the males over twenty years old. From the amounts Moses gives the materials included a little over one ton of gold, about four tons of silver, and about two and a half tons of bronze. That was a lot of weight that the people carried with them when they left Egypt. It doesn't even include the linen and yarn that they used for the curtains and the priests' clothes he discusses in the next chapter and the precious stones that were used.

Chapter 39

Verses 1 – 7. Moses describes the making of the High Priest's garments with emphasis that they made them according to the instructions God had given. The ephod not only was made from blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen but it also had thin sheets of gold cut into strips and worked into it. A woven waistband was made of the same materials that was one piece with the ephod. Two onyx stones, each engraved with the names of half of the tribes were mounted on the shoulder straps of the ephod.

Verses 8 – 21. The breast piece to be worn by the High Priest was made of the same materials as the ephod. It was a span wide (about 9 inches) and two spans long so that when it was folded in half it made a square with a pocket. It had twelve stones mounted on it in four rows; each stone was engraved with one of the names of the twelve tribes so that all of the twelve tribes of Israel were represented when the High Priest entered into the presence of the Lord. The breast piece had two braided gold chains attached to the top corners of it which could then be attached to the shoulder pieces of the ephod. The bottom of the breast piece was tied to the waistband of the ephod with two blue cords so that it would not swing out away from the High Priest's body.

Verses 22 – 31. A one-piece blue robe was made for the High Priest with golden bells alternating with pomegranates crafted from blue, purple, scarlet yarn and finely twisted around the hem of the robe. Tunics were made for Aaron and his sons from finely twisted linen and also linen headbands and undergarments. A gold plate was made and inscribed with “Holy to the Lord” to be attached to Aaron’s headband with a blue cord.

Verses 32 – 43. When the craftsmen finished everything they brought it to Moses for his inspection. His response was the list all the items and record that they had made everything just as God had commanded. So Moses blessed them for their work.

Chapter 40

Verses 1 – 33. Then God told Moses to start setting up everything on the first day of the first month (Nisan). That would be one year after they exited Egypt. They arrived at the base of Mount Sinai three months after leaving Egypt so they have been at the mountain for nine months. Since Moses was on the mountain 40 days receiving God’s instructions for building the Tabernacle and receiving the two stones tablets with the Ten Commandments of the covenant between God and the Israelite people, that reduces the time available for building the Tabernacle from nine months to seven and one half months. Since Moses broke the tablets and had to go back up the mountain to mediate with God on behalf of the Israelites because of their sin of breaking the covenant and also had to get two more stone tablets and that trip also took him 40 days, that further reduces the time for building the Tabernacle to six months. Building the Tabernacle in six months out in the wilderness is quite an accomplishment. Setting up the Tabernacle beginning on the first day of Nisan means they only have thirteen days to have it set up and anointed so they can celebrate the Passover as God has prescribed.

God gives Moses instructions for how to set everything in place. He begins with erecting the posts and curtains for the three sides of the Tabernacle tent. Then the ark was to be set in area that was the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) after which the curtain separating that area from the rest of the tent was erected. Then the Table of Showbread was to be put on the north side of the Holy Place; the Lampstand was to be set on the south side; and the Altar of Incense was to be set in front of the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Finally, the curtain that would be the entrance to the tent was placed on the east side. After the tent was set up, the Altar of Burnt Offering (Brazen Altar) was to be set to the East of the entrance to the tent and the Bronze Basin was to be set between the Brazen Altar and the tent entrance. The last of the setup was to be the posts and curtains surrounding with the very last part being the entrance curtain. Then Moses was to take the anointing oil and use it to consecrate everything. Then, so the Tabernacle worship could begin, Moses was to bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, wash them with water, dress them in the garments of their priestly office, and anoint them to consecrate them for their duties.

Then Moses records that he set everything up just as God had commanded by listing each step that he did to set every piece of the Tabernacle in place.

Verses 34 – 38. When the Tabernacle was completely set up, the cloud of smoke that was God’s presence covered the Tent of Meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle so that Moses could not enter it. From that time in the travels of the Israelites until they entered the Promised Land, whenever the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle the people would pack their tents and the Tabernacle and set out in the direction the cloud moved. When the cloud stopped they would set everything up again and the cloud would move to above the Tabernacle and remain there as a cloud of smoke by day and fire by night. Finally, God had a dwelling place among his people and everyone could see that God was with them. In the same way in the New Testament God provided a new covenant with people who would accept it by faith that Jesus was the fulfillment of God’s promise to provide a descendant of Eve who would provide the remedy to restore people to a right relationship with Him. Jesus provided his own life as payment of man’s debt of disobeying God’s original covenant with man. Those who believe are given the Holy Spirit to reside within them making their bodies the Temple (Tabernacle) of God with man and providing a guarantee that they will live forever with God.