

Exodus: A Chapter-by-Chapter Study

Introduction

The book of Exodus gets its modern name from the Septuagint. Exodus is the Greek word for “exit” or “departure.” The original Hebrew translation uses the first two words of the book which translated from Hebrew mean, “These are the names of...”

Moses is widely accepted as the primary author of this book, although there are compelling arguments for multiple contributors. Moses is the traditional author of the first five books of the Old Testament, and it is believed that he did most of his writing while being exiled to wander the desert for forty years with the rest of the Jews. Where Genesis is a recount of events prior to the life of Moses, Exodus recounts the life of Moses himself. There are roughly 350 years between the closing events of Genesis and the first events of the book of Exodus, although this book does open with the list of names of Jacob and his sons.

Over the years, there has been a great amount of speculation on when the events of Exodus actually took place. Although Egyptian chronology relating to the suspected period, the 18th dynasty, remains unclear, there is convincing evidence to support the theory that Pharaohs Thutmose III and his son Amenhotep II are the Pharaohs mentioned in this book. However, this theory is countered by the name Rameses in the opening chapter and there is historical evidence to support the theory that these events took place in the 19th dynasty with Pharaohs Seti I and his son Rameses II as the Pharaohs of the book of Exodus. Cases can be made for either of these arguments and this debate will probably not be settled without hard evidence any time soon.

Chapter 1

V1-7

These first verses are a short recap of the closing of Genesis. Jacob and his family, thanks to his son Joseph, all settled in the land of Egypt, Goshen in particular. There they were separated from the Egyptians, but still resided in Egypt and fell under their protection. The Jews, the offspring of Jacob, multiplied quickly during the four hundred years between the time of Jacob and the time of Moses.

V8-14

What happened to the Egyptian attitude towards the Jews between Genesis and now?

The Egyptians had a superiority complex which stemmed from well before the time of Joseph in Genesis. They believed they were above all other nations and peoples on the planet. When the Egyptian leadership saw that they were being outnumbered by the Jews, they set out to rule over them with tyranny rather than lose their manpower to another nation. The more the Jews grew in number, the harder and more intense their workload became.

Another explanation which is harder to prove is that the 18th dynasty began sometime between the events of Genesis and Exodus (1570 BC). This change of leadership would explain why the Egyptian leaders no longer recognized the Jewish ancestors as the saviors of Egypt during the great famine.

V15-16

As the numbers of the Jews kept increasing, the Pharaoh made a horrific decision. All male babies will be put to death immediately upon birth.

It is not made clear in this passage, but it is highly likely that the two midwives mentioned here, Shiphrah and Puah, were not the only midwives. In fact, it is impossible since the Jews supposedly numbered in the millions at this point. Rather, these two were most likely the leadership of the midwives or even head of a midwife's guild. It is interesting to note that these two names roughly translate to "beauty" and "splendor" respectively.

V17-22

Although it is without a doubt that these two midwives feared Pharaoh, they feared God even more. There is an interesting debate among commentators on whether these two midwives lied to Pharaoh when they told him that the Hebrew women were strong and often gave birth before the midwives could arrive. This could be entirely true, a partial truth where not all the facts were given, or it could simply be an outright lie. Regardless, the midwives obeyed God rather than the Pharaoh since what the Pharaoh commanded obviously went against the desires of God.

What does the phrase "He provided households for them" mean in verse 21?

Usually, a midwife held that occupation because she had no children of her own. Because these two midwives stayed faithful to God, He gave them children.

Rather than let his command go unanswered, Pharaoh carried out an even more horrific plan. All newborn males of the Jews were to be drowned in the river.

Chapter 2

V1-4

As Moses is attributed with being the author of this book, the story of his birth is of course passed on to him, probably from his parents or siblings. The names of his family members are not mentioned here, but chapter 6 says that his father and mother are Amram and Jochebed, respectively. Moses also had an older brother, Aaron, and an older sister, Miriam.

What word is used in verse 3 to describe how they hid Moses? Ark? Basket?

The Hebrew word used here is the same word used to describe the vessel that Noah held the animals in during the great flood. Moses' parents built him a miniature ark.

From the closing chapters of Genesis, the tribe of Levi is the priestly line of Abraham, so Moses meets the first criteria of being a Jewish priest. His parents also didn't hide him right away but waited three months before trying to find a better way to keep their son alive. Hiding him in the river with a sibling not far off may seem delusional at first. But Moses' parents most likely knew what they were doing.

V5-10

By hiding Moses in the spot where the royalty took their baths, the parents of Moses trusted in human compassion to save their child. They were trusting God to soften the hearts of their captors. It is likely that the family of Moses had this planned out. The sister had been instructed on what to do when

Moses was discovered and to even offer up the services of Moses' mother to tend to this little orphan. Moses' family got to raise him and teach him who he was and even got paid to do so.

Not only did he have an early Jewish upbringing, but as an adopted son of the Pharaoh's daughter, he would be brought up with a high quality, royal education.

This is not biblical, but it is Jewish tradition that Moses was brought up as a military leader in the Egyptian army and even fought battles in Ethiopia.

V11-15

It is not stated in the Old Testament, but according to Acts 7:23 and Jewish tradition, Moses was around 40 years old when this passage takes place. He had lived a royal and lavish lifestyle up to this point. His maturity and the awareness of his family roots lead him to finally act on behalf of his fellow Jew.

His actions are rash. Instead of giving him credibility with the Jews, they see him as self-righteous. His murdering an Egyptian put the Jews at risk of retribution. His actions didn't earn him respect from the Jews. They simply saw him as another entitled Egyptian that did what he wanted at the expense of others.

The thought of the Jews rejection and of being found out by his fellow Egyptians forced him to flee his own country. At first, he belonged to two worlds. Now he belonged to none.

V16-22

Who is the priest of Midian in verse 16?

It is not stated here, but it is likely that this family came from one of the later children of Abraham. Genesis 25:1-2 lists Midian as a son of Keturah and Abraham. It is believed that they worshipped the same God as Moses and the Jews.

The humility of Moses is coming through in this passage. He was raised as royalty, but in a foreign land he has nothing to offer but servitude. He immediately recognizes this and offers to help the daughters of the priest of Midian. His humility is rewarded with not only a place to stay, but a family, as well. It also gave him a life of arduous work.

V23-25

The people of God have grown in numbers and their burden is heavy. God is ready to set his plan in motion.

Chapter 3

V1-6

Moses had settled for a career as a shepherd for his father-in-law. Jewish tradition believes that as much as 40 years had passed between chapters 2 and 3 and further states that Moses was around 80 years old when he encountered God at the burning bush (see Exodus 7:7). If these estimates are accurate then Moses spent the first 40 years living in royalty and the next 40 years living in poverty.

Some translations state the early name of the location of this encounter as Mount Horeb. This would later be called Mount Sinai, the mountain where the 10 commandments would be forged by God.

Mount Horeb/Mount Sinai sits in a desert area. It is not uncommon during a drought and the heat of the day for dried plants to combust. What caught Moses' attention was that this fire didn't go out.

There is much debate on whether this voice calling to Moses was that of God the Father or an incarnation of Jesus. Moses didn't see anyone in the burning bush. He heard the voice of God (in whatever form that may be) calling to him from the bush.

God called Moses' name twice. A double call is a sign of importance, often meaning the intended recipient to pay special attention. God informs Moses that he is to remove his sandals and to not come any closer.

Why would Moses need to remove his sandals?

Removing sandals wasn't a necessity. It was more a sign of respect, especially in that historic culture. It would be the equivalent of 18th-19th century men removing their hats when entering a building or standing whenever a lady entered a room.

Moses responded with awe and respect. This is a different Moses than the one who killed an Egyptian and expected the Jews to rally around him as their defender.

V7-12

God explains His plan to Moses and how He wants to use Moses in this plan. The Bible is filled with examples of God molding and shaping a person before that person is able to perform the task God has in store for them (Moses and Jonah are just two examples). Moses needed the humility of being a shepherd to undo the arrogance his time as a royal had embedded in him.

V13-14

Why does God tell Moses to call Him "I Am Who I Am?"

This phrase is a play on words that can best be described as "I am equal to I." In other words, "I have no equal." The name Yahweh is a shortened form of this same phrase, although the name Yahweh was not new to Moses. God is reminding Moses that He has not, nor has He ever had an equal.

Verse 14 uses the phrase "I Am" as the name of God, which loosely translates to 'God is the entirety of existence.' This is the same phrase that Jesus would use to describe Himself multiple times in the New Testament.

V15-22

God's plan begins with a simple request. Moses is to gather the elders of his people and ask Pharaoh to let them take a short journey to honor God. Had Pharaoh simply allowed this, he would have been spared much turmoil. God was certain that Pharaoh would refuse, and this would begin the process of freeing the Jews.

Why would God have the Egyptians give silver, gold, and clothing to the Jews?

God brought Jacob and his sons into Egypt with the intent of keeping them separated and pure from the rest of the world, not to have them become enslaved. Although God knew His people would become enslaved in later generations, God also knew that He could also use this as a demonstration of who He is

to both the Jews and the Egyptians. The silver, gold, and clothing would simply be considered back-pay for the work the Jews did for the Egyptians.

Chapter 4

V1-9

What is Moses' reaction to being asked to face Pharaoh and lead the Jews out of Egypt (chapter 3)?

Much of chapter 4 deals with the doubt, or even lack of faith, of Moses. Moses had thought he was doing the right thing by killing the Egyptian (2:12), but the Jews didn't see him as a righteous redeemer. Now Moses had spent 40 years as a shepherd and most likely feeling worthless and even sorry for himself. He found it difficult to believe that God would want to use him in any capacity.

Verse 2 introduces the world to the staff of Moses. This same staff will be used by God and Moses for many things in the coming chapters of Exodus.

God gives Moses 3 miraculous signs to perform to prove that God is in control. The rod turned to a snake, leprosy invoked and then cured, and water turning to blood.

V10-17

Why is the excuse of Moses in this passage a bad excuse (verse 10)?

Moses had been raised as royalty in Egypt with the best of teachers and tutors available to him. He was not lacking in skill or knowledge. He had even already spoken to some of the Jews about how he wanted to save them from slavery, so public speaking wasn't an issue. Moses was feeling inadequate and unworthy. He didn't trust that God knew what He was doing by choosing him for this task.

Why did God assign Aaron to Moses as his assistant (verse 14)?

At first glance, this would appear to validate Moses not being a good speaker and that God knew Aaron would be the voice of the Jews and there is validity in that. But the later actions of Aaron show that Aaron may have been somewhat of a punishment to Moses for doubting God's choice of leadership. Aaron would be an obstacle on many occasions as seen in Exodus 32:1-6 (the golden calf and altar), Leviticus 10:1-7 (sons of Aaron making impure offerings), and Numbers 12:1-8 (Aaron incites mutiny against Moses). Aaron would also be a help to Moses, but there is much speculation as to how much Moses actually needed Aaron. Regardless, Aaron would support Moses and Aaron would become the first high priest of the Jews.

God was not angry with Moses' questioning of how to do things. But God was angry when Moses showed he was unwilling to do things.

V18-23

What does it mean that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (verse 21)?

There are many misconceptions on how this passage should be taken. Even the wording used throughout Exodus varies on whether God hardened Pharaoh's heart (v21), or whether Pharaoh hardened his own heart (8:15), or even if his heart was simply hardened without giving credit to anyone (7:13). Ultimately, what this means is that God allowed Pharaoh to do what was already in his heart without providing a way out. A quote from Augustine regarding this passage is, "God does not harden

men by putting evil into them, but by not giving them mercy.” The implication is that Pharaoh could have had a change of heart if God provided some outside influence to do so. God simply allowed Pharaoh to act on his own.

In verse 19, God tells Moses that all those that sought to kill him are dead. This likely means that there is a new Pharaoh, a new king in Egypt. It is impossible to know since the dates of Genesis and Exodus have not yet been determined, but one possible theory is that the Pharaoh of Moses’ childhood was Thutmose III and that the Pharaoh of the return of Moses was Amenhotep II, both of the 18th Egyptian dynasty.

V24-26

Why would God want to kill Moses?

This is a mysterious passage for many in that it is short and without much explanation. It can be assumed that this passage carried significant meaning to those in the time of Moses who may have been more familiar with the story and its details. It is generally accepted that, for whatever unknown reason, Moses did not circumcise his son as per the Jewish custom since the time of Abraham. Moses’ wife, Zipporah, had to perform the circumcision to save the life of her husband. It is believed that since Zipporah performed the circumcision that she may have been the reason that Moses didn’t perform the ritual, but this is not made clear.

V27-31

In the closing of this chapter, Moses records that God kept His promises of, one, sending Aaron out to meet him and, two, the people believed just as God said. The Jews are in awe of their God and excited for what is to come.

Chapter 5

V1-9

Chapter 5 is a direct continuation from the end of chapter 4.

How did Moses and Aaron get an audience with Pharaoh?

It is unclear what the protocol was for requesting to speak to the king of Egypt, but it is assumed that this could be done through some form of official request. History supports this as an “audience with the king” has been recorded in numerous ages and cultures. Still, this would not be a small feat as the Egyptians considered the Pharaoh a god and he was to be worshipped and treated as such. For Moses and Aaron to seek an audience would be a bold move, let alone to ask for a short sabbatical for all the Jewish slaves.

Why would Pharaoh not just kill Moses at this point?

It is difficult to fully answer this question without intimate knowledge of the protocols in use at the time or without extensive knowledge of who this Pharaoh really is and how his thought processes worked. It is likely that Pharaoh saw no need to waste further time with Moses and it would be better to make an example of him than to simply kill him and make him a martyr.

Pharaoh responds not only with a “no,” but with a condescending negative response and a disregard for the God of Israel that saved Egypt centuries ago. He reinforces this response with an increase in labor for all the slaves.

V10-14

Moses and Aaron were the ones who went to Pharaoh to make this request, yet Pharaoh is punishing the entirety of the Jews. Pharaoh was trying to make his answer heard throughout all the nation so that no one would dare ask for this again.

V15-21

There was a chain of command established among the Jews and those in charge of production were suffering the most. They gathered themselves together and sought an audience with Pharaoh. One commentator pointed out the absence of these Jews seeking an audience with God. They pled their case to Pharaoh, but he turned them away with nothing more than an explanation as to why they were being punished. The fault was on Moses and Aaron for asking for time to worship God.

The supervisors laid this abuse at the feet of Moses and Aaron as God would certainly never allow their situation to get worse! Often a situation gets worse before it gets better. God wanted to prove to the Jews who He was and was using the direst of circumstances to show His glory.

V22-23

The chapter closes with Moses going before God in despair. Moses has let his doubts get the best of him at the first sign of trouble. There is nothing wrong with going before God when we doubt or when things seem to be going wrong. It's not trusting in God where we make our mistake. The work of God can be slow and difficult, yet how often do we, just like Moses, want things to come easy?

Chapter 6

This chapter continues the conversation between Moses and God at the end of chapter 5.

V1-9

In the first verse, God responds to Moses by saying that Pharaoh will not just let the Jews go, but that he will desire them to leave. God reaffirms His covenant with the children of Abraham to Moses. God is trying to build up Moses' confidence with this confirmation. Then God makes a new list of promises to Moses:

- I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians (v6)
- I will rescue you from their bondage (v6)
- I will redeem you (v6)
- I will take you as My people (v7)
- I will be your God (v7)
- I will bring you into the promised land (v8)
- I will give it to you as heritage (v8)

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew language records these promises in the past tense. This could be because of Moses recording them later, but the way the quotes from God are recorded could mean that God said them in the tense of “I have promised these, so they are already accomplished.”

Moses passed on these promises to his fellow Jews, but they did not change their attitudes.

Why would the Jews not listen to Moses?

Without knowing exactly when these accounts took place, it is hard to say how long the Jews had been in slavery. It is safe to assume that at least a few generations had been enslaved and no one alive at this time knew the Egypt or even the God of Joseph in Genesis. Most of the Jews probably felt ignored by God. Ezekiel 20:5-9 records that the Jews had even taken to worshipping the gods of Egypt. They did not know the God of Abraham anymore.

V10-13

God does not get discouraged like humans do. He did not care that the Israelites were unimpressed. God made promises and He will keep them. He orders Moses to carry out the request to Pharaoh.

What was Moses' response and how do different translations record this?

In verse 12, Moses is still giving excuses as to why he should not be the one to do this. In the King James versions, the words "uncircumcised lips" are used to describe the faltering speech of Moses. Clumsy, faltering, and unskilled are also used in different translations. Some use the King James versions to question whether Moses had been circumcised as a child. Although it is an interesting debate, it does not alter the commands of God to Moses. Despite his feelings of inadequacy or unworthiness for the task, Moses must obey God.

V14-27

This section records the heritage of Moses and Aaron as Levites, the tribal priests of God.

V28-30

The day arrives when God wants Moses to confront Pharaoh. Moses balks again at how unqualified he is.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 is a continuation of the conversation between God and Moses from chapter 6.

V1-7

What does the phrase "I have made you as God to Pharaoh" mean in verse 1?

This Pharaoh had refused to acknowledge the existence of God so Moses was to function as proxy for God. In turn, Aaron would act as a "prophet of Moses."

Verse 3 is the second example of Pharaoh's heart being hardened. Pharaoh showed his true colors in denying the Jews a few days to worship God. God offered Pharaoh no other options but to act on his own will. This would play into God's plan by allowing God multiple opportunities to show Himself to the Jews and Egyptians.

Just as there are two examples in Genesis of the older brother not receiving the "blessing" (Jacob and Esau and Ephraim and Manasseh), Moses would rise to prominence over his older brother.

V8-13

Moses and Aaron's first encounter with Pharaoh appeared to backfire on them, but God had a reason for this. The next encounters would prove tumultuous for Pharaoh. Just as God had shown Moses, now God was showing Pharaoh a miracle.

How were the men of Egypt able to produce snakes from sticks?

There is much speculation on how the magicians of Egypt were able to pull this trick off. Whether it was some form of sleight of hand or actually "magic" is not made clear. There are some that think that Satan had allowed some form of dark magic to be used by the Egyptians in order to keep the Jews in bondage since God favored Abraham and his offspring. Regardless, God's snake was able to defeat the other snakes. This only pushed Pharaoh further away from God.

V14-21

Although the rod turning into a snake was the first sign to Pharaoh, this next section begins the first plague upon Egypt.

Instead of seeking an audience with Pharaoh through official channels, Moses and Aaron appear before Pharaoh at an opportune moment meeting Pharaoh at the edge of the Nile River after he finishes bathing.

What are some significant reasons for turning the Nile to blood?

Other than the obvious lack of fresh water for drinking and irrigation, the Nile was a large body of water. It would be hard to accomplish this by mere sleight of hand. Another reason is that the Nile was associated with or even represented as an Egyptian god. The God of Israel is displaying His dominion over the Egyptian deities.

There are non-biblical references to the Nile becoming blood. The Ipuwer Papyrus mentions how the Nile turned to blood and became undrinkable.

Verse 19 describes the extent of the plague. Any water that was in the river or even came from the river would be turned to blood. This would leave precious little water elsewhere as the Nile was the primary source of water for this Egyptian capital. Well-owners would suddenly become rich and popular.

V22-25

What was the response of the Egyptian priests?

The magicians of Egypt took some well water and changed it to blood. Again, whether this was sleight of hand trickery, or an actual miracle is not made clear. What is clear is that the magicians did not change the Nile back to water.

Chapter 8

V1-7

This is the second plague of Egypt, the plague of frogs.

Why would God use frogs for a plague?

Just as the Nile was associated with at least one Egyptian god and may have been considered a god itself, the Egyptian goddess Heqet was portrayed with the head of a frog. The Egyptians refrained from killing frogs for this reason. God was showing that He was more powerful than the gods of Egypt, both for the sake of the Jews and the Egyptians.

What was the response of the Egyptian priests?

Just like with the river turning to blood, all the priests could do was produce more frogs. They could not undo what God had done.

V8-15

Pharaoh sees that Egypt is so overrun with frogs that he finally relents and asks Moses to plead to God on behalf of Egypt. Unlike God, Pharaoh would not keep his promise. It is interesting to note that the frogs outside of the Nile died and produced what could almost be considered another plague: the stench of dead frogs.

V16-19

This begins the third plague of Egypt, the plague of gnats or lice.

What's the difference in the presentation of the third plague from the first and second plagues?

The first two plagues were brought on after Moses and Aaron asked Pharaoh to allow the Jews to leave to worship God. The third plague is simply brought about without an audience before Pharaoh. This pattern will hold true (1 and 2 confront Pharaoh, 3 just comes about) for the next 6 plagues.

What was the response of the Egyptian priests?

This plague was of a nature that these magicians could not duplicate. Although, even if they could, it would be difficult to tell since Egypt was infested with gnats. It should also be noted that the priests tried to create their own gnats, not rid the land of the current plague. All these priests could do was make things worse or do nothing. Even the priests are starting to take the God of Moses seriously.

V20-24

This begins the fourth plague of Egypt, the plague of flies.

What is the difference mentioned in this plague compared to the previous plagues?

In verse 22, God says this plague will not touch the land of Goshen, which is where the majority of the Jews lived. The previous plagues all had an effect on the Jews. The Jews would be spared from this plague. This would be a further sign that God was in control and that these weren't just magicians' tricks.

Why would God allow the first three plagues to affect the Jews as well as the Egyptians?

After four hundred years and several regime changes in Egypt, the Jews had become slaves to the leaders of the land. As such, they had adopted the Egyptian culture including their religions. This era of Jews did not know the God of Abraham and Jacob. God was reminding them who He was.

Another side effect of these plagues was that the Egyptians would be unable to worship their gods due to these plagues. Cleanliness was held in high regard by the Egyptians and in order to worship their

deities they had to undergo rigorous cleaning as they dare not approach their gods while being defiled by filth. If the Jews could not worship their God, then the Egyptians would be hindered from worshipping theirs.

V25-32

What is the abomination that Moses speaks of concerning the Jews worshipping God?

The Egyptians considered many animals sacred. The Jews killing cattle or sheep or even birds would be sacrilegious to the Egyptians. Likewise, the Jews did not want to perform their religious rituals in the land of unbelievers.

Pharaoh tries to compromise with Moses and God, but seeing that it would not be suitable, he relents and asks Moses to remove the plague of flies by the next day and he will let the Jews go worship. God removes the plague, but Pharaoh once again goes back on his word.

Chapter 9

V1-7

This begins the fifth plague of Egypt, the plague of diseased livestock.

The pattern of Moses making a request and Pharaoh refusing that request is maintained. God once again distinguishes between Egyptians and Jews by allowing only Egyptian-owned livestock to die. The Egyptians worshipped a god named Hathor who was considered to be a mother-goddess portrayed in the form of a cow. God continued to show His dominance over the Egyptian religious figures.

V8-12

This begins the sixth plague of Egypt, the plague of boils.

With this plague Moses and Aaron act on it in front of Pharaoh, but they do not make the request to allow the Jews to worship as they had previously. This plague was simply brought upon the Egyptians with no warning. The Egyptian god Imhotep was the god of medicine. The Egyptian priests could not remedy themselves against these boils proving once again that the Hebrew God Yahweh was more powerful than the Egyptian gods.

V13-17

God takes this opportunity to inform Pharaoh that everything that is being done is bringing glory to God and humiliation to Egypt. Moses asks Pharaoh again to allow the Jews to worship God and warns that there are still more plagues to come if this is not allowed.

V18-26

This begins the seventh plague of Egypt, the plague of hail.

What is the difference between this plague and the previous plagues?

With the first six plagues, they simply happened and there was nothing the Egyptians could do about it. This time, God provides a warning to Pharaoh and Egypt that what is coming will be devastating and if they wish to avoid death to stay indoors. This would show the grace, truth, and timing of God to the Egyptians. If they ignored God, there would be consequences.

Thunder, lightning, rain, and hail poured over the land of Egypt. But the land of Goshen was spared the hail saving the Jews from the wrath of God against Egypt.

V27-35

Pharaoh says the words of repentance, but repentance is not in his heart. Pharaoh doesn't want to change his ways. He simply wants to be spared the consequences of his actions. Moses knows this and even calls him out on it. Once again, Pharaoh fails to keep his word.

Chapter 10

V1-6

This begins the eighth plague of Egypt, the plague of locusts.

God has already revealed to Moses what His plan is, but here the purpose of the plan starts to be revealed. Verse 2 says that these events are not just to free the Jews, but to be an example of the power of God for generations to come. Neither the Jews nor the Egyptians had heard from God in four hundred years, so this magnificent display served to awaken the people to who God really is.

What is Pharaoh's true sin through all this?

In verse 3, God calls out Pharaoh's real problem, his pride. Pharaoh was so certain that he himself was a god that he refused to believe that Yahweh could out do him.

V7-11

In verse 8, Pharaoh can once again be seen trying to bargain with God. God had no desire to alter His plans. It's not that bargaining with God is wrong, as Abraham did just that in Genesis chapter 18. It's the intention of the bargaining that matters. Abraham was bargaining for mercy and to spare people's lives. Pharaoh is bargaining to save face and show his people that he is equal to God. Pharaoh's servants are pleading with him to relent, but his ego cannot allow the will of God to override his desires.

V12-20

The locust relentlessly and wholly decimate whatever crops are left in Egypt, even taking away the shade of trees and the aroma of flowers. It is unclear if the Jews or the land of Goshen were spared from this plague, but since it is not specifically stated as the previous plagues have done so it is believed that not even the Jews were spared from the ravaging of the locusts.

V21-29

This begins the ninth plague of Egypt, the plague of darkness.

This plague is brought on without warning, most likely in response to Pharaoh's breaking of his word yet again. This plague was directed towards the Egyptians as the Jews were allowed light in their dwellings. The passage concerning this plague is vague in many regards. Many scholars believe there is an aspect of the supernatural involved because of the wording in verse 21. A darkness that can be *felt* would be something very supernatural. It is also unclear of how the Jews had light in their dwelling. Whether this was a patch of sunlight that shone directly on the land of Goshen, or if God's light shone in each dwelling, or if God simply allowed lanterns to function for the Jews but not for the Egyptians is unclear.

This plague would speak against the Egyptian gods Ra, the sun god and Nut, the sky goddess. God continued taking direct aim at the Egyptian religions.

Pharaoh still wants to compromise with God instead of simply obeying. His pride will not let him admit that God is greater. When a compromise can't be reached, Pharaoh sends Moses and Aaron away with the warning to not return. Pharaoh is done trying to make an example of these two and now threatens death if they appear before him again. Instead of going away in fear, Moses lets Pharaoh know that he is correct. God is done with Pharaoh, as well. The next chapter is the conclusion to the conversation between Moses and Pharaoh.

Chapter 11

V1-3

This begins the tenth and final plague of Egypt, the plague of death.

God told Moses that the firstborn of Pharaoh would die in chapter 4:23. In this passage, God tells Moses what is coming and that His warning in chapter 4 is about to happen. Pharaoh won't just let the Jews leave; he will order them to go.

At this point, Pharaoh is the only one who doesn't want the Jews to leave. Every Egyptian up to the servants of Pharaoh now feared and respected the God of Israel. The Egyptians were offering up their wealth so that the Hebrew God would stop torturing their land. This acted as the past wages for the slavery of the Jews.

V4-8

This section is God whispering in Moses' ear while he and Aaron still stand before Pharaoh. Pharaoh has told them that the next time he sees them he will have them killed. God wants to ensure that Pharaoh knows what is coming next before Moses and Aaron depart.

For anyone to die would be meaningful, but for the first born to die held a special significance in this culture. The first born represented the next head-of-household, the major holder of the inheritance, and was considered the line that would continue the fathers' name. This is also why the stories of Jacob and Esau and the blessing upon the sons of Joseph by Jacob are important, which gave the rights of the first born to the younger sibling. For every first-born child to die would discontinue the lawful lineage of every household.

What does the phrase, "Against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue," mean in verse 7?

When Moses and Aaron first approached Pharaoh with the request of letting the Jews go to worship God, Pharaoh turned it around on them. He started to abuse the Jews even more and claimed that it was the fault of Moses and Aaron. God is telling Pharaoh that everyone will know that these plagues are the result of his arrogance. All the blame will fall on him for not obeying God.

V9-10

The last plague differs from the previous nine in many ways. In these closing verses of the chapter, Moses completes the warning of what is to come with no demands. It is simply stated that death is coming. The previous plagues were all irritants or inconveniences. At worst, they were hinderances to livelihood. Only the plague of hail threatened any death. This last plague would take lives. This plague also breaks the pattern of the "rule of 3" from the previous nine plagues. Plagues 1 and 2 involved

coming to Pharaoh, asking to be let go, and then repercussions from not obeying while plague 3 came without warning or bargaining. The tenth plague came with a warning, but no request.

Chapter 12

V1-13

What is the significance of God telling the Jews to mark their calendar in verse 2?

God just rearranged the Jewish calendar, and the new year starts in the month with Passover. This event was so important that it would be commemorated annually as the Jewish new year celebration, the beginning of their salvation. Just as Christmas is to Christians, so is Passover to Jews.

What is the significance of Moses and Aaron speaking to all the Jews in verse 3?

This is the first occurrence of the terminology used to describe a church. The congregation of the Jews has now been formed in a religious sense, as well as a genealogical sense.

The ritual of Passover:

1. Passover would begin on the 10th day of the first month.
2. Each family or household would choose a spotless lamb and that lamb would live with that family for 4 days.
3. On the 14th day of the month, the lamb would be slaughtered. Each family would sacrifice their lamb at midnight in what would be a mass, simultaneous slaughter. No bones could be broken during the sacrifice (verse 46).
4. The blood of the lamb will be put on the doorframes of each entryway.
5. The lamb would then be cooked and served with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. The meal must be eaten quickly.
6. Whatever remained of the lamb would be burned in the fire by morning.
7. Everyone must eat while fully dressed and ready to leave at a moment's notice.

Why instruct families to have the lamb live with them for 4 days?

For the Jews, cattle, sheep, and goats were meant to be food and were not regarded as much else. Bringing a lamb into the household would turn it into something personal, similar to a pet. This would make the sacrifice more meaningful and even sorrowful. The accompanying herbs would certainly make the meal bitter and difficult to swallow.

The Passover promise was not aimed at just Jews, it was for everyone. If anyone, Jew or Egyptian, marked their doorframes with the blood of a lamb, they would be spared. If anyone, Jew, Egyptian, or otherwise *didn't* perform the Passover ritual, they were subject to the plague of the death of the firstborn.

V14-20

This passage forms the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This feast begins with the feast of the Passover, essentially combining the 2 celebrations.

What is the purpose of the Feast of Unleavened Bread?

The first Passover was to happen so quickly that there would be no time for the yeast to rise in the dough. The Jews were to still eat and even take bread with them, but time was of the essence in God's plan. This was to be remembered in an annual celebration. A small bit of yeast can have an effect on a large lump of dough just as even one small sin can affect our relationship with God.

V21-28

These verses recall Moses explaining to the Jewish leadership on what to do. Not just for this Passover, but for all the commemorative Passover feasts to follow. Passover would be a remembrance of the defeat of an enemy and the deliverance to a new life. This would be the greatest deliverance of the Jews until the arrival of the Messiah.

V29-30

The final plague is dealt in this passage. This plague would speak directly against 2 Egyptian deities. The Egyptian god Osiris was the "giver of life." The God of Israel would take that life away. The second deity was the Pharaoh himself, thought to be a god in human form. Pharaoh was rendered useless for the 10th time and not able to save any of the first-born Egyptians. Not even his own son.

V31-39

What is Pharaoh's response to this plague?

Not only does Pharaoh command the Israelites to leave, just as God promised Moses would happen, but he then asks Moses to have God bless him, as well. Pharaoh had finally realized that the Hebrew God was greater than all and humbled himself before Yahweh.

Pharaoh and the whole of the Egyptians urged the Jews to leave immediately. The Jews were ready to leave, taking their belongings, the payments given to them by the Egyptians, and their food, including the bread which had no time to rise.

What does the phrase, "...a mixed multitude..." mean in verse 38?

Some of those that left with the Jews were not born Jews. There apparently were some Egyptians and perhaps other foreigners that went with them that saw the work of the Hebrew God and were convinced to follow. This begs the question, "What does it mean to be a Jew?"

What are the requirements for being Jewish?

The lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is where the covenant with God is established, but this does not exclude others from joining in the covenant. The Jews are used as the example to the world of what it takes for a relationship with God. This does not mean that others cannot join in that covenant. If others wanted to worship Yahweh, the God of the Jews, they simply needed to adhere to the laws of the covenant.

V40-51

In verses 40-41, Moses records that the Jews had left Egypt on the 430th anniversary of the arrival of Israel/Jacob in Egypt. This timing offered more proof that God was in control.

God establishes the rules for the Passover festival with Moses and the Jews. This establishes the Passover tradition that has been maintained for thousands of years. With the regulations set in place, the Jews begin their long journey out of Egypt.

Chapter 13

V1-2

What is the significance of setting aside the firstborn of man and animals for God?

There are a number of reasons why the separation of the firstborn would be important. First, the firstborn held a crucial role culturally. The firstborn was heir to the head-of-household, the firstborn represented the family in politics and religion, and would be responsible for maintaining a respectful family name for the next generation. Second, Israel is considered the “firstborn” of God since they are God’s chosen people. This act of separation would acknowledge and respect that fact. Third, the Passover spared the firstborn of any house that was marked with blood. As such, the firstborn children were allowed to live instead of being killed with those that didn’t bear the mark. The living firstborn children still belonged to God. They were just not killed in the tenth plague.

V3-10

This passage establishes the feast of Unleavened Bread. It’s not just a one-time celebration, it’s a feast to be passed down to all future generations in remembrance of who God is and what He’s done. The first days are spent in somber recollection of the slavery of the Jews. The seventh day is a celebratory feast of deliverance.

Verse 9 is one of several passages used by the Jews to institute the practice of wearing phylacteries, or small boxes holding strips of paper with scripture written on them. These are then held to the forehead or hand with leather straps.

V11-16

This passage is setting the stage for future Jewish customs. Notice that verse 11 says that this practice shall not be instituted until the arrival of the Jews into the promised land. Every firstborn animal would become a sacrifice. Every firstborn male human would be bought with an offering to God. This is another ritual of commemoration of the tenth plague.

V17-22

This passage begins the journey of the Jews out of Egypt.

The most direct way from Egypt to Canaan was through the land of the Philistines. Why would God not want the Jews to travel this route?

According to historians, this was a common coastal route that also contained many Egyptian military outposts. The longer road would be less traveled and less guarded. Being away from a trade route would also force the Jews to rely on God alone rather than man for their provisions.

Moses also fulfills the promise to his ancestors to take the remains of Joseph out of Egypt (Genesis 50:25).

God ensures that His people are aware of His presence in this journey. He appears as a cloud by day, in order to provide both direction and shade from the desert sun, and as fire by night in order to provide direction and light.

Chapter 14

V1-4

What does this passage say about God's plan to save Israel?

The route that the Jews were taking out of Egypt looked to be one of a trail guide that is lost. They didn't take the main road to Canaan. They didn't take a direct path. They spent days walking to and then camped at the shores of the sea where there was no escape from danger. This would influence the Egyptians in their upcoming decisions as surely the God of Israel must have left the Jews if they are wandering the desert so erratically.

V5-9

What other influences would make the Pharaoh decide to pursue the Israelites?

This passage describes how the Pharaoh changed his mind once again and decided that the Israelites were not going to leave Egypt. What is not stated is what caused him to change his mind. The Israelites were a source of revenue for the Egyptians, just like slavery in the American south before the Civil War. Free labor means large profit margins. Without the Israelites, the Egyptians not only lost their free labor, but now they had to do the labor themselves. This meant lost time, lost money, and an overwhelming amount of hard labor since there were a large number of Israelites performing the jobs that the Egyptians didn't want to do. Once the Pharaoh saw that the Jews appeared to be aimlessly wandering the desert, he decided to reclaim his slaves and put things back the way they were.

Early translations of verse 6 say something to the effect that Pharaoh made his chariot ready. The original Hebrew is more properly translated as he had his personal army of chariots ready. This was not a single chariot. This was the Pharaoh's elite chariot battalion.

V10-12

Even after ten plagues that handily defeated Pharaoh including the deaths of the firstborn sons, the Jews lost faith in God and were ready to give up and return to Egypt at the site of the army bearing down on them. In verse 4, God states that He wants the Egyptians to know that He is God. But this next battle would also ensure that the Israelites would know who God is, as well.

V13-18

What is Moses' response to the Israelites?

Despite the lack of faith shown by the Jews, Moses' faith still held strong. He didn't know what God had planned, but he trusted God to save them.

What is God's response to Moses?

Moses did the right thing in going before God in prayer. Some translations of verse 15 can be seen as God rebuking Moses to act instead of praying, but God is simply saying it is time to act. Prayer can be done along the way. God then reveals His plan to Moses. All Moses has to do is trust in God and lift up his staff.

V19-22

This passage contains more than one miracle. First, the Jews were camped along the shore of a large body of water with no way to escape the Egyptians. In clear sight of both Jews and Egyptians, God

comes between the two parties and keeps the Egyptian army at bay. This went on through the day and night. Moses raises his staff, the wind blows, and the sea is parted. The Jews make their escape on dry ground while the Egyptians are held back by the Cloud of God.

Which body of water is this that the Jews escape through?

Although traditionally the Jews fled Egypt through the Red Sea, it is not clearly known which body of water is indicated here. The original Hebrew phrase for this lake is translated as “Reed Sea,” not “Red Sea.” There is much speculation by educated scholars on where the Jews would have entered the Wilderness of Shur from (see 15:22) including the Red Sea, but because the geography of this area can change abruptly and often depending on rainfall and flooding, there is no way to be certain which body of water is being discussed.

Did the parting of the sea actually happen?

It is hard for many, including Christians, to believe in miracles of the Bible. These miracles usually have no explanation and seem impossible, which is what makes them miraculous. But there is evidence to support the plausibility of this scenario. An LA Times article from March of 1992 describes a computer simulation of sustained strong winds in the right geographic circumstances dividing water for over a mile and dropping the water line inside the division more than ten feet essentially parting a body of water. Even for those that don’t believe in God or the Bible, this miracle is not farfetched.

V23-31

Not only did God put Himself between the Israelites and the Egyptians, but He made travel difficult for Pharaoh’s army. One specific way was to give the chariots mechanical trouble. The Egyptians were being reminded of the plagues and their discouragement began to shine through. It is interesting to note that there is no indication of how the author knew the thoughts of the Egyptians or even knew of the chariot wheels falling off. Either this is pure speculation on the author’s part or God filled in Moses on the particulars of His plan.

Once the Jews had reached the other side of the lake or sea, God instructed Moses to stretch out his hand. Again, all Moses had to do was trust and wave his arm about. God didn’t need Moses to do this. God wanted Moses to have faith and obedience. This obedience was rewarded with the complete and utter destruction of the Egyptian army.

It is not specified in this passage how many soldiers or chariots were destroyed. It simply says that all that followed the Jews into the sea perished. It is generally believed that Pharaoh survived, but most if not all his elite chariot-men drowned. The Jews watched the waters fall on the Egyptians and were in awe when their bodies washed up on shore. The Israelites would never be under the rule of the Egyptians again.

Chapter 15

V1-18

The first half of this chapter is what is considered the first worship song recorded in the Bible. It is broken into five verses or stanzas.

1. Verses 1-5 are the first stanza

2. Verses 6-10 are the second stanza
3. Verses 11-13 are the third stanza
4. Verses 14-16 are the fourth stanza
5. Verses 17-18 are the fifth stanza

Things to note about this passage:

- The opening line is used by David in the Psalms at least three times
- Jewish tradition states that this song was spontaneously sung by the Jews after they witnessed the Egyptian army swallowed by the sea
- This song gives all praise to God and not man. "I will sing to the Lord," "He has triumphed," "The Lord is my strength," "He has become my salvation," etc.
- It is most likely that one person began singing and the remainder of the Jews echoed back the words in unison, but this is not certain.
- Verses 8 and 10 both mention the breath of God in some form. This would indicate that the parting of the sea was accompanied by strong winds.
- The fourth stanza talks of the Jews' faith in God to overcome adversaries in the future. The defeat of the Egyptians would be news that would quickly spread throughout the region.

V19-21

This short passage is a recap of the previous events. It also introduces the reader to the name of Aaron and Moses' sister, Miriam. Verse 20 calls Miriam a prophetess but gives no other details on what that means. She leads the women of the Jews in the same song found in the previous passage.

V22-27

For all the victory of the Jews and defeat of the Egyptians, it only took three days of wandering in the desert for the complaints to start. When the only pool of water that was found turned out to be bitter, the Jews turned to Moses for answers. God proves Himself faithful once again.

How does God remedy the lack of water for the Jews and why in this manner?

God tells Moses to throw a tree into the pool of water. What happens next is not without explanation. A study was done that concluded that the sap in the tree soaked up mineral content and made the water drinkable. It has even been speculated that the remaining magnesium and calcium in the water would act as a laxative to clean out the digestive tracts of the Jews which would cleanse them of common Egyptian ailments. The Egyptian diet often caused amoebic dysentery and bilharzia. Furthermore, magnesium and calcium are the primary ingredients in dolomite, a performance enhancing drug used in hot weather conditions. The Jews could certainly use this in their current climate. The creator knows exactly what His creation needs to survive.

Chapter 16

V1-8

What is the wilderness of Sin mentioned in verse 1?

In this case, it is just a name, not an evil place where sin is prevalent. It is the vast desert between Elim and Sinai.

This passage marks exactly one month since the Jews left Egypt. In just that one month, the Jews found reason to grumble against the God that had produced the plagues of Egypt and parted the sea for them. They would rather be slaves in Egypt than starve or trust God.

But God is faithful. Instead of rebuking the complainers, He miraculously provides food for them. There were a couple of caveats to this miracle bread. One, the people still had to gather it for themselves and measure it appropriately. God provided enough food for everyone equally. Two, they were not to store the bread. They were to eat it immediately that day and trust that God would provide for them the following day.

V9-21

In this passage, God provides meat in the form of quail in the evenings and “bread” in the mornings. It has been recorded that quail use the Sinai Peninsula to migrate between Arabia and Europe. Quail would be easy to catch if they are tired from their migration.

What is this bread?

It is unclear what this substance actually is. Even the Jews didn’t recognize it as something edible until Moses told them this is what God provided. The Bible describes it as roughly the same size as a sesame seed, pearly in color, and it melted in daylight. There is an Arabian term, “mann,” which describes a sugary globule that comes from the bark of a tree when the bark is punctured by insects, but this is rare and certainly would be a miracle to find enough to feed millions of people every day. According to extremely ancient Jewish tradition, manna had some unique properties:

- Manna could be ground up and used for baking, even creating cakes that tasted of pastries with oil (Numbers 11:8).
- Manna is said to have tasted like whatever the consumer was thinking of at the time. For the young it tasted like milk or bread, for the older it tasted like honey or barley steeped in oil and honey.
- Manna was supposedly bitter to the Gentile or unclean.
- Manna was so small that it would have to be swept up with a broom to be collected. Jewish legend says that God would provide a wind to blow away the dust, rain to clean the ground, and then the manna would rain down and be gathered with no dirt to clean off.

Why would God provide food to the Jews in this manner?

Walking through the desert can be a tedious task. Having the Jews gather food in the morning and birds in the evening provided a way to break the monotony, as well as give the Jews a work ethic to live by. It also taught them to obey and trust in God.

What is an omer (verse 17)?

There is no clear way to know exactly how much an omer was in the time of Moses. It is believed to be close to a gallon later in the Old Testament, but it could be more or less than that during the time of Moses. Most scholars believe it was roughly a cup full.

V22-30

Not only was God instilling a work ethic in the Jews with this manner of provision, but He was also teaching them to observe the Sabbath. In Egypt, there was almost certainly no such thing as a day off. God was providing rest for His children in this manner.

V31-36

The sustenance was given the name manna which translates to “what is that?” This was the best and most accurate name the Jews could come up with. A portion of this manna was kept as a reminder of what God provided His people in the desert. This cup of manna would later be placed in the ark of the covenant.

Chapter 17

V1-7

This chapter and the chapter prior both record events in the Wilderness of Sin. It should be noted that the book of Numbers records a more complete journey, but Exodus only records monumental events and where they took place.

Once again, the Jews are quick to forget the provisions of God. Instead of praying and asking God for water, they complain to Moses in the most dramatic of fashions.

Moses cries out to God not for water, but for patience from his fellow Israelites. Moses does what the people should have done in the first place. God hears and replies.

What are the parallels between Moses striking the rock for water and the crucifixion of Jesus?

Many commentators point out that the rod of Moses represented the law of God. When the rod (the law) struck the rock (Jesus), life-giving water (blood of Christ) poured out for all to receive. The Apostle Paul even references this event in 1 Corinthians 10:4.

Moses names the location of this miracle, “Is the Lord not among us?” This would be a reminder to the Jews of their own doubt and God’s faithfulness.

V8-16

Who are the Amalekites and why would they attack the Jews?

Exodus does not go into great detail on the Amalekites or what provoked the attack. Deuteronomy 25:17-18 says that the Amalekites attacked the rear of the Israelite column and took the slow and weak first, so this attack appears to be unprovoked. The Amalekites are the descendants of Esau, kin to the Jews, the offspring of Jacob. It is suspected that the Amalekites were inhabiting the land of Canaan and knew that the line of Jacob was promised Canaan as an inheritance. In order to fend off the legal claim, the Amalekites decided to go to war and hopefully annihilate the Jews before they arrived. The Amalekites would be the first of many to attack the Jewish nation. Haman from the book of Esther was said to be an Amalekite.

This passage is the first mention of Joshua. He will become a prevalent figure in Exodus and in helping the Jews establish themselves as a legitimate social group. Joshua led the Israelite troops, such as they were, into battle against the Amalekites. Once again, God shows who He is by having Moses pray over the battle. With help from Aaron and Hur, the battle is won by the obedience of Moses. Moses faithfully

records this event and names the location after the Lord God to remind them that this battle was won by faith and trust in God.

Chapter 18

V1-12

This passage is an indicator of how far the news of the defeat of Egypt spread. Jethro stayed in his homeland when Moses left him, but the entire region was aware of how the God of Israel dealt with the Egyptians.

Another vague reference from this chapter is that at some point prior to the Israelites wandering through the Wilderness of Sin, Moses sent his family back to Jethro. It is not made clear when this took place, but Moses is now reunited with his wife and children.

This section also shows how much Moses valued Jethro as both a father-in-law and a priest. Moses was an educated man taught as royalty among the Egyptians. It is speculated that Jethro taught him about God and the covenant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

V13-27

In this passage it is made evident that Moses has become a true leader of the Israelites as they look to him to settle any legal disputes. This passage also indicates the wisdom and leadership of Jethro as he instructs his son-in-law on how to delegate the responsibilities of leadership.

Moses was not to just pick any men to judge legal matters. There were criteria to be met.

- Able men (men that have already established some leadership and respect among their peers)
- Men who fear God
- Men who are honest
- Men who want justice

This establishment of “judges” among the Israelites would set a hierarchy of leaders and even good and fast communication among the people that would benefit all, not just Moses.

Chapter 19

V1-9

This chapter begins the record of the Jews in the Wilderness of Sinai. More than 57 chapters of the Bible take place during this year of encampment.

What does the phrase, “I carried you on eagles’ wings” mean in verse 4?

This is a metaphor meaning steady, protective deliverance. An eagle is one of the few birds that will carry their young on their back rather than in their claws so whatever predator is looking at baby eagles will have to get through the mother first.

God tells Moses and the Israelites that they are to be an example to the world of what a relationship with God can look like. Their destiny is to be God’s people and to make God known throughout the world.

V10-17

Just as in the first section of chapter 3, God asks for respect on the place where He settles. There are rules that need to be followed when being this close to a Holy God.

What is the purpose of men refraining from sexual relations in verse 15?

This is the only record of this particular request in all the Bible. It is believed that God was asking for a form of fasting on behalf of the Israelites. God had not been in the presence of humans this closely since the time of Jacob. Only Moses had been this close to God since then. And now God had settled on a mountain in the presence of the entire Jewish population. This request, as well as the other requirements were a form of respect in the presence of God.

V18-25

In this passage, God calls Moses up into His presence only to send him back down again. God is reminding the Jews that they must respect the boundaries and rules that are set for this visitation.

Why could only Moses and Aaron go up the mountain and no one else?

The holiness of God is such that humans, as the creation of God, have sinned and are separated from God so much that it is impossible to be in the presence of God. Jacob is the last human to have come in some form of contact with God in over 400 years. Even Moses has not looked at or touched God, only communed with the presence of God. The wages of sin is death. For an unholy person to be in the presence of a Holy God would require a sacrifice.

Chapter 20

V1-17

In this passage, God gives Moses the Ten Commandments.

1. You shall have no other gods before Me. (v2-3)
2. You shall not make idols or graven images. (v4-6)
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain. (v7)
4. Keep the Sabbath holy. (v8-11)
5. Honor your father and mother. (v12)
6. You shall not murder. (v13)
7. You shall not commit adultery. (v14)
8. You shall not steal. (v15)
9. You shall not lie. (v16)
10. You shall not covet. (v17)

Although this is the first time the Ten Commandments are spelled out in a formal context, it is believed that many of these laws had already been established since before the time of Noah. It is important to note that this is a God-based moral code, not a set of national or local laws. The emphasis is to put God first while putting the needs and respect of others before selfish desires. The first four commandments focus on how to respect and honor God. The remaining six commandments show respect and honor to our fellow man.

The first two commandments address the current state of the Jews after their departure from Egypt. The Egyptians, as many other cultures of their day, worshipped many gods. This practice had crept into the Jewish culture. God is cleansing His people of this with the first and second rules.

What does the phrase, "...visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me..." mean in the second commandment?

There are many who mistakenly take this to mean that the sins of the father will be visited on their offspring. This is only partially correct. If the offspring follow in their fathers' footsteps, then the consequences will continue, but if the children seek and love God, then those consequences will be revoked.

Is the fourth commandment still relevant under the New Covenant?

There is much debate surrounding this commandment. Most Christians observe Sunday as a Holy Day in remembrance of the day of Jesus' resurrection in place of the Jewish sabbath (Friday evening through Saturday evening). Hebrews 4:9-11 addresses the completion of the purpose of the Sabbath with the death and resurrection of the Christ. Colossians 2:16-17 and Galatians 4:9-11 are also often used to point out the futility of observing a calendar-based Sabbath. There are different perspectives on this subject, and it would be hard to fault anyone for adhering to any particular belief.

V18-21

God's presence on the mountain released so much of a storm that the people were afraid to go near it. They were scared of the power of God. Instead, they relied upon Moses to act as a mediator between them and God. Moses' response to their fear reveals a lesson that God wants His people to learn. God is sovereign and is above all that humanity knows, both physically and spiritually.

What made Moses qualified to approach God when all others were afraid to do so?

The easy answer is that Moses wasn't qualified to do anything of this manner. Moses had learned early on that he had been forgiven by God. Moses was a murderer, a doubter, and had even been threatened with death for the lack of circumcising his family (Exodus 4:24-26). Only grace allowed him to draw near to God.

V22-26

In the early part of this passage, God reiterates the first two commandments. It is not made clear why God did this, but speculation is that these are the most important commandments of God. It's also believed that God knew the sins that His people would commit shortly after this event and there would be no excuse for their behavior. This would explain the last half of this passage as God reveals how to atone for sins that are made. Knowing that these commandments would be difficult for humanity to adhere to, God offers a path of redemption through sacrifices on an altar.

Why did God only require an altar made of stone or earth as opposed to an elaborate, ornate altar?

God's creation was just that: His creation. He did not need what humans considered to be a sign of wealth or beauty.

The Latin word for altar is "altus," meaning "high" or "elevated." The Hebrew word for altar is "mizbach," which loosely translated means a place where something is killed.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 through chapter 23 contains a wide variety of laws and punishments for breaking those laws. These are supplements to the ten commandments found in chapter 20.

V1-6

Different translations use different terms in verse 2, with slave and servant being the most prevalent among them. The most accurate word is slave, but the Bible is not responsible for slavery or defining slavery. Slavery was already a common practice, as seen by Joseph in the last chapters of Genesis. The Bible is responsible for putting limits on slavery, not introducing slavery. The terms introduced here would be the basis for indentured servitude.

This passage mentions the obtaining of a “slave wife” for the indentured servant. It is not stated here, but ancient Jewish law held the same term limits in place for women and children as it did for men.

This law also clarifies the desire of the slave to remain a servant for life. This indicates that, at least for the Old Testament Jews, a servant/master relationship was not one of harsh brutality as it was in the early American south.

V7-11

This passage is often mistaken as having a double standard for men and women, but this is not the case. This is not a law regarding the servitude of women, but regarding their intention of marrying into another family. There is even a provision for the female that her master must tend to her needs, or he forfeits his right to her as a wife and she is to be treated as a daughter instead.

V12-14

This is a reiteration of the capital punishment law that God gave Noah in Genesis 9:6. Premeditated murder is punishable by death. God is just and there are consequences for sin.

What is meant when God provides a place where one could flee in verse 13?

God is a just God, but the human judges may or may not be just. In Numbers 35 and Joshua 20, more detail is given to where these cities are and what they are for. If someone is accused of murder, they can seek refuge in a designated city until their trial to determine if they actually committed murder or if the death was an accident. Even though they couldn't seek refuge at God's altar, there was still someplace to seek justice.

V15-17

This passage provides three more instances where capital punishment was applicable. The striking of one's parents, kidnapping someone, and even cursing (threatening with the intent of killing) one's parents all were worthy of death.

V18-21

This passage provides for compensation for lost time, wages, and even the ability to work.

V22-25

In the event of an injury to a pregnant woman, any subsequent injuries to the child may be subject to compensation.

V26-27

These verses are meant to keep slaves or indentured servants from being harmed. A slave-owner was not to treat their servants with disregard. If a master was mean or cruel, then the slave was to be set free. This command would be counter-cultural for its day.

V28-32

This passage discusses death caused by an animal. If the owner had no reason to believe an animal was dangerous, then the owner would not be found at fault. If the animal had a history of violence, then the animal and the owner were both at fault.

Why would the owner not be able to profit from the death of an animal that had killed a human (verse 28)?

Death was not to be taken lightly. If someone died, even as an accidental death by an animal, there should be no one that makes a profit from it.

V33-36

This passage discusses property damage and compensation for negligence.

Chapter 22

V1-4

This passage discusses the terms for punishment concerning theft. Notice that in these instructions jail time is not required but restoration and payment of penalties are.

Why would the protection of property be allowed even up to lethal force at night, but not during the day?

In this era and culture, the daylight hours were filled with activity making it almost impossible for a stranger to go unnoticed. Every minute of light was spent accomplishing something so that when night arrived, everyone was so tired that most members of the household were fast asleep. Only people with ill intent were active during the dark hours. This is where the term, "...like a thief in the night..." comes from.

V5-6

This section provides penalties for negligence and damage to property.

V7-15

God even saw fit to provide laws for how to deal with loss or negligence while safeguarding someone else's property.

V16-17

God gives strict instructions concerning premarital sex.

V18-20

These three individual verses are all instances of crimes worthy of capital punishment including witchcraft, bestiality, and sacrifices to any god other than The God.

V21-24

God gives distinct instructions on how to treat others. Foreigners, widows, and orphans were all often overlooked in the world at this time. God wanted to set His people apart with compassion.

V25-27

These verses discuss loans and interest. There is some verbiage in the Hebrew that could indicate that this is aimed at “unlawful interest” which would not include *all* loans. Regardless of the translational disputes, the consensus is that it is wrong to charge people interest who are seeking money to right their own lives. Even though it wouldn’t be considered a handout and it was expected that the money would be returned at some point in the future, a loan for the purpose of well-being was not to be charged interest.

V28

The Ten Commandments already made blaspheming God a sin, but this verse goes so far as to include authority figures.

V29-31

The last verses of this chapter concern the method of honoring God.

Chapter 23

V1-3

This passage falls in line with the ninth commandment but adds an extra sentiment. Allowing a lie to circulate without doing anything to negate it is the same as perpetuating the lie.

What does verse 3 mean when it says not to show partiality to the poor?

The wording can be confusing, especially for older translations. This does not mean that one should not show kindness or mercy to the poor, but that compassion should not persuade anyone to rule in favor of someone due to their circumstances. Justice must be done regardless of health, age, or finances.

V4-9

These verses continue with the expansion of the ninth commandment concerning truth, justice, and kindness.

What is the purpose of these verses?

It is easy to be kind to a friend or family member. It is not so easy to be kind to someone when bearing a grudge. Showing kindness to strangers and even enemies would be very counter-cultural for this time period.

Verse 7 is often used as a support for the pro-life movement as the innocent used here would include children.

V10-13

The number seven is taking a prominent place in Exodus as not only are indentured servants to be freed on the seventh year (chapter 21), but now even the ground gets a rest on the seventh year. God also reiterates the fourth commandment in this section on keeping the seventh day holy for even the sake of the animals.

V14-17

This section mentions three feasts to be celebrated throughout the year, the first being the Feast of Unleavened Bread which has been discussed in earlier details. The Feast of Harvest and the Feast of Ingathering will be discussed in Leviticus.

V18-19

These verses warn the Jews not to skimp on their sacrifices or cut corners. Serving the Passover Lamb with leaven bread would be wrong, as well as holding some of the sacrifice back for later. The fat of the lamb was considered the best portion and must be offered wholly to God.

What does the phrase, “you shall not boil a young kid in its mother’s milk” mean?

This is actually a reference to a common pagan ritual and was not to be incorporated into the offerings to God.

V20-26

Who is the angel mentioned in verse 20?

This angel was not mentioned by name, but how God defines this angel in verses 20-21 is the revealing factor. This is a prediction of the coming Messiah.

God is giving the Israelites a warning that the land of Canaan which they will be entering is filled with a depraved pagan society. The Jews are not to imitate this culture in any way.

V27-33

God promises the Jews that He will go before them into Canaan and will use various methods to drive out the current inhabitants of the land. But He will not drive them out all at once. God defined the boundaries of the Jewish inheritance and warned them again that falling into foreign cultures would be a snare to them.

Chapter 24

V1-8

The previous three chapters were all given to Moses alone. Now, God is allowing more than just Moses to come near. However, the people knew that God was present due to the storm on the mountain top which caused them to be afraid.

Moses spoke the words of the law to the people, then he wrote everything down to keep on record.

An official priesthood had not been established yet, so the young men brought to assist with the sacrifices were brought forward out of practicality (the need for strength in handling livestock), not a sense of religious duty.

What is the Book of the Covenant mentioned in verse 7?

Most scholars believe that this is a reference to the newly-written-down document which is recorded in Exodus 20-23. There are a few that argue that this may be a record of the line of Abraham through Joseph that records God’s promises to Abraham’s line. Either way, this book contained promises from God.

V9-11

This is a real-life encounter with God witnessed by more than 70 people. Many compare this to visions by Isaiah (Isaiah 1) or Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:22-26) or even John in his Revelation (Revelation 4:6). They were in the presence of God, they ate and drank with God, but they were not close enough to be touched by God.

V12-18

God calls Moses up to the top of the mountain in His presence so that He may provide Moses with stone tablets, the Ten Commandments. The bulk of the Jews were at the foot of the mountain, seventy-two men came up on the mountain. Joshua followed Moses up the mountain even further, and then Moses proceeded higher up the mountain to be alone with God. Moses waited six days. Finally, on the seventh day, God called Moses into His presence.

Chapter 25

V1-9

What is the criterion for presenting an offering to God for use in the sanctuary?

God had already provided riches to the Jews by way of the Egyptians giving them “back pay” for their labor. Now God was simply asking for some of it back to provide a means of communion between the Jews and Himself. His only requirement was that the giver provides their gift willingly.

What is the significance of the colors of thread to be used?

In this period, colored thread was an extravagance. Blue dye came from a shellfish, purple dye came from the murex snail, and red dye came from the dried eggs and bodies of the coccus ilicis worm.

Where did the fine linen come from?

The Hebrew word used here for linen is translated from an Egyptian word. The Egyptians and subsequently the Jews were the finest makers of linen in the world at the time.

The goat hair and ram skins described here may seem harsh and even uncomfortable by modern standards, but the goat hair was cut so finely that it resembled felt more than a coarse wool. The ram skins when treated and cured properly would be a fine leather, often softer and better looking than cow leather.

What word is used in verse 5 to describe the leather to be used other than ram skin?

Early translations including the King James Version of the Bible use the term “badger skin” here. Modern translations vary on the descriptions, but the Hebrew word is more closely translated as sea-cow skin or manatee leather.

What is the significance of Acacia wood?

Acacia wood is stronger and darker than oak. It is so thick that insects and other animals didn’t bother trying to penetrate it, so it was usually found to be very solid. It is also likely that Acacia wood was plentiful in Egypt and the Arabian Desert.

The word “tabernacle” appears here for the first time. This term can be found in the Old Testament over 130 times. The original Hebrew word is “miskan” and is a derivative of the word “sakan” which means “to dwell.”

V10-22

In this passage, we see the word “ark” for the third time in the Old Testament. The word ark means box and was an apt description of Noah’s dwelling while the world was flooded (Genesis 6-9). This word can be found again at the beginning of Exodus to describe the contraption that Moses’ mother set him afloat in. It is now used for the first time as a box that will be built without the intention of floating.

Once the ark was completed, it could not be touched by man. That’s why the ark was to have separate carrying poles made for it. These poles would never leave the ark, but they were not a permanent fixture, either.

Some translations differ on the verbiage of verse 17. Atonement Cover, the place of atonement, and Mercy Seat are all used interchangeably to translate the original Hebrew here. The idea presented here is that the two angels sculpted on the lid of the ark were bowing before and presenting God to the audience. God would appear above the place between the two angels above the stone tablets containing the soon-to-come ten commandments.

V23-30

The table of showbread was built with the same materials as the ark. This table was used to represent a meal or dinner between God and the high priest. This table was a symbol of fellowship between God and man.

V31-40

The lampstand would be used inside the tent, or tabernacle since it would be completely enclosed and dark. This would be the source of light during the communion between God and man.

Chapter 26

V1-6

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxFQ7NT35WE>

This chapter describes the tabernacle that the items from the previous chapter would be setup in. The cherubim on the curtain could only be seen from the inside of the tabernacle. With the angels on the curtains and the angels on the lid of the ark, this would resemble Heaven where God’s host of angels surrounded Him.

V7-14

The goat-hair curtain would be most likely be made from long haired goats, often black or dark in color. Goat’s hair was often used in making tents during this era. This curtain was longer than the other curtains and would extend over the back of the tabernacle.

The ram skin was a fine leather and would be a solid curtain, especially when dyed red. The badger or sea-cow curtain would be water-resistant.

V15-30

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0sJQAbHb00>

This section provides the schematic for the framework which would hold up the curtains. It would be heavy and elaborate in its materials.

V31-37

This passage describes the curtain used for the Holy of Holies, the place where the Ark of the Covenant would reside, and God would appear. According to Jewish tradition, this curtain was four fingers thick to ensure that no one could accidentally gaze upon the face of God. More cherubim would appear on this curtain.

The arrangement of the ark, the lamp, and the table are defined. The curtain for the entrance is also specified here.

Chapter 27

V1-8

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTj2H-Ut01A>

Although other sacrifices had been made prior to this time, this is the first time an altar was constructed for such a purpose. This is the first altar of the Jews and would remain the only altar for generations to come.

Why is the altar made of bronze and not gold?

Bronze would be able to withstand high temperatures which would be needed for burnt offerings. The altar and all its accessories were to be made of bronze.

The altar is estimated to be 7½ feet square and 4½ feet high. The horns on the altar were used not only for decorum but served as tying points for the animal to be sacrificed.

V9-19

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYQeYjDINr8>

The courtyard of the tabernacle was to be fenced off by fine, white linen curtains held up by bronze pillars. These pillars would be roughly 7½ feet high. This would provide an area of 150 feet by 75 feet. The tent of the tabernacle would take up less than ten percent of this area.

V20-21

The priests were to tend to the lamps in the tabernacle. This would be the only source of light under the heavy tapestries that made up the tent. These lamps were never to go out.

Chapter 28

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mznSvWsv0Xc>

V1-5

In this chapter, God describes how to make the garments of the priests. The high priest is Aaron, Moses' brother, and Aaron's sons will serve as priests, as well.

V6-14

This passage describes the ephod for the priests. An ephod is simply a sleeveless garment.

V15-30

This passage describes the breastplate for the priests.

V31-35

This passage describes the robe of the priests.

V36-38

This passage describes the headpiece of the priests.

V39-43

This passage describes the tunic and undergarments for the priests.

Chapter 29**V1-9**

This section describes the consecration of the priestly line of Aaron. The priests were to wear elaborate, clean garments. They were to bring the items needed for a cleansing sacrifice with them. They were to be cleaned by attendants and then have oil poured over them. All of this was to take place outside of the tabernacle in full view of observers.

V10-14

This passage describes the sacrifices and what they were for. The bull would be a sin offering for the priests. They were to lean heavily onto the bull as a symbol of transferring their sins to the animal. The blood of that sacrifice was to be used to sanctify the altar before burning the best portions of the bull on the altar for God. The remains would be disposed of outside the camp.

V15-18

The first ram was also to be offered as a sin offering, but this time the animal would be burned in its entirety before God

V19-28

The second ram was a sacrifice of a different kind. This was a sacrifice of consecration. With the blood of the sacrifice being applied to the bodies of the priests, they would be able to identify with the innocent blood being shed. The blood on the ears, thumbs, and toes reminded the priests that they should hear, work, and walk with the intention of serving the Lord.

This ram was to be offered to God by holding up the remains and gently waving it in the air to allow the scent to waft into the sky. It was then to be eaten by the priests as a meal shared with God. Inviting someone to eat with you was the major form of socialization in this culture. The priests were to enjoy the company of God.

V29-30

These verses set aside the line of Aaron, a descendant of Levi, as the line of priests. Only Levites were allowed to become priests.

V31-46

The remainder of this chapter describes the process of atonement for new priests, a seven-day period of consecration with a sacrifice being made each day. After the consecration, the priests would perform

twice-daily sacrifices on behalf of the people they served. Only in this manner could the sinful human race be cleansed enough to interact with a Holy God.

Chapter 30

V1-10

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEhHQbGWLgW>

This passage covers the building and use of the altar of incense.

V11-16

Everyone over the age of 19 was to be counted in a census and pay a half-shekel to God.

Why would a plague fall upon Israel unless a “ransom” was given?

The verbiage used here indicates that a census would denote that Israel belongs to itself. The ransom was to humble the people and remind them that they belonged to God.

V17-21

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuksOf_SoEg

This passage describes the bronze laver.

V22-33

This anointing oil was created for use with the priests and the temple. It was not to be used anywhere else.

V34-38

As with the oil, the incense was not to be duplicated outside of temple use. Anyone who used these outside of the temple was to be excommunicated from the Jews.

Chapter 31

V1-11

God didn't just tell Moses that the tabernacle needed to be built and how to build it, but He provided Moses the skilled workers needed to accomplish the task. Just as God provided the Holy Spirit to do works through Moses, the Holy Spirit would work through these craftsmen to provide the holy place of God.

V12-18

It is no coincidence that God reminded Israel to not work on the Sabbath after providing instructions for work to be done. No work, not even the holy work of the tabernacle, was to interrupt the holiness of the Sabbath.

Chapter 32

V1-6

In chapter 24, Moses and a handful of others ascend the mountain. Moses goes to the top alone and communes with God for 40 days (Exodus 24:18). During that time, the Israelites grow impatient and sinful. They turn to Aaron in their uncertainty and instead of guiding the people to God, Aaron succumbs

to their demands and builds them an idol. Not only do the people worship the idol, but they also attribute their rescue from Egypt to this new idol instead of God! The original Hebrew verbiage in verse 6 indicates that the people took up many pagan rituals to worship their new god, including sexual indiscretions.

V7-10

This passage shows one aspect of the heart of God. He has passion and emotions, just like His creation. He can be offended and saddened and angered. He has just rescued His chosen people from Egypt and performed miracle after miracle to save them. And they repay Him by worshipping an idol. He is understandably heartbroken.

Verse 10 is an incredible test for Moses. If Moses does nothing, Moses will become the father of all nations, stretching even further the lineage from Abraham.

V11-14

Instead of letting God destroy Israel and making him the patriarch of God's people, Moses pleads to God to spare the Jews.

- Moses does not claim the Israelites for himself but reminds God that He is the one Who brought the Jews out of Egypt.
- Moses begs God to not let His glory be stained by the destruction of His own people.
- Moses invokes the names of the patriarchs so that God will remember His covenant with them.

Just as verses 7-10 showed one aspect of God's heart, verse 14 shows another. All God wanted was for at least one person to show Him honor. Moses fulfilled that. One humble person can spare an entire nation from the wrath of God.

V15-18

Moses makes his way back down the mountain and meets up with Joshua. Moses has the handiwork of God in his hands! As they make their way to the base of the mountain, they hear what they believe to be noises of war. As they draw closer, they can make out singing.

V19-24

What is the significance of Moses breaking the tablets at the foot of the mountain?

This can easily be attributed to the anger of Moses, and this would be correct. But this act also represents Israel breaking the covenant with God. God had done nothing but serve them since they left Egypt. In this one act of idolatry, they threw all of that away. The covenant was broken before the Jews could even see the tablets for themselves.

What is the significance of grinding the golden idol to dust and having the people drink it?

The gold used for the idol is now a desecration to God and cannot be used further. Moses has the people drink it to show them that this god is not real and that the gold is now wasted and repugnant since it would be mixed with their own bodily waste.

Aaron, the very person that was to become the high priest of God, was now telling Moses to calm down and that the idol was some form of destiny since it seemed to form itself. Aaron had the audacity to claim that this idol was a real god!

V25-29

Moses issues a challenge to the Jews: if you are for God, then come to me. Unfortunately, only the Levites managed to gather enough of a significant number of people to be counted. To their honor, the Levites sided with God.

Moses instructed the Levites on their next move: the death of those involved with the cult of the golden calf. It is important to note that only a small percentage of the people partook in this idol worship. But not one of the Jews stopped it. The roughly three-thousand people that worshipped the calf were put to death at the hands of the Levites.

V30-35

Moses again intercedes on behalf of the Israelites. He begs God to forgive them and to not wipe them out as a nation. God agrees, but with the reminder that sin is deadly.

Chapter 33

V1-6

Even after their great sin, God was still going to keep His promise of providing the land of Canaan to the Israelites. However, He would not be with them as they entered their new home. He would send a protecting angel in His stead.

What is the purpose of removing the jewelry?

There is no definitive explanation for this action, only speculation on the part of scholars. The adornments they wore may have been a reflection of the Egyptian culture that they had been so immersed in for 400 years. Maybe the removal of jewelry was a way to humble themselves. Another possibility is that the jewelry reminded them of the golden idol that they had amongst them which incurred God's wrath.

V7-11

The tabernacle that Moses received instructions on how to build had not yet been completed. Moses set up a temporary meeting place. Creating this place outside of the general camp meant that anyone who wanted to commune with God would have to put forth an effort to do so.

Whenever Moses would go to the tent of meeting, the people took notice and paid respect to Moses and God. Moses was leading by example. God would not reside in the midst of His people, but He would still commune with them on some level.

Joshua would often follow Moses into the tent of meeting. He found it difficult to leave God's presence. This is a credit to Joshua.

V12-17

What is the purpose of Moses' prayer in verses 12 and 13?

Moses is asking God if He will enter the land with the Jews or if God will send an angel in His place. The verbiage used here indicates that Moses may have been asking this for almost selfish reasons. Moses wanted to keep God close.

God reveals to Moses that He will reside with His people in the land of Canaan. Moses still shows concern, but more for the reason that he knows that God is what separates the Jews from the rest of the world. If the Jews enter Canaan without God, they are just another people in the land. But with God, this people can accomplish anything.

V18-23

In verse 18, Moses asks God to reveal His glory. The original Hebrew used here is literally “to see the weight of God.” Moses wants to be around God so much that he wants God to physically manifest Himself in front of him, just as God did with Adam and Eve. Sin makes this impossible, but God still allowed Moses a partial glimpse.

What did God show Moses?

Verse 19 says that God showed Moses His “goodness.” There are many aspects to God, as discussed previously (chapter 32). God was going to show Moses only His goodness and, even then, still only a partial glimpse. The wages of sin is death. This viewing of God would be an example of that. God’s goodness is so overwhelming that any sinful creature coming within full view of God would simply perish.

Chapter 34

V1-9

After Moses intercedes on behalf of the Jews, God calls him back up the mountain so that the law may be written in stone again. God gives Moses the second set of stone tablets with the ten commandments on them. God proclaims to Moses who He is, and Moses falls to worship at God’s feet.

V10-16

In this passage, God is reviewing and even adding on to the already existing covenant with the line of Abraham. God promises to do great things with the Jews, as the rest of the Old Testament can attest to. But this promise works both in favor of the Jews, as well as against the Jews if they raise the wrath of God.

V17-28

This section reiterates many of the laws that God already established with Moses in chapters 22 and 23. However, God spends 40 days reiterating these laws to Moses and Moses is miraculously sustained while spending time with God.

V29-35

Moses retained a glow about him after his visit with God. The Hebrew word for “shone” is literally translated to “shot forth beams.” Light beamed from the face of Moses.

What is the purpose of the veil on Moses’ face?

Many would easily reach the conclusion that the veil was to keep the light from his face from blinding those who gazed upon him. Yet, Jewish tradition and the Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 3:13) have a different reason. The light on his face was fading. Moses didn’t want the people to assume that the glory of God would fade, so he hid his face until the light had subsided. This is often compared to the fading of the Old Covenant in favor of the New Covenant which began with Christ Jesus.

Chapter 35

V1-3

Why reiterate the “keep the Sabbath holy” commandment?

This was Moses’ way of saying that there is a lot of work to be done, but not at the expense of time with God. The next few verses would be instructing the Jews on the work that needed to be done which came second to honoring and worshipping God.

It should also be noted that the Hebrew language has two words for “work.” Avodah is a general term for work and is used to describe daily routines such as cooking and cleaning. Melachah is used to describe more business-oriented work which would be forbidden on the Sabbath.

Why could fires not be started or tended in verse three?

It is the understanding of the Jews as far back as the time of Moses that this meant no fires shall be made that involve work, such as metal working or burning of weeds. Fires for keeping warm or lighting are considered perfectly legitimate.

V4-9

Exodus chapters 25-31 are God’s instructions on how to build the tabernacle. Here, Moses is telling the Jews that it is time to start the work. The work begins with offerings of wealth (which God provided them through the Egyptians) to accomplish the task at hand.

V10-19

God gave Moses these same instructions. Now Moses is passing these instructions on to the people so that they may all contribute to the completion of the tabernacle in their own way, each according to their skill.

V20-29

Notice in this section that Moses did not conduct some sort of telethon or giving campaign. He told the Israelites what was needed and then sent them home. The next day, they came back with their offerings. Their gifts were thought out and contemplated, not given spur of the moment under peer pressure.

V30-35

God selected the leaders of this project and gave them the Holy Spirit in order to complete the work. Bezalel and Aholiab were both probably already highly skilled at their professions, but now they were doing the work of God, not just the work of man.

Chapter 36

V1-2

This opening verse ties chapters 35 and 36 directly to each other. The head artisans and their workers were ready to begin their duties.

V3-7

These verses speak to the potential of the hearts of the Israelites. These same people who allowed a golden calf to be worshipped as an idol just days ago were now giving beyond what was required of

them to honor their God. They had the ability and sometimes even the desire to follow God. They just weren't consistent about it.

V8-38

Although this section seems long and redundant, this would be a record of the first tabernacle ever built, the first constructed domicile for God. After 400 years of captivity and even wondering if God existed, here is a detailed record of the work performed on the place to commune with God.

Chapter 37

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOXOFS3K8_c

V1-9

This is a recount of the construction of the Ark of the Covenant.

V10-16

This is a recount of the construction of the Table of Showbread.

V17-24

This is a recount of the construction of the lampstand.

V25-29

This is a recount of the construction of the Altar of Incense.

Chapter 38

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93KF1NuCjWI>

V1-7

This is a recount of the construction of the Altar of Burnt Offering.

V8

This is a recount of the construction of the bronze laver.

Who are the women who assembled at the door?

This is a vague reference and not much is known about it, but apparently there were a group of women, whether designated or volunteered is unclear, who served the priests in the service of God. This is the first of only two times that the Hebrew word for "minister" is used in relation to women serving at the tabernacle. The second time is in 1 Samuel 2:22.

V9-20

This is a recount of the construction of the courtyard with pillars and linen fence.

V21-31

In this passage, an account is made of the materials used for the building of the tabernacle. An inventory of gold, silver, and bronze is listed here. It is estimated that one talent is roughly equivalent to seventy pounds. This means that over one ton of gold was used in the construction of the tabernacle.

Chapter 39

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMSNdi5LMGc>

V1-7

This section recounts the making of the ephod of the high priest (chapter 28:5-14).

V8-21

This section recounts the making of the breastplate of the high priest (chapter 28:15-29).

V22-31

This section recounts the making of the robe, tunic, turban, sashes, and other clothing for the priests (chapter 28:31-43).

V32-43

Moses performs a sort of inspection over the entirety of the work. For all the faults of the chosen people, they were up to the task of building the tabernacle and making the clothing for the priests.

Why do some of the chapters in Exodus seem redundant?

In a time when paper was not easy to come by, when there were no printing presses or typewriters, it seems almost foolish to repeat entire chapters, let alone chapters with architectural and sewing instructions. But for the Israelites who had been brought out of Egypt after 400 years, after a long period of silence from God, there was now a set of instructions on how to communicate with The Creator. This same God who appeared in clouds and fire wanted to spend time with His creation. Just as the instructions were meticulous in how things were to be made, the recording of these instructions must be carefully written down and passed from generation to generation so as not to be lost. These chapters are the instructions on how to commune with a Holy God and adhere to the Old Covenant.

Chapter 40

V1-16

God tells Moses that the tabernacle shall be setup at the beginning of the year. This will be the one-year anniversary of the Jews leaving Egypt (see chapter 12). God gives Moses specific instructions on the placement of the furniture in the tabernacle and the items to be placed in the courtyard. This first use of the tabernacle shall be used to anoint Aaron and his sons as priest, establishing the Levitical priesthood.

V17-33

This section records the first assembly of the tabernacle.

- The tent of meeting is erected (vv17-19)
- The Ark of the Covenant and the veil is set in place (vv20-21)
- The table of showbread is put in place (vv22-23)
- The lampstand is placed inside the tent (vv24-25)
- The golden incense altar is placed inside the tent (vv26-27)
- The screen is hung (v28)
- The brazen altar is put in place (v29)
- The laver is placed in the courtyard (vv30-32)

- The outer courtyard is setup (v33)

V34-38

This is the first human-made meeting place for God. Yet when His glory filled the tabernacle, it became impossible to enter. This same thing happened when Solomon first built the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). This would not always be the case, but it showed how pleased God was with the obedience in the construction and ritual. The “Old Covenant” was now fully underway.

While God remained in the tabernacle, the Jews would remain encamped where they were. Once God left the tabernacle, they would pull up camp and move on. This wasn’t a command of Moses or any man. The Jews could visibly see the Lord God in the tabernacle. They knew when He was there and when He left.

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