

# Exegetical Lessons 201–300 on Exodus

When I exegete a book, I tend to get very bogged down in the details and so, I decided to develop a series of a few short lessons on various books of the Bible, where I attempt to simply deal with the primary points of each verse without getting too bogged down in detail. Each lesson is 4–5 pages long and designed to be read at one sitting. Although it is always nice to have a Bible open when studying this, I have, in almost all cases, included the relevant Scripture within the study.

I anticipate that the study of the book of Exodus will be considerably shorter than the book of Genesis.

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## Lessons 201–202: Exodus 14:1–6

## God directs Moses/Pharaoh reconsiders

### A review of Exodus 14:1–4b, including a literary analysis:

This is what we have studied so far. I used the Literal Standard Version (2020) below for the first few verses:

Exodus 14:1–2 And YHWH speaks to Moses, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel, and they turn back and encamp before Pi-Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Ba‘al-Zephon; you encamp in front of it by the sea,...

The sons of Israel have left Egypt and they have been on the move for the past few days. God speaks directly to Moses and tells him what is going on back in Egypt.

The overall literary structure of this chapter is quite interesting. The quotation from God will continue from v. 2 through v. 4e, at which point most (all?) translations end the quotation, but continue with the narrative.

There are actually two narratives which will merge. Vv. 4f–9 are the events which take place in Egypt, where Pharaoh’s heart is strengthened, so he regathers his army and goes to where Israel is.

In v. 10, the narrative is seen from the eyes of the people of Israel. The narrative of Egypt and the narrative of Israel merge at this point.

What I have written probably sounds confusing, but the narrative itself is not. In fact, from a literary point of view, the narrative of Exodus 14 is extraordinary. If you simply read this straight through, there is nothing which would stand out to you. But the path of this narrative, when examined, is ground-breaking when it comes to literature. And it is easy to miss this when reading this chapter, because of the seamless nature of the story.

In vv. 1–4e, we are with Moses in the pre-Tabernacle tent of meeting. God is speaking to him. From vv. 4f–9, we are watching the Egyptians, as if we are a fly in the room (and, later, an observer from above). And then, suddenly (but it won't seem sudden), we will be with the Israelites and now they see the Egyptian army off in the distance, and the Israelites know that they are trapped. Two different narratives come together.

My guess is, you do not appreciate even in the slightest what I have just written, so let's approach this in a different way. We have all seen a movie where it begins as a narration, perhaps a grandfather reading a story to his grandson while the kid is sick. In the movie, we see the grandfather reading this story to his grandson, and we hear the words of the grandfather. And then, at some point in his reading, we find ourselves in the middle of the actual story that he is reading (this is the beginning of [The Princess Bride](#)). We are no longer in the bedroom listening to the voice of the grandfather reading the story, but we are suddenly inside that story, watching it, as if from the boy's very fertile imagination.

Anyway, in terms of ancient literature, this is ground-breaking in the way that it seamlessly moves from one event (God speaking to Moses) to another event, where we are with Pharaoh and his cabinet, and he is about to gather up an army and go after Israel. The writing itself is literary genius, and perhaps the first time anything like this has been done in the history of literature.<sup>1</sup>

Exodus 14:3 ...and Pharaoh has said of the sons of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut on them;... (LSV)

Pharaoh knows exactly where Israel is—he understands geography and he has probably been where they are, and he can see this in his mind's eye. And he knows that they are trapped.

Exodus 14:4a-b ...and I have strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, and he has pursued after them,... (LSV)

It should be clear that Pharaoh of Egypt has no respect or fear of Israel's God, not even now.

Both Pharaoh and the military of Egypt knew that the Hebrew people were not skilled in war, and that this attack had the intention of killing as many Hebrews as possible. Or all of them.

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<sup>1</sup> You may recall that I made quite a big deal out of the introduction of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person omniscient point of view found at the end of the book of Genesis. This is also a very big deal, from the historic standpoint of literature.

Exodus 14:4c ...and I will gain honor over Pharaoh... (at this point, I return to the New King James Version<sup>2</sup>, which is the default translation in this study)

God continues speaking to Moses. He says that Pharaoh's negative volition and his actions will glorify God. How do I explain that? Pharaoh hates God; he hates Moses, and he would like nothing more than to destroy the Hebrew people. This proposed destruction of Israel would make Pharaoh appear to be a great man to his people, many of whom must want revenge for all that has happened to them. However, what Pharaoh will end up doing is, he will make God look great; he will glorify the God of the Hebrew people. Pharaoh's power—his entire army—will be puny before God.

This is a point of confusion for many unbelievers. They think that God has the most massive of egos and He has this great need for people to recognize Him and praise Him. That is very human viewpoint thinking. This would be the view of a skeptic, superimposing his own thinking upon God. God does not think as we do.

Think about this: *how is man saved?* Today, by believing in Jesus Christ. When a person believes in Jesus, then God the Father is able to forgive man his sins and place him into Christ (= positional truth). In the Old Testament, salvation was received when one exercised faith in the Revealed God (Jesus is the Revealed God of the Old Testament). In that era, God is Revealed in many ways—one of those ways is by Him being glorified. It is not as if God has this ego which requires recognition; He simply wants many people brought into His kingdom. No doubt some or even many people believed in God, based upon this glorification over Pharaoh and over Egypt's gods. And all those people who exercised faith in Him will enter into His eternal kingdom.

The glorification of God results in more people being saved; not fewer. God is glorified, but there is a reason for God to be glorified—to reach a maximum number of unbelievers so that He might be revealed to them.

Exodus 14:4d ...and over all his army,...

This is the Egyptian army, what remains of it; and God would be glorified by them. They would all drown; and this glorifies God. It means that the God of the Jews is greater than the military of Egypt and, logically, He is also mightier than their gods.

The Hebrew people themselves were enslaved. They had beaten into their mentality their position in life as slaves. So, they were not fighters. They were not warriors. If the battle was between Israel alone and the army of Egypt, the army of Egypt would annihilate the people of Israel. There is no question. And because Pharaoh had rejected Israel's God, he saw no downside to attacking and destroying the people of Israel.

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<sup>2</sup> At the time that I began this study of Exodus, the LSV had not yet been released. It is one of the very few translations which use the word *strengthen* rather than *harden* throughout this section of Exodus.

Now, speaking of these soldiers in Egypt, bear in mind, they had to be willing to follow Pharaoh. At this point, many of them possibly even opted out of this raid. They simply did not show up for work, having been so devastated (this is speculative, mind you). But many did respond to the call of Pharaoh, hoping to gain some kind of revenge over the God of the Hebrews. Their intention was not going to be to bring back their slaves; their desire was to slaughter the Hebrew people, whom they believed to be helpless and wandering. The narrative concentrates on the actions of Pharaoh and reveals his thinking; but bear in mind that Pharaoh is representative of much of Egypt. He could not gather an army without his people supporting him and his thinking.

Exodus 14:4e *...that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.*"

The Hebrews left Pharaoh in his palace a beaten and destroyed man. Many in his position would have committed suicide by now and have ended it all. Such is all that is left to him as he refused to believe in and yield to the God of the Hebrews, Jesus Christ. However, God is giving him enough strength to continue on in his blind hatred of the Hebrews and of their God. God's purpose is to evangelize even more Egyptians; and to make His power known throughout that part of the world. People of that era would hear about these events and they would exercise faith in the God of the Hebrews.

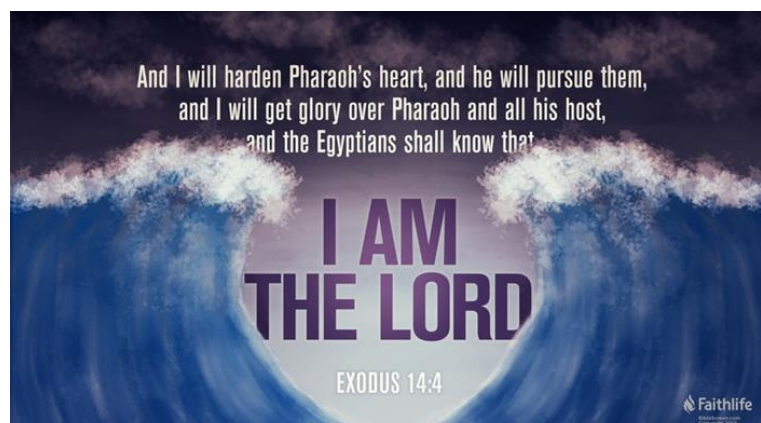
Logically, Egypt would have had small outposts along its border, along with a system to communicate information from these outposts back to Pharaoh. All of this time, these outposts would have been reporting to Pharaoh the movement of the Israelites. Pharaoh may have even sent others to specifically watch the movements of the Hebrew people.

And then we read this:

Exodus 14:4f *And they did so.*

These are 3 words in the Hebrew text, literally translating to, *And so / they were doing / thus*. Who is *they* and *what* were they doing? *They* refers back to the Israeli peoples, and God told Moses to tell them, "*Speak to the sons of Israel, and [tell them that] they [should] turn back and encamp before Pi-Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Ba'al-Zephon; you encamp in front of it by the sea,...*" This is the NKJV, but I have inserted the bracketed material.

God's directions to Moses are very specific. Because Moses is a genius in geography as well as in many other areas, Moses recalled in his writing exactly where God wanted them to be. This was a matter of being in God's directive and geographical will. Moses, knowing geography, understood that God was not





taking them a direct route to wherever (Moses knows that he is not guiding the people towards Canaan, but he probably does not know where God intends to take them). The sons of Israel also suffered from hardness of the heart. Taking all things into consideration, God is leading the Israelites correctly, even though, at this point, it is unclear as to the eventual destination. Considering the heart of Pharaoh and the heart of the Israelites, this is the most direct route that they could take.

**Exodus 14:4 (ESV)** (a graphic); from [Biblia](#); accessed January 5, 2022.

Exodus 14:4 *Then I will harden [or, strengthen] Pharaoh's heart, so that he [and his army] will pursue them [the Hebrew people]; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord."* And they [the Hebrew people] *did so* [they did what God commanded Moses to command them to do back in v. 2]. (NKJV, with bracketed material from me)

Originally, Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew people to leave Egypt. However, now he is going to change his mind and pursue them. He has free will and he could have simply let the Hebrew people leave. However, Pharaoh, knowing the tactics of war, can see that he essentially has the people of Israel trapped, if he exploits the situation. If he wants to have revenge, now is the time to act (obviously, this is from Pharaoh's point of view).

At this stage in the narrative, God has directed Moses to guide the people to a particular place, with the intent that Pharaoh would find out where they are and gather an army to quickly move against them.

In v. 5, the intelligence report comes to Pharaoh:

Exodus 14:5a *Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled,...*

Interestingly enough, we not only have a mandate from Pharaoh, saying, "Get out, you people of Israel;" but the citizens of Egypt gave gold and silver to the sons of Israel and they told them to leave as well (Exodus 12:30–33). The people of Israel moved out and quickly—so quickly that they did not even allow their bread to rise. However, the speed of movement of 2 million Jews is easily outmatched by the spies watching them and their communication system back to Pharaoh. The army of Pharaoh is using horses and chariots as their means of advance. They will move much more quickly than Israel ever could.

Even though all we have in this report is, the people had fled, one must assume, based upon God's aforementioned strategy, the report must have also included the fact that they people of Israel appear to be aimlessly wandering. They appear to observers unable to leave the borders of Egypt because of the desert-wilderness. Their exact location would be given, and it is clear to the scouts (spies) and to Pharaoh that the Hebrew people are trapped. Or, more likely, given their current route, the Hebrew people are moving toward a place where they will be trapped.



There are a couple of verbs that I would like to examine here. The 3<sup>rd</sup> person, masculine singular, Qal perfect of bârach (בָּרַח) [pronounced *baw-RAHKKH*] and it means *bolt, flee suddenly, drive away*. Strong's #1272 BDB #137. *People* is in the masculine singular, therefore it is the subject of this verb.

Pharaoh has been given additional strength by God in order to oppose Him. Every atheist alive is given the daily provisions and strength by God to actively oppose Him. All those who are negative towards God, including the insidious religious types, are given enough strength each day to oppose the living God. Pharaoh was a beaten man and God continued to strengthen his ability to actively oppose Him. Therefore, he was strong enough to change his mind about letting the Hebrews go. A weaker man—a man who had been beaten down—might have chosen to just ignore what was happening. “Do not concern yourselves with the Hebrew people—let them do whatever they want; let them go wherever they want.” is *not* what Pharaoh said. Pharaoh is no longer a weak man; God has given him the strength to act. But the direction of Pharaoh's volition is on Pharaoh.

Exodus 14:5b ...and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people [of Israel];...

The verb here is the Niphal imperfect of hâphak<sup>e</sup> (הָפַח) [pronounced *haw-FAHK<sup>e</sup>*], which means, *to turn oneself about; to be overthrown; to be turned, to be changed [mostly for the worst]*. Strong's #2015 BDB #245. Some would translate this, *was changed*. Although the Niphal is the passive stem, it can also stress the individual effect on each member of the group; it also is a verb stem which expresses progression or development. Pharaoh and his men have just allowed the Hebrews to leave and all of them have suffered the loss of their firstborn. In being together as they are, they begin to talk things over, to express their anger toward Y<sup>e</sup>howah and their hatred toward the Hebrew people. In this venting of their anger, they talk each other into changing their minds about the Hebrews and just allowing them to exit Egypt unscathed. They have lost their major economic commodity—their slaves. Therefore, Pharaoh and those who serve him are progressively changing their minds about they have allowed. In other words, they are dogs returning to their vomit.

The decision of Pharaoh and the Egyptians to send Israel out originally was the right one. His previous decisions to keep Israel in the land of Egypt were wrong decisions. After making the right decision, Pharaoh decides to revisit his wrong decisions. He is a dog returning to its vomit.

Messengers have come into Pharaoh, to tell him the position of the Hebrew people; and Pharaoh understands completely their vulnerable position (or, in the alternative, he has military advisors there who inform him of the situation the Hebrew people are in).

Sometimes *servants* can refer to Pharaoh's immediate underlings; but I think this might be applied to all of his citizens. Pharaoh and the citizens told Israel to leave; but now, they are changing their minds. It seemed expedient to dismiss all of the Israeli people from

Egypt. But now, they are rethinking their position, given the current location and movement of the Hebrew people.

For a month or two, God's judgments against Egypt rained down upon them. It made sense to simply get these people out of Egypt. However, the people of Egypt have become emboldened and they are filled with anger and hatred and revenge motivation (a mental attitude sin cluster). Their desire will be to kill all of the Hebrew people. No matter what they say, they are not going out to recapture their slaves and bring them back. They are going out on a genocide mission.

**Spies show pharaoh that the people of Israel are trapped** (a graphic); from [Free Bible Images](#); accessed January 26, 2022.



Exodus 14:5c ...and they said, “Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?”

At this point, we have the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural, Piel perfect of *shâlach* (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAKH*] and this means *to send out, to send for, to send away*. Strong's #7971 BDB #1018. Context determines the *direction*, if you will, of the sending. This is in the Piel, the intensive stem, meaning that they were forced out, they were sent away, they were dismissed. They did not simply let the Hebrew people go; they demanded that they leave Egypt.

The final verb in this verse is the Qal infinitive construct, 1<sup>st</sup> person plural suffix of *‘âbad* (עָבַד) [pronounced *gaw<sup>b</sup>-VAHD*], which means, *to serve*. We have seen this verb in Exodus 12:31 13:5 and it means *to serve, to work*. Strong's #5647 BDB #712. The Hebrew people have gone from serving Pharaoh and the Egyptians to serving the Lord.

Exodus 14:5c ...and they said, “Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?”

With his added strength, Pharaoh stands up, smites himself in the head, and says what have I done? His servants follow suit.

This is exactly what they thought: “What have we done? Why did we send Israel away from us?” So, here they are, after 10 severe plagues, and they are rethinking their position. They let Israel go; in fact, the people of Egypt actually told Israel to get out. And now, they are rethinking that decision.

For whatever reason, despite what God did to Egypt, Pharaoh and his people are feeling empowered, given where the Hebrew people are right now. In the view of the scouts, Israel is moving into a very vulnerable position.

Psychology is an interesting thing. It appears to me that Pharaoh and his military advisors and the messengers are meeting and discussing this situation; and it appears to me that they are working themselves up (remember, this is one use of the Niphal stem).

Exodus 14:5 Now it was told the king of Egypt [by messengers] that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants [Pharaoh's military advisors] was turned against [or, *changed towards*] the people; and they said, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" (NKJV with bracketed insertions from me)

Now, on the one hand, they certainly have a point that they have allowed their slaves to escape and to leave Egypt. However, it will be clear by Pharaoh's plan and by the execution of this plan that the army of Egypt was not going there to recover their slaves; they were going there to wipe this people out. The intention of this army is to destroy every man, woman and child.

Some of those close to Pharaoh spoke to him, and the question is, "How could we do this? How could we let all of our slaves go?" Bear in mind, whoever said this, had faced all of the exact same plagues that the rest of Egypt had. This entire month or more have been much more difficult for Pharaoh, because every time that he made a decision, he was making a decision for all of the people of Egypt. Let me suggest that the man who said this was a close aide to the Pharaoh; and he was a man who wanted revenge. His personal feelings were shared by the other people there.

Bear in mind, any one of these men could have said, "Do you not remember the destruction rained down upon us by their God? Should we not just let them go? They are in the hands of their God now." But, that was not the reaction of anyone there, insofar as we know.

Exodus 14:5 Now it was told the king of Egypt [by messengers] that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants [Pharaoh's military advisors] was turned against [or, *changed towards*] the people; and they said, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" (NKJV, bracketed portions added by me)

There is one more thing which needs to be considered: it sounds like their reasoning is all about losing Israel as a workforce and that they need to rethink that they allowed Israel to go. But they are not going to go after Israel in order to bring them back. They will go after Israel with the intention of slaughtering them. My point being, their reasoning is entirely erroneous. People in emotional revolt of the soul are unable to reason, and arguing with such a person is completely futile. The way that they justify their actions makes little or no sense.

Exodus 14:6a So he made ready his chariot...

I am assuming here that the subject of the verb is Pharaoh. He is the closest masculine singular noun in context.

The verb used here can mean a variety of things, but its basic meaning is *to yoke, to hitch*; and from that comes the meaning, *to prepare*. Context determines the proper application.

As is so often the case, when a person in authority is involved, Pharaoh may not personally prepare his chariot, but he would order it to be prepared.

Pharaoh is not simply sending his army out against Israel; he is going with them possibly in the lead.

Pharaoh knows that the Hebrews have doubled back once and that they were moving slowly and not in any sort of a straight course. He would rather slaughter these Hebrews than allow them to go. Therefore, he gets all of his people, those who still support him, to prepare themselves for war. The verb which is often translated *made ready, prepare* is the Qal imperfect of 'âçar (אָחַר) [pronounced *aw-SAWHR*] and it means *bind, tie, imprison*. He was attaching his chariot to his horses; or binding the chariot to the horses. However, this verb also applies to his people. They were brought along under coercion—they were bound and imprisoned, so to speak. These Egyptians may not have had his strength, having endured the same torments and plagues that he did, but they were coerced into joining him. This does not mean that Pharaoh of himself was strong enough to coerce all of these men. They coerced one another using faulty arguments.

Exodus 14:6b ...and took his people with him.

Pharaoh is acting on intelligence that the Hebrew people do not seem to be going in the right direction and that they doubled-back at one point. Therefore, Pharaoh believes them to be wandering aimlessly. At this point, they appear to be in a place where they cannot go east (outside of Egypt), being trapped right there by the water. Therefore, he concludes that they are vulnerable.

Pharaoh assembles an army and leads them against the Hebrew people.

Exodus 14:6 So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him.

Had God not given him the strength, Pharaoh would have laid exhausted upon his bed, having trouble even getting up. However, because he has strength, he expresses his negative volition by hopping into his chariot with much of his elite army in tow.

## Lesson 203: Exodus 14:1–8 Pharaoh has one more chance to express his volition

### Reviewing Exodus 14:1–6:

I will use the Berean Study Bible below:

Exodus 14:1–3 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. You are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal-zephon. For Pharaoh will say of the Israelites, ‘They are wandering the land in confusion; the wilderness has boxed them in.’

God tells the Israelites to double-back. Pharaoh, who has eyes on them, and who knows the geography there, will think that the Hebrew people are confused and not sure where to go next.

Exodus 14:4 And I will harden [lit., *strengthen*] Pharaoh’s heart so that he will pursue them. But I will gain honor by means of Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.” So this is what the Israelites did.

As is found in many translations, the word *harden* is used, when it should have been *strengthen*.

As a result of what he sees, Pharaoh will pursue the Israelites, believing that they are confused and that he will be able to destroy them all.

God’s plan is for the Egyptian army to come upon Israel, and He will destroy them, so that all Egyptians will know that He is sovereign over the earth.

Exodus 14:5 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, “What have we done? We have released Israel from serving us.”

It was not simply Pharaoh who took this position; he received complete support from his staff.

Notice that there is a great lack of logic in what they say. “What have we done? We have let our slaves, the Hebrew people, simply leave?” This is illogical because this army is not going there to round up the Hebrew people and bring them back. They are going to wipe them out. So, despite the justification that someone on Pharaoh’s staff uttered, their true motivation is revenge.

Unbelievers, after they build up scar tissue on their souls, can so often act irrationally. They will be the dog that returns to its vomit. For hundreds of years, the Egyptians had the Israelites under their thumb, acting as their slaves. Their God released them from this servitude, causing Egypt a great deal of harm in the process (since they would not let the Hebrew people go). But now, they think they are going to go back and confront the Hebrew people, and nothing is going to happen? This is like the dog who throws up the contents of his stomach, but then goes back to sift through his vomit, in case there is some tasty morsel in there.



Exodus 14:6 **So Pharaoh prepared his chariot and took his army with him.** (BSB; after this review, we return to the NKJV)

Pharaoh was so excited by this chance at revenge that he wanted to play a part in it.

Exodus 14:7a **Also, he took six hundred choice chariots,...**

The word which modifies *chariots* is the Qal passive participle of bâchar (בָּחַר) [pronounced *baw-KHAHR*]. It means, *to choose, to try (test), to select*. It is a verb, but in the participle, it acts as a verbal adjective. My impression here is that when he is about to mobilize his army, he puts together the very best chariots, having officers and high ranking warriors to man them, and then he finds that he has enough men who have come, many out of personal revenge, thinking that they can attack the Hebrews. However, they do not appreciate that their fight is really with God, and all their chariots for war will not be able to stand up against Him.

The more elite army is going to be those in chariots. These are their Navy SEALs or their Army Rangers. They have the very best and most modern equipment of the day. They believe that they can move quickly against their enemies, the Israelites, and destroy them. Furthermore, this ought to be easy because, as is well-known, these Israelites do not have weapons with which they may use to defend themselves. A well-trained and tightly-organized army should be able to destroy them completely. Given their overwhelming military advantage, they might not even have any casualties on the Egyptian side (which is probably what they are thinking).

Exodus 14:7b **...and all the chariots of Egypt...**

Pharaoh is going to lead an army of elite chariots—they will be in the forefront—followed by the rest of Egypt's chariot force. However, this portion of v. 7 may also be translated: **...every rider of Egypt,...** The word translated *chariot* is the masculine singular construct of rekeb (רֶכֶב) [pronounced *REH-khe<sup>b</sup>v*], which means, *riders, cavalry; chariot; horses*. It can refer to any part of the chariot assembly, including the rider/driver himself. Strong's #7393 BDB #939. Let me suggest that a significant portion of Pharaoh's attacking army would be these 600 chariots, having both riders and chariot drivers. There will be an additional force, also moving by means of chariots (I would assume that these are the older chariots).

From *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, we have the following description: *The Egyptian chariot was a framework of wood, nearly semicircular in front, having straight sides and open behind. The front was of wood and the sides were strengthened and ornamented with leather and metal bindings. The floor was of rope net-work, to give a springy footing. The fittings of the inside and the harness were of raw hide or tanned leather. On the sides quivers and bow-cases were fastened, crossing each other. The wheels were low, have six spoke, and were kept on the axle by a leather thong or lynch-pin. There was no sea in the chariot. The number of horses to each chariot was*

*two. The chariot of the king did not differ materially from ordinary war-chariots. He, however, usually rode alone into battle, having the reins fastened around his waist, leaving both hands free to manage his weapons of war. Jehu seems to have imitated the custom of Egyptian monarchs in driving his own chariot. See 2Kings 9:20.<sup>3</sup>*

Exodus 14:7c ...with captains over every one of them.

Some understand this to refer to 3 captains (over the entire Egyptian army, and under Pharaoh's instructions). Perhaps this refers to men with authority in each chariot. Certainly, a well-organized army is going to have a chain of authorities.

Exodus 14:7 Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots [or, every rider] of Egypt with captains over every one of them.

Although one might understand there to be only 600 choice chariots and then all the manpower needed; my assumption is that, the Egyptian army has an elite chariot force, and a much larger, older chariot army.

Obviously, there were a significant number of horses who were kept under shelter during most of these plagues; and most of them survived.

An attack of a people on foot by a chariot army would be devastating. Chariots would have speed and mobility. They would find it easy to strike and slaughter their opposition at will. Human viewpoint told the Egyptian army that the Hebrew people would not stand a chance.

**Chariot Attack on Israel** (a graphic); from [Free Bible Images](#); accessed January 26, 2022.

Exodus 14:8a And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt,...

Again, there is no need to think that God changed Pharaoh's thinking. Pharaoh is not sitting in his palace, somewhat depressed, but with a few kind thoughts towards Israel; and then God comes along and gets Pharaoh all riled up about the Israelites again. God gave pharaoh the strength to exercise his volition. The hatred



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<sup>3</sup> *Manners and Customs of the Bible*; James M. Freeman; reprinted in 1972 by Logos International; pp. 65–66.



and anger was already there; God gave Pharaoh the strength to act upon his emotions.

An experience which hard workers have had: we have had work to do—a job that needed to be finished—and we are just about out of strength—we don't think we can go on. Sometimes, something can give us just a little bit of strength—perhaps we sit down for 20 minutes or even take a 5 minute power nap or grab a cup of hot coffee (I have heard that there are these things called energy drinks)—and then we have the strength to complete the task. We needed something in order to finish what we started; and once we have this something (and I am not talking about dangerous stimulates here), we can finish it. This is what God has done for Pharaoh. God has given Pharaoh strength to do that which is already in his heart.

This is the last time that we will see our Lord *strengthen* the heart of Pharaoh. This is the word *châzaq* (חָזַק) [pronounced *khaw-ZAHK*] and it is used several hundred times in the Bible and usually translated *strengthen, fortify, repaired, and only* in this portion of Exodus do we find it translated *harden* over and over again. Strong's #2388 BDB #304. What caused the translators to translate this word differently in the book of Exodus, we do not know. In any case, Pharaoh was not acting because he simply lacked the strength. Now, he has this strength, and so he acts.

Pharaoh knows what he has faced over the past two months and he has witnessed the power of Y<sup>e</sup>howah. He can fall to the ground and worship Y<sup>e</sup>howah out of fear and respect. However, Pharaoh seems to lose track of what he has gone through in the previous few months. How does this happen? His soul is so covered with scar tissue that cannot think straight with regards to the Hebrew people. His anger and mental attitude sins make it impossible for him to take an objective account of what he might be doing.

Have you ever known people to act irrationally? As an outsider, you observe their actions and you think, *what is wrong with them? Can't they see what they are doing?* And, point in fact, they cannot. Mental attitude sins cover the soul with scar tissue so that they are unable to be rational about some things.

Pharaoh ought to realize that in advancing toward the Hebrew people, he will be facing their God. Given the 10<sup>th</sup> judgment, could he not himself determine, "The next judgment will be the end of me." But scar tissue makes him unable to consider this very logical outcome.

What Pharaoh and those who are with him understand is, they despise the Hebrew people and it will be sweet revenge for them to destroy the Hebrew people. All that has changed his this: Pharaoh did not have the strength to do this a few hours ago; but now he has the strength, which was given to him by God. He is supplying his own negative volition.

Exodus 14:8b [...and he pursued the children of Israel;...](#)

It is already in Pharaoh's heart to get Israel. He wants to harm them; he wants to hurt them. He did not have the strength earlier to act on his volition; but God has given him this

strength. So Pharaoh chases after the sons of Israel. Now, quite obviously, he does not do this on his own.

Exodus 14:8c ...and the children of Israel went out with boldness.

All the while that Pharaoh is in his palace—being strengthened by God—the sons of Israel were on the move, away from Egypt, with great feelings of power and confidence.

Many translations are similar, that the sons of Israel go out with boldness; but this literally reads, *with a hand lifted up* or *with a hand being held high*. The Hebrews are moving forward with an uplifted hand. This is a way of saying that they were going forward *boldly, defiantly*. To understand that, recall the black power symbol of raising the clenched fist or the thing that some supporters of sports teams as they raise their hand with the outstretch index finger in the air, indicating that they are number one; or the driver that you just cut off in traffic and he raises his hand and middle finger with reference to you. This illustrates that the uplifted hand even up to today represents boldness and defiance.

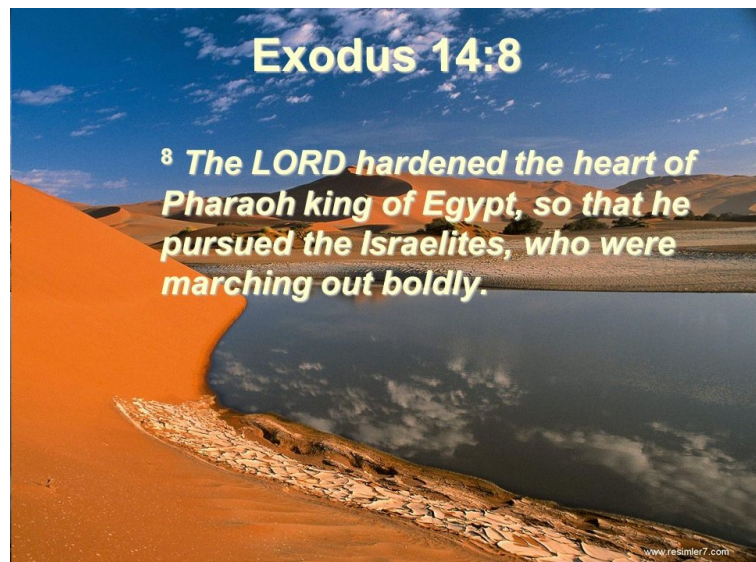
Why is this mentioned? I believe that this is the picture which Pharaoh sees in his own mind over and over again. The people of Israel walking out of Egypt, with a hand held high in victory. Pharaoh sees this; he thinks about this; and his desire increases to destroy this people.

**Exodus 14:8 (NIV)** (a graphic); from [Slide Player](#); accessed January 5, 2022.

Exodus 14:8 And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness.

The children of Israel are going out with boldness; and Pharaoh is going to lead his army, intent on destroying them all.

Pharaoh cannot let this go, despite the fact that every plague to come upon him and his country, he was warned about; and that he made decisions which resulted in the plague coming down upon them.



Pharaoh has been given renewed strength by God. His spies tell him that Israel appears to be lost and confused in the desert-wilderness. These things give Pharaoh the power to gather up an army of men who have the same revenge motivation. God did not plant Pharaoh's mental attitude sins into his head; God simply gave him the strength to act on what was in his heart.

Exodus 14:9a *So the Egyptians pursued them,...*

Pharaoh has intelligence reports in hand. He knows exactly where the Hebrew people are. He believes them to be wandering aimlessly, and he knows that they have walked into a difficult situation, where they have water to their backs—a large enough body of water that they cannot cross over it. This strikes Pharaoh as very poor planning on the part of Moses, their leader. He may have completely discounted their God in his own mind at this point.

Exodus 14:9b *...all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon.*

Pharaoh does not hop on a horse to pursue the Israelites by himself—he gathers up his chariots, his horses, his chariot horsemen, and his army; and they all go together to beat down Israel for their defiance.

You will remember that, at the beginning of chapter, God had Israel change direction and double back. God did that, knowing that the sons of Israel were being watched, and this gave the impression to the casual observer that Israel was confused and uncertain as to how to proceed. Essentially, God was luring Egypt into a trap. The movements of the Israeli people was the bait. If the Egyptians were willing to let things go, then there is no trap. But they were not willing at this point. They wanted revenge. They were filled with mental attitude sins; and they were thinking irrationally. It is important to note that this was a significant portion of Egypt. It was not simply Pharaoh who wanted to act.

Theologically, this is important, because Israel is being led by a cloud-pillar by day and a pillar of fire by night—so how does God get it wrong? Did God get it wrong and decide, “Hmmm, better double-back here and let Me think about this some more.” It is this change of direction, initiated by God, that actually got Pharaoh thinking that he now has a chance to challenge and destroy Israel.

Pharaoh has two options at this point—simply let the Israelites go and expect that they will simply all die out in the desert; or, go after them and kill them one-by-one.

The Hebrews were roughly two million people, they had no chariots, and they were doubling back; so it was easy for Pharaoh to prepare and to catch up to them. This is what God had intended to occur. The Hebrews were at the edge of the sea, unable to cross over, camped out, not expecting the Egyptians.

Pi-hahiroth means *mouth of the canals*; which suggests that freshwater canals were run to this area for farming and personal use, and this had resulted in reeds growing up beside

and it the canals. Its proximity to the sea and the unusual fact that there were papyrus growing near the sea caused this portion of the sea to be called the *Sea of Reeds* (or, it is just as possible that here the Hebrews had crossed over from a freshwater tributary to the Red Sea—I don't know that they are that far from where they started<sup>4</sup>). With what will occur, there is no doubt that the tidal wave produced by God spilled far out of the shores and ruined the canal system, if not the city.

J. B. Scott makes the argument that by comparing Exodus 14:2, 3, & 9 to Num. 33:7 that the Hebrews were perhaps even encamped on a large peninsula. It may have looked as though they had found a place to cross over, but they were unable to. They possibly had two large bodies of water on both sides of them and had march to a place where it appeared as though they might cross, but there was a raging river between the two salt lakes (this might have been above Lake Ballah or between Lake Ballah and Lake Timsah). And it is equally likely that the topology of the land in the area was totally changed by this tidal wave which is to come.

Or, in the alternative, they were going south and came to a place where the mountains moved into the sea, allowing them no passage. Their only option was to double back and try a different route (perhaps by going around the mountains).

To Pharaoh and his Egyptian scouts, the Hebrew people appear to be trapped, if the Egyptian army can get there in time.

Exodus 14:9 [So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon.](#)

It is fascinating that where the Israelites were camping is laid out here so carefully, with two locations that we do not know today. The Israelites had lived in this area for the past 400 years, so some of them may have known all of these various nearby cities and towns. It is almost certain that Moses, given his education in the royal palace, knew these places and had a map in his head of where they were and where they had traveled. In fact, a travelogue will be written by Moses in Num. 33.

Here is what we do know: when the Egyptian army (the cavalry, the chariots and the infantry) moved toward the Israelites, it was clear that the Israelite people were in a trap and there was nowhere to go from this trap. Or, at least, this is how it seemed to Pharaoh.

Note that the negative volition is not simply exclusive to Pharaoh. He has an entire army behind him (or with him). How many of these men could have protested and said, "Haven't we been beaten down enough as it is? Their God has killed our firstborn and pretty much all of our cattle and crops. Might not be smart to rile Him any more." But Pharaoh's army

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<sup>4</sup> Since it has only been a few days and the Egyptians are still spying on them, that would suggest that they are not that far out of Egypt.

is filled with men with negative volition toward the people of Israel; and therefore, against their God. No doubt, their intention is to destroy the Hebrew people.

There was a clear choice that needed to be made. The people of Egypt needed to choose the people and God of Israel if they were to be saved. Insofar as we know, there was only a mixed multitude of those who did so (some of whom probably were Egyptian).

Exodus 14:10a *And when Pharaoh drew near,...*

Pharaoh has gathered up an army and chariots, so that they are able to move swiftly to where Israel is. We may presume that Pharaoh had eyes on Israel all of this time. The Egyptians from that area observed the movements of the children of Israel and reported them to Pharaoh. I make this assumption as, Pharaoh knows exactly what is happening with the people of Israel. A report of their movements was given to Pharaoh in vv. 3–5.<sup>5</sup> His chariots will be able to quickly find the sons of Israel.

Exodus 14:10b *...the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them.*

I would suggest at this point that the people of Israel were not expecting this. It would be reasonable that there were lookouts for this people, and, at some point, the lookouts are looking over the landscape, and they see an Egyptian army marching towards them.

The word here can mean *marching*, but it can also mean, *pulling up [stakes], pulling out, breaking camp and moving out, setting out, making a journey*. So, the Egyptian army was coming their way. Are they all in chariots and on horseback? Are there some infantry? We do not know; but it would be my guess that this is a very mobile army, moving quickly on horseback and by chariot.

Exodus 14:10c *So they [the sons of Israel] were very afraid,...*

This would be a time for applying faith-rest. The sons of Israel have observed God's hand in moving them out of Egypt. Logically, if God has done this on their behalf, then God will continue to work in their lives. We have a similar principle expressed in Philippians 1:6 *And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.* (ESV; capitalized) Beginning a good work in us is salvation. After salvation, there is spiritual growth, which is an option for every believer (however, we still maintain our free will after salvation and some believers never grow). Now, regardless of our failures or successes, God continues this good work into death and beyond, when we will spend eternity with Him.

But, instead of considering what God had done for them in the past, the sons of Israel enter into a state of fear, which short-circuits their spiritual lives. Once you have sinned,

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<sup>5</sup> God said that Pharaoh would say, *"They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in."* Pharaoh cannot know this without getting some kind of information from someone.



you are out of fellowship and useless to God. Your recovery is rebound—naming your sins to God. The believer has to wrest control of the soul away from the sin nature.

When something is in control of your soul—be it fear, alcohol, or drugs—you are unable to live the Christian life. The control of your soul has been given over to something else.

Exodus 14:10d ...and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.

This first reaction from the Hebrew people was better than nothing. At least they realized, for a split second, that God had brought them to this place, and they cried *God help*, as people are wont to do when they are in a jam. Most people who cry to God for help have caused their own misery and their own problems. However, God did bring them to this place.

Pharaoh, having come upon them, was likely mustering his forces, arranging them to decide just how they would attack and slaughter the Hebrews. He was taking time to decide whether they should kill the men and let the children and women return with them into slavery; whether they should make an example of some of the men and save many; whether they should kill them all. Pharaoh knew the area and he knew the Hebrews were trapped. He did not have to do anything immediately and he knew that his army was absolutely intimidating. This gave Pharaoh a feeling of power; a rush of strength and invigoration. Even though I am reading some internal emotions and motivation into Pharaoh, I believe that my assessment of Pharaoh is reasonably accurate.

Exodus 14:10 And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.

The people did cry out in Exodus 2:23, but it does not say that *they cried out to the LORD*. Nevertheless, we read Num. 20:14–16 Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom: "Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the hardship that we have met: how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time. And the Egyptians dealt harshly with us and our fathers. And when we cried to the LORD, he heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. And here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory. This passage indicates that some did cry out to the LORD back in Exodus 2. Moses says essentially the same thing in Deut. 26:6–8 And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. Then we<sup>6</sup> cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders.

I think the logical explanation is one of two: (1) When Israel is first said to cry out; when slavery had become so difficult, we could infer that they are crying out to God. Or (2) some of them cried out to God and some simply cried out, into the universe, if you will. However,

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<sup>6</sup> This would be the editorial we.

all of them will be believers and looking to God (or to Moses) when they leave Egypt. For them to leave their homes and travel out of Egypt, this required faith. No doubt that, after the great plagues from God, all Israel exercised faith in God (which would explain why they did not suffer all of the judgments that God brought upon Egypt).

Moses himself on several occasions, will call out to the Lord (Exodus 15:25 17:4 Num. 12:13). We would expect this.

### **Lesson 205: Ex. 14:9–12a Heb. 4:1–3 Israelites: “We told you, leave us alone!”**

Exodus 14:9–10 The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon. When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. (ESV)

Interestingly enough, the people of Israel will then say something which is quite clever.

Exodus 14:11a Then they said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?”

The panicked people, upon seeing the army of Pharaoh off in the distance, complain. “Have you brought us out into the desert-wilderness to die? Were there not enough graves in Egypt?”

This is a very odd thing to say, because it appears to take into consideration that God killed off the firstborn of the Egyptians. Because of the final plague, thousands would be buried in Egypt. Instead of coming up with this immensely clever thing to say, these complainers should have paused to consider the awesome power of their God. The problem was, they never put together the miracles which they saw with the words that Moses spoke, which should have led them to strong conclusions about the power and grace of their God. In fact, virtually every complaint lodged by the Exodus generation against Moses reveals a fundamental lack of faith in their God.

#### **A short examination of Hebrews 4:1–3:**

Our spiritual growth depends upon our faith-perception of God, His essence and His plan. If we do not take the things about God which are true and believe those things, then we cannot advance spiritually. This is the fundamental problem of the Hebrew people that we are studying.

The writer of Hebrews tells us this, which is how he encourages the Jewish people of his era to believe in Jesus Christ. **Therefore, while the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were**



not united by faith with those who listened. For we who have believed enter that rest, as He has said,

“As I swore in My wrath,  
‘They shall not enter My rest,’”

although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. (Heb. 4:1–3 Psalm 95:11; ESV; capitalized)

The people of God were supposed to enter into God’s rest, which is the faith-rest life. Their failure was not taking this spiritual information and mixing it with faith. You can go to the greatest church in the world, with the greatest pastor, but if you do not mix his teaching from the Scriptures with faith, then you cannot enter into God’s rest. In fact, every individual of the Exodus generation will die the sin unto death out in the desert because they refuse to believe in the doctrines and plan of their God. They refused to mix the promises of God with faith, and therefore, God swore in His wrath that they would not enter into His rest.

Understand now, these are believers. God did not haul 2 million unbelieving Hebrews out of Egypt—that would be illogical. Their fundamental problem is simply stated: *they did not mix the promises of God with faith* (Hebrews 4:2). This is the post-salvation walk of the believer. No one automatically lives the spiritual life after salvation. Some do and some don’t. Someone can believe in the Revealed God (in our dispensation, that would be Jesus), but then never advance spiritually after that. Others might advance with some minimal spiritual growth. Others, like Moses, can advance to spiritual maturity. What is the key? Learning Bible doctrine and then believing it.

What is that final thought from God, expressed by the writer of Hebrews? God’s works, God’s provision for the Hebrew people, were designed in eternity past. Their safety and security was taken care of in eternity past. They had a potential future; all they had to do was hear the teachings of Moses and then trust God.

**Application:** God’s plan for your life was mapped out in eternity past. There is no difficulty in your life that God did not foresee and make provision for. And, just in case you are having trouble applying this, this is what you need to do: believe that; you need to believe that God has perfectly mapped out your life from eternity past.

God’s manifestations to the people then and His manifestations to you and I today are different. The Exodus generation saw some incredible things. However, we today are not trapped in slavery, and God is not leading us out of slavery with great signs and wonders. However, what is happening to the Hebrew people historically is what happens to us spiritually when we exercise faith in Christ. They provide a parallel for us. We are in bondage to our sin nature, and God delivers us from that slavery—positionally, experientially and eternally. In fact, these 3 words correspond exactly to the 3 phases of

our lives in Christ—phase 1 salvation (which establishes our position in Christ forever); phase 2 the Christian life (our lives experientially on earth in our human bodies); and phase 3 (eternal life with God). Every believer experiences all 3 stages of the Christian life. Some have a great life in phase 2 and others do not.

Now, just in case you are having trouble believing in this God, we have a parallel situation in United States history with regards to the slavery of the African people. Tens of thousands of Africans were brought to the United States as slaves; and do you know what happened in the southern slave states? Many of their masters taught these people the gospel of Jesus Christ; and taught them about faith in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, these slaves believed; and, we know by their spiritual music of the slave era that they believed strongly in Jesus Christ. Then what happened? God delivered them out of slavery, and God allowed them and their descendants to live in the greatest country on earth, the United States.

Furthermore, if you are a white Christian American, you should realize that much of God's great blessing to the United States has been, in part, based upon the faith and practices of the early Black church in America (which, unfortunately, has left the truth and become far too politicized over the past 5 decades or so).

Back to our passage:

Exodus 14:11a [Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?"](#)

At first, the people were thinking about God and they cried out to Him; but then they see Moses, and they decide to complain to him. The problem is with the focus of the Exodus generation. Rather than focusing their minds upon God, they are thinking about Egypt—and they seem to remember some weird, romanticized version of Egypt. 5 times we have the word *Egypt* (*Egyptians*) in vv. 11–12. That is a weird obsession for slaves to have who have just been freed from their slavery.

Have you ever, particularly when arguing with a spouse, thought about saying some that was quite clever, and you said it, even though it did not help the situation out a single bit and you knew it would not help out the situation (mostly anyone who is married can testify to doing that). But, it was so clever as to allow you to get your digs in.

This is actually a more clever thing to say than might appear on the surface. Recall that, when Israel was asked to leave Egypt, this was right after all of the firstborn of the Egyptians had died. Therefore, for the next few days, there would be mourning for the loss of these who died, and then they would be buried. If so many people died, then are there any graves remaining that might be used? Do you see what they are saying? These people might be in emotional revolt, but they are still very clever.

Exodus 14:11b [Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?](#)

They ask Moses straight out, *why did you bring us out of Egypt? What was your purpose?*

Several people are talking at once in this panic and they make these sarcastic remarks to Moses. These are the people who have witnessed these most incredible 10 plagues placed upon the Egyptians and they should realize that God has a plan for their lives and that God is leading Moses. However, in the past few days, they have done some backtracking and some wandering and some of them have begun to question whether Moses has any idea as to what he is doing. The first remark may have been thought up while pondering the significance of carrying with them Joseph's bones—who refused to be buried in Egypt.

Exodus 14:11 Then they said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?”

What they are saying is, Moses has taken them this far to let them die in the desert-wilderness. Despite the fact that this thinking lacks any sort of logic (people who are emotional rarely resort to actual logic), they still make these allegations. And because Moses is in the lead, they therefore blame him. Bear in mind that it is actually God who is leading them, so blaming Moses is illogical. But there is no logical in emotional revolt of the soul.

First they cry out to the Lord, but they also take time to get their digs in against Moses. These are insults which they engage in here.

**Application:** Why do we study this? And if you know how it turns out, why do you study it? This is because we apply the lesson here that, God had all of this planned out in eternity past. Rather than crying, complaining or thinking up clever complaints, the people of Israel should have their eyes open so that they can appreciate seeing what God planned out for them in eternity past. Life for us is the same way (and I fully appreciate that it is easier to say this than it is to exercise faith in God’s plan when we ought to).

**Exodus 14:11 (ESV)** (a graphic); from [Bible Verses](#); accessed January 5, 2022.

Exodus 14:12a **Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone...**

The elders of Israel did say this to Moses. Remember back on what we studied. Moses and Aaron showed up—seemingly out of nowhere—and they spoke to the elders and then they spoke to Pharaoh. They said, “God has said that you need to let His people go and worship Him in the desert-wilderness.” Do you recall how Pharaoh responded to that demand? Pharaoh not only refused, but he also gave them additional work to do. Previously, Pharaoh had farmers supply the straw (the chaff of the wheat and other grains), but after this request, he

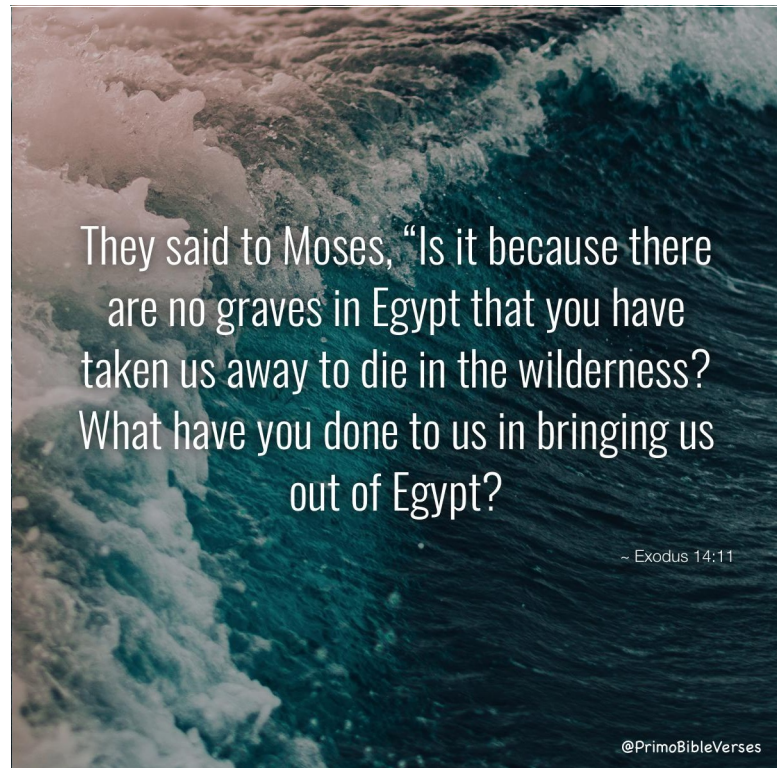
made the Israelite slaves find their own straw. The people were greatly burdened by this requirement, and they told Moses that it would have been better not to have interfered in the first place. Now they are reminding Moses of their original position. “Remember, we told you, just leave us alone!”

You may recall that we studied that particular meeting with Pharaoh twice—once from the human viewpoint, as is expressed here, and once from divine viewpoint. The divine viewpoint is, Pharaoh’s response was minor and temporary. What God did afterward made Pharaoh’s proclamation quite irrelevant.

So you see, these people have the ability to remember. What they are saying is quite true, but this is a very selective memory. Between that point of view, given to Moses and Aaron, and now, they Israelites have seen 10 judgments against Egypt, followed by God leading them supernaturally by pillars of fire and cloud. How can they focus in on what they said two months ago, and not think about all that happened between then and now?

Furthermore, prior to all of this—right before Moses came onto the scene—the sons of Israel had cried out in pain and frustration over their slavery. Did they not think that God would hear them?

We learn from those early chapters how God works. God could have killed every Egyptian on day one, pointed the Israelites in the right direction, and turn the land behind them into some great gaping hole, so that they had to keep on moving. But God does not work like that. God works through specific men and God requires people to make decisions.



It is also clear from these past 5 or so chapters in Exodus that the same stimulus can result in a variety of reactions. The Israelites and the Egyptians viewed the exact same plagues. The Israelites—at least in the beginning—trusted God and followed God’s servant (Moses). The Egyptians resisted these judgements up until the end.

## **Lesson 206: Exodus 14:12–13**

## **Moses uses a fortiori logic**

The people of Israel see that they are boxed in, so they are worried that the Egyptian army will slaughter them all. They continue their complaint to Moses:

Exodus 14:12a *Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, ‘Let us alone...*

At first, Moses had the support of the elders; and therefore, of the people. However, when he went into speak to Pharaoh the first time, the Pharaoh shut him down and imposed heavier work restrictions on the people. As soon as Israel faced these difficulties, they complained to Aaron and Moses and told them that they made everything worse.

Exodus 14:12b *...that we may serve the Egyptians’?*

The people said this after the first meeting with Pharaoh, when Moses and Aaron demanded that he let the people go. Pharaoh did not appreciate this demand so he put a lot of additional work on the people for even entertaining such a wild notion as going out into the desert-wilderness to serve their God.

Exodus 14:12a-b *Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, ‘Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’?*

This is the selective memory of the Israelites. Originally before Moses even came on the scene, the people were crying out due to being so overworked by Pharaoh.

God responded to their cries. But now, they remember things in a different way. They remember that Moses just showed up and started messing with everything. They contend that he should have just let them alone; that he should not have messed with their lives as he did. Simple logic, at this point, seems to elude these sons of Israel. Remember Exodus 2:23 *During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.* They are where they are now because God heard them crying out over their lives in Egypt.

They seem to be saying this to Moses: *Listen, we were fine in Egypt; we had lives and we enjoyed them. Why did you inflict all of this on us?*

There are two problems with this complaint: (1) The people cried out over their servitude prior to Moses coming on the scene; so their slavery, even before Moses came onto the scene, was quite harsh. (2) Their complaint completely leaves God out of the equation.



Moses is not there simply because he felt like interfering with their lives. If it were up to Moses, he'd still be back tending his own livestock in Midian and taking care of his family. His life has been upended easily as much as theirs has. In fact, he had a much easier life before. He was free, he lived out in the country, he was married with two sons, and he spent a great deal of time communing with nature.

The people of Israel cried out for deliverance, and God sent them a deliverer. That is the big picture. Their response should have been, "If you are God's deliverer, then show us what to do next."

But, they do not say that. They just continue with their complaint.

Exodus 14:12c [For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.](#)"

The sons of Israel are completely at odds with the plan of God. They had no understanding of what was going on; and no faith in the faithfulness of God. Therefore, they could make such a preposterous claim.

Their slavery had gotten so bad that they called out for deliverance (Exodus 2:23) and the situation continued to degenerate (Exodus 5:6–9). However, even with how difficult their slavery was, they had absolutely no appreciation whatsoever for freedom and they were not willing to make any of the sacrifices which were necessary in order to provide freedom for themselves and for the generations that followed them. It seems like every sacrifice that God required of them caused the Hebrews to complain and occasionally to foment revolution against the very God Who bought them. This is certainly not a good start.

Furthermore, we will see that this generation of Hebrews, although they were saved, were really quite unappreciative of what God was doing. They have seen miracle after miracle and yet they continue to question God and the man that God put in charge.

People claim today that they would believe if God would only fill their lives with verifiable miracles. However, miracles mean nothing. We have many instances of intense miraculous activity where the percentage of those saved is no different than it is today. Furthermore, miracles do not cause any kind of spiritual growth. This comes from the study of God's Word. A person exposed to no miracles and no overt signs of God's provision can grow to be a much greater believer than one who has witnessed a thousand miracles. This is one reason why we do not see miracles in generation after generation (the chief reason is, God uses miracles to indicate big program changes).

Consider your own life. If you were saved 5 years ago or more and have been learning Bible doctrine, then certainly you can see that you life is on a much different trajectory than it was before you were saved. Does this mean that you have perfect faith in God? Does this mean that, no matter what life has thrown you, you have responded with divine guidance? As imperfect creatures, we fail, we stumble, we sin against God. And yet God

is merciful and so many of us are enjoying great blessings in this life, despite our numerous imperfections.

Exodus 14:12 *Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."*

Do you see how illogical this is? The Israelites were crying out in pain and suffering as slaves to Egypt, which is documented in the book of Exodus. But now they are saying, "You should have just allowed us to remain in Egypt, serving the Egyptians."

In these few minutes, the people also decide that serving the Egyptians would have been far preferable to dying where they are in the desert. Do you see how warped their thinking has become? They were crying out to be delivered previously from slavery; and, just because they are in a tight spot right now, that does not mean that they are going to die in the desert. In fact, the only reason these people will die in the desert is, they did not mix the promises of God with faith.

Their situation is this: there is water behind them; they have no direction that they can go in; and they see the Egyptians off in the distance riding towards them. They fully understand that, when the Egyptians catch up to them, they will kill them all. These are the same Egyptians that they are speaking so wistfully about. The same Egyptians who have enslaved them for hundreds of years, the same Egyptians who are about to slaughter them in the desert—these Hebrew people are speaking nostalgically about.

Exodus 14:13a *And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid."*

Moses tells them first, "You need to stop being afraid." They cannot think while they are afraid; they cannot act while they are afraid. When your emotions control your soul, you cannot function spiritually. It is fine to have emotions—we all do. But your emotions are not designed to make decisions for you (which is the fundamental problem with liberalism).

To start out, Moses just needs these people to be quiet and to listen to him.

Recognize that Moses is speaking extemporaneously at this point. He has no specific guidance from God. First thing he knows is, he needs to tell the people to shut up and not be afraid. Fear never helps a situation. It only short-circuits the brain.

Exodus 14:13b *Stand still, and see the salvation [or, deliverance] of the Lord,...*

Moses orders the people to *not fear* and then he uses Hithpael imperative of yâtsab (יָצַב) [pronounced yaw-TSAHB<sup>v</sup>]; which was the verb used of Moses and Aaron when they would *station* themselves before the Pharaoh when he was to go out for his morning bath. The Hithpael is the reflexive of the Piel so it is the intensive reflexive. This verb means, *station yourselves, stand still, take your stand, stand up, stand here; take a stand*. Strong's #3320 BDB #426.



The Hebrews were running about expressing their fears, working each other up. They are continually expressing their disappointment with Moses and being out in the desert (actually, they were on the edge of the desert-wilderness). Moses tells them to stop being afraid and to stand still (and I would take the implication of *shut up* as well).

Moses says, “Obviously, you are afraid. Here is something that you should be able to do: stand still, don’t move; freeze right there.” When people are afraid, they often lose the ability to do anything; so Moses accommodates them here.

“All you need to do,” Moses tells them, “is to stand still watch God deliver you.” The sons of Israel did not have much going for them, but this is something that they could easily do.

I want you to notice what happened here. It does not appear that Moses said, “Hey, step back; let me commune with God, and I will get back to you on this.” Instead, Moses makes a determination about what God will do, right then and there without having to check in with God. Moses knows Who God is; Moses knows about the special bond between God and the Hebrew people. Moses has seen God act on behalf of this people 10 times; so there is no reason for him to think, “God may not do anything this time around. I am a bit worried.” I suspect that Moses is more irritated with the complainers at this point.

What Moses expects here is quite reasonable. If God is going to take Israel out of Egypt; and here they are, their backs to the sea, with no weapons, and here comes the Egyptian army—and these people are too petrified with fear to do anything—that leaves them with a single set of options: *stand still, shut up and watch*. Moses tells them, *stop being afraid! Take a stand, stand firm, get a grip, get stabilized*.

Now Moses is revealing some spiritual growth here—a great deal of it in fact. He has not panicked. He is not running to God crying for help. He knows that God made provision for this time in eternity past. Moses does not even know how God will deliver them; he just knows that God will. God has promises to fulfill to the children of Israel and God fulfills all of his promises.

The Hebrew people, on the other hand, are out of control, running around, crying to God, complaining to Moses; thinking of new and clever things to say to express their fear. Moses tells them to stop squirreling around like a bunch of babies and to stand fast; to take a stand; to hold their ground. Moses knows that there are not a lot of alternatives here.

If Pharaoh has the gumption to put together a huge army to pursue the Hebrews and the Egyptians are in chariots while many of the Hebrews are on foot, it is pretty obvious that the Egyptians are not just going to walk away and that they are not going to simply change their minds about attacking them. Right now, both the Egyptians and the Israelites are at a point of no return and the only way God can fulfill His promises to the Hebrews is for Him to annihilate the Egyptian army before their eyes. There is no clear alternative to this end result.

Exodus 14:13c ...which He will accomplish for you today.

Given all that has happened so far, Moses believes the promises which God has made to him. Therefore, Moses can logically expect God to step in at this time and do what needs to be done.

Let me guarantee you that Moses may have some ideas about what God might do, but he does not really know. There is no indication that God revealed to Moses some great plan at this point (although God has done that on previous occasions). It is simply logical that God would have to act on behalf of His people right here and now. Moses has faith in God; he trusts God and he understands God—at least in relation to the Hebrew people.

This is a fortiori logic: if God has done the most difficult thing already (He brought the people out of Egypt, despite every barrier in their way), then God can do the less difficult thing (which is, to rescue them right now as Egypt's army draws near to them).

As believers, this is an important point of logic for everyday life. God has already done the greatest thing on our behalf; He has provided us with our salvation. Therefore, it stands to reason that God can do the lesser thing, which is to get us out of this or that jam that we are in right now.

At birth and for many years of our lives, we stood in natural opposition to God. We were born with a sin nature; Adam's original sin had been imputed to us; and we all sin personally. Of all the enemies in life, there is not a greater enemy to have than God. We are inherently in rebellion against God.

Nevertheless, God, in His grace, overcame the barriers between Himself and us. There is no circumstance in our lives more difficult to deal with than the enmity between us and God. It is built into the equation of our lives from birth. Therefore, if God is able to deal with that, then His plan can take care of all difficulties that we face.



**Exodus 14:13 (NLT)** (a graphic); from [I Live for Jesus](https://liveforjesus.in/); accessed January 5, 2022.

The people of Israel are trapped between the army of Egypt and a large body of water and possibly other natural barriers (like mountains). They believe that this marks their end as a people. They all expect to die.

Exodus 14:13a-c **And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation [or, deliverance] of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today.**

The Israelites are upset. They have seen the Egyptians with their chariots and they know that, at any time, these Egyptians will come after them. And the Hebrew people have no place to run to, no place to hide. In their own minds, they will be the victims of a great slaughter.

Nevertheless, Moses makes this promise to them:

Exodus 14:13d **For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever.**

Moses sees exactly the same thing that his fellow Israelites see. However, Moses tells the people: “You will never see these Egyptian soldiers ever again. This is it; this is the end. You see them now; but you will never see them after today.” There are several adverbs and nouns in this phrase which indicate that the Hebrew people would never, no matter what, ever see the Egyptians again.

The Exegesis Companion Bible comes close to a literal translation: **...you see them never again any more eternally...**

Why does Moses know this? Remember, he is just speaking off the top of his head. God has not communicated anything to him yet. God has not pulled Moses aside and said, “You need to calm these people down, and then I will tell you what to do next.” There are no words from God. This indicates to us that Moses is beginning to understand God and beginning to think like God.

As a result, Moses does not have to run to God for every single crisis (although, quite obviously, this is the greatest crisis for these people to date).



**Exodus 14:13 (KJV)** (a graphic); from [Amazon](#); accessed January 5, 2022.

Exodus 14:13 And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation [or, *deliverance*] of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever.

Moses uses the verb *râ’âh* (רָאָה) [pronounced *raw-AWH*] three times in this single verse. The Qal imperative can be translated *observe*, *watch* or *see* (“**Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD...**”). In v. 13d, we have *râ’âh* in the Qal perfect—the Egyptians are encamped right in front of them and they have nowhere to go. They have *seen* the Egyptians and they know they are not going away. This views the action in a completed state. The Egyptians right in front of them is an established fact; it is a given. Finally, this verb is accompanied by the *lâmed* preposition (*to, for, in regard to*) and the verb is in the Qal infinitive construct; it acts as a verbal noun. This time, *râ’âh* is preceded by the negative and the 2<sup>nd</sup> masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect of the verb *yâçaph* (יָצָא) [pronounced *yaw-SAHPH*], which means *to add, to augment*, and often it is translated *to continue to*. This might be rendered *with regards to them, you not continue to be seeing them again forever*. *Continue to* and the negative means they will *never* see the Egyptians again. “Do not be afraid. Stand still and **see the deliverance of the Lord which He will do for you today**. These Egyptians which you **see** right now, you will never **see** them again, ever.”

Moses reveals great confidence in God at this point, as well as a clear understanding of God’s character and intent. He knows that God did not haul all Israel out into the desert to die. Therefore, the only logical event which can occur next is God delivering His people from Pharaoh and his army—somehow in some way.

Moses likely has no idea what God has in mind at this point; but he had seen a series of miracles and signs, which lead to the people of Israel leaving Egypt—and so he continues to trust God. He does not know *what* God is going to do; he is certain that God will solve this problem.

Bear in mind that Moses’ life is on the line as well.

Moses is almost at the point where he can sit back and think to himself, “This is fascinating! I wonder how God is going to get us out of this jam?”

**Application:** This describes, in many ways, our lives today. God gives us a little doctrine; and we apply it. God gives us a little more doctrine and then we apply that. At some point, we will be in a jam, we will be under great pressure, or it will appear that the world is about to fall in on us—and what is the solution? Faith in God, faith in His Word; and faith in the doctrine which is resident in your soul (assuming that there is any).

**Application:** God has not told you how He is going to deliver you in advance. We have all been in difficult circumstances, and, in many cases, we have seen God deliver us out of those circumstances. This does not mean that God’s deliverances are going to be as



spectacular as what we are studying here; but, if God can deliver the Hebrew people as described here, a fortiori logic then tells us that He is able to deliver us as well. (The a fortiori logic is, if God can do something as great as deliver the Israelites here, then He is able to do the lesser thing of delivering us from whatever personal jam we are in.)

**Application:** Just so there is no misperception here—the sons of Israel are in a time period when the canon of Scripture is not complete; and they have seen a great many signs and wonders. That is not our life. You are not going to be tripping over some great miracle every few steps. In fact, most believers today experience nothing even remotely resembling a miracle. That is fine; that is normal. God is not going to curse you with frogs; and God is not going to push aside the waters of a sea, so that you can walk across the bottom of where that sea used to be. That co-worker that you cannot stand—God is not going to strike them dead with lightning on some golf course.

What God has been doing thus far in Exodus is quite an amazing set of miracles and signs. That is because, the formation of Israel as a nation is one of the most important events in human history. Therefore, God is going to mark this event in such a way to make it incredibly memorable.

God is not going to take you and make a nation of you and your seed. 400 years later, God is not going to extract all of your ancestors in one nation and place them in another land. This happens one time in human history; it is an extraordinary event. Even just to read about. Therefore, these miracles are specific for a unique event in human history. An amazing God-caused event is called for at this time.

**Application:** When it comes to our own lives today, we need to lower our expectations considerably.

**Application:** It is a serious mistake for the believer in the Church Age to be a miracle chaser, to speak in tongues, to think that your church will hold healings at the front of the building, and that many people will believe as a result. These things really did happen in the past; and the God of 2000 years ago is the same God today. But, that does not mean that He has the exact same program today as He did 2000 years ago.

The fundamental differences are two: (1) we have God the Holy Spirit with us from the moment of salvation; and (2) we have the complete canon of Scripture. These two things have never happened before. The canon was closed out in A.D. 95; and the miracles and the signs of the early Church Age began to die out only a few decades after that first Pentecost of the Church Age (there are actual examples of these gifts disappearing in the epistles).

Moses reassures the people:

Exodus 14:14a [The Lord will fight for you,...](#)

A fortiori logic—God has already done the greatest thing, to get the people out of Egypt. Now, the lesser thing is, these Egyptians are on their tails, in chariots. Now, who is greater? God or the Egyptian army? Moses knows the answer to that, even if his people do not. Getting Israel out of Egypt in the first place is the great thing; keeping them safe afterwards is the lesser thing.

Moses does not have to be keyed in by God as to what He is going to do next. He knows that God must—based upon His promises and works—deliver Israel. “Right now,” Moses said, “We are going to stand and watch what God does.” Specifically, Moses, at this time, could not tell the Israelites exactly what God was going to do. However, Moses knows that the people will be able to see God fight for them.

**Application:** If Moses, the greatest man of his generation, a man close enough to God to hear God’s voice, does not know exactly what is coming next, why do we think we should?

Exodus 14:14b *...and you shall hold your peace.*”

Chârash (שָׁחַח) [pronounced *chaw-RASH*] has two disjoint meanings. It means *engrave, plough, fabricate* and it means *to be silent, speechless*. It is likely two different words which are spelled the same but mean entirely different things (this is how BDB presents these words).

“Here is all you have to do,” Moses tells them, “Shut up, stand still and watch.”

These Hebrews are out of control with panic. They keep running up to Moses and they keep yelling out clever lines and slogans; and behind them, a hundred other voices are chiming in, *yeah, tell it, right on*.

What does Moses tell the people to calm down and hold their peace? Why not just let them do whatever, and let God surprise them with the magnificent solution? Fear and being controlled by emotions are sins—obviously, God does not need 2 million people filled with mental attitude sins at this moment. And, secondly, Moses expects there to be instructions from God as to what to do. There has to be some calm, some control in order for Moses to relay this information to the people.

**Exodus 14:14 (NIV)** (a graphic); from [Etsy](#); accessed January 5, 2022.





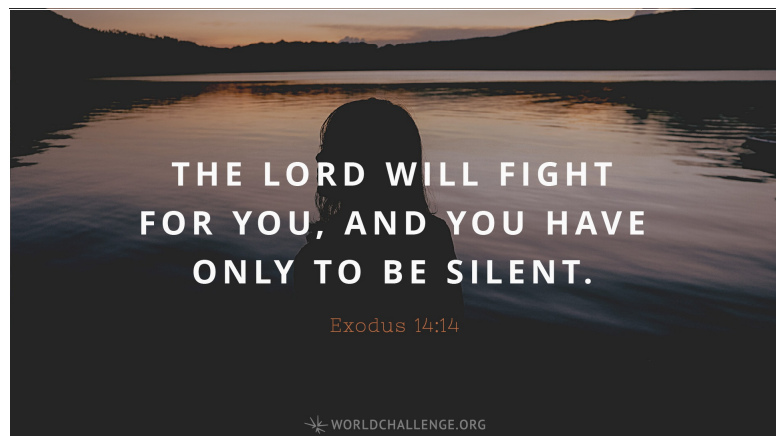
Exodus 14:14 **The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.**"

Moses knows that his people have no real weaponry; no ability to fight against a well-armed and well-trained army. Therefore, God would have to fight for them. God has no other choice. Moses does not know exactly how God is going to do this; he simply knows that is the only option.

In the book of Genesis, we find that there is a special bond between God and the Hebrew people. Moses has seen with his own eyes that God has brought this people out of Egypt, utilizing great power. Therefore, God is not going to allow them to be suddenly wiped out.

What do these people need to learn? They need to watch what God does. They need to look at what happens with their own eyes—and each one of them will experience what God will do for them—and they need to think about that. They need to take this information about God into their souls and believe it.

Then, something interesting takes place. After saying all of this—and what Moses said is dead-on accurate—he apparently goes to God and cries out to God (we assume this, based upon what God says to Moses).



**Exodus 14:14 (ESV)** (a graphic); from [World Challenge](https://www.worldchallenge.org); accessed January 5, 2022.

## Lesson 208: Exodus 14:15–17a

## God Gives Moses Instructions

### A brief summary of Exodus 14:10–14:

Exodus 14:10 When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD.

The sons of Israel have walked out of Egypt; but suddenly, the army of Egypt is right there, nearby. They panic and call out to God.

Exodus 14:11–12 They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the

Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

Israel actually suggests that things would have been better had they been left in Egypt as slaves.

Exodus 14:13–14 And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." (ESV; capitalized)

Moses, who has not yet talked with God, knows that God will deliver Israel.

In between v. 14 and v. 15, Moses communed with God, and he is apparently quite upset. When God asks, "*Why do you cry to me?*" the verb is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular. So God is speaking specifically to Moses.

Exodus 14:15a And the Lord said to Moses, "*Why do you cry to Me?*"

*You* is the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular; so God is speaking to Moses in particular, "Why are you crying out to Me in distress?" So, even though Moses appears to have it all together in the previous two verses, it is clear, by God's words, that Moses is experiencing some personal anxiety over this situation. Obviously, he has no clue as to what will happen next.

In the alternative, Moses represents the people to God, and the people of Israel are crying to God through Moses. However, I think that is a convoluted way of reading this.

What seems to be clear is, Moses has prayed to God—in fact, he might be somewhat emotional and possibly even in a bit of a personal panic, given the verb that God uses.

The verb is in the imperfect tense, and here, it is an Ingressive imperfect. Moses has told the people what to do, but then, he gave his own words 2 minutes thought, and he is beginning to panic. Apparently, Moses, talking to God, says, "Listen, LORD, this is what I have told Your people; but now I am beginning to panic. What should we do?" God replied, "*Why are you beginning to cry out to Me (in panic)?*"

Moses thought he had this figured out. The sons of Israel were to shut up, stand at attention and watch. But this is not exactly what God wanted them to do. God has specific instructions for His people. Ideally speaking, they are ready to hear these instructions.

Exodus 14:15b Tell the children of Israel to go forward.

God then tells Moses, "Command the sons of Israel to move out." This is certainly problematic because behind them are the Egyptian troops and right in front of them is the

sea (we do not know which one). My impression is that they are at a section where the waters are partially surrounding them. They have no weapons to speak of, at this point. So, where exactly are they going to move out to? Straight ahead is water.

Exodus 14:15 *And the Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.*

Although it is not written, Moses turned to God. What Y<sup>e</sup>howah said is interesting. It is almost insulting. Moses has, without talking to God, told the Hebrews to stop talking and to watch God's deliverance. This is good. Moses does not have to consult God for this. It is a logical conclusion based upon God's promises. God wants Moses to take this a step further. The Hebrews have no weapons, so they cannot turn around and march against the Egyptians; they are trapped where they are, so the only thing they can do is to march forward, away from the Egyptian. This means that they would be marching right into the sea. This is somewhat tongue in cheek. *What do you think you are going to do? You are marching away from Egypt; get up and start marching!* Furthermore, it is obvious in which direction the children of Israel are to go—the pillar of the cloud is in that direction (compare Exodus 14:19). At this point, Moses has no idea whatsoever as to what God plans to do.

Remember how the people were being guided by manifestations of God: *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.* (Exodus 13:21–22; ESV) Therefore, God had a direction for them to move in. Apparently, they had stopped.

God then gives Moses some specific instructions.

Exodus 14:16a *But lift up your rod,...*

God is nothing if not theatric. I say this, regarding this matter, as there are two million Israelites here (as well as the Egyptian army). For them to see and all appreciate what God does, it has to be big. Throughout the Scriptures, the signs, miracles and wonders which God does are always audience appropriate. Therefore, since we have an audience of 2 million, what God does will have to be quite spectacular. It has to be something that all 2 million can see with their own eyes.

Let me suggest an alternate miracle: God suddenly kills all of the Egyptians. Boom. All dead. It is simple, it easy, it is clean. So, why doesn't God do that? Four reasons: (1) It is less spectacular; (2) this would not be actually seen by all 2 million Israelites. (3) The Egyptians would be given no chance for a last minute act of repentance (a change of mind). (4) Where exactly would the Israelites go from this point? They would pretty much have to backtrack quite a number of miles, and at what point would they cross the waters? My point is, if some sat down and thought about this, and what God could do, some approaches would be rejected—pretty much for these four reasons.

Exodus 14:16a **But lift up your rod,...**

It is going to be clear that God will exercise His power through Moses. Moses will take that staff in his hand and lift it up. No doubt, the people are aware of Moses' staff and that it was used prior to this for many of the plagues. They may not have seen him do this, but nearly all of the Hebrews know what he did. So now, Moses is to lift up his staff—suggesting that God is about to act.

As before, Moses is not causing anything to happen. God is making these things happen. Moses is essentially signaling to the people where to look.

Exodus 14:16b **...and stretch out your hand over the sea...**

Moses is to stretch out his hand over the sea. I picture this as his hand with the staff in it. But, he could be lifting up the staff with one hand, and stretching out his other hand towards the sea.

In any case, this is done so that many of the Hebrew people can see what Moses is doing; and he is directing their attention to the sea. They have been marching towards the sea, God tells them to pick up and keep marching; and now Moses raises up the staff<sup>7</sup> over the sea.

Exodus 14:16c **...and divide it.**

Quite obviously, there is nothing in Moses's staff or in his own personal power that will divide the sea. Only God is able to do that. Moses is going to point out where the people should all look. God will divide the sea, so that the waters will pile up on this side and that side, as if they are stalks of grain.

I thought that this might be the same word for *divide* as we found in Gen. 1 where God separated the land from the sea, but this is a different word. We have here the 2<sup>nd</sup> masculine singular, Qal imperative, 3<sup>rd</sup> masculine singular suffix of bâqa' (עָקַב) [pronounced *baw-KAHQ*] and it means *break open, break through, rip open, divide*. Strong's #1234 BDB #131. God is going to break through, or break open or divide the sea before Israel.

Exodus 14:16d **And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.**

The sons of Israel will go through the midst of the sea walking on dry ground. They are to go forward, towards the sea, and the sea will be divided, allowing them to walk along the sea's bed.

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<sup>7</sup> Again, this is my assumption that Moses is holding his staff when he does this.

*Dry ground* is a word which means exactly that. God has given Moses the direction to send his people in. What God is telling Moses to do is totally unprecedented. However, Moses has seen enough miracles so he knows enough doctrine to trust God now.

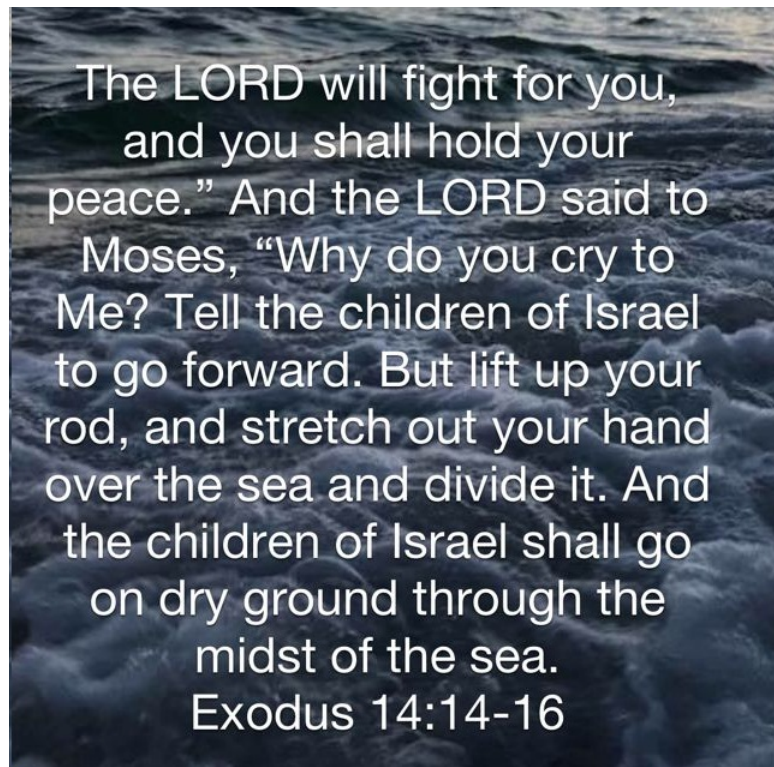
Moses strikes a very familiar figure and the Israelites will know who he is from afar off. They will know his staff and they will watch him raise up his staff and his hand; and they will see the sea part. We do not know if the Egyptians can see any of this. At this point, I doubt it.

Exodus 14:16 But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.

God tells Moses what to do. Notice, again, that this is very theatrical. Everyone's eyes will be on Moses all the sons of Jacob will see it. So, God does not just simply divide the waters—again, He makes it known that He is working through Moses.

Like all of God's miracles, this miracle is very crowd-specific. What I mean is, every person there will experience this miracle. They may not be able to see Moses holding up his staff, but every single man, woman and child is going to walk across the ground where a water way had been, moments previous (or however long this process took, whether it be a few minutes or a few hours).

**Exodus 14:14–16 (KJV)** (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#); accessed January 5, 2022.



Exodus 14:17a And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians,...

Again, we have the word *châzaq* (חָזַק) [pronounced *khaw-ZAHK*], which means, *to strengthen*. *Egyptians* here refers to the army of Pharaoh. This army has nothing but a desire to inflict harm upon the Israelites; this army is out for revenge. They are not going to bring these people back as slaves; they plan to kill every one of them. God will give the Egyptian army the strength in their souls so that they may act upon their desires. God does not put those desires in their souls; God gives them the strength to act.



Both Moses and the sons of Israel will need to be focused upon God and what He is doing. First of all, He has given the Egyptians the strength to exercise their volition against Israel. Remember, the firstborn in every household has died; and every household is in mourning. Their grief over the loss of their firstborn brings many families to a weakened state. Therefore, it requires great strength for them to suddenly reassume their positions as soldiers and to come after the sons of Israel. Their natural state at this time would be one of mourning. However, their hatred for the Hebrew people is stronger than their mourning. God did not place the hatred in their souls; God simply gave them the strength to act upon mental attitude sins in their souls.

**Illustration:** We have a modern view of this in the Palestinians today, who have souls filled with hatred for the Jews (not every Palestinian, of course). This anger fomented and causes them to do things which result in great harm to themselves. As has been said, "They need to come to a point where they love their children more than they hate Israel." As long as their hatred is stronger, there will be no peace for them.

#### **Lesson 209: Exodus 14:15–19**

#### **The Angel of the Lord and the Pillar of Cloud**

God is speaking to Moses, telling him what he needed to do; and telling him what the Egyptians were going to do.

Exodus 14:15 The LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward.

For the Hebrew people to go forward, they would be marching into the sea.

Exodus 14:16 Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. (ESV; capitalized)

If the people are to march forward, the sea must be removed.

Exodus 14:17a And I indeed will harden [lit., *strengthen*] the hearts of the Egyptians,...

God does not turn the Egyptians against the people of Israel. God is giving them the strength to exercise their negative volition towards Israel and towards God. Pharaoh gave the clarion call to his soldiers to come out against Israel (now, far out of their sight). God gives them the strength to respond. Instead of sitting at home in mourning for their firstborn and the destruction that they had all faced, the Egyptians had the strength to get up with the intention of avenging themselves.

Exodus 14:17b ...and they shall follow them.

*They* is the Egyptian army; and they follow *them*, the Israelites, into the sea (or, where the sea used to be). This has not taken place yet. God is describing what would happen in the near future.



Israel appears to be going down into the midst of the sea to walk along the sea bottom. The waters will be stacked up on both sides of them. The Egyptians will see them do this. Therefore, the Egyptians will follow right after them.

All of these soldiers know that the God of the Hebrews is a God of great miracles. No doubt, they realize that Israel is walking where there used to be water. However, no Egyptian in pursuit of Israel appears to stop and call out, “Listen, this could be a trap!”

Instead, what they see before them is 2 million unarmed people, moving forward, retreating from the Egyptians, leading their livestock and carrying all of their possessions. They are seen as sitting ducks by the Egyptian army. The Egyptian soldiers no doubt understand that their purpose here is to slaughter the people of Israel en masse. This is not a battle they are about to engage in, but a slaughter. The Egyptians are filled with hatred and blood-lust at this point. God has given them the strength to act according to what is in their souls. They have no intention of capturing their slaves and bringing them back.

Exodus 14:17c *So I will gain honor over Pharaoh...*

In this verse is the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, Niphal imperfect of *kâbêd* (כָּבַד) [pronounced *kaw<sup>b</sup>-VADE*] and it can mean *to be heavy, to be weighty and burdensome*; but it can also mean *to honor, to glorify*. Strong's #3513 BDB #457. There appears to be quite a distance between these two sets of definitions. Context determines the meaning. The BDB in this case lists it as one word but with both sets of meanings. The Niphal is the passive of the Qal; however, the function of the Niphal can be more complex than simply being a passive verb. The Niphal can also describe action which is in progress or development. This is likely an aspect of the usage here. God will receive glorification and this glorification is an ongoing thing. As groups of people hear more and more about Egypt and what occurred in Egypt, the more God is glorified over Pharaoh and his chariots and his armies and his horsemen. A simple translation would be, “*I will receive honor...*”

God is speaking here, and that He would be glorified by Pharaoh. This means that God will be acknowledged and observed to be Who He is—the God of the universe.

God does not do this because He has some massive ego which requires massaging; God does this so that the sons of Israel will know that they can trust in Him and in His power. Furthermore, other peoples of other nations are able to, based upon reports of what is taking place, recognize God, as He has revealed Himself in Israel, is the Entity in Whom they should all believe.

Exodus 14:17d *...and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen.*

In vv. 17 & 18, *chariot* is actually in the singular. It is speaking of his mobilized force (singular) as opposed to the individual chariots, as in Exodus 14:25–26.

All that the army of Pharaoh, his chariots and horsemen—they will all glorify and honor God. It is not what they want to do; but it is what they will do. These things are meant to

be the glory of Egypt of the glory of Pharaoh, but God will, by the events of this chapter, be glorified by these things instead. Their negative volition, their actions against Israel, and their final defeat—all of these things glorify God. In fact, God will use these things and even Pharaoh to glorify Himself.

**Illustration:** In the 1940's, Adolf Hitler had one of the greatest, most disciplined armies in the world; and he was allied with Japan, whose army was vicious and unrelenting. But there were two problems: Hitler was also intent upon destroying the Jewish (Hebrew) people and Japan worshiped false gods. God would not tolerate either of those things for long.

**Illustration (continued):** God was certainly not going to allow Hitler to destroy the Jewish people. So God was glorified both by the defeat of the German army (and the rescue of the Jewish people from the concentration camps which had been established). God also allowed for a defeat of Japan so complete, that they placed themselves under complete subjection to their American enemies. These defeats glorified God. Many Jews were rescued and many in Japan turned toward the God of the West. General MacArthur, when he ruled over Japan, called for Americans to send Bibles and missionaries to Japan. Even to this day, about 20% of Japan is considered Christian; and they remain one of our greatest allies.

**Illustration:** For about 20 years, the United States army was in Afghanistan. Although many of the soldiers wanted to share their faith in Jesus with the people there, our government worked against that (this was true in both Iraq and Afghanistan). As a result, the countries of the United States and Afghanistan are not closely allied (and never will be). We may have a variety of reasons for taking our armed forces into another country; but if Jesus is not a part of it, then we are wasting time, lives and treasure. There are legitimate reasons to go to war; but if God is not glorified, then warfare will accomplish very little.

**Application:** We are in a precarious position as a nation today (I write this in 2022), and our future looks quite bleak. This has happened many times in the history of the United States. When we turn toward God—which people did a large numbers before, during and after World War II—God delivered us. The relationship between the United States and God is key to our future. *If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.* (2Chronicles 7:13–14; NASB)

Exodus 14:17 *And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them [the Hebrew peoples]. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen.*

God continues speaking to Moses, telling him all that will happen next.

By hardening the hearts of the Egyptians, God is not changing their volition. The Egyptians are not hanging around talking about how much they like the Hebrew people and God steps in to change that. God strengthens the resolve of the Egyptians, who are angry with the Hebrew people. They hold them responsible for all that has happened. Their intent and desire is to destroy the Hebrew people. God does not put that into their hearts; God gives them the strength and resolve to do what they want to do.<sup>8</sup>

Exodus 14:18a *Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord,...*

Let me suggest, that, as the Egyptians follow the sons of Israel onto the dry ground of the bottom of the sea, that some of them will actually believe in the Revealed God, the Y<sup>e</sup>howah of the Hebrews. I don't doubt that there will be Egyptians in heaven from this time period and from this very incident.

Exodus 14:18b *...when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.*

And the actions of Pharaoh, his chariots and horsemen will glorify God. God has said what would happen; they will do this in front of the eyes of the Hebrew people; and for many centuries to follow, God's power was respected for what He did here.

There are still Egyptians who are alive at this time who are watching from the city gates; those who chose not to accompany Pharaoh in this endeavor. There are still Egyptians scattered throughout Egypt watching and listening for news. So are families whose husbands have gone to war against the Hebrews—that makes it sound too noble—they have gone out to slaughter the Hebrew people. Others are men who refused to participate, but had not yet believed in the Revealed God (Jesus Christ). This means that there is still some evangelization to take place. This final episode will cause evangelization throughout the entire world, which I believe will include some Egyptians.

Exodus 14:18 *Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.*

I would assume, at this point, there are other Egyptians, not a part of the army, watching all that is transpiring, watching to see the sons of Jacob crushed. This is their desire as well.

All of this that we have studied between vv. 15–18 is God speaking to Moses, telling him what would take place. The emphasis is upon what Moses is to do and how God would be glorified by the Egyptian army (which army God will destroy).

We now leave the point where God is speaking to Moses to the series of events which correlate to that. The narrative which follows picks up at that exact point.

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<sup>8</sup> I realize that I have repeated this point about 50 times, but I do so because what is actually taking place here is so universally misunderstood.

As an aside, this is a literary technique which is used in many books and movies. Someone narrates what is taking place (usually in the past) and, without any fanfare, the narration by someone turns into the actual event itself, playing out. The Bible does this on many occasions. I suspect that the Bible is the first book to ever do something like this.

Exodus 14:19a [And the Angel of God...moved...](#)

In this passage, there are two entities—the Angel of God and the Pillar of the Cloud. Both represent two Members of the Godhead. The Angel of God is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Member of the Trinity and the Pillar of the Cloud is God the Father. Or, we might understand each one as being a manifestation of the Revealed God.

Whether two Members of the Godhead, or two manifestations of the Revealed God, the Angel moves from where He is.

Now, in all reality, God is everywhere—He is omnipresent. He is immanent and transcendent. However, He also chooses to manifest Himself in particular ways in a particular place for particular purposes.

Because of what is going to happen, I believe that each manifestation represents a different Member of the Godhead—the Angel of God is the Revealed Member of the Trinity; and the Pillar of the Cloud is God the Father guiding and protecting the people (or vice versa; I do not see any overwhelming evidence as to Who is Who).

Exodus 14:19b [...Who went before the camp of Israel,...](#)

The Angel of God was in front of Israel, guiding them. At this point, Israel has stopped and they are camped in a place where they have water in front of them and Pharaoh's army behind them. The Angel of God leaves His place of going before the people of God.

Exodus 14:19c [...and went behind them;...](#)

The Angel of God was in front of the encampment of Israel, but now He goes behind them. Again, all of this refers to the manifestation of God—Who is able to manifest Himself in a diverse number of ways and forms.

Exodus 14:19d [...and the pillar of cloud went from before them...](#)

Israel followed the Pillar of the Cloud, Who led them in the daytime. Night is coming upon them and usually, the Pillar of the Cloud gives way to the Pillar of Fire. However, now, the Pillar of the Cloud moves from where He usually is.

Jesus Christ is the visible member of the Trinity and He was guiding them as the pillar of cloud and as the pillar of fire (that would make the Angel of God, God).

Moses, once he organizes the Israelites, will lift up his hand and stretch it out over the sea and they will march toward the sea. The pillar of the cloud was in that direction, indicating that was the direction for them to move in. Pharaoh and his army are standing behind Israel making a plan of attack. They are not in any sort of a hurry because the Hebrews are trapped between them and the sea. This allows Pharaoh's men all the time they need to think about this. God now places the pillar of the cloud between Pharaoh and Moses and between their respective peoples.

Exodus 14:19e ...and stood behind them.

The Pillar of the Cloud was leading the sons of Israel at night. However, that night, It moves in right behind the encampment of Israel, stationing itself behind Israel and between the two camps. By this, God gave cover to the Israelites as they pulled up stakes and walked to where the sea used to be.

### Lesson 210: Exodus 14:19–21

### God Stacks up the Waters

At this time, the camp of Israel and the army of Pharaoh are not too far from one another. In front of Israel is a large body of water called the Sea of Reeds. Somewhere, not too far behind is the army of Pharaoh.

Exodus 14:19 And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them.

Usually, wherever the pillar of cloud was seen, that was the direction that the Hebrew people were to go in. That will not be the case here.

The Angel of God is Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. He is the manifest Person of the Godhead; He is the Person who interacts with the Hebrew people.

The pillar of cloud both guides and protects the Hebrew people.

In v. 19, the Pillar of Cloud was first leading them, but then it moved behind them, to stand between the people and the Egyptian army. To the Egyptian army, this probably appears to be a heavy fog suddenly descending upon them.

Portions of v. 20 are very difficult to translate. Therefore, I will include a few very literal translations below:

### Literal Translations of Exodus 14:20

Brenner's Mechanical

...and he came between the campsite of "Mits'rayim<sup>Two</sup> straits" and the campsite of "Yisra'el<sup>He turns El aside</sup>", and the cloud existed, and the darkness, and he made the night light, and this one did not come near (that) one all the night,...

## Literal Translations of Exodus 14:20

Charles Thomson OT	And when it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel and had taken its station; there came on a thick darkness and night intervened so that they did not intermix one with the other during that whole night.
Christian Standard Bible	It came between the Egyptian and Israelite forces. There was cloud and darkness, it lit up the night, and neither group came near the other all night long.
Webster's Bible Trans.	And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness <i>to them</i> , but it gave light by night <i>to these</i> : so that the one came not near the other all the night.

Both Brenner and the Christian Standard Bible provide a translation closest to the original text. Webster, by using italics, shows what is added to many translations. Charles Thomson translates his text from the Greek LXX. Recall that my base translation for this study is the New King James Version.

Exodus 14:20a *So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel.*

*Came* is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *bôw'* (אוּב) [pronounced *boh*], which is a very common Hebrew verb. It means, *to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter, to advance; to attain*. Strong's #935 BDB #97.

In the English, it is proper to have the word *between* just once. In the Hebrew, this is a preposition which is generally found twice, but meaning, *in between X and Y*.

The word translated *camp* is *machāneh* (מַחֲנֶה) [pronounced *mah-khuh-NEH*], which means, *camp, encampment; an army camp; those who are camped [army, company, people]; the courts [of Jehovah]; the heavenly host*. Strong's #4264 BDB #334. Even though Israel did not see itself as an army, God certainly did.

So, there is the encampment of Egypt and the encampment of Israel, but the Pillar of the Cloud and the Angel of God are standing between them. In front of the camp of Israel is the Sea of Reeds.

Exodus 14:20b *Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one,...*

The NKJV translation above is fine, but the words *to the one* are not there. This does not mean that it is wrong to insert these words. Brenner's mechanic translation above gives a fairly good reading of the original Hebrew; and Webster suggests which additional words help us to understand what is meant by the Hebrew.

Exodus 14:20c *...and it gave light by night to the other,...*



Again, the NKJV translation above is fine, but the words *to the other* are also not there.

Exodus 14:20b-c Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other,...

V. 20b and 20c are very difficult to translate. Literally, it reads: So there is the cloud and the darkness and so light to the darkness.

If you read these two partial verses without the added words of the NKJV, and that is pretty much what you are left with. Those additional words are necessary in order to sort this out.

V. 20b appears to correlate with the *camp of the Egyptians* (named first) and v. 20c seems to correlate with the *camp of Israel* (named second).

If you want to see each and every Hebrew word and the morphology, see Exodus 14 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). I may have made it more confusing by what I revealed.

Exodus 14:20b-c Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other,...

I will go with the NKJV translation (directly above) and use that for the basis of my explanation. Most people would prefer not to give so much thought to this. However, when doing my own set of translations for this passage, I had to give a great deal of thought to each and every word in this section.<sup>9</sup>

Because the Angel of God and the Pillar of the Cloud are between the two camps, one camp cannot see the other. The camp of the Egyptian army cannot see anything. They cannot see which way to go nor can they see the Israelites. However, this does not panic or confuse either group. It is night, this probably seems like a fog, and they are in the right position to keep Israel trapped. From the Egyptian side, nothing seems unusual or amiss. For some of the Egyptians, they are possibly fantasizing about the wholesale slaughter they want to do the next day.

When the Hebrew phrase is taken by itself, it is unclear whether the light was provided just for Israel (as it appears to be here) or if this was true for both camps. When we take these two phrases together, God appears to be keeping the Egyptian camp in darkness and He is giving light to the Israelites. In addition to all this, the one camp was unable to see the other because of the Pillar of the Cloud.

Both camps being unable to see one another benefitted Israel in two ways: (1) the Egyptians could not see them, see what they were doing and attack; and (2) the Israelites could not see the Egyptians, and so were less anxious about their situation.

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<sup>9</sup> Before writing and sending out these short lessons, I have fully translated every word from the original Hebrew into 3 separate translations.

Why are these specific events taking place and why does God do this and why is this recorded by God the Holy Spirit? God is giving time for the people of Egypt and time for the sons of Israel to consider themselves and their relationship to the Revealed God. The Egyptian army had moved fast, but now it is night—yet with some light—and although they had seen the people of God, they cannot see them now. They can hear the waters of the Sea of Reeds. During this time, the Egyptians have time to consider what they are doing. They have time to think about what has happened up to the point in time.

Every single Egyptian has seen with his own eyes the 10 great judgments Israel's God brought upon them. They experienced each of these judgments personally. Ideally, some actually pondered this and what they were doing. Others in the Egyptian army, thinking about those things, only wanted revenge against Israel and her God.

In any case, there is a period of time for the people of Egypt to think.

I have observed this phenomenon on many occasions, where God gives a person some time—let's just call it time off, but there is time for that person to ponder, to think about their lives and to think—ideally speaking—about their relationship to God. The Egyptians have an antagonistic relationship with Israel's God, Nevertheless, they know that the God of Israel is far superior to their own pantheon of gods. They have all seen this with their own eyes. Here, at this moment, God gives them time to ponder their place in life and in time.

**Illustration:** I write this in 2022 and for the past 2 years, because of covid, many people had the chance to consider their lives, their futures and their relationship with God (if any). Unbelievers had a chance to consider God; believers had a chance to consider their spiritual growth or lack thereof. This gave time for believers to contact unbelieving friends and tell them about Christ (by phone, texting or email). This gave time for many unbelievers to consider their relationship with God. And this gave time for believers to learn more about God.

If God has given you time, what should you do? Use it to learn the Word of God. Today, there are so many ways to access the teaching of the Word of God. There are many doctrinal churches where the pastor's primary focus is the teaching of the Word of God. Although it is a rare pastor who teaches an hour or even two a day, as R. B. Thieme, Jr. did. Nevertheless, there is the ability to access the entire ministry of a pastor electronically (including the teaching of R. B. Thieme, Jr. and R. B. Thieme III; and many other excellent Bible teachers). In grace oriented churches, the availability of these materials comes without any cost.

I have found that, even if I have already heard this or that series taught by R. B. Thieme, Jr.; when I have gone back to listen to it again, it is as if I had never heard it before. And the present-day applications are quite amazing.

Like many, Bob used the events of the day to sometimes illustrate points that he made; and I have made various applications and allusions to this or that historical event or current series of events, in order to draw some parallels between the words of Scripture and our

lives today. We interpret Scripture according to the time and place of Scripture when it was written (known as the study of Isagogics); but we can nearly always draw parallels to our lives today, in one way or another (something that R. B. Thieme, Jr. was brilliant at doing).

Back to the narrative:

Exodus 14:20d ...so that the one did not come near the other all that night.

Although this passage could be somewhat confusing, the whole idea was, throughout the night, the Egyptian army was unable to find or see the Hebrew encampment. There might only be a kilometer or two between the two camps, but the Egyptians do not know where the Israelites are. There might as well be 100 miles between them.

God the Son is standing now as the rear guard for the children of Israel, who have never fought before. We have a huge group of Israelites that must be organized to cross over the sea. This requires time and organization. God gives them time as the cloud stands between Pharaoh and Moses. At night, the cloud illuminates the sky, but the army of Pharaoh is unable to see the army of Israel. The one not coming near the other one refers to the camps of Israel and Egypt.

To Israel, the cloud was one of light. To Egypt, the cloud was one of darkness. This sets up two different ways that the same God is manifested to man. To the Israelites, light; to the Egyptians darkness. For those who believe in Jesus Christ, God is our salvation, our deliverance, our light. For those who do not believe, God is darkness, a judgment cloud hanging over them.

During this period of time, each man in each camp reflects on all the events which have brought him to this place. Each man will make a decision as to what to do the next morning.

For each Israelite, the right decision is to move ahead, forward, as God will lead them. For each Egyptian, the right decision would be to simply let them go and then believe in their God.

Exodus 14:20 So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.

God manifested Himself in such a way as to guide the Hebrew people in the direction that they should go. He also gave cover to them, protecting them from the Egyptians. The Egyptian camp was apparently enshrouded in darkness, but the Israeli camp had some light.

When the dawn broke the next morning, God's great miracle occurred.

**Illustration:** God is justice, but that is seen in two different ways. To the believer, Jesus attained our justice for us. He paid for our sins on the cross. We deserve death, but we have been given life, because of God's justice. However, to the unbeliever, God's justice will eventually catch up to them, and God will separate them from Himself for all eternity.

Exodus 14:21a *Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; ...*

You cannot read the Bible without acknowledging just how theatrical God is. The great movie maker, Cecil B. DeMille, did a spectacular version of the Exodus, which was very theatric—but he was very much presenting the material as found in the Bible. God wanted the Israelites and the Egyptians to understand, by the things that Moses did, that God was active and powerful; and that He worked through His man, Moses. So, God does not merely divide the seas, but He has Moses lift up his hand over the seas in order for that process to begin.

Exodus 14:21b *...and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night,...*

The word for *wind* is the same word as *spirit*. I believe that we have a manifestation for all 3 Members of the Trinity right here—the Wind, the Pillar of Cloud and the Angel of God. The Holy Spirit, God the Father and Jesus the Christ (perhaps in that same order).

Exodus 14:21c *...and made the sea into dry land,...*

Sometimes, the lamed preposition is used to indicate a transformation from one thing into another (it is the word *into* in v. 21c). What used to be the bottom of a sea is now dry land.

God is certainly able to, instantly, change a flowing sea to dry land, where there is no trace of the sea. Then the sea can be instantly brought back. However, this is not what God does. Many times, the things which God does are spectacular, but often with a nod towards a series of natural events.

Exodus 14:21d *...and the waters were divided.*

The waters are heaped up on both sides of the dry land across which, Israel will travel.

This verse gives some geographical clues as to where the Israelites were. The waters running into the Red Sea basically run South, South East. However, Moses and company are parked in front of a section which is moving due south. God brings a wind from the east to do two things: (1) to cut a path through the sea, and to hold back the waters from the north and from the south; and (2) very importantly to dry up the ground so that the Israelites can cross at this juncture. Had only the surface water been moved out of their way, crossing a wet and sloshy sea floor still would have been almost an impossible chore. The sea floor had to be dried enough so that the people could walk across it with all their animals and possessions.

Exodus 14:21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided.

The picture painted by v. 21 is that Moses has organized the Israelites, God the Son is standing between the two peoples as a pillar of cloud, keeping them invisible to one another (partially to calm the Israelites). At some time during the night, in the light provided by the pillar, Moses stretches his rod over the sea and God brings in an east wind, separating the water to the north and south. This does not occur in a few minutes—this wind blows for several hours; for perhaps as much as 8 hours. The water moves back almost immediately, but the ground must be dried for travel.



**Moses Leads the People Between the Waters** (a graphic); from [God's Hot Spot](#); accessed January 5, 2022.

Obviously, given that 2 million people are going across that sea, it would have been much wider than that.

## **Lesson 211: Exodus 14:21–23      Israelites Cross Over the Sea/Egyptians Follow**

In this passage which we are studying (Exodus 14:21–23), we are placed into the midst of the action. Some may consider that this is the event that we have been building up to.

We should bear in mind that God does not act in the same fashion in every generation. The miracle which we are studying here is quite amazing. Yet, if you watch any nature program narrated by David Attenborough, it is clear that natural *miracles* occur billions of times every day in nature. God has designed a world teeming with extraordinary life; and that life is beautiful, incredibly complex and interdependent. Such life is both mysterious and fascinating. If you ever feel as if God has somehow given you less than previous generations, then your eyes are not open.



What we are studying is an amazing feat of power. But it is only right to bear in mind that, all of these people who observe these amazing acts of God—they will become failures to the n<sup>th</sup> degree. We do not grow spiritually from witnessing miracles.

I personally love watching nature programs to see the kinds of amazing things which God has designed for this world. But do you realize that many of the people who work on these programs do not believe in God. Their very job is watching, studying, filming, and/or film-editing these amazing creations designed and made by God—nature's miracles; and yet, they do not see it. They think that it all happened and they believe that evolution (natural selection, survival of the fittest, gradual changes<sup>10</sup>) explain everything.

Exodus 14:21 **Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided.**

God often uses natural forces to do His will. He used the wind from the east during all of that night pushing the waters back, so that the land behind the sons of Jacob is dry.

**Crossing the Red Sea** (By Nicolas Poussin) (a graphic); from [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crossing_the_Red_Sea); accessed January 5, 2022. One problem of many here is, it appears that maybe there are only one hundred or so Israelites gathered here.

Exodus 14:22a **So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground,...**

The people of Israel advanced, heading in their original direction, but now crossing over a sea which is now dry ground.

The people of Israel appear to began crossing over in the evening. Remember, there are 2 million people, which includes women and children and animals, going across this sea. They will get to the other side while it is still dark and cloudy for the Egyptians.



Recall that, on one side of the Pillar of Cloud is darkness; on the other side is light. The Egyptian army cannot move in this darkness, but they are confident that there is nowhere for the Israelites to go. They do not see what the Israelites see.

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<sup>10</sup> Also called micro-evolution.



Exodus 14:22b *...and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.*

There is a wall of water on one side and the other; and the people of Israel are passing between them. The water is stacked up on each side as if it were grain.

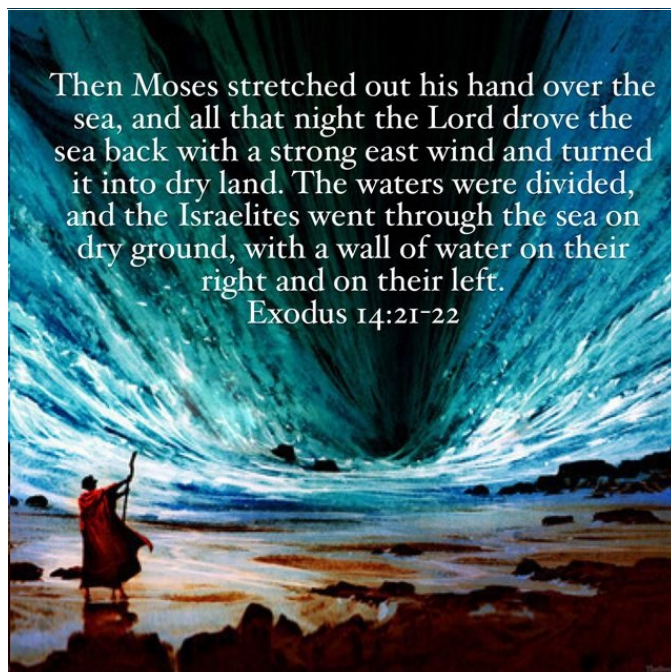
It would be difficult to naturalize any of this. All these events are clearly miraculous and only a person with a very hardened heart could read this and not recognize that these are miracles provided by God. Now you could read this and think that it is all a myth or just a story; however, the author's clear intent is to present what was miraculous to relay to the reader the incredible power of our God.

However one valid problem to deal with is the number of Hebrews crossing the Sea of Reeds at this time. There are two million, and there is no way that two million Hebrews can cross over a small area such as the width of a street or two streets (as per every graphical illustration ever done) in a reasonable amount of time. If you have witnessed or seen pictures of the Boston Marathon, you get a better picture of what is occurring. Add to this personal belongings, many animals and multiply by ten, and you can see that two million people plus livestock will not travel a narrow stretch in the space of a few hours. However, there is nothing in the Bible which suggests that this is a narrow stretch of road that they are traveling upon, nor is there this dramatic wall of water with a narrow passageway as shown in Cecil B. Demille's *Ten Commandments*. We have the wall of waters but with a very wide path before them. Recall that they were camped along the bank of the waters, not in some long line behind one another, and when they crossed, it would have been in the same width as their camp, which would have been several miles wide. Under those circumstances, which is clearly the case here, two million Hebrews plus livestock can travel across an distance of a mile or so in a few hours. Just as an army would move against an enemy, just as a large group would camp along side a river or a body of water, so would

the encampment and subsequent movements of these people be. Furthermore, God knows how many men He has and how wide the opening needed to be to get these people across in a reasonable amount of time. God has determined what He will do on behalf of Israel back in eternity past. He is not coming up with solutions for Israel's difficulties on the fly.

Exodus 14:22 *So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.*

What is quite amazing is, the waters were like walls to the sons of Jacob, on



both sides. How much of the sea had been opened up is unknown to us, but it was wide enough to get the people across in a few hours; and the section was far enough across to contain Pharaoh's army (as we will see).

**Exodus 14:21–22 (NIV)** (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#); accessed January 5, 2022.

**Israel Crosses Dry Shod** (a graphic); from [Byron's Babbles](#); accessed January 5, 2022.

Exodus 14:23a **And the Egyptians pursued...**

It is the next morning; it is light. Whatever visual barriers that were between the sons of Israel and the army of Pharaoh were removed. The wall of cloud no longer obscured their vision.

The sea was a dry bed, just walked across by the sons of Israel. The Egyptians, seething with anger, took off after them, pursuing them. There had to be some space between the two groups—I would assume that all Israel was on the other side of this sea of reeds with perhaps some still crossing it; and that Pharaoh's army could see them.



Exodus 14:23b **...and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses,...**

There was a massive open area where the Israelites crossed over, and the army of Pharaoh went right into what had just been the dry bed of the sea. The people of Israel were in their sights (which is how the Egyptians knew which way to go).

Exodus 14:23c **...his chariots, and his horsemen.**

Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen went right along with the horses of Pharaoh, following Israel by crossing over the dry bed where the sea once stood.

God allowed the Hebrews to have enough of a head start by blocking their movement from Pharaoh by the pillar of the cloud. Now, this cloud has been removed, Pharaoh's men have seen what was done, and they follow in right behind the Hebrews. This timing has to be perfect. The Hebrews must escape entirely from out of the sea and all of Pharaoh's men and chariots must be in the midst of the sea.

Exodus 14:23 **And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.**

So the Israelites move along the drying land, and Pharaoh's army pursue them there.

Given the number of Hebrews and the number of soldiers, this had to be a very large body of water for both sets of people to occupy at the same time, with considerable space between them. This suggests that there was a southern route taken by the Hebrew people before they came to this point, where they would cross over. I would assume that Pharaoh's army could see the people of Israel exiting the sea on the other side.

Wherever this was, the Hebrews did not simply arrive here by chance; the Angel of God was guiding them to this point. All of this had to be occur in such a way that, all Israel has exited the dry sea bed; and all of Pharaoh's army is in the midst of that dry sea bed.

Exodus 14:23 [The Egyptians then took up in pursuit of Israel, and all Pharaoh's horses went in after them, along with his chariots and horsemen, into the midst of the sea.](#) (Kukis not-so-literal paraphrase)

The next morning, Pharaoh and his army can see where the Israelites are and how they got there—by crossing through the sea, with the waters piled up on both sides. Their hatred has overwhelmed their circumspection, and the entire army of Pharaoh pursued them, crossing over the sea of reeds in the same place.

We are not given any approximate dimensions. I would suspect that the crossing might have been a mile or two; and that the waters might be separated by 3 or 4 miles—maybe more. Bear in mind, we must get 2 million people across this sea in half a night or so. Now, one person crossing over a mile or two, just walking, can do this in 30 minutes easily—just walking. But the organization of 2 million is quite a different thing.

Let's just say that each person travels in a 4x4' square and let's say that the distance across the sea of reeds is 1 mile, which is 5280 feet. That is more than 1300 people in a column line, walking across. Let's say that it is 4 miles from a wall of water to a wall of water. That would make 5280 rows of people crossing at any given time. That would give us over 6 million people who could stand in the sea of reeds walking across, where we have all of those people standing on the sea bed at the same time, the final group entering, and the first group ready to cross over, out of the sea bed. Given these dimensions—which I literally just made up on the spot—we could get everyone across pretty easily. My guess is, the sea of reeds may not be a mile across; and the distance between the walls of water may be less than 4 miles—but all of this is very doable, given an organized march (and there is every indication that, despite these all being civilians, that they were quite organized<sup>11</sup>).

Now, the actual army of Pharaoh is going to be considerably smaller—perhaps a 10<sup>th</sup> that size, but they have horses and chariots and weaponry. Furthermore, they are all trained to kill and to make each blow with whatever weapon count. So, 10 to 1 odds (or whatever) is reasonable to the Egyptian army.

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<sup>11</sup> Recall that Moses, when they began to get out of control, reigned them back in.

We have seen in modern history, mobs of tens of thousands dispersed by a well-organized police force of a few thousand (at most) armed with tear gas and rubber bullets.

So, these numbers would not dissuade the Egyptian army's intent to advance. Furthermore, approximately two-thirds of them would be women and children.

## Lesson 212: Exodus 14:21–25

## The Egyptian Forces Are Bugged Down

We studied these three verses last time:

Exo 14:21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

Exo 14:22 And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Exo 14:23 The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

Exodus 14:24a Now it came to pass, in the morning watch,...

Prior to the Babylonian captivity, the Hebrews divided the night into three watches. This is apparently where they got the idea or where it originated from. The first watch was from sunset to 10 pm; the second from 10 to 2 am; and the third, called also the *watch of the morning* (we would of course say, *third watch*) occurred between 2 am and sunrise (see also 1Sam. 11:11). This was the time of the third watch. The first was called *the beginning of the watches* (Lam. 2:9) and the second was *the middle watch* (Judges 7:19).

Obviously, the reason for these watches is to monitor the situation when it is dark and people are sleeping.

What appears to be the case is, God gave light to Israel but kept the two camps from seeing one another that night. Then God the Holy Spirit blew back the waters, making a long stretch of sea open and dry. Then the people of Israel began to walk across the sea, as guided by God.

Quite obviously the Israelites heard Moses and observed him raising up his hand over the waters.

At this point, obviously the people are moving and not sleeping. The phrase *morning watch* simply tells us at what time this was taking place. Since we have *morning watch* rather than *morning*, we may reasonably assume that it is still dark (but light is being given by God to the Israelites).

Exodus 14:24b ...that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud,...



Generally speaking there was a pillar of fire or a pillar of cloud—here, we either have two pillars or one pillar with both characteristics to it (recall that it was light on Israel's side and very foggy on Egypt's side).

God does not have to look specifically here or there to see something, as He is omniscient. However, this language of accommodation is used so that we understand that God is concentrating upon Egypt's encampment. It would appear to the people below that, God has noticed them and has decided to do something about them.

It is difficult to tell if it was the pillar of fire and cloud in part confused the Egyptian army. It took awhile for the army of Pharaoh to cross the sea and all still be in the sea; therefore, God caused them to become disoriented. The pillar of cloud and fire confused them and blinded them, until the entire army found itself in the midst of the sea.

Exodus 14:24c ...and He troubled the army of the Egyptians.

The verb here is the Qal imperfect of *châmam* (חָמַם) [pronounced *chaw-MAHM*], which means, *to put to flight, to route; to put into a commotion; to make a noise, to move noisily, to confuse, to discomfit*. Strong's #2000 BDB #243.

God, in some way, caused the army of Egypt to become confused or discomfited. I believe that the reference to the morning watch suggests that they do not have any light yet; and they might be moving according to the sounds of the Hebrew people. Maybe God has provided some light for them. Whatever God has provided for them, it is mixed with confusion. It is possible that, based upon what they see, the Egyptians are confused; and yet they move ahead. V. 25a will give us one way in which God troubled the Egyptian army.

God had to first get all of the Israelites across the sea first. After they were completely across, then God would allow the army of Egypt to proceed across that same part of the sea.

Earlier, we talked about the size of the opening in the sea of reeds. It has to be large enough to accommodate the entire Egyptian army (that which remains of it).

Exodus 14:24 Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled [or, confused] the army of the Egyptians.

The Angel of God troubled the army of the Egyptians in a variety of ways, all of which were designed to slow its progress. Some of this is explained in v. 25.

Exodus 14:25a And He took off their chariot wheels,...

The verb used here is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *çûwr* (סוּר) [pronounced *soor*], which is a fairly common verb, and it means, *to turn aside, to depart*,



*to go away; to depart from way, to avoid; to remove; to be removed; to come to an end; to deviate.* Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693. The 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular subject would refer back to God. This is literally applied to *[the] wheel of his chariot* (everything is in the singular). This is a metonym of number, where the singular is put in for the plural. It speaks of God making the movement of a chariot problematic; and this was apparently done to all or many of Pharaoh's chariots (if those in the front are stopped, then the ones behind cannot advance).

Although many, many translations have that the wheels have fallen off, I don't believe that is the case here. I believe that they get turned aside, or caught up in the river bed. Whereas, the people of Israel were able to cross with all of their possession, the concentrated weight of a chariot (its weight and the weight of 3 men, all bearing down against the sea floor) would cause the chariot to get stuck, for the wheels to get turned, for chariots to slow or even come to a stop.

When I was younger, I was trying to drive to school taking a shortcut across a dirt road. Well, it had rained the night before and, there was enough mud on this dirt road to get my vehicle stuck. I figured I would somehow solve the problem by taking my mother's station wagon to there to somehow unstuck it. Of course, the station wagon got stuck in the mud as well. My point here is, chariot drivers are looking ahead a half mile and they see some other chariots in front of them start to slow down or get stuck; but they just keep going—I guess figuring to go around them. They are not thinking the situation through.

To insert an opinion here, the hatred and anger felt by the Egyptians was so strong that, they could hardly wait to attack and butcher the people of Israel. This completely clouded their judgment (which is what mental attitude sins do to both believers and unbelievers).

Exodus 14:25b ...so that they drove them with difficulty;...

For some reason, we go to all masculine singular nouns here, but each man tried to move his chariot forward, but they were not moving as they should.

This word which I have translated *with difficulty* is found only here in the entire Bible, and it is translated variously as *caused the chariot wheels to swerve, to make their chariot wheels glide out, or He clogged their chariot wheels so that they drove with difficulty*. This is one of the words that we may never be able to settle upon a precise meaning; however, it is clear that God did something to the chariot wheels which slowed the Egyptians down so that they did not catch up to the Israelites and so that their entire army was in the midst of the sea.

The fact that there is a verb included here: *to drive*; this suggests that the chariots moved somewhat, but no longer at a normal pace.

We do not know exactly how this took place. Did God allow for the re-saturation of the seabed? Did He simply cause mechanical problems to slow the chariots, so that they moved as slowly as the marching army of Pharaoh?

Many of the Egyptians began to rethink their choices at this point.

Exodus 14:25c ...and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel,...

The people begin to think and consider against whom they are trying to fight, and they start saying, "We should just make a run for it. We should not be going after Israel after what has happened."

God had given them the night to think about things. Now that they were finding themselves in the midst of the sea bed, but unable to advance, they begin to consider their situation more carefully.

The verse literally reads, *and Egypt said, "I must flee."* Often a nation is personified and all the pertaining verbs are in the singular.

This was a voice of reason, and there could have been many Egyptians saying this (again, a metonym putting in the singular for the plural). It is even possible that many Egyptians, believing themselves to be faced with imminent death, reconsidered their relationship to the God of Israel. I suspect that many of them believed right then and there, prior to their deaths. For some people, having death right there is the only thing which brings them to God.

Exodus 14:25d ...for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians."

The people of Egypt rightfully come to the conclusion that God is fighting for the people of Israel (or, however many said this). He has continued to do so. This is why they find themselves stuck in the sea bed, with waters stacked up on both sides of them.

This statement sounds to be like a statement of faith; an acknowledgment of the Person and power of God; and I believe this to be sufficient for salvation. These Egyptians may have had but 30 minutes to live, but I believe that, when faced with certain death, many of them believed.

You may be thinking, "These are slave owners; their whole society was based upon owning over 2 million people to do their bidding. How can they be saved?" Everyone is saved the same way, despite their actions in life. We are all saved by believing in God's revelation of Himself, which I refer to as the Revealed God. To the Egyptians, this is the God of the judgments, the God of Israel Who is protecting them. In the Church Age and the age of the Hypostatic Union, the revelation of God is Jesus; so from the Lord's public ministry forward, people have been saved by believing in Jesus.

Regarding the morality of owning slaves, let's go on a tangent here: every society approves of things which are wicked and evil. People who are born into those societies simply go along with what society in general approves. Some forms of slavery are clearly wrong (the

Bible even outlaws some forms of slavery to Israel<sup>12</sup>); but people who grow up in a society where half the people are slaves just accept this. It is what is. I write this in 2022. People growing up today often accept abortion is legitimate healthcare, homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle, and gender fluidity as being okay. There are people today who believe that elementary school children ought to be taught about homosexuality and gender fluidity. According to the laws of divine establishment, all of these things are wrong and evil; but when these things permeate society, much of society is going to simply accept them.

**Application:** As believers in Jesus Christ, it is not our job to change society. As a believer, it is not your goal to end things which are clearly wrong, such as giving hormone blockers to children. It is okay to fight such a thing, to vote for politicians who have your values; but this should not be the center of your Christian life. Your hopes and dreams cannot be wrapped up in which candidate is elected and which one is defeated. As R. B. Thieme, Jr. put it, “Two things are here in this world when you are born and they will be here after you die: evil and Bible doctrine. Both of these things can potentially change you; but you cannot change them.”<sup>13</sup> For the believer who is positive toward the Word of God, there will be somewhere where that person can learn it (in most cases, at a local church where a pastor-teacher is teaching the Word).

**Application:** As a believer, you are to advance spiritually; and, when you recognize your spiritual gift, then you live your life using that gift. The focus of your life is not to cure every social evil you come across (this does not mean that you cannot advocate for and against certain issues; it simply means this is not to be the focus of your life). Along the same lines, let’s say that you grew to spiritual maturity and you used your spiritual gift liberally. But let’s also say that, there were causes that you believed in and advocated. Let’s also say that, at the end of your life, *none* of your causes caught any traction. Does this make you a success or failure in life? Any believer who reaches spiritual maturity and functions using his spiritual gift, that is a great success. Whether there were things you advocated for as social causes—it makes no difference whether you were successful here or not.

**Application:** The believer has to be careful about *tilting against windmills*. Even if there of societal issues which are good and doctrinal that you advocate for—it truly does not matter if any of these things come to pass or not. That is not why we are here.

**Illustration:** Let’s say that you have the opportunity to be involved in a great lawsuit which will really take down some evil people. If this consumes your life, you are wasting your life, no matter how evil those people are. The #1 priority for the believer is Bible doctrine. Whatever in your life keeps you from that is problematic.

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<sup>12</sup> It is called *man-stealing* in the Bible, which is the sort of slavery practiced in the United States.

<sup>13</sup> Not an exact quote, but an approximate quote from memory. Bob said this many times during his study of the book of Philemon. His specific reference was slavery as the accepted evil of that age.

This is what we have been studying:

Exodus 14:22 And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. (ESV)

That night, the Egyptian army and the Israelite people were encamped quite close to one another and between them was the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. The pillar of fire provided light for the Israel side; and the pillar of cloud submerged the Egyptian army in a great fog.

The Egyptians were probably pointed in the direction of the Israelites and the Israelites were pointed in the direction of the body of water. They had this body of water before them, the Egyptian army behind them, and many Israelites probably felt a bit unnerved by this situation.

Then the Israelites noticed something taking place in the water. It appeared to be blown aside. It appeared to be stacked up to the left and right. The seabed which was made dry was perhaps 2–4 miles wide, and possibly a mile long (from shore to shore). (I am simply suggesting these numbers, believing them to be large enough for all Israel to cross over in the morning watch, and large enough to entrap the entire Egyptian army.)

The Israelites began to cross over. This process probably took several hours—perhaps as much as six hours for them all to cross over.

Exodus 14:23 The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. (ESV)

The restraint of darkness and fog appears to have been lifted. The Egyptians can see the Israelites either in the midst of the dry seabed or nearly to the other side of the sea. The Egyptians go after them.

Exodus 14:24 Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled [or, *confused*] the army of the Egyptians. (NKJV)

What appears to be the case is, the army of Egypt has advanced on Israel, but they are now all in the midst of the waters, and their chariot wheels are no longer moving as they ought. They seem to be stuck right there, with a wall of water on both sides of them.

Exodus 14:25 And He took off [or, *turned aside, caused to deviate*] their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians." (NKJV)

God caused them to have problems with their chariots, which would have slowed their army down considerably.

Logically, the chariots at the very front have stalled out, and this stops the movement forward of everything behind them.

Some of the Egyptians recognized that God was fighting for the sons of Israel. That is that point at which some of them should have decided, "Hey, I am on the wrong side of this."

Some of the Egyptian army was in locked down negative volition. They hated the Hebrew people and they wanted to harm them. No matter what God did to them, they moved forward.

However, there are clearly some of them who recognize that God is on the side of the Hebrews, and they appear to have backed off.

The ESV puts these two verses together.

Exodus 14:24–25 *And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians."* (ESV)

This is taking place in the third watch (or at the end of the third watch). Whether they are seeing by daylight or by the pillar of cloud/fire, we are not certain. But the Egyptians were able to see the Israelites, so they took off in hot pursuit.

However, once in the open range of the seabed, the Egyptians find themselves being bogged down. Their chariots were moving, but with great difficulty. Or, they were simply stopped right in the midst of the sea.

Suddenly there is a voice (or voices) of reason among the Egyptians. They recognize that the God of Israel is fighting for Israel. They see retreat as their only good option.

Exodus 14:26a *Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea,..."*

Again, God uses Moses in a very theatric way. He could not speak loud enough for everyone to hear what is going on; but they could see Moses and they knew that when he used his hands or his staff, that God was working through him. This has been done 10 times before; and even if these Egyptian soldiers did not see this previously, I have no doubt that they *heard* about what Moses did. He would raise up his staff in some way, and then God would strike Egypt. And now, Moses was raising up his staff in front of them!

Exodus 14:26b *...that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen."*

This verse is the one which tells us that Pharaoh and his army are right smack dab in the middle of the sea; and their wheels appear to have gotten screwed up at this point. Then



the waters returned and coming down upon Pharaoh and his army and on their equipment. Massive waves on both sides of them suddenly raced towards them.

God wanted Moses to be very demonstrative. This is because he had an audience of 2,000,000, so they had to see him doing something to effect the miracles which occurred. These were not magician acts and God was not grooming Moses to be some kind of an act. What Moses did had to be seen by millions to reinforce the little faith that they had. They had to see that all the miracles that were done were done specifically through the hand of Moses. God was working through him and all of Israel needed to see that.

What has apparently happened is, all of Israel has crossed over and they are now on the other side of this body of water. All of the Egyptian troops, including Pharaoh, have been lured onto the sea floor. And Moses has lifted up his staff.

Exodus 14:26 [Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen.”](#)

God appears to be speaking to Moses in real time—while he is there guiding his people across the sea, in full view of the oncoming Egyptian army. Then God tells Moses what to do.

Again, what God does through Moses is very theatrical. He stretches out his hand over the seas.

Exodus 14:27a [And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea;...](#)

The primary purpose of Moses stretching his hand over the sea is, to show all observers exactly what is taking place. There are four sets of observers: angels (elect and fallen), the Hebrew people and the Egyptian soldiers. Watching Moses and then seeing what happens after is how they connect God's plan to the events which they observe. Moses is clearly associated with God and the plagues and God's power; therefore, when he does something—like stretching his hand out over the waters—everyone looks to see what is going to happen (looking in the direction of Moses' hand). By this—by observing Moses—there are no random events which just seem to happen. Nothing is random; and Israel is always benefitted by what God does. These are directed events; and they are great events, suggesting that they are done by Israel's God on behalf of Israel.

What appears to be the case is, Moses raises up his hand with the staff in it, early in the morning when it is just becoming light.

Exodus 14:27b [...and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth,...](#)

After Moses stretches his hand out over the seas, the seas return to their normal flow—but, at this time, the army of Egypt is in the midst of sea with chariots which will not easily move.

The Egyptians have been lured into the water with the promise of being able to do mayhem to the Hebrew people. And now, they will meet their Maker. Massive waves from each side converge where the Egyptian army stands.

Exodus 14:27c ...while the Egyptians were fleeing into it.

Normally, an army would flee to get away from their enemy (or whatever thing is troubling them), but here, Egypt's army is attempting to flee, but where can they go? The sea is coming down all around them, and their chariots are not moving.

Exodus 14:27d So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

Egypt is treated here as some sort of pest which Y<sup>e</sup>howah simply shakes off. *Shook* is the Piel imperfect of *nā'ar* (נָעַר) [pronounced *naw-ḠAHR*] and it means *to tumble about, to shake up, to shake off*. The Piel is the intensive stem and this was a most intensive shaking.

The Egyptians had realized that the Hebrews were escaping through the Red Sea during the evening. When they got their bearings, they charged into the Sea after them. They had some light to work by; the light of the pillar of fire. Then, while it was still night, God caused them to become disoriented until the entire army found itself in the midst of the sea. Just as morning broke, so that the Hebrews could see, Moses raised his arm over the seas. This was like a tidal wave; and nothing like it has ever happened before. The water rushed in from the north and the south and met in the middle where the Egyptians stood. The water from both sides had tremendous power and throwing them together had an incredibly destructive force.

The Egyptians were killed almost instantly, every single one of them.

**God Drowns the Egyptian Army** (a graphic); from [Redeeming God](#); accessed January 5, 2022.

Exodus 14:27 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.



Many who have seen Cecil B. Demille's *Ten Commandments* have a natural appreciation for what took place here. Many of these scenes are etched in our minds. For that reason, we do not fully appreciate just how magnificent God's choreography of this great event was. It was meant to be theatrical; it was meant to be *big*. It was designed for the sons of Jacob on one side of the water to see what God had done; and it was designed for Pharaoh and the Egyptian army, who are in the midst of the sea floor, to see and recognize clearly the power of Israel's God (we do not know if Pharaoh or anyone remains on the opposite side). And finally, this was designed for the angels of heaven (the elect angels) and for the fallen angels to view such a major event. It was clear that this was a major event. Nothing like this had ever happened before; nothing in human history was quite this spectacular, since the restoration of the heavens and the earth.

When Satan fell, he took a third of the angels with him. Satan and these fallen angels have been judged, but the sentence has not yet been carried out. They are seeing and learning about God's perfect character by seeing human history play out. Both fallen and elect angels are all around viewing God's actions and our own place in this grand drama we call human history.

The amazing spectacle of Exodus 14 was unparalleled since the deluge of the entire earth. Now, think back on how all of this started: God came to Abraham and told him, "I am going to give you the land of Canaan, so you need to go there." This started small. There are few people as unremarkable as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, insofar as the world is concerned. They were reasonably wealthy and successful, but they owned little land. These men did not control empires; let alone, a city. Abraham led no army and he conquered no land. That we know anything at all about Abraham is remarkable, because he stands out head and shoulders over all kings and military leaders of his era. This was such a small beginning. But, as we read in Zech. 4:10a: [For who despises the day of small things?](#)

Angels have viewed the history of mankind over a very long period of time (in fact, they observed the prehistory of man, while the earth was encased in ice). God, just as He had pointed out Job to Satan, asking, "Have you observed My servant Job?" So God spoke to the angels and said, "See this man, Abraham? I want you to watch him." Contemporary with Abraham is this great warrior-king Chedorlaomer. There is this great kingdom being established in Egypt. There are great wars between various sets of alliances. There is even this wise king, Hammurabi, struggling with concerns of law and morality. Man in general is discovering how to domesticate animals and to coordinate the growing of crops. There are also these great cities being developed along the fertile crescent and everywhere, it seems like these great city-states are being formed. Men in this era are beginning to work with metals and are harnessing their power.

Nevertheless, God points to this fairly ordinary man, Abraham, and says, "Watch this man; watch this shepherd. He will hear My voice and He will listen to Me." There is human greatness on every side of Abraham, but God says, "Watch this man. I am going to tell him to leave Ur of the Chaldees, where he was brought up, and to go to Canaan. He will listen to Me."

Abraham would not have registered on anyone's scale of important people. No one would have looked at him and said, "This man will change human history;" but God knew that he would, because God was with him. And we have followed Abraham's line, through Isaac and Jacob; through Joseph and Judah and Levi. In the book of Exodus, we have finally come to the man Moses—and even he seemed so small potatoes, once he left the palace in Egypt and became a nomad in Midian, marrying into the family of a priest, becoming the family shepherd.

If there was a contemporary historian writing in the era of Abraham, and he wrote an article, the 25 most influential people in and around the golden crescent, he would not have included Abraham's name. In fact, had it been the 1000 most influential people, Abraham's name would not be on that list. From human viewpoint, Abraham was no one special. But, in hindsight, looking back from this era, the most important man of that era was Abraham. No one else comes close.

This great human drama keeps building, beginning so subtly at first, but becoming somewhat interesting when the people of Jacob go from being respected and popular and desired in Egypt; to becoming reviled and made into slaves (no doubt, at the urging of Satanic forces).

**Illustration:** Today, we see how Satan is how able to exert his evil influence in the United States, much as he did in Egypt. One of the most bizarre insertions of evil has occurred in the private company Disney and in the public schools in the United States. There are things taking place in the United States that, a couple of decades ago, would have seemed like science fiction. We have witnessed a large reduction in people who believe in God in the United States and a reduction of those who believe in Jesus in the United States. Suddenly we find, the most reliable G-rated company in the world—Disney—now seems to be promoting homosexuality and gender confusion (it has been doing this for awhile). One of the arguments taking place right now in the public schools is, *should children 8 and younger be exposed to homosexuality and gender change*. It was not too long ago when such teaching would not have been thought proper for high school, let alone lower grades. But all it takes is enough change in percentages—such as faith in Jesus being on the decline—and things which were unimaginable 10 years ago suddenly become the newest thing. Although Disney began as the vision of one man as a divine establishment organization dedicated to children and the preservation of childhood, it lacked the one essential thing—a clear, unequivocal relationship to God and to His Son. Without that, Disney was left wide open to corrupting voices. This is the power of Satanic influence.

**Illustration:** The United States army, in WWII, was closely allied to God. When MacArthur went into Japan to rule over it, he called for missionaries and Bibles. Even though there was a natural opposition to this at the highest levels of government, he received both. Our relationship as a nation to Japan is based upon this foundation. More recently, we have spent 20 years in Iraq and in Afghanistan. Our presidents, beginning with George W. Bush, have taken a hands-off approach when it comes to religion. Many soldiers wanted to share their faith in Jesus with the people on the ground, and this got shut down from the very highest levels. When God is a part of our world influence, we

have alliances which last 70 years (or more), as in the case of Japan. When God is not a part of our plans, as in Afghanistan, we cannot even peacefully withdraw our own troops.

**Application:** God must be a part of our lives and our decisions; otherwise, we are wasting our time here on earth.

Back to the action:

Exodus 14:27 [And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.](#)

Now, there is this great event, a spectacular event, something only God would be able to do (no angel could do this; Satan could not do this).

**God Drowns the Egyptian Army** (a second graphic); from [Redeeming God](#); accessed January 5, 2022.



Exodus 14:28a [Then the waters returned...](#)

God held back the waters so that the sons of Israel could pass through the sea. But now, the sons of Israel have come out on the other side and the army of Pharaoh was right smack dab in the middle of the sea—some of their chariots being stopped or slowed—and suddenly, the waters closed in on them.

Exodus 14:28b [...and covered the chariots, the horsemen,...](#)

The waters drowned all of the people and horses in Pharaoh's army. They covered over the chariots and the horsemen.

Exodus 14:28c [...and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them.](#)

I believe that the text is very specific here—they are not just speaking of Pharaoh's army, but of those who came after Israel in pursuit—these are the ones being spoken of.

There is an implication here—and it could be argued from both sides—that perhaps there were others in Pharaoh's army who did not pursue the sons of Israel. Recall that there was



the night to think about what happened and then some expressed some misgivings about challenging the God of Israel. We do not know whether or not there were some who held back—who did not chase after Israel. That is only speculation.

The army of Pharaoh had to understand what they were there to do—they had come to slaughter the Hebrew people out of revenge. This was not an attack on an invading army; this was not a movement to bring their slaves back; this was to be a bloody slaughter. All of the men who agreed to do that were now in the midst of the waters.

Exodus 14:28d **Not so much as one of them remained.**

This would have included Pharaoh. Recall that he also rode out with his army (v. 6)

Of those who followed after Israel, and therefore found themselves in the midst of the sea—not a single one of them survived.

It is possible that some of the men did not follow Pharaoh into the sea; we have no evidence that any of them did that. However, all those who followed after Israel were obliterated. This must have been the most incredible thing that the exodus generation had ever witnessed; however, even witnessing this miracle will not carry them too far into the desert-wilderness. In fact, there will come a time when Israel turns so much against God, and God will talk to Moses about killing off every last son of Jacob.

What we are studying is also mentioned in the New Testament take on Moses. This incident is first of all used as an illustration for baptism in 1Cor. 10:1–2 **For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.** Note that the Israelites, the *fathers* of the Corinthians, were baptized **into** Moses. Now, the Corinthians are principally Greeks—they are not Semitic—and the Israelites passed through the Sea of Reeds dry. It was the Egyptians who were immersed. *Fathers* refers to spiritual fathers; the sons of Israel had believed in Jesus Christ (as the Revealed God), prior to the Corinthians, and preserved God's Word, making them the spiritual fathers to the believers in Corinth.

Baptism has this connotation: we are put into Christ when we believe in Him and we thereby share His righteousness and His perfection positionally (this is known as *positional truth*; we have an eternal position in Christ). Here, in our narrative, the Hebrews were identified with Moses—they were placed into Moses—and shared his relationship with God and his protection by God positionally. God protected Moses and He protected the Israelites because they had been baptized into Moses (or, *placed into Moses*; or, *identified with Moses*).

Exodus 14:28 **Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained.**

Apparently, whatever portion of Pharaoh's army—possibly all of it—was in the midst of the sea of Reeds, they were drowned. All of those who had completely committed to pursuing Moses and the people—those who were there to slaughter as many sons of Jacob as they could—they were covered over by the sea. Moses and the people had walked across *dry shod*; but once Pharaoh's army was there, God allowed the waters to come back. Pharaoh's army was fully immersed by the sea.

The waters came in too fast and they were too powerful for the Egyptian army to do anything. They were trapped and the water moved too rapidly and strongly for them to escape. Pharaoh's entire army was destroyed.

Exodus 14:29a **But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea,...**

On the one hand, the army of Pharaoh was drowned by the sea; on the other hand, the sons of Israel simply walked through the midst of the sea on dry ground. This is the difference between being set apart to God and acting in opposition to God. Their feet occupied the exact same place, but God caused the Egyptian army to be slowed down before He brought the waters down upon them.

At this point in the narrative, the Hebrew people are standing on the opposite shore; and the Egyptian army has been drown in the sea.

Exodus 14:29b **...and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.**

There was a wall of water both to the left and to the right of the Israelites. Those same walls of water came crashing in on Pharaoh's army.

2,000,000 people witnessed this. When Moses recorded this information, certainly some of it was distributed throughout Israel and had these people not actually witnessed this, the idea of the Holy Scriptures would have been laughable to them because they would know what the truth was and what fabrication was. All of them experienced this, the young and the old; they all saw the wall of water on both sides of them as they walked over the dry land. They did not dispute the record of Moses, as they all experienced it.

This generation of Israelites will see more signs than any other generation until the time of Jesus. However, what will become clear is, all of them believed in the Revealed God, but almost none of them advanced in the spiritual life. God gives every man the opportunity to believe in Him; and then offers every believer the opportunity to grow spiritually. Of the adult Israelites at this time, only a handful will grow spiritually, despite the great signs which they all saw.

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**Lesson 215: Exodus 14:29–31****God Has Delivered Israel**

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The Egyptian army has been drowned en masse in the waters, but the sons of Israel walked right through the waters' midst, only hours before.

Exodus 14:29 But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Although these waters destroyed the Egyptian army, when the sons of Israel walked across, the water was like a wall on both sides of them. So those near to one side or the other could see the water piled up, like so much grain.

Exodus 14:30a So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians,...

Recall that it was not but 12 or so hours ago that the Israelites were complaining that Moses had brought them out to this place to be killed by Egypt's army. "Were there not enough graves in Egypt?" they had demanded to know.

At the beginning of v. 30, we have the Hiphil imperfect of the verb *yêsha'* (עָשָׂה) [pronounced YAY-shahg] and it means *deliver, save, rescue*. *Yêhowah*, as we have found is the Tetragrammaton YHWH (יהוה), stopped being pronounced at some point, so we have lost the proper pronunciation of that Name. I believe that my educated guess of *Yêhowah* is more accurate than the word *Yahweh*.

The proper name *Joshua* is the combination of these two words, an abbreviation of YHWH plus *yêsha'*; so *Joshua* means *YHWH saves*. The Greek equivalent of *Joshua* is *Jesus*. "...And you will call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21b).

Exodus 14:30a So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians,...

This helps explain Moses being very theatrical. The sons of Israel saw all of this go down with their own eyes. They associated Moses with their God; and it was clear that the events which unfolded were legitimately from the hand of God.

Generally speaking, whenever Moses raised up his arms or his staff, the end result was going to be a miracle from God. Since this took place before the entire population of Israel, these would be big miracles—miracles designed to be witnessed by two million people.

Exodus 14:30b ...and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

All along the shore, the bodies of the dead Egyptian soldiers washed up. The men who threatened Israel could threaten them no more.

Things without life are thrown about by the waves of the sea. These Egyptians, at one time, had volition and they could choose for or against Israel; for or against Israel's God. However, they chose so many times against the God of Israel that now, at this point, they had no more choices to make. Their bodies are just cast along the sea shore by the waves.

There were tens of thousands of dead bodies floating in this unsettled sea and they would have begun to wash up on shore like so much sea weed. This is the only way that the Hebrews would have been freed of Pharaoh's control.

These soldiers had sought to kill the people of Israel. They would have slaughtered them, men, women and children. Israel was able to see how God delivered them.



**Israel Observes the Destroyed Egyptian Army** (a graphic); from [God's Hot Spot](#); accessed January 5, 2022.

Exodus 14:30 [So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.](#)

The Israelites were preserved. The Egyptian army had pursued them to kill them, and it is the Egyptian army which was killed.

A king had amazing authority; but, the king had to stand by his own authority. It was very unusual for a king to say one thing one day, and then contradict himself the next day. That really was not kingly. However, this is what Pharaoh had done. He gave Moses and the Israelites the permission to leave and to



worship their God. But, rather than to allow them to peacefully leave, he then sent his soldiers to kill them. In light of all that had happened, his soldiers should have refused, but they did not.

**Israel Observes the Destroyed Egyptian Army** (a second graphic); from [God's Hot Spot](#); accessed January 5, 2022.

Exodus 14:31a [Thus Israel saw the great work \[lit., \*hand\*\] which the Lord had done in Egypt;...](#)

The hand often represents the power and the strength of someone. The hand represents what a person does; in this case, Israel could see the hand of God in what had been done. The people of Israel began to appreciate all that Y<sup>e</sup>howah had done on their behalf. They saw all of this with their own eyes; culminating here at the destruction of Pharaoh's army.

All of this happened quite quickly. But time and again, Israel saw the hand of God acting on their behalf.

Exodus 14:31b [...so the people feared the Lord,...](#)

Wisely, the people feared Y<sup>e</sup>howah their God. This is usually a stage of spiritual maturity in the Old Testament. It indicates that the people thought about their God and they respected Him.

As we will find out later, their fear/respect for the Lord will only be temporary. The Hebrew people were simply unable to maintain this fear/respect for any period of time.

Exodus 14:31c [...and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.](#)

This is one of the verses which suggests to us that every Israelite believed in the Revealed God; and therefore, they were all saved. They are a very imperfect bunch of people, but they are at least a saved bunch of people.

The Hebrews will forever look back upon this day and God's deliverance (2Kings 17:7 2Chron. 6:4, 5). When the Hebrews fell into apostasy, Y<sup>e</sup>howah would call this day to mind and caused them to recall His so great salvation (Jeremiah 11:3 Hosea 12:13).

Throughout Exodus and the rest of the Pentateuch, we will see Moses and the people on a honeymoon. However, as soon as they faced pressures or disappointments, the people will turn on Moses like a mad dog. Then things will go well and they will behave and it will be a honeymoon again. Then pressures followed by rebellion. Moses showed a great deal of stability throughout this ordeal; the people lacked God's Word in the souls and therefore they lacked the stability to grasp what was going on around them. They would not take the information which they were learning about God, and believe it and apply it.



Exodus 14:31 Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.

Notice those key words: the people of Israel *feared* Y<sup>e</sup>howah and they *believed* in Y<sup>e</sup>howah. Just as we are exhorted to do as unbelievers throughout the New Testament. God put the Israelites into a hopeless situation where there was no human solution. Then Moses told them to "*Stand still and watch the salvation of Y<sup>e</sup>howah.*" They were put into a position where no one could save them from the Egyptians. Only God could deliver them. In this observation of God's work, they believed in Y<sup>e</sup>howah and trusted in His power as their only solution, just as we trust in Jesus Christ as our only means of salvation. We are in a hopeless, helpless situation in our sins that no one can save us—that is, cleanse us before God—but Christ Jesus. The Hebrews could do nothing but watch their deliverance and we can do nothing but accept the salvation (= deliverance) which God has provided for us.

At this sight of the destruction of the Egyptian army, the people of Israel believed the LORD; so, any who doubted before or had the least amount of uncertainty, they now believed.

Exodus 14:31 Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.

This verse is why most commentators understand that all the Hebrew people, at this point in time, are saved.

Throughout the book of Exodus (and even Genesis), it is apparent that God is very theatrical as well as appropriate with His miracles. When Moses was by himself, it was a simple burning bush that would not burn up. God did not lift up a mountain and then send a hundred bolts of lightning to strike on all sides of Moses. That was unnecessary.

However, with the sons of Israel, God's miracles had to be seen by a large group. What God was going to do needed to be visible to everyone. It had to be more than God doing something marvelous that 20 people saw, and then they told everyone else about it. These great miracles were seen by all Israel. They all walked across the sea of Reeds; they all (or nearly all) of them could see the wall of water (we do not know how wide the Israelites were when crossing the sea, but they did have to get 2 million people across). Once they reached the other side, they would be safe and dry, and they could see the army of Pharaoh coming upon them, right where they had been in the sea, and suddenly, the walls of water burst open, and came upon the army of Pharaoh.

It says here that they believed the Lord. Let me suggest that some people became believers at this point; and others, who had already believed in the Revealed God, had their faith renewed or strengthened by what they saw. They all had a healthy fear/respect for God after seeing Him destroy their enemies. However, as we will see, miracles would provide a temporary measure of faith for the people of God; but it was not lasting.

There are many examples of parallels between Moses and Jesus. Moses is a type of Jesus; he is a shadow image of Jesus. There are a great many parallels between these two men which are recorded. It is worth mentioning that, although Moses wrote about himself and the things which would eventually show him to be a shadow representation of Jesus; how those parallels came to be in the life of Jesus is revealed in all of the gospels and in several epistles. This in itself is quite remarkable, because it is unlikely that any person in the 1<sup>st</sup> century had a complete (or nearly complete) collection of the inspired writings. I believe that John had access to the other 3 gospels, and that they inspired him to write down the events of the Lord's life as he remembered it; so John presents Jesus in a much different light than do the other 3 gospel writers. But who among the 4 gospel writers would have had a complete set of Old Testament books?

A. W. Pink in his book, *Gleanings in Genesis*, lists some similarities between Moses and Christ. The ESV (capitalized) is used below; substituted for the KJV (which Pink used). I made a number of changes and additions throughout (Pink had a strange fondness for using the exclamation point)!. As usual, I denote Old Testament passages in blue, New Testament in red and OT passages quoted in the NT in purple.

The number of parallels between Moses and Jesus is staggering. This is an exhaustive and exhausting list. It might be difficult to take it all in at one sitting.

God the Holy Spirit worked through Moses to record the portions of his life that needed to be recorded. That is what it makes a comparison like this possible. All of these points of intersection are preserved in the Mosaic writings of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

### Similarities between Moses and Christ (A. W. Pink—edited)

1. His nationality. Moses was an Israelite (Exodus 2:1, 2). So, according to the flesh, was Jesus the Christ.
2. His Birth. The birth of Moses occurred when his nation was under the dominion of a hostile power, while they were groaning under the rule of a Gentile king (Exodus 1). So also the Hebrews were in bondage to the Romans when Christ was born (Matthew 2:1 cf. Luke 24: 21).
3. His destiny at birth. When Moses was born, the Pharaoh of Egypt had condemned to death all male children of the Hebrews (Exodus 1:22). Jesus was born into this world with the cross as His purpose and ultimate destination.
4. His innocence. Moses was condemned to die as a Hebrew infant, before he could do anything good or bad (Exodus 1:22). The Lord was condemned to die on the cross, having committed no wrongdoing whatsoever. 1Peter 2:22 **He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.** (Isaiah 53:9) 2Cor. 5:21 **For our sake He made Him to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.** 1Peter 1:18–19 **...knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable**

## Similarities between Moses and Christ (A. W. Pink—edited)

- things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. See also Matt. 27:24 John 8:29 Heb. 4:15 1John 3:5.
5. His Person. At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God's sight. (Acts 7:20a). How blessedly did he, in this, foreshadow the Beloved of the Father! His estimate of the "fairness" of that Child which lay in Bethlehem's manger, was evidenced by the sending of the angels to say unto the shepherds, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11).
  6. His Infancy. In infancy Moses' life was endangered, imperiled by the reigning king, for Pharaoh had given orders that, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile" (Exodus 1:22). How this reminds us of Matthew 2:16: Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Both gentile rulers wanted to end the lives of Moses and Jesus when each was in his infancy. Thousands of innocent children died as a result of those royal decisions.
  7. His Adoption. Though, previously, he was the child of another, Moses yet was made the son of Pharaoh's daughter: When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. (Exodus 2:10a). Thus he had a mother, but no father! What anointed eye can fail to see prefigured here the mystery of the Virgin-birth! Christ was the Son of Another, even the Son of God. But, born into this world, He had a mother, but no human father. Yet He was, as it were, adopted by Joseph (Matthew 1:19-21).
  8. In childhood, both Moses and Jesus were raised up in Egypt. We have studied this about Moses in Exodus 2. Jesus was also raised for a portion of His early life in Egypt: ...behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the Child, to destroy Him." (Matthew 2:13b). This fulfilled God's ancient oracle, ...and out of Egypt I called My Son. (Hosea 11:1b).
  9. Their sympathies for the people of Israel. Moses was filled with a deep compassion for his suffering kinsmen according to the flesh, and he yearned for their deliverance. Beautifully does this come out in Acts 7:23, 24, "When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian." So too Christ was filled with pity toward His enslaved people (enslaved to the old sin nature), and love brought Him here to deliver them. Matt. 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"
  10. Both men had an early knowledge of their missions. Long years before he actually entered upon his great work, Moses discerned, "[Moses] supposed that

## Similarities between Moses and Christ (A. W. Pink—edited)

- his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand." (Acts 7:25). So as a Boy of twelve, Christ said to His perplexed mother, "Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?" (Luke 2:49).
11. Condescending grace. Though Moses was legally *the son of Pharaoh's daughter*, yet he regarded the Hebrew slaves as his relatives: *One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people* (Exodus 2:11). So it is with Christ: *He is not ashamed to call them brothers* (Heb. 2:11b).
  12. The great renunciation of Moses and Jesus. *By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.* (Heb. 11:24-26). What a foreshadowing was this of Jesus: *Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* (Phil. 2:6-7)! Like Moses, Christ too voluntarily relinquished riches, glory, and a kingly palace. Matt. 4:8-10 *Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve."*
  13. Being rejected by brothers. *"And on the following day he [Moses] appeared to them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?' But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' "* (Acts 7:26-28). Although this is very sad; sadder still is it to read of Christ, *He came to His Own, and His Own people did not receive Him.* (John 1:11).
  14. This same line in the typical picture was before us when we considered Joseph. But mark this difference: In the case of Joseph, it was his brother's enmity against his person (Gen. 37:4); here with Moses, it was his brother's enmity against his mission. Joseph was personally hated; whereas Moses was officially refused - *"Who made you a prince and a judge over us?"* (Exodus 2:14b). So it was with Christ. Israel said, *"We do not want This Man to reign over us"* (Luke 19:14b). See also John 1:11 15:18, 23-24.
  15. Sojourning among the Gentiles. *But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian.* (Exodus 2:15). Following Christ's rejection by the Hebrews, we read, *"God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for His name"* (Acts 15:14a). John 10:16a *"And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice."*
  16. Sitting by the well. Away from his own land, we read of Moses, *But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.* (Exodus 2:15b). So the only time we read of the Lord Jesus seated by the well, was when He was outside Israel's borders, in Samaria (John 4:4, 6).

## Similarities between Moses and Christ (A. W. Pink—edited)

17. Both men are presented as shepherds. Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro,... (Exodus 3:1a). This is the character which Christ sustains to His elect among the Gentiles: "I am the good shepherd. I know My Own and My Own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd." (John 10:14–16).
18. A season of seclusion. Before he entered upon his real mission, Moses spent many years in obscurity. Who had supposed that this one, there in the west side of the wilderness, was destined to such an honorable future? So it was with the incarnate Son of God. Before He began His public ministry, He was hidden away in despised Nazareth. Who that saw Him there in the carpenter's shop, dreamed that He was ordained of God to the work of redemption!
19. A royal commission from God. Moses was called of God to emancipate His people from the house of bondage: "And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." (Exodus 3:9–10). So Christ was sent forth into this world on a mission from God: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10).
20. Returning to their own land. In Exodus 4:19 we read, And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead." The antitype of this is found in Matthew 2:19–20: Mat 2:19 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the Child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the Child's life are dead."
21. Being sent forth by God. Moses was sent forth by God to Israel; "Now therefore go" (Exodus 4:12). So Christ was the Sent One of God (John 9:4 etc). In Hebrews 3:1 He is designated the Apostle, which means *the one sent forth*.
22. The credentials of God's power. Moses' commission from God was confirmed by power to work miracles (Exodus 4:28 7:3–4, 10, 19–21). So also Christ's mission was authenticated by wondrous signs (Matthew 11:4, 5). It should be noted that Moses is the first one mentioned in the O.T. who performed miracles; so is Christ in the N.T. - John the Baptist did not perform any (John 10:41).
23. The first miracles. Moses wrought many wonders, but it is most striking to observe that his first two miraculous signs were power over the serpent, and power over leprosy (Exodus 4:6–9). So after Christ began His public ministry, we read first of His power over Satan (Matthew 4:10–11), and then His power over leprosy (Matthew 8:3).
24. For his first great sign that could be observed by many people, Moses turned the water into blood (Exodus 7:19–21); Jesus turned water into wine for his first public miracle (John 2:1–11).
  - 1) Moses brought the Law to the Jewish people, and the Law condemns us (blood speaks of judgment).



## Similarities between Moses and Christ (A. W. Pink—edited)

- 2) Jesus brought grace to the people, which will result in great celebration. Hence, the water changed into wine.
25. Acceptance by close relatives. This is recorded in Exodus 4:29–31. How different was this from his first appearing before and rejection by the Hebrews in Exodus 2! How beautifully it prefigured Israel's acceptance of their Messiah at His second appearing!
26. The powerful rod. Moses now wielded a rod of mighty power: see Exodus 9:23; 10:13; 14:16. So also it is written of Christ, "You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psalm 2:9). The passage in Psalm 2:9 occurs at the end of the Tribulation.
27. The announcing of solemn judgments. Again and again Moses warned Pharaoh and his people of the sore punishment of God if they continued to defy Him (Exodus 7:16–23 8:1–15). So also Christ declared, "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3).
28. They deliver Israel. Moses perfectly fulfilled his God-given commission and led Israel out of the house of bondage: "...this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush" (Acts 7:35b). So Christ affirmed, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:36).
29. Baptism into Moses/Christ. Remarkably is this brought out in 1Corinthians 10:1–2 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,... So obedient Christians are baptized unto Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:3).
  - 1) Baptism references a close identification. God closely identified the people of Israel with Moses, and so delivered them at the Sea of Reeds. Recall that Moses understood that God would deliver them; the people of Israel did not believe that God would.
  - 2) Our being baptized into Christ is positional truth; that is, at salvation, we are all placed into Christ by the Holy Spirit (this is called the baptism of the Holy Spirit).
30. Leadership of Israel's praise. Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD,... (Exodus 15:1a) And of Christ, it is written, ...in the midst of the congregation I will praise you... (Psalm 22:22b).
31. Their authorities are challenged. The type is recorded in Numbers 16:3; the antitype in Matthew 21:23.
  - 1) Numbers 16:3 They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" This is one example of many.
  - 2) Matthew 21:23 And when He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this

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- authority?" This is also one example of many.
32. Both men were envied. Type: Psalm 106:16; compare Mark 15:10.
- 1) Psalm 106:16–17 **When men in the camp were jealous of Moses and Aaron, the holy one of the LORD, the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.** Those were the men who were jealous of Moses.
  - 2) Mark 15:9–10 **And he [Pilate] answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered Him up.**
33. Their persons opposed. Though Israel were so deeply indebted to Moses, yet again and again we find them "murmuring" against him: Exodus 15:24, 16:2, etc. For the N. T. parallel see Luke 15:2, John 6:41.
34. Their lives threatened. So fiercely did the ungrateful Hebrews oppose Moses that, on one occasion, they were ready to "stone" him (Exodus 17:4). How this brings to mind what we read of in John 8:59, 10:31.
35. The sorrows of both men. Moses felt keenly the base ingratitude of the people. Mark his plaintive plea as recorded in Numbers 11:11, 14. So too the Lord Jesus suffered from the reproaches of the people: He was **a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.** (Isaiah 53:3) How difficult it must have been to deliver a people who, for the most part, rejected you.
36. Unwearied love and faithfulness. Though misunderstood, envied, and opposed, nothing could alienate the affections of Moses from his people. **Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.** (Song 8:7). Beautifully is this seen in Exodus 32. After Israel repudiated Jehovah and had worshipped the golden calf, after the Lord has disowned them as His people (Exodus 32:7),
- 1) Moses supplicates God on their behalf, saying **"Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written."** (Exodus 32:31b–32).
  - 2) How this reminds us of Him who **...having loved His Own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.** (John 13:1).
37. Moses had a forgiving spirit as did the Lord. **Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman. And they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?"** (Num. 12:1–2). But Moses answered not a word. However, when Miriam was stricken with leprosy because of her revolt against her brother, we are told, **And Moses cried to the LORD, "O God, please heal her—please."** (Num. 12:13). See how this points to Him who, **When He [Jesus] was reviled, He did not revile in return** (1Peter 2:23a).
38. His Prayerfulness. An example of this has just been before us, but many other instances are recorded. Moses was, pre-eminently, a man of prayer. At every crisis he sought unto the Lord: see Exodus 5:22, 8:12, 9:33, 14:15, 15:25, 17:4, etc. Note how often in Luke's Gospel Christ is also presented as a Man of prayer.
39. His meekness (= grace orientation). **Now the man Moses was very meek** [or,

## Similarities between Moses and Christ (A. W. Pink—edited)

- grace oriented*], more than all people who were on the face of the earth. (Num. 12:3) Compare Matthew 11:28–30 (Jesus is speaking) “Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”
40. His Faithfulness. Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant (Heb. 3:5a). Similarly, Christ is the faithful and true witness (Rev. 3:14).
  41. Moses provided Israel with water. See Numbers 20:11. Compare this to John 4:14 7:37.
  42. Moses had a Prophetic office. God told Moses, “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers.” (Deuteronomy 18:18a). Compare this to John 7:16 8:28, where Jesus speaks as He was taught by the Father (which is the essence of a prophet).
  43. Both Moses and Aaron were priests and both were involved in His priestly activities. Moses and Aaron were among his priests (Psalm 99:6). Illustrations of this are found in Leviticus 8:15b–16: ...and Moses took the blood, and with his finger put it on the horns of the altar around it and purified the altar and poured out the blood at the base of the altar and consecrated it to make atonement for it. And he took all the fat that was on the entrails and the long lobe of the liver and the two kidneys with their fat, and Moses burned them on the altar. By doing these things, Moses was functioning as a priest. Similarly, Christ, is our true High Priest: ...how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God... (Heb. 9:14a) Jesus is many times called our High Priest in Hebrews 2:17 3:1 4:14, 15 5:1, 5, 10 etc.
    - 1) So that there is no misunderstanding, there is actually nothing in Jesus' blood which provides salvation for us, magical or otherwise.
    - 2) Along the same lines, there is nothing in the crucifixion itself which provided our salvation. Jesus having spike driven through His wrist and feet did not provide us with salvation; nor did the physical suffering which He endured on the cross.
    - 3) God, while Jesus was on the cross, poured our sins out upon the Lord, and then exacted the punishment due for those sins. This was far, far more painful than the suffering of the cross itself. 1Peter 2:24 He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. (Isaiah 53:5d)
    - 4) The blood of Jesus carries the analogy of the sacrificed animals and the shedding of their blood into His day. Very specifically, the marks of blood on the door frame match the places where the Lord bled on the cross.
    - 5) But, in order for our sins to be paid for, a much more painful spiritual price was paid while Jesus was on the cross.
    - 6) Just as the sacrifice of the animals was prophetic, so the cross of Calvary was illustrative. It really happened; the suffering was absolutely real; but no one saw what actually did save us from our sins, which was the pouring out of our sins onto Jesus' humanity (Jesus could *only* pay for our sins

## Similarities between Moses and Christ (A. W. Pink—edited)

- through His humanity, as God cannot have any contact with sin).
44. Their kingly rule. Moses commanded us a law, as a possession for the assembly of Jacob. Thus the LORD became king in Jeshurun (Deut. 33:4b–5a). So Christ is King in Zion, over the Hebrews: “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:32–33, where the angel spoke prophetically to Mary).
  45. His Judgeship. The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. (Exodus 18:13). For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2Corinthians 5:10a).
  46. His Leadership. Moses was the head and director of God's people, as God said to him, “But now go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; behold, my angel shall go before you.” (Exodus 32:34a). God exalted Jesus as our *Leader and Savior* in Acts 5:31.
  47. His Mediation. What a remarkable word was that of Moses to Israel, “I stood between the LORD and you at that time.” (Deut. 5:5). There is one God, and there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1Tim. 2:5).
  48. His Election as God's Servant. In Psalm 106:23 Moses is called, His chosen. So God says of Jesus the Christ, Behold My Servant, Whom I uphold, My chosen, in Whom My soul delights. (Isa. 42:1a). Matthew tells us that Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy in Matt. 12:18a “Behold, My Servant Whom I have chosen...” Similarly, God speaks of Jesus: And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!” (Luke 9:35)
  49. His Covenant-engagement. And the LORD said to Moses, “Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.” (Exodus 34:27). But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. (Heb. 8:6). The better covenant is further described in that context.
  50. Moses sends forth the Twelve. These were the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. (Num. 13:16a). So Christ sends forth twelve apostles (Matthew 10:5).
  51. The appointing of the seventy. So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. (Num. 11:24). So Christ selected seventy<sup>1</sup> to send forth (Luke 10:1).
  52. Moses was well-instructed and wise, according to Acts 7:22a (“And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians..”). Of Jesus, Luke writes: And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. (Luke 2:40a) and And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:52) Compare also Colossians 2:2–3.
  53. Moses' might. “...he [Moses] was mighty in his words and deeds.” (Acts 7:22b). Behold the antitype of this in Matthew 13:54: “...they were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?”

## Similarities between Moses and Christ (A. W. Pink—edited)

54. Moses' intercession for the people. **Moses brought their case before the LORD.** (Num. 27:5). Moses interceded for his people in Exodus 32:9–14, 30–34. Jesus is our great Intercessor. **Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.** (Hebrews 7:25) Also see Isa. 53:12 59:16 Rom. 8:34.
55. Moses enjoyed intimate communion with God. **And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,...** (Deut. 34:10). Similarly, on earth, Christ enjoyed a similar intimate relationship with God: **No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, that One declares Him.** (John 1:18; Green's literal translation<sup>2</sup>).
56. It is striking to behold in Exodus 31 to 34 how Moses passed and re-passed between Jehovah in the mount and the camp of the congregation: expressive of his equal access to heaven and earth - compare this to Jesus in John 3:13 (**No one has ascended into heaven except He Who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.**).
57. Intimate knowledge of God. Compare Psalm 103:7 (**He [God] made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.**) to John 5:20a ([Jesus is speaking:] **"For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He Himself is doing."**).
58. Righteous anger. Compare Exodus 32:19 (**And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.**) to Mark 3:5a (**And He [Jesus] looked around at them [the Pharisees] with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart.**).
59. Both men spoke for God: **Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules.** (Exodus 24:3a). **Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, Whom He appointed the Heir of all things, through Whom also He created the world.** (Hebrews 1:1–2)
60. Both delivered God's commandments to His people: **"You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you."** (Deuteronomy 4:2) [Jesus is speaking:] **"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."** (Matthew 28:19–20). [Jesus is speaking:] **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."** (John 13:34)
61. Both provided written revelation. Moses was so ordered in Exodus 17:14 34:27 Deut. 27:3, 8. Whereas Jesus did not physically write down any words of the Bible, the words which He spoke are recorded by other men (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John); and what the disciples taught was the mind of Christ (1Cor. 2:16 Philip. 2:5). Also see Heb. 1:1–2 Revelation 1:1.



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62. Both men fasted for 40 days. Exodus 34:28 Matthew 4:2.
63. A Transfiguration. Exodus 34:29b (**Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.**) (See also v. 35). Moses would have shown the reflected glory of God. Jesus reveals to specific disciples His Shekinah Glory in Matthew 17:2 (**And He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.**).
64. Moses would meet with God in a place outside the camp (Exodus 33:7). Jesus frequently spoke with God in prayer away from everyone (Mark 1:16, 35 Luke 5:15-16 6:12-13). See also Hebrews 13:13, which reads: **Therefore let us go to Him outside the camp and bear the reproach He endured.**
65. Both Moses and Jesus pray for Israel's Forgiveness. See Numbers 14:17–19 and compare to Luke 23:34.
66. Moses' Washing his Brethren with Water. **And Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water** (Leviticus 8:6). Who can fail to see in that a foreshadowing of what is recorded in John 13:5: **Then He [Jesus] poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around Him.**
67. Both Moses and Jesus uttered Prophecies. See Deuteronomy 28 (blessings and cursings for Israel) and 33. Compare to Matthew 24 and Luke 21.
68. His Rewarding God's servants. See Numbers 7:6 (to the Levites) 32:33, 40 (to Reuben, Gad and half tribe of Manasseh. Compare to Revelation 22:12–13 (**"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."**)).
69. His perfect Obedience. **This Moses did; according to all that the LORD commanded him, so he did.** (Exodus 40:16)<sup>3</sup>. What a lovely foreshadowing was this of Him who could say, **"I have kept My Father's commandments"** (John 16:10).
70. Both would erect the Tabernacle/Temple. See Exodus 40:2, 17–21 (**In the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected. Moses erected the tabernacle. He laid its bases, and set up its frames, and put in its poles, and raised up its pillars. And he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent over it, as the LORD had commanded Moses. He took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above on the ark. And he brought the ark into the tabernacle and set up the veil of the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony, as the LORD had commanded Moses.**). Compare to Zechariah 6:9, 12–13 (**And the word of the LORD came to me: "And say to Him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Behold, the Man whose name is the Branch: for He shall branch out from His place, and He shall build the temple of the LORD. It is He Who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on His throne. And there shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.' "**)). This is the prophecy of the Temple in the Millennium.

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71. Both Moses and Jesus would complete their Work. **So Moses finished the work** (Exodus 40:33). What a blessed prefiguration was this of Him who declared, **"I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave Me to do."** (John 17:4). And, of course the Lord's declaration from the cross: **"It is finished!"** (John 19:30).
72. Both Moses and Jesus blessed the People. **And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it; as the LORD had commanded, so had they done it. Then Moses blessed them.** (Exodus 39:43). So too we read in Luke 24:50: **Then He led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up His hands He blessed them.** These two parallels are culmination blessings. Moses' blessing came at the culmination of the building of the Temple; and Jesus of the disciples prior to His ascension.
73. There is the parallel of Moses' anointing of God's House and Jesus anointing His disciples with the Holy Spirit. **Then Moses took the anointing oil [the Old Testament emblem of the Holy Spirit] and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them.** (Leviticus 8:10). Compare this to the anointing of the disciples in Acts 2:1-3, 33 **(When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them....[Peter is speaking:] "Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing." )**.
74. Both Moses and Jesus demonstrate unabated strength at the end of their lives. **Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated.** (Deut. 34:7). Compare this to Matthew 27:50 and note that Jesus spoke with a loud voice.
75. On several occasions, Moses stood between God and the people of Israel. **They [the sons of Israel] angered Him [God] at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account,...** (Psalm 106:32). [Moses is speaking:] **"But the LORD was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me."** (Deuteronomy 3:26). What marvelous foreshadowings of the Lord's intercessions for us is found in Moses! Romans 8:34 **Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.**
76. Both Moses and Jesus appointed another successor/Comforter when they left the world stage. Moses did not leave his people comfortless, but gave them a successor in Joshua in Deuteronomy 31:23 **(And the LORD commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the people of Israel into the land that I swore to give them. I will be with you.")**. Compare this to the words of Jesus to His disciples: **"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as**

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- orphans; I will come to you.” John 14:16–18.
77. Moses and Jesus give their people an Inheritance. “Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but all the men of valor among you shall pass over armed before your brothers and shall help them, until the LORD gives rest to your brothers as he has to you, and they also take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and shall possess it, the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise.” (Joshua 1:14). In Christ, all believers will receive an eternal inheritance. **In Him we have obtained an inheritance...** (Eph. 1:11a).
78. Moses’ death was necessary before Israel could enter Canaan. God told Moses that he would not enter the land. “Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel.” (Joshua 1:2; compare Deuteronomy 32:50–52). **And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”** (John 12:23–24). Isaiah prophesied this far in advance: **He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so He opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of My people? And they made His grave with the wicked and with a rich man in His death, although He had done no violence, and there was no deceit in His mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him; He has put Him to grief; when His soul makes an offering for guilt, He shall see his offspring; He shall prolong His days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.** (Isaiah 53:7–10).
79. The second appearing of both Moses and Jesus. Moses is one of the two Old Testament characters who returned to this earth in New Testament times (Matthew 17:1–3). In this, Moses was a type of Christ, illustrating His second coming to the earth. This second advent is prophesied in Isaiah 9:6–7 Zechariah 12:10 14:4 Revelation 1:7.

It is extremely important to realize that Moses is not the only *type* of Christ. Throughout the Bible, there are many men who are types: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and Solomon all stand out as types.

<sup>1</sup> This passage is disputed and it may read 72.

<sup>2</sup> The exact reading of this passage is under question. CLV: **God no one has ever seen. The only-begotten God, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He unfolds Him.** ESV: **No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.** Disputed reading is bolded.

<sup>3</sup> Moses’ obedience was certainly not perfect; but with regards to the sacred things made (the Tabernacle and its furnishings), Moses did exact as God required.

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## Lessons 218–219: Exodus 14:1–31

## A Review of Exodus 14

The translation which I used below is called *The Scriptures 2009*.

Regarding the Scriptures 2009:

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The translation used throughout this review is known as *the Scriptures 2009*. Here is a table so that you will understand some of the unique features of this translation:

Equivalent Proper Nouns in the Scriptures 2009		
Scriptures 2009	More common	Explanation for the Scriptures 2009:
יהוה	YHWH, JHWH, Jehovah, Yahweh, Y <sup>e</sup> howah	The is the actual name of God as it is found in the Hebrew. It is a reference to Y <sup>e</sup> howah, the God of Israel. The Hebrew letters are written right to left.
<i>Mitsrayim</i>	Egypt	<i>Mitsrayim</i> is a transliteration from the Hebrew.
<i>Yisra'el</i>	Israel	A better transliteration from the Hebrew.
Mosheh	Moses	A better transliteration from the Hebrew.

### Crossing the Red Sea (I have kept the e-sword titles and subtitles)

One purpose of an outline is to simply give the reader an overview of what he is about to read.

Exodus 14 Outline (for the summary)		
vv.	1–18	<a href="#">The Egyptian Army Pursues Israel (once again)</a>
vv.	19–20	<a href="#">The Angel of God Protects the Israelite Encampment</a>
vv.	21–22	<a href="#">The Israeli People Cross the Red Sea on Dry Land</a>
vv.	23–29	<a href="#">The Egyptian Army Follows Israel and Is Drowned</a>
vv.	30–31	<a href="#">The Deliverance of Israel by God Is Recognized</a>

## The Egyptian Army Pursues Israel (once again)

It is God who speaks to Moses and tells him exactly what is taking place in Egypt.

Exodus 14:1–2 And יהוה [= *JHWH, Jehovah*] spoke to Moshe [= *Moses*], saying, “Speak to the children of Yisra’ël [Israel], that they turn and camp before Pi Haḥiroth, between Miḡdol and the sea, opposite Ba'al Tsephon – camp before it by the sea.

God speaks to Moses in vv. 1–4, telling him what is going on (God is able to see the big picture, and Moses is not).

Although it is hard to understand by these first two verses, God has guided Israel into what appears to be a dead end. If Pharaoh struck them now, the Hebrew people would be in the worst possible position to defend themselves. They would have nowhere to run to, nowhere to hide. Furthermore, they are not soldiers—they have no training and they have no weapons. Even though the Egyptian army is numerically much smaller, they have the weapons, the chariots, the training and the killer instinct.

Exodus 14:3 “For Pharaoh shall say of the children of Yisra’ël, ‘They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has closed them in.’

It sounds as if Pharaoh is right there with a pair of binoculars watching them. What this indicates is, there are eyes on Israel even at this time. These are Egyptians at lookout stations all along the outskirts of Egypt. They are able to communicate what they see to Pharaoh.

Exodus 14:4 “And I shall strengthen the heart of Pharaoh, and he shall pursue them. But I am to be esteemed through Pharaoh and over all his army, and the Mitsrites [= *Egyptians*] shall know that I am יהוה.” And they did so.

God is still speaking, so He is promising to strengthen Pharaoh’s heart (I chose this translation because it accurately translates the word *châzaq* (חַזַּק) [pronounced *khaw-ZAHK*] (translated here, *strengthen*). Although Pharaoh had been beaten down by the judgments of God, God has given him strength enough to continue to resist Him.

With v. 5, the narrative shifts from God speaking to Moses to 3<sup>rd</sup> person omniscient.

Exodus 14:5 And it was reported to the sovereign of Mitsrayim that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people. And they said, “Why have we done this, that we have let Yisra’ël go from serving us?”

The people that Pharaoh and his servants turns against are the people of Israel.

Because Pharaoh now has a feeling of additional strength, he begins to question his decision to let Israel go (this decision was made by the entire country). His negative



volition toward the Hebrew people and toward their God has always been there; but he has not had the inner strength to access it for awhile.

You will note inconsistent argument being made here. “We should have never let the sons of Israel leave.” Yet, despite these words, the Egyptian army is not going out to regather the Hebrew people and bring them back. Egypt is going out to destroy the Hebrews. Having enough inner strength to act on the content of one’s soul does not make a person more rational.

Exodus 14:6 *So he made his chariot ready and took his people with him.*

Pharaoh gathered together an army to go and destroy Israel. Leading the army would be a regiment of chariots. Pharaoh himself would be a part of the chariot force.

Exodus 14:7 *And he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Mitsrayim with officers over all of them.*

Pharaoh puts together 600 chariots; they would make the first strike against his enemies. It appears that there will be an additional number of chariots behind them.

Exodus 14:8 *And הוה strengthened the heart of Pharaoh sovereign of Mitsrayim, and he pursued the children of Yisra’ël, but the children of Yisra’ël went out defiantly.*

God is not inserting hatred or anger into Pharaoh’s heart. God is giving Pharaoh the strength to express his anger and hatred towards Israel.

Pharaoh’s resistance to God is strong. He has clearly not learned his lesson, even to this time.

Exodus 14:9 *And the Mitsrites pursued them, and all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Haḥiroth, before Ba’al Tsephon.*

Pharaoh knew exactly where to go. He knew the geography and topography of where the Israelites were. The people of Israel were being watched. Pharaoh had the big picture of where the children of Israel were and how they were moving.

Recall that God has the sons of Israel double-back, so they are in an untenable position. They are trapped with Pharaoh’s chariots behind them and the sea is in front of them. We do not know what other natural terrain is to be found here. I suspect that there is a mountain range, which helps to hem them in as well. Pharaoh’s lookouts were probably watching the people of Israel from an extension of those mountains.

Exodus 14:10 *And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Yisra’ël lifted their eyes and saw the Mitsrites coming up after them. And they were greatly afraid, so the children of Yisra’ël cried out to הוה.*

There will be a period of time during which the Egyptians and the Israelites can see one another. The purpose is to allow Israel the full knowledge of the situation in which they were in.

Having recognized their situation, they first call out to God in this time of trouble.

However, they have Moses right there to blame. And they will do that next.

Exodus 14:11 [And they said to Mosheh, "Did you take us away to die in the wilderness because there are no burial-sites in Mitsrayim? What is this you have done to us, to bring us up out of Mitsrayim?"](#)

This is actually a very clever saying, and I suspect that it was repeated many times among the Israelites, because of its cleverness. Then they said it to Moses (not unlike a clever meme which might be posted and re-posted).

The firstborn of the Egyptians had all just died. There would have been a massive number of burials taking place in Egypt at this time. "There are no more graves in Egypt, so you have brought us out here to die?" It is actually a meaningless statement, albeit clever.

Exodus 14:12 ["Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Mitsrayim, saying, 'Leave us alone and let us serve the Mitsrites?' For it would have been better for us to serve the Mitsrites than to die in the wilderness."](#)

The Israelites are guilty of having a very selective memory at this point. They are resorting to, "I told you so." At the first, when Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh, Pharaoh responded by increasing the workload on the Israelites to an impossible standard. They could not meet this standard and their leaders were beaten because they could not meet this standard. Israel then told Moses, "We wish that you never came here."

However, this new standard of work only lasted for a few days. Given the widespread destruction of Egypt which followed (the plagues or judgments), normal life throughout all Egypt was completely interrupted. Although the Hebrew people faced an impossible workload, they were only subjected to this additional injustice for a few days to perhaps a week at the most.

I said *selective memory*, so what are the Israelites leaving out? At one point, prior to Moses and Aaron showing up, their burden of slavery was so great, that they cried out to the heavens (it is not clear if they were calling to God or not). When Moses and Aaron first arrived and God did a few miracles through them, they were accepted by the elders as having come from God. Because the leaders were initially behind Moses and Aaron; the people were also behind them.

At this point in our narrative, the people have come to Moses and they complain directly to him.

Exodus 14:13 And Mosheh said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the deliverance of הוהי, which He does for you today. For the Mitsrites whom you see today, you are never, never to see again.

What is most fascinating is, Moses does not hear the complaint and then run to God with it (remember, the Egyptian army is moving towards them right now). His answer is based upon his understanding of God.

So, Moses let them have their say, pretty much ignored what they said, and then told them how it was going to be.

Moses, based upon his understanding of the plan of God, tells his people to not be afraid, to not do anything, just to observe the deliverance of God.

Bear in mind that, up to this point, God has not told Moses what He is going to do. He did not say, “The Egyptians are going to come at you in their chariots, and then this is what I will do next.” Nevertheless, without being first assured by God of what is going to happen, Moses tries to relieve the anxiety of the people. So Moses gets it. He does not require God to tell him each step of the way, or to reassure him.

Exodus 14:14 “הוהי does fight for you, and you keep silent.”

Moses essentially tells the people, “Shut up and watch. God will fight for you.”

Ideally speaking, the people are to see what God is going to do, and they should place this into their memories, so that, the next time they are in a jam, they understand that their God will deal with it. In fact, God has dealt with every problem that they would ever have in eternity past. God knew their every problem of the Exodus generation in eternity past and, at that time, made provision for them.

Between vv. 14 & 15, Moses apparently cries out to God. God will speak to Moses in vv. 15–18:

Exodus 14:15 And הוהי said to Mosheh, “Why do you cry to Me? Speak to the children of Yisra’el, and let them go forward.

God now gives specific directions to Moses of where to lead the people. Apparently, the children of Israel are poised to walk toward the Sea of Reeds. There does not appear to be anything else in front of them.

Exodus 14:16 “And you, lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and let the children of Yisra’el go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.

The same rod which Moses would lift up and a judgment would come down upon the Egyptians; he is to lift up this rod over the waters in front of them.

Exodus 14:17 “And I, see I am strengthening the hearts of the Mitsrites, and they shall follow them. And I am to be esteemed [or, *glorified, honored*] through Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen.

God tells Moses, “I have given strength to the hearts of the Egyptians.”

*They shall follow them* means that these Egyptians will follow Israel, wherever Israel goes.<sup>14</sup>

The Egyptians feel anger and hatred towards God and God’s people; and God will give them the strength to act upon the hatred in their souls.

By the actions and events that follow, God will be glorified.

Exodus 14:18 “And the Mitsrites shall know that I am יהוה, when I am esteemed through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

“The Egyptians will know that I am Y<sup>e</sup>howah,” God says to Moses.

### **The Angel of God Protects the Israelite Encampment**

Exodus 14:19–20 And the Messenger of Elohim, who went before the camp of Yisra’ël, moved and went behind them. And the column of cloud went from before them and stood behind them, and came between the camp of the Mitsrites and the camp of Yisra’ël. And it was the cloud and the darkness, and it gave light by night, and the one did not come near the other all the night.

The *Messenger (Angel) of Elohim* is Jesus Christ, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Member of the Trinity. He is the God Who is revealed; He is the God Who has direct contact with man.

The Angel of Elohim manifests Himself as a cloud, and He fills this particular region with an almost impenetrable cloud cover. The Egyptians are unable to break through and find the Israelites. This does not disturb the Egyptians, as they know that the Israelites are trapped between them and the waterfront. A late-night fog near a waterway does not strike them as being unusual. A comfortable rest prior to a day of slaughter would have been well-received by the Egyptian army.

On the other side, the Israelites have light during that same evening. They cannot see the Egyptians, but they can see Moses and they can see the sea of reeds before them.

So, even though the Egyptian army was relatively near to Israel, God made it impossible for them to interact. Neither encampment could see the other.

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<sup>14</sup> It sounds, by this translation, that the Egyptians will follow *their own hearts*; but *heart* (in the Hebrew) is actually a masculine singular noun; and *them* is a 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix.



## The Israeli People Cross the Red Sea on Dry Land

Exodus 14:21 And Mosheh stretched out his hand over the sea. And הוּי caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided.

God had told Moses what to do next. For all of the judgments by God against Egypt, Moses would employ his hand or arm and/or staff; and God would work through Moses. Essentially, Moses would point to the place where God would do His work.

Exodus 14:22 And the children of Yisra'el went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right and on their left.

It is fascinating to me how God works. God did not make the water disappear for a period of time, but He used the

wind to push it back and hold it in place. God uses seemingly natural events to work great acts of power.

I have roughly guessed that it was 1 or 2 miles across this waterway; and that God stacked up the waters perhaps 3 or 4 miles apart. We need a region large enough that all Israel can cross over it in a few hours; and it needs to be large enough so that the entire Egyptian army can fit into that same region all at the same time.

**Israel's Escape from Egypt** (a graphic); from [Joshua Cottrell](#); accessed May 25, 2022.

## The Egyptian Army Follows Israel and Is Drowned

Exodus 14:23 And the Mitsrites pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all the horses of Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.

Pharaoh and his army continue after the Israelites in hot pursuit. After a night of heavy fog, the Egyptians can apparently see them, and the Israelites have crossed over the sea in the open region caused by God. Their elite chariot brigade went first, followed by Egyptian soldiers on horses and other chariots.



Exodus 14:24 And it came to be, in the morning watch, that הוה looked down upon the army of the Mitsrites through the column of fire and cloud, and He brought the army of the Mitsrites into confusion.

God caused some confusion to the Egyptian army, so they are in the midst of a sea (with the waters pushed back) and suddenly confused, troubled or discomfited.

Exodus 14:25 And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty. And the Mitsrites said, “Let us flee from the face of Yisra’el, for הוה fights for them against the Mitsrites.”

When the chariots began to malfunction, the Egyptians became disconcerted. Some of them realized that they were fighting the God of Israel once again.

Under normal circumstances, the chariots would move at a great speed. Catching up to the Israelites would have been a very easy thing for Egypt to do. But they were as if in a dream, where you want to move faster, but are unable to.

Exodus 14:26 Then הוה said to Mosheh, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, and let the waters come back upon the Mitsrites, on their chariots, and on their horsemen.”

God again uses Moses to reveal what is going to be done. Moses cannot make the waters come back over the Egyptian army—all he can do is stretch out his hand over the sea. God will bring the waters down upon the Egyptians. Moses, by lifting up his arm simply indicates that God is about to act.

Exodus 14:27–28 And Mosheh stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its usual flow, at the break of day, with the Mitsrites fleeing into it. Thus הוה overthrew the Mitsrites in the midst of the sea, and the waters returned and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them, and not even one was left of them.

The Egyptian army is in the midst of the sea. And, until Moses stretched out his hand, it was an open valley. But now, the waters return and drown the Egyptians. Every Egyptian in the army in the midst of this waterway is drowned.

Exodus 14:29 And the children of Yisra’el walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right and on their left.

The sons of Israel crossed over this waterway walking upon dry ground. On both sides of them, the waters had been stacked up.

### **The Deliverance of Israel by God Is Recognized**

Exodus 14:30 Thus הוה saved Yisra’el that day out of the hand of the Mitsrites, and Yisra’el saw the Mitsrites dead on the seashore.

God saved Israel and He destroyed the Egyptians. The entire Egyptian army, which had hoped to destroy Israel, were drowned before the Israelites. Their dead bodies began to wash up onto the shore.

Exodus 14:31 And Yisra'el saw the great work which הוה had done in Mitsrayim, and the people feared הוה, and believed הוה and His servant Mosheh.

There was a faith of all Israelites directed toward God; and they believed God's servant, Moses, as well. We will see that this will last only as long as they are not facing any problems.

We will learn an important lesson from this: miracles will not provide a sustaining faith. The faith exercised by a believer towards God has to come from his soul, and, therefore, from the resources in his soul. A verse of Scripture may provide you with more comfort or strength than seeing miracles as great as we have studied. God, through His Word, gives power to our souls.

The ESV (capitalized) is used below.

### The Exodus and Salvation

1. The state of man:
  - 1) The Israelites were in a hopeless situation in Egypt. They had been enslaved, and the Egyptians were working them so hard, that they cried out into the heavens.
  - 2) Man is born as a slave to sin. R. B. Thieme, Jr. called this the slave market of sin.<sup>1</sup> All men are born into this slave market of sin. We have no means by which we may purchase ourselves to be removed from it.
2. God works through a human mediator:
  - 1) God worked through Moses with the Exodus generation.
  - 2) God works through Jesus to save all mankind.
  - 3) The writer of Hebrews speaks of both Moses and Jesus: **Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, Who was faithful to Him Who appointed Him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. (Hebrews 3:1–6)**
3. God reveals Himself to His people:
  - 1) God revealed Himself through Moses. Exodus 34:6–7 **The LORD passed before him [Moses] and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and**

## The Exodus and Salvation

faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." What God revealed to Moses, Moses was to tell to the people.

- 2) God reveals Himself through Jesus Christ. John 1:17–18 **For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, Who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known.**
4. Redemption (which means payment):
  - 1) God promises to purchase the people of Israel. When speaking to Moses, God said: **"Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.'**" (Exodus 6:6–7).
  - 2) Jesus redeems us by His spiritual death on the cross. 1Peter 2:24a **He Himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.** Titus 2:14 **[Jesus] gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.**
5. The Passover, which was a part of the Exodus narrative, illustrates the salvation of man:
  - 1) A lamb without spot and without blemish was chosen for each home. This illustrates Jesus Christ. 1Peter 1:18–19 **...knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.**
  - 2) The lamb was to be watched for several days; just as Israel watched the Lord in His public ministry.
  - 3) The lamb was slaughtered, and its blood placed on both sides of the doorframe and at the top (so that it would drip down on the threshold). This was a type looking forward to Jesus dying for our sins, having bled from His head, hands and feet.<sup>2</sup>
  - 4) All those in the household were to eat the flesh of this lamb. Eating the flesh of the lamb is analogous to exercising faith in Jesus Christ. John 6:53–56 **So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."** We are certainly not saved by cannibalism; but by

## The Exodus and Salvation

exercising faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16, 36). Again, eating is analogous to exercising faith in the efficacious death of our Lord.

- (1) The analogy is this: every person has the ability to eat, which is actually quite the complex process when taken as a whole. We take the food into our mouths and masticate it, but what happens after this is a grace function designed by God for our bodies.
  - (2) Every person also has the ability to believe and men believe all kinds of things, both reasonable and unreasonable. However, believing in Jesus is a grace function for our souls. The faith that we exercise in Jesus has no merit, but God the Holy Spirit makes that faith efficacious (that is, effective and successful to provide for us salvation).
- 5) Wherever God saw the blood smeared on the doorframe, He passed over that house and did not kill anyone in the home. However, where there was no blood, God took the life of the firstborn in that household. 1Corinthians 5:7b **For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.**
6. The priesthood and the special nation status:
  - 1) God chose Israel (Psalm 33:12 Isaiah 41:8 44:1). God speaking to Israel through Moses: **"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."** (Exodus 19:5–6)
  - 2) 1Peter 2:9 **But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.** Peter is speaking to believers and all believers in the Church Age are priests. We are also a chosen race, because we are born again. We are God's possession.
7. All of the work is done by God:
  - 1) None of the work to take Israel out of Egypt was done by Israel. God did all of the work (all of the miracles and He provided all of the guidance). When God told Israel to pack up and leave, that is what Israel did.
  - 2) We offer nothing of merit for our salvation. We believe in Jesus, believing being a nonmeritorious system of perception. Regarding Jesus, every person has some form of faith—they believe that He died for their sins or they believe that He did not.
8. God takes us from slavery into great blessing.
  - 1) God will guide Israel into the land of promise (Canaan). Moses, speaking to the people, said: **"And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and**

## The Exodus and Salvation

- 2) are full, then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” (Deuteronomy 6:10–12)
- God promises the believer in the Church Age that he will be raised again and given eternal life. 1Corinthians 15:24–26 **Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.** Ephesians 1:3 **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,...**

<sup>1</sup> I don't know if this terminology is original with Bob or not. In the Chafer Theological Seminary Dictionary, the term *slave market of sin* is found, but this seminary was founded after Bob used the term.

<sup>2</sup> We are not saved by the Lord's literal blood. Our sins were poured upon Jesus Christ, and He took upon Himself the penalty for every sin that has been committed and will be committed.

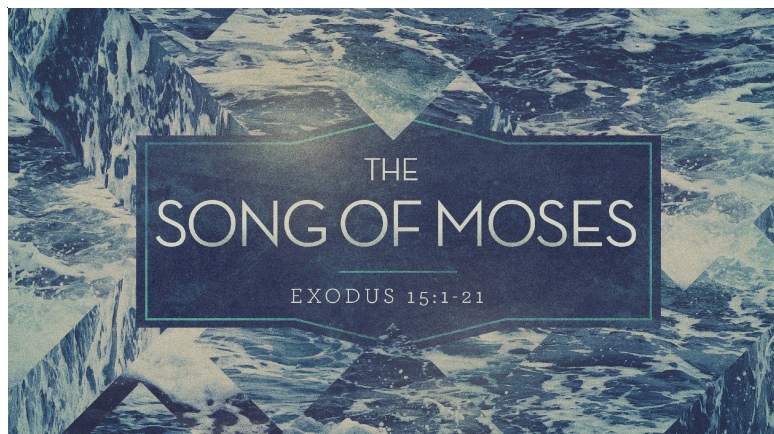
### Lesson 220: Exodus 15 introduction

### Introduction to the Song of Moses

#### The Song of Moses

**An introduction to Exodus 15:** Exodus 15 mainly covers two events. (1) The Israelites will sing a song to Y<sup>e</sup>howah after crossing the sea of reeds; and (2) Israel will encounter the bitter waters of the wilderness of Shur. Sometimes Miriam's contribution at the end of the first section is seen as its own section, but she and the women appear to be singing counterpoint to Moses and the men (assuming that Moses begins by leading an all male choir).

The song's author is not specifically named; however, it is very likely the work of Moses, who was a genius in several areas. Why wasn't it some aspiring young musician? Easy—the lyrics are recorded in God's Word and there is no reason to think that this represents anything other than divine viewpoint. Considering that at this time only Moses seemed to have a clue in the realm of things spiritual, he would have been the most likely person to write a song with this much spiritual content. Had this been Joshua or Phinehas, I would think that their names would have been mentioned





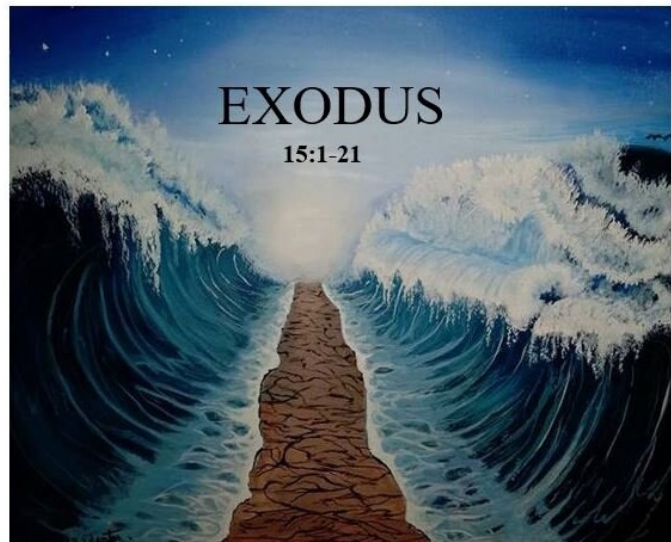
here. Not many believers in the time of Moses advanced spiritually, despite all of the great signs which they witnessed.

**The Song of Moses (Exodus 15:1–21)** (a graphic); from [Navel Cutbacks](#); accessed May 25, 2022.

**The Parting of the Sea (Exodus 15:1–21)** (a graphic); from [Squarespace](#); accessed May 25, 2022.

Later in this chapter, Moses' sister, Miriam, who has the gift of prophecy, appears to have simply led a chorus of women to sing counterpoint to Moses' song. Although some have suggested that she wrote a second song, she is merely singing Moses' words back to him. However, the fact that she is named in this chapter suggests that she possibly may have contributed to this song in some way.

The second big event in this chapter is the provision by God of fresh water in the midst of the desert for the Israelites.



There are times when believers in the Bible show initiative and it falls into God's plan. It is something that God did not have to specifically come down and say "Do A, B and C." They were guided by the doctrine in their soul. Two examples readily come to mind: this song of Moses and David's plan to build a permanent Temple to God. Nowhere was Moses told he should stop what he is doing and compose a song of praise to God. This sons simply proceeded from his soul as a honest emotional reaction to what God had done. Similarly, Solomon built this temple for God, based upon his father David's plans. David came up with this idea out of nowhere, but we know the building of the Temple to be within God's will because it is found in later prophecies (that is, prophets would speak about what would happen to the Temple and in the Temple in the future).

Along this same line, in the Church Age, God does not come to any of us and audibly say, "You will be an evangelist!" Or, "You will witness to those in your periphery." Nor do we hear a *still, small voice within us* telling us things that we should be doing. We take the doctrine which God provides for anyone willing to hear His Word; and apply it to our lives at any given time.

Around 1995, I began to study and write commentary of the Scriptures, focusing primarily in the Old Testament. At some point, I decided to begin posting these commentaries, which led to the creation of [www.kukis.org](http://www.kukis.org). At no point in time did I hear an audible voice of God saying, "This is what you need to do, Kukis." It was all a natural progression. It was

all about applying Bible doctrine to my life at that point in my life. This accounts for the function of any spiritual gift in the Church Age. Jesus obviously commanded His disciples and told them what to do, but, as their lives continued, they received less and less direct revelation, less and less direct guidance. Nevertheless, the disciples—according to traditions—continued to have dynamic ministries until their deaths.

I think that John (the Apostle) is a marvelous example of this. Because of his ministry—particularly his testimony for Jesus Christ—he was banned to the Island of Patmos for the rest of his life. This was to prevent him from spreading the gospel and the teachings of Jesus. So here is John—a man of action very much like Peter—and he is confined to an island where he is unable to evangelize and teach. What do he do? He does the most logical thing in the world: he writes his gospel; he writes down what he remembers about Jesus. John would have been unable to do this under any other set of circumstances. He was in his 80's or 90's and he had not written his gospel yet. Because of the sort of man that he was; and because of his very active ministry, John went almost his entire life without writing down what he remembers from the public ministry of Jesus. Being confined to an island gave John the opportunity to slow down, consider what he remembers, and then to write it all down. What did he write on? How was it preserved? We don't know, but God saw to those details. God did not have to tell John, "Okay, next on the list of things for you to do is write a biography of Jesus." (I say this because, had God actually come to John and told him to do this, logically, John would have included that experience at the beginning of his gospel.)

The next generation picked up the Word from there and moved forward, as did the next generation after that. In any case, after the canon of Scripture had been closed out, there was no longer a need for God to provide *new* information. In other words, God did not appear to anyone and tell them what to do going forward. Each person took the doctrine in their souls, their place in life, and applied that doctrine.

By the way, we actually know the names of some of John's disciples, and we have their writings; and we also know the names of their disciples and we have their writings. So we have the forward march of Christianity. Jesus clearly spoke to John later in life, but that was because he was going to write the book of Revelation. Communication with God goes hand-in-hand with inspired writings. John's disciples and their disciples did not have direct interaction with God; nor did they write any Scriptures.

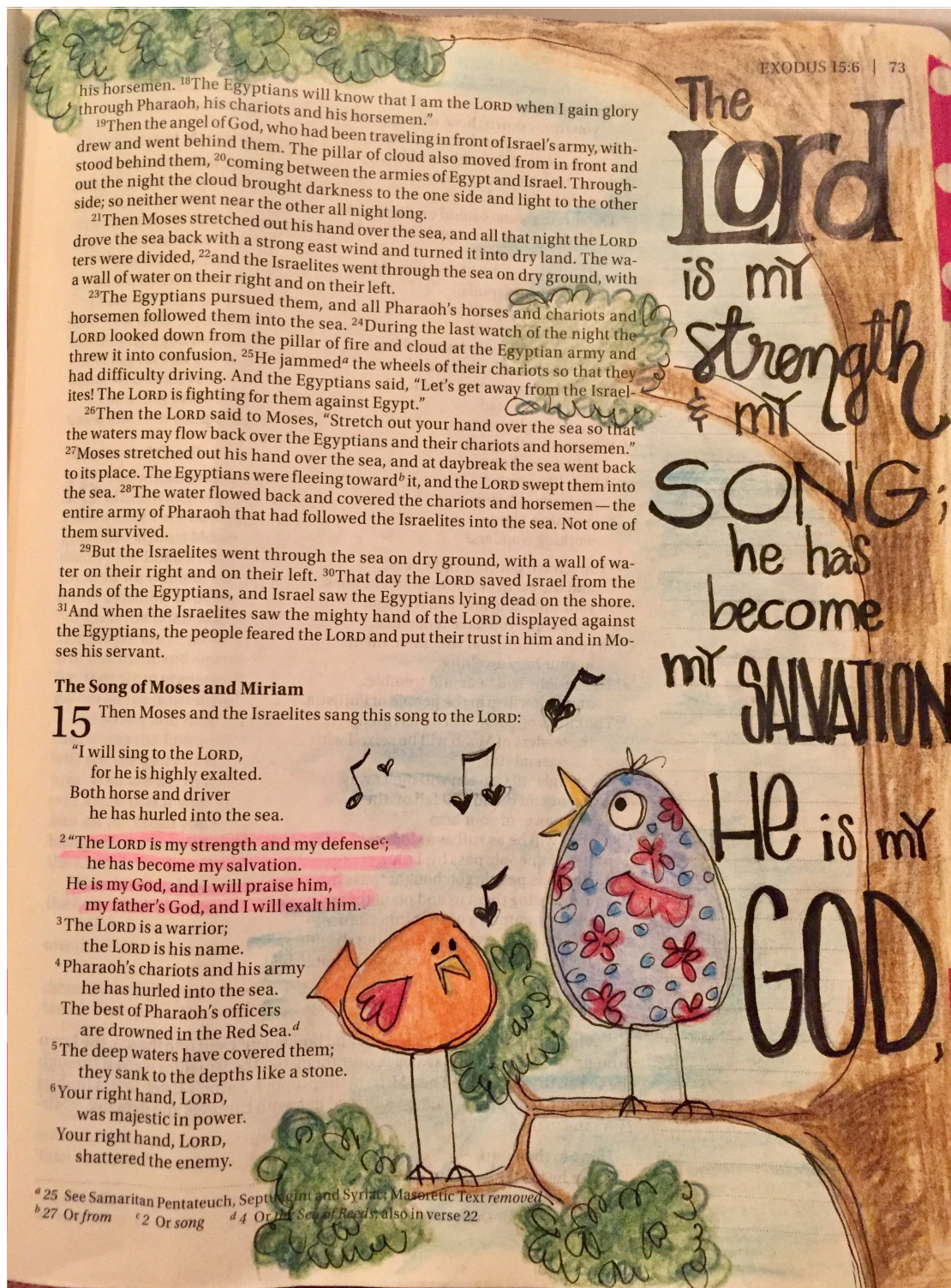
There were certain things done by certain believers which showed initiative, but poor judgement. When the Apostles were to wait for the Holy Spirit, they, still knowing next to nothing, decided to elect another Apostle. Their reasoning was (1) there were twelve Apostles originally, (2) there were twelve tribes of Israel, and (3) they were bored and needed something religious to do. They even made this election sound holy as we sometimes do. They gave God two choices of men to replace Judas and God chose neither one of them. So, not every original action on the part of a believer or group of believers is automatically God's will.

Back to the Mosaic narrative:

God has delivered the Hebrew people and Moses celebrates this great deliverance of God with a song. We do not know exactly when Moses recorded all of these events; but we do know when he spoke/sang this song, which was right after God had delivered all of the sons of Israel. So, all of the events that Moses had seen were fresh in his mind—he had witnessed these things within hours; perhaps within minutes of writing and then sharing this song.

If you know any songwriters, sometimes some of their best tunes are put together in 10–30 minutes. It just suddenly flows from them. I believe that this is what happened with Moses. He was inspired by all that had happened, and he wrote this song, which he apparently taught to the congregation of 2 million (this would have been done in an orderly fashion). I suspect that it was sung many times upon their exit from that place where they had crossed over.





**Exodus 15** (a Bible Journaling graphic); from Julie Williams on [Pinterest](#); accessed May 25, 2022.

Exodus 15:1a Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying:

I tend to take a very naturalistic approach to the events of the Bible. There is no reason to think that Moses suddenly began singing a song just off the top of his head. Somehow, in some way, despite all that was going on, Moses composed this song. Perhaps it only took him 20 or 30 minutes, but he had it ready for Israel to sing as they continued on. This is clearly a song composed *after* God's deliverance written in order to celebrate His deliverance.

Most of this chapter will be a song sung by Moses and the sons of Israel. The writing of this song logically had to occur within hours of the destruction of the Egyptian army. Now, how it was distributed is unknown to us, but Israel learned and sung the song with Moses—and it appears that all of this took place soon after the crossing of the sea and the devastation of the Egyptian army.

All Israel is standing on the far side of the Sea of Reeds, and they are watching the Egyptian army being destroyed by the waters which have come back upon them. Moses also watches this and a song begins to form in his head, which song will be written in short order and then sang by the Israelites.

Something which is missed here is, what this song implies. Even though it is possible to write a song in a very short amount of time, it still requires concentration and song writers tend to *write down* the song that they are developing. What this suggests is, Moses was writing at this time. We don't know how much or how often, but if he wrote this song then he certainly had written portions of his life and portions of the exodus down so far. Or, at the very least, his writing at this point caused him to record Exodus (and some believe that he compiled Genesis).<sup>15</sup>

All of these events have just occurred, so Moses had to have written this song immediately after. The point that I am making is, these historical events appear to be recorded by Moses almost immediately after they occur. Moses is not looking back on these times decades later, and writing. In this particular case, Moses likely had written the song within an hour of the Egyptian army being destroyed (bear in mind, the most fearsome thing to Israel, at this point in time, would have been the Egyptian army).

Later on, in the book of Exodus, we are going to read a set of chapters which will seem to be very repetitive. God will give Moses directions, for instance, to build the Tabernacle; and then we will have a chapter where Moses oversees the building of the Tabernacle.

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<sup>15</sup> I personally believe that Genesis was passed along generation to generation orally. It was memorized, added to, and then passed on to the next generation. Moses may have written this down, but he was writing down a narrative that was already in existence.



This would suggest that Moses wrote down those instructions *when* God gave them to him, or hours or days later. And then when Moses and the people of Israel followed God's instructions, that would also be recorded by Moses. If this information was written down years later, there would not have been two chapters which describe nearly the same thing.

The point that I am making is, the book of Exodus which we are studying was written very close in time to the events which took place. Maybe hours later; maybe days later; but not months or years later.

While we are on the general topic of songwriting, there is something else I should point out. When a celebrity of some sort is saved, often they are paraded about by Christian groups and asked to give their testimony and tell everyone all that has happened to them and how they feel. Sometimes, a celebrity with talent is called upon to use his talent for God, and some of them write or perform "Christian" songs. Just about the worst thing that you can do with a new believer is to parade him or her about like some trophy and to let them tell everyone about how they feel. It is just as bad for such a celebrity who is a new Christian to start writing *Christian* songs. All believers have a past; all believers can look back to their former life and, as a new Christian, they might take from that past as their inspiration for writing. I recall when Arlo Guthrie was saved (you probably don't know who he is) and he wrote some songs which sounded sort of Christian.<sup>16</sup> Now, the songs sounded nice; and I still enjoy hearing them today. However, the lyrics are not really Biblical. He sings about making a heaven out of this earth, which is not something that mankind is ever going to do. We are not going to give in to hyper-environmentalism, join hands with the greenies, and suddenly end up living in the midst of a heavenly earth. That will never happen. Now, do I like fresh air and clean water? Sure, I do. Furthermore, there is nothing wrong with choosing to work with the environment and to make your environment pleasant to you. Establishing national parks throughout the United States was a wonderful thing. But, Guthrie's *Christian* songs were devoid of any spiritual understanding, which is exactly what you would expect of a brand new believer.

Moses' song, on the other hand was on point and appropriate. He was a man with great spiritual understanding.

Moses here did not commission some newly saved believer in Y<sup>e</sup>howah Elohim to write a song for everyone to perform. Most of the believers whom were led by Moses could not have punched their way out of a spiritual paper bag. Moses is likely the author of this song because it is doctrinally correct and it has real spiritual meaning.

Most of the *Song of Moses* will focus upon what they have just seen.

### Outline of the Song of Moses

vv. 1b–12	God's great strength in delivering Israel from Egypt; God destroys the Egyptian army in the Sea of Reeds.
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<sup>16</sup> I do not know any of the details here other than from listening to the album "Washington County."

## Outline of the Song of Moses

v. 13	God gives grace to Israel.
vv. 14–16	The Fear of the people in the land of Canaan (focusing upon Philistia, Edom and Moab).
vv. 17–18	God leads His people to His Mountain.

More briefly, vv. 1–12 tells us where Israel has been; vv. 13–18 where Israel is going.

Exodus 15:1b “I will sing to the Lord,

We have no idea how quickly Moses wrote this song. Did he speak it right here on the spot? Had he thought about it and put together some lyrics previously (in anticipation)? Did he simply think about what had just happened, what he saw, and put it all together into a song? No matter how this was composed, it appears to have been done quickly.

Some songwriters will tell you that, some of their greatest songs just came to them and in 5 or 15 or 30 minutes, they have all or most of the song written. So, the idea that Moses sees all that he sees here and then writes a song to commemorate it right there on the spot is not an unusual thing to happen.

Moses' song is directed towards the LORD; and the idea is for his people to also focus upon God (rather than upon themselves or upon Moses). For example, Moses is not writing a song about how good he looked when he raised up his arm over the sea. This song will glorify God, not Moses (and not the people of Israel).

Exodus 15:1c **For He has triumphed gloriously!**

Literally, this reads, *for rising up, He rose up*. It is a doubling of the verb *gā'āh* (גָּאָה) [pronounced *gaw-AW*], which means, *to rise up; to grow up; to be lifted up, be raised up, be exalted [in victory]; to triumph*. Strong's #1342 BDB #144. We could read this as, *in rising up, He triumphed; in victory, He is exalted; He triumphs having been raised up*.

By these acts, God has glorified Himself. All Israel was to understand Who and What God is. That is key to their future and their relationship with God (as it is with us). Who else could have opened up the sea to allow the people of Israel to walk across the sea bed to safety?

What has happened is God's victory; all of the credit can be heaped upon Him.

Does God do this so that He can be admired and worshiped? Was that His ultimate goal? God does not think as we think. We like doing something great, and having people say nice things to us or to look up to us with some level of admiration. We just love that affirmation. God is not like that.

Maybe an analogy will help you to understand the worship of God. A child learns early on the voice and the visage of his parents and he learns early on that, if he needs anything, he can go to either of his parents. Does the father do this so that his son will grow up thinking that he is the greatest man in the world and worship him? Of course not! The father acts as he does because he loves his son (the same could be said of the mother). The love of a parent for his or her son (or daughter) is great. Parents are not looking to be glorified by their children, but for their children to know that they can come to them with anything. Parents want the child to know that he (or she) can trust them. Ideally speaking, the two people in the world a child can look to for guidance and help are his parents.

The parents do not do this for the admiration of their children. Parents act as they do because they love their children and they want the best for their children.

God makes Himself known to Israel in the same way. When they have a need, He wants them to come to Him. God wants Israel to understand that they, as a people, belong to Him; and that He will act towards them in love (to be completely accurate, our point of contact with God is His perfect justice; however, I use the term *love* in an anthropomorphic way in order to exploit this analogy).

To carry this analogy further, when you show disrespect towards your mother—the person who loves you more than anyone else on earth—then you are subject to discipline by your father to set your mind right (parents who do not discipline their children do not have their best interests at heart).

Similarly, when Israel disrespects God or God's representatives (Moses and Aaron); then they *cruisin' for a bruisin'*, as my father used to say.

So far, this is what we have:

Exodus 15:1a-c [Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously!](#)

The ones singing are Moses and the sons of Israel. This song is directed to the Lord. They recognize, by these lyrics, that God has triumphed over the army of Egypt. All of the credit is given to God; no one in Israel, including Moses, can claim to have helped God in this triumph. Remember, all that Moses did was to lift up his hand or lift up his staff, and when he did that, God would act. Moses by lifting up his hand was not assisting God in any way. He simply showed Israel where to look to see the works of God.

Exodus 15:1d [The horse and its rider](#)

The horse and rider refer to the individuals in the army of Pharaoh; and God triumphed over all of them. Pharaoh had a great cavalry. The men were experts at war and at riding;

and were able to do both. But God could overcome the greatest army (something that we have seen many times in the Bible<sup>17</sup>).

Exodus 15:1e **He has thrown into the sea!**

What just happened was, the army of Pharaoh drowned in the sea along with their horses and all of their equipment.

The likely scenario here is that the sons of Israel just stood and watched dumbfounded as the sea was cut loose on them, drowning Pharaoh and his army. Watching the power of a tidal wave (which is essentially what they were seeing) was an awesome event. Furthermore, they were completely safe (although they were so overwhelmed that they probably gave that very little thought).

Moses probably watched for a moment and then wrote this song. The Egyptians rode into the midst of the sea by their own volition, and their God drowned them all.

It is only fair to point out that this is one area where some archeologists and the Bible do not always agree. As of today, we do not know of any Egyptian monuments which feature the calvary. It is obvious that they were all wiped out during this period of time, however and it sounds as though Egypt was so devastated that it may have taken a century to begin to come back to the power that it once was. We have a later passage in 2Chron. 12:3 where Shishak, king of Egypt has 1200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen. Unless there were 50 men on each chariot, that means that a large portion of these were calvary. This is 500 years later, however.

On the other hand, Freeman refers us to another book, *Ancient Egyptians*, written by Wilinon, Vol. I, pp. 288 & 292, where we have Egyptian Hieroglyphics which hold the command of the calvary to be an exalted position, often a post held by the king's sons. Also, there are ancient secular authors who mention Egyptian's calvary.

Here, all of Pharaoh's army was vanquished; they were drowned in the midst of the sea (insofar as we know; if any men held back, we do not know of it).

Exodus 15:1 **Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!**

Very soon after seeing Pharaoh's army destroyed, Israel learned a song—probably written by Moses—and they sang it with great enthusiasm. At this moment, they feel great enthusiasm and emotion, having believed, 12 hours before, that Moses took them to that place to die.

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<sup>17</sup> Believers in the United States may need to remember this fact in some future day.

God has just drowned all the Egyptian army in the Sea of Reeds, and Moses has written a song about it. All Israel sings this song. That is what most of Exodus 15 is.

Exodus 15:2a *The Lord is my strength and song,...*

Moses understands that God is his strength; and God is his happiness (his song).

Moses recognizes that God provides him with his strength and power; and that he is able to sing and celebrate God because of all that God has done.

When it says Yah (an abbreviation for Y<sup>e</sup>howah) is his song, it means God is *the reason* for his song; this song representing inner happiness and joy.

As we study the remainder of Exodus, it is clear that the Hebrew people were not easy people to work with; and, no doubt, Moses needed God's strength to continue with them.

**Exodus 15:2a** (a graphic); from [Tumblr](#); accessed May 25, 2022.



Exodus 15:2b *...And He has become my salvation;...*

God is Moses' salvation; just as He is our salvation. We are not saved because we follow the teachings of Jesus or because we try to live out His words in our lives; we are saved because we stand upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. We believe in Him and God has promised us that we will be saved (and that He would keep us saved).

I first heard these verses [sung](#) by the Liberated Wailing Wall in the early 1970's. This is a [live version](#).

Moses recognizes that his strength is found in God; that even his song, which is representative of his rejoicing, is found in God. God is both our deliverer (that is, our help in times of need through the trials and troubles of our lives) and He is our salvation, our eternal hope. Moses identifies Y<sup>e</sup>howah as his God and the God of his father. In his song, Moses is lifting up God.

Moses (and the people) recognize that the Revealed God is their God. He is the Creator God.



For the basic text in this study of Exodus, I have depended upon the NKJV. However, there is a more literal translation of v. 2b which you may find to be interesting.

Exodus 15:2b more literally reads: ...He [the Lord] also has become to me Y<sup>e</sup>shûw'âh [= salvation].

The word at the end of this phrase is y<sup>e</sup>shûw'âh (יְשׁוּׁוּאָה) [pronounced y<sup>e</sup>shoo-ĠAW], and it means, *salvation, deliverance*. Strong's #3444 BDB #447.

This is a fascinating word that we have here, which is a letter for letter Hebrew equivalent to *Jesus* (in the Greek). This can be worked out letter-for-letter to be the Hebrew spelling of *Jesus*. Or, to put this in a different way, *Jesus* (in the Greek) is the transliteration of y<sup>e</sup>shûw'âh (יְשׁוּׁוּאָה) [pronounced y<sup>e</sup>shoo-ĠAW], even though that may not be obvious to you.

At various times, people have made the claim, "The name of Jesus does not even occur in the Old Testament." Ah, but it does! *Jesus* is found nearly 80 times in the Old Testament!

Exodus 15:2b ...He [the Lord] also has become to me Y<sup>e</sup>shûw'âh [= salvation]. (Kukis mostly literal translation)

No doubt, you have heard people say, "The name Jesus is not found anywhere in the Old Testament." But, they are wrong. The Hebrew word Y<sup>e</sup>shûw'âh (יְשׁוּׁוּאָה) is the name *Jesus*, letter-for-letter, and it is found many times in the Old Testament.

To understand this table, the first column is the Hebrew word Y<sup>e</sup>shûw'âh (יְשׁוּׁוּאָה) spelled out, letter-by-letter. Each row of letters is a letter in the Hebrew word Y<sup>e</sup>shûw'âh and what its equivalent is in English (from the Hebrew), Greek, and then the English again (but taken from the Greek). The top row is the entire word.

A transliteration is a letter-for-letter rendering of one language into another.

### The Name Jesus in the Old Testament

Hebrew	English Transliteration	Greek	English Transliteration
יְשׁוּׁוּאָה	y <sup>e</sup> shûw'âh [pronounced y <sup>e</sup> shoo-ĠAW]	lêsous (Ἰησοῦς) [pronounced ee-ay-SOOCE]	lêsous = Jesus
י	y <sup>e</sup>	Ἰη	lê = Je

This Hebrew word begins with the equivalent of an English y, but there is no such letter in the Greek. It is brought into the Greek with the equivalent of an English i. Modern English transliterates that as a j (there is no letter j in the Hebrew or in the Greek).

The vowel point is the Hebrew e, which is brought into the Greek as ê; and transliterated by the english vowel e.

## The Name Jesus in the Old Testament

Hebrew	English Transliteration	Greek	English Transliteration
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Notice that we take these letters from the right side of the word יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, as Hebrew is read from right to left.

יְ	sh	σ	s
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The next consonant in the Hebrew is the letter shîyn, brought into the English as an *sh* sound. However, there is no *h* in the middle of a Greek word (they allow for there to be a rough breathing at the beginning of a word). So what is *sh* in the Hebrew is brought over into the Greek as a sigma (there is no *shigma* in the Greek). Sigma in the Greek is the English equivalent of *s*.

וּ	u	οὐ	u
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The Hebrew letter is called a wâw dagesh, which is taken into the English as a simple *u*. The Greek equivalent is an οὐ, which is treated as a single vowel, and pronounced as a single vowel. This is transliterated into the English from the Greek as a *u*.

הּ	ah	οὐς	us
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An *ah* ending in the Hebrew is very common; but, just as there is no *h* in the middle of a Greek word, there is no *h* at the end of a Greek word either. So word which ends with an *h* in the Hebrew often are brought into the Greek with an *s* ending. We have already studied this with Zacharias (transliteration from the Greek) as over against Zechariah (transliteration from the Hebrew). Many Bibles, in order to maintain consistency with names, will stick with the Hebrew transliteration throughout. So, when you read *Zechariah* in the NT, that is not transliterated from the Greek, but from the Hebrew.

The end result is, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (in the Hebrew), transliterates to yêshûw'âh (in the English); both of which transliterate to lêsous (in the Greek), which is *Jesus* (in the English).

The name *Joshua* is sometimes spelled very much like *salvation*, which is yêshûw'âh (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) [pronounced yêshoo-GAW]; which is transliterated letter-for-letter into the Greek as lêsous (Ἰησοῦς) [pronounced ee-ay-SOOCE], which is also *Jesus*.

This word which we studied, is yêshûw'âh (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) [pronounced yêshoo-GAW] in the Hebrew. It is reasonably be transliterated *Jesus*, and is found nearly 80 times in the Old Testament. What is even more remarkable is, look up some of these verses and replace yêshûw'âh (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) [pronounced yêshoo-GAW] (*salvation, deliverance*) with *Jesus*. See what happens. I promise you, you will be amazed.

Gen. 49:18, Exodus 14:13 15:2, Deut. 32:15, 1Sam. 2:1 14:45 2Sam. 10:11 22:51, 1Chron. 16:23 2Chron. 20:17 Job 13:16 30:15 Psalm 3:2, 8 9:14 13:5 14:7 18:50 20:5 21:1, 5 28:8 35:3, 9 42:5, 11 43:5 44:4 53:6 62:1–2, 62:6 67:2 68:19 69:29 70:4 74:12 78:22 80:2 88:1 89:26 91:16 106:2–4 118:13–15, 21 119:123, 155, 166, 174 140:7 149:4, Isa. 12:2–3 25:9 26:18 33:1–2 49:6, 8 51:6, 8 52:7, 10 56:1 59:11 60:17–18 62:1 Jonah 2:9 Hab. 3:8.

Armed with this knowledge, notice that v. 2a-b can be properly rendered: *The Lord is my strength and song, He also has become to me Jesus.*

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Gen. 49:18 *I wait for your salvation, O LORD.* (ESV)

Gen. 49:18 *I wait for your Jesus, O LORD.* (ESV with replacement)

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Exodus 14:13 *And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.* (ESV; capitalized)

Exodus 14:13 *And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the Jesus of the LORD, which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.* (ESV with replacement) Et cetera.

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Exodus 15:1 *Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! (NKJV)*

Moses has begun to lead the Israelites in song, a song which he has just written right there on the spot.

Exodus 15:2a *The Lord is my strength and song,...* (NKJV)

We all understand that God is the strength of Moses. Moses could not do anything without God; not one miracle could he perform; he could never have led the Hebrews out of Egypt. He could not have led Israel across the street.

Exodus 15:2b *...And He has become my salvation [or, my Jesus];...* (NKJV)

God is more than God to the Israelites. He is their deliverance; He is their salvation; He is their *Jesus*.

Exodus 15:2c *He is my God,...*

Now, Who exactly is Moses' God? Let's look back at v. 2b to answer that:

Exodus 15:2b more literally reads: *...He [the Lord] also has become to me Y<sup>e</sup>shûw'âh [= salvation].*

Moses, without fully appreciating what he has written here, has said, *"Y<sup>e</sup>shûw'âh (my salvation) is my God."*

Or, *The Lord has become to me my salvation; the Lord has become to me My Jesus.* (I am essentially writing v. 2b twice).

Exodus 15:2d *...and I will praise Him;...*

At this point, we have come to a difficult verb. Exodus 15:2c-d is translated in the KJV as *He is my God and I will prepare Him a habitation*. In *The Emphasized Bible* v. 2c is rendered: *I will glorify Him*. NASB: *I will praise Him*. VW: *...and I will adorn Him;...* As you can see, we have 3 basic ways that this verb is translated.

The Hebrew word is Hiphil imperfect of *nâvâh* (נָוָה) [pronounced *naw-VAH*] (the Hiphil is the causal stem). This verb is found only in this passage and in Habakkuk 2:5. In Habakkuk, it is a Qal imperfect and found with the negative and refers to a man who is not at home in his own house. The different stems can end up giving us very different meanings. However, the Qal stem is often the base meaning upon which all other meanings are derived.

It is helpful that we have the adjective cognate is *nâveh* (or *nâvâh* in the feminine), which word is clearly connected to habitation or home or a dwelling; it possibly carries with it the connotation of *being at home* in one's habitation, which is much different than just having a place where you park your car and stay. Moses wants God to be at home with him and with the people of Israel.<sup>18</sup>

Exodus 15:2d (corrected translation): *...and I will cause Him to be at home*.

It might have been easier to explain that Moses says that he will celebrate Him.

So, what does this mean, that *Moses will cause God to be at home*? The idea is to present truth to the people of Israel, so that their thinking becomes more aligned with the thinking of God. If they think like God thinks, then God will be more at home with the Israelites. If they continue to think in terms of human viewpoint, then they will be alienated from God and God will not be at home among the Israelites (since the actions of the Israelites are based upon their free will, what Moses wanted to happen and what actually happened are two very different things).

Let me illustrate this. You come home and the wife is there, and you have one opinion and she has another opinion, and there is no middle ground, and both of you hold to those opinions. You may not feel at home in your house; or your wife may not feel at home in her house.

When the thinking of Israel is aligned with the thinking of God, God is at home among the Israelites.

## Lesson 223: Exodus 15:1–2

## Moses is the Author of Exodus

### Was Moses really the author of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy?

<sup>18</sup> Inspired and paraphrased from Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; from a footnote for Exodus 15:2.

Throughout history, we have seen certain religious movements catch hold and sometimes replace sound doctrine with something which begins as a fad, but later supplants true Bible doctrine.

Originally, it was accepted that Moses wrote the first 5 books of the Bible (although I don't believe that Moses necessarily wrote Genesis as we think, but simply wrote down what was the existing oral tradition at that time).

For thousands of years, no one questioned Mosaic authorship—not Jewish and not Christian scholars. Then one day, the allegation was made that, the Hebrew people had no ability to write in 1450 B.C., so, logically, Moses could not have written the Torah. Then, after accepting this (false) hypothesis, a very weird theory was developed, known as the JEPD theory (also known as documentary hypothesis). This theory, which you may or may not be aware of, posits that two primary sources—living long after Moses—recorded their history of this period of time. One was J (the Jehovist) and the other was E (the Elohist). J often used the name *Jehovah* when he wrote; and E often used the word *Elohim* when he wrote (neither J nor E used his own term for deity exclusively). These men (as the theory asserts) wrote hundreds of years after Moses. Then someone—perhaps a priest—decided to intertwine their narratives, and that intertwining of narratives, involving 3 different men (J, E and P, at least), gave us the first 4 books of Moses. Also, the book of Deuteronomy was, apparently, written by someone else, long after the fact (if Moses did not actually write Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, then how could he have written Deuteronomy?). Now, I may have a few of these details wrong, but this is the gist of documentary hypothesis.<sup>19</sup> Surprisingly this theory is taught as fact in a considerable number of seminaries and really deep-thinking individuals read a passage out of the Law and then discuss why J wrote that passage rather than E.

Now, if Moses is *not* the author of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, then you might as well cast aside any concept that you have of the inspiration of Scripture, because when you lose Mosaic authorship, then these books lose all credibility (which is the fundamental intent of this false system of thought).

What we read in these books is that Moses speaks with God and then Moses brings back a very complex set of worship mandates and rituals for Israel, now living in the desert-wilderness. Despite harboring a great deal of negative volition, Israel begins to follow these various rituals. Furthermore, insofar as we know, these rituals remain quite consistent for over a millennium. We have no reason to think that there was one set of rituals followed, then, 500 years later<sup>20</sup>, a whole different set of rituals began to be followed. There is absolutely no support for this idea whatsoever.

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<sup>19</sup> Bear in mind that, for any theory, there will be many alternative takes on this theory.

<sup>20</sup> I am just using the words *500 years later*; maybe some think it was 200 years later; maybe some think 600 years later. The arguments for and against are essentially the same.



This makes a lot less sense if long after Moses, all of this material is written down, edited together, and then suddenly, out of nowhere, presented to the people as though it had always been with them. Assuming that to be true, what rituals were they following prior to these writings? Were they following the exact same rituals from the Mosaic Law? Well, then, where did those complex rituals come from, if there was no Mosaic Law? Does this new set of books—appearing on the scene 500+ years later—have new rituals in them? Are there changes in the rituals or the laws? One thing that we will find, as we continue further in the book of Exodus is, God is complex and His laws and rituals are complex.

If those rituals are already in existence before J and E wrote, then where did they come from? If the books about these rituals are written 500 years later, to what did they refer in order to know what rituals to do and when? Did Israel follow one set of rituals, and, 500 years later with the new holy book, start over and change all of them?

Anyone who thinks that you can instantly change the thinking of a large group of religious people by introducing a new *holy book* (or set of *holy writings*) apparently does not know any religious people. Now, given a large enough population, something like this can peel off a percentage of believers. The Mormon and Jehovah Witness cults showed us that is true. But can you easily change a nation of believers? Not on your life. Mormons and JW's are out there pounding the pavement day after day, trying to drum up support for their theologies. And certainly, a few people here, and a few people there are enticed into their false thinking; but all of Christian America? That won't ever happen. They will be able to peel off this or that person, but neither cult has much traction today.

### **Catholicism Tangent:**

Catholicism has been around for a very long time. Although it started off on the right foot, it quickly veered into legalism and power lust, so what exists as Catholicism today is a far cry from the original teachings of Saint Jerome. Now, Saint Jerome translated the Greek Bible into Latin and it is his Latin Bible is the basis for many Catholic translations. So that there is no misunderstanding here, Jerome did an excellent job in translating from Greek to Latin (they were equivalent languages at the time; meaning you could just about do a word-for-word translation from one language to the other). To put this in another way, any translation made from the Jerome's Latin text could be used in a Protestant church, and no one would be the wiser (apart from they apocrypha).

The changes in the Catholic church did not happen all at once, which is how they were able to go from a fundamentalist point of view to a very mixed up theology. There was a change here, then a change there, but Catholics never made wholesale changes to their faith; they saw small changes with each generation. The Protestant revolution was all about going back to what the Bible actually said, and negating the many changes made to the Catholic religion over periods of hundreds of years.

Now, could we with logic, the existing Scriptures, and the teachings of Saint Jerome get the followers of the pope to change their minds and revert back to the time when the teaching was sound (in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.)? No, not a chance. With careful and intensive teaching, a handful of Catholics can be set straight. But all of them? Not on your life! They were raised with these beliefs, most of them will die with these beliefs; and they will never be able to brought back to pre-Pope Catholic theology, even though that is their true history as a religious organization.

## **Mosaic authorship part II:**

My point in that tangent is this: introducing a new holy book 500 years after Moses is not going to change the minds and rituals of all Israel. And if nothing is changed by this new holy book, then there are two questions: (1) why is this new holy book necessary, if it adds or changes nothing? (2) How did the people of God know how to follow these complex set of sacrifices in the first place, if they did not already have the books of Moses?

If you follow out the JEPD theory to its logical conclusions, it makes very little sense. How do you introduce the most important Scriptures to a people 500 years after the fact? How do you make them believe, "This has been here all the time!"? Various sects and denominations can be changed, but only a little at a time. Small steps taken in each generation; but the worship of God in the Old Testament would not have made grand changes to all that they believed, if a *new* set of Scriptures were suddenly introduced.

Let's say I wanted to add a book to the Bible; the epistle from Kukis. And I guaranteed to you that this letter was written 2000 years ago, and that it belongs with the general epistles. How far do you think that I could take this? How many Bible translators do you think I could convince that this epistle from Kukis is a real thing and belongs in the Bible? I could devote my entire life to this project, and, at best, I would get a small, goofy cult following (I am not a very charismatic person or a dynamic speaker). That would be the most I could hope for. But would some Bible translation publisher take me seriously? ESV or the NIV would not be calling me on the phone, asking about this new epistle, wanting to check it out. If they even knew that I was trying to sell this epistle of Kukis as being legitimate, they would know that I am a nut! But what would most likely be the case is, they would not even know that I exist.

The point that I am making is, you do not introduce a new religious book, hundreds (or thousands) of years after the fact, and think that you will accomplish anything more than start a cult (and that would happen only if you are really good at selling yourself, as cults start most often based upon the charisma of the cult leader). Quite frankly, I am not a very charismatic guy (so, you can breathe a sigh of relief with regards to the epistle from Kukis).

So, if the books of Moses were introduced, 500 years after the fact, and certain priests started acting as if they had always been there, how far do you think this charade would go? It would go nowhere! Yet, JEPD is taught in many of our most prestigious seminaries;

and many good commentators who you pick up and read will, from time to time, make references to J or to E (and, more rarely, to P<sup>21</sup>).

My point in all of this is, you can have big religious movements which are contrary to the faith take hold in a culture and even infiltrate the thinking of Christianity in many different countries. Whereas, it would be virtually impossible to make wholesale changes to the Scriptures themselves, you could change some of the philosophical bend of a small number of people in the theological world. After all, documentary hypothesis is taught in many seminaries, but how many churches have pastors who constantly evaluate the books of Moses by talking about J or E? No doubt, a few of them do; and very often, to a mostly skeptical congregation (my guess is, most Christians are not even aware of the JEPD theory).

The Catholic religion is an excellent example of a set of traditions taking hold and becoming the norm. But this took place over a long period of time. Furthermore, what did not change was the Word of God. So, despite all the best efforts of the Catholic religion, the Word of God got out into the world and all of their phony traditions were seen for what they were—heresy. Historically, what followed was the Protestant movement, which was a return to the existing Scriptures (which, in case you did not know, were kept under wraps for hundreds of years by the Catholic church).

One more interesting tangent: most of the weird Catholic doctrines became traditional, mainstream Catholicism because they ignored the Word of God (in fact, for a time, they hid the Word of God). However, in the new Catholic church, despite following all of the traditions of the past (traditions which involve the pope, Mary, priests as a separate class of people), they are doing great work in the field of Bible translations. Or, more accurately, they are encouraging and giving their stamp of approval to 6–12 modern translations. Some of these translations are the Jerusalem Bible, the Christian Community Bible (1988), the Heritage Bible, the New American Bible, the Revised English Bible. These are all excellent translations, having the single weakness of including the apocrypha as a part of their translation (no book would receive the imprimatur of the Catholic Church without the apocrypha).

One wonders what will happen in the future with the Catholic church? If they have a set of apostate beliefs and practices on the one hand; yet many accurate approved-of translations on the other (which translations do not teach their false beliefs and practices), what will happen? Will Catholicism move back to its roots? I think that is entirely possible, at least in part. There is no pope in the Bible. There is no veneration of Mary found in the Bible. There is no priestly class taught in the New Testament (we are all priests, including women, in the NT). There is no baptism for the dead or for infants in the Bible. There is no purgatory. Catholic-approved Bibles are good translations. Will Catholics in the future

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<sup>21</sup> P stands for *priest*.

consult these accepted translations and reject some of the false Catholic doctrines? Only time will tell.

So that you have an idea as to how I got off on this tangent, it goes like this. The Song of Moses clearly was written minutes or hours after the drowning of the Egyptian army. As Israel pushed on, they sang this song. This would indicate that Moses wrote in close proximity to the time that these events occurred. This is one more reason to reject the false JEPD theory (which I had to define in order to refute).

Then I illustrated, using the Catholic church, that you cannot make wholesale changes to a religion overnight. That will never fly, except to result in a cult following. The Catholics did go astray after Saint Jerome, but this was a long process, changing their doctrines little by little over hundreds of years.

Now let's return to our narrative:

Here is what we have studied so far:

Exodus 15:1 Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!

Exodus 15:2a-d The Lord is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation [or, *Jesus*]; He is my God, and I will praise Him;...

Exodus 15:2e My father's God,...

Sometimes when we take a verse one phrase at a time, we get a much better understanding of the individual parts of that verse. However, we can also lose the progression of the thinking of the speaker/writer/singer. In context, we should understand this to mean: [This God is] my father's God,...

There is this great continuity with the Hebrew people. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is also the God of Moses; also the God of David. And, most importantly, He is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the God of the father of Moses; and the God of Abraham.

Exodus 15:2f ...and I will exalt Him.

Moses is the one who wrote this song and he is singing it. He will exalt God. Exalting God means that we glorify Him; we put Him up where all can see Him (but without idolatrous statues).

Let me use myself to illustrate again. When I exegete a portion of Scripture, my intent is to make it understandable and relatable. In this way, I exalt God. Now, I begin telling you all about myself and how I am a very cool and groovy guy, then I have left teaching the Scriptures and am exalting myself.

Moses, throughout his 4 books, spoke about himself, but only in the context of what God did in Egypt for Israel. Moses never actually exalted himself; he exalted God. Moses was tough, and he was a tough leader; but his life and his words always exalted God.

Israel found itself being pursued by an army; and Israel had no military training at this time. They were all former slaves. Egypt was not going to train them in the military. Therefore, Israel had to depend upon God:

## Lesson 224: Exodus 15:1–5

## The Lord is a Man of War

We are studying the song which Moses wrote (apparently) and the people sang. As we have studied, the writing of this song suggests that the writings of Moses were written very soon after the historical incidents occurred. This is because we find this song (Exodus 15) right after the incident that it describes (Exodus 14). Moses did not have a word processor where he could take a paragraph in one place and move it forward or backward in a document.

Exodus 15:1 Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! (NKJV)

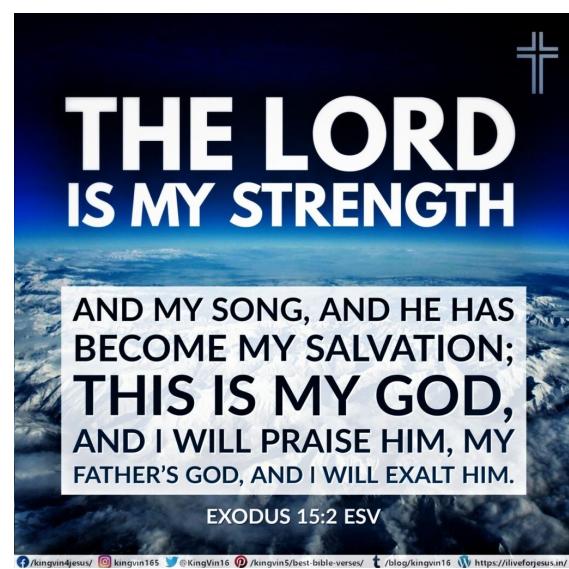
Exodus 15:2 The Lord is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation [or, *Jesus*]; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him. (NKJV)

You will recall that *salvation*, in the Hebrew, is a letter-for-letter equivalent to *Jesus* in the Greek.

**Exodus 15:2 (ESV)** (a graphic); from [I Live for Jesus](https://www.liveforjesus.org/); accessed May 25, 2022.

Exodus 15:3a The Lord is a man of war;

Y<sup>e</sup>howah has delivered them by defeating the enemy; by wiping out the enemy; by killing the enemy. The people of Israel were on their way out; they would be gone forever from Egypt. All the Egyptians had to do was let them go. It should have been clear to the Egyptians that the God of the Hebrews is an all-powerful God—far more powerful than their man-made gods. And yet, the Egyptian army was assembled and they pursued the Hebrews; with the intent to kill every man, woman and child. This choice would do nothing for Egypt (beyond their potential plundering). Therefore, God had to destroy them. Egypt gave God no choice.





The people of God would never be safe until the Egyptian army was destroyed, along with Pharaoh.

Here is an interesting thing for Moses to say. He calls Y<sup>e</sup>howah a *man* of war. Y<sup>e</sup>howah did the fighting for the Israelites, but Moses does not call him the God of war, but a man of war. Moses may or may not have realized it, but he was here foreshadowing the hypostatic union—the first and second advents of our Lord. Throughout the Old Testament, every name given to Y<sup>e</sup>howah, the God of Israel, has its complement in Jesus Christ. The concept of Jesus Christ as a warrior is downplayed in our era of peace and love. It is even difficult to find in your Bible's concordance or subject index. People often have the foolish notion that the God of the Old Testament was a warlike, unforgiving, judgmental God, and the God of the New Testament, Jesus Christ, is a kinder, gentler God, a God who walked around barefooted with long hair and exhorted everyone to hold hands, sing songs, and say nice things about each other. This is an incorrect notion about God in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New.

Let me quote a little from Revelation (first let me point out that the Lamb of Revelation is Jesus Christ—Rev. 5:8–9, 12–13). *Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"* (Rev. 6:15–17—ESV). *"If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of His anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb."* (Rev. 14:9b–10—ESV). *So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the clusters of the vine of the earth, and threw them into the winepress, the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood gushed out of the winepress, even to the bridles of the horses, as far as two hundred miles.* (Rev. 14:19–20—MNT)

When God judges the earth during the Tribulation, this will include the death of one-third of all mankind (Rev. 9:15, 17–18). We have the seven bowls of wrath of God poured out onto the earth in Rev. 16. And one last quote about loving Jesus: *And I saw heaven opened and I saw a white horse, and He who sat upon it [is] called Faithful and True; and in righteousness, He judges and wages war. And His eyes [are] a flame of fire and upon His head [are] many crowns; and He has a royal title which no one understand except Himself. And [He is] clothed with a robe splattered with blood; and His name is called The Word of God; and the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white, clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth come a sharp sword, so that with it He may smash the nations and He will rule them with a rod of iron and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.* (Rev. 19:11–15). And we will save the rest for the time that we exegete Revelation.

I hope you don't misunderstand me. I was brought up to be gentle and raised in a generation of peace-at-any-price people; but I have to believe what the Bible tells me about

my God, the Lord Jesus Christ. For those that oppose Him, it does not result in a slap on the wrist or time out standing in the corner. His wrath will be poured down from heaven with devastation such as the world has never known before—and much of that is poured out upon those in high political positions and those who are religious. Being religious condemns us before God, it does not redeem us.

Moses' God is a *man of war*; He will destroy the enemies of Moses; He will destroy the enemies of the sons of Israel. To be clear, Moses is writing about Jesus. Jesus is a Man of war (as Jesus is the Revealed Member of the Trinity).

Exodus 15:3b [The Lord is His name.](#)

God has developed a great reputation due to His interaction with the Egyptians, who were one of the most powerful countries in the world at that time.

His name is Y<sup>e</sup>howah; He has a specific identifying name. Literally, this reads [Y<sup>e</sup>howah is His name](#). This is the personal name for God (YHWH), used for individual members of the Trinity.

Exodus 15:3 [The Lord is a man of war; The Lord is His name.](#)

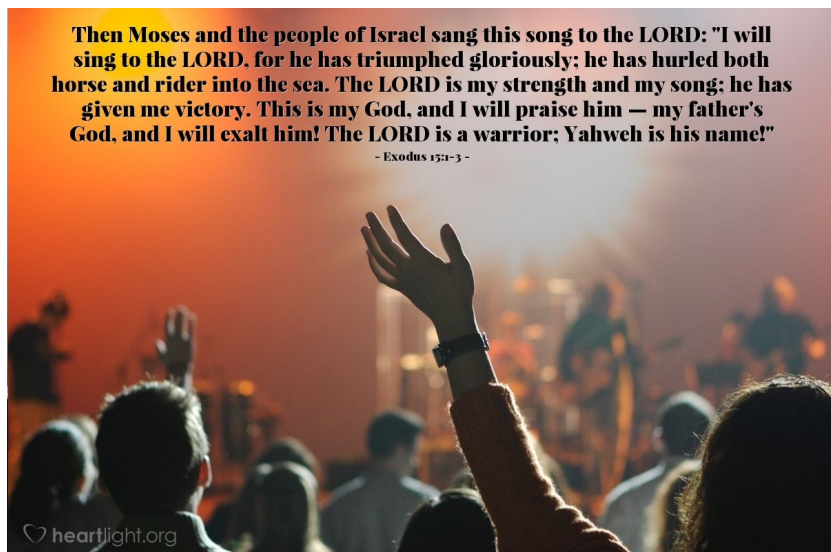
**Exodus 15:1–3 (NLT)** (a graphic); from [Heartlight](#); accessed May 25, 2022.

Exodus 15:4a [Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea;...](#)

Even though the main verb can mean *to cast*, *to throw*; they actually entered into the sea of their own volition. But, by what God did, opening up the sea and allowing the Hebrew people to walk across, He set the

Egyptian army up to end up in the sea. So, even though God did not physically throw them into the sea, he set things up so it was as if He *set* them into the sea (another possible meaning of the verb). However, it is clear that these men all chose to pursue the Hebrew people, which meant, their purpose was to destroy all Israelites. The volition of Pharaoh and of each member of his army is fundamental to our study. Had they not gone after Israel, they could have devoted themselves to the rebuilding of Egypt.

Moses sings about what has just happened—God cast Pharaoh's chariots and army into the sea. This is figuratively speaking; they rode out into the midst of the sea on their own



volition, with murder in their hearts. However, once they stepped into the sea of reeds where the water had been, God stopped them cold.

Exodus 15:4b ...His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.

The word for *officers/captains* is related to 3 or 30; but given the number of people destroyed in the sea, we would have to understand this word in its general sense. So, those killed would have been Pharaoh's select officers. Even the greatest of Pharaoh's officers were destroyed in this battle.

This tells us that the area where God caused the tidal wave to be brought down upon Pharaoh and company was known as the Sea of Reeds. This would mean that there was a freshwater tributary along which Moses and the children of Israel walked until they came to the actual sea. Because of the reeds growing out of the fresh water, this area became known as the sea of reeds. Since then, the topology has probably changed drastically—due in part, I would think, to the tremendous crashing of the waves from the great wall of water. Although it did not harm the Israelites on the East side, it very likely created havoc on the west side, possibly rerouting or destroying the canals or tributaries which were there at one time.

Pharaoh had carefully chosen and promoted his officers; and they were all dead now; drown in the Sea of Reeds.

We continue with the song written by Moses, which is, during this narrative, also being sung by all of Israel.

Exodus 15:4 Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.

Pharaoh gathered up men to kill the people of Israel. However, by the will of Pharaoh and his army and by the will of God, his entire army was destroyed. By bringing the water down upon them, God cast them into the sea.

Exodus 15:5a The depths have covered them;

This phrase is much more literal, where the waters came down over the army of Pharaoh.

This was apparently a fairly deep sea, as it speaks of the depths covering them. As mentioned earlier, this had to be a fairly wide sea as well, in order for it to accommodate the 2 millions Israelites followed by the whole army of Pharaoh. The army of Egypt would have been considerably smaller, but they would have had horses and chariots.

Exodus 15:5b They sank to the bottom like a stone.

The waters were so forceful that the men all drowned; no one was able to swim out to shore.

When water moves en masse at a high rate of speed, there is nothing that you can do to stop it. There is no engaging with it. Unless God is protecting you, you are not protected.

The Amplified Bible translates this second half of v. 5: [\[Clad in armor\] they sank into the depths like a stone](#). We do not know what these men wore or what they were carrying, but it only seems reasonable that they were as armed as possible, thinking that they could somehow withstand the Mighty God. These men were carrying armed weapons, shields, and they were wearing warriors' clothing. When the water struck them, they were drowned almost instantly, but the force of the water brought them to the surface before they plummeted into the depths of the sea. Whichever way the waters of the sea moved them, that is where they went.

## Lesson 225: Exodus 15:5–7

## God Defeats Israel's Enemies

Exodus 15:1–19 is a song, presumably written by Moses, that all Israel will sing. It commemorates the events of Exodus 14.

Exodus 15:5 [The depths have covered them; They sank to the bottom like a stone](#).

At the very beginning, the Egyptian soldiers had the Hebrew people trapped, with nothing but the raging sea behind them. They thought for certain that they would either kill the Hebrew people themselves, or that they would drive the Israelites into the sea to drown.

In the eyes of the Egyptian army, there was no reprieve for the Hebrew people and there was no way out. This is how they first evaluated the situation the previous evening.

In the eyes of God, there was no reprieve for the Egyptian army and once they stepped onto the sea bed, they had no way out. By marching on God's people, they had sealed their own fate.

The water would come crashing down upon them and they were on the bottom of the sea, as if they were rocks. When they entered into the sea bed in order to kill God's people, that volitional choice would be their last.

Exodus 15:6a [“Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power;](#)

God does not have a *right hand*; and, even though that Jesus has a right hand now, that is not what is being talked about here. Most people are right handed, and the right hand is what you do things with. It is your dominant hand. When a person chooses to act, they use their right hand to do the first thing. This is a reference to God acting on behalf of Israel. What God has done was bring the power of the sea against the army of Pharaoh.

God's power is glorious.

The right hand of Y<sup>e</sup>howah God is the Revealed Y<sup>e</sup>howah, His Son. He is magnified in His power. To all the people of Israel, God revealed His power.

Exodus 15:6b *Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces.*

God breaks the enemy of Israel into pieces. Again, this is not a reference to some sort of physical manifestation of a right hand, but it simply refers to the power and sovereignty and action carried out by God. God used the waters of the sea of reeds, based upon Exodus 14 and what we are reading here in Exodus 15.

Here and in several other Scriptures, we find the right hand being associated with power and with victory in war. This is an anthropomorphism—God does not have a right hand, but it is as though He did and that He smashes His enemy with it.

The Qal imperfect of râ'ats (רָאֵץ) [pronounced *raw-GATS*] is found only here and in Judges 10:8. There are similar words used much more often, but here context will have to be our guide. In this verse, it is very possible to see this as a final encounter. However, in Judges, it reads: *And they afflicted and crushed the sons of Israel that year; for eighteen years after they [afflicted] all the sons of Israel who were beyond the Jordan in Gilead in the land of the Amorites* (Judges 10:8). Even though the NASB in Exodus translates this word as *shatters* and in Judges as *afflicted*; I will opt for a more genteel term *neutralize*. This way it easily fits into both verses and in no way takes from the power of God. *Your right hand has neutralized the enemy*. We understand that, in the language of war, *neutralize* means *to destroy* the enemy.

It is God Who destroyed the enemies of Israel. Israel had no army; they had no weapons; they had no military training; their God destroyed their enemy's army.

**Application:** We do not know what is coming in the near future for the United States, but it certainly appears as if we are under divine judgment. It is not wrong to stockpile silver, copper, dried foods, good water and weapons, and to have that secret place way off the grid out in the country; we do not know when the balloon will go up—and these resources, even if we have purchased them, may not be available to us at that time. We may, in fact, have all of these resources today, but that does not mean that we will be able to use them tomorrow. I am not trying to discourage anyone from developing plans and resources for the worst case tomorrow; I am simply saying, if for any reason you find yourself removed from these things, and disaster comes suddenly, you have always got God in your corner (Who is far more important than having precious metals or dried foods).

**Application:** Your greatest resource through times of trouble is God and what you understand about Him.



Exodus 15:6 "Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces [or, *neutralized the enemy*].

The actions of the hand is a reference to God's power (omnipotence) and will (sovereignty). In order to protect Israel, whom God had called, God had to destroy her enemies. Egypt demonstrated by these actions that its army had to be stopped; its Pharaoh had to be stopped.

As long as Pharaoh drew breath and had the strength, his will was to pursue and destroy Israel.



**Exodus 15:6 (BSB)** (a graphic); from [Heartlife](https://www.heartlife.org/); accessed May 25, 2022.

Exodus 15:7a [And in the greatness of Your excellence...](#)

The final word in this phrase is the masculine singular noun gâ'ôwn (גָּוֹן) [pronounced *gaw-OHN*]. With it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix. This word is variously translated, *Your unlimited majesty, Your majestic triumph, Your mighty majesty, the greatness of your majesty, the fullness of your triumph*. Strong's #1347 BDB #144.

*Greatness* here can be *abundance, much, plenty*; and God's *excellence* is *His majesty*. Therefore, God is *abundantly majestic*.

In the ancient world, there was always this great gap between a king and any of his subjects. This gap is not nearly as apparent to Americans, as the president is not the wealthiest American. In fact, he is often not even in the top 100. But in the ancient world, a king would be wearing fine, clean and well-manufactured clothing, whereas, the average subject would be unclean, wearing dirty clothes, and the clothes he possessed would have been repaired on numerous occasions. So, to the common man, his king would have been quite majestic and set apart. The common man could not even imagine what the king's life would be.

When language like this is used to describe God, there is simply a contrast being made. Just as the common man would be in awe of his king's majesty; we, as imperfect people, ought to be in awe of God, Who is abundantly majestic. The gap between man and God is so great as to be unimaginable.

Exodus 15:7a [And in the greatness of Your excellence...](#)

The army of Egypt foolishly stood against God; Pharaoh and his army stood against God. The gap between God and the greatest men of Egypt is far greater than the gap between Pharaoh and the least citizen of Egypt.

Egypt's army is far, far less than the God of Israel. There is no way that their army could stand before the greatness of God's excellence. God completely destroyed them. God's destruction of Egypt's entire army revealed His glory, excellence and majesty.

Exodus 15:7b ...You have overthrown those who rose against You;...

Most of Egypt opposed the God of the Israelites. By opposing Israel, they opposed God. This was the wrong side to choose. In today's world, many times we hear this expression, being on the right side of history (or the wrong). The Pharaoh, his people and his army were all on the wrong side of history. Despite the great signs and miracles which they all observed, time and time again, they chose against the God of Israel. As a result, God overthrew them. God gave them many chances.

In Exodus 12:38, there is a mixed multitude who aligned themselves with the Israelites and left with them. This likely would have included some Egyptians. All of Egypt should have been smart enough to stand with God rather than against Him, but they were not. So many Egyptians were negative toward the God of Israel, and that was their downfall.

Those who oppose God are destroyed as if they are nothing.

Exodus 15:7c You sent forth Your wrath;...

God is not mad; God is not filled with anger or rage; this is an anthropopathism, where the actions of God are explained by means of human emotion or human action. God makes it appear as if He is angry with the Egyptians. However, bear in mind that God will embrace them as His Own, if they turn to Him (it is possible that some did<sup>22</sup>).

God's power and might were rejected by most of the Egyptians, despite seeing it with their own eyes. Because the Egyptians rejected God and His greatness and excellence, He sent forth His wrath against the people of Egypt; against the Pharaoh of Egypt.

Throughout life, people choose for or against God. Not only is this incident typical of those who are saved by God; but it is also typical of those who are lost.

All Egypt saw the truth of the power of Israel's God. However, because they rejected this truth, they believed the lie that they could stop the people of Israel.

If man is negative toward God, then there is no sign, no miracle, no great wonder that will turn them around. We see this in today's society all of the time. People who witness great miracles of God every day still choose not to believe in Him.

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<sup>22</sup> The only evidence that we have of this is the mixed multitude, whose racial makeup is never given.

The eyes of man (and of animals) are one of the greatest things created by God. The sense of sight and the engineering of it is far too complex to have been built one step at a time; it is too well-manufactured to have just happened.

Yet skeptics, agnostics and atheists use their eyes each day, without giving half a thought to how amazing they are. They assume that they just evolved, because that is what their personal faith system demands. As an aside, all agnostics and atheists have faith; yet most of them refuse to recognize or acknowledge it.

The whole birthing process is an extremely complex process, beginning as a fairly small event and culminating in a living, breathing person. How exactly did this process proceed in steps? And why does all animal and plant creation have such a massive variety of birthing processes? How exactly did this all come to pass?

We have all been born; yet so many people simply take this process for granted. They dismiss it using the word evolution and the magic chant of evolution, "Given billions of years...." Because in the thought process of evolution, when you add billions of years to any process, then virtually anything can happen. Non-life can become living; the simplest of cells can group together, and somehow, over billions and billions of years, eventually become man in some way. All one has to do is pronounce the magic words, *after billions and billions of years*. There is nothing that can't happen once the words are applied. Many people believe this, despite how illogical it all is.

I have long been a fan of David Attenborough's nature documentaries; and although he has admitted that there might be a place for God in evolution, he has never embraced Jesus or the Christian God Who created everything (that is, Jesus). He has viewed so many incredible things in nature which defy any logical explanation as to how these things evolved; and yet, he believed solidly in evolution, allowing maybe that there might be a God (god?). It is a matter of volition, despite the number of (natural) miracles that this man has seen.

Exodus 15:7d ...[It consumed them like stubble.](#)

*It* here refers back to God's wrath. God's wrath consumed the Egyptian army as if it were stubble.

Those who oppose God are destroyed as if they are nothing.

Moses and his people have just seen the entire Egyptian army that opposed them swallowed up by a tidal wave—consumed, if you will.

Stubble is a reference to that which is insignificant and unimportant. When grains are picked and the edible grains are separated out, what remains is the stubble—the stuff that is insignificant and unimportant.

God's wrath is an anthropopathism—God is not mad or angry with anyone—these are not actual characteristics which God has. However, God must take very extreme measures to reach some of us here on earth.

In the case of the Egyptians, God spoke to the rest of the world, to the Hebrews, and to some Egyptians with His *fierce anger* poured out upon the Egyptians. We only understand some of this as it applies to us, or as we perceive the pain and discomfort and death suffered by some of the Egyptians. Therefore, this is revealed to us in the form of an anthropopathism—because from our vantage point it looks like wrath and fury.

When God's fury consumes them, this is an anthropomorphism—ascribing a physical human action to something which God does not possess that in order to illustrate to us what has occurred.

Notice that we find a great deal more figurative language here in a song than we find in the narrative portions of Scripture. Exodus 14 was mostly narrative and historical; Exodus 15 is a song about what had occurred in Exodus 14 (actually, the song we are studying is much longer than the few verses given over to the crossing of Israel followed by the destruction of Pharaoh's army). Note that we find far more figurative language in this chapter. Almost every other verse has an anthropopathism or an anthropomorphism in it.

Bullinger's marvelous work *Figures of Speech used in the Bible* has two references in the index to Exodus 14. By contrast, we find 14 verses indexed with 19 different citations in Exodus 15. It is simply a difference between song and narrative and this fact should not disturb the Biblical literalist (which is what I am) nor does it give any fuel to add to the fire from one who desires to discredit the Bible. Sometimes, the Bible simply conveys divine information using figures of speech.

Exodus 15:7d ...It [God's fury] consumed them [Egyptian soldiers] like stubble.

The Egyptians soldiers were nothing before God. They were destroyed as if dry grass in a fire. (If you were paying attention, I just used two figures of speech in those two sentences.)

## **Lesson 226: Exodus 15:7–9      The Waters are Used Against the Egyptian Army**

We continue with Moses' song, which is a description of the events of Exodus 14. Vv. 6–13 address God directly, for the most part.

Exodus 15:7 And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth Your wrath; It consumed them like stubble.

Moses continues to glorify God in what He has done. The Egyptian army rose up against God, and God has focused His wrath upon them. They were destroyed as if they are nothing. All Israel observed this.

In v. 8, Moses describes the dividing of the seas as he saw it.

Exodus 15:8a *And with the blast of Your nostrils...*

God does not have nostrils. This is an anthropomorphism. What took place was as if God exhaled through a massive pair of nostrils.

No one actually sees God, as God is a Spirit; but we can see what God does.

The blast of the wind to hold back the waters was something which would have been heard; and the effects of the wind would have been seen.

In our own lives, I believe that we see God in the complexity of His creation.

And when we consider what happens in outer space, we are even more amazed. In our own planetary system, Jupiter has storms unlike anything we could imagine, with 400 mph winds (that is close to 200 yards per second). The NASA site tells us that it rains diamonds on Jupiter. *in the dense atmospheres of planets like Jupiter and Saturn, whose massive size generates enormous amounts of gravity, crazy amounts of pressure and heat can squeeze carbon in mid-air — and make it rain diamonds.*<sup>23</sup>

By the way, on Neptune, the winds can move at 1.5 times the speed of sound. No idea what that would produce in terms of sound and sight. These are things which we know about God's creation. The number of things which we do not know about God's universe probably far exceeds the number of things that we do know. That is also probably true with regards to this earth.

It is easy to take all of these things for granted, as we are born into a world where all of this stuff is already here and on full display.

Back to the song:

Exodus 15:8b *The waters were gathered together;...*

Moses seems to be saying the same thing in three different ways. Through God's breath—through God's Spirit—the waters have piled up. The people of God could see the water stacked up water upon itself.

Although several translations suggest the word *anger* (or, *wrath*) instead of nostrils (which is sometimes warranted), here the piling up of the waters was unrelated to anger. The waters were stacked up or gathered together to allow the Israelites to walk over the sea floor unscathed.

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<sup>23</sup> From <https://svs.gsfc.nasa.gov/11349> accessed July 27, 2022.



The waters were gathered together, on at least one side of the Israelites (logically, God only piled up the waters on one side of the Israelites). I realize that every artistic representation of this event, including the many which I included, has two walls of water, with the Israelites walking between them, but only one wall would have been necessary (to stop the water flowing towards them). Once a divine dam of air has been put up, the waters on one side would be held back while the waters on the other side would simply flow away.<sup>24</sup>

Exodus 15:8c *The floods stood upright like a heap;...*

Flood waters stood up as if they were a heap; as if the waves could be piled up like stalks of wheat and held in position.

The waters were piled up on themselves, as if they were solid matter. When the Israelites went through the Red Sea, they could see the great waters stacked up at least on one side of them.

Exodus 15:8d *The depths congealed in the heart of the sea.*

The waters congealed in the heart of the sea; it is as if they have thickened or condensed, and were able to be heaped up.

*Congealed* is the Qal perfect of qâphâ' (קָפַחַ) [pronounced *kaw-FAW*] and it means exactly that: *to congeal, to thicken, to condense*. The waters behaved as if they had become solid and they remained in that state for perhaps 6 or 8 hours (however long it took for the Israelites to cross over).

Sights like these would be etched on a believer's mind for a lifetime—unfortunately, these incredible miracles will not cause spiritual growth (unless one is able to extract doctrinal principles from what he is able to observe from this act of God).

Exodus 15:8 *And with the blast of Your nostrils The waters were gathered together; The floods stood upright like a heap; The depths congealed in the heart of the sea.*

A blast from the nostrils of God is a reference to wind and is obviously an anthropomorphism (God is a Spirit and does not have nostrils).

We know that milk is made into yogurt or into sour cream; and it is as if the water had congealed into something solid, right there in the midst of the seas. This water was congealed on at least one side of the Israelites. But it was not solid as ice (that does not appear to be Moses' description of it).

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<sup>24</sup> In the alternative, God could have completely stopped the flow of this water, and put up two dams using the air from His nostrils, but that does seem an unnecessarily complex way of doing things.

We do not know how this took place, but it was as if the waters congealed and were stacked up.

Moses has described in three ways what seems to have happened; this is how it appeared to him. Moses would have been with the people, walking along the sea's floor—so this would have been quite an amazing sight to him.

V. 9 will present the 4 *I wills*; and 2 *I shalls*. Egypt proclaims what they would do to Israel. Isn't it fascinating how God's enemies think that they can choose to do whatever they want against His people?

Exodus 15:9a *The enemy said, 'I will pursue,...*

These words are a clear expression of volition. Egypt would chase the people of Israel down. You will recall that Pharaoh had eyes on the Israelites and their movements. At some point, they made an unusual move, and this appears to have resulted in them moving toward what Pharaoh would know is a trap. That is, Pharaoh, by his knowledge of the geography of that area, understood that Israel had put themselves into an untenable position. When he realized that, he made the decision to quickly assemble his army and pursue them.

Exodus 15:9b *...I will overtake,...*

Israel had been moving away from Egypt, but it was on foot. However, they were only a few days out. Egypt was certain that they would catch up to Israel. Many of them were in chariots or on horses; while Israel was on foot. The Egyptian army was unencumbered; the Israelites had as much as they could carry along with them.

Exodus 15:9c *...I will divide the spoil;...*

Once the Egyptian army had caught up to them; they would take the wealth that Israel had acquired.

Previously, Egypt was a blessed and wealthy nation. However, after keeping Israel in slavery for several generations, God destroyed their wealth and had individuals show their gratitude by bringing various forms of wealth to Israel before they left.

Part of the reason that the Egyptians went after Israel was for greed. The people of Israel had silver and gold (given to them by the Egyptians); and they had loads of animals which had not been harmed by the plagues. The soldiers of Egypt had in their minds to take all of this away from the Hebrew people, after they slaughtered all of the people.

Exodus 15:9a-c *The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil;...*

These words reveal the negative volition of the enemy towards God and towards the people of Israel. Pharaoh had given Moses and Aaron his word that they could go, but

then he sends his army out against them; and they choose to follow his orders, despite all that they have seen.

The Egyptians believed that they could pursue and destroy the sons of Israel. The first two steps in this plan were to pursue and to overtake Israel. Thirdly, they desired to take all of their stuff back.

Interestingly enough, Moses presents somewhat of a sanitized version of what Egypt planned to do. They would pursue Israel; they would overtake Israel; and then they would kill all of the Israelites (they may have been planning to keep the children as slaves). At that point, they could take all that Israel had. Israel exited Egypt with animals and silver. Israel went off with a great amount of worldly goods given them from their former masters. They would be hauling much of this stuff on their pack animals, which haul would have included a considerable amount of silver and gold.

Exodus 15:9d *My desire shall be satisfied on them.*

Moses continues to write this from the point of view of Egypt. *My desire* refers to the desire of the Egyptians.

Whatever the soul of the enemy desired, it would take. This did not simply refer to taking spoil from them, but taking out a vicious revenge against them as well.

The Egyptians believed that taking and dividing up Israel's possessions would bring great pleasure to their souls.

There is an important consideration here: Egypt, as a powerful country, had collected many slaves and no doubt had many subservient nations. If they simply allow Israel to leave, to walk out of Egypt, and there are no repercussions—regardless of the reason for this—who would take Egypt seriously after this? This probably represents the reasoning of some of them.

Exodus 15:9e *I will draw my sword,...*

Israel really had nothing by way of weapons. The Egyptians had all of the weapons. They would draw out their swords, and Israel would be powerless against them.

These men have in their minds what they will do. They will move against the sons of Israel and when they are close enough, they will draw out their swords. Each Egyptian desired to inflict maximum pain on the Israelite people. Because of the disparity of numbers, each Egyptian soldier planned on killing anywhere from 10 to 100s of men, women and children. The desire of each Egyptian is to kill a lot of Israelites and take from them whatever they have.

Exodus 15:9f *My hand shall destroy them.'*

The hand here does not just refer to what the Egyptian army would do, but this is all about volition. The Egyptian soldiers want nothing more than to completely destroy the people of Israel.

They see themselves as destroying the sons of Israel. Pharaoh's intent here was to destroy them.

The Hebrew word often translated *destroy* is the Hiphil imperfect of *yârash* (שָׂרַשׁ) [pronounced *yaw-RASH*] and it means *take possession of, to dispossess, to inherit* but it can also mean *to impoverish, to bring to ruin* (Strong's #3423 BDB #439). Egypt wanted to do to Israel what God had done to Egypt.

Exodus 15:9f *My hand shall destroy them.'*

We have a marvelous parallelism here, called a mimesis (mim-mee-sis) by Bullinger. All that Pharaoh intended to do to God's people, God purposed to do the same to Pharaoh and his army.

Although it sounds as though it is only Pharaoh speaking, it is all the Egyptian army which intends to do this. However, to be theatrical for a moment: if you could visualize the face of Pharaoh beginning to speak the words in v. 9, and then his face quickly metamorphosing into the face of our Lord Jesus Christ before the end of the verse, our Lord speaking the last few words, you have a feel for what is implied here. All that Egypt intends to do will be turned against them.

Pharaoh's heart and the heart of his soldiers were strengthened by God the Father. They were beaten men with not much of a future in a land destroyed. God gave them the strength to go on, to oppose Him and to oppose the Hebrews. It was God Who gave them the strength to chase after the Hebrews. God did not put it in their heart to do this—that was strictly a matter of their own volition. God no more controlled their volition than He does when He allows a rabid atheist to draw breath. God allows man his free will.

God gives all men life and volition. The key to our existence on earth is our volition.

## **Lessons 227–228: Exodus 15:9–12**

**T<sup>e</sup>hillâh**

We are still in the song of Moses, recounting the events of the past few days of Egypt pursuing Israel and then being destroyed by Israel's God.

We are coming to the end of Moses' song, where he celebrates God's victory over the Egyptian army.

Exodus 15:9 *The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, My hand shall destroy them.'*

V. 9, spoken from the viewpoint of Pharaoh and his army, presenting their objectives regarding Israel. They planned to pursue Israel, catch up to them, and then divide their spoil. That would bring them satisfaction (in their own minds). In order for them to take the spoil of Israel, they would have to draw their swords and slaughter the entire population of Israel.

Now v. 10 summarizes what God did to the Egyptian army in response:

Exodus 15:10a *You blew with Your wind,...*

Now Moses turns to God, and says, “You blew with Your wind.”

We know the thinking of the enemies of Israel; we will now see what God does to them.

God blew back the waters for the sons of Israel to walk across the dry sea bed; and then he blew the waters back over the Egyptian army, which found itself struggling to cross the sea bed in the first place (the Egyptian army, before the waters came upon them, struggled to move along the sea bed—but this slowed them down considerably).

Exodus 15:10b *...The sea covered them;...*

The waters came down over the Egyptian soldiers, covering them completely.

God used the wind to stack up the waters; and now He pulls back on the force of the wind, to allow the waters cut loose and to move of their own accord, which would cover the Egyptians.

Exodus 15:10c *...They sank like lead in the mighty waters.*

The warriors of Egypt drown in the waters which suddenly came down upon them.

The Egyptians were like lead in the waters. They just sunk down; they remained on the sea floor until they drowned. The water coming down on them was a force too great for them to overcome.

The Hebrews heard the incredible wind that morning and they saw the waters pushed back by this force. Obviously the wind could not have held the waters in place as it would have blown the Hebrews into the water. God held the waters back; His wind pushed the waters there to begin with and dried out an area for the Israelites to walk across. But this would only be temporary for the Egyptian army—God waited for them to get into the sea of reeds.

Exodus 15:10 *You blew with Your wind, The sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters.*



You may consider God to be heartless, reading these words; but remember, each and every soldier had planned on slaughtering most or all Israelites. They were not there to recover their slaves; they were there strictly to execute vengeance upon the people of God.

Exodus 15:9–10 *The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, My hand shall destroy them.' You [God] blew with Your wind, The sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters.*

Vv. 9–10 completely sum up the heart of Exodus 14. It is a quick run through of the intentions of Pharaoh and the might of God in quashing Pharaoh and his intentions.

In v. 10, Moses addresses God directly:

Exodus 15:10 *You blew with Your wind, The sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters.*

Moses sings about God's destruction of Egypt's army.

Exodus 15:11a *"Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods?"*

The Egyptians had a plethora of gods; and most nations worshiped many false gods. Moses asks if there is any among those gods who are like Y<sup>e</sup>howah.

Even though this is worded like a question, it really expresses the claim, *there is no God like You, O Y<sup>e</sup>howah!*

There is no one of the gods of Egypt who is able to stand before the God of Israel. The Egyptians stood no chance; and they should have known this from the plagues launched against them. In fact, each individual plague should have been enough of a demonstration of God's power and will. Each plague also revealed the complete inadequacy of Egypt's gods.

The sons of Israel were eyewitnesses to these plagues and they believe God and they trusted Moses and what he said. The Egyptians saw the exact same plagues. They could have, at any point, succumbed to the pressure and judgment put upon them by God. They could have even aligned themselves with Israel and with Israel's God. We know that this was an option because, Jesus would die for the sins of the Egyptians. God allowed the Egyptians to see each of the plagues; and in the end, there was a mixed multitude who went out with Israel (suggesting that anyone with positive volition toward the God of Israel could join with them).

This is a natural phenomenon in human behavior—two people can experience the same series of things, but react to them all very differently. We, as believers, see sunsets, the great beauty of the earth, the amazing plethora of plants and animals, and see all of these things as a manifestation of the grace, power and genius of God. Atheists see exactly

what we see, and believe that life just spontaneously erupted and that the beauty of this earth is simply the result of natural forces acting upon something which, at some point, just happened (that is, the Big Bang Theory, which is also taught in Genesis 1:1, plus evolution). The big bang theory of the atheist just happened, but with a spectacular natural result which took billions of years.

There are even unbelievers who deny that they have souls or true volition. For some of them, what takes place in their brain is a combination of chemicals sloshing around in their brains and various electrical impulses firing off. They try to pass themselves off as a higher sort of animal which just acts according to human instinct.

Others try to pretend that their points of view are based entirely upon reason and observation. Many of them deny that faith has any place in their life, whereas their faith and expression of same is no different from ours (except that they place their faith in other things).

These absurd points of view expressed by atheists and agnostics believe that they take themselves off the hook for expressing negative volition toward God and His plan. I have personally talked with atheists who deny that they have free will or deny that they believe in anything on the basis of faith.

Despite God's signs being overwhelming, all of the sons of Israel believed in the Revealed God and most of the Egyptians did not. Unfortunately, one generation of believing Jews never advanced spiritually.

The Egyptians would not have done what they did, had they believed in Israel's God. It would be futile. It would be like kicking against the goads (as it is expressed in Acts 26:14).

Exodus 15:11b [Who is like You,...](#)

In the universe (and outside of the universe), our God is unique.

Moses repeats this question, and will give three ways in which God is different from all living things and from all gods, real or imagined.

Exodus 15:11c [...glorious in holiness,...](#)

God is separate from all things. God is perfectly holy. There is majesty and glory in His holiness. Even gods which are made up by men are not set apart as God is. They themselves are often flawed (as we would expect, those gods having sprung from the imagination of man). The actual literature which refers to the various gods of various people presents them as flawed creatures. Our God is without flaws.

God is glorified by His great acts; and He is glorified by His holiness—how much that He is set apart.

The word holiness essentially means being set apart. God is completely and totally separate from His creation. R. B. Thieme, Jr., believing this word to be outdated, expresses this aspect of God as being *integrity*, which is made up of His righteousness and His justice.

All of us have created something. It is in our nature to create. Perhaps you have built a house, written a letter, developed a recipe, planned out some landscaping, put together a melody, designed a form for your business. Because we are human, made in the image of God, we create. But we are not what we create. At most, some of who we are can be seen in what we create; but we are separate from the things that we create. So it is with God. Although God has created a universe which is impossibly huge, using materials which are, at their most fundamental state, impossibly small. Some of His essence may be perceived in that; but He is certainly separate from His universe.

To most of us, simply the concept of the universe is greatly majestic; but beyond the universe is its Creator, Who is far greater than what He has created.

Exodus 15:11d ...[Fearful in praises](#),...

V. 11d is a phrase made up of two words. The Niphal participle of *yârê'* (אַרַּי) [pronounced *yaw-RAY*] means *to fear, to revere, to respect*. The Niphal can be the passive, but it also refers to a constant or a continuous state of action. Strong's #3372 BDB #431.

*T<sup>e</sup>hillâh* (תְּהִלָּה) [pronounced *t<sup>e</sup>hil-LAW*] means *praise, song of praise, deeds that inspire praise, public praise*. It is a feminine plural noun. The emphasis is upon what God has actually done. The emphasis is upon His mighty works—these are what is being praised. Strong's #8416 BDB #239. Given the context, we would have to go with the *deeds which inspire praise*. The ESV translates this phrase: ...[awesome in glorious deeds](#)... If we wanted to expand this, we might translate it: ...[awesome in glorious deeds \[which elicit praise\]](#)...

*Fear* is used in two primary ways in Scripture: (1) to denote the response of fear (to a situation and especially to what is anticipated) and (2) to indicate an occupation with and a healthy respect for God. What God did in Egypt would have engendered both responses.

The things said about God in the Scriptures of the Hebrew people (at this time, the Scriptures would have consisted of Genesis and possibly Job), the way that God is praised sets Him apart from all creation. This would engender respect and fear from those who understand those praises.

No one and nothing can create as God has created; or can do as God has done. The events of Exodus are not duplicated anywhere in human history (God's purpose here is for nation Israel to stand out as a recipient of His grace).

This doctrine was originally presented in **Psalm 148** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). I have not covered the difference between the singular and plural use (if there is any).

The phrase that we are studying is: being fearful [is] t<sup>e</sup>hillâh (תִּהְיֶה) [pronounced t<sup>e</sup>hil-LAW]. This is variously translated, in Exodus 15:11 as: *fearful in praises, being praised in fear, fear-inspiring in praiseworthy deeds; awesome in glorious deeds; marvelous in glories; being revered in praises; awesome in acts deserving of praise.*

### The Short Doctrine of T<sup>e</sup>hillâh

1. The noun in question is t<sup>e</sup>hillâh (תִּהְיֶה) [pronounced t<sup>e</sup>hil-LAW]. Strong's #8416 BDB #239.
2. It is typically and fairly consistently rendered *praise*. T<sup>e</sup>hillâh is built upon a verb with a variety of meanings. Also, there are several passages where the translation *praise* just does not make sense. There are many other passages where this translation makes sense, which should cause us to want to get a better handle on the English meaning for this word. I recall a holy roller pastor from many years ago who used to sprinkle his speech with the phrase *praise God* and other similar language. I don't recall thinking, *wow, this is really a man of God*. I recall thinking, *this man is a nut case and he is embarrassing*. He was involved in some of the early creation/evolution debates (which were quite a thing at one time), but what he had to say added little to the debate. No matter what his contribution was, it was always offset by his *praise the Lord* speech pattern. Unbelievers were not impressed by this, nor were they struck deep in their souls because of his great holiness and religiosity. They just found him to be irritating. Now, if his speech had content to it, giving clear evidence against the idea of evolution, and evidence which reveals the greatness of God's creation (and the existence of micro-evolution, built into every living thing), *that* would have been praise for God, even if he never uttered the word *praise*. When you shine light upon what God has done, that praises Him. Repeating the words *praise God* innumerable times do not.
3. What I am saying is, the word *praise* has been cheapened and has become, to some extent, some old empty Bible word. The word *praise* itself is not a bad translation, if one actually understands just exactly what *praise* is. You do not praise God by uttering the words "praise God" over and over again. If anything, the believer who does that embarrasses God.
4. I originally assigned the meanings *praise, a song of praise* to this word. However, it became clear, upon further examination, that this was not only an insufficient meaning, but that it made little sense in a number of the passages which it was found. Furthermore, adding the definitions from Gesenius and BDB did not help, although BDB did supply me with a number of possible English renderings.
5. There are several passages which clearly associate t<sup>e</sup>hillâh with what we say. Psalm 51:15: *Lord, open my lips. My mouth shall declare Your t<sup>e</sup>hillâh*. See also Psalm 34:1 35:28 40:3.
6. However, to give this word the one-word translation *praise* makes very little sense in passages like Exodus 15:11: *Who is like you, O LORD, among the*

## The Short Doctrine of T<sup>e</sup>hillâh

- gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome [lit., feared, respected] in t<sup>e</sup>hillâh, doing wonders? See also Deut. 10:21 26:19 1Chron. 16:35.
7. There are, however, some synonyms which almost get it done for us: *homage, glorification; magnification; honor, honoring, crediting, accolade, veneration*. The problem is, apart from any knowledge, information or understanding, it is like handing out a purple heart or a medal of honor without reading the accompanying citation. When you hear about what someone has done through courage and honor and training, it is inspiring and the homage paid to such a one is clear.
    - 1) Let me give you an illustration: I watched a television special on General David Petraeus some time ago—he was the commander of all the American forces in Iraq—and his service to his country is amazing. I write this at the same time that MoveOn.org published an ad calling him *David Betray Us*, and for no other reason than, at the time, that he might give a favorable report on our progress Iraq (the ad came out the day that he addressed Congress with this report).
    - 2) To see what that man has done—the service that he has given to his country, the honor with which he has served his country—and then to view this vicious attack ad—knowing what he has done for our country makes the ad all the more vicious, despicable and hate-filled. The point I am making is, it is one thing to honor or to respect a man because of his general status as a soldier serving our country; but it is much more meaningful to know *why* he is an honorable man. When you know what he has done and what sacrifices he has made, you appreciate him all the more.
  8. T<sup>e</sup>hillâh means *praise which reveals [information, doctrine]; doctrinal praise; a revealing of information [doctrine] [by shining a light upon something]; that which has been revealed [by shining a light upon it]*. These are meanings which are reasonably applied to God and to that which God has done.
  9. When speaking of man, t<sup>e</sup>hillâh means *the shining of a light upon His saints; the act of making his saints renown; the revealing of His power and wisdom through His people*. The idea here is, this word reveals God's grace and His wisdom, and God will shine a spotlight upon a particular believer so that those in his periphery (which could be an audience of one) can understand and appreciate what that person has said or done.
  10. With respect to a city, t<sup>e</sup>hillâh means *praise for the city based upon what believers in the city have accomplished spiritually; praise [for the city] based upon its spiritual heritage; the shining of a light upon the city, revealing its spiritual heritage*. The city is not renown for its architecture, its great arts program, or its nightlife, but because of believers within the city who have executed the plan of God.
  11. This is the key passage: **My mouth is filled with your t<sup>e</sup>hillâh, and with Your glory all the day. But I will hope continually and will praise You yet more and more. My mouth will tell of Your righteous acts, of Your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge** (Psalm 51:14–15). *Praise* is actually



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giving information about God's character and deeds. It is not saying the words *praise God* but it is telling *why* God is righteous and admirable. T<sup>e</sup>hillâh is acknowledging what God has actually done; and these words shine a light upon His integrity, love and perfection.

Or, more briefly: (1) when applied to God, t<sup>e</sup>hillâh means *praise; praise which reveals [information, doctrine]; doctrinal praise; a revealing of information [doctrine] [by shining a light upon something]; that which has been revealed [by shining a light upon it]*. (2) When speaking of man, t<sup>e</sup>hillâh means *the shining of a light upon God's saints; the act of making his saints renown; the revealing of His power and wisdom through His people*. (3) With respect to a city, t<sup>e</sup>hillâh means *praise for the city based upon what believers in the city have accomplished spiritually; praise [for the city] based upon its spiritual heritage; the shining of a light upon the city, revealing its spiritual heritage*. The city is not renown for its architecture, its great arts program, or its nightlife, but for believers who have executed the plan of God within the city.

Exodus 15:11e ...[doing wonders?](#)

No one is like God. He does that which is extraordinary; He does wonders. God does things that no person and no angel could do. Even when Moses or Aaron used the staff to perform this or that miracle, they were not doing anything but pointing towards what God wanted the audience to see. They are focusing the attention of the people there upon what God was going to do.

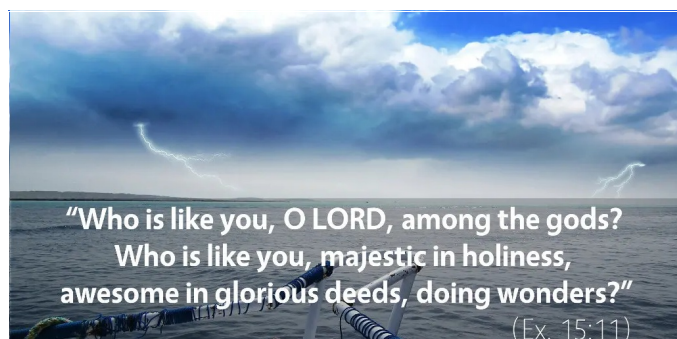
You may wonder about the *question mark*. The question mark ends a set of phrases which form a question. [Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?](#) (V. 11b-e) Or, as the ESV translates this: [Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?](#)

Exodus 15:11 ["Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?"](#)

There is no god in the pantheon of Egypt (or among any other people) who could do with the God of Israel has done. These great things done by God are unmatched in human history.

**Exodus 15:11 (ESV)** (a graphic); from [Free Daily Bible Study](#); accessed May 25, 2022.

We continue with Moses' song. He continues to address God.



Exodus 15:12a *You stretched out Your right hand;*

The right hand is most often used for the hand which does everything; the hand which is operational. I should add that, as an elite member of the 10% who are lefties, I am not offended or upset that the Bible speaks of the right hand favorably.

*Stretching out one's right hand* indicates volition (what God chooses to do) and the action which God takes. It is what a person chooses to do and then what they actually do. For many of these miracles, Moses, holding the staff, stretched out his hand; this was symbolic of God entering into human history to act on behalf of Israel.

Exodus 15:12b *The earth swallowed them.*

*Earth* is not a metonym for *sea*; but the sea and the sea floor here are seen as simply a part of the earth.

This would refer to the army of Pharaoh in the midst of the waters, being swallowed up by the waters.

As a result, some of Egypt's army were buried right there, in the earth at the bottom of the sea. It is as if the earth swallowed them up.

Even though they have been drowned in water, the emphasis here is how they have been returned to the earth and made back into the chemicals of the earth.

Exodus 15:12 *You stretched out Your right hand; The earth swallowed them.*

Note that throughout this song there are a great many anthropomorphisms, several of which involve our Lord's right hand, which is, as we have seen before, His right hand of power. Moses wrote this song of praise, so this is not a reference to the stretching out of his own hand. When Moses or Aaron would lift up the staff of God, that was merely to illustrate visually that something tremendous was about to occur. Moses stretched out his hand as a representative of God stretching out His. Moses hand, or arm or staff pointed where to look and it is God's arm which does the actual deed.

Moses stood on the opposite shore, the army of Pharaoh before him trying to cross the sea floor. Moses then raised up the staff over the open sea and the seas came forth over the people of Pharaoh, from both sides, drowning them all.

As we studied at the beginning of this song, vv. 1–12 tells us where Israel has been; vv. 13–18 where Israel is going. God's plan moves ahead, despite the opposition of Egypt; and God's plan will continue to move forward for Israel, despite the opposition of many Israelites.

What we have studied up to this point in time has left tens of thousands of Egyptians dead, because they opposed the God of Israel. God has given Israel the land of Canaan. That

is the eventual game plan; that is where God's plan is going. Surprisingly enough, just as God left tens of thousands of Egyptian bodies strewn along the sea's floor, He will do the same with those in Israel who oppose Him. He will leave their bodies strewn across the desert of Egypt. We will not hear about Israel's failures in the rest of Moses' song; but we will study them in the remainder of Exodus and continuing through Deuteronomy.

God's plan is always moving forward. We can oppose it and find ourselves overwhelmed by it; or we can move right along with it.

If you are reading this, you have likely believed in Jesus Christ. If you have believed in Jesus Christ, then your eternal future is set—you will spend eternity with God. However, God has a great plan for you right now, right here, on earth. God gives us the free will to choose to go along with this plan or to oppose it. It should not take a genius to figure out which is the best option.

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**Lesson 229: Exodus 15:13–14      The Inspiration of the Words Written by Moses**

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We continue with the Song of Moses which recounts God delivering Israel from Pharaoh and the Egyptian army.

Exodus 15:13a    You in Your mercy have led forth The people whom You have redeemed;...

And God led His people out of Egypt and continues to lead them. As we will come to find, these sons of Israel are not some great people, who will go down in history as the greatest generation. This is one of the worst generations of Hebrew people, and they will reveal their deficiencies again and again as we study them further. God, knowing their hard-heartedness, knowing how they would continually reject His provision (aka, logistical grace) and Moses' authority, still leads them out of Egypt, through the desert, and He continues to provide for them.

God's mercy is why all of us are here right now. I can guarantee, without equivocation, that I do not deserve to be; and all that is in my life by way of blessing—including the time and ability to study and comment on His Word—is completely undeserved.

On the one hand, the passages which we study will require me to present this generation of Israelites in the harshest of light; but without losing sight of the fact that my own life moves along based upon God's grace and God's justice.

Exodus 15:13a    You in Your mercy have led forth The people whom You have redeemed;...

The word translated *mercy* in the NKJV is *cheçed* (חֶסֶד) [pronounced *KHEH-sed*], and it means, *grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness; steadfast love*. Strong's #2617 BDB #338.

This is a very common word in the Old Testament, found nearly 250 times. Surprisingly enough, this is the first occurrence of this word in the book of Exodus.

*Redeemed* means that God has purchased this people through His great works. The Israelites would have understood Him to have purchased them as slaves from Egypt. What God did for Israel is also representative of what Jesus would do on our behalf. Today, we understand that we have been purchased with Jesus' blood.

Exodus 15:13a *You will [continue to] lead in Your grace the people whom You have redeemed;*... (Kukis nearly literal translation)

We have two verbs with the same morphology (the verbs *lead*, *redeem* both have the morphology 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect). Although God will continue to lead Israel, the focus is upon what we have been studying. God led Israel to this precise place along the Sea of Reeds; and God has purchased His people by means of His great acts in Egypt.

**Exodus 15:13a (NIV)** (a graphic); from [iDisciple](#); accessed May 25, 2022.

Exodus 15:13b *You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation.*

This next sentence starts out simply enough, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular (reference to God), Piel perfect active of *nâhal* (נָהַל) [pronounced *naw-HAHL*], which means, *to lead, to guide to a watering place; to guard, to provide for, to sustain*. Strong's #5095 BDB #624.

This was somewhat tricky, because the verb is also a perfect tense; but clearly, when Moses sang this song, God had not led them to His holy abode (which I would assume to be Mount Sinai, taking this passage in its historical context). So that was to happen in the future. God had guided Israel to this point, but God will continue to guide them to Mount Sinai and, eventually, to the land of promise.

What exactly did Moses know? He knew that they were not going in the direction of Canaan.

God's holy habitation is two words: the masculine singular construct of *nâveh* (נֶהְיָ) [pronounced *naw-VEH*], which means, *abode, dwelling place, habitation*. Strong's #5116 BDB #627. This is followed by the masculine singular noun *qôdesh* (קֹדֶשׁ) [pronounced *koh-DESH*], which means, *holiness, sacredness, apartness, that which is holy, a most holy thing; possibly, a sacred [holy, set apart] place*. Strong's #6944 BDB #871. Affixed to the second noun is the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix. This gives us, *Your holy (sacred,*



*set-apart*) *abode* (*dwelling place, habitation*). I do not know what is in Moses' mind at this point, but God will lead them to Mount Sinai, where God will manifest Himself as dwelling apart from all others (the Israelites will not be allowed to even come close to this mountain).

Exodus 15:13b *You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation.*

Bear in mind, these words are written by a person at a particular time and place. These are Moses' words, after having been delivered by God at the Sea of Reeds, and he writes that God has, in His power, guided them (the Israelites) to His sacred abode. Logically, Moses writes these words as a prophet; but there is no indication that he fully appreciates in his own mind what exactly these words mean. Unless God has implanted in Moses' mind a vision of Mount Sinai—and there is no indication that God has done this—even Moses himself may not, at this time, fully appreciate the words which he himself has written.

Throughout this time in the desert—in particular, the time period that we are about to study—God continues to be very visual, theatric and demonstrative in His dealings with Israel. These are not characteristics of God, but this is how God chose to make Himself known to the people of Israel. If you have a good imagination, which is functioning as we study this time and place in world history, you can see this all take place in your mind's eye. However, in our respective lives, we would not describe God as being visual, theatric or demonstrative.

What God is doing is forming a people for Himself, which means, He intends to use this people for His Own purposes. This people—the Hebrew people—will require a place to live and a government. God is ready and willing to provide all of that for His people, but, as we will find out, they will rebel against Him.

Regarding this holy habitation, some interpret this to mean that God brings the sons of Israel to the land of promise, Canaan (later renamed *Israel*). Moses is certainly aware, at this point, of the land of Canaan as God's place for Israel. He would not have known, at this time, about Mount Sinai or what was to transpire over the next few weeks or years. How God would lead them and where they would go exactly—Moses has no clue. Moses knew where Palestine was, and he would have been very aware that God was leading them in a different direction (geography would have been an important part of Moses' early training in Egypt). To go to Palestine, they would have to travel east/northeast; and eventually turn north. For the most part, Israel has been traveling east and then south. From this point, they would be traveling east. Because the sun rises every morning, Moses knows which direction they are going in.

Exodus 15:13b *You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation.*

Moses would understand that the eventual goal was the land of promise. At this point in time, he would have had no idea what was going to take place over the next 40 years.



Much of this song is related to what Moses has actually witnessed. It seems most likely that he would write about things about which he understands, whether those things are in the past or in the certain future. Many of us, who have read Exodus, know what is in Israel's immediate future (Mount Sinai and the giving of the Law). But, that does not mean that Moses knows or the people know that (they seem to be unable to recognize most of what God has done on their behalf, as we will find out).

This could be a situation where Moses, the human author, is thinking about the land of promise when he writes these words; but that God the Holy Spirit, as He guides Moses, is thinking about Mount Sinai. What is inspired is the words which we receive. Moses speaks these words inspired by God the Holy Spirit; but that does not mean that he always apprehends with full clarity all that they mean.

Moses recognizes that the children of Israel were purchased by God. He does not know precisely what the coin of the realm is, as of yet (it is Christ's blood).

Throughout the Bible, believers, under God's direction, have done and said things which they themselves did not fully understand. Recall that when Abraham was going to offer up his son as a blood sacrifice to Y<sup>e</sup>howah—did he fully appreciate that this was a picture of God the Father offering up His Son for our sins? I think not.

We have already studied how Moses is a type of Christ. Was he aware that the things that he did or the things which happened to him provided parallels to the Person of Jesus Christ? Most certainly, he did not. Moses had some limited knowledge about the Messiah (he will speak of God sending to Israel *a prophet like unto me*), but he will have no idea that he himself is a type. People who are types (shadow images of the Messiah Jesus) do not know that they are types.

Abraham, when he offered up his son Isaac, was certainly of type, providing an early parallel to God offering up His Son. But Abraham did not understand that. He was simply acting in obedience to God.

Exodus 15:13b *You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation.*

God has guided the sons of Israel with His great power. His strength is the strength which held back the waters and then let the waters flow over the Egyptian army.

God, by His great power, will lead them there, to Mount Sinai, to His holy habitation. There are many manifestations of God's power which we have already seen take place in Egypt (and here, at the Sea of Reeds). There is much more to come.

Exodus 15:13 *You in Your mercy [or, grace, benevolence, steadfast love] have led forth The people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength To Your holy habitation.*

The people of Israel, despite their many faults, will be treated in grace by God. God has led them to this point and He will continue to guide them toward His holy habitation.

**Exodus 15:13 (NIV)** (a graphic); from [Crystal Storms](https://crystalstorms.me); accessed May 25, 2022.

As with v. 13, Moses will continue to assume the role of a prophet, and speak of what would happen in the future when Israel would seize the land of promise. Vv. 14–17 focus upon what could have been Israel's immediate future.

Exodus 15:14a *"The people will hear and be afraid;...*

*People* here is in the plural and refers to the various groups of people in or around Canaan (you may recall that, when the people of Canaan are mentioned, there is a list of various groups who live there).

That reason that they will hear and be afraid is based upon God's works in Egypt. What happened in Egypt was very big news to the peoples in that region.

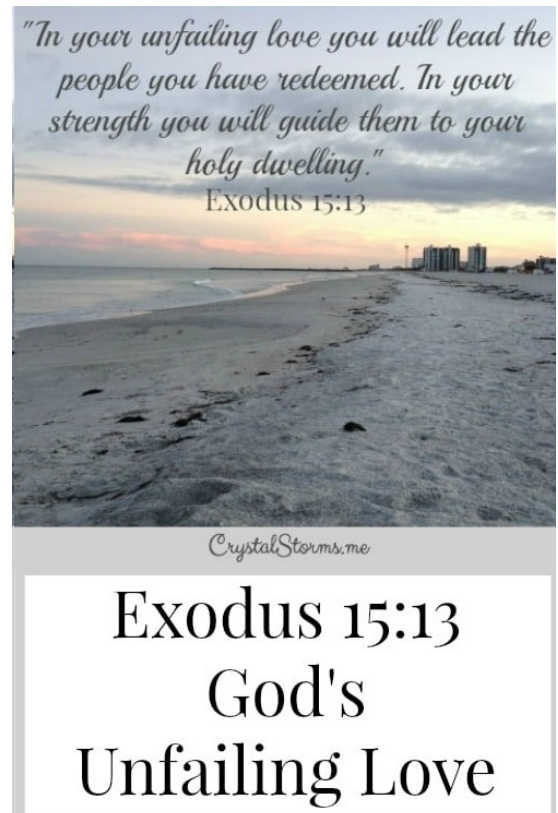
Exodus 15:14b *Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia.*

V. 14b describes the response of the people of the land of Philistia. This is the sea-front property along the west side of Canaan.

The subject of this phrase is *chîyl* (חַיִּל) [pronounced *kheel*] and it means *writhing, anguish*. The verb is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect of 'âchaz (אָחַז) [pronounced *aw-KHAZ*] and it means *to grasp, to take hold, to seize, to take possession*. Anguish will seize the hearts of the people of Philistia, as Israel advances towards them.

Those who occupy the promised land have heard in detail about the power and the ferocity of Y<sup>e</sup>howah, the God and King of the Hebrews. God has promised their land to the Hebrews and those who know this have become reasonably concerned as to their future well-being.

The people of Israel are moving forth out of Egypt; and they would, at some point, be coming to the Land of Promise (which is Canaan, portions of which are called Philistia). In the land that God would give to the people of Israel, the inhabitants would hear about Egypt and what happened to that once great nation. They would, over the next few years,



learn about a people on the move, a people who had just defeated Egypt. That was something for them to be concerned about.

Exodus 15:14 "The people will hear and be afraid; Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia.

The *people* is actually the *peoples*; and it refers to those in Canaan. They will hear what Israel has done to Egypt and become afraid. Those along the coast of Canaan (that region being called Philistia) will become saddened. Logically, Israel would come up and enter the land given them by God through Philistia.

When Israel actually does invade Canaan, they do not appear to encounter these emotions? Why not? The fear of Israel would have been with the generation of warriors who would have faced Israel in war at this point in time. Israel will not actually invade the land for another 40 years; therefore, they will face a different generation of Canaanites at that time (and Israel will invade the land with a new generation as well).

## Lesson 230: Exodus 15:14–16

## The Peoples Near the Land of Canaan

We continue with the song of Moses. Interestingly enough, this song will include information about the peoples in Canaan.

Vv. 14–16 is about those who are dwelling in the land of promise. This is not true for all time; it will remain true for the next few years.

Exodus 15:14 "The people will hear and be afraid; Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia.

Had Israel invaded Canaan immediately, they would have come up through Philistia, which is in southern Canaan on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Exodus 15:15a Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed;...

Edom was the land settled by Esau, Jacob's twin brother. Anyone with the genes of Abraham, but not also of Isaac and Jacob, is an Arab. Abraham had only one Hebrew son (Isaac) and he only had one Hebrew son. The descendants of Abraham's other sons and the descendants of Esau make up the Arabic groups of today.

The land of Edom became Esau's heritage. Those who were the leaders of Edom were overwhelmed by the news of this slave uprising in Egypt; where their God fought for them. The Edomites lived south of Canaan and would have been another point of entry by the Israelites.

Edom could have enjoyed a good relationship with the sons of Israel, as they were not encroaching upon the land of Israel. There was no reason for there to be animosity

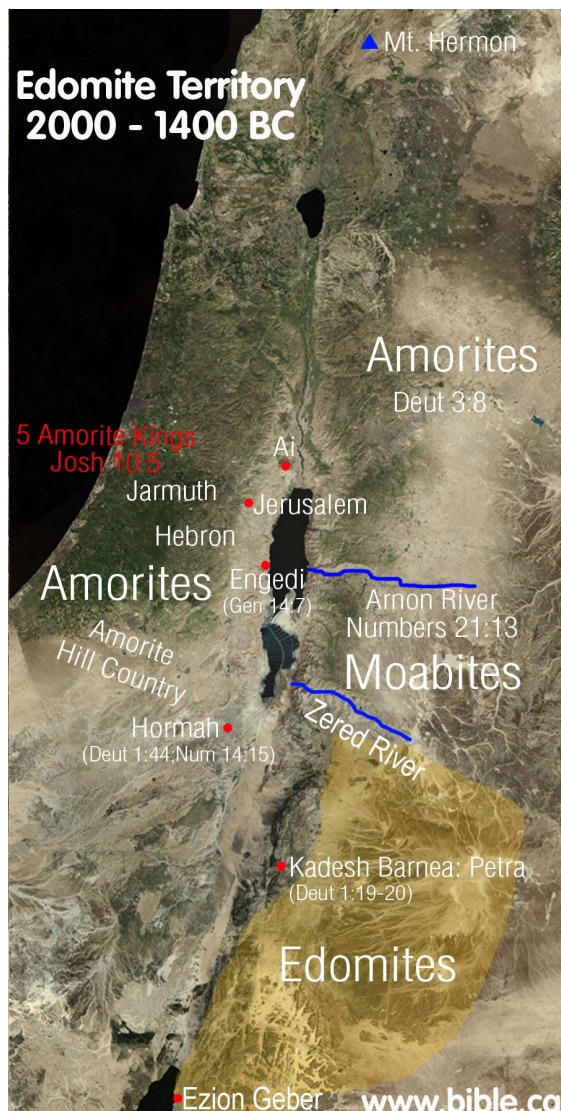
between the two peoples (Jacob and Esau did eventually mend their personal differences). However, the Edomites will choose not to have friendly relations with the Israelites; and this will cause them to lose many battles.

Although Esau probably believed in Abraham's God, as did some of his children and grandchildren, at some point, this people turned away from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Exodus 15:15b ...[The mighty men of Moab](#),...

Those who occupy Moab are half of the people descended from Lot (Abraham's nephew). They lived on the east side of the Jordan River. The Edomites lived due south of them. Both peoples will oppose Israel.

Exodus 15:15c ...[Trembling will take hold of them](#);...



It was as if God seized the hearts of the leaders of Moab, causing them to tremble with fear.

By the time that Israel moves in that direction, the Moabites will make an attempt to control them. The Moabites will be seized by fear during the time that they hear about Israel and Egypt; but that fear will not last for 40 years.

Philistia, Edom and Moab have not been mentioned at all in the book of Exodus until now. They are potential enemies of Israel at this point.

**Edomite Territory** (a map); from [bible.ca](http://www.bible.ca); accessed June 22, 2022. Ammon also occupies some area east of the Jordan and Philistia would have been a section of land along the Mediterranean Sea. Canaan is the land between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea (which is occupied by many peoples). Although God will promise Israel a larger territory than Canaan, Israel must be able to populate it and defend it. Therefore, Israel, up to the point in time, will never occupy all of the territory promised them by God. They will, however, rule over this territory in the Millennium.



This is an excellent map, indicating just exactly who Israel will face when they invade Canaan.

Exodus 15:15d [All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away.](#)

When Israel enters into the land, all of its inhabitants will be defeated, one after another. They will melt away because of Israel; or, more properly, because of Israel's God.

Everyone in Canaan will melt away in fear. Those who militarily oppose Israel will know this fear firsthand, as God destroys their armies.

So the nations round about heard what had happened and it frightened them. No one knew who was next, but if this people could defeat Egypt, then they could defeat any group of people in Canaan.

Those in surrounding territories listened for news from out of Egypt as to what was occurring between the Egyptians and the Hebrews. Once the Israelites left Egypt and began moving their way, the informed people began to worry. If they were in the path of the sons of Israel and God desired for them to have that land, they would possess it.

We see that this is fulfilled, at least in part, in Joshua 2. Joshua sends spies into the land and they have come upon Rahab the prostitute and Rahab says, ["I know that Y<sup>e</sup>howah has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how Y<sup>e</sup>howah dried up the water of the Sea of Reeds before you when you came out of Egypt and...when we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for Y<sup>e</sup>howah, your God—He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath."](#) (Joshua 2:8b–10a, 11). This passage tells us that not only were the words of this song fulfilled, but that many people became believers in Y<sup>e</sup>howah, the God of the Israelites, as had Rahab.

This would have been more generally true had Israel invaded Canaan when God first told them to. We will study this in the book of Numbers (which book is, in part, about Israel being numbered for war).

Exodus 15:15 [Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; The mighty men of Moab, Trembling will take hold of them; All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away.](#)

Moses continues with his song, and this portion looks further into the future, of the peoples in Canaan, and surrounding regions, who would hear what God has done to Egypt and they would be fearful.

Exodus 15:14–15 ["The people will hear and be afraid; Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; The mighty men of Moab, Trembling will take hold of them; All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away.](#)



As we see in the book of Joshua, some of this fear would continue even into the next generation; but this is not the case with all of the peoples spoken of in vv. 14–15.

Exodus 15:16a **Fear and dread will fall on them;...**

*Them* refers to the people around Canaan and those north of Egypt who have heard about what God has done for His people; and how He has taken them out of Egypt and destroyed the Egyptian army as well. Many of them will come to believe that this can happen to them.

They will fear and dread the sons of Israel; and they will fear and dread the God of Israel.

Exodus 15:16b **By the greatness of Your arm...**

*God's arm* is a reference to His strength and power; to His will and His willingness to enter into human history to act on behalf of His people.

Those who are informed in Canaan and in the surrounding areas would recognize God's great power. They knew that God was willing to act on Israel's behalf.

Exodus 15:16c **...They will be as still as a stone,...**

Some people, although angry at Israel, will sort of hide themselves in their stillness from Israel and from Israel's God.

Exodus 15:16d **...Till Your people pass over, O Lord,...**

As the people of Israel pass by, these other nations will be like stone, hanging back quietly and not disturbing them. Whenever this is not the case, God will step in and help Israel, and the opposing peoples will suffer great loss.

Israel is going to pass through several lands in order to get to Canaan. Moses was aware of all the various routes into the Land of Promise; and which peoples lived where. This would have been a part of his training to become pharaoh.

Exodus 15:16e **...Till the people pass over...**

Some nations would not respond positively to Israel, but they would allow Israel to pass by them to get to the land given them by God.

Exodus 15:16f **...Whom You have purchased.**

In the era in which Moses wrote, God purchased Israel by leading them out of Egypt. They used to be Egyptian slaves and now they are, ideally speaking, God's slaves.

The people of Israel were purchased by God. Very likely, they would have understood this to mean that God brought them out of slavery, and thus, purchased them. They were enslaved and God purchased them from the Egyptians. Ultimately, God had to destroy a generation of Egyptians in order to bring Israel out of their land.

We know that ultimately God purchases His people by His Son.

Some translators combine vv. 16e and 16f, changing the word order slightly, and arrive at this translation: ...until the people whom You have purchased pass on by.

Exodus 15:16 Fear and dread will fall on them; By the greatness of Your arm They will be as still as a stone, Till Your people pass over, O Lord, Till the people pass over Whom You have purchased.

The doubling of the people *passing by* is a method of emphasis. It probably worked well with the music written for Moses' song.

The people's of Canaan will allow the people of God to pass on by.

This is a promise of God to Israel, written into the song of Moses, but bear in mind that it does not stand forever. This would have been the response of many peoples in the land of promise, had Israel gone to Mount Sinai, and then invaded Canaan.

Now, if you know about some of the things which will happen in the future, this may not ring true to you. Was there not some push-back from some of the peoples of the land? And yes, there was; when Israel did not boldly march into the land and take it right then and there. If Israel goes for a few years without any new impact, the peoples of the land gradually lose their fear or dread of Israel. Also, a new generation rises up in all of those territories north of the desert region, where Israel is now. That new generation has a different view of things from their parents, who knew that Israel had defeated Egypt in some way (we have no idea as to the details that these people knew about Israel and Egypt).

Neighbouring peoples are intent upon not causing any ill feelings between themselves and the Israelites. Some plan, when the Israelites march through, to be non-confrontational, to fade into the background, just as quiet as we might be if a wild beast wandered by and the possibility existed that if we didn't move that they might not see us.

## **Lessons 231–232: Exodus 15:14–19**

## **God Will Give Canaan to the Israelites**

We are still in the Song of Moses, but we will complete it in this double lesson.

God has just defeated Egypt's army by drowning them in the sea of reeds; and Moses has written a song to commemorate that. At this point in the song, Moses writes about the future of the people of Israel.

Exodus 15:14–16 The peoples have heard; they tremble; pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of Your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O LORD, pass by, till the people pass by whom You have purchased. (ESV; capitalized)

This would have been even more true had Israel gone to Mount Sinai, and then went up through southern Israel and took the land right then. God had the land and the people prepared for Israel's invasion, but they will not execute the invasion.

Exodus 15:17a You will bring them in and plant them...

*Them* refers to the sons of Israel; and God would bring them into the Land of Promise, which is Canaan. God would plant them there, indicating that they would be in Israel semi-permanently (there would be Israelites in the land between 1450 B.C. and A.D. 70, which is a considerable amount of time for any specific people in the ancient world to occupy any specific land).

Exodus 15:17b In the mountain of Your inheritance,...

The mountain of their inheritance is not a reference to Mount Sinai (the Hebrew people would not live there), but to the wonderful mountain Zion. Moses knows the topography of the lands around Egypt; this would have been a part of his training to become pharaoh. He would have known about Canaan and its topography.

Interestingly enough, the people of Israel would not live in Zion at the beginning. Jebusites dwelt there and the Israelites were unable to remove them. It would not be until the time of David that they would be excised from Zion. However, Mount Zion is where Jerusalem was established and Jerusalem has since then been associated with Israel (this would be circa 1000 B.C.).

Exodus 15:17c In the place, O Lord, which You have made...

God has made this place for Israel, meaning that God has prepared it for being invaded. The people of Canaan, due to their own great degeneracy, would lose their land.

There has been a great deal of brainwashing about one people going into a land occupied by others and taking it (the western world, including the United States, is accused of doing this). That is, pretty much, the history of every country in the world. No peaceful, laid-back, live-in-harmony with the land types have ever moved into an unclaimed territory and just lived there forever. That just does not happen, even though many people are taught that describes the Indians in America. Human history is filled with one people occupying a land, and another people coming into that land to take it. The Italians who live in Italy today bear virtually no resemblance or relation to the Romans who occupied that territory around the time of Christ. Virtually every country is established through war—either the inhabitants keep invaders out (this very much describes the book of Samuel) or invaders

come in and take the land (this describes the first half of the book of Joshua). It is taken in war or it is defended by the military. Only in a few instances does a country actually purchase land from the occupants and then peacefully occupy it (this does describe some land expansion which took place in the United States, but not all of it).

As a nation becomes corrupt in many ways, it is laid open to invasion by others. This is the natural ebb and flow of life in the devil's world.

Exodus 15:17d ...*For Your Own dwelling*,...

The Hebrew people would dwell in the land of Canaan and God would dwell with them there. At this point in time, God has already set aside a place to live, so to speak. The place where God would manifest Himself would be the Tabernacle (and later, the Temple).

That God is said to live among His people foretells Jesus living among His people.

Exodus 15:17e ...*The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established*.

God's sanctuary would be among His people.

God, by decree, has established His sanctuary. This is the masculine singular noun *mîq<sup>o</sup>ddâsh* (מִקְדָּשׁ) [pronounced *mik-DAWSH*], which means, *sanctuary, sacred place*; possibly a synonym for the *Tabernacle of God*. Strong's #4720 BDB #874.

There are times that I wonder, *what did Moses know when he wrote this phrase or that word?* Moses may have understood this to refer to the land of Israel in general, where God would dwell. Moses, at this time, spoke to God in a holy tent (which was not the Tabernacle). No matter how Moses understood his own writing; God the Holy Spirit knows what the text means. There are times in prophetic utterances where the speaker may understand what they have written in one way, but God the Holy Spirit understands it in another.

God's hands would establish this *sanctuary* or *sacred place*. The verb is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural, Pilel (Polel) perfect of *kûwn* (כּוּן) [pronounced *koon*], which means, *to set up, to erect; to confirm, to establish, to maintain; to found [a city, the earth, etc]*. The plural is used because *hands* is the subject of the verb. The Pilel is the intensive use of the verb (the Pilel is like the Piel, but with a different grammatical pattern). Strong's #3559 BDB #465.

Exodus 15:17 *You will bring them in and plant them In the mountain of Your inheritance, In the place, O Lord, which You have made For Your Own dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.*

The land is the inheritance of the Hebrews. It has been given to them unconditionally since the times of Abraham a half millennium previous. It is also where Y<sup>e</sup>howah will dwell, with his people.

Y<sup>e</sup>howah dwelling in the land with his people is a foreshadowing of our Lord coming to this earth and living among the Hebrews, His own people. Throughout most of Israel's history, they would understand this to mean that God has some sort of a supernatural Presence in the Tabernacle (or in the Temple). This was probably more true right after the Tabernacle (and later the Temple) were built. There is no indication that there was a perceivable Presence of God which remained with either structure.

Despite what this meant prophetically, this does not seem to be well understood among the Israelites.

Exodus 15:18 *"The Lord shall reign forever and ever."*

God would reign over Israel forever.

God's power cannot be changed or overthrown; He will rule over Israel and over the earth forever and ever. I would take this to refer to the current iteration of the earth and the future one as well.

God's true eternal presence and power are recognized by Moses. In eighteen verses, Moses has shared with us his observations and the doctrine in his soul in a song. For him, because he has learned a great deal of God's Word over the past several years, the words flow out easily.

**Exodus 15:18 (ESV)** (a graphic); from [Facebook](#); accessed May 25, 2022.

This verse marks the end of Moses' song.

Interestingly enough, Moses will then summarize part of what he was singing about.



Exodus 15:19a *For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea,...*

When they first entered sea, the waters were piled up before them, as it was for the sons of Israel. So they advanced on Israel, following them. Pharaoh's entire army and all its assets were in the midst of the seas. This refers to when they are actually on the ground, and dry.

Recall that, after entering the sea that some of the chariots got caught up by the mud of the sea floor (or, that seems to be the case). Something slowed their chariots. Where Israel had crossed with all of their possessions with little incident, Pharaoh's army would get bogged down in the sea of reeds.



Also, what makes sense here is, Pharaoh wanted to lead the people, so he rode out ahead, but he was followed by chariots first and then horsemen. What appears to be the case is, when his chariots began to get caught up, that Pharaoh then slowed his assault. He was not going to attack Israel without backup.

It would be my further contention that the men on horseback were held back because of the chariots in front of them. Another option, is, the men on horseback were caught up by the same thing as the chariots; but this is not a part of the recorded narrative.

Now, some have claimed that the Egyptians did not use horses at this time. Let me suggest two things here: the army of Egypt lost all of their chariots and horses in the waters here (the horses which had not already been destroyed by the plagues of God against Egypt). So, Egypt took a very long time to build back its military. Remember, they were virtually destroyed as a nation at this point in time. Would they want to acknowledge in their recorded history such a thorough defeat at the hands of the God of their former slaves? I doubt that they would.

Exodus 15:19b ...and the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them.

Once Pharaoh's entire army was in the sea, God brought the waters of the sea back over them, drowning them all. I have offered up a couple of different approaches which would have placed all the chariots and horsemen in the waters of the Sea of Reeds at the same time.

Exodus 15:19c But the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

Not long before, the sons of Israel had stood in the same spot and crossed over on dry ground.

Below the song, as an addendum, Moses penned these additional words to let us know the occasion of this song, although it is fairly obvious. It is likely that he wrote the words down and then they were copied by several scribes and passed throughout the army of the Hebrews. This is to remind the Hebrews unequivocally that God was fighting for them. They experienced first-hand God's provisions.

Exodus 15:19 For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them. But the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

Moses then goes back to how Israel got to where they are right now. God led them between the waters and then God allowed those waters to drown the people of Egypt who rushed them.

Let's consider v. 19's purpose and placement in Exodus 15. I see three possibilities: (1) it continues and concludes the Song of Moses; or (2) if it provides us the historical context

of the Song of Moses; or (3) if it is the preface to the Song of Miriam. These different points of view are revealed in some of the many translations which are available.

This verse is simply a set of facts; we may assume that these facts are true, regardless of whether or not they are a part of any song (I do not see them as being a part of the Song of Miriam, as I believe that the women were singing as a backing chorus rather than singing an original piece of music written by Miriam. Did this accompanying chorus provide counterpoint or did it simply echo the music and lyrics of Moses (we have not studied Miriam's songs yet—it is v. 21)? Again, that may have been interesting to the people at the time (who doesn't love counterpoint in music?); but the words are what are key to us today.

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The previous verses read: Exodus 15:17–18 *You will bring them in and plant them on Your own mountain, the place, O LORD, which You have made for Your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established. The LORD will reign forever and ever.*" (ESV; capitalized) This appears to be the end of the song. But then we read...

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Exodus 15:19 *For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them, but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea.* (ESV)

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Now, even though the exact contextual purpose of v. 19 is not germane to its importance as an accurate recitation of the facts, it does not hurt to see the options and consider them.

### **The 3 Approaches of Various Translations to Exodus 15:19**

Many translations felt it necessary to take a stand here; and some of them had to, simply because their formatting required it (that is, where are the final quotation marks placed?).

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(1) V. 19 continues or concludes the Song of Moses:

American English Bible	<i>'Pharaoh's horses sank into the sea, Along with his chariots and horsemen. Then, they were covered with water, Where the children of Israel had walked on dry land Through the midst of the sea.'</i>
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	<i>STANZA VIII. The LORD will reign for ever and ever; For the horse of Pharaoh went with his chariot, And with his horsemen, into the sea, Where the LORD turned on them the flood of the waters; But the children of Israel walked on the dry,- Thro' the midst of the sea!"</i>

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Despite the finality of v. 18, those two translations continue this as a part of the Song of Moses.

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## The 3 Approaches of Various Translations to Exodus 15:19

Some translations go with option #2. (2) This verse provides us with the historical context of the Song of Moses. It *confirms* the historic accuracy of the events to which the Song of Moses refers. It is not a part of Moses' song; nor does it lead us into the singing of Miriam. Here are three examples of this approach:

Easy-to-Read Version–2006

Yes, it really happened! Pharaoh's horses and riders, and chariots went into the sea. And the LORD brought all the water of the sea down on top of them. But the Israelites walked through that sea on dry land.

*The Message*

Yes, Pharaoh's horses and chariots and riders went into the sea and GOD turned the waters back on them; but the Israelites walked on dry land right through the middle of the sea.

Kaplan Translation

[This song was sung] when Pharaoh's horse came into the sea, along with his chariot corps and cavalry, and God made the sea come back on them. The Israelites had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea.

(3) V. 19 is a prelude to the Song of Miriam. Any translation which includes this verse under the heading of *The Song of Miriam* implies this very thing (GNB, Kretzmann's Commentary). Or, this is signaled by there being no new paragraph with v. 20 (Easy English, NIRV, NLT).

Good News Bible (TEV)

**The Song of Miriam**

The Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground. But when the Egyptian chariots with their horses and drivers went into the sea, the LORD brought the water back, and it covered them.

New English Bible–1970

***The song of Miriam.***

For Pharaoh's horse, both chariots and cavalry, went into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters over them, but Israel had passed through the sea on dry ground.

As an aside, it does not appear that Miriam is singing her own song, but simply singing counterpoint to what Moses is singing.

Personally, I lean toward the second explanation based upon 3 things: (1) V. 18 really appears to be the proper climax or culmination to the Song of Moses, not v. 19. (2) The words of v. 19 are already found in the Song of Moses (not exactly, but they're close). (3) Miriam's song is simply a recitation of Moses' song's first verse (or stanza); so it requires no prelude apart from Moses' song.

**The Passage of the Jews through the Red Sea (Ivan Aivazovsky, 1891)** (a graphic); from [Sign of the Rose](#); accessed May 25, 2022.



## Lesson 233: Exodus 15:20–21

## The Song of Miriam

Now the person in Moses' family, with the second or third highest amount of doctrine in her soul was Miriam—who not only learned by watching Moses and Aaron, but was a prophetess in her own right (suggesting that God, on occasion, spoke through her).

### The Song of Miriam

The NKJV suggests that there is a separate Song of Miriam by its title above (many translators placed such a title here, or before the previous verse). However, what appears to me is, Miriam guided the women to sing counterpoint to the words of Moses. You will observe what Miriam (and the women) sing simply repeats v. 1 of this chapter.



On the other hand, the very fact

that Miriam is mentioned here suggests that perhaps she had some part in the crafting of this song. Did she help with the music or the arrangement or even some of the lyrics. The only clue that she might have is the mention of her in these two verses.

**Moses, Miriam and Israel Celebrating with Song** (a graphic); from [Godtube](#); accessed May 25, 2022.

Exodus 15:20a [Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand;...](#)

This is the first mention of Miriam by name, although she is likely the sister of Moses who followed him as an infant after she placed him in the waters of the Sea of Reeds.

Interestingly enough, she is called the sister of Aaron rather than the sister of Moses or the sister of Aaron and Moses. Aaron is the older brother and that could be the reason why. Spiritually speaking, she probably has more in common with Aaron than with Moses.

She is called here a prophetess, which is the first time this word occurs in Scripture. It is important that this is found here, because this indicates that what she sings is prophetic (accurate) teaching.

Up until this time, the word *prophet* (or, *prophetess*) has been rarely used. We have seen it once way back in Gen. 20:7 where Abraham is called a prophet. Later, Aaron is spoken of as Moses' (**not** God's) prophet in Exodus 7:1 (that is, Aaron spoke on behalf of Moses—which in itself tells us a great deal about the meaning of this word).

The verb for prophecy has not been used yet (and it will not occur in Scripture until the book of Numbers). It is possible that a small amount of information is known about prophets and prophecy, but very little had been recorded up to this point in time.

Miriam's title as *prophetess* is important here. She is not exalted only on the basis of Moses; but this title seems to indicate that she is properly understood to also be a source of divine information. The chief problem with this understanding is, there is nothing recorded which affirms by example that she is a unique source of divine information. Even here, in this passage, she has not given some additional words of revelation, but she will repeat what Moses has already sung.

Miriam, no longer a slave and thrilled to be in a royal family, if you will, leads the women in song and puts together a response of the women, singing back to the men. She sings Moses' song; and it is my assumption is that she is counter harmonizing with the men.

Miriam is only called a prophetess here, and I would interpret this to be somewhat of an informal designation, somewhat like Aaron being called a prophet. What likely explains their titles is not that God communicates specifically to Aaron or Miriam and then they revealed this information to the people; but that God communicates to Moses and he would reveal this information to the elders as well as to Aaron and Miriam. When they take



Moses' words to others, they were revealing divine information, but through the mediacy of Moses.

Moses would have been a celebrity—despite the occasional rebellion—and his background would have been discussed along with his relations. So, Miriam would have had some social status afforded to her as Aaron had. Therefore, Miriam would have been looked up to by the other women. She is not a prophetess in the full sense of the gift (I don't know that we have any evidence of it), but her relationship to Moses may have put her in the line of communication to the people (there would have been many women interested in what God has told Moses).

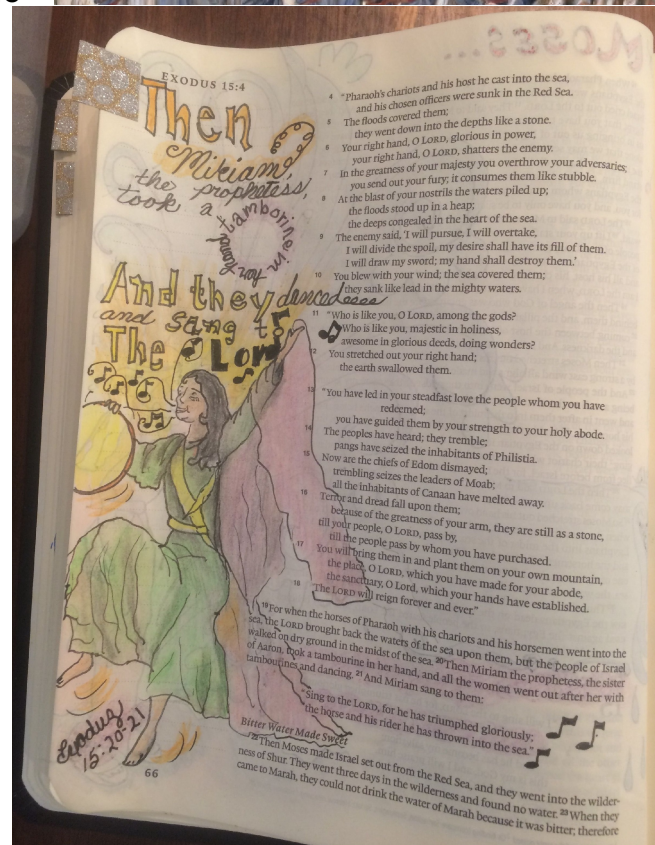
Exodus 15:20b ...and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

According to Freeman, originally, dancing occurred at religious ceremonies only (this is true of the Egyptians as well as the Hebrews). He claims that women primarily danced alone and the few times when the men danced, that it was separate from the women. In the dancing mentioned in this verse, the first person began, not confined by any sort of form, and the others followed in her steps. We have a similar passages in Judges 11:34 21:19–21 1Samuel 18:6. When David danced before the Lord (2Samuel 6:14), it is possible that his wife was upset due to the fact that he was wearing very little (2Samuel 6:20) and also because dancing was an activity generally reserved for women. Whether this is true or not, there are times in the Bible when believers are exhorted to dance (such as, Psalm 149:3).

**The Songs of Joy** (a graphic); from [Jewish Women's Archive](#); accessed May 25, 2022.

The Songs of Joy, c. 1896-1902, by James Jacques Joseph Tissot (French, 1836-1902). Courtesy of the Jewish Museum, New York.

Exodus 15:20 Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.



That these women went out after Miriam, following her lead; and that they will sing, dance and play music (I am assuming that the women as a group sing, rather than just Miriam alone).

**Miriam Singing to the Lord** (a Bible Journaling graphic); Uploaded by Sherry Allen to [Pinterest](#); accessed May 25, 2022. This chapter, and Miriam in particular, appeared to be very inspiring to a great many artists. I had a plethora of art to choose from for this section of Exodus 15.

Exodus 15:21a **And Miriam answered them:...**

Miriam is answering the men who are singing with Moses. This does not mean that someone has asked her a question and she is responding with the answer; but that Moses and the men sing; and they Miriam and the women answer them by singing counterpoint to the men. Although this specifically names Miriam, I would suggest that she is leading a chorus of women who are singing a chorus in between each stanza.

Exodus 15:21b **...“Sing to the Lord,...**

Miriam has not written her own song here; she is joining in the singing with the other women providing counterpoint. She is answering the men here, singing almost the exact same words as are found in v. 1. The only difference is, she uses the imperative and Moses used the cohortative.

Exodus 15:21c **For He has triumphed gloriously!**

Miriam is singing in counterpoint here (if that is the correct term). She is singing the same words, but in a higher octave than the men (as they are women).

Exodus 15:21d **The horse and its rider**

What is sung here is nearly exactly what Moses was singing. She and the women may have been singing in counterpoint throughout Moses entire song. There is no indication that Miriam has written a song or that these are the first lines for a longer song. However, some interpret this passage in that way (incorrectly in my opinion).

My opinion is based upon the content of Miriam's song, not upon the fact that she is a woman. In the book of Luke, both Elizabeth and Mary (mothers of John the Herald and Jesus, respectively) will speak as inspired by God the Holy Spirit.

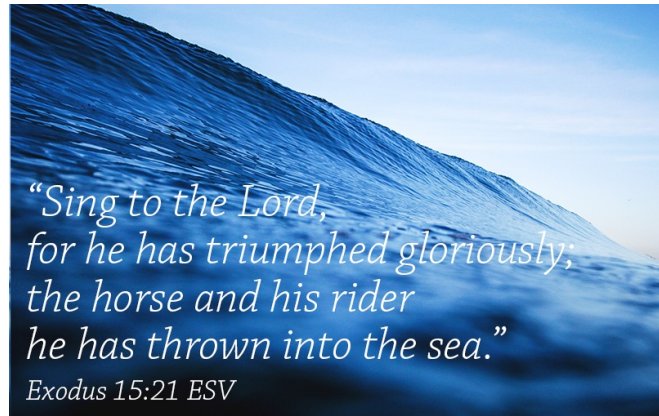
Exodus 15:21e **He has thrown into the sea!"**

Obviously, this is not Miriam's original song, but a choral response of the women to the men, still using the words of Moses' song, making very minor adjustments for the change of singers and to indicate that this is a response to the song of Moses.

I would suggest that this was done for the entire song of Moses (which song may be longer than what is recorded here).

Exodus 15:21 **And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"**

**Exodus 15:21 (ESV)** (a graphic); from [KFUO Radio](#); accessed May 25, 2022.



## Lesson 234: Exodus 15:22–23

## The Bitter Waters Test

### Bitter Waters Made Sweet

At this point, we begin a dramatically different narrative. What happened in Egypt will remain a part of Israel's history and it will be referred back to by Moses himself in Deuteronomy and by various psalmists in the Psalms, as well as several New Testament authors. However, from this point forward, Egypt is going to be in the rear view mirror for the people of Israel.

Exodus 15:22a **So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea [= the sea of reeds];...**

Interestingly enough, when describing the final confrontation between Pharaoh's army and the Israelites, we do not have the *Sea of Reeds* mentioned by name in Exodus 14. However, on the other hand, they are moving towards the Sea of Reeds in Exodus 13:18 and moving away from the Sea of Reeds in this verse.

This is the verse which tells us that the Sea of reeds is synonymous with or very close to the sea which God parted for Israel. My strongest leaning is toward a canal or a freshwater tributary which was near the Sea. Whatever it is, it had to be considerably large—a long ways across and reasonably deep (given all that took place there).

Exodus 15:22b **...then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur.**

The desert-wilderness of Shur is a fairly large place. God has a place towards which He is guiding the people. Recall that God reveals Himself as a pillar of cloud in the day and a pillar of fire at night to lead the people forward. The only choice the people really have is to follow whichever of these pillars is moving ahead. So the people of Israel are not out for a random walk, nor is Moses lost.



Exodus 15:22c **And they went three days in the wilderness...**

They march for 3 days after their encounter with Pharaoh. Some see a parallel to the 3 days that God wanted the people to march out into the desert to worship Him, but I am not sure exactly what that parallel would be or what it means. They have been on a march for a couple days prior to this 3-day march.

In this march, they are moving away from Egypt and from the waters of Egypt.

**Moses Leads Israel** (a graphic); from [St-Takla.org](http://St-Takla.org); accessed May 25, 2022. Possibly an illustration by James Padgett (1931–2009).



Exodus 15:22d **...and found no water.**

During this 3-day march, they have not come across any water. On the face of it, this has become a very dire circumstance.

This is still analogous to the Christian life. The Hebrews have been redeemed and they have been delivered, just as we are in salvation. However, what they require is water and they will die of thirst unless they find some. Likewise, we require the water of the word to begin immediately following salvation or we find ourselves in a spiritual desert, foreboding and unforgiving. Our desert is the life on earth filled with human viewpoint.

And let me state this as clearly as I can: there is no spiritual growth apart from learning and believing the Word of God. Both of those participles are necessary to move forward in the Christian life (and for these people in the desert, to move forward in the spiritual life).

Now, these three days in the desert wilderness without water would be analogous to the spiritual condition of the people of Israel. There was a great deal of spiritual information which they could have picked up on and understood from their experiences over the past few months, but it does not appear that these people grew spiritually at all.

Christians engage in a great many *religious* behaviors: they pray, they read their Bibles; they go to church, they listen to Christian radio, they go to evangelistic meetings. For the most part, the various behaviors that Christians engage in *will not* result in spiritual growth. The things described are not wrong—they will not necessarily harm a believer or throw them off the track—but the believer must expose himself to good and accurate Bible

teaching (and God designed that to occur in the local church). Secondly—and this is extremely important—the believer must believe the doctrines being taught to him (or her) from the Word of God. The exercise of faith in time for the believer is as important as it was in salvation.

Let me approach this statement of truth in two ways. Some people hear the gospel of Jesus Christ (that he died for their sins) and they may know and be able to repeat this truth. But, *if they have not personally believed in Jesus*, then they are not saved. Faith is essential in order to move from death to life. This same faith is necessary for the Christian life as well.

The second approach is simply quoting Scripture to prove this: *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* (Rom. 10:17) *For we walk by faith, not by sight.* (2Cor. 5:7) *Walking* refers to living the Christian life. Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of apprehending it.

*For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,' " although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.* (Heb. 4:1–3; Psalm 95:11) The context of this passage is the Exodus generation, the very men that we are studying. The Exodus generation heard the excellent teaching of Moses. He spoke God's words to the people and then he repackaged everything into a series of *Bible* lessons (if you will) before they crossed over into Canaan (this is known as the book of Deuteronomy). Gen X—those who left Egypt as adults—heard this excellent teaching from Moses, but it did not benefit them because they did not mix what they heard with faith. That is, when Moses would teach various principles, the people of Gen X heard what he was teaching, but they did not believe him; they did not believe the spiritual principles. Therefore, what they heard from Moses was not beneficial to them. They did not grow spiritually.

*Entering the rest* refers to the successful living of the spiritual life. The *rest* describes a life which is not confused, hurried, or filled with frustration and mental attitude sins.

God put the option of living the spiritual life before Gen X, and they rejected it. As a result, God will leave their dead bodies rotting in the desert. The next generation of Israelites—those who left Israel at 20 or younger (along with those adults who were born in the desert). That generation benefitted by the teaching of Moses; they believed him. Moses' final sermons, which were collected into the book of Deuteronomy, is what gave that next generation—the *generation of promise*—the spiritual strength to move forward in God's plan. Therefore, they went into the land of promise and they took it (this is all recorded in the book of Joshua).



What distinguishes these two generations? Faith. Gen X had little faith in the teachings of Moses, which are the words of God. Both generations heard this teaching; but only the generation of promise appropriated advancement in the spiritual life through faith.

Exodus 15:22 *So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea [- the sea of reeds]; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.*

The sons of Israel had observed God powerfully take them out of Egypt; they had watched God destroy their enemies—they all saw these great plagues of God (or heard about them when they did not directly affect the Israelites<sup>25</sup>). However, in their minds, they were now facing a different sort of problem. They were in the desert-wilderness and they had found no water.

It will be at this point where they should have developed a faith-rest rationale as a response to the difficulties in their lives. The Israelites are facing a different set of circumstances than they did while in Egypt; or after they had crossed the sea of reeds; but they are still God's people and God is still God. A faith rest rationale would understand when they had come up against a problem that they themselves could not solve; but, they should be able to recognize that God can solve that problem. Unfortunately, Gen X never responded to problems and difficulties in this way.

Exodus 15:23a *Now when they came to Marah,...*

They have been walking in the desert-wilderness for 3 days, but without coming upon any water. Then they come to a place called Marah. Most of these stops receive a name at the time of the stop or soon thereafter. *Marah* seems to be a good name after the bitter waters have been discovered. *Mârâh* (מָרָה) [pronounced *maw-RAW*] means, *bitterness*. Strong's #4785 BDB #600.

Although the location of this and other places can be guessed, there is no route which has universal acceptance. We do not know where Israel crossed which body of water and we do not know where Marah is. That location today would not match up at all with what we are reading here in this chapter. That is, the topography in this same desert today is much different from the time of Moses.

Exodus 15:23b *...they could not drink the waters of Marah,...*

There was apparently a lake or river or some significant amount of water there, but when they tried to drink it, they spit it out (I am reading into the narrative here). It was extremely bitter.

Exodus 15:23c *...for they were bitter.*

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<sup>25</sup> Remember, Israel did not experience all of the plagues firsthand.

*They* is a reference to *waters* (which are generally in the plural in the Hebrew language<sup>26</sup>). The waters were too bitter for the Israelites to drink.

The proper nouns from the Hebrew are usually transliterated from the original language (although often poorly as we have seen with the names of various tribes). As we have discussed, *Marah*, in the Hebrew, means *bitterness* and is so translated in Prov. 14:10 (actually, that is *morrah* (מֶרָה) [pronounced *mor-RAW*]).

The word translated *bitterness* is the masculine plural adjective *mar* (מַר) [pronounced *mahr*], and that word means, *bitter, bitterness; sad, sorrowful; fierce*. Strong's #4751 BDB #600. Adding the *-ah* ending simply makes the adjective feminine.

We do not know the composition of this water, whether it was filled with rust, oil, sea salt—whatever was in it; it was clearly undrinkable.



**The Bitter of Waters of Marah** (a graphic); from [Benn Matthew](#); accessed May 25, 2022.

Exodus 15:23d [Therefore the name of it was called Marah.](#)

The word *Marah* is found 3x in this very short passage; the bitterness of the water is obviously being emphasized.

It is most logical that most of these places were named by the sons of Israel as they came to them—and that the name is indicative of whatever they observed or experience in that place. This makes far more sense than there being a big sign in front of a place saying, “You are now entering Marah; population 0.”

When the Israelites arrived in Marah, it did not have this name yet nor did it have this name but in a different language. There was not a population in that area nor did anyone erect a sign saying this was Marah. The Hebrews arrived, tried the water, spit it out, muttering the word *marah*. Therefore, this place is named *Marah*.

We will occasionally come upon other areas and places which were clearly named after the arrival. On many occasions in the narrative, it sounds as if they are arriving at a place which already has a name, but most of the time, this is a designation given it by Moses or one of the elders. This is just the way things were expressed then in that language. In

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<sup>26</sup> I am not aware of a single instance where *water* is in the singular in the Old Testament.

English, we would have said that *we came to a clearing where there was a large body of water and that the water was bitter. Therefore, we decided to name this place Marah.*

It is our habit to write things in a strict chronological order. I have two Bibles edited in such a way that they are in chronological order because that is the way I think and perceive. This is not how we should interpret the ancient Hebrew mind, however. A simple corroborating factor of these innate differences: our verb tense system is based upon time: *past, present and future*. The Hebrew verb structure (as well as the Greek) is not based upon time. The Hebrew imperfect or perfect tense could refer to a past, a present or a future event. Context determines the chronology of the passage.

At this point, the sons of Israel are not on a direct route to the land of Canaan. We saw in Genesis various portions of Joseph's family go back and forth from Egypt to Canaan in a relatively short amount of time (literally, a single verse might be given over to record the entire one-way trip). God is dealing with a people who, although they are all believers, are one of the worst collection of believers anywhere at any time (I can state this with certainty, because God will call them that later in Scripture). Their instability, their lack of trust in God, their constant whining will become a source of irritation. They have seen God do the most for them (just as when we are saved, God does the most for us). When they are to go into the land to take it, what should they expect? They should expect that God will do much more than the most for them (just as after salvation, we should expect the same). All they have to do is to trust God and listen and obey. It can't be much simpler than that. God knows their every need and He has taken care of these needs in eternity past. Had these men been able to exercise faith in God's direction and care, they would have marched directly into the land of Canaan and taken it (after stopping at Mount Sinai first). As it is, these Israelites will wander the desert for 40 years, making one mistake after another. Only God, in His infinite wisdom and patience allowed *many* of them to live out their natural lives without killing them (Numbers 14 and other similar passages notwithstanding; we will cover that later).

A fascinating study is **Numbers 33** where each of these stops is recorded. See the book of **Numbers** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

## Lessons 235–236: Exodus 15:22–25

## At the Waters of Marah

Exodus 15:22 *So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea [= the sea of reeds]; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.*

The Israelites continue their trek through the desert-wilderness of Shur. They are going westward; the army of Egypt lies behind them, destroyed in the sea of reeds.

Exodus 15:23 *Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah.*

Then they had come to a place where there was water, but the water was so bitter, they could not drink it. They have been traveling in the desert for 3 days and their water supply is apparently depleted. They have no water and the water they have come across is not drinkable.

**Exodus 15:23 (KJV)** (a graphic); from ; accessed May 25, 2022.

Exodus 15:24a **And the people complained against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?”**

This will be the way of this people. They will run into a problem and they will complain. Partway through their complaint, they will start blaming Moses and disparaging his character.

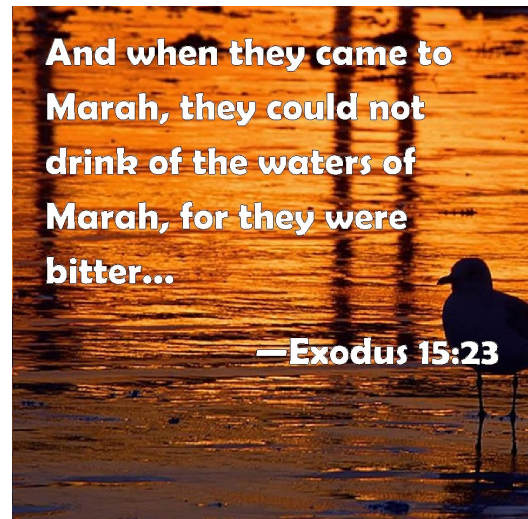
They have seen great miracles of God, but at no time do we have a large number of Israelites applying the faith-rest drill, saying, “God desires for us to become a great nation; so therefore, God must provide us with water [or, *whatever*].” I have just given the appropriate faith-rest rationale in that single sentence.

Instead, they murmur and complain, often expressing anger along with a cluster of mental attitude sins, mostly directed against Moses.

In the English, the word *complained* (also translated, *murmured*) is onomatopoeic [pronounced *ON-ə-MAT-ə-pō-ET-ic*] where a word imitates the sound of what it represents. In the Hebrew, it is the Qal imperfect of *lûwn* (לון) [pronounced *loon*] and it means *to murmur, to complain, to bitch, to speak in an obstinate manner*.

It wasn't but three days ago that they saw a miracle beyond what we can comprehend—the destruction of the Egyptian army right before their eyes. This is documented proof that miracles do not carry the believer very far. For a few hours after the Egyptians were drowned, the people of Israel were exhilarated. Moses wrote a song and they all sang about it. Possibly even into the night, many of them still talked about it in an animated, enthusiastic way. It may have been mentioned the next day. On day two, they were hot and thirsty and by day three, they were angry and upset. This is going to be a pattern that we will observe. God has performed an incredible number of miracles through the agency of Moses before these people. Immediately following the miracle, they are charged, enthusiastic, excited, and thankful to God. After a few hours or a few days, it was as though the miracle had never occurred.

Why is that? How could they witness such a great miracle and then, after a few days, act as if nothing happened? They did not connect the miracle to the character of God (which would be the application of Bible doctrine). They did not consider their experiences,



beginning with the plagues in Egypt, and put them all together, leading them to doctrinal conclusions about the power and faithfulness of God. God made a series of promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and these promises continue to stand for the Hebrew people. How could God fulfill His promises if all the people just died off in the desert-wilderness?

Let me approach this in a slightly different way. If we were to study the essence of God, we would name these various characteristics of God's essence and then quote Scripture to back it up. Sometimes Scripture to back up an aspect of God's essence is all about something that God has done, therefore connecting His actions to His essence.

This is what the sons of Israel should be doing. They should be considering the promises which God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; they should understand that God is faithful to His Word, which they have seen with their own eyes. When God makes a promise, then He will keep it. In fact, God *must* keep His promises, as that is His character.

Part of God's faithfulness is the provision of logistical grace. You are a believer; God has a plan for your life—therefore, God must provide for your needs. Now, so that you do not misapply logistical grace, the doctrine does not mean that you find a nice park bench, sit down, and wait for God to bring you food and water. A portion of our lives involves work. In fact, for many people, working from dawn till dusk is key to providing for themselves their own bare necessities. That God gives us time for other things should not be time spent out of fellowship.

Because of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Hebrew people should be able to trust God to provide for them. Giving them the land of promise is a fulfillment of God's promises given hundreds of years ago. Therefore, the people of Israel should be able to understand that, God must take them safely from Egypt to Canaan.

Unfortunately, this generation of Israelites does not think in this way. They face a crisis. From our vantage point, we think this is simple: you go to Moses and ask for him to perform a miracle. Or you go to Moses and ask him to petition God. God is fully capable of handling whatever problem they are facing. Or, in the alternative, you simply wait on God, as God must provide. None of these approaches involve whining and complaining or impugning Moses' character. None of those things will result in the resolution of any problem.

What is their ultimate problem? Their problem is that they had no doctrine. All the miracles in the world won't carry you but a few feet without doctrine. We saw the same thing with the Apostles. After three years with our Lord, after seeing miracle after miracle—perhaps as many as hundreds in a day—still, when it came to the cross, the Apostles scattered, as if the jig was up. They ran for their lives when Jesus was seized by the Jewish religious hierarchy. The disciples scattered, even though Jesus clearly predicted the cross and its necessity. What was their problem? They needed to hear and concentrate on these words of Jesus and believe them.



Have you ever had a problem that you were anxious over; upset about? And then God solved the problem apart from your own effort. However, when the same problem reoccurred, what happened? You became anxious and upset again. Thieme dubbed this the charge of the mosquito. We periodically face problems and pressures which God solves and we may even recognize that He solves them. But when the exact same problem reoccurs, we should be able to withstand the pressure or the mental stress. Our thinking ought to be, *I wonder how God is going to solve this?* In our lives, we know that God is not just capable of taking care of us, but He is ready and willing to do so. Sometimes this involves action on our part; sometimes not (the great Alcoholics Anonymous prayer is for the faith-knowledge within us to tell the difference).

In case you don't know it, the AA prayer is: *God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, The courage to change the things I can, And the wisdom to know the difference.*

These minor problems that we see solved in our lives prepare us for the major crises that we face in our lives. God is glorified when we can depend upon Him to solve the problems in our lives. This does not mean that we go through life expecting every day a series of miracles which get us through the day. The sons of Israel could expect this, given their time and place; but we live during the Church Age. Therefore, we should be able to go to our souls into that reservoir of doctrine, and be able to face whatever difficulty life puts in our way. Although we are studying how God solves numerous problems with seemingly miraculous means, God is also able to solve these same problems without miracles (it may surprise you that God is that great). The Church Age believer can go through an entire lifetime and never witness anything which comes close to a miracle; and God can still be there and God is still able to solve problems for us, through us and with us. In fact, that describes the lives of perhaps 99% of the believers in the Church Age.

I mentioned the AA prayer for this reason: there are times that we participate fully in the solution to our problems. If you lose a job, it is not faith-rest to find a park bench to sit on as God drops money, a sandwich or a job into your lap. We go out there and we meet that challenge and look for a job. In this life, many of us face diseases and medical conditions. It is certainly right and prudence to seek medical treatment; it is also right to pray as well. There are situations in life where we have done all that we can. In those situations, we give it all over to God.

I should point out in this context, I am referring to problems which we have not foisted upon ourselves (e.g., overspending due to greed; illicit sex, verbal sins, drug usage, etc.) or other problems which may have resulted from the function of our old sin nature. God also solves those problems, but He also requires some cooperation from us.

Do you see how our study of these events of thousands of years ago benefit us today? They help us to understand Who God is and how He operates. We can depend upon Him just as the sons of Israel should have depended upon Him. Our dependence on God is a day-to-day act of faith, but without expecting God to perform a plethora of miracles (which are not necessary to solve the problems of most people).

You may ask, *why do they get the miracles and we don't?* God often uses miracles when He is doing a great work—a work which often indicates a considerable change in policy. Remember what is happening right now in our narrative. God has taken nation Israel (a people without a country) out of Egypt and He is about to give them the Law. There has never been a nation Israel before and there has never been a Law given directly from God to a people before. These are very big things; and God marks such things with many miracles.

We will see a great many miracles when Jesus begins His public ministry, because this will be the point in time when God the Father places our sins upon God the Son. We have no hope in life apart from that taking place. Furthermore, God is going to establish His church, which is a much difference organization that nation Israel. When God does very big things, He promotes and establishes these big changes with a great many miracles.

Although we do not live in either period of time, we can enjoy and benefit from these things having occurred through our study of those periods of time.

Back to the narrative:

Exodus 15:24b [And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"](#)

The water is bitter. They go to Moses complaining, "How can we drink this bitter water?" They do not appear to take into consideration that God has gotten them this far through many great acts of power. Their question should have been, "How will God solve this problem? We are in a desert-wilderness; we need good water. We are God's people. God is leading us toward His land of promise. We cannot get there without water. What does God plan to do?"

Exodus 15:24 [And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"](#)

The people should have petitioned God; or they should have asked Moses to petition God. They should have done something which indicated that they had faith in God, but they did not. They simply complained to him. It was as if they had no idea Who God was or who they were to God.

No doubt you have encountered others who often had complaints which they would air to anyone who would listen—and many times, these complaints either had no actual solution or they had a solution that the complainer could have effected but did not. However, rather than do anything about it, they preferred to complain to anyone who would give them an ear.

These men complaining to Moses could have and should have gone to God or asked Moses to speak to God. Their God had shown Himself to be all powerful. But this does not seem to occur to them.

Have you ever known a person who complains loudly and often? Many times, the general solution to his problems is to believe in Jesus Christ and then to begin learning the Word of God. Whatever their complaints are in life, a right relationship with God would solve them. But when you tell them how to deal with life, what is their response? Once and awhile, such a person will respond to the gospel and believe in Jesus Christ. However, many times, their preferred method of dealing with problems is to complain to whomever will listen (lucky you).

**Application:** In the society in which we live, so many people think that the solution for their ennui is, psychotherapeutic drugs or illicit drugs. I had two close friends of mine who were both on legally prescribed drugs for years. Neither person had anything more than a temporary lessening of their fears, frustrations or sadness. In both cases, after years of therapy and prescription drugs, their attitudes toward life worsened. One of them lived in what he would have considered the perfect environment. Do not think that there is a drug out there which will fix your brain. There isn't. So many of these medications in the long run make things worse. The solution for a bad brain is a relationship with God followed by the intake of Bible doctrine.

**Illustration:** Along these same lines, most of the recent mass murderers have been on legally prescribed drugs; drugs given them to calm them down and take the edge off.

Exodus 15:25a [So he \[Moses\] cried out to the Lord,...](#)

The people did not go to God, but Moses did. Moses believes God and understands enough about God to know that he can go to Him.

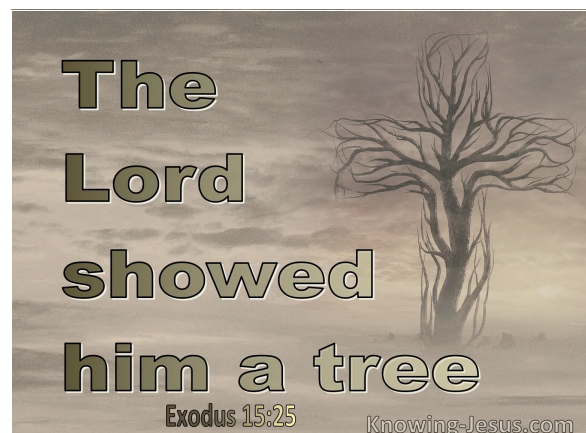
Throughout the writings of Moses, there is an economy of words. That is, we do not read, *and then Moses told God about the people and how they came to him, and they were upset, and their complaint was, 'We cannot drink this bitter water.'* We already know all of this, so, even though Moses said something like this to God, Moses does not record it.

Exodus 15:25b [...and the Lord showed him a tree.](#)

God then shows Moses a tree. No doubt, God gave Moses some instructions, but they are not recorded here. We will be able to deduce what those instructions were by what Moses does. If the tree was living, God told Moses to chop it down and throw it in the water. If the tree had already fallen, God gave instructions to Moses to throw it in the water.

**Exodus 15:25b** (a graphic); from [Knowing Jesus](#); accessed May 25, 2022.

Exodus 15:25c [When he cast it into the waters,...](#)



Moses orders that this tree be thrown into the waters. Had the tree fallen or did Moses have to cut it down? We are not told. Nor do we have a clue as to the size of the tree or if anyone assisted Moses at this point. None of these are important considerations. We begin with Moses speaking to God, and the next thing we know, he is casting a tree into the water.

Exodus 15:25d ...the waters were made sweet.

It is possible that this is not a miracle, in the strict sense, but a simple chemical reaction of what was in the water and what was in the tree.

You may wonder what is God doing here? God is taking what He has given them and He is showing them that He has made provision for them in eternity past. Perhaps the water there was totally undrinkable; in eternity past, God provided that tree to chemically counterbalance whatever was in the water in the first place to make it so bitter. You see, that tree was right there. Given that it was a tree, it has been there probably for decades. Not only did God provide the Israelites with the solution to this problem, He made that provision in eternity past; and in time, that provision began growing 20 years ago, or even 40 years ago. This should tell the people that God planned for their problems and difficulties long before they even knew that they would have them.

The Hebrew word is the Qal imperfect of *mâthaq* (מָתַק) [pronounced *maw-THAK*] and it means *to become sweet, pleasant*. The Arabic equivalent means *to smack the lips*. God provided exactly what it would take to cause a chemical reaction to precipitate out whatever there was in the water to make it undrinkable (I am assuming that this is *not* a miracle).

One must bear in mind that, whether God accomplishes something by natural means or by a completely miraculous event, it does not really change anything. God may choose to follow the laws as set up by Himself or He may choose to disobey those scientific laws at any point. God has to remain faithful to His Own essence; but not to scientific laws.

What God is teaching this generation is not that He is a great miracle worker, but that He is willing and able to take care of His people.

**Application:** You do not need a miracle (or a host of miracles) to get through every day. God has made provision for every problem that you have in eternity past. Sometimes you play a part in solving that problem and sometimes you don't.

There is also a type which is presented here. The wood represents Jesus Christ—specifically, Jesus Christ upon the wood (that is, upon the Roman cross). It is through Him that our bitter life is made sweet.

Life is filled with unpleasant experiences and difficulties. This is because we live in the devil's world and we are in the midst of a spiritual conflict. In the Christian experience, these are not removed (although we receive some protection from some great tragedies and personal suffering that we will not even know about until we are face to face with God).

God brought the Hebrews to this place to teach them something. They were hard-headed and it took illustration after illustration for them to get it. Actually, the older generation never did catch on and most of them will die the sin unto death in the desert. However, the younger generation will catch on and they will take the promised land.

Scofield points out that since they are in God's will, that this bitter water was not a punitive measure for what they had done in the past but it was a teaching aide. Some people learn by the mistakes of others; some learn directly from God's Word being taught to them; and some only learn when they suffer hardship and pain. Our lives are very similar. We will all face personal tragedy, pain and heartaches—things which are not necessarily discipline. We learn through these things to trust God; we also learn to accept death because at the point of death **there will be no more sorrow, no more tears, the old things have passed away and observe that all things have become new** (Rev. 21:4) (for those who have trusted in Christ).

As hard as it is to imagine now, when we reach the eternal state, we will be appreciative of the problems, difficulties and pains which we had in this life.

This concept of learning the easy way and the hard way is not a difficult concept; and something which we see illustrated throughout Scriptures; and we see it in our own lives as well.

It has been the attempt of many hard-working, misguided men particularly of the past century or two to attempt to demythologize the Bible. Their reasoning is as follows: *I have not observed anything which I consider to be miraculous in my lifetime, other than what is performed by scientists, therefore, nothing miraculous has ever occurred that cannot be explained somehow by science either now or in the future.* These people view the Bible as a product of primitive people who when observing natural phenomena which went beyond their personal comprehension (which is how I feel before a computer or even a stereo), that they tended to identify it as a miracle of sorts.

Manfred Barthel wrote the book, *What the Bible Really Says*. His intention (as is the intention of many of his ilk) is to preserve the core and the basic goodness of the teachings of the Bible, while carefully eliminating the things which he views as miraculous, primitive, anti-scientific, or culturally biased. On the back cover, it reads, *Here is a scholarly but lively attempt to prevent the Bible from degenerating into, in the author's words, "neglected quarry that is only plundered for the odd quotation."* However, Barthel will find his work, at some point, to be long gone, whereas the Word of God lives and abides forever (my guess is, those reading this have never heard of this man before).

No matter what the attacks are (and Barthel's book is certainly an attack on the Bible, although I know he would deny that vehemently) and no matter how subtle or how vicious they might be, God's Word will remain and, in every generation, some new author will crop up and try the same thing, while former critical works are long forgotten. My only attempt is to clarify and to teach what is in the Bible and pass this information to the souls of another generation as the baton of life.



So that there is no confusion on this matter, God is both capable of miracles and there are times when He does things which defy scientific explanation. He is not limited by time or space or even dispensation. However, this does not mean, in our own life today, we will observe dozens of miracles each and every day in order for us to get through each day. God has chosen for this dispensation to reveal to us the power of His Word (since we now have the completed Word of God—something which no one had before, prior to A.D. 100). With God's Word in our soul (after having first believed in His Son), we can face literally anything that this world has to throw at us. God's Word can be trusted; and that is part of what we should be learning here.

## Lesson 237: Exodus 15:25

## God Teaches and Tests Israel

The Israelites have been in the desert-wilderness walking for at least three days. They are extremely thirsty and they have come to a body of water which is undrinkable. They become quite angry with Moses, as if he has personally acted against them.

Moses takes this complaint to God.

Exodus 15:25a-d [So he \[Moses\] cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.](#)

The people of Israel come to Moses complaining, so that Moses cries out to God. We do not know any of the mechanics of this verse. Was there a place Moses could go in order to speak to God? Would Moses merely look up to the cloud and speak? Then how did God *show Moses the tree*? Did God audibly speak? Did Moses see this tree in a divine dream and then woke up and see that he was sleeping under such a tree?

These sorts of details are almost never given to us; but we know that somehow, Moses is able to go to God; and God showed Moses this tree. When Moses cast the tree into the water (I assume the entire tree, cut from the trunk), very likely, a chemical reaction of some sort took place. We do not know what exactly the chemical reaction was or if we could duplicate it in a lab. In any case, the water was made sweet (which I assume means that the water was drinkable; and water when you are extremely thirsty, tastes amazing).

If I were to guess, there were an abundance of bitter ions in the water and chemicals from the tree leached out and attached themselves to the free ions and they were precipitated out, sinking to the bottom, and leaving clear drinking water on the surface. I still remember a precipitation demonstration which my high school chemistry professor did; so I think that this was what happened.

Now, stop for a moment and consider this *miracle* (it would have seemed miraculous to them). Every single person there experienced it. They could all see the water. Probably many of them tasted the water when it was still foul. No doubt, they saw people take a drink and then spit it out or cough it up. The water could not be drunk; but everyone was so thirsty that, so many of them would have thought, "How bad can it be? Maybe I won't mind

it as much as they do.” Yet every person who drank or sipped this water had a bad reaction and spit out the water.

They all saw the tree thrown into the water (or at least, they saw the tree in the water); and they all drank, and they all tasted the fresh, clean, sweet water. Every person there, young, old and everywhere in between, was exposed to this act of God—many of them experienced the water on both sides of this event—as bitter and as sweet. They are supposed to take these events into their thinking and to and consider them.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God’s miracles are always crowd specific. God’s works are always appropriate for those who observe them.

I have seen Penn and Teller perform magic at the Renaissance Festival, and they would move about and perform magic for crowds of 15 or 30 people. I have seen them in an auditorium where there were probably 1000 or so people there. They cannot do the same tricks for both sets of crowds. They have to tailor their shows for the audience and the venue which they are in. At the Renaissance Festival, everyone is maybe 6' away from the tricks being performed. At the big show, the closest person might be 15' away; and those in the back might have 40 rows of people between them and the action.

God does the exact same thing in the Bible. At this point, He is dealing with 2 million people in all. Therefore, everything which He does must be observable by all 2 million (in some way or another).

Many times, these incidents also teach us something. It is *as if* the Lord spoke a parable about the bitter waters: “...and a tree was thrown in the midst of them, and they became sweet.” And His disciples ask him, “What does this mean?” And Jesus answered, saying, “The bitter water is your wrong relationship with God. The bitter water is your journey through life apart from God. However, the tree represents My death on the cross. This is the message that God would take the sins of mankind and place them onto Me, a bitter experience for God the Father. But it is the Roman cross (that is, the tree) which makes the water sweet to your souls. This tree establishes a relationship with Jesus Christ and removes the bitterness of your relationship with God. In fact, the tree potentially removes the bitterness of your negative reaction to life.”

To the people there with Moses, this was simply God taking care of them; giving them drinkable water (no one, in the Old Testament, understood the cross; and few, if any, had any understanding of the payment for sins that Messiah would offer). They needed water and the Omnipotent God—their God—provided for them. And the preexisting tree indicated to them, God knew about this problem in eternity past and He planned for it. The Exodus generation did not relate this incident to their future Messiah, Who would die for their sins.

However, for us, many centuries later, this incident has an additional meaning. Everything is representative. We understand the meaning that the sons of Jacob took away from this experience; but we also see this as the twofold nature of the cross (the tree)—bitter to God

the Father and God the Son; but this tree made the water sweet for us, we who have believed in Him. We are able to recognize the typology here; something that Moses and the Israelites would have been ignorant of. Things which are types are not aware that they are types; those who observe a situation which is typical (representative of a theological concept) do not recognize that they are viewing a typical situation.

Typology is the study of situations, people and rituals in the Old Testament which reveal, in parable form, New Testament truths. Most often, a typical event relates to Jesus or to the cross of Christ.<sup>27</sup> Such things are real but also typical. That is, the Hebrew people going for 3 days without much water, and then coming across this lake of bitter water—all of this really happened. However, like many other incidents in the Old Testament, it telegraphs what is going to happen (even if none of the Israelites observing the incident understood its typical nature).

Furthermore, even though typology is taught in the New Testament; it took many centuries before it was fully, or nearly fully developed. Typology was taught even in the early church; and there are many allusions to it after that in theology history. But I think it was Dake<sup>28</sup> and Patrick Fairbairn (among others) who developed typology into a full-blown theological science.

What we study in the Old Testament are a series of real events happening to real people. But, we find out, that many of these things can represent theological themes that we are very aware of today.

Again, the bitter waters of this lake represent the bitter waters of life; which transition into the bitter waters of death (and of ultimate judgment). When the tree—representing the cross of Christ—is applied, the waters become sweet. Our life in time is sweet and our life in eternity is sweet. The waters are both refreshing and life sustaining.

Clearly, every person who believes *must* partake of the waters. No one there would survive apart from drinking these waters. And, clearly, no one survives this life apart from the cross (spiritual death) of Jesus Christ. If someone observed all of this and said, “I don’t believe that those waters are now drinkable;” that person would die of thirst. A person revealed his faith in the Revealed God by drinking the water which He made drinkable.

Exodus 15:25e [There He made a statute and an ordinance for them,...](#)

*He* refers to God here.

There are times when it is difficult to determine the subject of some Hebrew sentences, as the number and gender are a part of the verb itself. Many times, a subject can be

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<sup>27</sup> We often use the phrase *the cross of Christ* to refer to His crucifixion on a Roman cross, which looked more like a T than a †. This phrase is shorthand, referring to God the Father placing on God the Son all of our sins, which He paid for while on the Roman cross.

<sup>28</sup> I do not endorse any of Dake’s Pentecostal leanings.

determined in the Hebrew language when a subject is defined one or two verses back, and that same subject continues throughout a specific passage. So, theoretically, we could have Moses doing something in v. 23, and then continue with verbs which repeat his number and gender (masculine singular) for many sentences.

The other way a subject can be defined is by locating the most recent noun with matching number and gender. In v. 25, first Moses is the subject, then God, then Moses, and then the waters. So, when we come to this fifth verb (without a specific subject), and since we do not have a well-defined and repeated subject, we go back to the most recent noun which matches number and gender, and that would be God (we bypass *waters* as the subject, as it is a masculine plural noun which takes a masculine plural verb<sup>29</sup>). It is for this reason that I capitalize the pronouns in v. 25e and 25f. So I have assigned *Y<sup>e</sup>howah* as the proper subject for the two verbs at the end of v. 25. At the same time, Moses is going to very likely repeat this information given him by God in v. 25e (as God did not speak to the people of Israel directly—not yet, anyway).

God's statute and ordinance was what God told the sons of Israel to do.

Now, I am assuming that this is God making a statute and an ordinance for nation Israel, based upon this incident. Let me further assume that this statute/ordinance will be the content of what God says to Moses (v. 26).

Exodus 15:25f ...and there He tested them,...

I assume that this is God testing the Hebrew people; and that this testing was all about what the people would do when faced with problems and crises. Personally, I have had some very nice periods of time in my life where I might go for months without a real serious problem (bear in mind, minor problems are not really problems). But, now and again, I will suddenly face an extremely difficult problem, one without a clear solution presenting itself. Sometimes these big problems come to me as a result of some boneheaded things which I have done, and sometimes, they come to me out of nowhere.

No matter what, you are going to do things, and it will set off a chain of events, and you will be unhappy with the outcome (or the outcome will be painful or difficult). Also, you will face troubles in your life, and there may not seem to be an easy solution for these problems.

Nation Israel is being tested. God has manifested Himself to them and they ought to know, by this time, that God will take care of all their needs. They should know that He will solve all of their difficulties. However, they must be willing to approach God correctly, through Moses, when they have a problem which needs to be solved.

Exodus 15:25f ...and there He tested them,...

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<sup>29</sup> There is nearly always a matching of number and gender with a verb and its subject. A notorious exception to this would be the noun *Elohim*, which is a masculine plural noun which usually acts with a masculine singular verb.

For the same reasons as noted previously, the subject is *God* and not to Moses.

**Getting technical with the Hebrew** (and many of you may want to skip the next few paragraphs):

*Tested* is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix, Piel perfect of nâçâh (נָחַח) [pronounced *naw-SAW*]. It means *to test, to try, to prove*. With the exception of Psalm 4:6, this verb is only found in the Piel (intensive) stem. The Piel can also refer to an accomplished fact or a completed state of being. The 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular gives us the subject (God). However, there is a 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix, and not a 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix. So, we need to discuss that:

Literally, this final phrase actually reads, *...and there He put him to the test*. The verb carries with it a masculine singular suffix. In fact, v. 25e also has a masculine singular suffix, so together, v. 25e-f literally reads: *There, He made for him a statute and an ordinance and there, He put him to the test*. But God is not make a statute for Moses; nor is He testing Moses.

*People* (v. 24) is a masculine singular noun and *Israel* (v. 22) is also a masculine singular (proper) noun. Therefore, I do not believe that God is testing Moses here—nor is God making a statute and an ordinance specifically *for Moses*—but God is testing Israel, and that the statutes and ordinances that come from God will be for Israel and not just for Moses. Given the overall context, that makes sense.

Admittedly, that may be more information than you wanted about the end of v. 25. Most translations use the pronoun *them* to translate both masculine singular suffixes and they do so without comment. Jeff A. Benner's Revised Mechanical Translation of Exodus is one of the few places where the suffix is literally translated as *he*. Also the BHSE - Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Enhanced) *commentary* literally renders this suffix (both translations are available for e-sword through [Bible Support](#)).

For the average Christian, this is way more technical information than is needed. The other translations which literally translated v. 25e-f: the Complete Apostles' Bible, the Easy-to-Read Version (surprisingly enough), the Unlocked Dynamic Bible, Wikipedia's Bible translation and Rotherham's Emphasized Bible.

In a way, the Hebrew people up until that time were lawless. God had not yet given them the Law; they had a conscience and they had some idea what was right and wrong, but that changes from society to society; from time to time. For example, I recall in the 50s and 60s, committing homosexual acts was almost unanimously thought of as wrong in the United States; however, by the 1990s a large number of people began to perceive homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle. Another example: in the 50s, it was generally agreed that sex outside of marriage was wrong, whereas the 60s and the 70s ushered in the idea of sex outside of marriage as not only being acceptable, but advisable by some in order to screen one's life partner. So it takes only a few years to turn the morals of a



country around. The Hebrews had some idea of what was right and wrong, but this was still relatively subjective. God would reveal to them exactly what was right and wrong by His enumerated laws.

However, at this point, God will present them with a simple overall law: *listen to Me and obey Me*.

## Lessons 238–239: Exodus 15:25–27

## God Reassures Israel

The Israelites have come across a body of water, but it is undrinkable. Rather than come before Moses or before God with some semblance of grace orientation, they grumbled against Moses. There was a tree there—possibly a log—and when it was placed into the water, the bitterness of the water disappeared.

In the previous lesson, we looked very closely at v. 25. One particular problem is, vv. 25 & 26 were divided up incorrectly. V. 25e-f should be a separate verse entirely or attached to v. 26 (the NKJV, which is our base text, begins a new paragraph with v. 25e that leads into v. 26).

Exodus 15:25e-f **There** [in the desert-wilderness] **He** [God] **made a statute and an ordinance for them** [the Israelites], **and there He tested them**,...

This statute and ordinance that God would make for the Israelites will be given in the next verse.

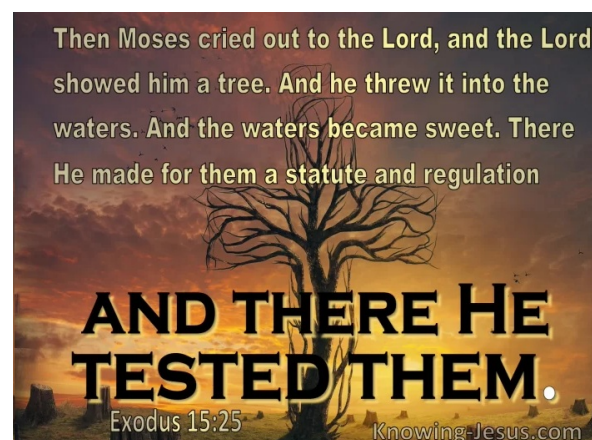
Exodus 15:25 **So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.**

**There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them**,... (NKJV)

You can see how a new sentence begins in the middle of v. 25 and continues into v. 26. In fact, some translations have a separate sentence for v. 25e and then continue 25f into the next verse.

Exodus 15:25 **So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them. And there He tested them**,... (A Voice in the Wilderness)

**Exodus 15:25 (NASB)** (a graphic); from [Knowing Jesus](https://www.knowing-jesus.com); accessed May 25, 2022.



### **A brief review of vv. 23–25:**

At this point, let's go back a few verses, and properly divide up v. 25 when we come to it:

Exodus 15:23 *When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah.*

The Israelites have come to a large body of water and the water is undrinkable.

Exodus 15:24 *And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"*

When it becomes apparent that the people cannot drink the waters of this lake (assuming that it is a lake), they complain to Moses about it, asking, "What can we drink? This water is not drinkable."

Exodus 15:25a-d *And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.* (ESV; capitalized)

The people complained to Moses and Moses called out to the Lord. The Lord told him what to do. "Take that tree (or log, if it had already fallen) and throw it into the water. The waters will be sweet."

What the Israelites should have learned at this point is, God thought about them in eternity past. This tree was a part of His plan for them. So it had begun to grow 20 years (or 40 or 50 years ago), before the Hebrew people came to this place. That reveals great foresight from God, as Israel was enslaved to Egypt at the time that this tree began to grow.

Exodus 15:25a-d *And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.* (ESV; capitalized)

Moses takes the concerns of the people to the Lord, and God tells him what to do. Moses sees that this log or tree is thrown into the water, resulting in the water becoming sweet.

Exodus 15:25e-f *There the LORD made for them a statute and a rule, and there He tested them,...* (ESV; capitalized)

God began to give Israel a preliminary statute to carry them to Mount Sinai (although this would stand as a commandment to them from this day forward).

The end of v. 25 should be carried into the verse which follows.

Exodus 15:26a *...and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God..."*

In v. 25e-d, God is the subject of those two verbs, so He continues to be the subject of the verb here in v. 26a. What seems likely is, God first spoke to Moses and then Moses said these same words to the people. We get the gist of the conversation in v. 26.

Rather than repeat it twice, we hear it only once here. God begins with a simple commandment—*Listen and obey Me*. The number of statues which God has given the people of Israel thus far is relatively small. They will perform some animal sacrifices and God has given them the Passover Feast and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (recall that we have already studied the first Passover). God's promise to them is to not afflict them as He did the Egyptians. *Your Healer* is not a new word, but it is a new description of Y<sup>e</sup>howah, Jesus Christ, their God.

This is what God said to Moses. All of this is couched in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix approach. However, God is not talking directly to Moses with a concern about what Moses does. Many times when we read the words of God, He uses the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix, even though this applies to every man, woman and child in Israel.

Just in case you are interested, there are English translations of the Bible which specifically identify when *you* or *your* is in the plural: the Context Group Version, the Modern Literal Version and the Updated Bible Version (all of these translations can be found on [Bible Support](#) for [e-sword](#)).

“You need to carefully listen to My voice,” God says to Moses.

This begins a very lengthy *if...then...* conditional.

Exodus 15:26b ...and do what is right in His sight,...

...in His eyes (*sight*) means that God sees and approves.

So that we clearly understand this, God is speaking of men doing what is right in God's eyes; not what is right in their own eyes. One of the worst periods of time for Israel will be the time of the judges; and at least thrice in that book, it speaks of men doing what is right in their own eyes. What you decide on your own what is right or wrong, then right and wrong have no meaning. This is how we have ended up in a country where people believe that there is more than two genders and that a person gets to pick his or her gender at virtually any age.

**Illustration:** As an aside, you should know how most people make this sort of decision and help to guide the child in the direction of choosing a different gender: sexual stereotypes. So, the exact same people who derided sexual stereotypes over the previous 40 years, now tell us that, if a boy plays with dolls or a girl wants to climb trees, they might really be the opposite gender from how they were born. The idea that a child has a different gender from how he or she was born is ridiculous. This philosophy is not normal.

However, this is what happens when people reject God and God's standards. They pick up weirdo ideas and run with them.

**Illustration:** We cannot pick up an anti-God idea without it leading us to a place of confusion and contradiction. So, the powers that be who presently think that a boy who identifies as a girl should be able to play sports on the girls' team and go to the showers and locker room with the girls. But, these exact same people want that person to register for the draft (the boy who claims to be a girl). On the other hand, if it is a girl who identifies as a boy, she/he does not have to register for the draft. It is completely inconsistent, but that is what happens when man follows his own standards of right and wrong.

Back to the context:

Exodus 15:25e-26b [There the LORD made for them a statute and a rule, and there He tested them, and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight,..."](#)

Then this is what they must do:

Exodus 15:26c [...give ear to His commandments..."](#)

Moses (and the people) are to listen to God's commandments. God has not given all of His commandments yet. This will happen at Mount Sinai. Moses does not know what is coming, nor do the people of Israel.

At this point, God is preparing the people of Israel to receive His commandments. At this point, this would be understood as God simply telling Israel what to do with regards to their movement out of Egypt and through the desert. However, God will transition from giving Israel guidance in moving from point A to point B, to giving them an entire system of laws by which their nation will be guided for 1500 years.

God is acting very much like a human king, who gives laws and ordinances for his people in order to provide law, freedom, stability and order in their lives. These laws are not designed to serve the king but to provide principles and guidance for the people of nation Israel.

Now, to some, it may appear contradictory to speak of law and freedom in the same breath, but it is law which provides freedom. Under anarchy, you must constantly defend yourself and your property (and even your food). Under law, it is more difficult for an errant member of society to try to take you, your property or your food. The laws of the land give protection to each citizen—protection for their property and possessions. Ideally, these laws provide individual freedoms throughout the nation.

Generally speaking, when a people have a good king, then this often translates into a far better life. However, even if the people have a good king, but they disobey him, then society breaks down. The stability is gone.

Exodus 15:26d ...and keep all His statutes,..."

The sons of Israel were to guard/keep/protect/preserve God's decrees and statutes. Moses was first up in this department.

God will act as Israel's King; and His laws and decrees will be just and good for the people. So many kings enact laws which are simply self-serving (for instance, the fallen Pharaoh of Egypt). God's laws will be for the betterment of Israel.

At this point, there is a subtle change of pronouns here (in the Hebrew, this is a matter of suffixes). We will worry about the odd changes of perspective once we complete this verse.

Exodus 15:26e ...I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians.

Literally, this reads, "Every disease which I placed in Egypt [I will] not [place] upon you."

You may have again noticed a change of voice. This will be discussed once we complete this passage.

All Israel saw what God did to Egypt. Here, we may better understand these as plagues. God will not do to Israel as He had done to Egypt. Disease may be seen as discipline from God, and this discipline was heavily laid upon Egypt—which all the people of Israel observed.

Israel is out in the desert at the mercy of the elements as well as a lack of sustenance. God is assuring the people of Israel that He will not treat them as He treated the Egyptians. However, God had requirements which He placed upon the Israelites. God required them *to diligently listen to the voice of the LORD their God, and do that which is right in His eyes, and to listen to His commandments and to keep all His statutes*. So these four things were required of them.

Positive volition toward the plan of God means little or no discipline (depending upon their sins). The end result would be great blessing.

Exodus 15:26f For I am the Lord who heals you."

When the Revealed God came to us in His incarnation, this is the aspect of His ministry that even the heathen seem to remember well—Jesus Christ was a healer. Râphâ' (רָפָא) [pronounced *raw-FAW*] and it means *to heal, to mend, to cure*. It is found here as a Qal active participle, meaning it acts as a verbal noun. Therefore, it would be acceptable to translate this *healer, physician, doctor*. The action performed by the noun identifies the noun. The 2<sup>nd</sup> masculine singular suffix is translated *your*. This word has only been found twice in the past: Gen. 20:17 50:2. Our Lord will be referred to as a physician once more in Psalm 147:3 and then all four gospels present Jesus Christ as the Great Physician time



and time again (Jesus is not called the Great Physician in the gospels; but He *acts* as the Great Physician in the gospels).

God is to them their Healer; He will not inflict plagues upon the people of Israel, if they fulfill what He requires of them.

Exodus 15:26 ...and said, “If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you.”

This is the general notion of how Israel is to respond to the words of God.

### **Those pesky pronoun changes:**

Let's put a portion of v. 25 with 26 and then discuss the pronouns (which come from either the morphology of the verb or the added suffixes):

The NKJV and the ESV, along with many other translations (among them, VW, BSV, BSB) place with v. 26 the final two phrases of v. 25, giving us:

Exodus 15:25e–26 There He made a statute and an ordinance for them. And there He tested them, and said, “If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you.”

Most translations try to be reasonably literal, but if you read through this carefully, we appear to be getting God's words to the people as spoken by Moses. However, at the end, we go back to the 1<sup>st</sup> person (as if God is speaking directly to the people).

One way to understand this is: There He [God] made a statute and an ordinance for them [the people of Israel]. And there He tested them, and said [through His representative Moses], “If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, [for He has promised this to us:] ‘I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you.’ ” (NKJV with some additional words added by me)

So God spoke these same words to Moses, but He said, “...My sight...My commandments and...My statutes...” Moses spoke these same words to the people, but appropriately changed the suffixes (suffixes in the Hebrew, possessive pronouns in the English).

The added words, *for He has promised* may have been spoken and it may have been understood.

We could look at this passage in a much more complex way, and make the assumption that the Revealed God (Jesus) is referring to the commandments and statutes made by God the Father, but I don't see that as really warranted here. There are many passages in the Old Testament which testify to a Godhead rather than to a singular God; but I would not include this passage as being among them.

Interestingly enough, the Alpha & Omega Bible seems to take this approach: THERE HE ESTABLISHED TO THEM REGULATIONS AND JUDGMENTS, AND THERE HE PROVED THEM, AND SAID, "IF YOU WILL INDEED HEAR THE VOICE OF JESUS YOUR THEOS (*Alpha & Omega*), AND DO THINGS PLEASING BEFORE HIM, AND WILL HEARKEN TO HIS COMMANDS, AND KEEP ALL HIS REGULATIONS, NO DISEASE WHICH I HAVE BROUGHT UPON THE EGYPTIANS WILL I BRING UPON YOU, FOR I AM JESUS YOUR THEOS (*Alpha & Omega*) THAT HEALS YOU." (Exodus 15:25e–26; A&O Bible)

The Easy to Read Version simply changed the pronouns in order to retain consistency: He said to him, "I am the LORD your God. If you listen to me and do what I say is right, and if you obey all my commands and laws, then I will not give you any of the sicknesses that I gave the Egyptians. I am the LORD who heals you." (Exodus 15:26; ERV) The Good News Bible, the Contemporary English Version, the New International Readers Version, the Voice<sup>30</sup> and the Awful Scroll Bible also do this.

The Living Bible, interestingly enough, just throws those pesky possessive pronouns out: It was there at Marah that the Lord laid before them the following conditions, to test their commitment to him: "If you will listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and obey it, and do what is right, then I will not make you suffer the diseases I sent on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you." (Exodus 15:25e–26, the Living Bible<sup>31</sup>)

The Unlocked Dynamic Bible does something similar: There at Marah, Yahweh gave them a fixed rule by which to live. He also tested them there to determine if they would obey him. He said, "I am Yahweh, your Almighty. If you will obey me when I speak to you and do those things that are right to me, and listen to all the things that I tell you, I will keep you from all the diseases that I brought on the Egyptians. Do not forget that I am Yahweh, the one who heals you." (Exodus 15:25e–26; the Unlocked Dynamic Bible)

The Translation for Translators presents this quotation as entirely spoken by God: There at Marah, Yahweh gave them various laws to direct their lives. He also tested them there, to determine if they would obey him, by saying, "I am Yahweh, your God. If you will carefully obey me when I speak to you, and do those things that I know are right, and pay close attention to all the things that I command you, I will keep you from being afflicted by

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<sup>30</sup> Which specifically presents this as the words from God.

<sup>31</sup> Which takes a great many liberties with the text.

all the diseases that I brought on the Egyptians. Do not forget that I am the one who heals you.” (Exodus 15:25e–26; Translation for Translators)

I did not come across any translator who solved this little problem by inserting the words, *for He has promised you*, “...” (although I found this to be a very neat and solid way to approach the text).

In any case, in order to compensate from the pronoun changes, translators either (1) ignored it; (2) changed all the pronouns so that they were consistent; or (3) kept all of the pronouns the same, but inserted a few additional words for clarification.

It was Moses’ style to present this history with an economy of words.

**Exodus 15:26 (NIV)** (a graphic); from [bibliatodo](http://bibliatodo.com); accessed May 25, 2022.

With v. 27, we return to narrative. Israel continues as guided by God.

Exodus 15:27a **Then they came to Elim,**...

Now that Israel has been refreshed, they continue on in their journey.



The name of this place comes from the fact that there are palm trees here. The Hebrew word is *ʿĒlim* (עֲלִים) [pronounced *ay-LEEM*], which means, *palms, terebinth*; transliterated *Elim*. The -im ending indicates that this word is plural. Strong’s #362 BDB #18. Interestingly enough, the name of the 70 trees (given below) does not match the name of this place.

Again, I believe it is highly likely that the Hebrew people themselves are giving names to these places as they stop (or that Moses and Aaron are).

Exodus 15:27b **...where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees;**...

There are 12 springs of water and 70 palm trees. So this is a lovely oasis that they have come to.

This is a rarity out on the desert to find twelve springs of water and this many palm trees. Each tribe was given a spring here, as there were twelve tribes of Israel (well, actually, 13). The 70 palm trees represented the 70 (approximately) who moved to Egypt, forming the seed for these tribes 400 years previously. They are allowed to rest here, to reflect upon what has occurred to them, to think things through. Unfortunately, all that has happened

does not seem to sink in. God has provided in eternity past for their every need. He is their Great Physician. They needed only to listen and obey.

God is providing further proof of His love and care. This reveals to them the potential of what their lives could be.

I see these two incidents with the water as typical. The waters of Marah represent the world that we live in, and the waters are bitter; but with the cross of Christ (represented by the log/tree), they become sweet. Elim speaks of the Millennium, where we will all enjoy perfect environment. This is the natural progression of the citizens of nation Israel.

Exodus 15:27c ...so they camped there by the waters.

This is a perfect place for them to stop and camp. They have refreshing waters for themselves and for their animals.

Exodus 15:27 Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.

Based upon the level of detail that we read here (and in Num. 33), let me suggest that Moses was recording information of their travels nearly every night (he may have dictated his thoughts of the day to Joshua, his primary aide). This would be a natural outgrowth of his writing his song down and then singing it. He has the means to write down what has happened, which is the song of Moses. So he would also have the means of writing down what happens to them on a day-to-day basis.

Bear in mind that Moses learned all of this geography when he was in Egypt, being prepared to become pharaoh. So he knows these places, both by means of his school books<sup>32</sup> and by means of his personal experience found right here.

This is quite an amazing way to close out this chapter, on a high note. Where they are all camping is a testimony to the grace and provision of God.



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<sup>32</sup> The Egyptians did not have books as we have today.



**Exodus 15:27 (KJV/NIV)** (a graphic); from [A Little Perspective](#); accessed May 25, 2022. Although this translation begins like the KJV, it ends like the NIV.

## Lessons 240–242: Exodus 15

## A Brief Review of Exodus 15

It is easy to miss the forest through the trees, so I find that a brief summary helps to preserve the flow of the text and narrative.

The translation used below is the Scriptures 2009. Here is a table so that you might be able to understand some of the unique features of this translation:

Understanding the Scriptures 2009		
Scriptures 2009	More common	Explaining the Scriptures 2009
הוהי	YHWH, JHWH, Yahweh, Jehovah, Y <sup>e</sup> howah	This is the actual name of God as it is found in the Hebrew. It is a reference to Y <sup>e</sup> howah, the God of Israel.
<i>Mitsrayim</i>	Egypt	<i>Mitsrayim</i> is a transliteration from the Hebrew.
<i>Yisra'ēl</i>	Israel	A transliteration from the Hebrew.
Mosheh	Moses	A transliteration from the Hebrew.

The setup for this chapter is Exodus 14, where God guided the people of Israel into such a place or pattern of movement which caught the attention of Pharaoh's watchers (spies who had their eyes on Israel all of this time). They saw that Israel was in a place where they appeared to be trapped, and that Pharaoh's army could suddenly appear and easily wipe them out.

This message that Israel appears to be confused goes to Pharaoh. Therefore, he gathers his army, and they pursue Israel. The night that they catch up, Israel appears to be trapped. The next day would bring a slaughter (so the Egyptian army anticipated). However, that night, neither group could see the other group, yet they appeared to be camped within a mile or so of one another. Also that night, God stopped up the sea in front of Israel—this is the sea which had Israel trapped between it and the Egyptian army—and Israel, guided by God, marched across the dry seabed to the other side. The next day, when it became light, Pharaoh's army could see the dry seabed and Israel on the other side of where the water used to be. Israel was no longer trapped, as the Egyptian army had anticipated. Regardless of the changed circumstances, the army of Egypt was a far more deadly force than Israel was. Therefore, Pharaoh and his soldiers began to cross the opening in this body of water, in pursuit of Israel.

Once his entire army was in the midst of the sea of reeds, God allowed the waters to run free and all Pharaoh's army was drowned.



The bulk of Exodus 15 is a song about what happened in Exodus 14.

Here is a question which may not have an obvious answer:

### **Why Did Moses Record Exodus 15?**

1. We have studied Exodus 15:1–21 verse-by-verse, and it is very much a repeat of portions of Exodus 14. So, why is this repeat necessary?
2. Exodus 15:1–21 is a song written ostensibly by Moses to celebrate what happened in Exodus 14.
3. This song puts us into the time and place of Exodus 15. We would expect Moses and all Israel to be pumped and excited and happy at the events which they witnessed in Exodus 14. A celebratory song is a natural outgrowth of that.
4. For Moses, this victory is an important event to write about. Recalling the events of Exodus 14 in a song simply seemed apropos to Moses.
5. The children of Israel did not simply observe God's power and move on from there. They observed and then they celebrated God's power.
6. This also indicates to us that all of these events take place close in time to the recording of these events. It would make sense for Moses to compose a song about Exodus 14 and for all Israel to sing it in celebration right after the event. It would make less sense for the singing of this song to take place a few days, weeks or months later.
7. Therefore, without specifically stating it, the chapter implies that these events took place close in time to the writing of them. The song we will study was written within an hour of the destruction of the Egyptian army. That is an important consideration.
8. Further, this song also allows us, as readers, to share in the enthusiasm of Moses and the Israelites, albeit 3600 years later. (Ideally speaking, when reading an historical narrative, you have some sort of personal participation taking place in your own mind, whether you envision some of the events or you imagine yourself being there, or whatever).
9. Much of the Bible allows us to relive, via literature and via our own imaginations, events which transpired long ago.
10. Furthermore, this song glorifies God. Now, many people have some difficulty with the idea that we glorify God, thinking that this is good for God's ego. But that is not what glorification of God is all about. The glorification of God reveals Who God is and what God does. That is important. Ideally speaking, those who witness some aspect of God's glory develop a better understanding of Who God really is.

While these events play out, all angelic creation watches what takes place in this world much as you or I might watch a movie or a play. The angels also learn about God by seeing these historic events play out (since this song glorifies God, both man and angels find out more about Who God is by reading/hearing the song).

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The angels know about God's laws and the laws of divine establishment; they are also aware of God's hand in history. These things reveal God's character. They are also aware of the flaw in man (and fallen angel seek to exploit our flaw).

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When we watch a movie, we often are given insight into the mind of the script writer for that movie and the director. We understand their character and thinking through watching the sort of movie they produce. In the same way, by studying the Word of God, we are helped to understand God and His essence. In other words, God is glorified when we study Him in His Word.

The great miracle of Exodus 14 is important enough to be sung about in Exodus 15. Furthermore, it is important that there be an association between what Moses writes, God's Word, and the events which all Israel observed. Essentially, Exodus 15 ties all of these things together. Ideally speaking, the Israelite whose faith begins to fail him, should be able to remember these words of Moses—this song which they all sing—and to be reminded of what happened at the sea of reeds. That Israelite is to think these words and remember these things, and draw comfort and strength from them (ideally speaking).

The words of this song reveal the character of God in His interactions with Israel. Believers should be able to recall the words of this song and they can think about this song. By this, the Hebrew people recognize that God is revealing Himself to Israel in this song.

Unfortunately, there is a problem with the thinking and volition of the Hebrew people. This should help guide them to a place of trust, when under pressure, they do not draw upon this doctrinal information. Israel does not mix these words and doctrines with faith; and that will become their fundamental failure. In fact, their failure as a generation will be so spectacular that this is an important theme of Psalm 95 and Hebrews 1–4.

Although I focused upon the song of Moses, this is only the first three-fourths of this chapter. The end of the chapter records two incidents which follow the song.

A brief review of Exodus 15:

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Most of Exodus 15 is a song sung by Moses and the sons of Israel commemorating the events of Exodus 14.

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### **Summary Outline of Exodus 15**

vv. 1–19	<a href="#"><u>The Song of Moses Commemorating God's Power</u></a>
vv. 20–21	<a href="#"><u>Miriam and the Ladies Sing Counterpoint</u></a>
vv. 22–26	<a href="#"><u>God's Faithfulness: God Sweetens the Bitter Waters</u></a>
v. 27	<a href="#"><u>God's Faithfulness: Twelve Springs and Seventy Palms</u></a>

Throughout the book of Exodus we see the faithfulness of God and the flaws of this generation of Israel.

## The Song of Moses Commemorating God's Power

Exodus 15:1 Then Moshe [= Moses] and the children of Yisra'el [= Israel] sang this song to הוהי [= *Y<sup>e</sup>howah* = *Jehovah*], and spoke, saying, "I sing to הוהי, for He is highly exalted! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"

The song commemorates what the Lord has done.

By a heavy wind, the water had stacked up on one side of this water way. When God allowed the water to run freely, it was as if He had thrown the army of Pharaoh—its horse and rider—into the sea. They had ridden into an area which was dry and God brought the waters down upon them.

One of the most important facets of this chapter is, the fact that this song was written right there, on the spot; and that, after enough copies had been made and distributed, all Israel sang this song. It is one of the proofs that Moses wrote much of the book of Exodus soon after each incident occurred. There was no such thing as cut and paste in the time of Moses, so what we read is very likely written in the same order as the events transpire (and in the same order that they were written; that is, the events of Exodus 14 took place and Exodus 15 was a song that commemorated those events).

We have a description of the night before the crossing; then a description of the crossing; then a description of the assault of the Egyptian soldiers (where God destroyed them with the waters). *After all of this*, we have the record of the song which all Israel sang to commemorate this event.

All of this makes perfect sense if Moses was either writing this history down as it happened (or that he dictated it to Joshua, who wrote it all down). It would have made much less sense for Moses to have written this song (Exodus 15), and then, months later, described in writing what took place at the sea of reeds (Exodus 14). Even though that is not impossible that Moses first wrote the song and then wrote about what happened (what the song was about); that is simply less likely to have occurred.

And, no matter what, this chapter makes no sense unless Moses wrote the song immediately after the events of Exodus 14; and then the people all sang it, right there at the water's edge (and as they press forward). Any other perception of the writing would suggest that any or all of these accounts is fictional.

In order for this song to be sung—particularly so close to the events it describes—Moses (or his amanuensis, Joshua) has to physically write the song down on something. Then it has to be copied, distributed and taught. That requires several copies of the song to be written and handed around (to the elders or whomever). This would further suggest that Moses had some sort of writing instrument and medium (such as vellum). This would suggest that, at some point in time, previous to this, either Moses or someone associated with Moses thought that it would be a good idea to record these events (as they were quite spectacular and unprecedented).

Also, there is something which I did not mention earlier and that is, when Egypt was suffering these great judgments, Israel was not. Therefore, Israel had a lot of downtime (which would have also been enjoyed by Moses and Joshua). It would make sense that they spent this time recording the events which took place. What could be more important history to record than this? Logically, Moses made the executive decision to begin to record these events around Exodus 3 or 4.

There will be such details recorded in future chapters of Exodus as to demand their writing close to the events which are written about (the details, for instance, of the construction of the Tabernacle).

All of these things make sense if these things are being written within hours or days of the things written about.

Detail is key when it comes to writing down these events. Moses' first 80 years of life is described in Exodus 2. What we read in Exodus 3–40 takes place in less than two years time. Exodus 2 was written in retrospect; Exodus 3–40 was written as these events took place. It is obvious the Moses wrote an retrospective of his own life; and this was probably all done at one sitting. So he completes the narrative of his early life in the space of a chapter.<sup>33</sup>

Exodus 15 demands that there is writing taking place right then and there (as events unfold), as well as the distribution of writings. How else are the Israelites going to be able to sing this song that Moses wrote?

Exodus 15:1 **Then Mosheh and the children of Yisra'el sang this song to יהוה, and spoke, saying, "I sing to יהוה, for He is highly exalted! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!**

Moses writes what he has observed, and the sons of Israel sing this song. What was most spectacular was seeing the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the waters which God had opened up for Israel.

Exodus 15:2 **"Yah is my strength and song, and He has become my deliverance.<sup>a</sup> He is my Ėl, and I praise Him – Elohim of my father, and I exalt Him.**

<sup>a</sup>See Psalm 118:14 and Isaiah 12:2. [Both of these will be quoted in the doctrine which follows.]

God is the strength of Israel and God is who Israel celebrates in song. God delivers Israel. There is no other explanation for what the people observed. They all came to the same body of water and stopped. At night, with the army of Pharaoh not far away, they observe the waters having been stacked up and the sea floor dried up, allowing them to cross over.

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<sup>33</sup> There were no verse or chapters then, but there would be times that Moses would pick up the quill (or whatever) and write; and, at some point, he would lay it down again.

Only God could have done something like this. Recall the pillar of fire at night would have made it possible for Israel to see and then be led across what was, only a few hours before, a sea bed.

### Jesus in the Old Testament:

The Hebrew word *deliverance* (or, *salvation*) is actually the letter-for-letter equivalent of *Jesus* (this is [lesson #222](#)). When we replace *deliverance* with *Jesus*, we have this: “Yah is my strength and song, and He has become my Jesus. He is my Ēl [= God], and I praise Him – Elohim of my father, and I exalt Him.

This word *deliverance* (or, *salvation*) occurs nearly 80 times in the Old Testament; and if you read any of these verses, replacing *deliverance* with *Jesus*, the results are quite remarkable.

The Hebrew Roots Bible often does this for us:

Exodus 15:2 My strength and song is Yah, and He was to me salvation [= *Jesus*]; this is my Eli and I will glorify Him; the Elohe of my father, and I will exalt Him.

1Samuel 2:1 And Hannah prayed and said: My heart has exulted in YAHWEH; my horn has been high in YAHWEH. My mouth has been large over my enemies; for I have rejoiced in Your salvation [= *Jesus*].

2Samuel 22:3 My Elohim is my rock; I shall take refuge in Him; my shield, and the horn of my Y'shua\* [= *Jesus*], my high tower, and my refuge! My Savior, You shall save me from violence (Hamas).

Psalms 67:1 May Elohim be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us. Selah.

Psalms 67:2 That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation (Y'shua\*) among all nations.

Psalms 69:29 But I am poor and in pain; O Elohim, Your salvation (Y'shua\*) shall set me on high.

Psalms 118:14 Yah is my strength and song, And He has become my deliverance [= y°shûw'âh (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) = *Jesus*].

Isaiah 12:2 Behold, El is Y'shua\* (My salvation)! I will trust and not be afraid, for my strength and song is Yah YAHWEH; yea, He has become to me Y'shua\*. (Y'shua\* is *Jesus*) (Hebrew Roots Bible)



Isaiah 12:2a Behold, God is Jesus.

What you have read here occurs nearly 80 times in the Old Testament. So, if someone every told you, “The name of *Jesus* does not occur in the Old Testament;” they are wrong.

Let’s return to the narrative:

Exodus 15:2 “Yah is my strength and song, and He has become my deliverance [= *Jesus*]. He is my Ēl, and I praise Him – Elohim of my father, and I exalt Him.

Notice this again: He [God] has become my Jesus.

Moses recognizes that this God Whom they are praising is the God of his father and of his father’s father.

Exodus 15:3 “הוהי is a man of battle, הוהי is His Name.

Israel has just been delivered from war; God fought for Israel, making Him a man of war.

Exodus 15:4 “He has cast Pharaoh’s chariots and his army into the sea, and his chosen officers are drowned in the Sea of Reeds.

Even though Pharaoh and his army rode into the seabed of the Sea of Reeds, it is as if God had thrown them in there. This is the combination of the will of man coinciding with the will of God (or better, the *plan of God*).

Exodus 15:5 “The depths covered them, they went down to the bottom like a stone.

The water was let loose by God, and it covered all of Pharaoh’s army. They remained at the bottom until drowned, like stones.

In vv. 6–17, Moses, in this song, will address God directly. Our God is a personal God.

Exodus 15:6 “Your right hand, O הוהי, has become great in power. Your right hand, O הוהי, has crushed the enemy.

What God wills and then does is represented by His right hand. God crushes Israel’s enemy, Egypt, with His right hand.

Exodus 15:7 “And in the greatness of Your excellence You pulled down those who rose up against You. You sent forth Your wrath, it consumed them like stubble.

By going against Israel, Pharaoh challenged God. God’s wrath consumed them as if they were nothing.

Exodus 15:8 “And with the wind of Your nostrils the waters were heaped up, the floods stood like a wall, the depths became stiff in the heart of the sea.

God held back the waters by the wind of His nostrils (an anthropomorphism), which wind pushed the waters back and stacked them up like a wall.

If the water is flowing, then it is only necessary to stop the water at one point (that is, God would only need a single *air* dam).

Exodus 15:9 “The enemy said, ‘I pursue, I overtake, I divide the spoil, my being is satisfied on them. I draw out my sword, my hand destroys them.’

The soldiers of Pharaoh knew what they intended to do. They would pursue Israel, overtake them, divide up their possessions, then draw out the sword and destroy them. It was a simple and devastating plan.

Exodus 15:10 “You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them, they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

For a time, God’s wind held the waters back. The Egyptian army entered into the sea bed, expecting to come out on the other side, However, when God stopped this wind, the sea was let loose and it covered them. The soldiers sunk into the waters and were drowned.

Exodus 15:11 “Who is like You, O יהוה, among the mighty ones? Who is like You, great in set-apartness, awesome in praises, working wonders?

Moses asks, “Who is like You, O Y<sup>e</sup>howah?” There is no god of any people who is anything like the God of Israel. God is magnificent in His *holiness* (which some teachers understand to mean, *integrity*). God is set apart from all else in magnificence. Those who fear and respect Him also praise Him. There is no being who can perform His great works.

Exodus 15:12 “You stretched out Your right hand, the earth swallowed them.

God’s right hand was stretched His right hand out to act (an anthropomorphism), and the army of Egypt was swallowed up by the waters (the waters are a part of the earth).

Exodus 15:13 “In Your loving-commitment You led the people whom You have redeemed, in Your strength You guided them to Your set-apart dwelling.

God’s commitment to Israel is His covenant with them. He has led the people whom He redeemed.

The word *redeemed* is aptly chosen, as the Hebrew people were all slaves, and it is as if God purchased them from the slave market.

They will be guided to Mount Sinai, which is where God will choose to manifest Himself.

Exodus 15:14 “Peoples heard, they trembled, anguish gripped the inhabitants of Philistia.

Peoples throughout the land will hear about what has happened. The people of Philistia will be gripped with anguish because of what has happened.

Exodus 15:15 “Then the chiefs of Edom were troubled, the mighty men of Mo'ab, trembling grips them, all the inhabitants of Kena'an melted.

The chiefs of Edom are troubled by Israel's God's destruction of the Egyptian army. We might consider the Edomites as being the first cousins—as a tribe—to the Israelites. They are descended from Esau, Jacob's twin brother.

Moab is descended from Lot (Abraham's nephew).

The inhabitants of Canaan have melted away, which is a reference to a number of different groups.

Now, bear in mind, all of this is taking place soon after the destruction of Egypt and her army. However, the intensity of this fear is not going to hang on everywhere for the next 40 years.

Exodus 15:16 “Fear and dread fell on them, by the greatness of Your arm they are as silent as a stone, until Your people pass over, O הוהי, until the people, whom You have bought, pass over.

If you have ever heard the phrase, *strike while the iron is hot*; it means that there is a limited amount of time for the people of Israel to act. If the Israelites invade Canaan over the next year or two, the people there are going to be afraid of Israel's God. If Israel attacks the people of the land 40 years from now, what happened in Egypt will make no difference to some of the inhabitants of Canaan. Many of them will not even know about it (as a result, many heathen will continue to live in the land of promise after Israel's invasion).

Exodus 15:17 “You bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O הוהי, which You have made for Your own dwelling, the set-apart place, O הוהי, which Your hands have prepared.

God has a place for the people of Israel, a place which God prepared in eternity past.

The mountain of God's inheritance here is Mount Zion (not Mount Sinai). This is the place which God prepared for Israel. However, Israel will have to go to Mount Sinai first.

Exodus 15:18 “הוהי reigns forever and ever.”

The God of Israel will reign forever. The people hearing Moses' song do not fully appreciate this line, but it will come to make more sense in Israel's future.

Jesus will reign over Israel (and the world) from Mount Zion.

Exodus 15:19 For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea, and הוּי brought back the waters of the sea upon them. And the children of Yisra'el went on dry ground in the midst of the sea.

We know that Israel's God will reign forever based upon what He did to Pharaoh and his chariots and horsemen. God destroyed them with the waters of the Sea of Reeds, whereas, Israel walked over the exact same ground while it was dry.

Remember that this is a song that Moses is leading the people to sing, commemorating what God has done. This reveals Who God is and, therefore, glorifies God. By glorification, I mean that the song informs the hearer of Who and What God is.

### **Miriam and the Ladies Sing Counterpoint**

Exodus 15:20 And Miryam the prophetess, the sister of Aharon, took the timbrel in her hand. And all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

It is quite interesting that Miriam is called a prophetess here. This means that she is capable of speaking divine truth. She leads the women (whose spiritual growth is just as important as the spiritual growth of the men).

Exodus 15:21 And Miryam answered them, "Sing to הוּי, for He is highly exalted! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"

This verse reads that Miriam answered Moses and the others singing. They sing the woman's counterpoint.

Despite seeing with their eyes the power of God, and then singing about it, the sons of Israel will fall apart at the next crisis.

### **God's Faithfulness: God Sweetens the Bitter Waters**

Exodus 15:22 And Mosheh brought Yisra'el from the Sea of Reeds, and they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

God had a direction for Israel to go in; He was leading them to a specific place. Along this journey, they would be tested.

Today, the region that we are speaking of is mostly sand, but this would not have been the case during the days of Moses. The land is called a wilderness, but that simply means that it was unpopulated.

This was perhaps 2500 years after the flood, which suggests that the water table would still have been fairly high, and there would have been more lakes and rivers in this region (which is extremely dry and barren today).

This Israelites would have carried water with them, but at this point in their journey, their water supplies had become dangerously low.

Exodus 15:23 *And they came to Marah, and they were unable to drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. So the name of it was called Marah.*

In Numbers, we will have a list of names for every place that the Israelites stopped. In a few cases, the names may have been preexisting. However, most of them were given names by the people of Israel (or by Moses as he wrote). This place is called Marah, which means, *bitterness*.

Exodus 15:24 *And the people grumbled against Mosheh, saying, "What are we to drink?"*

Since Moses is in charge, the people came to him with every complaint of this journey. They usually held him personally responsible for the inconveniences which they suffered.

Exodus 15:25a *Then he cried out to הוהי, and הוהי showed him a tree. And when he threw it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.*

One possible explanation is, the chemicals in the tree interacted with the chemicals in the water, and the resulting in a chemical reaction which precipitated out the unsavory taste of certain ions in the water.

This tree is a type; it looks forward to the cross upon which Jesus would die. His death for our sins would take the bitterness of sin and death and transform it to justification and life, making it sweet and refreshing for us.

**Application:** It is very easy to observe just how crazy the United States has gotten over the past ten years. There is every indication that we, as a nation, may endure great national discipline (we do not know when or where, but it could come from a dozen different directions). As an unbeliever, I know I would be extremely frustrated and worried for this land and for myself and family. However, as a believer, I understand that things could suddenly take a turn for the worst; but I also understand that God is in charge. His plan must play out and prevail. Being upset or worried about it will do no good. Being fearful of the future is also a waste of time for the believer.

Exodus 15:25b *There He made a law and a right-ruling for them, and there He tried them.*

*There* refers to Marah, where the people of Israel have halted.

At this point, Moses will speak and write out a general principle by which all Israel should live:



Exodus 15:26 And He said, “If you diligently obey the voice of יהוה your Elohim and do what is right in His eyes, and shall listen to His commands and shall guard all His laws, [then God made these specific promises to Israel] ‘I shall bring on you none of the diseases I brought on the Mitsrites [= Egyptians], for I am יהוה who heals you.’ ”

I have inserted the words, *then God made these specific promises to Israel.*

Moses makes a covenant with the people on behalf of God. When God gives Israel a command, they were to learn it, preserve it and obey it. Their morality should conform to His morality, as the Israelites are God’s people. They were to listen and study His mandates. As a result, they would be preserved by God. The reason that we have an Old Testament is that Israel wrote it down and preserved it (which is what God is telling them to do).

### **God’s Faithfulness: Twelve Springs and Seventy Palms**

Now we have just one more stop for Israel to make (before the end of this chapter):

Exodus 15:27 And they came to Ėlim, where there were twelve fountains of water and seventy palm trees. And they camped there by the waters.

Ėlim means *palms*, which is what the Israelites would have seen from a distance as they marched toward this place.

Prophetically, the bitter waters made sweet describe life for Israel, having turned from slavery to God. The oasis of Elim speaks of the Millennium which is to follow.

Clearly, Exodus 15 is one of the most remarkable chapters of Scripture.

## **Lesson 243: Exodus 16:1–2**

## **Introduction of Exodus 16**

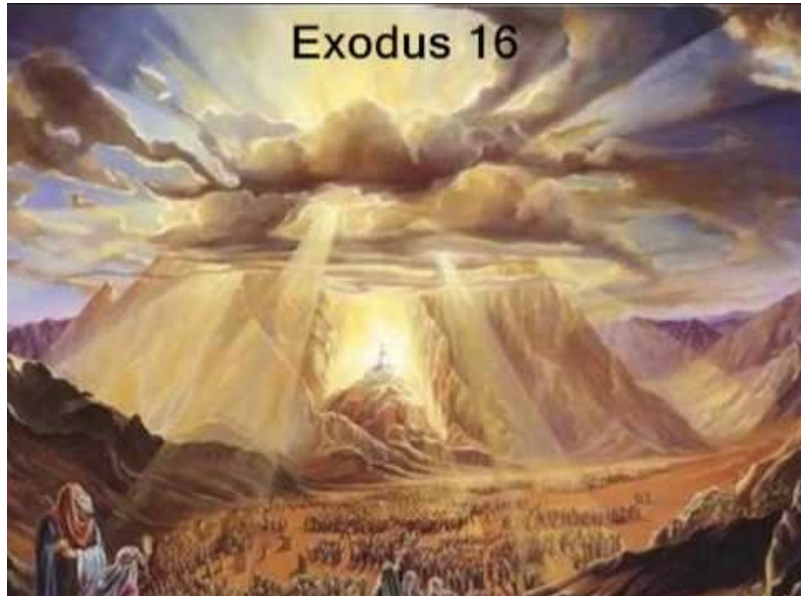
### **Bread from Heaven**

Exodus 16 continues the series of tests for the people of Israel which we find in Exodus. Here, the people complain to Moses that they lack food and water. Then they suggest that they would have been better off, had they remained Egypt as slaves, enjoying pots of meat and other such foods, which they remember having in abundance.

The sons of Jacob failed on so many occasions. This chapter is more about their failure and God’s continued faithfulness.

**Exodus 16** (a graphic); from [YouTube](#); accessed August 24, 2022.

As the Israelites move further and further into the desert wilderness, there are no crops growing anywhere, and it seems impossible for the two million Israelites to be sustained in the desert-wilderness. There just is not enough of any sort of food product out there for such a massive collection of people.



We all have an idea in our minds of what this region looks like. Miles and miles of sand. However, that is not what it looked like back at this time. The worldwide flood had occurred perhaps 2000–2500 years previous. The water table was relatively high (that is how deep you must dig a well before you hit water). There would have been many trees, plants and bushes; and very few (if any) cacti. There was probably more rain in that era and there were lakes and rivers. On the other hand, this was all uncultivated, as it was a desert-wilderness (meaning that no people lived there). Therefore, there was not enough food to sustain the Israelites. And the Israelites were not going to stop and cultivate the land. They had places to go.

*Whedon: In reading the narrative of the desert sojourn we are not to consider the people of Israel as constantly in motion. The greater part of the forty years they spent at fertile halting places in the desert wadies, where they scattered over several square miles for pasturage; and when they moved to another camping place it is probable that the cattle carried the water for their own use in leathern bottles or sacks, as Baker tells us that the cattle in the Abyssinian deserts do today. Holland, who has four times visited the Peninsula, and wandered over it for months on foot, sees no difficulty in finding pasturage for the flocks of the Israelites, and says that "it is wonderful how apparent difficulties melt away as one's acquaintance with the country increases." <sup>34</sup>*

I postulate that the land was even more hospitable at that time, and that they had the best possible guide—God.

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<sup>34</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Exodus Book Commentary (slightly edited). Whedon cites Smith's Dictionary, Am. Ed., (Appendix.)

A small group today could travel in this region. However, Israel consisted of about two million people in total. So, even under the best of conditions, there would not be enough food in this wilderness to sustain them. That would have required cultivation, and that is not what God wanted them to do (when you cultivate a land, you are then tied to that land; and God did not want them to be tied to the Sinai desert).

Because it is clear to the people that there is not enough food and their food supplies had run out, they complained to Moses. They are not stopping to plant crops because they are simply moving through this region.

A delegation from the people ought to come to Moses and ask, “We have many promises from God; but we have no food to eat. What is our God going to do about that?” Unfortunately, that is not their attitude, or their understanding of the circumstances. Their complaint will be, “It is better if we died in Egypt at the hand of God; at least we would have had full stomachs.”

God chooses to feed them at this point—with bread from heaven, which will be called manna (meaning, *what is it?*). God would also provide them with quail to eat.

With this provision from God comes a requirement for the Israelites to observe the Sabbath. The word *Sabbath* occurs for the first time in this chapter (it occurs 4x in Exodus 16). There will be basic requirements to be followed by the Israelites which relate to the Sabbath and to the collecting of manna.

At the end of this chapter, there will be a description of the manna and its use which extends into the future. We certainly will need to sort this out when we come to it.

Exodus 16:1a [And they journeyed from Elim,...](#)

This is the entire congregation of Israel. They have left Egypt; the Egyptian army was drown by the water of the seas by which they were trapped. So they had already lived through a hopeless situation and it was clearly God Who delivered them.

The sons of Israel are heading south, south-east, exactly the wrong direction to go toward the land of promise. This does move them away from Egypt, but simultaneously, they are moving away from the land of Canaan. Canaan was their ultimate destination, and many of the Israelites would have been aware of this.

Moses, since he lived out in the desert for 40 years, and because He was prepared in the palace as a king, no doubt knows how to get to the land of Canaan, but he quickly got to a point where he trusts Y<sup>e</sup>howah and the direction in which they went. Remember, there is a system of guidance in place. The movements of the people of Israel is not a matter of confusion or a lack of understanding of geography. The direction in which they went was a matter of God’s will.

The people are going to travel to Mount Sinai, where they will worship God and receive the Law.

Exodus 16:1b ...and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin,...

No one was left behind. No Israelite decided to stay in Egypt instead.

In the back of almost any Bible you will find a map to correspond with this bit of movement and this is fairly well agreed upon. The Red Sea is kept on their right hand side as the traveled and the timing tells us that they have just begun their desert wanderings.

The wilderness of Sin is the 8<sup>th</sup> place that the Israelites camped. **Numbers 33** provides us with a travelogue for the Hebrew people traveling through the desert, telling us place-by-place where they went (in most cases, Moses probably assigned the name of each place). I hope to do an expanded chapter-by-chapter study of the Book of **Numbers** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) at a later date.

Exodus 16:1c ...which is between Elim and Sinai,...

Right now, they are somewhere between Elim and Sinai. In the previous chapter, they had just come to Elim.

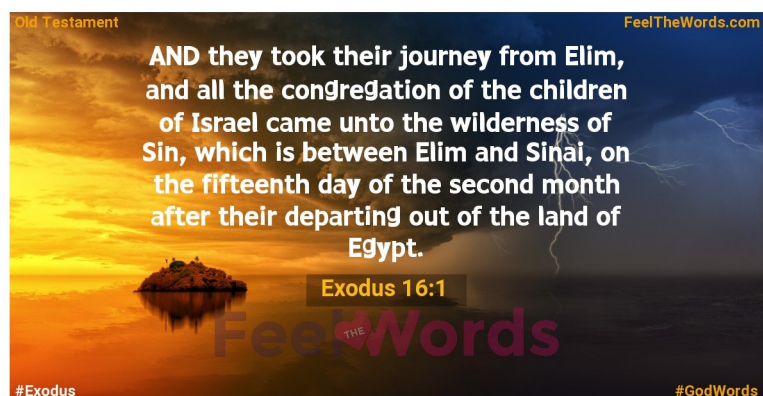
Exodus 16:1d ...on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt.

Right now, they are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> month and it is mid-month.

**Exodus 16:1** (a graphic); from [Feel the Words](#); accessed August 24, 2022.

Exodus 16:1 And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt.

The specificity found here suggests two things: (1) Moses knows exactly where he is and he generally understands where God is leading the people. (2) Moses also appears to be writing this information down each day. Had Moses wrote all of this 40 years later (or even a few years later), I would guess that most of the details would have been set aside for the big picture. However, the





details of this chapter and of Numbers 33 suggests that the narrative was written down (or put to memory) soon after the events took place. All of this is consistent with the song sung in the previous chapter which celebrated the destruction by God of the Egyptian army.



**Wilderness of Sin** (a graphic); from [Blogspot](#) (originally from [www.bible.ca](http://www.bible.ca)); accessed August 24, 2022. I cannot really vouch for the specifics of this movement; but this gives us an idea of where Israel is and where they are going. As an aside, this map does not have a north-south orientation.

Exodus 16:2 **Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.**

Very little time has passed since the sons of Israel had come across the bitter waters. Here, they have a new problem. They are hungry; and they complain to Moses and to Aaron.

Even though all of Israel chose to leave Egypt following Moses and Aaron, they were not happy people. When things went wrong, they automatically blamed Moses and Aaron, no matter what it was. The text often implies (or states) that the sons of Israel bore a host of mental attitude sins. They were easily able to cite what Moses and Aaron had done wrong; but they were unable to remember time after time that God took care of them.



Based upon their experience, the believers of Israel should have been able to recognize each challenge or test as it came; and be willing to wait on God for the solution (if it was not something which they could handle themselves).

These were progressive challenges, ideally designed to get the people of Israel to learn to depend upon God for the things which they themselves could not do.

**Application:** When we are faced with problems and difficulties, we should act reasonably in response (without sinning). We should also be able to recognize when our actions are not working or when there is nothing more that we can do. Then we must trust God for the final outcome.

Exodus 16:2 *Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.*

This is a place where *entire* (or *all*) does not mean every last soul. As we will see, there are at least two of the sons of Israel who are head and shoulders above all the others: Caleb and Joshua, and Aaron's sons. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Miriam spoke against either one of them. However, out of this many, to have only a handful of exceptions, it is like the entire congregation is saying vicious things behind the backs of Moses and Aaron.

The Qal imperfect of *murmur* indicates that this action was continuous. A few began to get hungry, realized that there was no food in sight (certainly not enough to feed this many people) and they began to point this out to the others, who then passed on their ill feelings.

These are the same people who have just witnessed miracle after miracle where God preserved them. They have promises which God has delivered to them. Either He will keep His promises or Y<sup>e</sup>howah is not God—it is that simple. The Bible is filled with promises to us and either He will keep His promises or He is not God.

#### Lessons 244–245: Exodus 16:1–4

#### The People Complain to Moses

Exodus 16:1 *And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt.*

The people of Israel are in the desert-wilderness at this point; and it has been about a month since they left Egypt.

Exodus 16:2 *Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.*

Again, the people began to complain to Moses and Aaron, as if they had plotted against the people in some way.

**Murmuring Against God** (a graphic); from [the Latter Rain](#); accessed August 24, 2022.

When anything went wrong, the people of Israel came to Moses and blamed him; oft times they threatened him.

They never understood logistical grace, they never understood God, and they did not get their place in the plan of God. This is despite the fact that everyone of them believed in the Revealed God. They were all saved; but few of them advanced in the spiritual life. Many times in Scripture, God said, "I loathed that generation!"



Exodus 16:3a [And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt,..."](#)

The content of their complaint is that, they would have preferred to have died in Egypt. Now, the idea is, they are out in the desert-wilderness and they believe that they are going to die of hunger.

Remember all of the promises made to Abraham, yet what God has promised does not seem to enter into their thinking. This is doctrine which they ought to be falling back on, but they do not have it in their souls.

Furthermore, these Israelites have seen an incredible number of miracles, which should have made them realize that their God was capable of doing virtually anything—but this does not appear to be a part of their thinking or reasoning. Remember all that they have seen, and they are considering none of that.

The Israelites have seen incident after incident where God clearly is taking care of them and seeing to all of their needs, and yet, they keep on wanting to live in the past in slavery to Egypt. This new world unnerves them; and the new circumstances cause them to panic.

**Application:** I grew up during a great era of the United States: the 1950s and I was a teen in the 1960s. As much as I would like to return to the 50s, that simply is not going to happen. Nevertheless—despite all that appears to be taking place in the United States—God is still God, and He can be depended upon. Our nation, because there are fewer believers and even fewer believers with doctrine, is on the decline and is facing divine discipline. In that era, attending a church seemed to be much more common.

**Application:** Given the current state of affairs where our country faces so many real and potential problems, this does not mean that believers today ought to panic or try to figure out *where can we run to?* Regardless of how many things could go wrong (and will go wrong), God remains faithful. Our focus should be upon Him, and not upon the chaos which appears to be closing in on us. No matter what, God is still God and we can still depend upon Him.

**Application:** I began write this in 2021–2022. The election midterms were about to happen and many people, including myself, would like to see a Republican turnover in the House and Senate. Will that happen? Maybe and maybe not. There is every indication that our elections can be falsified; and every indication that we have Chinese-backed candidates (possibly from both political parties). If I did not have doctrine I would be on pins and needles until the next election; and then even more so in 2024.

**Application:** Now, upon returning to do the final rewrite of this material in late 2022, the elections were a clear disappointment. Either America is so far gone as to elect the candidates who made America worse; or the system for rigging out elections is now set firmly in place. Having grown up during one of the greatest times in American history, it is quite sad to see this great nation retrogressing.

**Application:** Nevertheless, God will give the United States the leader (s) it needs and the leader (s) it deserves. No matter who is pulling the levers in Washington D.C., Jesus Christ still controls history. My focus every day is the Word of God. My trust must remain in God, despite all that is taking place in the United States. Depending upon a political party or upon specific candidates is a great mistake for any Christian to make. I am not saying that Christians ought to depart from politics or from voting, but basing our happiness upon such shaky ground as political outcomes is a serious spiritual mistake.

**Application:** Given my own age, I may not see the country turn around, spiritually speaking. The key to our future as a nation is, and always was, spiritual advance. Our nation needs more believers and more believers who value the teaching of the Word of God.

Exodus 16:3a *And the children of Israel said to them, “Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt,...”*

Meanwhile, the sons of Jacob take a trip down memory lane of the good times they enjoyed while enslaved to the Egyptians.

Exodus 16:3b *...when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full!*

In this chapter we have two words for food: (1) Bâsâr (בָּשָׂר) [pronounced *baw-SAWR*] means *flesh* and it can refer to human flesh (Numbers 8:7) or to animal flesh (Exodus 21:28 Isaiah 31:3). (2) Lechem (לֶחֶם) [pronounced *LEH-khem*] means *bread*, but it also is a generic word for *food*, including grains and vegetables, since bread was a mainstay of their diet. Throughout this chapter they refer to *meat* and *bread (food)*.

A *pot* (or a *flesh-pot*) was a three-legged bronze pot used by the Egyptians for cooking meat. According to Freeman, the Egyptians ate a lot of beef, goose and fish, but the cow was sacred and not eaten (so I guess *beef* refers to the meat of steers?). Egyptologists are split on whether or not they ate sheep. Numbers 11:5 tells us that Egypt had a variety of vegetables.

In Egypt, had the Israelites died, it would have been while they sat next to their pots of meat and loaves of bread (so stands the report of their memories). They do not seem to remember ever being hungry in Egypt. Whether or not this was true, they still functioned as slaves in Egypt. And, if you can recall, as slaves, their lives were so difficult, that they called out with great emotion into the sky over their circumstances (you may recall from one of the early chapters in Exodus that God heard them, which is why they are where they are at this point). God responded to their cries of sadness.

Yet these complainers continue:

Exodus 16:3b *...when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full!*

Slaves were a valuable commodity, despite there being so many of them, and the Egyptians recognized that feeding them reasonably well was to the benefit of the Egyptians. So, in that one particular area, the people of Israel have not suffered much lack (based upon what we read here). But Egypt worked them hard; and if it came down to choosing between Egyptians eating or their slaves eating (in difficult times), it would make sense for the Egyptians to be fed first.

This does not mean, however, that the sons of Israel always enjoyed these exact same benefits as slaves as they have described. There may have been times of plenty (which they are remembering) and times of leanness (they do not appear to remember those times).

Obviously, these men have memories. So why don't they remember what God has been doing for them? Believers have souls and, through continued negative volition, they build up scar tissue on their souls. As this scar tissue builds up, they appear to become more and more irrational.

**Application:** Previously, I have mentioned the spiritual condition of the United States. Many of us look around at this country and we ask ourselves, *have we gone stark-raving mad?* Scar tissue builds up on the souls of believers and unbelievers both. Unbelievers who reject the gospel and who reject the laws of divine establishment continue to build up scar tissue on their souls. Things which liberals would have outright rejected 10 or 20 years ago are now mainstays of their political and personal philosophy. As people continue to reject truth, they turn toward falsehood and embrace it. 10 or 20 years ago (I write this in 2020), the idea that drag queens ought to have any association with children would have been completely rejected by all political persuasions. 10 or 20 years ago, the idea that children could select their gender would have been considered absurd. This is the result of a build up of scar tissue. This is the dog returning to its vomit (this is a person

who, at one time, has clearly rejected a political position or a philosophy; but then, goes back to it and gives it another look).

Israel has left the banks of the sea of reeds, having watched God destroy their enemy, and has moved more inland deeper into the desert-wilderness region. As discussed earlier, this is not desert as we think of it; it is simply land which has not been settled or cultivated.

The Israelites have noted that their food supplies are going down. It is possible that many of them are hungry at this point. They have come to Moses to complain about their circumstances. However, they are completely wrong in their approach.

Exodus 16:3c [For you have brought us out into this wilderness...](#)

The sons of Israel blame Moses and Aaron at every turn. If anything goes wrong, it is the fault of Moses and Aaron. "You made us come out here to this desert-wilderness," they complain (yet, a month ago, they all agreed to be led out of Egypt).

What is clearly different from their new status as freedmen is, actual survival is now an issue to them. We do not know many details of their day-to-day existence in Egypt, but apparently, lack of food was not often an issue for them.

There was a clear tradeoff here, which the people of Israel do not yet appreciate. They were now free from the bondage of Egypt; but now, Egypt no longer saw to their food needs (the specifics of which, we are unaware, apart from their recitation of memory).

In addition to the issue of freedom versus dependence, the people of Israel are in the midst of a desert-wilderness. So there are no farms; there are no grain fields—and there are 2 million of them who must eat.

Agriculturally, we are aware that Egypt grew 4 types of grains, so that the grains would grow and ripen at different times. At one time, the chaff was delivered to the Hebrew slaves for the bricks. It seems reasonable that grain was similarly provided them (we are not aware of the Hebrew people working on these farms as per the Exodus record; but it seems likely that they did).

Exodus 16:3d [...to kill this whole assembly with hunger.](#)

These sons of Jacob are making irrational claims. "You brought us out into the desert to kill us!" they assert. They complain as if Moses and Aaron have some malicious master plan. What they are saying is ridiculous.

As a result of their complaints and continued negative volition, many of the men saying these words will die in the desert by the sin unto death.

**Application:** How many Christians today have embraced absolute evil? I have personally known true believers in Jesus Christ who have embraced many false and evil axioms of



today's degenerate society. In Exodus and in the book of Numbers (which we will study in the future), we will see many examples of God removing Israeli believers who have fallen into reversionism (spiritual degeneracy).

What God wanted to hear was, "We are hungry, we cannot figure out from where in the desert we will get enough food to sustain us for even another month; how will You provide us food?" This would have been a marvelous show of faith. God doesn't mind that, in the course of our daily lives where we have not personally ruined our own lives, to come to Him and call Him on His promises. The Bible is filled with promises to us; promises that God must keep or He is not God. In Egypt, the Hebrews had cried out to God for deliverance and now, years after they began to call upon Him, they are saying they would rather die, their appetites satiated under slavery, than face possible death by starvation in the desert. Spiritually, they are not improving.

**Principle:** You cannot grow spiritually by witnessing miracles.

Exodus 16:3 *And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."*

It is funny how human memory works. They have blocked out so much of what their lives were under slavery, and they remember the few times where they had an abundance of meat and bread. No doubt, they are recalling a better quality of life than they actually had. Again, what people would call out into the heavens in despair if things were as great as they are describing here?

You would think that life in Egypt was a never-ending picnic with this great assemblage of foods. But that is not how it was. Again, these are the very same people who cried out to their God over their suffering as slaves (or they expressed their despair by crying out to the skies).

It is clear just how irrational these sons of Israel are. They are saying, in essence, "O that the Lord killed us in Egypt rather than here in the desert!" How does this make any logical sense? Believers without doctrine and unbelievers without the laws of divine establishment become extremely illogical in all that they say and do.

**Illustration:** The current administration in the United States (I write this in 2022) seems to be very much in favor of children deciding that they belong to a different gender and doing whatever is necessary to change genders (which cannot be done). They are so in favor of this, that they claim legislation allows them to enforce boys claiming to be girls to participate in girls' sports and to use the same locker rooms and bathrooms as the girls (at this point, the administration is making noise about threatening to take away federal funding for schools who do not participate in this charade that any boy can be a girl. Yet, this same federal government requires these very same boys who claim to be girls to register for the draft (which is required only of males in the United States). So, you see just

how illogical they are? So, Charley Brown may have *become* Charli Brown, but, no matter what evil has been done to make changes in Charley, he/she is still going to have to register with the draft.

**Principle:** When a person lacks doctrine and lacks the laws of divine establishment, they cannot think straight; and their thinking always leads them to many points of contradiction.

Exodus 16:2–3 *Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, “Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”*

The people of Israel have a point here, as they have gone from slavery and deep dependence to freedom. The thing is, they are free in a desert-wilderness, but a desert-wilderness is not the most hospitable place for millions of people. What they are used to—breads from the grains of Egypt and the various meats—these things are no longer readily available to them.

They may have not received an abundance of foods in Egypt (as they seem to be claiming), but they did not starve.

Nevertheless, what they are saying indicates a great deal of irrationality on the part of these Israelites. They would rather have died in Egypt because they had an abundance of food there? What good is an abundance of food if you are dead?

On the other hand, they are acting as if their God has no power to act in their behalf. They have seen God’s great power, but they do not fully appreciate the extent of His power. If God is able to bring them all out of Egypt in such a spectacular way, then how is God’s hand staid when it comes to providing for His people?

Luckily, we have a merciful God. God does not say, “I am sick of you whiney babies; if you don’t exercise the right faith in the right things, you are dead to Me!” God cannot say anything like that because He made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**The People Murmur Against Moses** (a graphic); from [st-takla](http://st-takla.org); accessed August 24, 2022.

At this point, God promises the sons of Israel bread from heaven. We go from the complaint of the Israelites made to Moses and



Aaron; to the words of God being spoken of to Moses. Obviously, various things had to take place in between vv. 3 and 4.

Exodus 16:4a *Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you.*

I have mentioned on several occasions that there was probably a tent of sorts which Moses went to in order to commune with God. This would have been the precursor to the Tent of Meeting (which will be built in the final chapter of Exodus). So, having received these complaints from the sons of Israel, Moses goes into this tent and calls upon God (I am presuming this, but this is a logical presumption).

We always find this economy of language throughout the writings of Moses. Moses did not find it necessary to speak of the intervening steps to go from the complaints of the people to the words of God; nor do we have the words of God spoken, followed by Moses repeating those exact same words to the people. Instead, God will speak to Moses, and Moses will speak to the people, but this is generally recorded without any repetition. Even if Moses was recording this information on the day it was taking place (which I think was often the case), it was not necessary to repeat things.

Exodus 16:4a *Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you.*

The people were complaining that they lack bread; God will provide them with bread.

*Bread* is the substantive *lechem* (לֶחֶם) [pronounced *LEH-khem*]; it is also the all purpose term for food in general for the Hebrews. What this means is that we cannot assume from this verse that the manna that God will rain from heaven is necessarily a grain-based product.

What is about to happen is known as logistical grace. That is, whatever we need for each day, God provides that. Whatever Israel needed in the desert-wilderness, God was prepared to provide them with that.

**Application:** Fundamental to our existence is work (remember back in Genesis, God told Adam that he would work by the sweat of his brow). At the same time, God says that He will provide for us. We put these two things together and determine that this means that we will work for our food (which is exactly what God said to Adam and the woman after they sinned in the garden<sup>35</sup>).

**Application:** In other words, don't go sit on a park bench waiting for God to drop a McDonald's hamburger on you.

Exodus 16:4b *And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.*

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<sup>35</sup> As an aside, the man—and possibly the woman—worked when in a state of sinlessness.

God is going to give the people very specific instructions; and this is going to include a specific command regarding the Sabbath day (in case you are wondering, this is new to the Israelites). Prior to giving this people the Ten Commandments, God is going to limit their work on that 7<sup>th</sup> day.

These people have exceptionally fragile short-term memories. Since they seem to have no interest in God's plan or His law, God will teach them by every single day providing them with a miracle. Every day from heaven, food will rain down upon them. Every single day, what they will eat will be provided for them by a miracle. Furthermore, it will be a miracle food. This food will be completely nutritious, filled with all of the vitamins, minerals, enzymes, fiber and all the other nutrients that their bodies would require. Furthermore, this food can be fixed in a variety of ways, as we will see. The intention here is for the Hebrews to see something miraculous every day, day after day, for 40 years. God's faithfulness will be revealed to them every single day. However, this will clearly show us that miracles, even on a daily basis, will not carry us. They did not look at these things, conclude that their God was faithful and then believe that.

At age 29 or 30 I saw a natural phenomena which appeared to be miraculous—something that not one out of a million people have every seen. Did it do anything for my spiritual life? Not a single thing. It did not make me better, it did not make me worse; it didn't increase or decrease my interest in God's Word. My interest in God's Word came from continual study of God's Word coupled with obedience in areas of my life which caused scar tissue of the soul. This is not to say that I have led the life of a saint—far from it! But I learned from God's Word that I needed to trust Him in certain areas, and, after years of mistakes in some areas, I thought, "What the hell; why not trust Him there as well?" My life has clearly been imperfect throughout these many years; but that odd thing which I saw (or thought I saw)—changed nothing in my overall life. But what has changed my life is Bible doctrine in my soul.

Back to this manna situation: God could have provided a food which lasted for days or weeks or even months. But God did not do that. God did not tell them, "Get and there and bring in a monthly supply."

God's instruction is that they people gather just enough for that day (which means that they would trust God for His provision on the next day). Then there would be an additional instruction to follow. God is going to tell His people some very specific instructions regarding the collection of this bread. God was teaching them day-by-day.

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**Lessons 246–247: Exodus 16:3–7****The Nascent Sabbath/the Glory of God**

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The sons of Israel are presently traveling through the desert-wilderness under Moses' leadership. Egypt would never trouble them again. However, as of late, they have been complaining about a lack of food. In fact, they are actually reminiscing about the good old days in Egypt! So God makes some promises to Moses.

The Israelites currently face the crisis of running out of food supplies and correctly recognizing that, there is not enough food in this region for them. This has led them to make a false assertion based upon a false memory.

Exodus 16:3 ...and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." (ESV)

How exactly do you reason with a people with the false memory that they always ate well when in Egypt as slaves and the false accusation that Moses and Aaron have brought them out into the desert-wilderness with the intention of killing them all with hunger?

Moses goes to God and speaks to Him. It is likely that Moses went to God and first said, "Listen, this is what I am dealing with." (And then he elaborates.)

Exodus 16:4 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.

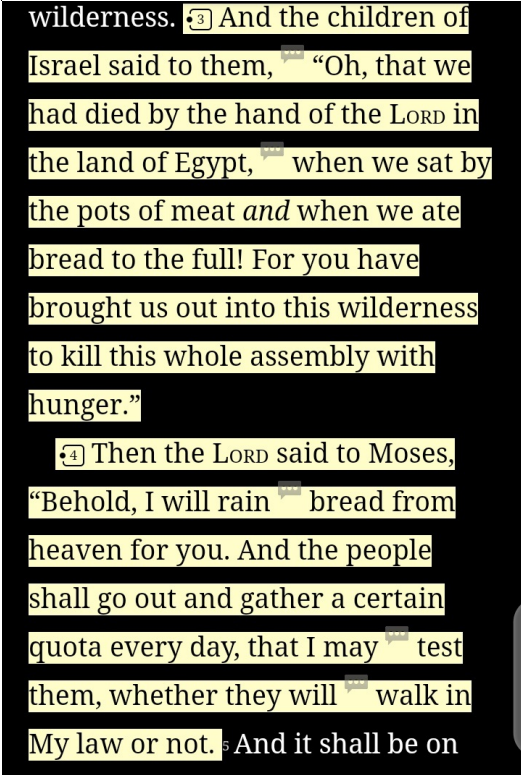
God is going to give His people a set of specific laws to follow with regards to the collecting of bread (manna) from heaven. This is like short-order drill for soldiers. Soldiers do not go into battle and march around as they learned in basic. That was to get them used to orders, direction and authority. Soldiers first learn to respond to authority without thinking; and after that, they learn the skills of war.

In a similar fashion, the sons of Israel were to receive guidance and order from God concerning the bread he provides for them; and they are to every day follow a specific set of rules, guidelines which God sets up; guidelines which change slightly, depending upon what day it is. Even in the desert-wilderness, the children of Israel had to be aware of the days of the week; and they needed to know the Sabbath (Saturday) and observe it.

We will come to the giving of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. The Hebrew people are going to get a trial run with the concept of the Sabbath day.

**Exodus 16:3–4** (a graphic); from [Twitter](#); accessed August 24, 2022.

God continues:



wilderness. 3 And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. 5 And it shall be on



Exodus 16:5a *And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in,...*

This sixth day will be different from the other days. The sons of Israel are to use the 6<sup>th</sup> day in order to prepare for the 7<sup>th</sup>.

This is the first verse to reference the 6<sup>th</sup> day since Genesis 1:31 (*And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*—ESV; capitalized); and this is a prelude to the 7<sup>th</sup> day (which will be spoken of in Exodus 16:23).

This reference back to the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> days should cause the people of Israel to think back to the beginning of man's time on earth, to what God did in order to prepare the world for mankind.

Because of creation and because everything that we need has been provided for us, God expected the Hebrews to rest on the seventh day. This was their time to stop and to recognize what God had done. This was to convey to them that there is nothing more that they can do. God's provision is completely sufficient.

The 7<sup>th</sup> day will be the day for the sons of Abraham to think about their relationship to God and about what God is doing with them.

This is the perfect time to reveal this to the Israelites, as they are right now concerned about their daily provisions. God tells them that He will provide for them even on the day that He does not want them to collect manna.

This might be an excellent place to show how divine information is revealed bit by bit, also known as, *progressive revelation*. This general approach to manna is what Israel needed to know first. God did not reveal His entire truth to man all at once. He reveals this a little bit at a time.

That problem with this generation of Israelites is easy to express—they do not understand the history of man and God up to their point of existence. If they understood Who God is and who they are, their only question to Moses should have been: “We are out in a desert-wilderness, and we obviously are not going to stop here and cultivate crops. So, what are God's plans for our C-rations?”

At the same time, we as students of this history might be caused to ask, *Did the Sabbath day exist in this place and at this time in nascent form?*

Obviously, the Sabbath will be a part of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), which have not been given yet. Furthermore, we cannot make the assumption that the events are given out of order here. These various stops, and the names of these stops (encampments), are very carefully recorded and preserved for us here, in subsequent chapters of Exodus, and in Numbers 33. The names are integral to the narrative; and they preserve the chronology of the text. On top of this, we also have dates given to us.

Therefore, a commentator must be very careful about suggesting that this or that narrative is presented out of order. There are just too many things which suggest otherwise.

Exodus 16:5a *And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in,...*"

Therefore, these instructions, at the very least, anticipate the Sabbath. Was there any sort of Sabbath-day observance at this time? Right now, that does not appear to be the case. Would the Egyptians have provided a day of rest for their slaves? I seriously doubt that; but that can certainly be considered. I do not recall any mention or implication of the 7<sup>th</sup> day being observed previous to this passage.

A much more plausible explanation is this: God knows that He will give His people the Sabbath day. Therefore, as a part of progressive revelation, God tells His people to gather twice as much food in anticipation of their observing the Sabbath. Their observation will be the Sabbath in nascent form.

God's requirement for them to collect twice as much bread (it will later be called *manna*) and He will see whether or not they would obey Him. This is a requirement given to the people apart from a rationale. God will give them a very specific set of directions, and some will follow them and some will not.

Exodus 16:5b *...and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.*"

On that 6<sup>th</sup> day (which is Friday) they were to gather twice the amount that they normally collect. At this point in time, the people do not fully appreciate why they are doing this.

Now later on in this chapter—in vv. 22–30—God will give them the explanation of the Sabbath day. This passage will be the first time that we have the word *Sabbath* in the Bible.

There is an interesting linguistic evolution which occurs in the Hebrew. *Twice as much* at the inception of its usage in the Bible, began here (and throughout the Law) as meaning exactly that. However, in Job 11:6, 41:13 Isaiah 40:2 61:7 and in other passages as being denoting that which is complete, or ample—it will come to refer to a full compensation, whether in relation to a blessing or cursing.<sup>36</sup>

Exodus 16:5 *And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.*"

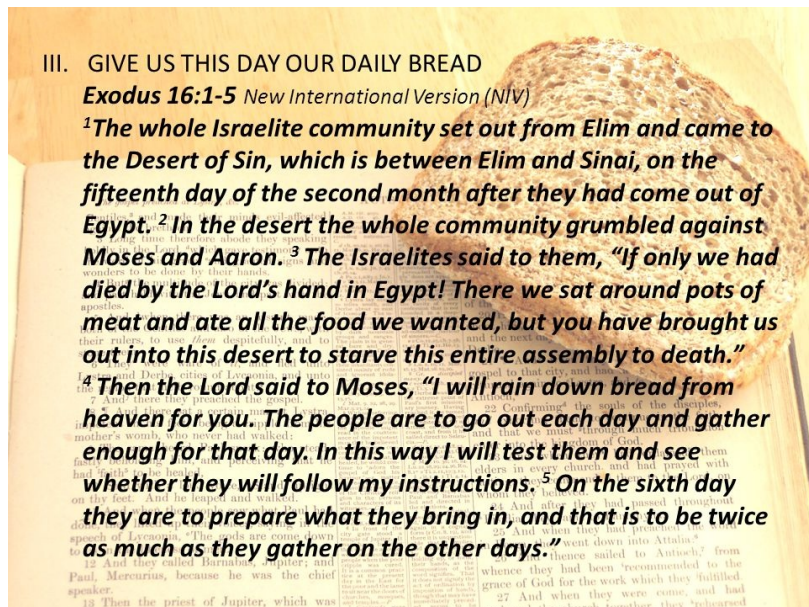
Based upon what we read in v. 5, there does not appear to be much information revealed to them at this point about the Sabbath. This chapter appears to prepare them for the Sabbath.

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<sup>36</sup> See Bullinger, pp. 585–586

On the 6<sup>th</sup> day (Friday), the Israelites were to gather enough manna to feed their families for 2 days. This was the only time that the manna would keep for 2 days. On that sixth day, they were to gather twice as much manna, and the extra manna would last and taste fresh on day seven.

So, God promises here to deal with their daily need of food. Every morning, there would be bread for this people.



**Exodus 16:1–5** (NIV) (a graphic); from [Slide Player](#); accessed August 24, 2022.

Exodus 16:6a **Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel,...**

Although this chapter appears to be a reasonably coherent narrative, you will note that there are some significant gaps of information, which Moses saw no reason to record. In vv. 2–3, the children of Israel complain to Moses. In vv. 4–5, God gives Moses instructions to give to the children of Israel. In vv. 6–8, Moses and Aaron speak to the people, giving them instructions from God. In between these passages, Moses moves from the presence of the people to the presence of God; and then back to the presence of the people. By simply naming who is speaking to whom, these movements are implied.

The people of Israel had been grumbling against Moses and Aaron; so they try to answer them; they try to reason with them. They will bring them the Word of God.

God has told Moses and Aaron about the bread from heaven that He would provide. So they speak to the sons of Israel. This is a very large group of people (perhaps a million men); so it is possible that all of this begins with a group of a few thousand, who pass along this information to others.

Since there is no way for Moses and Aaron to speak to a million men, they likely spoke to the leaders who then went back to their groups and passed along this information.

What takes place here has to be very organized, as all Israel will be responsible to follow these instructions.

Moses and Aaron begin with sort of an outline of what the Israelites would know and when they would know it.

Exodus 16:6b ...“At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt.

The problem has been that these people should know that God is in charge; but they just complain to Moses. After what they have seen, they should have some idea as to God’s power and might.

Interestingly enough, v. 6b tells us that, at evening, the sons of Israel will realize that the Lord has brought them out of the land of Egypt. Now, bear in mind that the bread is not coming to them until the next morning. So why does the reality hit them this coming evening? In the evening, the people of Israel would receive meat (Exodus 16:8) and they would see the pillar of fire (by which pillar God would continue to guide them).

God will provide for the Hebrews food that particular evening and every morning (except for the Sabbath). This is how they would know that it is truly God leading them out of Egypt.

Exodus 16:6 Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, “At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt.

To Moses and Aaron, this would be reasonable to expect that their fellow Hebrews would catch on after seeing this time and time again.

What would also be reasonable would be that the people of Israel develop trust for their God, as they depended upon Him daily for their food. However, you must bear in mind that you are in the same situation. God provides food for you as well. This does not mean that He provides it in a miraculous way; but the fact that you eat is God’s grace.

**Application:** There is starvation taking place all over the world right now. I believe that some governments are allowing their least successful people—their poor—to die through starvation (this routinely takes place under communist and socialist governments because they cannot produce enough food for everyone). If you have food today, don’t forget to thank God for that blessing.

What happened in Egypt was an amazing thing. All of Israel witnessed these things happen. They saw it with their own eyes. When their day is winding down, can they not look around and recognize that they are no longer in Egypt and that they are no longer slaves? Is it not clear to them that this is the Lord’s doing?

**Application:** I remember the first time that I took a look around where I was sitting in my own house and I recognized that God was providing a great deal of undeserved blessing for me. Blessing that, five years earlier, would have seemed impossible to me.

Exodus 16:6 Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, “At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt.

Moses and Aaron are guiding the people back to what they know, to what they have observed about God and the present-day circumstance. This is to guide them away from their complaining. Their eyes need to be on God; not upon themselves, their circumstances or on Moses and Aaron.

Exodus 16:7a *And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord;...*

Every day, as they eat their manna, they are to recognize that it was God Who brought them out of Egypt. This same God is providing them with food each and every day in the desert-wilderness. All of their senses ought to reveal to them that all of this is the Lord's doing. When they collect manna in the morning, do they not begin to grasp the glory of the Lord?

They would see the glory of God in the morning, which would come with the bread; or, more properly, the manna (the sons of Israel would name it in v. 31).

The word for *glory* here is *kâbôwd* (כָּבוֹד) [pronounced *kaw<sup>b</sup>-VODE*] and it means *glory, honor, majesty, dignity, abundance*. This is everything that God is and everything that we are not. In fact, this would be an excellent place to examine the **Doctrine of the Glory of God**. My notes for this doctrine come from the teaching of R. B. Thieme, Jr.; and I may have added a few details. Unless otherwise noted, the translations found in this doctrine are from R. B. Thieme, Jr.

#### **The Doctrine of Glory** (by R. B. Thieme, Jr.)

1. Definition.
  - 1) The glory of God refers to the sum total of His divine essence or to some aspect of divine essence.
  - 2) The Greek word *doxa* (δόξα) [pronounced *DOHX-ah*] means *brightness, radiance, splendor, magnificence, fame, renown, honor, or glory*.
  - 3) The Hebrew word *kâbôwd* (כָּבוֹד) [pronounced *kaw<sup>b</sup>-VODE*] means *honor, glory, riches, nobility, splendor, and majesty*.
  - 4) Glory always has the connotation of honor (distinction, greatness, renown, fame, nobility, or majesty) inherent in a person.
  - 5) In Romans 5:2, glory refers to the integrity of God. Romans 5:2 **Through Whom** [Jesus Christ] **also we have obtained that access by means of faith into this grace in which we stand, and so let us boast in hope** [or, *demonstrate integrity*; or, *demonstrate esprit decor*] **the glory of the God**. (Translation by R. B. Thieme, Jr.)
2. Glory is used for the attributes of God in total or in part.
  - 1) David in recognizing God's grace and rulership over Israel states the principle of the glory of God in Psalm 21:5 (**His glory [is] great by means of** [or, *in*] **Your Jesus** [or, *salvation*]; **and You set majesty and splendor upon Him**. —Kukis mostly literal translation).



(1) The word *salvation* in the Hebrew is, letter-for-letter, transliterated into the Greek word for *Jesus*.

(2) This is explained in the Hebrew exegesis of Psalm 21:5 in **Psalm 21** God Blesses the King and Destroys His Enemies ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

2) There is a point at which we see God for the first time (this does not mean that we literally see God with our eyes, because we don't; we cannot see a spirit). We see God with the doctrine in our human spirit. Deuteronomy 5:24, "[Behold, the Lord our God has shown us His glory and His greatness.](#)" Glory refers to His integrity; greatness refers to His other attributes. Any person in the Bible who is said to see God is simply seeing a manifestation of God caused by God.

3) You cannot appreciate the greatness of God until you can see (through Bible doctrine) the glory of God. Seeing the glory of God is seeing the integrity of God through pertinent Bible doctrine.

4) The glory of God has many applications.

(1) Romans 3:23 says that to fall short of the glory of God is to fall short of His integrity. God's perfect righteousness rejects sin. Sin is not compatible with God's glory.

(2) We fall short of God's glory because we have a sin nature; because we have Adam's original sin imputed to us; and because we have all sinned personally. Romans 3:23 ([...for all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God;...](#)) emphasizes our personal sins.

(3) Ephesians 1:17 [That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom even from the source of revelation by means of epignosis knowledge from Him.](#) The integrity of God refers to His righteousness and justice. God's glory is the source of the epignosis doctrine in our right lobes which causes occupation with Christ to occur within our souls.

### 3. Other Uses of Glory.

1) Glory is used for the indwelling of Christ and its implications. Colossians 3:27 [To whom the God decreed to make known what is the wealth of the glory of the mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the confidence of glory.](#)

(1) We have Jesus Christ indwelling us, as well as God's perfect righteousness imputed to us (this means that we are positionally righteous; not experientially righteous).

(2) The indwelling of Jesus Christ is the guarantee of our escrow blessings from the justice of God the Father, since these blessings are deposited in Christ, the escrow officer.

2) Glory is used to describe the maturity of the believer. Mature believers form the basis for the recognition of God's glory. Ephesians 1:5-6 [Having pre-designed us with the result of the appointment of adult sons for Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the benevolent purpose of His will,](#)

resulting in the recognition of glory from the source of grace, from which He has pursued us with grace in the Beloved.

- (1) We recognize the glory of God through the perception of doctrine.
  - (2) The integrity of God pursues us in grace for the purpose of blessing us.
- 3) The riches of maturity are from the glory of God. This means that God provides for us, from His essence, the ability to become spiritually mature and, as a result, enjoy great blessing (called here *riches*).
  - (1) Ephesians 1:17-18 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom even from the source of revelation by means of knowledge from Him..., that the eyes of your right lobe may be enlightened, in order that you all may have a permanent knowledge, knowing what is the hope of His calling [maximum blessing], and what is the riches from the source of the glory, the inheritance of His saints.
  - (2) Ephesians 3:16 In order that He might give you according to the riches from His glory, to become strong by means of power through His Spirit with reference to the inner man.
  - (3) Philippians 4:19 Now my God shall fill up the deficiency of all your needs according to the standard of His riches in glory by means of Christ Jesus.
- 4) The mature believer has received this glory. 1Peter 1:7-8 (...so that the authenticity of your faith—more precious than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with an inexpressible and glorious joy,... —Berean Study Bible). Receiving glory is blessing from the integrity of God to the mature believer.
- 5) Glory is used to describe the strategic victory of Christ in the angelic conflict.
  - (1) Hebrews 2:10 To have led to glory many sons. God brings many sons to glory by judging our sins, so that, when we believe in Christ, we enter into a relationship with His glory. We receive the imputation of God's perfect righteousness, which is the potential for blessing from the integrity of God.
  - (2) 1Timothy 3:16 Christ taken up into the place of glory refers to the third heaven, the location of the integrity of God.
- 6) The royal family is called to eternal glory since Christ is seated in the place of glory. The formation of the royal family comes under the phrase, **being called to eternal glory**, 1Peter 5:10; 2Peter 1:3. This is the status of the royal family being called into eternal relationship with the integrity of God.
- 7) The resurrection body is described in terms of glory, 1Corinthians 15:43. Our resurrection body is raised in glory because we are in the status quo of everlasting life. We will live forever in a state of glory. In 2Thessalonians 2:14

the attainment of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ refers to having a resurrection body exactly like His.

- 8) The right woman is called the glory of the right man, 1Corinthians 11:6,7, 14–15. Her long hair is a glory to the woman. Long hair on the male is dishonorable and against nature.
- 9) Additional uses of glory in the Bible.
  - (1) For the wonders of the universe, 1Corinthians 15:40-41.
  - (2) For human glamor, 1Peter 1:24; Philippians 3:19.
- 10) God is glorified and receives glory forever in the function of ultimate sanctification and the deliverance of the ultra supergrace believer, 2Timothy 4:18.

6/19/77; 7/23/76 (This doctrine would have been done during the Romans series)

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There would be two signs of God's glory in the morning: the people would receive the bread (manna) from heaven; and they would be guided by the cloud.

Exodus 16:7b ...for He hears your complaints against the Lord.

Moses acknowledges that they keep filing complaints against God, for no reason.

Is it not clear to these people that God has been with them constantly and has seen to their every need?

God heard their complaints about having no food. God heard them and provided for them.

Moses is urging the people to put the actions of God together with what they are seeing every day, and understand that, based upon this, they should know that they have a faithful God.

Exodus 16:7c But what are we, that you complain against us?"

They also continue to complain against Moses and Aaron, and Moses asks the people, "Who are we?" The idea is, *who are we but simple servants of God?* How can Moses and Aaron provide the food needed for 2 million people? Complaining to them or blaming them is not going to solve anything.

One would think that, along with these complaints were mental attitude sins along with gossiping and judging.

On the one hand, Moses and Aaron certainly did not want to be facing time after time of people complaining to them about this or that. At the same time, this reveals true grace orientation. They truly recognize that all of this has come about because of the power of

God, and nothing inherent in them. So Moses and Aaron understand what is going on; they *get* God; but the people of Israel, for the most part, do not.

Two thoughts are begun here which will be carried on into the rest of the passage. God has heard the complaining of the Israelites and this complaining is directed against God. You may be thinking that in v. 2 it said that the Israelites complained about Moses and Aaron, but the second thought presented here is Moses and Aaron are nothing—they are only following God's orders. Whining and complaining about them, murmuring about them is useless. This is God's plan and their problem is with God's plan; not with Moses and Aaron. Therefore, with all of their bitching and moaning about Moses has nothing to do with Moses but with God.

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**Lessons 248–249: Exodus 16:7–12****God Feeds the Sons of Abraham**

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The people, growing hungry in the desert-wilderness, grumbled against Moses and Aaron. They even invented the weird conspiracy that Moses and Aaron hauled them out into the desert-wilderness in order to starve them to death. What they were thinking and saying was absurd.

After speaking with God, Moses tells the people of Israel what to expect.

Exodus 16:6 *Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, “At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt.*

That evening, God would provide quail for the people to eat; and they would see the pillar of fire. By seeing both of these things, the people of Israel could confirm that God brought them out of Egypt.

Exodus 16:7 *And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord; for He hears your complaints against the Lord. But what are we, that you complain against us?”*

The people, that next morning, would see the glory of the Lord. They would see manna for the first time (it has not been so named yet) and they will see the pillar of cloud, both manifestations of God's glory.

Moses and Aaron might represent God, but they cannot provide bread. They led the children of Israel out of Egypt and they pointed at what the Lord would do, but none of this power is inherent to them. Moses and Aaron, if their lives depended upon it, could not produce the smallest piece of manna. They are subject to the exact same things that all the other Israelites are subject to.

If the people of Israel are hungry, then Moses and Aaron are hungry. If the people lack water, then Moses and Aaron are thirsty. The chief difference is, Moses and Aaron had a greater confidence in God.

Exodus 16:8a Also Moses said, "This shall be seen when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening,...

As we will find out, God will provide quail in the evening and manna in the mornings. Although the manna appears to happen every day, the quail does not appear to be given from God every evening.

The beginning of Moses' statement in v. 8 is difficult to grasp. The NASB inserts: *"[This will happen] when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening..."* The Updated Bible Version reads: *"[This will be], when Yahweh will give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; because Yahweh hears your murmurings which you murmur against him: and what are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against Yahweh."*

What Moses said actually begins with the bēyth preposition bē (ב) [pronounced b<sup>eh</sup>], one of the most important words in the New Testament, but totally left out of Zodhiates marvelous work, neglected in Strong's, and not keyed in Owen's. Its basic meaning is *in, into*. Here it is with a verb, the Qal infinitive construct of nāthan (נָתַן) [pronounced *naw-THAHN*], the simple word for *giving* or *placing*. Here, we have problems with the language because of the time element. We desperately want to hear Moses tell the people that God **will** provide food for them at some near future time. That is how we think. God told Moses that He would provide food for the Hebrews and we expect Moses to go back to the Hebrews and tell them that there will be food that very evening or tomorrow morning. However, this is not how it is written. And the verb, although it has a subject (Y<sup>e</sup>howah) and an object (*you*; the Israelites), it should be translated like a noun because the infinitive construct is a verbal noun. Therefore, Moses said, *"In [the] giving (or, placing) [by] Y<sup>e</sup>howah for you flesh in the evening...."* Many translators translated the bēyth preposition as *when*, because it takes on a temporal meaning here.

God's glory will be seen *when* the people are given meat in the evening. Or, the people of Israel ought to recognize God's power and provision *when* they eat meat in the evening. God is glorified by bringing the Israelites out of Egypt and He will be further glorified by providing for His people out in the desert.

We continue with the second thing that will show God's glory to the Israelites:

Exodus 16:8b ...and in the morning bread to the full;...

Bread would be given to them in the morning. God's glory is revealed in what He does for the Israelites here out in the desert-wilderness.

Exodus 16:8a-b Also Moses said, "This [God's glory] shall be seen when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full;...

God would also be providing bread in the morning, which bread we know as manna. They would be sated by that bread. Right at this moment, the people are starving. By mid-



moring, they will have eaten *bread to the full* (meaning that they are sated).

When God's character is revealed, God is glorified.

Every evening, there would be guidance by the pillar of fire; on some evenings, there would be the flesh of quail; and every morning, there would be bread and guidance by the pillar of cloud. God is promising sustenance and guidance to His people every morning and every night. Does this not glorify God? God made many promises to Abraham and in preserving this people, God begins to fulfill these promises. When God's character is revealed, God is glorified.

For most believers (those not under discipline), this is what God promises to us as well. God promises us logistical grace (the grace which takes us from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity). Our lives are not simply a series of random events; our place in this world is not an arbitrary assignment from an uncaring universe.

The people will be fed both quail and manna each day. They are surviving in the desert-wilderness against all odds because the Lord is taking care of them. It does not appear that any of them fully appreciate that.

Exodus 16:8c ...for the Lord hears your complaints which you make against Him.

When the children of Israel complain, God hears them. He does not ignore their problems or their needs.

Normally, the way that this is set up, this would be considered a temporal phrase, like *when Y<sup>e</sup>howah heard your grumbings*.

What more could these people expect from God? He promises sustenance and guidance. God hears their complaints.

Exodus 16:8d And what are we?

Moses gives the people the proper understanding here. Moses and Aaron, in and of themselves, cannot do anything. They cannot solve problems which require a supernatural act. When Israel is out in the desert-wilderness and becoming hungry or thirsty, this is too big a problem for Moses to solve. The problem these Israelites complain about are usually problems only God can solve. Therefore, what good does it for them to complain to Moses, as if he could do anything in and of himself?

Exodus 16:8e Your complaints are not against us but against the Lord."

Moses is not passing the buck here. He is simply unable to deal with the complaints brought forth by his people.

However, Moses is able to speak with God, but God already knows what is going on among the people of Israel. They do not have a need or a complaint that is unknown to God.

God has brought Israel to this place and time. Moses and Aaron have acted on behalf of God, but, ultimately, God brought the people to this place.

But for the people of Israel to complain to Moses that he himself has done something wrong or evil is simply out of line. Moses and Aaron are in the same situation as the people. If the people are hungry, then Moses and Aaron are both hungry as well. If the people face a no-water problem, then Moses and Aaron face that same no-water problem. Complaining to Moses and Aaron, or blaming them for this current situation—they are there by God's guidance the same as everyone else.

No matter how much the people complain to Moses and Aaron, neither man has the power to effect any real change in their lives.

Exodus 16:8d-e [And what are we? Your complaints are not against us but against the Lord.](#)

Moses points out that the grumbling of the people against him is not going to accomplish anything. Quite obviously, he cannot provide food, water or meat for the sons of Israel. That is clearly an impossible task for any one man or a small group of men.

This entire statement is tied to *why are you murmuring against us?* Moses is incidentally mentioning, "Oh, by the way, there will be food provided by God for you, so why bitch to us?" This is slipped in here so casually, as, "Of course you will have food; you're hungry aren't you? God is still God isn't He? He will provide." The food is presented here as a given.

Moses and Aaron speak to the Hebrews not about their lack of faith, not directly about the coming food, but about their misplaced anger and complaining. Moses and Aaron can neither provide them with food or do anything to cause them to starve or to be fed. Moses and Aaron are non-issues. They are merely leading as God's representatives, but they do not have the power to provide for all Israel.

**Application:** Your daily provision is not something that the government can see to. If we depend upon the government for our every need, those needs will not be met.

The issue is that the Israelites are complaining about Moses and Aaron and they are not to be complained about. Their complaints are with Y<sup>e</sup>howah—and even that is foolish, since Y<sup>e</sup>howah has provided meat in the evening and bread in the morning. So the Israelites are listening to this, and they catch this phrase about meat in the evening and bread in the morning, and wonder what the heck is Moses and Aaron talking about? What is this meat in the evening and bread in the morning?

Exodus 16:8 Also Moses said, “This shall be seen when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the Lord hears your complaints which you make against Him. And what are we? Your complaints are not against us but against the Lord.”

The faithfulness of God will be seen that very evening and the next morning, direct complaints against Moses and Aaron notwithstanding.

Exodus 16:9a Then Moses spoke to Aaron,...

There was always a well-established line of authority. God would speak to Moses and Moses would speak to Aaron, and then Aaron would often convey this to the people.

Exodus 16:9b ...“Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel,...

The gathering of the people of Israel was quite huge. Aaron could not speak to all of them; but, he would speak to representatives of the people and they would speak to those under them. There clearly must have been a clear line of authority.

Exodus 16:9a-b Then Moses spoke to Aaron, “Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel,...

Here is one of the places I can side with Moses. Speaking in front of a large group is quite difficult and scary. Well, after giving the excuse to God that he is too easily tongue-tied, Moses can pawn off any speaking chore that he does not like on Aaron. This is what he is doing here, it appears.

Moses has finally gotten it straight in his mind as to what Aaron is to do. Aaron is second-in-command; and Aaron works for Moses. This is not to denigrate Aaron's position, but Moses is the spokesman for God and Aaron is clearly under Moses. Since Moses cannot do everything himself, he must delegate some of the responsibilities. This is not because Moses is a poor public speaker or is afraid to speak to the crowd, as before; but because he simply does not have enough hours in a day to do everything, so Aaron takes up the slack for him. The people are to present themselves before Y<sup>e</sup>howah.

Exodus 16:9c ...‘Come near before the Lord,...

Generally speaking, coming before the Lord meant that they approach God in prayer and with animal sacrifices.

The people are supposed to come near or approach God. Now, how do they do this? Generally speaking, with an animal sacrifice. However, listening to the teaching of God would also bring a person closer to God.

What appears to be the case is, they will gather before Moses and Aaron and before God.

Exodus 16:9d ...for He has heard your complaints.”

“God is listening,” Moses tells Aaron to tell the people. “He is not ignoring you.”

Moses is telling Aaron to tell the people (through their representatives) to come before the Lord, as He has heard their complaints.

Exodus 16:9 Then Moses spoke to Aaron, “Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, ‘Come near before the Lord, for He has heard your complaints.’”

At best, all that Moses can do is present Israel’s complaints to God.

Exodus 16:10a Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel,...

Aaron spoke to the sons of Israel, to indicate that God is hearing them.

We are never given the specifics as to how communication was carried out. Aaron did not stand in front of 2,000,000 people and speak. The Israelites had to be extremely organized about this and it was likely a tedious process. Aaron may have spoken to several hundred or several thousand men and they in turn spoke to the people under them. It had to be a highly organized system that they took for granted. It is not unlike one of us sitting down and describing our lives; this story given to another culture at another time would be fascinated by hundreds of things that we take for granted but never think to mention.

The things which we have been reading, Aaron has said those things to the elders and representatives of the people; and they have further told them to the rest of the people. So everyone now knows what God has said.

Now, there is an alternate way this could have occurred. The people of Israel were organized into groups, and they may have gathered into those groups and Aaron himself may have spoken to these groups. This seems unlikely if not impossible to me.

Exodus 16:10b ...that they looked toward the wilderness,...

Based upon the context, it does not appear that Moses said to Aaron, “Then tell the people to look over in this direction.” At some point, after Aaron spoke (and, perhaps he spoke to many groups), the people looking in a certain direction saw something. Perhaps they motioned to those around them to look as well.

It would not be unusual for a few to see it; and then they alert those around them.

Exodus 16:10c ...and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.

Suddenly, the people see an apparition, which is not something that is easy for us to quantify. Somehow, when they saw the cloud, it was as if God has appeared to them. Somehow, His power and magnificence are discernable. How does a cloud with God's glory look different from a regular cloud? I could not begin to describe what the difference would have been.

Being that they are in a desert-wilderness (but not as dry as we are familiar with), clouds may be been in short supply; so simply seeing a cloud may have been quite unusual.

In any case, it is the cloud which would lead the people by day and the pillar of fire would lead them by night. Therefore, it would be logical that the thing associated with God would also manifest the glory of God.

Now, we do not know what this was exactly. Most assume that this references a massive light; however, it is a light that the people can look towards without losing their eyesight. Whatever it was, the people of Israel understood that this was a supernatural phenomenon which revealed God.

We do not know exactly what they saw visually in the cloud. Furthermore, this apparition had to be more than just visual. That is, just because some visual phenomenon occurs, that does not mean that it has anything to do with God. There was very likely an accompanying conviction in their souls that this was God and that they were standing before Him.

Exodus 16:10 [Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.](#)

This verse bypasses the exact mechanics of how Aaron spoke to the entire congregation of Israel; but after that took place, the people of Israel looked out into the desert-wilderness and they saw a manifestation of God in the cloud.

Exodus 16:11 [And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,...](#)

We do not know, every time, the mechanics of this, whether God takes Moses aside and speaks to him; or if there is a place that Moses goes, or even if this is in a dream or a dream-like state.

Based upon other Scriptures which occur later, it appears that there was a tent, and that Moses would commune with God in that tent. This is not *the* Tent of Meeting (also called the Tabernacle). That has not yet been explained to Moses.

Exodus 16:12a [..."I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel.](#)

God is omniscient; He knows what is going on.



God speaks to Moses and tells him that He has heard the complaining done by the sons of Israel.

The sons of Israel are looking out towards the desert-wilderness and they see the glory of God in a cloud; and God is speaking to Moses. The people of Israel cannot hear God's voice. However, later, when God gives the Ten Commandments, all the people will hear God's voice. Furthermore, they complain, and ask Moses to speak for God instead. Given that response at that time suggests that here, God is speaking only to Moses.

Exodus 16:12b *Speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat,...*

God told Moses to speak to the people and assure them that they would have meat that evening.

In Exodus 12:6, we see that *between the two evenings* is at dusk, immediately after the sunset.

Exodus 16:12c *...and in the morning you shall be filled with bread.*

Also, in the morning, they would have bread (as many people have toast or croissants in the morning).

Exodus 16:12d *And you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'"*

That this would happen, and the people of Israel will see it happen, should indicate to them, once again, that they are being led by God.

We do not have an exact chronological time frame for this. We do not know if God spoke several times or but once to Moses (see vv. 4 & 11). In any case, when God provide information to Moses, then Moses would speak to Aaron, and then they both spoke to the people. This is just not organized in the way that we are accustomed to thinking and it throws a person. This is the Bible and all of these conversations took place. In what order and how many conversations were involved is not told to us. Here, God tells Moses to make it clear to the people that they would have meat and bread. The narrative appears to present this as two conversations between God and Moses.

*Whedon: It has been strongly objected, by Colenso and others, that the Desert of Sinai never could have sustained two millions of people, with their cattle, for forty years. But this is also the precise statement of our narrative; which accordingly relates the specially providential or miraculous provisions of the manna, the quails, and the water from the rock of Horeb. It is particularly and repeatedly declared that ordinary natural means were not sufficient to sustain them. It is not specially stated that pasturage was providentially or supernaturally provided for the cattle, but we are at liberty to suppose this, if needful, for the greater miracle of the manna includes lesser ones like this. Colenso's difficulties arise wholly from attempting to*

*account for what is avowedly supernatural upon natural causes, and of course he finds these difficulties insuperable.*

*Whedon continues: Yet it is most probable that there was not any thing supernatural in providing pasturage for the cattle of Israel. The monuments and the most recent explorations of travellers show conclusively that the Desert did once sustain a great population. Long before the time of Moses there were permanent Egyptian settlements in this desert, around the copper, iron, and turquoise mines of Maghara and Sarabit-el-Khadim, where troops, officered by men of high rank, were garrisoned, and who have left their record in the beautiful bas-reliefs of Wady Maghara. These inscriptions boast of Egyptian victories over the warriors of the Peninsula, showing that they were then formidable enough in numbers and in valour to contest the supremacy of these deserts and mountains. Rich veins of iron, copper, and turquoise are now found in that vicinity; and ancient slag heaps, as well as remnants of smelting furnaces, are met with in many parts of the Peninsula.*

*Whedon continues: Palmer, of the "Sinai Survey Expedition," describes extensive and massive foundations and walls of ruined cities — deep, finely constructed wells — walled fields — and traces of terraced gardens — where now are arid wastes. Hundreds of monastic gardens and orchards were once scattered through the Sinai mountains. The causes of these great changes have also been largely, if not wholly, discovered. The reckless destruction of the forest has diminished the rainfall, and the contemptuous neglect of all cultivation on the part of the inhabitants has left the soil to be stripped from the hillsides and carried down the rocky wadies by the torrents which are produced by every shower, which else might be clothing these barren valleys with blooming gardens. The rich black soil, palm groves, and tamarisk thickets of Wady Feiran, and the convent gardens and orchards around Jebel Musa, show what cultivation might accomplish here. The wretched misgovernment of centuries, which has not only neglected but wasted the natural resources, even levying upon the country a tribute of charcoal which annually diminishes the scanty stock of timber, and the total neglect of irrigation and agriculture, have been steadily deteriorating the country for more than two thousand years. The same causes have operated in this desert which have changed Palestine from a "land of milk and honey" to the bare and barren country which the Christian traveller visits to-day.<sup>37</sup>*

Exodus 16:12b-d [Speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'](#)"

Another way of saying this: "Through the sensual experience of eating meat at night and eating manna in the morning, you people will recognize that I am the Lord your God!"

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<sup>37</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Exodus Book Commentary. He cites Palmer's *Desert of the Exodus*, chaps. 2:10.

God had promised the sons of Israel meat, and he provided quail for them. Every evening, the quail came up from wherever and they covered the camp.

## Lesson 250: Exodus 16:13–14

## Israel Receives Quail and Manna

God is leading Israel through the desert-wilderness toward Mount Sinai (this destination is known to God, not to the people). The people have become hungry and have complained again to Moses, as if he is capable of supplying food for them all.

God has promised the Israelites quail that evening and manna for the next morning.

**Quail in Israel** (a photo); from [Tatzpit](#); accessed January 11, 2023.

Exodus 16:13a *And so, it comes about in the evening that the quail [seemingly] rise up...* (Kukis Mostly Literal Translation)



I would not be surprised if much of what happened during the plagues upon Egypt was, in part, a result of natural phenomenon. How this was originally kicked off, I don't know; or whether God created things out of thin air, I don't know. I lean toward there being a series of natural acts which somehow culminated in enough quail being provided this particular evening for a meaty meal.

You will recall of the varmints which plagued Egypt. Who is to say that these quail did not rise up and multiply based upon a quantity of food sources in Egypt. Recall that there were a myriad of locusts and other things which came and went as God commanded. Perhaps a huge food chain was the end result, much of which took place out in the desert-wilderness.

However, regardless of the means employed by God, the quail appeared to rise up out of nowhere. I have included the word *seemingly* simply to suggest that the quail did not necessarily rise up in some miraculous way.

There are various commentators who say that a similar phenomenon has been observed in the region of Egypt (likely not in the same quantity). We can only speculate as to how the laws of nature would be involved in explaining this event.



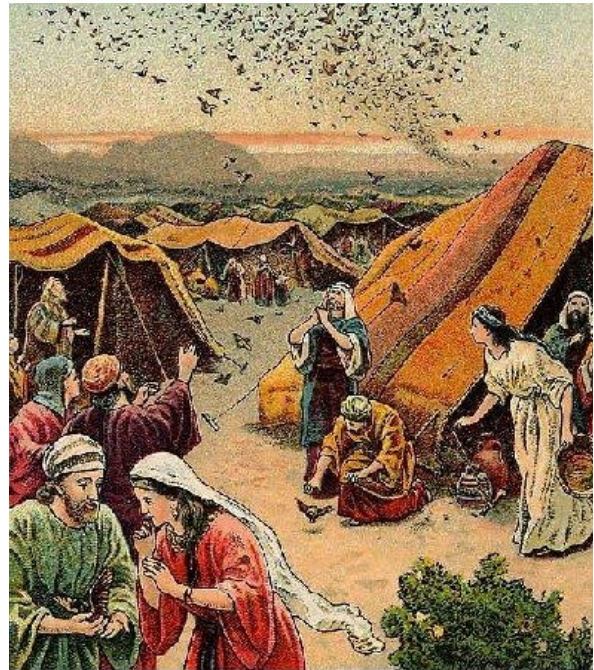
Now, it is possible that this is supernatural and it is possible that God has used the natural conditions of this region to produce the quail. I tend to believe that this is a seemingly miraculous event which has its origins in natural phenomenon.

**The Giving of Quail** (a graphic); from [Luther Place Memorial Church](#); accessed January 11, 2023.

Exodus 16:13a-b **So it was that quails came up at evening and covered the camp,...**

The quail are everywhere; they cover the camp. They are like a blanket over the ground.

Just as Moses presented the provision of meat in the evening as an incidental; it is mentioned here the same way. Nothing is said about the Israelites *beholding* the birds, chasing after them, cooking them, etc. It simply states that there were a lot of quails and the sentence moves on to the next morning. According to Barthel<sup>38</sup>, quail were common in Egypt and this would have been during their migratory flight north. Due to the long flight, they were exhausted and easy to catch. However, keep in mind that we are feeding 2,000,000 and that would be an awful lot of quail. Today in April it is a closed season on quail in Egypt.



"The Giving of Quail"  
Providence Lithograph Company, 1901 (copyright expired)

The details of this event do not match up with what happened in Num. 11 at all. In that chapter, the sons of Israel have gone a very long time without meat; and God gives them quail. One commentator suggests that these recollections must have come from different manuscripts, where one account has it wrong.

The explanation for different sets of details is quite simple. The manna would be a daily event (except on Saturday); but the quail was a one-time experience, repeated in Num. 11. There is nothing which suggests that the Israelites received a meal of quail every day after either of these events. In fact, when this is recalled in the psalms, it reads: Psalm 105:40 **They asked, and He brought quail, and gave them bread from heaven in abundance.** (ESV; capitalized) God gave the people a lot of quail; but He is said to give them *bread from heaven in abundance*; which suggests that the bread (manna) continued as a daily thing. There were rules for collecting manna; but there were no rules for capturing and eating quail, as that only occurs twice in Israel's history (could this time be for Gen X and the next for the generation of promise?).

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<sup>38</sup> P. 116

Exodus 16:13b ...and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp.

Every morning, God would provide the people with manna, which was sort of a dew which was found around the camp.

**Application:** Often, the believer learning about this historical experiences, might stop and ask, “Well, what does this have to do with me? I’ve walked around at night without seeing quail. I don’t go out each morning and gather manna. I don’t get it.”

**Application:** God provides for each generation of people. When you trust in Him, God takes care of you.

**Application:** This does not mean that you will never experience hunger or life won’t be difficult; but surely we should be able to recognize all that God does for us in our lives.

**Application:** When I first moved to Texas, where I live, life was a struggle. And the years before that, when I was in California, I struggled as well. But it was never to a point where I wondered, *where is my next meal coming from?* God has always been faithful in that regard.

**Application:** Here is your application: if God is able to provide for 2 million recalcitrant Hebrew men and women out in the desert, then He is certainly able to provide for you. This is known as logistical grace. Logistical grace is what God provides to enable the new believers to advance to maturity. This does not guarantee that they will advance; only the God will provide them the means to live when moving in that direction.

**Application:** Understanding that God will provide for us does not mean that we lay around all day doing nothing, and then God provides for us by magically restocking our refrigerator and our freezer. God also provides us with work, and from our work, these things are obtained.

We studied the doctrine of logistical grace back in Genesis 13 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)); and the Doctrine of logistical grace can be found online here: ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Exodus 16:13 So it was that quails came up at evening and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp.

As discussed, this abundance of quail probably occurred one-time; and then, in Num. 11, it was again, a singular event. This does not mean that this provision only occurred those two times. However, it is recorded only these two times.

Exodus 16:14a And when the layer of dew lifted,....

Although the Bible is not a science book, it often deals with scientific phenomenon in descriptive layman's terms. Most people would decide the dew, for the most part, would be absorbed by the ground. However, in that dry weather, it evaporated. The word used



here is the Qal imperfect of 'âlâh (עָלָה) [pronounced *gaw-LAWH*] and it means *to ascend, to go up, to climb*. A better word could not be found to describe evaporation.

Every morning, there would be a dew on the ground; but that dew would evaporate.

Exodus 16:14b ...there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, as fine as frost on the ground.

Exactly the nature and structure of this bread is unknown to us. Many see these as very thin wafers.

Ronald Knox has an interesting take on this: *'Dew that covered the earth's surface'; the Hebrew text has a different sense, 'When the dew (or perhaps, the mist) had cleared, there lay in the desert (something) powdered fine', etc.*<sup>39</sup>

I believe that he may have something here; that when the morning mist burns off, what remains is this odd, powder or wafer-like substance.

What was left behind was an odd substance, which is described here as small and round. However, there are a variety of descriptions:

ESV	...there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground.
Green's Literal Trans.	...and, behold, something small was on the face of the wilderness, scalelike, small like the hoarfrost on the earth.
Kukis paraphrase	It was thin, like the frost of morning, and round; and it was everywhere around them.
Voice in Wilderness	...there, on the surface of the wilderness, were small flakes, as fine as frost on the ground.

As you can see, there is not a great deal of agreement about what these things are. The things which can be agreed to is, these wafers look like frost on the ground, but they are not.

There are two words used together to describe it. The first is the feminine plural, adjective daq (דַּק) [pronounced *dahk*], which means, *thin, small, fine; gaunt*. This word is found enough in the Old Testament to establish its meaning as *small, thin*. Strong's #1851 BDB #201.

This is followed by the Pual participle (acting as an adjective) chaspas (חָסַפָּס) [pronounced *khas-PAS*], which means, *a round thing; flake-like; scaled off, scale-like [in appearance]; from, to peel, to shred, to scale*. Strong's #2636 BDB #341. This word only occurs here in Scripture and it has no related words. How is a meaning of such a word even derived

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<sup>39</sup> From <http://www1000.newadvent.org/bible/exo016.htm> accessed May 11, 2019.

in the first place? Sometimes it is taken from other descriptions of manna; or it may be found elsewhere in Hebrew literature; or translators look to the Greek, Syriac and Latin translations to see how they translated the word. This may help to explain why there are so many English translations for this description of manna.

I do not fully comprehend *hoar-frost*, but in the Hebrew it is k<sup>e</sup>phôwr (כֶּפֶה) [pronounced k<sup>e</sup>f-OHR] and it is found but three places in the Old Testament, and this is one of them (also in Job 38:29 Psalm 147:16). A hoar-frost is a gray or white frost that has been there for awhile.

I explore some of these things, as I find them to be interesting; but I don't know that there is anything which would actually help us to understand what this substance was in modern-terms or if there is any kind of a product today which is similar.

Exodus 16:14 *And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, as fine as frost on the ground.*

Based upon the description here, this appears to have been a natural product as opposed to a miraculously created thing, but what exactly is a matter of speculation.

We do not know exactly what manna is and some have made educated guesses as to its composition. One is that when any of seven different plants, all native to Egypt, have their bark punctured by insects, that they will exude small, thick, sweet droplets. Scientists have also identified manna as a thick secretion of the Tamarisk tree. This identifications are all well and good, but keep in mind that we are feeding 2,000,000 people a day for forty years, so we are talking miraculous portions of manna beyond human comprehension. This does not mean that God did not combine natural existing elements in order to produce this; but what the final product is, is impossible to identify.

## Lesson 251: Exodus 16:11–17

## Israel Receives Manna from Heaven

### A Brief Review of Exodus 16:11–14

Exodus 16:11–12 *And the LORD said to Moses, "I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"*

The people were grumbling because there was no water and no food for them.

God promises quail for the evening meal (a singular event); and bread in the mornings (which was to be a daily event).

Exodus 16:13 *In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp.*

They ate quail that night.

Exodus 16:14 And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. (ESV)

Once the dew evaporated, there was some sort of a bread or wafer left behind, which the people were to gather according to specific rules.

Exodus 16:15a So when the children of Israel saw it,...

The Israelites, being hungry, went out the next morning to see what it was that God was going to provide. I am assuming that they saw something which they recognized as being the food that God had promised, simply because they had not seen it before.

There is some sort of white material on the ground, perhaps of a wafer consistency and this was a new thing. No doubt that they looked at it for awhile and some touched it and some grabbed it and brought it up closer to their face—perhaps to smell or to taste.

Exodus 16:15b ...they said to one another, "What is it?"

There are many Hebrew people out that morning, having been promised this by God; but they had never seen anything quite like it before. Nobody says, "You know, I have eaten something like this before;" or, "I have seen something like this before, and it is okay to eat." No. They looked at this stuff, probably inspecting it carefully, and kept saying to one another, "What is it?"

Exodus 16:15a-b So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?"

When the people saw this for the first time, they asked one another, *what is it? What is that?*

We all know that this is manna from heaven. The question, *what is it*, is actually two words in the Hebrew: *mân* (מָן) [pronounced *mawn*] and it is found but one time in the Scripture, here, and most authorities believe that it means *what*. Since these were slaves of the Egyptians for four centuries, it might even be an Egyptian word. We have the exact same spelling (and pronunciation) of a Chaldean word which is translated *who* or *what* in Ezra 5:3, 4, 9 Dan. 3:6, 11, 15 4:17, 25, 32 5:21. This is followed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun *hûw'* (הוּא) [pronounced *hoo*]. As you have noticed, there are a number of phrases in the Hebrew which we supply some form of the absolute status quo verb *to be*, but this verb is not carried, only implied, in the Hebrew. You have no doubt noticed that this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine, yet I've translated it as *it*. This is because there is no neuter form of this verb—either the feminine or the masculine can be used for the neuter. So the Hebrews are running around seeing this stuff and they are saying continually to one another, "mawn hoo, mawn hoo" which literally translates to, "What it? What it?" We know that *it* is manna. For some reason, when we transliterated

it, we substitute the -na at the end instead of hûw. The Hebrews named this food *what it*; or as Strong put it, *whatness*.

Exodus 16:15c For they did not know what it was.

Based upon this sentence, what they are seeing, they have never seen before.

Exodus 16:15a-c So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was.

God told them more or less what to expect; but when they saw it, it was outside their realm of past events. They had not seen anything like this before. Whereas, I have suggested that quite a number of the previous events fit in with the laws of nature, I would suggest that this amount of *manna* is at least, in part, miraculous. By the term *miraculous*, I do not necessarily mean that it was created out of thin air, but that this is something which really existed, and in great enough quantities to provide the Hebrew people (population two million) with a meal every single day.

Exodus 16:15d And Moses said to them, “This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat.

Now, Moses did not look down and recognize this food. But he knew what God had promised; therefore, he could simply say, “This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat.” He was seeing something on the ground that he had never seen before; and the promise of God was fresh in his mind.

The bread about which Moses is speaking, refers to the *manna* from God (we have not used this particular word yet). Now, there will be specific instructions from God about gathering it each morning.

Although the word that Moses uses here does mean *bread*, similar to our sense of the word; it was an all-purpose word referencing *food*. *This is your food, your sustenance, your nourishment, your daily bread*, is what Moses tells the Israelites.

Where did the bread come from? It came from God. Moses is more or less confirming what the people thought might be true.

Exodus 16:16a This is the thing which the Lord has commanded:...

God has already told them about this stuff; this is the food that God had promised them.

This time we actually have the word for command; the Piel perfect of tsâvâh (צַו) [pronounced *tsaw-VAW*] and it is found primarily in the Piel and it means *command, lay charge, order*. In the actual command, the Hebrew is a bit wordy and does not follow the simple English at all; but the command is for the man to go out and gather about one omer of manna per person for those in his tent. This is a pretty specific command. However,

it will become clear that Israel was not all interested in *listening* to God's Word or *obeying* God's Word.

Again, author Moses moves the action right along. In Exodus 16:11–12, God begins to tell Moses about the bread from heaven (soon to be called *manna*) and the quail which God would provide. God apparently speaks to Moses at length, but we are only given a single sentence. Then the sons of Israel have the quail in the evening and this odd bread in the morning (vv. 13–14). The Israelites ask one another about this bread (v. 15). Then Moses tells the people exactly how they are to gather and eat the bread (vv. 16, 19, 23, 25–26). In between those verses are what the people actually did.

What we do not have in the Exodus record is, God first tells Moses how He will provide for Israel, and then God gives Moses all of the specifications and regulations for eating and gathering the food; and then Moses comes down and repeats these things to the people. And then when the people don't do what they are told to do, Moses reprimands them. Although this is pretty much what happened, if all of this was recorded, we would pretty much double the length of chapter 16. In other words, when God says something, it is generally found but once—either when He speaks to Moses or when Moses speaks these words to Israel.

Exodus 16:16b ...*'Let every man gather it according to each one's need,*...

There was no need to go crazy when collecting this food. Whatever anyone needs or desires, gather enough for that day's need. More than likely, either the father or the mother of each family went out and collected according to the number of mouths that had to be fed.

I do find it interesting that God does not simply have the manna manifest itself right outside each tent; but time must be spent gathering it. That is, there is some work or effort involved in procuring it.

Exodus 16:16c ...*one omer for each person, according to the number of persons;*...

Each kind of food has its own density. God gives Moses a ballpark amount that each adult person should collect.

Freeman: *An omer is a dry measure which is approximately equal to two quarts, one pint and one tenth (of a pint?) in English corn measure.*<sup>40</sup>

Although it is not clear here who is to do the gathering, God gives them a recommended daily amount per person—an omer.

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<sup>40</sup> Freeman, p. 68



For the proper nourishment, God suggests an omer per person, a measure that we have made some guesses about; but we really don't know. Perhaps two large cereal bowls or so might be the right amount of Manna.

This verse actually reads *an omer a skull* or *an omer a head*, which sounds grisly, so I have opted to record the intent of the verse, as most translators do: *an omer per person* or *an omer apiece*.

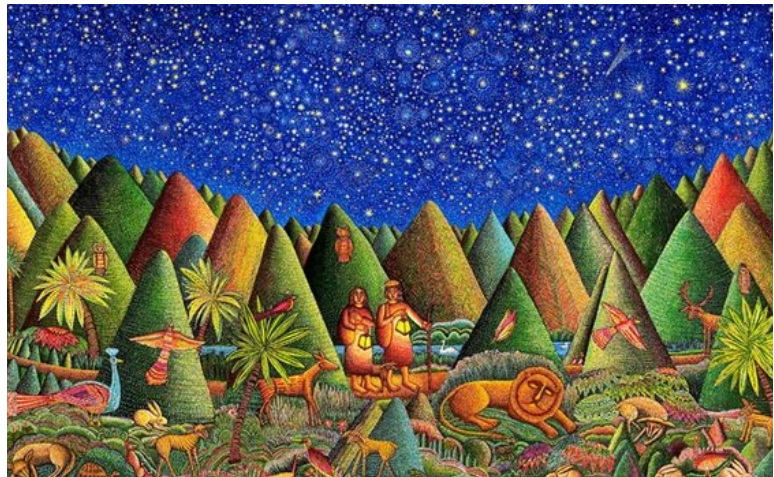
Exodus 16:16d ...let every man take for those who are in his tent.”

This seems to be the head of the household who is doing the gathering—or, perhaps someone designated by him. This is not specified. And he considers the number of people in their tent and gathers according to that.

Exodus 16:16 This is the thing which the Lord has commanded: ‘Let every man gather it according to each one’s need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent.’”

The entire family did not go out and gather manna; but it appears that the head of the household did that. No doubt, there are both nuclear and extended families.

**Strange Picture of Israel in the Desert** (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#); accessed August 24, 2022.



Exodus 16:17a Then the children of Israel did so...

There are four verbs in this short verse. We have the Qal imperfect of the oft times used ‘āsāh (אָסָה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*], it it means *do, make*. Strong's #6213 BDB #793.

Exodus 16:17b ...and gathered, some more, some less.

The first time that the people went out to gather up this manna, they had never done so before. They had never eaten it, prepared it or even saw it before. Determining the right amount to gather, despite what God told them, is simply a guess that they make.

They went out to gather manna, and, as we would expect, sometimes they gathered too much and some of them gathered too little.

As we will understand by the context, these are those who tried to get about the right amount.

*Gathered* is the Qal imperfect of *lâqaṭ* (טָקַל) [pronounced *law-KAHT*], meaning simply *to gather, to pick, to pick up*. Strong's #3950 BDB #544. This is all followed by the definite article plus the Hiphil participle of *râbâh* (רָבַח) [pronounced *raw<sup>b</sup>-VAWH*], which means *to increase, to become many*. Strong's #7235 BDB #915. The last verb is the Hiphil participle of *mâ'aṭ* (טָעַח) [pronounced *maw-GAHT*] and it means *to decrease, to lessen*. Strong's #4591 BDB #589. The Hiphil participle is a verbal adjective which indicates continued causative action. It was their disobedience or their indifference to God's Word which caused them to gather too much.

Exodus 16:17 *Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less.*

This verse stands out because it is filled with verbs and it shows us that the Israelites did not put a lot of stock in God's Word. God's Word was very specific and, apparently, many ignored it.

#### **Lessons 252–253: Exodus 16:14–21**

#### **Israel Gathers Manna**

The people had come to Moses and they complained about having no food. They were in a desert-wilderness (meaning that this was an unpopulated area, not that it was bleak, barren and without rain); and there was no indication that they were going to stop anywhere and plant crops. So, how were they to eat?

God promised Israel that, each morning when they woke up, He would provide a wafer-like substance, which they would find outside, on the ground.

Exodus 16:14 *And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground.*

You might picture this as these fine, flake-like things as being on the sand or on the dirt, but that is not necessarily the case. There was probably a fair amount of vegetation where they were traveling. There just was not a sustainable food source.

Exodus 16:15 *When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.*

They were told about this fine, flake-like thing, which was on the ground like a frost. The people of Israel had never seen this before, so they kept saying, *what is it?* A very rough transliteration for those two Hebrew words is *manna*.

Exodus 16:16 This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.'

God had already given them a command as to what to do with this new stuff on the ground. "Gather is up until you have about an omer per person."

Exodus 16:17 And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. (ESV)

The people of Israel more or less followed God's instructions

**The Gathering of the Manna**  
by James Tissot (a graphic);  
from [Wikimedia Commons](#);  
accessed April 19, 2021.

I tend to see the landscape in that era as much more green and a lot less sandy. If today, someone traveled in the same region, they would come across an ocean of sand.

I do not believe that the landscape was so bleak at that time. Throughout this section of Exodus, we have mentions of oases, trees, etc. Land, for a variety of reasons (usually as a result of low rainfall) can go from being a rather pleasant environment to a sandy desert. When rainfall over a region changes—and that certainly does take place—that region can change dramatically, even in a relatively short time (a century or two).



Israel could not sustain itself in this region because they were moving about from point A to point B. God did not tell them to stop and cultivate the earth. They are not to do that until they arrive in the land that He promised them.

However, logistical grace demands that God feed this people, despite their hardheaded nature.



V. 18 applies to the first gathering of manna:

Exodus 16:18a *So when they measured it by omers,...*

This simply means that they gathered approximately an omer of manna per person. Elsewhere, it is suggested that an omer of manna is about 2 quarts.

Exodus 16:18b *...he who gathered much had nothing left over,...*

God seemed to allow for those who took too much or too little. The one who gathered more than they needed to, they ended up, after their meals for the day, with no additional manna remaining.

However, if one gathered too much manna, he did not end up having too much. Again, this is gathering an amount of manna that is within reason.

Exodus 16:18c *...and he who gathered little had no lack.*

Some people tend to be conservative in their approach to things, and they may have thought, on this first day, that perhaps they should not bring in too much. Maybe they just need to try it and see how it goes. They had not seen it before—would it make them sick?

If someone gathered too little manna, they did not end up needing more.

*The much* and *the little* in this verse are the exact same Hiphil participles that were in the previous verse, both being found with a definite article. Despite their disobedience, God in the beginning, gently enforced their compliance.

Exodus 16:18d *Every man had gathered according to each one's need.*

As has long been the case, the head of the household went out and got the food necessary to survive. He knew the number of people who needed to eat and he gathered the proper amount.

When their first meal was complete, they had enough so that everyone was satiated.

Exodus 16:18 *So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need.*

This describes the first day or two.

Paul applies this passage:

It is always fascinating to me how teachers in the 1<sup>st</sup> century often seized upon a passage here or there and give it a very different application than we might expect.

When Paul or another teacher takes a passage like this from the Old Testament and applies it, it helps us to see how these things apply to us (the results are often surprising). Quite obviously, you and I are not going to be gathering manna any time soon. You won't be leading a boy scout group out for a camp out and instruct them, "Tomorrow morning, we are going to gather manna for breakfast." You won't wake up tomorrow morning, look in the refrigerator, see nothing which looks good, and decide, "Well, why don't I just go and beck the backyard for manna?" Based upon this, you might think, *well, this passage really has no application to me*. And yet, Paul, 1500 years later, tells us that it does.

Paul quotes this passage, when writing in 2Corinthians. Paul wrote to men and woman who would never gather manna in their entire lives (which passage has been read by billions of people who will never gather manna):

2Corinthians 8:15 **As it is written, He that [had gathered] much had nothing over; and he that [had gathered] little had no lack.**

What is Paul saying to the Corinthians exactly? Obviously, we need a bit of context and explanation here.

This context of this passage is giving. The ESV; capitalized is used below.

### 2Corinthinas 8:9–15 — Basic Exegesis

Scripture	Text/Commentary
2Corinthians 8:9 <b>For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.</b>	<p>Jesus is God, but for us, He became man (a state of poverty, by comparison). Because He died for our sins, we are forgiven for our sins and placed into Christ, thus sharing in His great wealth.</p> <p>When it came to paying for our sins, Jesus did not skimp on that process. He died for everyone's sins, including those who would not believe in Him.</p>
2Corinthians 8:10–11 <b>And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.</b>	<p>The Corinthians had begun to set money aside for a gift for the church in Jerusalem, and they began to do this a year ago. Paul is urging them to complete the task of collecting for this gift and then to send it off.</p> <p>"Finish what you started," Paul tells them.</p>



## 2Corinthians 8:9–15 — Basic Exegesis

Scripture	Text/Commentary
2Corinthians 8:12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.	The Corinthians are supposed to give according to to what they have. As we study Scripture, this is between the individual and God. The clergy is not to step in and set up a particular amount or percentage. If that was the intent, then you would read about that percentage right here. In this passage which is all about giving, no percentages are given.
2Corinthians 8:13–14 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.	Paul is not asking for them to give more, so that others might be able to give less. He wants them to give a fair share based upon how God has blessed them.  The Corinthians were apparently blessed with material blessings; and Paul is telling them, you need to share what God has given you.
2Corinthians 8:15 As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."	God is going to take care of your needs, no matter what. So, the Corinthian believer who holds back is not going to end up being better off than the Corinthian believer who gives liberally. Even though, from human viewpoint, it appears that what you do not give is going to give you a little extra in your bank account, that is not necessarily true.

Do you see the sort of spin which is put on this passage? Paul incorporates Moses' narrative in a completely different way from the history that Moses has recorded. Paul is talking about Christian giving and Moses is talking about the collection of manna on the first day of God's manna. What exactly is the connection?

Part of the lesson here is, this is God and His interaction with the sons of Israel. We ought to be able to learn about God interacting with His people and then apply those lessons to what we think and do today—even if we are not doing the same things today as the Israelites did back then.

Exodus 16:19 And Moses said, "Let no one leave any of it till morning."

People were not to gather large quantities of manna and save it aside, just in case. The reason for this is, God provides for us day-by-day. It is not wrong to focus on the future and to consider things to be done for and in the future; but when it comes to God's grace, that comes day-by-day. Manna would certainly fall within the parameters of grace. These ungrateful Israelites continued to be a thorn in the side of Moses and God; and yet God provides them with the necessary food to live (this is known as logistical grace).

We have only begun to learn about the Exodus generation; they will do far worse things in the future. And yet, despite their rebellion, God provided for them manna for 40 years. Most of them also faced discipline, but that is because most of them never exploited God's grace.

God's promise to the people of Israel was to provide them with manna each and every day. So, no one needed to gather additional manna, just in case God forgot the following day.

Moses lays out some pretty simple instructions. One of them is, they are not to try to save the manna until the next day.

God's instructions may have been more detailed than what we read here. Moses may have given all of the instructions at once or spread them out over a few days. Again, this is arranged and recalled by Moses more topically than chronologically. We first deal with the gathering too much and the too little. This is likely what occurred the first couple days. Then we have the excess problem.

Exodus 16:20a **Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses.**

Exactly as we would expect, Moses gives the sons of Israel clear, explicit directions and a significant number ignore those directions. So, the people, fearful that God would not provide for them tomorrow, got enough manna to set aside for the next day—just in case.

Just so you don't take one verse and one concept and blow it all out of proportion, it is okay to make investments, it is okay to have a savings account, it is okay to think about the future. For instance, when you are between the ages of 20–60, you are able to work really hard for 10 or 12 or more hours a day. It is okay to do that, as long as you do not neglect Bible doctrine; so that, when you get into your 60's, you can reduce your workload. By that age, with or without government, you will have more time, a tad less energy, and, ideally speaking, some spiritual growth—which may affect how you spend your time. Best case scenario, you find more time for Bible doctrine.

Speaking of which, I have gone back and re-listened to quite a number of studies by R. B. Thieme, Jr. I can guarantee you that I get more out of his teaching the second time through, even though I am listening to them 40 years after the fact.

Exodus 16:20b **But some of them left part of it until morning,...**

There were some who tried to save additional manna for the next day.

Now, you may ask, *why did they do this? Weren't Moses' instructions clear enough?* You see, the problem is, the people did not believe Moses and they did not believe God. They did not believe that the manna would be there the next day; so they saved some aside just in case God was not faithful.

Exodus 16:20c **...and it bred worms...**

Saving aside some extra manna for the next day turns out to be a mistake. For those who ignored Moses and tried to save the manna for the next day, it bred worms. Some sort of worm or maggot grew in day-old manna.

Those who gathered up more manna than they needed—thus revealing a lack of faith in God—ended up with food that spoiled, smelled and bred worms.

Exodus 16:20d ...and stank.

The manna also stunk.

The verb found here is bâ'ash (בָּאֵשׁ) [pronounced *baw-AHSH*] and it means *to have a bad smell, to stink, to become malodorous*. God made certain that they noticed their own lack of obedience. You may wonder *doesn't this contradict the previous couple verses*. Not necessarily. Some continued to gather too much and God no longer took up the slack for their disobedience (remember, it says that if they gathered too much, they had no extra left over). God may have kept up that program for a few days (so He evened things out, even if one family gathered too much and another too little); but once the people knew how much to gather, God no longer evened things out. Or, possibly some may have rationed their family when it came to eating this and made them save some aside until the next day because they did not trust God to provide them food for the next day. It boils down to simply trusting what God has said. Many in the Exodus generation did not do that.

When the people tried to save the manna for the next day, this is analogous to human good. Human good has no eternal results; and what follows human good is not good.

It came to Moses' attention that the people were no gathering the manna as they had been told.

Exodus 16:20e And Moses was angry with them.

Moses told them exactly what they needed to do. His directions came from God and he was explicit in telling them. The problem of the people was, they simply disobeyed God's directions.

From Moses' point of view, God has been faithful and He had done all that He had promised to. But the people do not appear to recognize this.

I am reminded of the story from the news from Lake Woebegone of the rental cabins and the rural owner who throws a family out because they cannot follow one, simple instruction. Moses has given them the Word of God. This was a direct, specific command from God. There are pastors today who do not teach God's Word carefully, examining it for its true meaning and context. There are thousands upon thousands of Christians today who listen to what they want and ignore what they want. The Bible is crystal clear on the prohibition of sex outside of marriage (including pre-marital sex), yet an incredible number of Christians ignore this and follow the morality they have learned from movies and television.

Similarly, there are a lot of homosexual Christians who will not attend a church unless it is pro-homosexuality (and yes, it is possible to believe in Jesus and still have homosexual desires<sup>41</sup>). The Bible is clear about homosexuality. That may be their natural inclination, but that does not make it right. There are commands in the Bible concerning mental attitude sins, verbal sins, judging and gossip—totally ignored by Christians. And I should be clear on what I mean by ignore: these Christians will not even name these sins to God to get back into fellowship. They are so bull-headed and so wrong that they refuse to recognize their behavior as sinful, willfully rejecting the Word of God whenever it steps on their toes. So if you read this passage and are thinking to yourself, "In terms of instructions, this is pretty damn simple; how come they can't obey this?"; then examine your own life; examine the clear teaching of God's Word as it applies to you and ask the same question of yourself.

Bear in mind, if you choose to not recognize a sin as sinful, then you will not name that sin to God; and you will remain out of fellowship until you finally commit another sin that you agree with God is a sin and confess that (when we name our known sins, then all of our unrighteousnesses are forgiven—1John 1:9).

Exodus 16:20 **Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them.**

God gave the Hebrew people manna; and with the promise of manna, God also gave them clear and unequivocal directions. This is not unlike the morality given in the Bible. It is clear and unequivocal, and yet believers in Jesus Christ refuse to believe it.

Exodus 16:21a **So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need.**

Those responsible for gathering food—probably the ancient breadwinner of that era—went out to gather up the manna. The idea was to gather about an omer for each mouth to feed. However many mouths that man had to feed determined how much manna to gather.

Exodus 16:21b **And when the sun became hot, it melted.**

I believe the idea here is to correlate these two events. As it became warm, the manna would melt. Therefore, there was a time frame during which the bread had to be gathered up.

Exodus 16:21 **So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted.**

It appears as if God is doing everything possible to guide the people to obedience. When the people are not gathering the right amount, God sees to it that it makes no difference, if they gather too much or too little.

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<sup>41</sup> The believer would have to build up the scar tissue again, which God removed at salvation.

Then manna kept overnight bred worms and stank. That ended that.

In v. 21, God now limits the amount of time a person can go look for manna.

Therefore, God does not simply give the people of Israel the guidelines, He even makes it difficult for them to go outside of those guidelines.

Let's go back to pre-marital sex. Some Christians might try recreational sex because they are just driven by their hormones and they have no self-control. They find out that this does not work. They are no happier as a result of having sex outside of marriage; and the people that they hook up with are bad for them. They spend years in go-nowhere relationships. So then they try putting off sex until the fifth or sixth date, deciding that they will wait for someone that they like a lot. This doesn't work either. Then they decide to date Christians seriously, but to occasionally have sex with unbelievers to satisfy their lust. They are looking for every single angle that they can play against God's Word. And they cannot understand why they are miserable and they cannot seem to locate their right man or right woman (which is a very big thing for most people).

Homosexuals might go through a similar scenario—it is clear in the Bible the homosexual behavior is forbidden. Nevertheless, the person with homosexual desires might ignore this and practice indiscriminate homosexual behavior; then they may just opt for special relationships; then they might become sexually involved only when it looks as though it is a long-term relationship. They try everything except obedience to God's Word, as though God was confused or didn't know their circumstances. You didn't know that all of this was hidden here in this passage, did you? I know I didn't get everyone here but what mandate do you know of that says to do A and you are trying B, C, D, E and F? You try everything except obedience to God's Word. Now you know what the Exodus generation was like. No matter what message God gave to Moses to give to them, they would find ways of getting around that message in order to do things their own way.

## Lesson 254: Exodus 16:14–23

## Gathering Manna on Day Six

### Manna—a summary so far:

Exodus 16:14–15a And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was.

Moses told the people where the manna would be found. They went out to look for it, and found some sort of flaky thing that looked like morning frost. They had never seen it before.

Exodus 16:15b–16 And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Gather of it, each one of you, as much



as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent."

Moses confirmed, "That is the bread from heaven that God has provided. Gather enough for everyone in your household to eat for today."

Exodus 16:17–18 And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat.

On the first day, if they gathered too much, none was left over. If they gathered too little, the people of the household were satiated.

Exodus 16:19 And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning."

The people were not to put this manna aside to eat the next morning.

Exodus 16:20–21 But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

What we are seeing here is a number of scenarios. You see, they tried keeping the excess inside, but it began to stink and attracted vermin; so they decided to just leave it outside the tent to see how it would fare there. Outside the tent, it would melt.

I know that many of you have heard this story many times or have read it and it never occurs to you what is happening here. They are trying anything they can to get around the Word of God. Moses has given them instructions directly from God. Therefore, they are intentionally disobeying the commands that God has given them, and when things don't work out one way in their disobedience, they try disobeying in another way.

We have studied a lot about Israel gathering manna, and have seen that God gave them clear instructions, yet many of them disobeyed those instructions.

We have another set of instructions in the passage which follows.

Exodus 16:22a And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread,...

The way I read this, taking this with the next verse—Moses is giving them instructions (found in vv. 5 and 23); so that they followed those instructions in v. 22.

On the sixth day, which is Friday, they gather twice as much bread (or manna) as usual. This is because they will not gather any manna on Saturday (the Sabbath).

Exodus 16:22b ...two omers for each one.

Now, they are gathering up 2 omers per person.

Now here we have some obedience of God's Word. In v. 5, this is what they were commanded to do for the Sabbath. This also shows us the extent of the miraculousness of all this. They could not gather twice as much on the other days because the manna rotted in their tent. For five days, they could not gather a double portion without the manna going bad. However, on the sixth day, it was God's command that they double up on their gathering so that they did not have to gather any food on the Sabbath (Saturday).

### **Applying Manna Instructions:**

We have these instructions about manna; how does that relate to us today?

Let's consider sex. Mutually consensual sex of any kind is completely permissible within the confines of marriage. It does not work correctly anywhere else; in fact, sex outside of God's boundaries ruins marriages and relationships and the discovery of right man, right woman (as people have become more sexually active in the United States, the divorce rate has gone up). However, within God's confines, where marriage is the proper playing field, sex works.

Let's take another totally different illustration: Christian service. You can attend church, listen to Bible teaching, give vast quantities of your money to a church or to some worthy organization and if you are an unbeliever or if you are out of fellowship, it does not mean a thing. It counts for nothing in God's plan. However, if a Christian does the same thing while in fellowship, it is gold and precious silver to him. It can result in temporal and eternal rewards. The proper playing field for Christian service is while filled with the Spirit.

Some people reject confession of sin to God (as per 1John 1:9) because they were Christians for five years (or for twenty years) and they never confessed their sins during that time and they feel like they have done pretty darned well in the spiritual growth department. As a result, they reject God's Word when it comes to naming their sins to God.

Or they asked Jesus into their hearts and ever since, they have led a fairly moral life, and they think that they are good. But have they followed God's Word and believed in Jesus Christ? Have they trusted in His finished work upon the cross on their behalf? If they think that asking Jesus into their hearts is all that is necessary, then they are arrogant and think that they have found a way which is a little bit better than what we read in God's Word. They are arrogant and they are depending upon their own works. Any unbeliever can clean up his life and stop drinking, stop taking drugs, stop lying and cheating, and even stop participating in acts of sex outside of marriage and his life will benefit greatly from it. His mood will improve and many people will comment about how he is such a changed person and so much better to be around. He will even be happier because he is following

God's laws, to a certain extent (this is known as adhering to the laws of divine establishment). However, if he does not believe in Jesus Christ, then he will spend eternity in the lake of fire and all of his good deeds and personal reform will mean absolutely nothing when it comes to eternal things. Temporally, his life might become 100% better. But eternally, if he has not believed in Jesus Christ, he will burn. In order to live the Christian life, you must first be a Christian. That is the proper playing field. Believing in Jesus Christ is God's instruction to the unbeliever.

In case you do not know, the Christian drill is simple. You believe in Jesus Christ, you trust in Him and what He has done for you on the cross—He has paid for your sins, He has endured an eternity of hell for everything that you have done wrong, and all you need to do is to take it. That appropriation by faith takes all of two, three, maybe five seconds and your eternity is sewn up. Then, post-salvation, when you sin, you name your sin (s) to God. And finally, you live in God's Word. You find a pastor teacher who teaches God's Word verse-by-verse with extreme care to get it right. That is the Christian life in a nutshell. It is simple. Anyone can do it. And what is great, is that you can try this and if you don't like it, you can return to your former life. God allows you free will. You can't lose. It is just as though someone has handed you a free lottery ticket for \$18,000,000 and all you have to do is scratch off the numbers. Certainly, you can return to your \$39,000/year job if you decide that you do not like having \$18,000,000.

There is, however, one catch. When you believe in Jesus Christ, you enter into a family relationship with God. Salvation places you into Jesus Christ and you become a son of God through imputation and through the new birth. As a son of God, you are subject to divine discipline so if you chose to return to your former life of darkness, God will allow you to do that; however, He will also discipline you—and in some cases, severely. However, on the plus side, you have eternal life.

Let's get back to the narrative:

Exodus 16:22c [And all the rulers of the congregation came...](#)

What appears to be the case is, the leaders of the congregation will come in and report what is happening. I believe the idea here is, to get further instructions of what to do next.

Exodus 16:22d [...and told Moses.](#)

The leaders came in and reported to Moses; and it appears to me that they were just telling Moses what they did on the sixth day, according to his instructions (which are found in the next verse).

The way I read this in some translations, it almost seems as if the leaders are *tattling* on the people. It could simply be that, Moses gave the instructions and the leaders were just checking in, saying what the people had done, knowing that previously, those who gathered too much ended up with a mess the next day.

Exodus 16:22 And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.

What appears to be the case is, the leaders are simply confirming with Moses that the people are doing is what is expected of them.

Exodus 16:23a Then he said to them, “This is what the Lord has said:...

The first week of collecting manna would be connected to the Sabbath—presented in this chapter for the first time in the Bible. What appears to be the case is, the mandates were given first and then they were obeyed; but it is presented here in Exodus 16 with the commands and the actions interspersed.

Moses first tells them to go out and collect twice as much manna on day six (a Friday); after telling them *not* to do this for the previous 5 days. The people did this, the leaders confirmed to Moses that the people did this. Now the leaders had come to Moses for further instructions. “We got twice as much, like you told us to do. What’s next?”

Exodus 16:23b ...‘Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord.

Moses tells them that the next day, Saturday, would become a day of rest for them, also known as *a holy Sabbath*.

This is the first mention of the Sabbath in the Bible. However, there have been nascent mentions of a 7<sup>th</sup> day of rest in Genesis. God took six days to restore the earth; but on the seventh, He rested (God rested because He was finished, not because He was tired).

Exodus 16:23c Bake what you will bake today,...

On that day, Friday, the people were to bake whatever needed to be baked. They were to prepare family meals for two days.

Exodus 16:23d ...and boil what you will boil;...

That Friday, they were to prepare and cook whatever needed preparation and cooking for Friday and for Saturday.

In some cultures, if there is a holy day of rest, the work usually done on that day might be put upon slaves. Israel did not do that. All of the work for the Sabbath was to be done the day before (they did not have slaves of their own at this time, but they would own slaves in the future).

Exodus 16:23e ...and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.”

And, since they have gathered twice as much manna, there will be some remaining for Saturday. They are to allow this to remain until Saturday (previously, if there was any

additional manna, it had to be thrown out—otherwise, worms would begin to grow in it and it would stink.

My translation of v. 23e is somewhat different:

...and whatever is left over, permit [it] to rest until tomorrow [as] an observance [or, rite].’ ”  
(Kukis moderately literal translation)

All of this would be an observation or a rite. This is what the Hebrew people were to do from now on.

For the most part, the sons of Israel listen and obey. Their leaders report this information to Moses.

Exodus 16:23 Then he said to them, “This is what the Lord has said: ‘Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.’”

Moses is speaking to the elders, telling them that they were to prepare Friday what they would need for Friday and Saturday.

Now let’s put both of those verses together:

Exodus 16:22–23 And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. Then he said to them, “This is what the Lord has said: ‘Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.’”

The congregation of the desert did as instructed, then their leaders came and confirmed their actions with Moses. Then Moses gave them further instructions concerning the next two days.

## Lesson 255: Exodus 16:24–27

## Instructions for the Sabbath

God has told Moses to teach the people of Israel about the Sabbath day; and how they were to gather twice as much manna on Friday (and no one was to cook or gather manna on Saturday).

Exodus 16:24a So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded;...

Previously, extra manna was to be thrown out; if not, it went bad. However, on Friday, the people of Israel were to collect and save additional manna—enough for another full day. Moses told them to do this based upon God’s instructions to him.



The verb found here is the Hiphil imperfect of *nûwach* (נָח) [pronounced *NOO-ahkh*] and it means *to rest* and in the Hiphil, *to cause to rest*. It can also mean *to lay, to put down, to deposit*. In both v. 23 and 24, I have translated this *set aside*. The NKJV (which is what I use for my base text here) translates this *laid up*.

Exodus 16:24a *They set it aside until the morning, as Moses had commanded [them]...*  
(Kukis moderately literal translation)

Notice that when following God's instructions, rather than the manna going bad, as it did when too much was collected on the other days, here it remained fresh.

Exodus 16:24b *...and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it.*

Unlike what happened previously, there was no stinkage associated with the day-old manna; and there were no worms in it.

The way that this is all put together, this is certainly the first week that the people received manna and this is the first preparation for a Sabbath which took place.

Exodus 16:24 *So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it.*

Moses had given them the command, so the people gathered more manna on Friday. It did not go bad.

Exodus 16:25a *Then Moses said, "Eat that today,..."*

"You gathered additional manna," Moses says, "So today, you will eat that manna." If they did baking or cooking on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, whatever remains will be eaten on the 7<sup>th</sup> day.

Exodus 16:25b *...for today is a Sabbath to the Lord;...*

Saturday, the 7<sup>th</sup> day, will be considered the Sabbath day.

*Sabbath* is built on the verb *shâbath* (שָׁבַת) [pronounced *shaw-BAHTH*], which means *to rest, to keep a day of rest, to celebrate the Sabbath; to sit down [still]; to cease, to desist, to leave off, to discontinue*. Strong's #7673 BDB #992. This verb is found in Genesis 2:2–3 8:22 Exodus 5:5 12:15 16:30. So the noun cognate would be associated with *ceasing, resting and sitting*.

Now, we have all kinds of notions about a Sabbath day, as students of Scripture; but this is the first time that the sons of Israel are getting any sort of dissertation on it. This is brand new to them. To us, as students of Scripture, this is the nascent Sabbath, to be more well-defined in the near future.

Yesterday, Moses told them to gather twice as much manna for tomorrow, as tomorrow was a Sabbath. And now, the Sabbath is upon them. Moses will continue giving the people more information from God.

Exodus 16:25c ...today you will not find it in the field.

“First off,” Moses tells them, “if you try to collect manna, you are not going to find any. So, if you want to waste your time, go outside now and try to find some manna. You will not find any.”

Again, notice that the instructions of Moses, which were probably given all at once and then repeated again for the sake of the elders. Among the people, there is some disobedience and some obedience. When recording these event, Moses is interspersing events with the instructions of God.

Exodus 16:25 Then Moses said, “Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field.

The people of Israel were to gather additional manna on Friday and eat that Friday and Saturday. They would not find any manna, had they gone out that Saturday morning (no doubt, some of them did).

Exodus 16:26a Six days you shall gather it,...

Moses gives them instructions for the next 40 years (Moses does not realize that he is instructing them for 40 years, and they don’t know this either). None of them know what is going to transpire at this point, including Moses. But, when it comes to day-to-day living, for six days, they will go out each morning and gather manna, just as Moses has previously instructed them. But there will be no gathering of manna on the 7<sup>th</sup> day.

Exodus 16:26b ...but on the seventh day, the Sabbath,...

The 7<sup>th</sup> day is different. The 7<sup>th</sup> day is the Sabbath day. That day is going to be treated differently from the other days.

The word for 7<sup>th</sup> is very similar to the word for *sabbath*. Sh<sup>e</sup>bîy’îy (שְׁבִייעִי) [pronounced *sh<sup>e</sup>-bee-EE*] means *seventh*. Strong’s #7637 BDB #988. The second word is shâbbath (שַׁבָּת) [pronounced *shawb-BAHTH*], which means *ceasing, resting; desisting*; transliterated *Sabbath*. It is a time when normal life, particularly work, ceases. Strong’s #7676 BDB #992.

We actually have already covered the Doctrine of the Sabbath back in Genesis 25 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)), so I won’t repeat that here. Or see the Genesis #201–300 lessons ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) (Lessons #267–269). There is a great deal of overlap in these two studies. Pretty much the commentary is exactly the same. The Genesis 25 document has every Hebrew word from that chapter laid out in easy-to-follow tables (and the more you know

about the Hebrew language, the easier they are to follow). If that sort of thing disturbs you (and many people are disturbed by ancient languages), then check the Genesis #201–300 lessons instead, which mention the Hebrew words now and again, but not every single one of them.

Exodus 16:26b ...there will be none.”

There will be no manna to be found on the 7<sup>th</sup> day; so there is no need to try to go out to try to find any.

Exodus 16:26 Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none.”

If any Hebrew family decided to do it their way and look for fresh manna on a Saturday morning, they would simply not be able to find any and the family would be hungry that day. So this would happen at most once for most families.

God is doing everything possible for the people to hear His Word and believe it. Moses comes to the people with the words of God; they hear it; and whenever they disobey (which they often did), the results are fruitless.

Exodus 16:27a Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather,...

Now, when we began to study this section, we would simply think that everyone would obey the words from Moses. However, this phrase indicates that some families did their own thing. They went out and collected manna every day, Sunday through Friday; so they saw no reason trying to do things differently on Saturday.

Exodus 16:27a Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather,...

Moses has made it clear to gather twice as much manna that day before and not to bother going out on the Sabbath to find manna. And, there are people of Israel who decide they will ignore what Moses says and go out to find fresh manna that day.

God's mandates in this area are clearly presented by Moses. They could not be misunderstood.

Exodus 16:27b ...but they found none.

Experience revealed to them that they would not find any manna if they searched for it on a Saturday.

They did not find any manna, just as God told them.

Exodus 16:27b ...but they found none.

This verse was added so that you don't think that suddenly all of Israel began to obey God's Word. As in all groups of Christians, some obey and some do not. Some tried every way that they could think of to get around God's Word, some tried a few things, and some obeyed. There are always those who will test God's Word.

I wonder which people went out to gather on the 7<sup>th</sup> day? It seems to me that those people who disobeyed the first time, and tried to save manna for a couple days, and saw that it became spoiled and filled with worms—it is my guess that these people went out on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. “I have seen with my own eyes,” one might say, “that this food will go bad on the second day.” You see, some may have gone with the empirical evidence. “This is what I have seen with my own eyes.” They go with the empirical evidence rather than to believe God.

Now, these same people with their own eyes may have observed that the manna they had remaining for the 7<sup>th</sup> day *looked* fine; but, they were not going to take any chances. “Maybe it looks fine, but it could be bad,” some may have speculated.

God is trying to teach these people grace and about His gracious provision; and yet, they go out and try to work instead.

Exodus 16:27 Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none.

God saw to it that no manna would be available for collecting on a Saturday. They only had manna if they saved it from the day before.

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**Lesson 256: Exodus 16:28–29****Manna and the Sabbath**

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At this point in the narrative, the people are being exposed to God's provision of manna and to the concept of the Sabbath together. On Friday, they were to gather double amounts of the manna and eat what they collected Friday and Saturday. Some of the Israelites followed these directions and some did not.

Exodus 16:28a And the Lord said to Moses,...

God is continually speaking with Moses. This does not make Moses a nutty guy. We do not know, in every case, just how this is taking place. That is, does Moses go somewhere and God speaks to him? How are these communications begun and under what circumstances? We only know some specific instances where we know the related circumstances. However, nevertheless, we have God's words, which is certainly good enough.

A few years ago (I began to write this in 2018), I saw an *Old Testament Bible* series on television, where some Hollywood types were bringing the Bible to the small screen (or, not so small, depending upon your television screen). Moses was presented as a nutball; he was très goofy in this show.<sup>42</sup> He appeared to move about as if imaginary flies were always flying around him, and he was noticing each and every one of them. This is not who Moses was; he was not a nutcase. For the director to allow this sort of interpretation of Moses indicates to me that he understood very little of this history. Moses was aristocratic and well-trained to become the king in the Egyptian palace. He was a family man, albeit with some pressures from home put upon him from time to time. Moses had, among the people, an air of authority and intelligence when speaking to them.

Moses was a rational, well-educated, well-spoken, and a genius in many fields. He was someone whose training was utilized for at least 40 years of his life (there are times when you send some kids off to excellent schools and they end up returning as the cue ball they were when they were first sent).

Moses spoke to God. Now, today, people who have conversations with God—during which conversations they hear God’s voice—are nutballs; they are looney tunes. But Moses was not.

So what’s the difference? Why are people nutballs today if they claim to speak to God (and to hear God speak back); and Moses, who did speak to God (and also he heard God speak back), was not?

God has already conveyed His complete thinking to man in the canon of Scripture (His thinking being as complete as we need it to be in this and the next dispensation). At no time do you need to ask yourself, “Hmm, I wonder what God thinks about this situation.” That is because, in the Bible, we are more able to find out how God thinks about every situation. As a result, God does not have to appear to you while you are driving around and say, “Up ahead, at the light, I want you to make a right turn.”

Is it possible that people hear other voices? Probably. But, those voices do not belong to God.

I actually have a relative who believes that he has spoken to God (when in a drugged state I would assume). However, without knowing any details about this *meeting* (the relative is not the sort of person to share this information with everyone he meets), I know that, either this took place in his imagination or a demon was allowed to make direct contact with him. It certainly was not God, because this relative has no interest in Jesus; and no understanding of Who or What Jesus is.

Exodus 16:28b ...“How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?”

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<sup>42</sup> After viewing their *Moses* for about 5 minutes, I turned the show off and did not watch any more episodes. The interpretation of Moses was just that offensive to me.



I want you to notice that this phrase involves a 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural verb. Moses is not two or more persons; and he is not disobeying God. So, to whom is God speaking?

Despite the fact that God is speaking to Moses, you will note that everything here is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural. So, the idea is, God is telling Moses, “This is what you will say to the people of Israel.” That is understood, based upon form of the verbs. If you go back and read this, with the idea that God has said to Moses, “This is what you will say to the people, thus has said Y<sup>e</sup>howah, your Elohim...” then all of the verb forms and the sentence structure make perfect sense.

Throughout the Mosaic record of the plagues, you will recall that Moses, over and over again, severely edited down a complete narrative, as we would have gotten bogged down in all of the details. We do not read, *“Pharaoh said, no?” exclaimed God. “Well, then, this is what you will say to Aaron and he will speak to Pharaoh.” And God said thus and so to Moses; then Moses said thus and so to Aaron; and then Moses and Aaron went out and confronted Pharaoh, and they said thus and so to Pharaoh.* All of that would become quite tedious by plague #2. So, Moses took many literary shortcuts, as guided by his own sense of narrative, and as guided by God the Holy Spirit. Most of the things which were said, were only found once in the narrative (even if those things were repeated in real life). This approach allows the narrative to move right along. So, I believe the same thing is happening right here as well.

The people of Abraham, the people with Moses out in the Midian desert—many of them continue to disobey God. That is to whom this message is directed.

Exodus 16:28b ...“How long do you [all] refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?

Moses is not disobeying God's Laws; but many of the Hebrews are.

*Refuse* is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural so I added in [all]. I do this because there is a difference between 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular and 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural in the Hebrew, so it is often helpful to bring that into the English text. A number of translation do something like this, including the Modern Literal Version, the Context Group Version, the Lexham Bible and the Updated Bible.

Exodus 16:28 Y<sup>e</sup>howah then said to Moses, “How long will you [all] refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?” (Kukis moderately literal translation)

God is speaking to His people through Moses. Throughout this past month, God has given directives to the people and there is also a significant number of them who disobey Him.

Exodus 16:29a [Moses said this to the people and then added, “] Observe that Y<sup>e</sup>howah has given to you [all] the Sabbath [as a blessing]. (Kukis moderately literal translation)

Moses represents the Hebrews to God and he represents God to the Hebrews (in this way, Moses acts as both a priest and a prophet). So far, all communication from God to the

children of Israel is done through Moses. He takes God's Word seriously enough to transmit it correctly. In fact, this is why Moses had such a position of authority; because he accurately transmitted the Word of God.

This is directed to all Israel; to the entire nation. They are to obey these directives, regulations and laws as a nation.

Now, you may think, God sounds pretty harsh where some people (a few thousand or maybe tens of thousands) have disobeyed Him and gone out to look for manna—what is the big deal? What is the harm in that? Twofold answer: (1) these people have seen by great and mighty miracles that God is taking care of Israel in Egypt. Now that the people are outside of Egypt; He continues giving clear, unequivocal directions. Now, if this occurred in a vacuum, apart from these miracles, we might protest, “Give the people a chance to catch on and to obey.” But that is not the problem. They have no excuse to distrust God at this point in time, and yet, they still do. (2) The people are not supposed to spend this day, the day of rest, out working to find something. This is a complete violation of the provision of God, Who has made certain that their needs are taken care of. God is giving them time to reflect on His blessings and His might and His rest—and yet, they are filled with human works. Trying to find manna when God says, “Don’t,” that is the essence of human viewpoint thinking.

**Application:** What does this mean to us, 3600 years later? God has given them both guidelines for life and logistical grace. This is a most disobedient generation of Jews—which God reminds us of in the psalms and in the book of Hebrews—but do you know what He continues to provide them with? Logistical grace. If God provides them a rebellious generation of believers, with logistical grace, then what about us? Can we not draw the conclusion that He will provide logistical grace for us as well?

We also should understand that, even though God sounds angry here, this is simply for the benefit of the Israelites to recognize how much they have disobeyed Him. God is not petulant, furious, or arbitrary. All of what He is doing is for the benefit of the Israelites.

Exodus 16:28 [And the Lord said to Moses, “How long do you \[all\] refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?”](#)

At this point, God’s guidance and requirements have mostly been day-to-day expectations. He will be giving the Law to Moses to this people, but we are not there yet.

Given the plural *commandments and laws*, we might ask, is the Sabbath an example of one of the several laws that God gave to Moses? Were there others, but it is used to stand in for all of them? Given what is to come, that would not make any sense.

There were several regulations associated with the Sabbath; and several associated with the gathering of manna; so my assumption would be, those are the commandments and laws to which God refers in this context.

Or, is the general disobedience of the Hebrew people the issue to God? The next verse seems to narrow the issue.

Exodus 16:29a [See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath;...](#)

### **The subtle change of voice:**

With v. 29, it appears that we have moved seamlessly from God speaking to Moses, to Moses speaking to the people. I included that change of speaker in my own translation:

[Y<sup>e</sup>howah then said to Moses, “How long will you \[all\] refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?”](#) (Exodus 16:28; Kukis mostly literal translation)

[\[Moses said this to the people and then added, “\] Observe that Y<sup>e</sup>howah has given to you \[all\] the Sabbath \[as a blessing\].](#) (Exodus 16:29a; Kukis mostly literal translation)

In v. 28, God is speaking, so it is *My commandments and My laws* (He uses 1<sup>st</sup> person personal pronouns). In v. 29, Moses is speaking, so he speaks of God in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person: *Y<sup>e</sup>howah has given to you [all]...*

Moses writes in this way so as to avoid including every repetitive conversation. It is not needed. And many readers would have read these two verses and not even noticed the change of voice (or they would have done the mental gymnastics in their heads, without giving it much thought).

I say this by way of preparation for the last chapters of Exodus, which will seem to be very repetitive. In one chapter, God will tell Moses to oversee the building of the Tabernacle and various pieces of furniture (where everything to be constructed is described in meticulous detail). Then, in another chapter, Moses actually oversees the building of the Tabernacle and various pieces of furniture (where everything is again described in meticulous detail).

The reason that this information appears to be repeated is, Moses is writing about these events as they take place. A person writing the book of Exodus 10 years after the fact, (or 500 years after the fact—which is what some *scholars* claim) would *never* have two chapters which seemingly describe the same thing. They would have written the chapter about God telling Moses to build the Tabernacle and its furnishings, and, at the end of the chapter, add the verse, *and Moses did what God told him to do*.

This is one of the many internal evidences which we have to indicate that Moses wrote the book of Exodus as things took place, and not years later.

Exodus 16:29a [See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath;...](#)

Or, “Listen up, Y<sup>e</sup>howah has given you the Sabbath to observe.”

The Sabbath day is given to the people, as a blessing, as a day of rest. Instead of appreciating it and enjoying it, the people are violating the Sabbath, and making it all about their own works (in this case, spending a portion of their day trying to find manna—which God specifically told them not to).

What they are doing is looking for something that is not there. This is analogous to trying to find salvation in someone or something other than Jesus.

Exodus 16:29b ...therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days.

Because the people are given the Sabbath by God, God also gives them 2 days' worth of bread (that is, manna) on the sixth day, which is Friday. Therefore, they have no need to leave their homes in order to get manna on the seventh day.

Exodus 16:29c Let every man remain in his place;...

“If it is Saturday,” God says to the people, “then you do not go out looking for manna; you are not going to find any. Stay home.”

Exodus 16:29d ...let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.”

God has a purpose for the 7<sup>th</sup> day; and it does not include work.

The Sabbath is to connect the idea of not working and instead attending to spiritual things. God has finished everything and there is nothing for man to do when it comes to salvation. All we can do after believing in Jesus Christ is to listen and obey. It requires nothing more. God taught salvation in many ways and the no labor (or, no works) aspect of salvation is taught in the Sabbath. It's ironic how those religious groups which keep the Sabbath today are those who are the most works oriented. They picked up on the Sabbath where the Hebrews left off. The Hebrews became very legalistic with regards to the Sabbath, incorporating a vast list of do's and don't's for the Sabbath, none of which are found in Scripture. They took a day of rest, a day of no work, a day devoted to God and His grace; and they transformed it into a day of legalism and works.

Man never seems to tire when it comes to distorting God's grace.

As mentioned earlier, God is speaking to Moses in v. 28; and Moses is speaking to the people in v. 29. There is no intervening text to explain that; but the change of pronouns tells us that.

Some of the less-than-literal translations adjusted for the change of voice and address, and changed it so that these would be the words God speaks to Moses (to speak to the people). The Good News Translation is an example of this: Then the LORD said to Moses, “How much longer will you people refuse to obey my commands? Remember that I, the

LORD, have given you a day of rest, and that is why on the sixth day I will always give you enough food for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day and not leave his home.” Notice how all the action is being done by the first person singular.

The CEV provide a similar point of view: Then the LORD said, "Moses, how long will you people keep disobeying my laws and teachings? Remember that I was the one who gave you the Sabbath. That's why on the sixth day I provide enough bread for two days. Everyone is to stay home and rest on the Sabbath."

I am not listing those translations as a matter of criticism. I believe that paraphrases certainly have their place in the Christian life (which is why one of my three translations is a paraphrase). A paraphrase is often a mini-commentary where some things are being subtly explained to the reader, within the paraphrase.

## **Lessons 257–258: Exodus 16:22–31**

## **The Doctrine of Manna**

Here is what we have studied so far.

Exodus 16:22–23 On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread [that is, manna], two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.'"

Moses, on the orders of God, was teaching the people how to observe the Sabbath (which is the 7<sup>th</sup> day = Saturday). When it came to manna, they were to gather up a double portion for everyone on Friday and save that second portion for Saturday.

Exodus 16:24 So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it.

Previously when the people tried to keep manna overnight, it would go bad. However, what they gathered up on Fridays did not go bad on Saturday.

Exodus 16:25–26 Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none."

Moses told the people to then eat this additionally gathered manna on Saturday, as there would not be any manna to be found on the Sabbath.

Exodus 16:27 On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none.

Despite being told this, some people went out on Saturday to look for manna.



Exo 16:28 And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? (ESV; capitalized)

God speaks to Moses about this, with the intent that, whatever God said to Moses, Moses would pass this along to the people.

Exodus 16:29 (Moses is speaking to the people) "See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."

God provided the Sabbath day as a gracious gift for all Israel. God gives them time to remember Him; but also time to recharge their batteries, so to speak; and to become spiritually prepared for the coming week.

At either v. 30 or 31, the final portion of this chapter is a postscript. That is, it was written after the fact. Joshua was second-in-command under Moses, and he appears to have been Moses' amanuensis. That is, Moses would dictate and Joshua would write. Therefore, for Joshua to add 6 or 7 verses at the end of this chapter, by way of explanation does not abrogate the concept of Scriptural inspiration (inspiration means *God-breathed*).

Although all of this was written down and preserved, most people heard it by word of mouth. That is, it was a long-time Jewish tradition for them to gather and hear the reading of the Word of God. So, we would expect Joshua, as one of the readers of Scripture, to tack on a few words of explanation after the fact—especially if some of the hearers (and readers) of these words had not experienced the events of this chapter (that is, the gathering of the manna). You see, these words would be taken by Israel out of the desert and into the new land. Children would be born to them in this new land and they would read these words to their children who had never experienced manna and would never taste it.

We will read all of these verses together with minimal explanation in the chapter summary once we complete this translation and explanation of them, and it will be even more clear that we are reading an addendum.

At the end of this chapter, there is some potential confusion. God will tell Moses to store up a pot of manna before the testimony. Now, if we interpret this as something which God tells him to do on the first week that manna is given, then we have a whole host of problems. Where exactly is it placed and why is God requiring this so early on, when the daily gift of manna is just beginning? A proper interpretation of the timing of the final verses of this chapter removes all questions and confusion. Exodus 16:1–29 are presented in chronological order, in the grand scheme of things, where these verses are properly placed between the end of Exodus 15 and before the beginning of Exodus 17. However, v. 30 will be a transitional verse, and vv. 30–35 actually look into Israel's future with manna. This sort of thing is done throughout Scripture. The author is covering a particular topic, and then we read a few verses to describe what happens in the future (future from the narrative at hand). This is not a crazy interpretation, as v. 35 talks about

the Israelites eating manna for 40 years up to the time that they come to Canaan. In other words, my correct interpretation is, vv. 31–35 do not take place before Exodus 17 is something found in historical narratives now and again (Luke 3:19–20 are an example of this).

Anyway, the topic is manna, so the writer of this narrative looks off into the future of manna and talks about that (vv. 31–35). More than likely, this would be a postscript added by Joshua many years later. That is certainly possible, if not likely, given that Joshua will clearly write most of the final chapter of Deuteronomy.

We understand the book of Exodus to be the Word of God. I would not presume to add another few verses at the end, and pretend that it is Scripture. However, the recognition of the sacred writings as Scripture would have been a more organic process back then. When God spoke and Moses recorded His words—those are clearly and unequivocally God's words, and everyone would have understood that to be the case. But, what about this narration which occurs in between God speaking? I would suggest that, this also became recognized as the Word of God, but much later (perhaps after Moses' death; perhaps when Israel took up residence in Canaan). So, Joshua, who was probably writing most of this (as dictated by Moses), later would have seen no harm in adding 5 verses, temporarily leaving the time frame of the narrative and looking off into the future (future from the narrative at hand). What Joshua has added here (and that is an assumption that I am making) is still the Word of God. Nevertheless; I am simply presenting a more organic approach to the actual writing of these words.

I see four possible alternatives as to how and why these words were added. (1) Moses wrote the end of this passage prophetically. Certainly possible, but doubtful. (2) Moses or Joshua added these verses later. This is the simplest, most straightforward explanation. (3) A 3<sup>rd</sup> alternative is, Moses wrote this *entire* historical narrative about 40 years later, and so adding this brief tangent is easy for him to do. This third alternative also seems less likely, given that the Song of Moses had to be written and sung by all Israel within hours of God destroying the Egyptian army. Also, had Moses written this chapter at the end of his life, then does he write the remainder of the Law then as well? That doesn't really make much sense. (4) Sort of a fourth explanation is this: we have already talked about a tent which is a precursor to the Tent of Meeting. It appears as if there was some sort of holy tent used by Moses prior to the building of the Tabernacle. Placing the bread from heaven in there, for the time being, seems also like a reasonable alternative. However, v. 35 ([The people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan. —ESV](#)) was clearly written some time later. So, no matter how you slice it, all or a portion of vv. 30–36 was added much later, as an explanatory postscript.

What I have written here may not make a lot of sense, as we have not yet examined these verses. In any case, pay close attention to the interpretation of this passage and see how it makes perfect sense as we continue forward:

Exodus 16:30 [So the people rested on the seventh day.](#)

We are not speaking of a specific 7<sup>th</sup> day, at this point; but after the people realized that they would not find more manna on Saturday, they stopped looking for it. Therefore, they observed the Sabbath.

God did not give the people much choice here. The only way for them to get food was to go outside and gather it; and there was never any food outside to be gathered on the Sabbath. They didn't have a regular job other than to pick up and move when God told them to, so they couldn't go to work. Therefore, they rested.

My guess is, this is the first day of rest that these people had ever had. There is no reason to think that they ever rested while they were slaves in Egypt. So this would have been quite a brand new experience for them.

Exodus 16:30 *And so the people typically rested on the seventh day, having gathered enough manna the day before.* (Kukis paraphrase)

Quite obviously, in my not-so-literal translation, I have added some additional text. Let me suggest to you, at this point in the narrative, Moses (or Joshua), writing about 39 years later, appends this chapter with seven verses which give us a summary view of manna.

This might be better understood if we simply jump ahead and look at v. 35: *The people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan.* There is no other way to understand this verse apart from it looking off into the future. It could have been added as a gloss to the text years later (by Moses or Joshua); Moses could have written it prophetically; or Moses simply did not record this narrative until 20–40 years after it took place, and so what we read is from a simple, historical perspective. He first places this narrative into its proper place, chronologically speaking, and then follows out the topic of manna to its logical end (returning to the chronological narrative in the next chapter). I don't suggest this actually happened, as I believe Moses wrote Exodus through Deuteronomy as these events occurred. That Joshua simply added a few verses at this point makes a great deal of sense.

Clearly something like that happens in v. 35—no one can argue that. I am simply suggesting that this happens—leaving the strict chronological approach—earlier than v. 35. I illustrate this by adding a few words in v. 30. The purpose is to properly guide the reader into this manna tangent (vv. 30–36). To maintain accuracy and also to suggest that this is an addendum, we might present the less literal version of v. 30 like this: *And so the people [typically] rested on the seventh day, [having gathered enough manna the day before].* In this way, v. 30 properly closes out the narrative we have been studying, and then transitions us into the manna retrospective narrative at the same time (in vv. 31–36).

This interpretation will also help us explain some subsequent verses, which get somewhat tricky.

Exodus 16:31a *And the house of Israel called its name Manna.*

I have been calling this stuff manna from the beginning. However, in the context of Exodus, this is the first time this name is used (in fact, in the entire book of Exodus, the word *manna* is only found in vv. 30–35<sup>43</sup>). So, at some historic point after v. 29 (we don't know when exactly), the Hebrew people coined a name for this bread from heaven—*manna*.

At first, the Hebrew people called it mân (מן) [pronounced *mawn*], which means *what, what is it?* However, for whatever reason, that has come down to us as *manna*.

Exodus 16:31b *And it was like white coriander seed,...*

Manna had a color similar to this seed. I assume this is an off white color.

Exodus 16:31c *...and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.*

Its taste was like a honey wafer.

As we have seen, there are many differing opinions as to the actual composition of manna. We do not know if this was a natural product or whether it was a divine food substitute. It was certainly nutritious, tasty and versatile.

Speaking of this, why was manna given only daily? Why could they only gather enough for one day? Why was God so strict on these laws, which have only to do with getting breakfast and dinner?

What I tend to do in developing a doctrine is overkill, so I will also attempt to break this down to the most basic and pertinent points below. The links will take you to the complete [Doctrine of Manna](#). ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

### The Abbreviated Doctrine of Manna

1. The name *manna* appears to be derived from the Hebrew phrase *what is it?* There is some disagreement here, including the suggestion that this is actually an Egyptian word, however the Bible reads: *They said to one another, mân hûw' [or, manna; or, what is it?], for they did not know what it was* (Exodus 16:15b). The Greek noun, manna (μάννα) [pronounced *MAHN-nah*], is simply a transliteration from the Hebrew (more or less). Clearly, our word *manna* comes directly from the Greek, which we transliterate into English.
2. The Israelites, early in their march toward the Land of Promise, began to complain about a lack of food. Their approach, unfortunately, was often one of anger when they did not like the way things were going. Therefore, they complained and they even threatened Moses and Aaron. Also, while attempting to bully Moses and Aaron, they reminisced about how wonderful their lives used

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<sup>43</sup> The word *manna* will be found in subsequent books.

## The Abbreviated Doctrine of Manna

to be as slaves in Egypt (they forget to mention the *slave* part in their remembrances). God, in His grace, instead of striking them dead, began to provide food for the Israelites in the form of manna.

- 1) Manna appeared to fall from the sky almost as a morning mist.
- 2) The Israelites would then go out and gather the manna up. They were told to gather just enough for one day (and they were even told the approximate amount to gather). If they gathered too much, it spoiled before the next day.
- 3) On the day before the Sabbath, the Israelites would gather enough manna for two days, so that they would not have to gather manna on the Sabbath. This extra manna did not spoil.
- 4) Whenever they stopped for awhile, or whenever they moved out in this direction or that, the manna continued to follow them, from Mount Sinai all the way up to east of the Jordan River, and all places in between.

3. What seems to be the case is, there is a strange mixture between the natural and the supernatural. that is, there does appear to be a manna-like substance produced in that area, from a particular tree, with many of the same characteristics of manna. However, approximately 600–700 lbs. of this is produced a year in this area, where the Hebrews required much more than that each day. Fausset<sup>44</sup> lists these differences: Manna differs from this natural honey-like substance in the following ways:
  - 1) Manna was found not under the tamarisk, but on the surface of the wilderness, after the morning dew had disappeared.
  - 2) The quantity gathered in a single day exceeded the present produce of a year.
  - 3) It ceased on the Sabbath.
  - 4) Its properties were distinct; it could be ground and baked as meal, it was not a mere condiment but nutritious as bread.
  - 5) It was found not merely where it still is, but Israel's whole way to Canaan (and not merely for a month or two each year, but all the year round). That is, the manna actually followed Israel where Israel marched.

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<sup>44</sup> Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Manna.



## The Abbreviated Doctrine of Manna

4. Fausset<sup>45</sup> also points out the miracle of manna and how it has all the conditions and characteristics of divine interpositions.
  - 1) Manna was a necessity, for Israel could not otherwise have been sustained in the wilderness without it.
  - 2) Manna had a divine purpose, namely to preserve God's peculiar people on which His whole providential government and man's salvation depended.
  - 3) There is still this strange harmony between the natural and the supernatural; God fed them, not with the food of other regions, but with that of the district. Let me add to this that, even though the tremendous production of manna occurred 6 out of 7 days for nearly 40 years, and that such a thing has never occurred before or since, this does not mean that God did not, in some phenomenal way, bring together a huge series of unrecorded events which resulted in such an amazing production of manna. We can, at best, speculate as to its true nature.
5. It appears as though the manna of the Bible is more versatile than what may be its contemporary, natural counterpart. That is, it could be baked or boiled, ground into some sort of a powder or beaten in a mortar.<sup>46</sup>
6. The Bible describes manna: as “a small round thing,” like the “hoar-frost on the ground,” and “like coriander seed,” “of the colour of bdellium,” and in taste “like wafers made with honey.”
7. The word *manna* is found in the following Old Testament passages: Exodus 16:31, 33, 35 Numbers 11:6, 7, 9 Deuteronomy 8:3, 16 Joshua 5:12 Nehemiah 9:20 Psalm 78:24
  - 1) In Exodus 16, we have the first historical occurrence of manna. Also included here are the rules which God set up for the gathering of manna.
  - 2) In Num. 11, the people complain of living on a diet of manna alone, and they turn against Moses. All they had to do is go to Moses, say that they are tired of eating manna only, and God would have provided vegetables and meat and fruits. They did not need to bitch, moan, whine and complain. God was aware of their needs and willing to provide for their needs.
  - 3) In Deuteronomy, Moses teaches this new generation of Israelites, the Generation of Promise, how their time in the desert illustrates spiritual truths (Moses also taught them the Law). One of the things which he said about manna was: *And God humbled you, and allowed you to hunger, and He fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man*

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> I took this directly from M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; 1897; from e-Sword, topic: Manna. His description came straight from the Bible.

## The Abbreviated Doctrine of Manna

- live** (Deuteronomy 8:3).
- 4) The passage in Joshua simply records when the manna stopped—when Israel entered into the Land of Promise.
  - 5) Psalm 78 tells how God provided for the needs of Israel every step of the way.
  - 6) Psalm 105 speaks of God's provision for the children of Israel, which includes manna from heaven. This is a relatively long psalm (45 verses), which gives us a sweeping view of God's involvement with Israel from Abraham to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant (which is still yet future).
  - 7) Nehemiah recalls God's provision for Israel in the desert, so that the people with him could learn to depend upon God as well.
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8. The word *manna* is found in the following New Testament passages: John 6:31, 49, 58 Hebrews 9:4 Revelation 2:17. It is also spoken of in Psalm 105 Matthew 4 1Corinthians 10, but the word *manna* is not used.
- 1) In Matthew 4:4, Jesus is being tempted by Satan, and He quotes from Deuteronomy 8:3, that **man should not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God**. This is a point of doctrine which Moses made, using God's provision of manna in the desert as a backdrop.
  - 2) In John 6, Jesus presents Himself as the Bread from Heaven, sent by God, so that anyone who eats of His body (which is metaphorical for, *believes in Him*) will live forever.
  - 3) 1Corinthians 10 uses complaining Israel as an illustration of what *not* to do. Paul tells the Corinthians of how much God had provided for Israel, calling manna spiritual food; and how Israel failed to appropriate God's full and complete blessing because of their emotions and mental attitude.
  - 4) Hebrews 9:4 tells us what was kept in the Ark of God, something which is not clearly in the Old Testament (we know the tables of the Law were placed there and, it seems to be implied, that the pot of manna was placed there; but Aaron's rod that budded is first told to *us* in Hebrews 9:4.
  - 5) Finally, in Revelation 3:12–17, our Lord speaks to the church at Pergamum, and how they are located where Satan has set up his headquarters. He speaks of how they are teaching some false doctrine, and He warns them that He could come against them (the sin unto death). He promises that, for those who remain faithful, He will give them the hidden manna and the white stone, by which I would interpret that Jesus is speaking of rewards in heaven for their faithfulness.

## The Abbreviated Doctrine of Manna

9. God uses real events which have happened to real people, in order to illustrate spiritual truths. This is done throughout Scripture. In theology, this is known as type and antitype. Generally speaking, a person, thing or event is presented in the Old Testament as a type (although recorded as a real person, thing or event). In the New Testament, we often will find the fulfillment of the type in another real person, thing or event (this is known as the antitype). The antitype fully explains and illustrates the type. When our Lord was teaching during His earthly ministry, He taught in the same manner—He used real events about real people, or illustrative events which were common to that era, and He used these stories to teach a variety of spiritual truths. The same were called parables.
  - 1) Manna gave life to a people who, otherwise, would have dropped dead in the desert wilderness. This is a picture of Jesus Christ providing for us. We are slaves in Egypt, unable to purchase our own freedom. We wander through this desert wilderness which is the cosmic system. Jesus Christ gave His body for our sins; He paid for our sins in His body on the cross (which means that God the Father judged Him and punished Him for our sins while He was alive in His human body). In this way, Jesus is the True Bread of Life sent down from heaven by God, so that, whoever eats of His body (that is, believes in Him) will live forever. John 6:47–51: **Point of doctrine: He that believes on Me has everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and they are dead. This (indicating Himself) is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.** The entire passage is John 6:30–58.
  - 2) Manna was a provision of God for the people of God which sustained them, regardless of their spiritual condition. We know this as logistical grace. Unless God is going to take a believer out by the sin unto death, He continues to provide for them their daily needs. This is the second concept of manna. It is important to recognize that no one in the New Testament has to use an event of the Old Testament in order to present a present-day spiritual truth in order for such a comparison to be valid. In fact, our Lord and Paul and the remainder of the Apostles and New Testament writers only used a few incidents in the Old Testament to illustrate spiritual truths. There are many more instances of types and antitypes to be found in Scripture than are unearthed in the New Testament. My point is, Paul did not, in one of the epistles, tell us that the manna sent by God for the grumbling Israelites<sup>1</sup> was illustrative of logistical grace. In fact, Paul never used the term *logistical grace*. However, logistical grace is a true doctrine, as is the fact that the manna given by God illustrates the principle of logistical grace.
10. Fausset gives a good 10-point summary, which is worth repeating here:

## The Abbreviated Doctrine of Manna

- (1) It falls from above ([John 6:32](#), etc.) as the dew ([Psalm 110:3](#) [Micah 5:7](#)) round the camp, i.e. the visible church, and nowhere else; the gift of God for which we toil not ([John 6:28–29](#)); when we were without merit or strength ([Rom. 5:6, 8](#)).
- (2) It was gathered early; so we, before the world's heat of excitement melt away the good of God's gift to us ([Psalm 63:1](#) [Hosea 5:15](#) [6:4](#) [Matt. 13:6](#)).
- (3) A double portion must be gathered for the Sabbath.
- (4) It was ground in the mill, as Christ was "bruised" for us to become our "bread of life."
- (5) Sweet as honey to the taste ([Psalm 34:8](#) [119:103](#); [1Peter 2:3](#)).
- (6) It must be gathered "day by day," fresh each day; so today's grace will not suffice for tomorrow ([1Kings 8:59](#) margin; [Matt. 6:11](#) [Luke 11:3](#)). Hoarded up it putrefied; so gospel doctrine laid up for speculation, not received in love and digested as spiritual food, becomes a savor of death not life ([1Cor. 8:1](#)).
- (7) To the carnal it was "dry" food though really like "fresh oil" ([Num. 11:6, 11:8 21:5](#)); so the gospel to the worldly who long for fleshly pleasures of Egypt, but to the spiritual it is full of the rich savor of the Holy Spirit ([2Cor. 2:14–16](#)).
- (8) Its preservation in the golden pot in the holiest typifies Jesus, now in the heavenly holiest place, where He gives of the hidden manna to him that overcomes ([Rev. 2:17](#)); He is the manna hidden from the world but revealed to the believer, who has now a foretaste of His preciousness; like the incorruptible manna in the sanctuary, the spiritual food offered to all who reject the world's dainties for Christ is everlasting, an incorruptible body, and life in Christ at the resurrection.
- (9) The manna continued with Israel throughout their wilderness journey; so Christ with His people here ([Matt. 28:19](#)).
- (10) It ceases when they gain the promised rest, for faith then gives place to sight and the wilderness manna to the fruit of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God ([Rev. 2:7](#) [22:2, 14](#)).<sup>47</sup>

I realize that this abbreviated doctrine may seem long, but the full doctrine runs about 25 pages.

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<sup>1</sup> Which is, by the way, a good name for a band.

### Lesson 259: Exodus 16:31–32

### Manna continued

We have studied manna quite extensively. What remains is the study of the addendum to this chapter, which is vv. 30–36.

Exodus 16:31 *And the house of Israel called its name Manna. And it was like white coriander seed, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.*

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<sup>47</sup> Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Manna.

At some point in this narrative, someone added a few verses to this chapter. Based upon v. 35, that and possibly other verses were appended to this chapter. My reading is, this appended section began with v. 30 or 31. Vv. 30–34 were likely added by Moses after the Tabernacle had been built; and vv. 35–36 were then added by Joshua after Israel entered into the land of promise.

Exodus 16:32a *Then Moses said, “This is the thing which the Lord has commanded:...*

A few verses back, God spoke to Moses, and, if you recall, it appeared that, what God said to Moses was supposed to be repeated to the people. However, this is a command which would have been given to just one person, Aaron.

What is significant about the mention of Aaron (in v. 33), is this did not take place during the final year (had that been the case, Moses would be addressing Joshua). So, at some point, God gave a command to Moses and Moses passed the command along to Aaron. The question which occurs to me is, *when did this take place?* I believe that Moses spoke to Aaron after the Tabernacle had been completed (which is Exodus 40).

God wants the person in charge (now Moses; but Moses will delegate this responsibility to Aaron) to do one additional thing.

Throughout Exodus, God has instructs Moses and Moses then instructs the appropriate person or persons as to what God wants to be done. In the next verse, God will tell Aaron to take care of this duty. Because of this command, the people would, for many generations, to come, know about this container of manna (although they would not actually see it, interestingly enough).

Exodus 16:32b *...‘Fill an omer with it [the manna], to be kept for your generations,...*

God wanted Moses to put aside a container of manna, and this would be for future generations.

Interestingly enough, even though there are two verbs in the English translation of v. 32b, there are no verbs in the Hebrew.

Exodus 16:32c *...that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness,...*

What God wants is for later generations to actually be able to know the manna still exists, years after it was actually searched out and consumed. There would be a number of things which God required, which were memories of previous generations.

Logically, this container of manna would have remained until the time of Jeremiah. When Israel was attacked and the Temple plundered, it is unlikely that the jar of manna remained after that.

Exodus 16:32d *...when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.”*



For this generation, God bringing the Israelites out of Egypt and then preserving them in the desert will be their entire lives. But many subsequent generations would rise up and follow this one.

To give a better English sense to this verse, we might render it: **This is what God has commanded: You will preserve [or keep] an omer of it [manna] throughout your generations, so that they might see the food that I fed you with in the desert when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.**

Throughout the Old Testament, there was a continual connection made between past and future generations, so that this history retained a certain continuity. God determined that there would be more than just written testimonies from the past. There were also physical artifacts of various kinds designed to be a witness to the people of God.

Although Israel carefully preserves its Scriptures, God required a variety of artifacts to be kept for future generations.

### **The Artifacts from Israel's Past**

1. The greatest physical artifact from the past is the actual Word of God, which Israel preserved and read from regularly. For hundreds of years, this took place even without anything being written down, the very words themselves bearing the witness of past generations. This would have been the oral tradition of the book of Genesis (which Moses did not originate; and if he wrote it down, it was simply a reiteration of what already existed as the oral tradition of the Hebrew people).
2. Obviously, the Tabernacle and the furniture of the Tabernacle, kept in and outside of the Tabernacle. These things linked many generations together. Most people only actually saw the brass laver and the bronze altar. The furniture in the Tabernacle was not seen by the public (the Tabernacle was not a public building like a church auditorium is).
3. Later, the Temple took the place of the Tabernacle; the Temple having been built by Solomon. It contained the same furniture mentioned above, with the same laver and altar (those two items were probably rebuilt from time to time; and likely rebuilt during the time that the Temple was built).
4. Near the Ark of the Covenant was kept the pot of manna (mentioned here in this context), Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the Law. These things were not on display, as one might see in a museum. The Ark of the Covenant was kept inside the Holy of Holies, and these three things were kept with it. Only the High Priest once a year would go into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle blood on the cover of the Ark of the Covenant. He would see these objects once a year.
5. When Israel will first conquer the land of promise, the Law will be written on stones in the land. We do not know how long this lasted, but I imagine that people could visit this place and it must have lasted for several generations or more.
6. The book of Leviticus describes a very complex set of rituals which the people of Israel followed, generation after generation.

## The Artifacts from Israel's Past

- 1) It is this extremely specific set of rituals which is a witness to the book of Leviticus being written by Moses.
- 2) The rituals required by God and the book of Leviticus had to go hand-in-hand. These rituals were too complex to be carried around in the head of one man.
- 3) Had the book of Leviticus been written by someone other than Moses, then, at some point in time, all of the rituals of the Israelites would have changed in order to conform with the book of Leviticus. This would have been a very big deal, yet it is not recorded in Scripture, and tens of thousands of worshipers would have been willing to suddenly accept wholesale changes in their faith and practices. If you know religious people, this is not the sort of thing that they do.
- 4) Logically, two forms of Judaism would have formed at that point. There would have been those who accepted all of the new changes and those who did not (which would probably be the majority of Israelites).
- 5) Logically, if you follow out the assumption that someone other than Moses wrote Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, that leads you to what would have been a very big event in Israel, as well as to a massive religious division. But none of this is recorded as taking place.
- 6) Therefore, Moses wrote Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
7. There were many practices of the Israelites which were followed generation after generation. Even though these are not physical artifacts, the repetition of these ceremonies and practices maintain a generational continuity.
8. And it was more than a complex set of sacrifices which Israel followed. There were also specific days, weeks and months, all of which had their peculiarities. Israel today follows these same holy days (but they do not practice them exactly as is prescribed in the Bible).

Let's look at this argument again. It is falsely taught by many that these books of Moses were written long after the fact. The ceremonies, rituals and customs of the Hebrew people argue against that. Let's assume for a moment that the writings of Moses were not written by Moses but by another person or persons and these writings were presented to the Hebrew people hundreds of years later, but as if Moses had written them. What about their complex ceremonies? Did they suddenly start to practice them after receiving these books? If so, why is there no indication anywhere that the ceremonies suddenly began to be followed? How do you get people who have not been involved with ceremonies and observances to suddenly make them central to your life (or to change them)? On the other hand, if the people were already following this complex set of ceremonies, how did they know what to do if they lacked the books of Moses (which contained all of the instructions)? Therefore, attributing the books of Moses to some unnamed author (or authors) hundreds of years later explains nothing and solves nothing, but introduces a host of problems.

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We will study the book of Leviticus after we complete Exodus; and it will be clear that the things required in that book of the Levites would have had to have been read and reread in order to follow them correctly.

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Contemporary Jews have the Scriptures still, but their present-day observation of the various feast days is almost nothing like what took place during and after the time of Moses. If an ancient Hebrew observed a typical Seder (Passover) today, they would not recognize it.

Exodus 16:32 Then Moses said, “This is the thing which the Lord has commanded: ‘Fill an omer with it, to be kept for your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’”

V. 32 is all about preserving an artifact for future generations.

For v. 33: Keep in mind, an omer is one full serving of manna. God will have several things placed under guard for the Hebrews to contemplate. The manna speaks of God's daily provision and guidance. The Hebrews will spend 40 years out in a desert-wilderness incapable of sustaining 2,000,000 lives. Yet God kept them alive and allowed one omer of manna to remain, resisting decomposition, as a reminder to the Hebrews for several generations. Not all Hebrews had easy access to the Scriptures (in fact, very few did); and they had to be taught Bible doctrine verbally and through the symbols which God gave them (the sacrificing of the lambs, the manna, the Sabbath). Every time that they celebrated a feast day, it would be filled with things symbolic. Their children would inquire what does this mean? What is this all about? It provided the adults with the perfect opportunity to share enough of God's divine truth that many of the children could believe in the Revealed God and be saved.

In the previous verse, Moses makes a public announcement to the people; and in this verse, he tells Aaron to go ahead and do this thing. In v. 34, Aaron does it.

Exodus 16:33a And Moses said to Aaron, “Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it,...

We seem to have a lesson in authority here. God tells Moses what needs to be done (v. 32); Moses assigns that to Aaron to do (v. 33); then Aaron does it (v. 34).

God required, apparently for many generations, for there to be a container of manna which would be a memorial to God's gracious provision for the sons of Israel, despite their negative volition toward God's plan. They had believed in the Revealed God and they did leave Egypt, traveling with Moses. But, beyond that, these were some difficult people.

Exodus 16:33b ...and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations.”

For a time, there would be this container of manna. In the future, when the Tabernacle was built, then this would be placed near or in the Ark of God.

Because we do not know when vv. 30–36 were actually written, we do not know if the urn of manna is to be preserved somewhere temporarily until the Tabernacle is built. I think it is likely that these instructions occurred after Exodus 40 (the chapter where the Tabernacle is built). At some point after the Tabernacle is built, this jar of manna will be kept there.

At some point, this pot of manna will be placed into the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle. That does not appear to be what is happening here for the simple reason that, there is no Tabernacle yet.

In Egypt, with all of the clay, one of the most common containers for all kinds of things were clay pots and jars. They were all purpose items wherein was stored food, clothing, utensils, can openers, etc. It might be easier to examine these in points:

### Food Containers

1. The Hebrew for the clay pots used to cook in is *çîyr* (רִי) [pronounced *seer*] (there are two other similar forms of this word). We find these in Exodus 16:3 38:3 Leviticus 11:35 and a great many other places. This is our most commonly used word. I would think that the various forms of this word had slightly different meanings, something which is not relevant to this study. None of these words are found prior to Exodus but are found as late as Zechariah 14:20 and 2Chronicles 35:13.
2. The papyrus reeds both provided a medium for writing, which I would undoubtedly think that Moses used (which is why we do not have copies of the Law dating back too far), and were woven for baskets, often enforced with additional materials such as tar and/or pitch. The Hebrew word used for a woven basket of any sort (even woven out of twigs) is *çal* (סַל) [pronounced *sa*]. This is found as early as Genesis 40:16–18 (notice that they are in Egypt here) Exodus 29:3, 23 Leviticus 8:2 but no later than Judges 6:19.
3. We have an entirely different word translated *basket(s)*: *țene* (אָנֶט) [pronounced *TEH-neh*] and this is found only in Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 26:2, 4 28:5, 17). The word *çal* does not occur in Deuteronomy.
4. By far the most common word for container is *kēlîy* (כֵּלִי) [pronounced *kel-EE*] and it means *container* and we find it translated in the KJV as *vessel*. Whereas the previous two words referred to the material that the container was made of, this word refers to its function and not its composition. *Kēlîy* can also refer to what is contained within the container. We find this word in Genesis 24:53 (twice) 27:3 31:37 (twice) 42:25 43:11 45:20 49:5 Exodus 3:22 11:2 27:3, 19 etc. This word seems to encompass much more than just the idea of a container. This can refer to household furnishings in general (this being the chief furnishing or any household) (Genesis 31:37 Exodus 31:7); it can refer to the function of something made out of anything—and is translated as *weapons or instruments of war* in Genesis 49:5 1Chronicles 10:4 12:33, 37; as *instruments of music* (1Chronicles 15:16 16:5, 42). *Kēlîy* also means *jewels* (Genesis 24:53 Exodus 3:22 2Chronicles 20:25). It is possible that they had jewelry containers, as

## Food Containers

- women today have jewelry boxes, and that container came to mean *jewelry*; or vice versa. On the other hand, these uses may be completed unrelated.
5. There are other less commonly used words: *pârûwr* (פַּרוּר) [pronounced *paw-roor*], which means *pan, skillet* (Judges 6:19 1Sam. 2:14); *ʾâṣûwkê* (אִסּוּק) [pronounced *aw-SOOK*] is an oil flask, sometimes translated *pot*; *dûwd* (דֹּד) [pronounced *dood*] is a pot for boiling liquids and it is found in 1Samuel 2:14 2Kings 10:7 Job 41:20 Psalm 81:6 Jeremiah 24:2 (it is sometimes translated basket or pan) and it is closely related to the word for *love* or *beloved*, but that is a new topic altogether.
  6. The word used here in Exodus 16:34 (and only here) is *tsinʿtseneth* (תִּנְצַנֶּת) [pronounced *tsin-TSEH-neth*] and it means vase, pot or jar. I brought in all of those other Hebrew words to show you that they are not even related. Therefore, this translation (*vase, pot or jar*) is our best guess.

## Lessons 260–262: Exodus 16:33–36

## When Exodus was Written

Much of what we are dealing with in this lesson is, what about v. 35: when was it written and how about the rest of Exodus as well?

Exodus 16:35 *The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land where they could settle; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.* (Berean Study Bible)

The problem is, the people of Israel are about a month or so outside of Egypt and suddenly there is a verse which speaks of Israel eating manna for 40 years. How exactly should we understand this?

Most of the book of Exodus was written right at the time that these events took place. There is a great deal of internal evidence for that.

### Evidence that Exodus was mostly written as its events unfolded:

1. Moses' early life was covered so quickly, that we had to actually speculate somewhat as to some additional intervening events in order to fill in some explanatory details.
2. A very important event along with 40 years of Moses' life are covered in the first two chapters of Exodus. The second 40 years of his life (when living in exile from Egypt, having been married) is barely referenced. The bulk of Exodus takes place over a period of 2–3 months around the time that Moses is 80 years old. We would expect a lack of detail if Moses writes a brief history of himself, looking back.
3. That Moses begins writing about his life and experiences with God at around age 80 fits in very well with the narrative that we have been studying.
4. We would expect great detail if Moses records these events as they take place.



## **Evidence that Exodus was mostly written as its events unfolded:**

- That is exactly what we find in the book of Exodus.
5. Moses appears to begin recording the events of his life soon after he encounters God in the Midian wilderness when he is about 80 years of age.
  6. The first encounter with Pharaoh was covered in two different chapters from two different vantage points (from human viewpoint as opposed to divine viewpoint; the first in Exodus 5, the second in Exodus 7). A person writing at the time these things take place would conceivably include that much detail. A person looking back many years later would not. Such an approach would not even occur to one writing a false narrative hundreds of years later.
  7. You may recall that the plagues on Egypt were written in such a way as to move through the various stages without repeating dialogue. Generally speaking, after a judgment from God, Pharaoh would harden his heart and refuse to let the people go. Moses and Aaron would appear to go to God over this (although, in most cases, it appears that they were actually locked and loaded with the next judgment). God would have to speak word of this judgment to Moses; Moses and Aaron would have to speak to Pharaoh as to what God has said, and then the event promises by God would come to pass. Moses brilliantly wrote of each judgment on Egypt without ever appearing to repeat himself. That simply took skill as a writer. You may remember sometimes untangling what was taking place because of Moses' well-edited manner of writing.
  8. The pursuit of Israel by the army of Egypt is filled with detail; details we would expect from someone recording this information day-by-day as it happened.
  9. When God destroyed the Egyptian army, Moses wrote a song. While standing there on the bank of that water, the people of Israel sang this song. And they appeared to sing this song as they marched away into the desert-wilderness. This would indicate that Moses had writing material, that he wrote the song right then and there, and that enough copies were distributed so that everyone could join in on the singing. The fact that we have Exodus 15 in between the event Moses and the people sing about (that event being Exodus 14), which all takes place before the next steps which are taken by Israel in Exodus 16—all that suggests that Moses is writing down what takes place almost while these things take place. In most cases, he appears to be recording events the day of or the day after.
  10. In the final chapters of Exodus, God will give Moses instructions and then those instructions are obeyed. For instance, in one chapter, God is going to give Moses exact details as to how to build the Tabernacle. In another chapter, we have Moses overseeing the building of the Tabernacle. Someone writing these things down, even just five years later, would not have written two chapters which record essentially the same thing. What God told Moses to do and what Moses did would be a single chapter; not two. But for a person experiencing both events (the event of God speaking the instructions and the event of following those instructions), it would make sense to record both events.
  11. Personal example: I took roughly a million photos when adding some rooms to my house (which was a second story). Every day, I would take the camera and snap 10–20 pictures of the work that took place (digital pictures were a new thing

## Evidence that Exodus was mostly written as its events unfolded:

at that time). I have *never* shown those pictures to anyone because they would be bored out of their minds. But, for me, I wanted to see and record the day-by-day progress (from time to time, I still look at these photos). For someone who is interested, I show the before and after photos (but not all of the intervening ones). Because I was right in the middle of everything, I wanted a record of the progress. Had I bought the house with the second story addition already in place, I would have been interested in seeing the before and after photos, but not the daily record. I kept a daily record because I was there when these events took place.

12. The book of Exodus is more similar to a record of the daily progress than it is to someone writing about it well after the fact.
13. This is why we have a pairing of many chapters—one chapter with God's instructions and then a later chapter of these instructions being carried out.
14. Fair warning: you may find that section of Exodus to be very repetitive.

The way that Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are all written is very indicative of a single author writing as these events take place (with the exception of Moses' history prior to age 80, which is clearly written in retrospect).

Even though there are many scholars who believe that Moses did not write Exodus, but that this was written hundreds of years later by at least three separate groups of men, all pretending to be Moses, and apparently doing so for their own nefarious purposes (power? Recognition?)

What we are studying here is called *Documentary Hypothesis* or the *JEPD theory*. It is very possible that you have never heard of this before.

## Could the Book of Exodus Have Been Written Later?

1. There are quite a number of scholars who believe that Moses did not write the book of Exodus, but that this was some sort of group effort made hundreds of years later (500+ years later).
2. The Jehovist (some unknown guy) wrote the parts of Exodus (along with portions of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) where the name *Jehovah* is prominent. Some other unknown guy wrote the parts of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy where *Elohim* is prominent. Then someone else—possibly a group of men—came along and took these two sets of manuscripts and wove them together, in some great ancient cut and paste. If you have never heard of this before, this is actually what many (most?) seminaries teach. There are even commentators who make reference to these different groups of people (*we think that J wrote this portion, up until v. 18, and that is a portion written by E*).
3. Included with this theory is, there may have been a priestly group who put together the book of Leviticus.
4. However, in the end, everyone involved pretends that the end product was the

## Could the Book of Exodus Have Been Written Later?

work of Moses. The only reason we know about J and E and P (and others) is through “brilliant scholarship.” By *brilliant scholarship*, I mean a very weird and untenable theory with absolutely no evidence to back it up.

5. So, what exactly is the evidence for this theory? Well, quite frankly, there is none. There are chapters and portions of chapters where *Jehovah* occurs more often than *Elohim*, and vice versa, but does that really prove such an elaborate scheme?
6. Furthermore, who are any of these people? Do we actually know them? Are they found anywhere in some sort of history? No. Despite there being many seminaries teaching this, there are no alternate manuscripts in existence, and we have not even a clue as to who these men were.
7. This would mean that the book of Exodus and Leviticus came on the scene hundreds of years later, which would have completely overhauled religious teaching and practice in Israel. Do we have any evidence of such a momentous event taking place? No. None.
8. There have been people who have written faked religious books (Mormons, Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddy, Scientology) and to what end? Usually for power, recognition, money, influence. If such people existed who somehow put the book of Exodus together, where was their power, recognition, money and influence? Even though the tribe of Levi had a great deal of influence, power in Israel was divided up. Most of the time, the king had the most power, but that is simply what happens in most nations. These books of Moses would have come in after the establishment of a king, yet there is no evidence that somehow the king’s power was shaken up. We do not have a time where the king’s power is suddenly subordinate to the writings of Moses, where it was unchecked before. The king of Israel was always subject to God.
9. As an aside, when I use the phrase *king of Israel*, I am simply referring to any king of any nation of Israelites, without specifically referencing the united kingdom, the northern kingdom or the southern kingdom.
10. Prophets came along, and many of them had spiritual authority; but most of them were killed and persecuted; often by the king in charge.
11. There is no period of time in Israel where we see any sort of massive power or authority shift. The Levites had a great deal of influence, but that does not mean this is because the book of Leviticus was written hundreds of years after Moses in the method described.
12. How did two sets of people (J and E) write two separate histories, both pretending to be Moses, with almost no overlap in their history? How could someone, years later, discover these manuscripts and then weave them seamlessly together? There should be hundreds of instances of overlap, but, somehow, an author managed this were only a few instances of overlap (again, the example of the first plague being recorded twice).
13. There is one more great flaw in this theory. We know the great power and authority of Scripture today. That was also clear by the time of David and Solomon (and at various times before and after them). How did this group who

## Could the Book of Exodus Have Been Written Later?

- wrote Exodus in various stages—completely unknown to us apart from theory—realize that Exodus would have great power and authority? We know it now? How did they know it then?
14. And if such people existed, and somehow the book of Exodus was assembled after the fact by them, why did it not achieve power, recognition, authority or wealth for those people? We only know J, E and the later editors in theory; they are not referenced in Scripture.
  15. Furthermore, we have no idea when such a thing occurred. Although some people have named a few dates, but if such a thing occurred, it would have upended all religious practices and theology in Israel. Now, if you know religious people at all, it is not typical for them to believe X, have a new book of doctrines come along, so now they all believe Y. What usually happens is this: let's say that a new book comes on the scene and it happens to be very persuasive, what is the normal result? The result is, two groups are formed: those who hold to the old ways and those who hold to the new. But this never happened for these books of Moses added into the canon hundreds of years later.
  16. On the other hand, we clearly have two groups of people after the advent of Jesus: those who believed in Him and the Jewish traditionalists who did not.
  17. Some may try to defend the JEPD theory and claim that this new book did not change any of the practices and theology. Then ask yourself, why would anyone go to the trouble of doing what their JEPD theory alleges in order to not change anything? Were there existing documents with these practices and theology which were just suddenly discarded? Again, religious people do not do that sort of thing. Let me give you the example of the NIV (the most popular translation of the Bible today) and the KJV (the previously most popular translation). Are KJV Bibles out of existence? Have they disappeared? No. In fact, there are still people today who cling tenaciously to the KJV of the Bible.
  18. To summarize, this JEPD theory really solves no actual problem. It is not an explanation which suddenly helps to explain everything. Instead, the JEPD theory introduces quite a number of problems, inconsistencies and contradictions which cannot be explained away.
  19. On the other hand, there have always been those who would like to take down the authority of Scripture, and what better way to do this than to question the first books of the Bible. If Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were not written by Moses, then really, what authority do they have? If this were the underlying intent of the JEPD theory, that would make a lot of sense. This is simply the sin nature of man at work.
  20. This whole JEPD approach is very clever, but what is its true purpose apart from denigrating the authority of Scripture?

If you have never heard of this theory before, you might be thinking, as you read this, *what the hell is he on about?* I was first exposed to this theory by reading Josh McDowell's second book, *Evidence Which Demands a Verdict Part II*; and, at the time, I wondered that exact same thing. A full third of this second book was written to answer the JEPD theory. As I read Josh's refutation of this theory, I myself wondered, *what the heck is he on about?* However, having found that this theory is being taught in many seminaries—even today—I felt it necessary to comment on it.

All that I have just written, is done in anticipation of Exodus 16:35, which is placed with material that took place in the first month or so of the Exodus; but would have been logically written in the 40<sup>th</sup> year in the desert or later.

Before we move forward in this exegesis, we need to acknowledge that there is a problem with v. 35. The ESV; capitalized will be used throughout, unless otherwise noted.

Bear in mind that we have not exegeted that verse yet. We are just establishing the anomaly of that verse.

### When Was Exodus 16:35 Written?

Even though we have not looked at the full exegesis of vv. 33–35 yet, we will take the translation from the ESV and work with that:

Exodus 16:32 Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Let an omer of it [that is, of manna] be kept throughout your generations, so that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'"

Exodus 16:33 And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the LORD to be kept throughout your generations."

Exodus 16:34 As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the [Ark of] testimony to be kept. [Kukis: I added *Ark of*.]

Exodus 16:35 The people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

Now, here is the problem. I have been proceeding in my analysis of this book as if most of it was written as things took place. But suddenly, we have something written from the perspective of 40 years later.

Secondly, we have Aaron presumably placed this jar of manna before the Ark of Testimony, which is not yet in existence as of Exodus 16.

The simple explanation: Joshua, who was likely the amanuensis of Moses throughout much of the recorded 40 years, remembers what had been written, and he went back and added vv. 30–36, as a proper conclusion to the manna chapter (the key to the addition of this passage is v. 35).

In other words, vv. 33–35 (or some subset of vv. 29–35) were appended to this narrative 40 years later.



## When Was Exodus 16:35 Written?

If you accept this (I believe it to be the most logical conclusion), then there is no reason to read the material which follows. The material which follows contains arguments for that position and references other (untenable) theories.

One other possible explanation is, Moses wrote this verse prophetically. Although writing prophetically throughout the Old Testament (particularly among the prophets) is not abnormal (that is, for the Bible), I don't really see a great necessity for Moses to have been inspired to write about the future right here. Prophetical writings were reserved for great events to take place in the future (like the coming Messiah). Writing down that Israel would remain in the desert for 40 years does not fall into that category.

The big problem with this approach is, Moses and many others would know that they will remain in the desert for 40 years—but that does not appear to be the tenor of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers or Deuteronomy.

Now, clearly v. 35 looks down the road, future from this narrative, because it talks about manna being eaten for the next 40 years. Well, right now, within the confines of our narrative up to v. 29, Moses did not even know he was going to stay in the desert for 40 years leading the recalcitrant Israelites. So, v. 35 clearly and unequivocally continues with the subject of manna, but goes out 40 years into the future. Now, if it is acceptable for v. 35 to break out from the chronological bounds of our narrative—which it clearly does—then there is no reason why vv. 30–36 cannot do the same.

So, at some point in time, Moses or Joshua appends the narrative of Exodus 16:1–29, and adds a few verses which continue the *topic of manna*, while breaking out of the bounds of the strict chronological narrative that we are in (and Exodus, as we have seen and will see, is in a fairly tight chronological order).

This is not a weird theory or weird interpretation which I am giving here, because v. 35 follows the period of manna out to its logical end—the point at which God no longer provided manna for the people in the desert-wilderness. All I have done in this interpretation is to suggest that, we are logically following out the topic of manna at the end of this chapter. So, one possible approach is, vv. 30–35 (not just v. 35) follow out the topic of manna to its logical end (which makes perfect sense to me).

Also, there are several translations which present this passage with a similar interpretation:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron [eventually] placed it in the presence of the Testimony [The stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written.], to be kept.
Kaplan Translation	As God commanded Moses, Aaron [later] placed it before the [Ark of] Testimony as a keepsake. (Exodus 16:34)

The only difference between my interpretation and theirs is, I don't think that there was

## When Was Exodus 16:35 Written?

a few months period of time which takes place between v. 33 and 34. I believe that God gave the order to Moses, *after* the Ark of Testimony had been built. Moses assigns this task to Aaron, and then Aaron does it. All of this takes place a few months (or years) into the future, with these actions all taking place on the same day (or within a few days of one another). It makes far less sense for, during the first week of manna, for God to give this directive to Moses, as Moses would, right off the bat, be asking for clarification. Where should I place it? When should I do this?

The Translation for Translators does this adding an additional phrase at the beginning:

Translation for Translators	<i>Many years later, as Yahweh had commanded Moses/me, Aaron put the jar in front of the box that contained the stone slabs on which the Ten Commandments were written.</i> (Exodus 16:34)
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My only quibble here, would be that he should have added that *many years later* at the beginning of v. 32, where this portion of the narrative begins. Quite obviously, it makes more sense for God to give such a directive right before it needs to be done. So, God's order, which goes back to v. 32, is best seen as being given *many years later*; rather than Aaron's obedience to that order as being many years later.

Again, all I am doing here is asserting that some portion of vv. 29–36 was later appended to Exodus 16 all at the same time (this portion clearly including vv. 32–36).

Several translations and commentators realize, once they get to this verse, that this is probably information future from this specific narrative. Too many of them try to place only vv. 34–35 into the future. I think this makes far more sense to place vv. 31–35 in the future. Otherwise, God gives Moses an order, and then, a few decades later, Moses tells Aaron to do it.

The NIV does this by implication:

NIV, ©2011	<i>As the LORD commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna with the tablets of the covenant law, so that it might be preserved.</i> (Exodus 16:34)
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At this point in the overall narrative of Exodus 16, there are no tablets of the law; that will all take place after Exodus 20. Therefore, the NIV, by implication, places this passage sometime after Exodus 20. It is my opinion that the addition of vv. 29–36 occurs all at once near the end of their 40 years in the desert-wilderness; something that one would do at the end of a great era.

So, relative to Exodus 16, vv. 30–35 are in chronological order. Relative to Exodus 15 and 17, this short passage is not in chronological order, but it is a chronological tangent.

## When Was Exodus 16:35 Written?

This interpretation solves a myriad of problems with the text given.

There is another theory that the jar of manna was first placed in the pre-Tabernacle and then later in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle. While not rejecting this theory out of hand, I sense my audience's interest in these theories waning by this point.

Although one might interpret *testimony* to refer to something other than the Ark of Testimony, the pot of manna was in fact placed in or near the Ark (Hebrews 9:4).

It is possible that there are two addendums added: one which tells where the manna is going to be kept; and the other when it tells us how long God fed the people of Israel in the desert-wilderness. However, I believe that we have explored enough theories at this point.

There is no doubt that I have spent far more time on this than you were interested in.

Let's complete the exegesis of these final verses, keeping some of that information in the back of your mind.

Exodus 16:33 **And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations."**

Moses had Aaron take a food container and place an omer of manna in it. This would be placed in the holiest of all places, the Holy of Holies.

At this point in time, there was a pre-Tabernacle, a place where Moses would go to interact with God. Was this where the jar of manna was first to be kept? In my own thinking, what we are reading here likely took place after the building of the Tabernacle. Aaron and his sons were mostly in charge of the Tabernacle, and this is why Moses would have gone to Aaron with this command from God (Aaron oversaw the Levites and priests; and was involved in the religious practices of the Hebrew people). The pre-Tabernacle appears to have been a tent which Moses went to before the Tabernacle was built. However, the Tabernacle is placed under Aaron's purview, so we would expect v. 33 to be applied strictly to the Tabernacle (again, which would not be constructed until Exodus 40).

Exodus 16:34a **As the Lord commanded Moses,...**

When God gave a command, Moses and Aaron obeyed God. What God told them to do, Moses and Aaron did. The only real problem in this area was, Moses was resistant to being God's spokesman before Pharaoh. However, given the time which has gone by, Moses appears to have taken the lead as God expected him to.

Exodus 16:34b **...so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.**

Okay, just exactly where is this *place of testimony*?

## Where or what is the testimony?

Properly understanding the narrative of Exodus 16:30–35: At this point, interpretation is tricky. What some authors of the Bible do is, take a particular subject and follow it out into the future. So, one option here is, what we have studied about manna easily fits into the time frame that we have been studying until we come to vv.30–32, and that jumps into the future, following out the *topic* of manna. Let me show you how we might illustrate that in the translation (I am modifying the ESV to illustrate this):

Exodus 16:30–31 **So** [from that point forward] **the people rested on the seventh day** [having gathered the necessary food the day before]. **Now the house of Israel [later] called its name manna** [this food from God]. **It was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.**

Exodus 16:32–33 **Moses said** [announcing this to the public several months later] , **"This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, so that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'" And** [after making this public announcement,] **Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the LORD to be kept throughout your generations."**

Exodus 16:34–35 **As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the [Ark of] testimony to be kept.** [Consequently,] **The people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan** [after which, they never saw nor ate manna ever again].

This might make your head hurt, but let me suggest that two additions took place here. Vv. 30–34 were added later—probably by Moses—concerning this disposition of the jar of manna. Then Joshua, after entering into the land of Canaan, added vv. 35–36, which officially ends the discussion of manna.

Even though there was some sort of pre-Tabernacle where Moses went, we associate the actual Tabernacle with Aaron and his sons (as they will be in charge of it). So, it would make sense, if Moses tells Aaron, “Place a pot of manna before the testimony” then he is speaking of the completed Ark of Testimony kept in the Holy of Holies inside of the Tabernacle. Placing the jar of manna first in the pre-Tabernacle and later in the Tabernacle would not jive with Moses telling Aaron to do this. Again, in order for this to be as I explained it, vv. 30–34 would have been added after the construction of the Tabernacle. It makes sense if this takes place near the end of Israel’s time in the desert-wilderness (keeping a memento of what God did for Israel is appropriately done when Israel is about to enter into Canaan).

To summarize, no matter how we understand this, v. 35 was added 40 years later. However, there is no need for this to cause us a problem with the logical assumption that

we have been going with, that Moses wrote about these events shortly after they take place. In fact, Moses is sometimes recording on the very same day that they happen.

The actual mechanics at this point are speculative. I would suggest that Joshua, 40 years down the road, decides to append this section with two more verses (vv. 35–36), which summarizes what has taken place since the previous verses were written:

Exodus 16:35a *And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land;....*

Moses, in writing this (or, perhaps Joshua wrote this part) indicates that the final words were written at the time that Israel was camped outside Canaan at the end of Numbers. If this verse was added after the fact, we would expect a description like this. They have been living in a desert-wilderness for about 40 years, but they are about to leave it and go into an inhabited land and take it.

Perhaps Joshua added these words later as an addendum; or perhaps Moses did not complete writing this book completely until he was in the time of Deuteronomy. As discussed earlier, vv. 30–34 may have been added by Moses; and then a few days or even months later, vv. 35–36 were added later.

Canaan is a land which can be farmed and livestock can be kept; the Sinai desert was less hospitable and less inhabitable. However, at the time that these things were taking place, it was probably much better land than it is now.

Exodus 16:35b *...they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.*

The sons of Israel did not stop eating manna until they reached Canaan. Also, by this point in time, Gen X has died out.

This is an interesting verse. Suddenly, we are projected forty years into the future. These final verses bring the discussion of manna to a close.

The Law was copied almost innumerable times and possibly once or twice before they got out of the desert. Moses might have been the executive editor by that time and it may have been up to Scribes to make copies of God's Word (remember, the Levites would heed a copy of Leviticus as a guide to their duties).

Because we have no manuscripts from this time period, or anywhere close to it, it is likely that God's Word was recorded on the very ephemeral medium, such as papyrus paper. As they got further out into the desert, they may have resorted to writing on animal skins, which would be a little more durable. Some other historic declarations have been recorded on stone and others on columns which are with us even to this day. However, it is interesting that the Word of God, which is also with us to this day, was written on very ephemeral material. Today some things are written in a newspaper, which has a relatively short life compared to those things written on quality glossy paper in expensive hardbound



books. My point is, that these final verse could have been added by way of information on the second or third copy of the Law.

This particular day is also commemorated by Joshua in Joshua 5:11–12: *And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.* (ESV) Given this passage in Joshua, I believe that it is most likely that Joshua added the final two verses to Exodus 16. He wrote Scripture (the book of Joshua and the last chapter or so of the book of Deuteronomy) and needed to copy the books of the law; he added annotations as he felt necessary (and as guided by the Holy Spirit).

The fact that there was enough manna for all of Israel to feed upon for forty years is an incredible miracle, so the phrase *ate the manna* is repeated, although this sentence could have been easily written in such a way as to not repeat the phrase. Joshua, being one of the men who ate manna everyday and found it in abundance, was rightly impressed by this (many people simply took this provision for granted).

Exodus 16:35 *And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.*

At this point in our overall narrative, we have been about a week or three out from the attack of the Egyptian army. But v. 35 is clearly written from the perspective of 40 years down the road.

Exodus 16:36 *Now an omer is one-tenth of an ephah.*

This is certainly one of the oddest verses in the Bible. And it comes in right after v. 35, which required a tremendous amount of explanation.

If, at this point, I have made you sick and tired of talking about manna and when this section of Exodus was written, then I have accomplished my purpose. At the end of the 40 years, Israel had become sick and tired of manna. It kept them alive, but they never wanted to eat it ever again.

## **Lessons 263–264: Exodus 16:1–36**

## **Exodus 16 Chapter Summary**

Sometimes, we examine a chapter in such detail, that we might spent 100–200 pages on that chapter. What is lost in all of this is the flow of the chapter. Therefore, I have been writing a summary examination of each chapter at the end.

The Bible translation used for the base text below is the Tree of Life Version. It has but a few peculiarities. Mostly, it takes a few important words from the Old Testament and transliterates them instead of translating them.

Understanding the Tree of Life Version		
Tree of Life	More common	Explaining the Tree of Life Version
<i>Bnei-Yisrael</i>	<i>sons of Israel, Israelites, sons and daughters of Israel</i>	The Hebrew reads <i>b'ney Yishrā'el</i> (בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>b<sup>e</sup>-NEE yihsh-raw-ale</i> ] (which means, <i>sons of Israel</i> ); so this is a transliteration from the Hebrew.
<i>Adonai</i>	<i>Lord, YHWH, Jehovah, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	Rather than speak the sacred name of God, the readers of Scripture inserted their word for <i>Lord</i> instead, which is <i>'ādônîy</i> (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced <i>uh-doh-NEE</i> ]. However, in the actual Scriptures, <i>YHWH</i> is the word found here.
<i>Torah</i>	<i>Law (of Moses)</i>	This is a transliteration of the Hebrew word for <i>Law</i> .
<i>Shabbat</i>	<i>Sabbath, Saturday, day of rest</i>	Although <i>Sabbath</i> is a common transliteration of the word found here, <i>Shabbat</i> is a more literal transliteration.
<i>Mitzvot</i>	<i>Commandment (s)</i>	Like these other words, <i>mitzvot</i> is just a transliteration taken from the Hebrew.

In Exodus 14, the Egyptian army pursued Israel, but God killed them all. In Exodus 15, Israel sang about this incident. In Exodus 16, God provides food (manna and quail) for the Israelites during their trek through the desert.

At this point in our narrative, Egypt is behind the Israelites, but it is not out of their thoughts. They are moving forward as guided by God, although no one really appreciates where they are going. If they were going to head directly into the land given them by God, they should be traveling northeast. However, they have mostly followed the water going south, and after crossing over, they will be going east, deeper into the desert-wilderness. They are traveling through where Saudi Arabia is today. This region would not have looked like a desert but it would have been uninhabited.

Exodus 16:1 *They journeyed on from Elim, and the entire community of Bnei-Yisrael [= the sons of Israel] came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after leaving the land of Egypt.*

At this point, the sons of Israel are completely separate from Egypt. The Egyptian army lay dead in the Sea of Reeds. If they were traveling along the Nile or any other water way leading south, they have now crossed over it. Whatever body of water they have been walking along, that now stands between them and nation Egypt. Also, they have moved very far south of Egypt.

The date given tells us that Israel is a month out of Egypt.

Although Sinai is mentioned in this verse, it is not clear that anyone—Moses included—knew that their destination was Mount Sinai. One possible explanation for the inclusion of *Sinai* at this point is, Moses knew the geography and knew the direction in which they were traveling.

Exodus 16:2 But the whole congregation of Bnei-Yisrael murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

The people of Israel now have a new problem, and they immediately turn against Moses and Aaron, which is what they tend to do.

Despite all that they have seen, the sons of Israel have not developed any strong trust in God.

Exodus 16:3 Bnei-Yisrael said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of Adonai [= *the Lord, Y<sup>e</sup>howah*] in the land of Egypt, when we sat by pots of meat, when we ate bread until we were full. But you have brought us into the wilderness, to kill this entire congregation with hunger.”

At this point, the people seem almost delirious. They are saying things which are ridiculous.

It appears that those who complained, built up a little narrative, which included two key elements: (1) Life was pretty great in Egypt and (2) Moses and Aaron have brought them all to the desert to kill them with hunger. Based upon all that has happened, what they are suggesting is absolute nonsense.

I must admit that, for many years I wondered, how could these people be this confused, given all that they had witnessed. However, the key to understanding the Exodus generation is found in the soul. We can understand them because we can understand what takes place in the soul. So, even though every person in the Exodus believed in the Revealed God, they were on negative signals toward the plan of God and toward Bible doctrine and toward God’s authority. They are especially negative toward God’s delegation of authority to Moses and Aaron. Therefore, they were unable to retain spiritual information in their souls, despite seeing it with their own eyes. Therefore, they would think and say really stupid things. We understand this to be the build up of scar tissue on the soul, which blocks the mind from thinking logically.

**Illustration:** In a period of less than ten years, we in the United States went from a society which clearly differentiated between boys and girls to a society where a considerable percentage (20 or 30%?) think that it is okay for a child or a teen to believe that they belong to the other gender. Many people today even think that steps should be taken to facilitate physical changes in a child, to help them change into the opposite gender. It has gotten so crazy as to be a status symbol in Hollywood and among some liberal groups. This crazy

idea appears to be fundamental to the Democrat platform today (I write this in 2023), whereas, ten years previous, such thinking would have been considered absurd to the exact same democrats. In the past few years, at a time when truth is more easily found than ever before, huge numbers of Americans have chosen to believe lies. In fact, we have various media sources which peddle nothing less than government-approved lies and skewed points of view, and yet, people believe what the media propagates.

Pharaoh—presumed to be an unbeliever—built up scar tissue against God. So, even though each plague was worse than the previous plague, Pharaoh had built up scar tissue equal to the intensity of each new plague. Pharaoh could be beaten down to the point of giving up; but when he was allowed to get back up again, he was more anti-God and anti-Moses than before. His brain seemed unable to process the power of God, despite seeing it in every judgment put upon the Egyptian people

Pharaoh never came to a point where he recognized that he ought to be worshipping the God of Moses. The build up of scar tissue on his soul precluded that.

The sons of Israel are believers, but believers are also capable of building up scar tissue on their souls. So, even though they have seen with their own eyes many reasons to trust God, they find themselves giving in to negative volition toward God (and, therefore, becoming antagonistic toward Moses and Aaron, God's emissaries).

All of these people are saved, because they have believed in the God of Moses (the Revealed God), but they are not moving forward in the spiritual life. They continue to regress and to build up scar tissue. As you build up scar tissue, it is easier to become irrational and unreasonable. Believers and unbelievers can build up scar tissue on the soul.

**Illustration:** There are a considerable number of people today who hate Donald Trump, and there is virtually nothing that he could do to change their minds. They have scar tissue built up on their souls to the point that, they are unable to give him a fair shot. I write this in 2023, and if Trump was president, and doing everything that Joe Biden is doing, these people would hate him even more. They would still find fault with everything that Donald Trump did. Or, let's say that Joe Biden had come into office and did not change a single policy (which would have been a brilliant strategy), he still would have been supported by those who are anti-Trump. It is not about policy or achievement; it is all about their souls being covered with scar tissue so all they can do is feel anger and disgust and superiority toward Donald Trump (yet, prior to 2015, very few of these people had this sort of negative attitude toward him). Now, even though there are adherents to both major parties who literally hate members of the opposing party, the percentage of Democrats who hate Donald Trump is far higher than usual (I can say this knowing several people who absolutely disdain Donald Trump, whereas, before 2016, they had no real opinion of him one way or the other.

So, this is where the people of Israel are right now—many of them, anyway. They can accept Moses and Aaron for very short periods of time, when things are going well, but

given any difficulty that plagues them, and they go right back to feeling a concentrated anger against Moses. Some of them can feel nothing else toward Moses, although they might hide it during the good times.

Exodus 16:4 Then Adonai said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. The people will go out and gather a day’s portion every day, so that I can test them to find out whether they will walk according to My Torah [that is, *My Law*] or not.

Because these people are believers, God must act justly toward them, providing them with logistical grace. However, when their negative volition reaches a crisis state, God will put these folks under the sin unto death, which would include the withdrawal of logistical grace.

God tells Moses that He has this problem handled. Food is going to be provided for the Israelites every single day. Because these are believers, God must feed them (that is a fundamental tenet of logistical grace). Given where God wants them to go (first to Mount Sinai and then to the southern border of Canaan), there is no opportunity for the people to hunt and plant. Therefore, if they are to live, then God must take care of them.

Much of the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to logistical grace. God will provide the Israelites with food from this point forward, as long as they are in the desert-wilderness. In fact, we might see this section of Exodus as fundamental to our understanding of logistical grace.

God gives Israel very specific instructions. Every day, they will go out and gather the proper amount of food to feed every person in the house for that day. No more and no less.

Exodus 16:5 So on the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather day by day.”

When it comes to gathering this food on a Friday, there will be very specific directions given. Every Friday, they are to gather twice as much as they need for their daily rations.

This will be the first teaching of the Sabbath day to the sons of Israel.

Exodus 16:6–7 So Moses and Aaron said to all Bnei-Yisrael, “In the evening you will know that Adonai has brought you out from the land of Egypt, and in the morning, then you will see the glory of Adonai. For He heard your complaining against Him. What are we? You complain against us?”

That evening, the people would see the pillar of fire (which they have seen the entire time that they left Egypt) and they will be fed quail (which does not appear to have been given to them every night). The Israelites should be able to look at these two things and conclude that God truly brought them out of Egypt.



The next morning, they would see the glory of God. That morning, they would have manna given to them from that day forward. Also, they would see the pillar of cloud.

When a person sees or perceives the glory of God, this means that they become aware of God's character or essence to a point where it affects their thinking (this would be analogous to occupation with Christ). All these things which God is doing for Israel *should result* in them being aware of God's faithfulness and in the focusing their minds on God's character. They should begin to understand His faithfulness and love. But, as we will continue to see, God's great acts on their behalf will not change their thinking at all. *Why?* you ask. It is because of scar tissue of the soul. That explains how God could do so much for His people, and yet for them to respond with perverted thinking.

Moses straight out asks the representatives with whom he is speaking, "God has heard you complain about Him. And what are we that you complain to us?"

In other words, "God already knows what your complaints are. However, Aaron and I cannot do anything about your complaints; only God can. Therefore, do not waste your time complaining to us."

Exodus 16:8 Then Moses said, "Adonai will give you meat to eat in the evening and enough bread to fill you in the morning, since Adonai hears your complaints that you mutter against Him, what are we? Your complaining is not against us, but against Adonai!"

The meat to eat in the evening is the quail (which did not appear to be given them every night). However, they would be given enough bread (food) every morning.

Moses again points out to this people that their complaints should be directed toward God; not toward him or Aaron. They can do nothing for the people of Israel, apart from God.

This understanding of the spiritual life is fundamental in all dispensations.

For some of the people reading this verse, what Moses says does not sit right with them, because they recognize that they should not be complaining to God.

**Application:** No believer can do anything worthwhile apart from God. We need God's power and His resources in order to act in a way that is worthy before the Lord.

Exodus 16:9 Moses said to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of Bnei-Yisrael, 'Come near before Adonai, because He has heard your complaining.'"

All Israel was to come near or approach Y<sup>e</sup>howah, as He has been listening to them complain.

The people do not seem to have a firm grasp on Who God is. When Moses and Aaron are right there in their line of fire, they complain to them. They do not seem to grasp that God hears everything that they have to say.

Exodus 16:10 Then, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of Bnei-Yisrael, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of Adonai appeared in the cloud.

While Aaron was speaking to the sons of Israel, the people looked toward the uninhabited region and there was some sort of manifestation of God in the cloud.

Exodus 16:11–12 Adonai spoke to Moses saying, “I have heard the complaining of Bnei-Yisrael. Speak to them saying, ‘At dusk you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am Adonai your God.’”

God is speaking to Moses again, and we don’t know if this is a continuation of v. 4 or if this represents a new conversation. Since we appear to be dealing with exactly the same subject matter, I would consider it a continuation of this conversation.

“I have heard your complaining,” God says to Moses (referring to the complaints of the people), “and this evening, you will have quail to eat; and tomorrow morning, you will have a special food. As you eat this things, you will know that I am Y<sup>e</sup>howah your God!”

God is describing what should be taking place in the minds of the Israelites. As they eat what God provides them, their minds should be turned around.

Why does it appear that Israel might be turned around to the will of God; but then, sometimes even just minutes later, they begin to rebel again? These are fair-weather believers. As long as things are going relatively well for them, they are happy with God’s contribution to their lives. However, the moment they come against some problem, they see God, or Moses and Aaron, as being impotent, or worse, evil.

**Application:** Even though believers often receive greater blessings in life than unbelievers, we still face difficulties and problems. Ideally, the spiritual life helps us to navigate these circumstances

**Application:** If we go by our emotions, then our difficulties and challenges will get us down. Emotions are good to have, but they should never lead you in life.

Back to our narrative:

Exodus 16:13 So when evening fell, quails came up and covered the camp. Moreover, in the morning there was a layer of dew all around the camp.

That evening, there were quails which blanketed the ground of the camp. The people were to go out and capture the quail for food. The next morning there was an odd layer of dew all around the camp.

All of this is logistical grace. God is providing for the believers in Israel (which was pretty much everyone).

Exodus 16:14 When the layer of dew was gone, on the surface of the desert was a thin, flake-like frost, as fine as the frost on the ground.

When the dew had evaporated, there remained an odd, flaky sort of covering on the ground. This flaky thing turned out to be edible.

Exodus 16:15 When Bnei-Yisrael saw it, they said one to another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Then Moses said to them, “It is the bread that Adonai has given you to eat.

When the people saw this flaky stuff covering the ground—something that they had never seen before—they kept on saying, “Manna?” Translated, that means, *what is it?* More precisely, what they said was, “Maw-HOO.” (= *what it?*)

When Moses and others in the knew heard this question, they answered, “This is the bread (food) that God has given you all to eat.”

Exodus 16:16 This is the word that Adonai has commanded. Every man is to gather according to his needs, an omer per person, according to the number of people per household. Each man is to take it for those who are in his tent.”

Specific instructions were given as to how much should be gathered each day for each household. Even though the manna could be found outside on the ground, it took time and effort for the people of Israel to gather enough for each household.

Exodus 16:17 Bnei-Yisrael did so, and some gathered more, some less.

The sons of Israel sort of followed directions, but some gathered too much and others did not gather enough. There were always those in the Exodus generation who wanted to test God. No matter what Moses told them to do, they were going to do a little bit more or a little bit less.

Exodus 16:18 When they measured it with an omer, those who gathered more had nothing left over, and those that gathered less did not lack at all. Every man gathered according to his appetite.

At first, God simply overruled their initial disobedience. Those who gathered too much, did not have any left over; and those who did not gather enough were nevertheless satiated.

Every man gathered the amount necessary for the household—even those who didn’t.

Exodus 16:19 Also Moses said to them, “Let no one save any of it until the morning.”

Manna was not to be saved for a few days. God was teaching logistical grace to the Exodus generation, although very few of them seemed to get it. Logistical grace is the grace given by God to allow a new believer to proceed into mature believer status. It is

food, shelter and clothing necessary to keep them alive during this time. Sometimes, there are other bonuses in logistical grace (such as, quail).

The Christian life is a day-by-day affair. This does not mean that we don't plan for the future, but every day, that is a day given to us by God; and we need to live in that day. We should stay filled with the Spirit and we should take in Bible teaching. And whatever happens today, we leave it where it is when tomorrow comes.

**Application:** We need to be careful about being too literal. This does not mean that we can only go to the grocery store every day and buy just enough for that day. Those were specific limitations—collecting manna each morning—placed on the sons of Israel at that point in time.

**Application:** We need to be careful about *imitating* things that you read in the historical portions of the Bible. It should be obvious that believers do not need to confine themselves to going outside each morning, looking for food on the ground. Yet, we have a massive subsection of believers who are trying to live in the book of Acts, chapter 2, today. Paul never orders anyone in his epistles to seek after the Holy Spirit. He never tells a church, “Listen, I know what your problem is—your problem is, you don't have the Holy Spirit.” In fact, even the most carnal congregation that Paul corresponded with—the Corinthians—he told them that they had all been baptized into Christ (which is the work of the Holy Spirit).

**Application:** My point is, the Christian life is not imitating the narratives that we read in the Bible. We learn from these narratives—which is why God provided them for us—but we do not imitate them.

Back to the narrative:

Exodus 16:20 *However, they did not listen to Moses. Some of them preserved it until the [next] morning—but it bred worms and rotted. So Moses was angry with them.*

Instead of listening to Moses and doing just what he told them to do, quite a number of families tried to preserve the manna for the next day, just in case. It began to smell and small worms would grow in it.

Exodus 16:21 *So they gathered it morning by morning, each man according to his needs, and as the sun became hot it melted.*

There was a time frame during which the people could go out and collect manna. If they waited too long, it would become too hot outside and the manna would melt.

Exodus 16:22 *On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each individual. So all the leaders of the community came and informed Moses.*

They had been given instructions to gather twice as much manna as they needed, for they were not to go out on the seventh day to gather up the manna (as per v. 5).

The sons of Israel had leaders and elders, and they would come to Moses regularly and tell him what was happening in their community.

Exodus 16:23 But he said to them, “This is what Adonai has said. Tomorrow is a Shabbat rest [that is, a *Sabbath rest*, a *Sabbath day*], a holy Shabbat to Adonai. Bake whatever you would bake, and boil what you would boil. Store up for yourselves everything that remains, to be kept until the morning.”

Although the seventh day was mentioned back in Genesis, the day after God finished restoring the earth; what we read here is the first time that we have come across any sort of Sabbath observance.

Moses worked with the elders who worked with the people during the first five days of this first week of manna, interacting, and trying to help the people get their minds right when it came to instructions from God.

On the sixth day, they were instructed to gather twice as much manna and to plan for a day of rest in God’s economy for that era.

Exodus 16:24 So they set it aside until the morning, just as Moses instructed, and it did not rot nor were there any worms.

Although on other days, if the manna was kept overnight, it would begin to go bad; the extra manna gathered a day prior to the Sabbath did not go bad.

Exodus 16:25 Then Moses said, “Eat that today, because today is a Shabbat to Adonai. Today you will not find it in the field.

Moses warned the people that there would be no manna to find on the seventh day. So they had to gather twice as much on the sixth day, and eat that second amount on the seventh day (Saturday).

Exodus 16:26 You are to gather it for six days, but the seventh day is the Shabbat, and there will be none.”

God told Moses and then Moses told the people, “Don’t bother to try to find any manna on the seventh day; there won’t be any to be found.”

Exodus 16:27 Yet on the seventh day, some of the people went out to gather and they found none.

Of course, some people decided to check on this, and they did go out to gather manna on the seventh day. Many of them were possibly thinking, “This is illogical for the manna to go bad on the second day, and yet be okay the day after the Sabbath.” They also must have thought, “It is illogical for us to get fresh manna for six days, but not to collect it fresh for the seventh.” Given God’s clear directives, that sort of thinking was human viewpoint.



Exodus 16:28 Adonai said to Moses, “How long will you [all] refuse to keep My mitzvot [= commandments] and My Torah [= Law]?”

God has given the Israelites specific commands and it seems that every time, some of them—a considerable number in fact—intentionally disobeyed the commands of God.

We then go from God speaking to Moses to Moses speaking to the people:

Exodus 16:29 [Moses spoke these same words to the people, and he also said:] “See, Adonai has given you [all] the Shabbat, so on the sixth day He gives you [all] the bread of two days. Let every man stay in his place, and let no man go out on the seventh day.”

God repeats these commands to Moses with the intent that He repeat them to the Hebrew people.

Exodus 16:30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

At some point, the people appear to obey God in these directions. After all, there was no percentage in disobeying God. If they did not collect the additional manna for the Sabbath, then they had nothing to eat. If this took place over a couple of Sabbaths, that would be a hard lesson to forget.

The giving of manna is summarized in v. 31, and what would be done in the future regarding manna is presented in vv. 32–36.

Exodus 16:31 The house of Israel named it manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.

At this point, the food from God is given a name; it is called *manna*. Its look and taste are also described.

The final five verses of this chapter give us a summary of God’s provision of manna all the way to the end of their stay in the desert-wilderness.

Either Moses or Joshua added these verses many years down the road. At this point in time, in our Exodus narrative, no one knows that Israel is going to remain in the desert-wilderness for 40 years (God knows, of course; but no one else does).

Exodus 16:32 Then Moses said, “This is what Adonai has commanded. Let a full omer of it be kept throughout your generations, so that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out from the land of Egypt.”

We have no idea when v. 32 took place. My assumption is, vv. 31–36 (or 32–36) were later appended to this section. Vv. 31–34 were likely added by Moses after the Tabernacle had been built; and vv. 35–36 added by Joshua after the Hebrew people entered into the

land of promise. In the final two verses, Joshua (I assume) looks back on what took place regarding manna over a period of 40 or so years.

At some point, God told Moses that an omer of manna be kept for future generations (what is saved aside for this reason will not go bad).

Some of this manna was saved aside. It would be placed with the Ark of God (which had not yet been designed and built). The Tabernacle and furniture will be completed in Exodus 40.

Exodus 16:33 Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put a full omer of manna inside. Store it up before Adonai, to be kept throughout your generations.”

A full omer of manna (a day’s rations for one person) was put into a container of some sort. This was to be saved as a witness for many generations in the future.

Exodus 16:34 Just as Adonai commanded Moses, Aaron stored it up in front of the Testimony, to be preserved.

These actions take place after the construction of the Tabernacle.

There were going to be a few things from their time in the desert which were to be saved aside. The first of these things is this jar of manna.

*The testimony* is the *Ark of Testimony*, which will be built at the end of this book. At this point in the Exodus narrative, no one knows anything about the Ark of Testimony (except God, of course). Vv. 33–34 make sense if the Ark of Testimony is in existence; it would be a difficult order to understand if the Ark of Testimony had not yet been built.

Interestingly enough, this is not kept as some sort of museum piece so that anyone can come by and look at it. It will be kept in or near the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant will be kept inside the Holy of Holies, which is a compartment at the back of the Tabernacle. Only one man will enter into the Holy of Holies and he entered only once a year (the High Priest).

God has not yet—as of Exodus 16—commanded Moses to build the Ark or the Tabernacle (the Holy of Holies will be a part of the Tabernacle). All of this is going to take place in Exodus 25–40.

Exodus 16:35 Bnei-Yisrael ate the manna for 40 years. They ate the manna until they came to an inhabited land, when they came to the borders of the land of Canaan.

Given that v. 35 appears to have been tacked onto this chapter after Israel has entered into the land; and given that vv. 32–34 likely took place after the time frame of this chapter; it would make sense that all of these verses were added together after the fact. This was discussed in too much detail in the overall exegesis.

Exodus 16:36 [Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah.](#)

I am assuming that this defines the measurement used by Israel in order to determine how much manna was to be gathered per person.

## Lesson 265: Exodus 17:1

## Introduction to Exodus 17

Exodus 17 covers two basic topics. In the first half of this chapter, the Israelites are tested with regard to water and God provides them water. The second half of Exodus 17 deals with a skirmish between the Israelites and Amalek.

The sons of Israel are being tested throughout this portion of the book of Exodus, and mostly, they are failing. Almost every test that they face—recorded chiefly here and in Numbers—they will fail as a nation.

This is the second *no water* test for Israel. Altogether, they will face three *no water* tests in all: the first was Exodus 15 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) and the third one will occur in Numbers 20 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). All three tests are different and they are all significant. Each one is typical (that is, each one looks forward to a future event or it illustrates a future event).

In this second *no water* test, the people complain to Moses again, as if he has some hidden agenda to harm them.

Moses understands that each day of life is a grace gift from God; but these people do not seem to have a clue about this, despite all that they have seen (remember, they are receiving manna every single morning). God will have Moses take his staff and slam it against a rock, which will then open up and water will rush out.

While Israel is at this place, drinking the water provided them by God, the people of Amalek come out to fight them. Apparently, they set a day and time for this engagement; and Moses chooses men from his population to oppose them. We might envision this more as a large, preplanned gang fight as opposed to a full-scale war. The fight would be to the death, but it appears that Amalek is giving Israel every chance. However, in their eyes, they might be simply toying with Israel, as a cat with a mouse.

During this skirmish, Moses will stand on a hill with others, and as he raised up his arms, the fight would go in Israel's favor. As his arms became tired and they dropped down, Amalek would appear to start winning this fight.

Both of these incidents have meaning, both to the Israelites of that day; and for people in the future.

### Water from the Rock

Exodus 17:1a [Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin,...](#)

We begin this verse with the wâw consecutive (a connective which often moves action along in narrative) followed by the Qal imperfect of *nâça'* (נָצַח) [pronounced *naw-SAHG*]. The imperfect is commonly used in verbs which move the narrative along. *Nâça'* means, *to pull up [stakes], to pull out, to break camp and move out, to set out, to journey, to march, to depart; to bend a bow*. Strong's #5265 BDB #652. So the Israelites are simply uprooting themselves from being camped out and they are moving forward.

Throughout this study, I use the NKJV, and we are going to compare the NKJV and the ESV with regards to how they translate two words. After *the Wilderness of Sin*, the NKJV translates the next two words as, *on their journey*. The first word is *lâmed* (ל) [pronounced *l'*], which means, *to, for, towards, in regards to*. No Strong's # BDB #510. You will note that it has no Strong's #. This is because there are a few words in the Hebrew which are not really considered words. This is more of a prefix than a word; but it has all of the characteristics of a word for us who read English.

The *lâmed* preposition is followed by the masculine plural noun *maçça'* (מַחֲצָא') [pronounced *mahs-SAH*], which means, *a pulling up [of stakes]; breaking camp; setting out; travels, journeys, journeying; stages*. It is related to the verb found earlier in this verse, translated by the NKJV as *set out*. Affixed to the word is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix. The NKJV translates this *on their journey*. The English Standard Version translates these two words, *by stages*. The ESV translation of v.1a is, [All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages,...](#) You will note that the NKJV treats this plural noun as if singular; and the ESV leaves out the possessive suffix.

In my mostly literal translation, I translated this as [All the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed from the desert-wilderness of Sin, according to their journeys...](#) This preserves the word order, the plural noun and the suffix (the Literal Standard Version (the LSV) does nearly the same thing as I do).

Nonetheless, the ESV may have better preserved the meaning. Their translation, *By stages*, means that the Israelites would move a bit, traveling for most of a day, and then make camp and stay for awhile. We don't know if they would remain at any one place overnight, for a few days, a week or a month, but keep in mind that we have a city all moving here where babies are being born, children and women are a part of the movement, so it does not move very quickly. This city moves by stages.

All that we are dealing with here is a simple move from point A to point B (or, in this case, from point S to point R). However, actually, there are 3 places where the people camped between the wilderness of Sin and Rephidim. These places are also named in Num. 33:12–14. They would move, then camp, move then camp, move then camp. Or, as the ESV puts it, [Israel moved....by stages...](#)

It is Numbers 33 which indicates to us that the bulk of Exodus is in chronological order. See Numbers 33 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

The word *Sin* is unrelated to our word *sin*. It is a proper noun, better transliterated *Siyn* or *Ciyn*. It means, *thorn, clay*. Strong's #5512 BDB #695.

In the previous chapter, the people complained to Moses about not having bread or meat to eat. When tested, the people will complain to Moses.

Exodus 17:1b ...[according to the commandment of the Lord](#),...

God guided the sons of Israel through the desert, which was the case throughout their time in the deserts between Midian, Egypt and Canaan.

So that there is no misunderstanding, the Hebrew people are not *wandering* in the desert, confused or lost. No one is lost—Moses, who was brought up with the training to read and understand maps and geography—was never confused about where they were or where they were going. Moses guided them as per God's guidance. At this point, they are moving in a rather linear direction.

There is nothing hidden or mysterious about their movement. Recall that there is a pillar of fire in the evening and a pillar of cloud in the daytime. Although this region did receive some rainfall, a cloud pillar was unusual; and when it moved, Israel moved.

When it says that Israel traveled *according to the mouth of Y<sup>e</sup>howah*, this is a simply a metonymy of the *mouth* which is a reference to, *what the mouth says* (this is also an anthropomorphism, as God does not have a mouth). Many translations render this, *by the command of Jehovah*. Similar phrasing can also be found in Num. 3:16, 39 20:24 27:14 Deut. 1:26, 43. Recall that Moses is very well-educated, so we will find literary flourishes throughout his writings.

Exodus 17:1c ...[and camped in Rephidim](#);

Although Rephidim sounds as if it might be a reference to a people, it is not. It is the transliteration of a word that means, *rests, stays, resting places*. Strong's #7508 BDB #951. This is simply one of the many places where Israel came to, stopped and stayed for a bit.





**Israel's Route in the Desert-wilderness** (a map); from [Pinterest](#); accessed January 10, 2023. You will note several question marks along the way. We do not know exactly where Israel crossed the Red Sea (or the Sea of Reeds). We can guess at Israel's route, but these names are given, for the most part, by Israel (or by Moses). So, these names given in Numbers 33 do not represent well-known cities or geographical markers known today.

Although Moses knows where they are (as he has received this sort of training), that does not mean that he is leading the Israelites (seeing that they are going away from the land of Canaan rather than towards it). God is leading Israel, as a pillar of cloud in the day and a pillar of fire at night. Moses knows where they are and where they are moving (he has a map of this in his head). The people of Israel are like a person using GPS—they know where their next turn is. They are simply moving along, but few of them have any perception of where they are in relation to Egypt or Canaan.

I grew up in a generation without GPS, so I used (and enjoyed) maps. If driving, I had in my head a map of where I was and where I was going. This is how most people traveled until the advent of GPS. Moses may not know his destination, but he certainly can see the movements of Israel as if on a map.

Exodus 17:1c ...and camped in Rephidim;...

The second stop *named* in this chapter is Rephidim. However, the book of Numbers tells us that there were 3 intermediate stops between Sin and Rephidim.

Sin and Rephidim are famous only inasmuch as, these names are found in the Bible. These are words simply used to name the place where Israel has chosen to stop.

We do not know today where exactly Rephidim is. Even though we have a fairly detailed explanation in Num. 33:13–15, this depends upon the location of Mt. Sinai, a location which continues to be debated to this very day.

The name Rephidim is likely named by Moses or Aaron or someone else who is with them. We do not know if these names came about as the result of a discussion, or if Moses simply made them up as he recorded the journey of Israel.

It is possible that Moses, at this time, is recording on two separate documents. On one, he names the day-to-day action (which is what we are studying); and on the other, he simply outlines the movement of Israel, as per Numbers 33.

Exodus 17:1d ...but there was no water for the people to drink.

When they arrive in Rephidim, it become apparent that there is no water for the people to drink. When an area is populated, then wells have often been dug, so that the people may get water from that well. But, because this land is mostly uninhabited, they are not coming across any wells; and there is no body of fresh water nearby that they are aware of.

There are at least three times when the sons of Israel experienced this problem of having no water, and they failed the test each time (interestingly enough, it is Moses who will actually fail the third time).

Exodus 17:1 Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink.

Although I provided a map, we don't know if they are further inland than what we see on the map; and we do not know for certain where Mount Sinai is (that is where they are traveling to).

Maps from this era are reasonable guesses by people who know the geography better than I do.

Exodus 17:1 Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water there for the people to drink.

Israel continues to move in the direction that God is leading them. The people of Israel would have very little idea where they are. They are moving along like a person with GPS in his vehicle. The GPS says turn here, and they turn there. But they have no overall vision of where they are. The exception to this is Moses, who has studied maps for significant portion of his life; and he both left and returned to Egypt, knowing where to go in each instance. However, like the rest of the people, Moses does not know why they are moving in the direction that they are moving. Moses does not know God's plan for them to go to Mount Sinai nor does he know what is going to happen when they arrive there.

It is likely that Moses is aware of that mountainous area; and he may have an idea that they are moving in that direction. The reason that Moses would know about the mountains is, he was raised to be king over Egypt, and he would have known the various regions all around Egypt. He would have known where there was water, where there were mountains, and what sort of general terrain there was, here or there (a king might lead an army into battle, so he must know the lay of the land in order to determine tactics).

What Moses would have certainly known is, they are not moving toward the land of promise; but there is no record of him questioning God about this. There is no verse where Moses speaks to God, saying, "Listen, I know where we are, but shouldn't we be moving more to the north, toward Canaan?"

In any case, a crisis has come to the people. They have no water to drink.

Exodus 17:2a Therefore the people contended with Moses,...

The first verb is the Qal imperfect of רָיַב (רִיב) [pronounced *ree<sup>b</sup>*] and it means *grapple*, but it is used in a more figurative sense; therefore, it means *to strive, to contend, to find fault, to bitch [about something]*. Strong's #7378 BDB #936.

Because there is no water to drink, people contend with or find fault with Moses.

The people hold Moses responsible once again. You will remember in the previous chapter, the people lacked meat and bread; so they blamed Moses for hauling them out to the desert, with the intent of killing them en masse.

Bear in mind that, all of this time, there is a pillar of cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire at night which the people are following. There is no way that Moses has any control here of the environment or the direction that they are all going in. The people all see this. Furthermore, every morning, they go out and gather manna to eat. They should have drawn the conclusion, "If God is leading us and if He is providing food for us, surely He knows that we need water." Moses might be thinking this, but the people of Israel certainly were not.

Up to this point, God has provided all the things required by the people to survive. However, at this juncture in their travels, they lack water.

The people have two possible approaches: they can depend upon God and even approach Moses with this in mind; or they can simply complain to Moses and blame him for this situation.

There is nothing in the world wrong with the elders or the people coming to Moses and telling him that they need water and request that he speak to Y<sup>e</sup>howah to have the water provided for them (as Moses has become an intermediary between the people and God). That would have been entirely acceptable. The problem here is that they still do not recognize God's power and God's provision (even though they are eating manna every day of the week). It is no different than us complaining to God about our own circumstances. I recall working with three women many years ago that spent the majority of their time bitching and moaning and complaining. This was how they spent their free time. Mostly they complained about other people, but often they talked about where they were in life and the problems that they had. God made provision for their problems, for your problems and for the troubles of the Israelites in eternity past. He would prefer for that the people approach Moses with respect and ask for water to be provided. "Could you speak to God and ask Him for water?" would have been a reasonable question to pose to Moses. That would have required the people to have knowledge of God's plan and provision, and then to apply that knowledge.

**The People Contend with Moses**  
(a graphic); from [the Latter Rain](#);  
accessed May 3, 2023.

Exodus 17:2a [Therefore the people contended with Moses,...](#)



Moses is sick and tired of their complaining to him as though he is at fault. Moses recognizes that he is simply following the orders of Y<sup>e</sup>howah and that whether he goes along with the program or not, Israel is moving forward toward Canaan (eventually) according to God's plan. The direction that they are traveling is obviously circuitous. So Moses can either go along with the program or not. However, any test that the people face is not his fault. He is being tested at the same time.

Exodus 17:2b [...and said, "Give us water, that we may drink."](#)

The people demand from Moses water to drink. Now, Moses by himself cannot provide the people with water to drink. At the very least, the should have said, "We are thirsty;



petition your God to give us drink.” In fact, it would have been better for them to go to Moses and say, “We are God’s people, led out into this desert-wilderness by God. Where is His provision of water for us?” That would have been a legitimate approach to this problem, given all that they have been through up to this point. God could then have looked down upon His people and said, “Now, I can work with this.” But that was not their response.

Exodus 17:1 Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink.

The people continue their trek through the desert, and they run into a second circumstance where they are lacking water (not too surprising, being that they are in an uninhabited desert wilderness (uninhabited means, no one has dug any wells).

Exodus 17:2a-b Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, “Give us water, that we may drink.”

The people have no reason to contend with Moses. Although he is leading them, they can all see the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire. That means, they all know which direction to go in. They do not have to find Moses in the crowd and see which direction he is pointing.

Every time that they have a problem, it is clear that God steps in to solve that problem and not Moses. Therefore, they should be contending with God and not with Moses. Furthermore, they should not be *contending*, but they should be petitioning the Lord.

Even though Moses is leading them, he cannot control having water or not having water. They are all going in the same direction; and that direction is not one chosen by Moses. Moses only advantage over the people is, he knows where they are all at on a map.

A few years ago, I was walking with one of my kid brothers along the American River in Sacramento. Even though I did not know exactly where we were, I knew in which direction the river was and in which direction the myriad of trails were. I knew the general direction to walk in to get to the vehicle, even though I had not been there before.

This is roughly Moses’ experience. In his preparation to become pharaoh, he learned geography. He would have known the geography all around Egypt. He knew compass points; he knew where the sun came up; he knew the direction that Canaan was in; he knew where Egypt was. He knew the general direction to go for any of the inhabited regions.

Nevertheless, every morning that Moses woke up, he knew that this was a new day. He knew that God was leading them. And he knew the Canaan was north, but they were, for the time being, traveling west. He simply trusted God at this point.



Obviously, Moses has no control over where water is. This should have been obvious to the Israelites as well.

Exodus 17:2c *So Moses said to them, “Why do you contend with me?”*

Bear in mind that this is a huge number of people out in the desert. So it is not easy to find water. Furthermore, this is not a problem that Moses can solve.

Clearly, Moses cannot, on his own, provide food or water for the people. And Moses would be out of bounds, if he chose to guide the people in another direction different from God’s guidance.

Moses has a place before the people, and that is as their human authority. God has placed him in that position for a number of reasons. There are things which he can do, but there are a myriad of things which he cannot do.

**Application:** Our own leaders on this earth are also limited in what they can and cannot do. Although it is clear, by the last two presidents that a president can control and solve some problems; and also, a president may step in and dramatically change a great deal for the worst; even presidents have their limitations. There are events outside the realm of the politician.

Moses is able to see what is taking place; and to him, this is a very black and white situation. He speaks to this complaining delegation.

Exodus 17:2d *Why do you tempt the Lord?”*

What they are doing is the Piel imperfect of *nâṣâh* (נָסָה) [pronounced *naw-SAWH*] which means *put to the test* and it can be used with God as the subject and man as the object (which is in a good sense) or vice versa, which is using this verb in a bad sense. Strong’s #5254 BDB #650.

It is fine for the people to be concerned because of the lack of water. But, their approach is to attack Moses for this situation that they find themselves in (and, throughout, no one forced the Israelites to do anything; they just moved forward according to God’s guidance).

It is okay to call the Lord on a promise; you go to the Bible, or, preferably to your soul where a promise is, and call on God to fulfill His promises to you.

Exodus 17:2c-d *So Moses said to them, “Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord [or, put the Lord to the test]?”*

Moses rightly tells them, “I am not the problem here. Getting in an argument with me solves absolutely nothing. Accusing me is not going to solve this no-water problem.”

**Application:** A believer with Bible doctrine can recognize what his leaders can do and what they cannot do. If you think politicians can somehow control the climate and make things better in this regard—listen, our own politicians cannot even balance a budget, so do you really think they can fix the climate? And do you really think that the climate needs to be fixed?

In the narrative that we are studying, the people could have made things even worse, had they harmed Moses; as he is their lifeline to God.

Exodus 17:3a *And the people thirsted there for water,...*

The people are in a desert-wilderness, which means there is not the water that two million people need to be had. And they are on the move, so that they cannot really dig wells. Obviously, they become thirsty.

Exodus 17:3b *...and the people complained against Moses,...*

They murmur against Moses; and they complain directly to Moses.

At no time do the people indicate that they have any understanding of God's promises, despite all that they have seen. Now, how is it possible for them to see this much and not get it? The information is reaching the soul of the sons of Israel, but they are not believing it; and they are not applying it. If they do not believe it in the first place, then they are not growing as believers.

The first basic doctrine is this: God formed Israel and He has made promises to Israel. These promises go back to the book of Genesis. The people are aware of their heritage, but they apparently are not believing all of it. This information appears unable to enter their souls because that information cannot pass through such a thick layer of scar tissue.

The second basic doctrine is logistical grace (they would not have had this name for this doctrine). The Israelites have seen, time and time again, how God has protected and preserved them. They just do not tie all these things together and believe them. Key to their many failures is, they simply do not trust God and they do not believe Moses. Everything that they ought to know right now is buried beneath a mound of scar tissue. The scar tissue prevents them from accessing the information which ought to be in their souls but is not.

Have you ever been worried and upset; and it took you away from God? You were unable to trust Him; you were unable to apply faith-rest; you were unable to move forward in the Christian life. In a mild case of carnality, you have allowed your worries and fears to choke off the application of Bible doctrine (because you are out of fellowship). Under a more severe case of carnality, you have been out of fellowship for awhile and now you are beginning to build up scar tissue, making your access, intake and retention of Bible doctrine all the more difficult.

What is happening (or, actually, not happening) in their souls is where their failure lies.

Interestingly enough, I have spoken with a number of atheists, and many of them do not even believe in a soul. To them, we are evolved from animals, so all we have are electronic impulses and chemicals sloshing around in our brains. Everything that we think and do can be taken back to a complicated relationship between experiences and our brain function. This may help you to understand why there is such a dramatic change in American society with regards to sex. If we are simply advanced animals, should we not celebrate this by engaging in all kinds of physical pleasure?

If you take the human soul out of the equation and see man as simply a smart animal, then your view of the world and our place in it become much, much different.

## Lesson 267: Exodus 17:3–5c

## The Exodus Generation

The Exodus generation is well-known to those who study the Scriptures. God speaks of these people on several occasions elsewhere in the Scriptures.

Psalms 95:10 *For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways."* (ESV; capitalized)

Where is the problem? In their heart, the right lobe, where a person thinks. They have gone astray in their hearts (today, the *heart* is often related to emotion; but it refers strictly to thinking, viewpoint and motivation during the period of time when the Bible was written).

Hebrews 3:7–10 *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put Me to the test and saw My works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known My ways.'*" (ESV; capitalized; Psalm 95:7-10)

The key factor in their failure—they did not believe God; they did not mix His promises with faith. This means they have to know what God's promises, policies and laws are and then they have to trust God for those promises, policies and laws. There is information about God that these people should have known—known and believed.

This does not mean that they were not saved. The Hebrew people of the Exodus generation were all saved; but 99.9% of them never advanced spiritually after believing in the Revealed God. How is it possible for there to be 2 million believers, and most of them never advance spiritually? Hebrews 4:2 specifically spells out the problem:

Hebrews 4:2 *For, indeed, we have had the gospel preached to us, even as they [the Exodus generation] also; but the Word did not profit [did not benefit, was not advantageous to] those hearing it, not having been mixed with faith in the ones who heard.* (Green's literal translation; with additional meanings added by me)

Where are these promises and where do they get mixed with faith? All of this takes place in the soul which is where the bulk of the Christian life actually takes place.

As we observe the Exodus generation fail over and over again, remember: the problem is, they did not mix the promises of God (which is one category of Bible doctrine) with faith. That is what is necessary to advance in the spiritual life, then and now. That is how the believer gets the advantage; that is what makes the Christian life beneficial in time. The key to spiritual growth is to learn accurate doctrinal teaching and then believe it.

Instead of thinking about the information which God had given the Israelites, they instead met adverse circumstances with constant complaints. **The Israelites were constant complainers** (a cartoon); from [Coopertoons](http://Coopertoons.com); accessed May 3, 2023.

The sons of Israel continue to complain to Moses:

Exodus 17:3c ...and said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt,...

Possibly there is a spokesman who comes forward, and he asks, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt?" Or perhaps there is a group of men who represent the rest of Israel.



*The Israelites were constant complainers.*

The speaker will immediately add his own incorrect answer to his own question:

Exodus 17:3d ...to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

What an absurd accusation. "Was your purpose to kill me and my family and my cattle with thirst?" is what this man is accusing Moses of doing. This is totally irrational. What sense would it make for Moses to hatch such a devious plan against his own people? And how exactly could Moses produce the manna or the cloud pillar or the fire pillar which actually led Israel to this place?

Despite the absurdity of this complaint, it apparently resonated with much of Israel.

Nevertheless, all of this time, God has been providing the people with bread from heaven. God knows they need food; God also knows that they need water. This is something that they ought to know. They ought to know what God knows; they ought to understand what God has promised them.

Given what is taking place, many people have wondered, *what is wrong with these Israelites? Why are they not getting this?*

Exodus 17:3 And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, “Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

Have you ever known such a group of whiners? You just want to slap them to get their attention. But then every time we whine and complain about anything, we are behaving exactly like the Israelites. God knows that they need water. God did not bring them into the desert to kill them. They are being tested and they are failing miserably. V. 2 says that they are testing God, but He is also testing them. It is legitimate for God to test us, as testing is for our benefit. However, it is not legitimate for us to test Him. Who benefits from that and how?

An analogous situation would be, it is legitimate for a teacher to test his students—which often determines if they can move ahead in that particular unit. However, it is not legitimate for the students to test the teacher (in most schools, evaluation of each teacher takes place—but generally not by the students).

Exodus 17:3 And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, “Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

The people have another clever line to deliver: “Have you brought us out to this desert to kill us with thirst?”

The problem with this people is, they are not thinking. God is providing them with manna every morning. If God is able to provide food for them, then surely He is able to provide water for them. Clearly, they do not believe and/or appreciate all that God has done on their behalf so far.

Even though the people of Israel did not appreciate the God Who provided for them; Moses understood that all of life came down ultimately to God. So Moses goes to God at this point.

Exodus 17:4a So Moses cried out to the Lord,...

About all that we can discern about the communication between God and Moses is, this does not appear to resemble a dream. Moses is clearly upset by the accusation and the anger of the people, so he goes directly to God and calls out to Him.

We are not directly informed as to where Moses goes or how he makes contact with God. I believe that there is a pre-Tabernacle tent that is outside the camp and that this is where Moses goes. No one except Joshua ever goes with him. It is in this tent where Moses appeals to God (see Exodus 33:7–8).

Exodus 17:4b ...saying, “What shall I do with this people?”



Moses asks God, “What can I do for these people? What can I do with them?” Moses saw himself being backed into a corner by them. When these people complain, bear in mind, some of them are angry specifically with Moses and Aaron. Not only are they bringing their complaints to air in public, but these Israelites have the potential to go further than making simple complaints. There are some men who are considering replacing Moses as the leader of the Israelites. Some may be willing to stone Moses to death so that he can be easily replaced.

This is only the beginning of frustration for Moses with this people. At this point, we are only a few months out of Egypt. Moses has no idea, at this point in time, just how recalcitrant the Israelites are.

Exodus 17:4c *They are almost ready to stone me!*”

“They are about to stone me to death,” Moses tells God.

*Stone* is in the Qal perfect; the perfect tense means that it is looked upon as a completed action or the action is looked upon as a whole, even though it has not occurred yet. The possible event of *stoning* would not occur several times nor would it be a prolonged process where they would stone Moses, catch a bite to eat, and then go back and stone him some more. It would occur one time and then it would be over. That is the meaning of the perfect tense.

Moses is going to God with a legitimate concern. He is not doubting God, he is not asking for another job, he is not asking Aaron to take over any more. He is simply asking for guidance and expressing his concern.

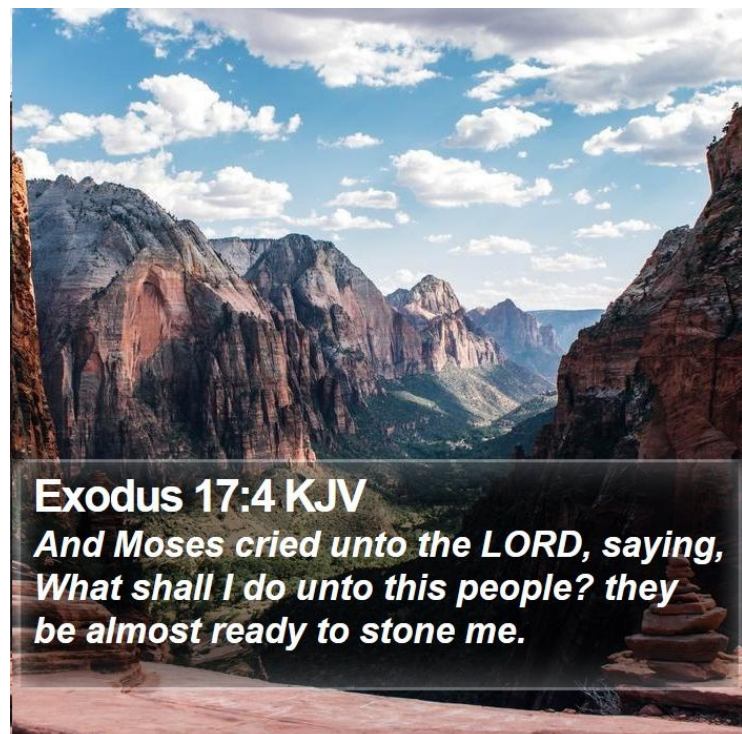
Exodus 17:4 *So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!”*

Moses has not recorded everything said between the Israelites and himself. Either some of them threatened to stone him to death or that implication was clearly made.

**Exodus 17:4 (KJV)** (a graphic); from [Scripture Images](#); accessed May 3, 2023.

Exodus 17:5a *And the Lord said to Moses,*...

God answers Moses; and it appears that this answer is immediate. So, in some way, Moses is able to communicate directly with God. It appears that he actually hears the voice of God (we do not hear God’s voice today).



Exodus 17:5b ...“Go on before the people,...

Jesus tells Moses, “You are going to walk before the people.” Moses is God’s commissioned man on earth, and the people have to see him, so he is told to pass before them.

Since Moses is going to respond to their complaints, what he does must be very public. He does not simply grab a few leaders and head for the rock, but he walks before the people first.

All of this would make a great deal of sense if there was a tent where Moses went to talk with God. He would emerge from the tent, the people would be aware that he has spoken with God, and then He was going to act (more accurately, God was going to act through Moses).

Exodus 17:5c ...and take with you some of the elders of Israel.

Moses is also to have some of the elders with him. So, interestingly enough, not everyone is going to observe just what Moses does or just what happens. The people are going to see the results of what Moses does and participate in that.

Given the sign/miracle which will occur, Moses is going to take some witnesses along with him. Now these elders have closer ties to the people than they do to Moses. On at least one occasion, they turned against Moses, when Pharaoh responded to the initial meeting by putting more work upon the Hebrew slaves.

Why exactly does Moses not take most of Israel to watch what will happen? Well, there is a reason for that.

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**Lessons 268–269: Exodus 17:1–6****The Living Waters Offered at Horeb**

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Exodus 17:1–2a Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, “Give us water, that we may drink.”

Israel continues to move forward, but as they move deeper into the uninhabited regions of the Sinai desert, they find themselves without water. They complain to Moses, as if he is able to provide them with water. He is in the exact same position that they are in.

Exodus 17:2b So Moses said to them, “Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?”

Moses pushes back against them, telling them that their problem is not with him; and their attitude and approach opens them up to divine discipline.

Exodus 17:3 And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

The people do not get what Moses is saying, and then specifically accuse him of forcing them to go out in the desert, where he will kill them and their livestock with thirst.

Exodus 17:4 So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!"

Moses leaves and communes directly with God, telling Him that Moses' life is in danger with these complainers.

Exodus 17:5a-c And the Lord said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. (NKJV)

God wants Moses to take some of the elders of Israel and they are all going to go on a field trip.

Exodus 17:5d Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river,...

Moses will carry his staff with him; the staff which he used to strike the Nile River.

God makes a reference to *your staff* here; but I do not think that this refers to Moses' actual ownership of the staff. From the very beginning, it is Aaron's staff which is cast down and turns into a serpent (Exodus 17:9); and Aaron's staff which strikes the waters of the Nile and turns them to blood (Exodus 17:15–18).

One simple solution is, this was originally Moses' staff; and when Moses told God, "I cannot speak to Pharaoh; I am uncircumcised of lips"), God said, "Okay then, Aaron is going to speak on your behalf; hand him your staff." By this time in the narrative, Moses has taken the lead in all things, which would have gained him the staff back. However, we do not have a verse where God says, "Hand Aaron your staff." This is the simplest and most elegant solution. Recall that it was originally Moses' staff which turned into a serpent before him (Exodus 4:2–5); but later, it is clearly Aaron's (Exodus 17:9, 10, 15). About the only thing which is uncertain is, *who does the sign with the staff in front of the Hebrew elders?* That appears to be Aaron, but it is somewhat unclear (Exodus 4:30).

So, if both Moses and Aaron have separate staffs, and sometimes Moses' is used and sometimes Aaron's is used, then much of what happens is unclear (and the words *your staff* is also not defining specific ownership). Again, the simple solution is, when Moses said, "I cannot do this in front of Pharaoh," then God said, "Okay, your brother Aaron will do the speaking," (Exodus 4:14–17) and then He added, "he will need to borrow your staff." (Words not recorded in Scripture) Exodus 4:17 implies that the signs would be done with Moses' staff: [God is speaking to Moses] "And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs."

I realize that this is a pretty minor detail, but it is a good idea to deal with those, because most Christians will be faced, at some point in their life, with a recitation of the *contradictions in the Bible*.

**Tangent:** As an aside, when dealing with someone who talks about all of the contradictions in the Bible, this is not someone who has deeply studied that Bible and has *discovered* all of these contradictions one-by-one by themselves. This is someone who googled *contradictions in the Bible* and perhaps skimmed through a few websites. The work involved at one time to assemble together a set of so-called contradictions would have been considerable. Today, it is a matter of searching the web, then copying and pasting. It seems that most of the time, they find a meme and post that meme—and that meme somehow represents their knowledge of Scripture. Many times, that meme represents “knowledge” that they did not have the day before yesterday.

**Tangent:** Such websites devoted to Bible contradictions rarely allow comments or explanations. Now and again, one of these sites might allow one to comment freely until the time that he answers two or three of their *contradictions*. At that point, a person may find himself barred from comments (this is an experience which I have had personally).

**Tangent:** A doctrinal believer ought to collect these so-called *contradictions* and post them, allowing people to post explanations for them.

Back to the narrative:

Exodus 17:5d [Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river,...](#)

Moses will follow God's directions to the letter. God tells him what to do and here, he does exactly that. Moses was therefor oriented to God's plan.

The rod that Moses took into his hand both cleared a path in the water for the Israelites to walk through and brought judgement down upon the Egyptians which resulted in their deaths (Exodus 14:27).

Exodus 17:5e [...and go.](#)

Moses is going to go somewhere, which appears to be to a specific rock in the Horeb mountain range.

Exodus 17:5 [And the Lord said to Moses, “Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go.](#)

I have suggested that Moses goes to a tent and that is where he communicates with God. When he emerges from that tent, he is supposed to walk before the people. God has given Moses directions and God is about to act through Moses. This is what people would be observing.

Moses is going to choose a few of the leaders or simply call for a number of leaders to go with him. They will all observe what God has Moses do. The people are going to enjoy the results, but they will not see exactly what Moses does. Only a limited number of people will see what happens.

You will find v. 6 to be rather remarkable. Remember that God is speaking to Moses.

Exodus 17:6a Behold, I [God] will stand before you [Moses] there on the rock in Horeb;...

Literally, these first few words of v. 6 read: Behold Me standing to your faces (meaning, before you, in front of you) upon the rock in Horeb...

Moses and the people are, apparently, in Horeb (recall that these are not cities but places which are named as they go along). However, Horeb may be an exception to that general rule. There is a massive rock formation there where the sons of Israel are. It seems reasonable that Moses is aware of this rock or rock formation. Either, they can see it from camp, they passed by it, or Moses is aware of it from having lived in Midian or having studied it in geography class when in training to become king of Egypt.

I have assumed that the rock is large, simply because a single rock is designated. I have no idea how many rocks are in Horeb at this time; but when God speaks of the rock at Horeb, Moses appears to know which rock that is. Perhaps this is a rock which stands out in a mountain of rocks. Maybe God's description of it was in greater detail.

Based upon the use of Horeb here and Sinai later, Horeb appears to be the mountain range that Mount Sinai is found in. On occasion, Horeb will be used as a synonym for Mount Sinai.

Exodus 17:6b ...and you shall strike the rock,...

Moses is to strike the rock using his staff; which staff often speaks of judgment. Striking the rock would also be an act representative of judgment.

If God tells Moses that He will stand before him, where is the rock, where is God and where is Moses? In order to Moses to strike the rock and for God to be right before him, God has to be in front of the rock or within the rock. In any case, God is on or upon the rock (that is what the Hebrew text says). Now, generally speaking, Moses is unable to actually see God or some manifestation of God. He could only see a manifestation of God (like the fire or the cloud pillar). So where God is and what Moses sees exactly is not clear to us.

It sounds as if Moses is facing the rock, that God is right there in front of Moses in or on that rock; and Moses is going to strike the rock, meaning that He is going to strike God (or in the direction of God) with his staff (which represents judgment).

In other words, Moses illustrates with his actions a judgment of God.



Exodus 17:6c ...and water will come out of it,...

From the rock that Moses strikes with judgment will come living waters or the waters of life. These waters would sustain the people of Israel (and their flocks).

Exodus 17:6d ...that the people may drink.”

The people would be able to drink from these waters. There would be enough water for them and for their cattle.

Exodus 17:6a-d Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.”

These are Moses directions, and they are extremely important, as everything that God tells Moses to do foreshadows what is to come (not with regards to Moses but this is all about the far future, which is what this whole incident represents).

Exodus 17:6e And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

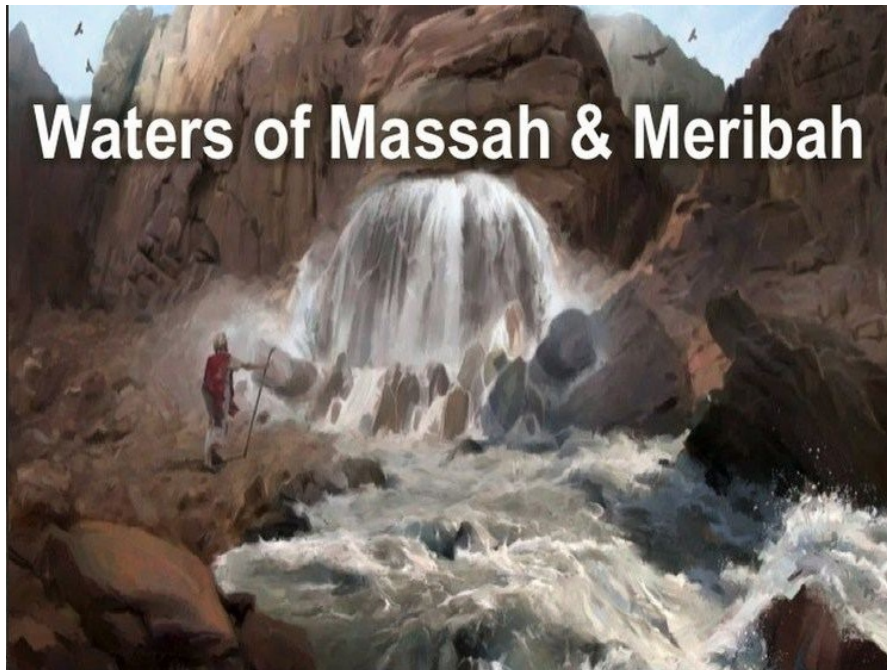
All that God told Moses to do in this passage, Moses does.

There are many artistic renderings of this incident. What is often pictured here is a rock about three times the size of Moses and water shooting out kind of like a hose was turned on full blast. However, that is not what happened. There is no way that a hose could water two million people and their cattle. This rock essentially capped a geyser and when it was struck and broken, water may have begun as a small stream, but it quickly became a gusher of water, forming a very large pool of water. Essentially, it will become a lake or quite possibly a river. We know this for two reasons: (1) logically, there are two million people and their animals to water here, so the end result cannot be some small spring of water. (2) Secondly, this is discussed elsewhere in Scripture. Psalm 114:8 reads: He is the one who caused water to flow from a rock. He made a spring of water flow from that hard rock. (ERV) Psalm 78:15–16 He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep. He made streams come out of the rock and caused waters to flow down like rivers. As a result, we have geyser becoming a lake formed here. (ESV) Psalm 105:41 He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a river. Psalm 107:35 He [God] turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water. (ESV)

Given the narrative, the people would not have seen all that took place here, but they would have seen the result, which is this massive amount of water. Applying some logic here, all of this has to take place without drowning the people and their animals, so it is likely that Moses and the elders actually traveled some distance to get to this rock. Given the amount of water that would be necessary to sustain such a large number of people, a river of water would have to have opened up. That could be dangerous if too many people are right there while it is happening.

Here is why Moses did not lead the people en masse to the smashing of the rock with his staff. Given their actions, how many of these people would have acted like idiots and jumped into the middle of the water as if first came out. In order for there to be enough water for all Israel, the amount of water coming out from this rock is going to be huge; meaning that it will also be dangerous.

When it comes to Moses striking the rock, it is just the elders who saw this; but all Israel would participate in drinking of this water. They would all be sustained by the water from the rock.



**Waters of Massah & Meribah** (a graphic); from [Mopicov.pw](http://Mopicov.pw); accessed May 16, 2019. I do not know who originally designed this graphic, as it was found on several webpages.

This is a slightly better representation than most, if we can imagine this as the waters just beginning to flow. One must bear in mind that 2 million people and their animals must be able to drink from this fountain of water.

Therefore, so much of the which has a dozen or so people kneeling down by a recently made stream does not convey even slightly what is taking place here.

The logical conclusion at any time should have been, the God of Abraham is capable of doing anything.

**God Gives Israel Water from the Rock** (a graphic); from [odbf](http://odbf); accessed January 17, 2023.

Exodus 17:5–6 [And](#)



the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. (ESV)

Now, as far as we have gone in Exodus, we might be far enough along for you to understand the concept of the parables. Much of what occurred in the Old Testament was a parable of what was to come; it was a shadow of the good things to come. It all occurred—it was not made up—but it paralleled what would soon occur and was the gospel for the Old Testament believers. **For the Law** [which should not be constrained to refer only to the ten commandments or to the laws handed down by God, but to the five books of Moses and to the rest of the Old Testament], **since it has a shadow of the good things to come—not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offered continuously, make perfect those who draw near** [to the altar] (Hebrews 10:1).

The ESV (capitalized) is used below.

As was true of almost everything that Moses did, this was a shadow of the good things to come. Moses will strike the rock with his rod, which can represent judgement, as it did when Moses held it above the Sea of Reeds and the Sea closed in on the Egyptians and drowned them. There are so many parallels that it would be best to take this in points:

### The Rock at Horeb is Jesus Christ

1. First, let's look at the passage which is before us: **And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.** (Exodus 17:5–6)
2. You will note that God will stand before Moses and Moses will strike the rock, essentially striking the Lord with his staff. Remember that the staff that represents divine judgment. It was used many times in announcing a new judgment to come upon Egypt.
3. Jesus Christ is the Rock Who provides us with living waters: **For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.** (1Corinthians 10:4) The God of the Exodus is Jesus Christ in His preincarnate form. I have often used the words *Revealed God* to designate Him. Jesus Christ is the rock; and Moses will strike the rock.
4. This parallels God the Father striking God the Son, the Rock of Israel, with judgement on the cross. **Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him...** (Isa. 53:10a). **He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.** (1Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:4–5).

## The Rock at Horeb is Jesus Christ

5. Isaiah tells us to come to these waters, which will be the living waters which flow out from the rock which Moses will strike. "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters..." (Isaiah 55:1a).
6. From Jesus Christ flowed living waters to whomever thirsted, so that a man may come and drink and never thirst again. That is, from Jesus Christ came salvation that whoever believed in Him would not perish, but have everlasting life. Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water...Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again." (John 4:10, 13b–14a) Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37b-38; no specific OT passage, but many similar sentiments expressed in the OT; compare Exodus 17:6 Proverbs 18:4 Isaiah 12:3 44:3 58:11 Zechariah 14:8)
7. This living water is given to those who are totally unworthy of it. ...among whom we also all conducted ourselves in times past in the lusts of our flesh, doing the things willed of the flesh and of the understanding, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even we being dead in deviations, He made us alive together with Christ (by grace you are being saved),... (Ephesians 2:3–5).
8. The water from the rock was free, as our salvation is free. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23).
9. The water which flowed from the rock was abundant—it was everything that they needed to assuage their thirst. ...but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,... (Romans 5:20b).
10. The salvation of the Israelites from dying of thirst was near, just as salvation is near to all of us—it is as near as our heart and as near as our tongue: For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:10).

Incidents which occur in the Old Testament are ...a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near [to the altar, and, therefore, near to God] (Hebrews 10:1b).

In other words, these are only shadow images; they are not the reality. These incidents really happened; but they also speak of what is going to come. So this water flowing from a rock is a shadow image of what is to come.



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What is fascinating by these shadows is, they all existed in written form for 1500 years (this particular incident in Exodus). The entire Old Testament had been completed 400 years prior to their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. In fact, because Israel rejected Jesus (as a whole), they have retained their Scriptures separate from Christians. Nevertheless, there is little or no difference between the Old Testament in any Christian Bible and the Scriptures of the Jews.

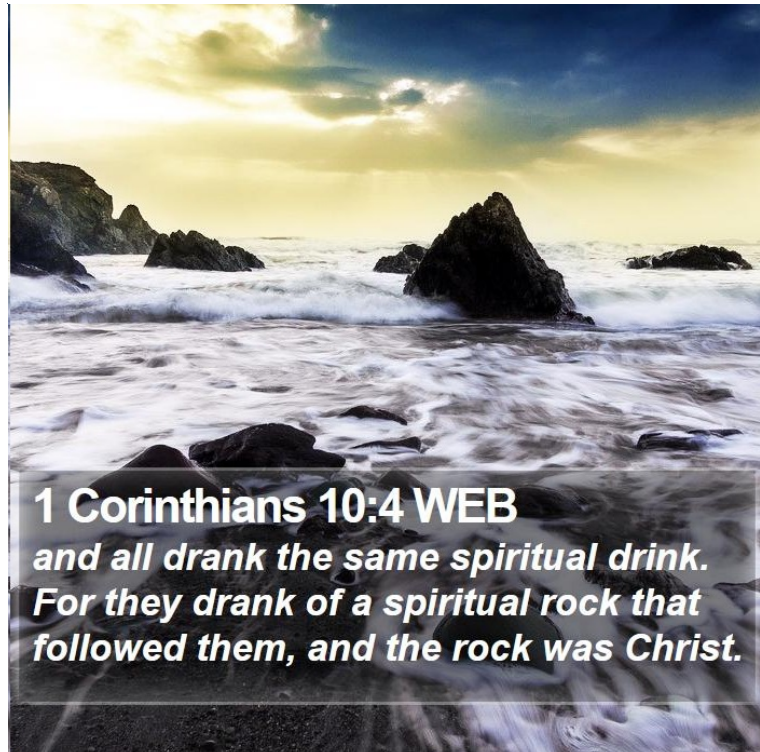
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Since I work with 60+ translations, it is always amazing to me how close Jewish and the Catholic Bible translations synch up.

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1Corinthians 10:1–5 **For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.** (ESV)

**1Corinthians 10:4 (WEB)** (a graphic); from [Scripture Images](#); accessed May 3, 2023.



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As you will see, every single phrase is significant in the last two verses which we studied.

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The ESV (capitalized) will be used below:

God's Directions Foreshadow Jesus and the Crucifixion	
Scripture	Text/Commentary/Foreshadowing
Exodus 17:5 <b>And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people,...</b>	Moses, just like Jesus, would walk before the people. They would have a chance to view him. Bear in mind that there are two million people there, so only a fraction of these people actually saw Moses begin to act (just as only a fraction of mankind would have a direct encounter with Jesus).

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## God's Directions Foreshadow Jesus and the Crucifixion

Scripture	Text/Commentary/Foreshadowing
...taking with you some of the elders of Israel,...	There would be a very small representative group that would go with Moses—perhaps twelve men like the disciples of the Lord. In any case, the number of those who would actually witness what Moses does, would be very small, just as the number of people who saw Jesus on this earth was relatively small; and those who witnessed the crucifixion would be very small.
...and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile,...	The staff which Moses uses represents God's justice. Remember when Moses struck the Nile, the waters became like blood. This looks forward to the greatest judgment of human history, where God the Father judged God the Son for our sins.
...and go.	Moses is going to go out before the people, even though a smaller subset will be observing him; just as Jesus, at a point in history, was observed by a small subset of all people.
Exodus 17:6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb,...	The Revealed God will stand right before Moses on the rock at Horeb.  Throughout both testaments, Jesus is referred to as the Rock of God (prophetically and in retrospect).
...and you shall strike the rock,...	In order for Moses to strike the rock, he is striking God or in the direction of God. This speaks of God the Father striking God the Son, judging Him for our sins.
...and water shall come out of it,...	From these events, life-giving water will come forth. Because of Jesus dying for our sins, living water comes forth. That is, we can believe in Him and have eternal life.
...and the people will drink."	The very undeserving people would drink from these living waters and be saved, just as men would drink from Christ (that is, believe in Him) and be saved.  Since all men are able to eat and drink, eating and drinking are often used to represent nonmeritorious faith.
And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.	Moses did exactly what God commanded him to do; just as Jesus did exactly as God the Father commanded Him. This all took place in front of a relatively small number of witnesses.

As you can see, every single phrase of what is said has meaning and looks forward to the cross. These words were written 1500 years before our Lord's crucifixion.

The theological terminology for this is *type* and *antitype*. The type is the thing that happens which represents an important spiritual incident to take place in the future. The antitype is the fulfillment of the type. So Moses striking the rock and there being living waters spring out from that rock is the type. This is fulfilled by Jesus, Who is judged for our sins, and out from Whom will come living waters. This fulfillment is the antitype.

**“Is YHWH among us or not?”** (a graphic); from [Full of Eyes](#); accessed January 18, 2023.

Seems like I have used another graphic from this website and it was equally freaky, suggesting to me that these graphics are probably produced at this website (or by the creators of this website). In this instance, they also provide their commentary on Exodus 17:7.

They do a full gallery of art, developing it for the Scripture which they cover. It appears to be passage by passage, rather than, say, book-by-book.



## Lesson 270: Exodus 17:7

## Massah and Meribah

Previously, Moses struck the rock (where God was) and from it sprung living waters (enough water to save all of the people of Israel).

### Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well:

Now let's move forward into the New Testament to see Jesus interacts with a Samaritan woman.

John 4:7–8 A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." (For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) (ESV; capitalized; throughout)

Jesus is at a well and there is a Samaritan woman there. She apparently has the containers with which to store the water. Jesus asks her for a drink.

Although there might be other people there, this narrative focuses in on Jesus and this woman (John probably observed this incident, as not all of the disciples needed to go for food).

It is very unusual for a Jewish man to speak to a Samaritan woman, as there is considerable animosity between Jews and Samaritans.

John 4:9 The Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

The Jews looked down on the Samaritans, and it surprises this woman that Jesus speaks to her at all. This foreshadows the fact that Jesus provides salvation for both Jews and all others (Samaritans are part Jewish<sup>48</sup>).

John 4:10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

Jesus says to her, "If you knew the gift of God, which is eternal life; and if you knew Who I am, you would be asking Me for a drink of living waters." In other words, she would be asking Him to be saved.

Obviously the Chosen One of God is able to give her these living waters.

John 4:11–12 The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."

The woman examines Jesus and sees that He does not have the proper equipment to draw water from this deep well. But what He has said to her intrigues her. "What is this living water?" she asks Him. Then she asks, "Are you greater than our father Jacob?" She begins to recognize that she is not just speaking with some random Jew. Now Jacob is the father of the Jews, but also of the Samaritans, as they are half Jewish.

Interestingly enough, the woman knows that this was a well which Jacob originally dug, and that he drank from this well, as did his sons and his livestock. So this is a rather important well; yet she has asked Jesus: "Are you greater than our father Jacob?" She recognizes that she is not speaking to just any man.

John 4:13–14 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water

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<sup>48</sup> Their racial makeup is a bit more complex than this.

that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (ESV; capitalized)

Jesus tells her that the water He is offering will be such that she will never again thirst, as this is the water of eternal life. The person who drinks this water—that is, who believes in Jesus Christ—will have eternal life as a result. He will partake of the Lord's living waters and live forever.

What we have studied in Exodus 17:1–6 is a shadow image of Jesus, the Rock of Israel, providing the waters of life for all Israel (all Israel which chooses to partake).

Exodus 17:7a *So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah,...*

As Moses led the people of Israel forward, I believe that they named each stop along the way (each place where they made camp). Moses gave two names to this place: Massah and Meribah.

Massah is equivalent to the Hebrew noun *maṣṣâh* (מַצָּח)<sup>49</sup> [pronounced *mas-SAWH*] means *test, trial, proving*. Strong's #4531 and #4532 BDB #588. Meribah is the word *Mêrîybâh* (מֵרִיבָה) [pronounced *mêreeb-VAW*] and it means *strife, contention*. Strong's #4808 and #4809 BDB #937. Although Moses explains to us why this place was named what it was, it's always nice to take a trip into the Hebrew to see the actual word from which these names came. The proper nouns that we read are nearly identical to the Hebrew nouns.

The names Massah and Meribah suggest that these places where Israel stopped were given names based upon what took place there.

The people were tested; yet they tested God. What took place here was strife and contention. Nevertheless, God provided for them.

Exodus 17:7b *...because of the contention of the children of Israel,...*

The name Meribah means *strife, contention*; and so the sons of Israel were in contention with God. They came to Moses with the wrong attitude. Of course, they could approach Moses and say, "We have no water; what will God do about this?" But they came to Moses angry and spouting stupid things. There is a correct and an incorrect mental attitude for the people to have. Their thinking and resultant words were wrong and revealed a complete misunderstanding of God and Moses.

Exodus 17:7c *...and because they tempted [or, tested] the Lord,...*

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<sup>49</sup> The dagesh, that little dot in the middle of the samekh (ס), doubles the consonant when the consonant is found in the middle of a word

Each time, rather than allowing themselves to be tested and then passing the test, the sons of Israel would instead test (Massah) God. God would be tested to the point where He would be ready to kill all of the Israelites.

At some point, God would put to death the generation of adults who exited Egypt; Israel would remain out in the desert until nearly every single one of them dropped dead in the desert. This is why Israel remains forty years in the desert; it has nothing to do with Moses or the Israelites being lost or wandering about.

Exodus 17:7d ...saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

They spoke to one another saying, "Is God really in our midst or not?"

This is quite the amazing thing for the Israelites to ask, given that they are being led in the day by a cloud-pillar and at night by a pillar of fire; and then fed each morning with manna from God. How can they not know that God is with them? (The answer is, they do not know this because their souls are covered with scar tissue to the point where they cannot recognize truth.)

Exodus 17:7 So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted [= tested] the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

There are all kinds of false doctrines around related to the Jews, such as the replacement theory. According to the replacement theory, we in the church have replaced the Jews, and the reason is, is their complete failure and unfaithfulness.

Listen, there is no greater generation of failures than the Exodus generation. They will be referred to time and time again in the psalms, in the book of Hebrews and elsewhere because of their great failures (furthermore, we have not seen the worst of their failures yet). God could have started over with just Moses and his sons (God will actually threaten to do that in the future). God could have said, at any point, "I have had it with all of you," and then killed all of the unfaithful Hebrews right there, suddenly, in the desert, and then start over with Moses and his sons (maybe this would include Aaron and his sons?). Yet God continued with this people, and even though He would kill off all Gen X, God will still move forward in His plan with their children. He does not start all over again with Moses, even though He will suggest that.

There are two generations of Israel which are found in the four books of Moses and Joshua. All of the people together the Exodus generation. However, they are broken down into two groups in the books of Moses. Those who are adults—20 and over—who leave Egypt and follow God in the desert-wilderness. I call them Gen X. Those who are children at this time (20 and younger) and those who will be born while Israel is in the desert-wilderness I will designate with the term, the *generation of promise*. The promises of God are for all generations of Israel. However, Gen X, by their reprehensible behavior and hearts covered with scar tissue, will not enter into the land promised them by God.



However, their children (the generation of promise) will enter into that land and they will take that land.

A census of Gen X will be taken in Numbers 1; and a census of the generation of promise will be taken in Numbers 26.

Now, even though the Jewish people in the time of Jesus were pretty bad, taking their legalistic religion over the grace of God, there was a significant following of Jews who believed in Jesus. Despite the despicable actions of many Jews at the time of our Lord, there is no indication that that generation of Jews were really that much worse than the ones we are studying right now.

So, just in case you hear the false teachings that the Jews are gone from God's plan because they were such failures during the time of Christ, always remember this generation of Israelites. They go down in the history books as one of the worst generations of Jews. In fact, God Himself will testify, "I loathed that generation!" And yet, from their ashes (so to speak), rose up nation Israel, the generation that went into the land, under Joshua, and took the land.

At the time in which we live, God has temporarily set the Jewish people aside as His people, but this is only temporary. Throughout all time, Jews have believed in Jesus and have been saved. And in the future, God will work directly through His people the Jews.

Therefore, we, as Church Age believers, are here, on the basis of the grace of God. But don't ever think that somehow, we totally rock while the Jews totally failed; and therefore, we have replaced them. That is not the case. We are here temporarily in their place, by which I mean, God executes His plan through us—church age believers (which includes believing Jews)—instead of through nation Israel. But we have not replaced nation Israel; nor can we look down on the Jews as though God is done with them. Once the rapture takes place, we are out of here, and God will restore His people, the Jews. At that time, God will complete the Age of Israel with the Tribulation, as there are 7 more years yet to go in that dispensation (these final 7 years are also known as Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week).

Certainly, many Jews of the generation of Jesus failed; and huge numbers were unsaved. But believers every day today fail; large groups of believers fail. In the United States, we are clearly under national discipline today because so many Christian believers have failed. Furthermore, fewer and fewer Americans are believing in Jesus.

Therefore, don't ever get on your high horse and don't ever think that you are somehow superior to the Jews and don't ever practice antisemitism. Taking this stance in the Christian life is a shortcut to the sin unto death.

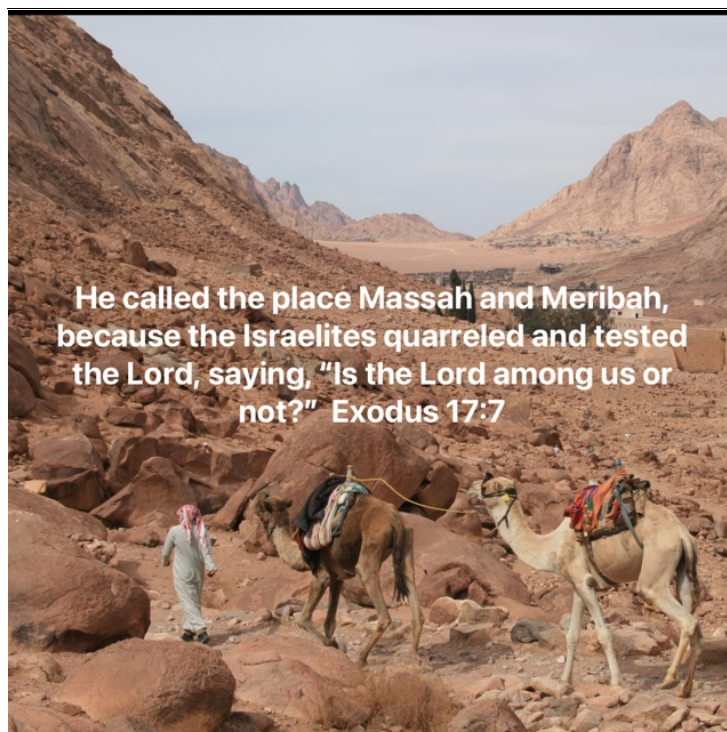
These ages are presented below in the chart.

The Age of Israel, the Church Age and the Millennium				
The Age of Israel		Church Age	Tribulation	Millennium
The people of Israel are established	Nation Israel is established	(The Great Parenthesis)	(The Age of Israel continued)	Final Age on this Earth
God primarily works through a family of believers, beginning with Abraham.	God primarily works through nation Israel, descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.	God primarily works through the body of believers known as the church (which is made up all of who have believed in Jesus).	There were seven years remaining in the Age of Israel. Those years will begin with no believers on the earth, as the church has been raptured.	God will remove from the earth and judge all unbelievers. This age will begin with believers only.
Genesis 12 – Exodus 1:6	Exodus 1:7 – Acts 1	Acts 1 – Revelation 3 (to the present day)	Revelation 4–19	Isaiah 2:1–4 4:4–5 11:1–12 32:17 35:1–6 Revelation 20:1–6

The plan of God depends upon God, not upon our terrible imperfections. God's plan moves forward in this age, despite our many failures. God's plan will resume with nation Israel at the end of the Church Age.

Regarding the chart above, many take the life and public ministry of the Lord and assign this a separate period of time called the Age of the Hypostatic Union. That age has more in common with the Age of Israel than it does with the Church Age.

**Exodus 17:7 (NIV)** (a graphic); from [Randy Allen](#) (devotionals); accessed January 18, 2023.



Exodus 17:7 So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

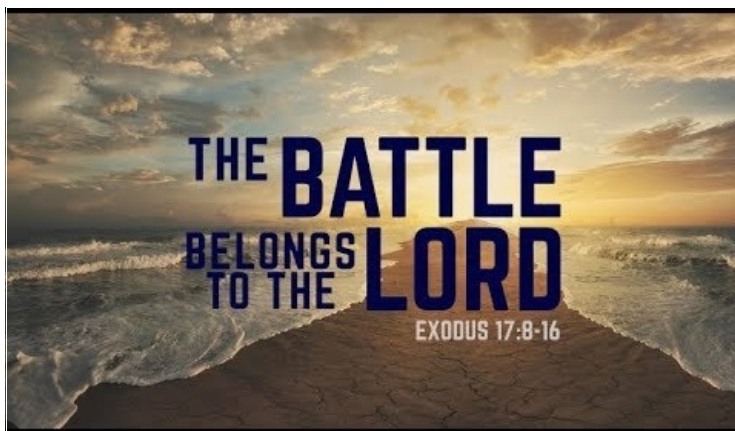
This is the final verse of part I of Exodus 17.

## Lessons 271–272: Exodus 17:8–13

## Israel and the Amalekites

### Victory over the Amalekites

**The Battle Belongs to the Lord (Exodus 17:8–16)** (a graphic); from [YouTube](#); accessed January 17, 2023.



At this point, we go to an entirely different set of circumstances. There is almost no relationship between the first and second halves of this chapter.

Exodus 17:8a      Now Amalek came...

This series of events appears to occur suddenly. The people do not have a chance to gripe and complain and stand before Moses

and make accusations. Suddenly, they face an opposing army and so they must act.

As an aside, when we use the name Amalek, we are referring to his descendants and not to him; much the same way that *Israel* refers to the sons of Jacob (Israel) and not to Jacob himself.

It is likely that we have already been introduced to Amalek as a person. He was the grandson of Esau (Genesis 36:10–12, 15–16). [These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau...\(Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.\)](#) (ESV) There would have been ample time for this particular tribe to grow into a nation within Edom (or adjacent to Edom) (Edom is the nation of Esau).

It is also possible that this is not the same Amalek, but a completely separate tribe, which had been established by someone else. However, it is not necessary for them to be an earlier tribe of people in order to grow to be such a large nation.

Recall that Jacob and Esau were fraternal twins. God considered Jacob to be a Jew whereas Esau is considered to be a gentile. Many think that this indicates that Jacob was

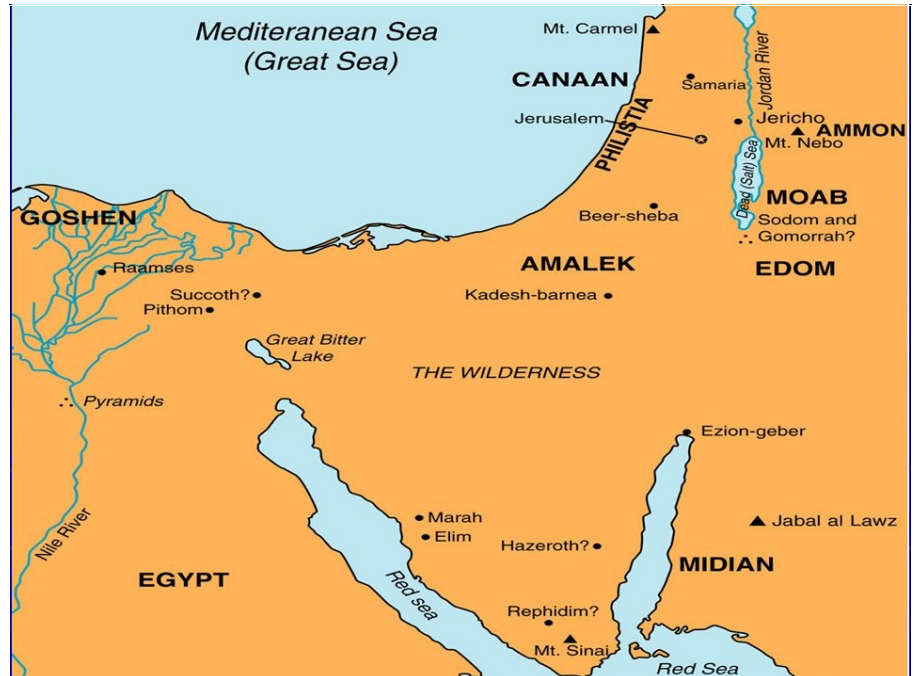
saved and that Esau was not. I believe that this is more indicative of how their children, grandchildren and others would end up. Jacob's descendants would continue to bear the mantle of Y<sup>e</sup>howah (albeit imperfectly); and Esau's would not.

When the descendants of Jacob meet up with the descendants of Esau, we would hope that they would still worship the same God; and that the differences between Jacob and Esau could be patched up—but that will not be the case. This is okay, because God wanted there to be a separation between the Hebrews to come from Jacob and the gentiles to be born from Esau.

**Egypt, Midian and Canaan** (a map); from [Capt Ajit Vadakayil](#); accessed May 17, 2023.

Exodus 17:8a **Now Amalek came...**

In any case, Amalek had heard, as everyone around them did, about the Hebrews and they knew about Y<sup>e</sup>howah's destruction of Egypt. Rather than be afraid, the descendants of Amalek decided to locate the Hebrews and destroy them before they came into their land. As a nomadic tribe, they could be found all over the Sinai desert region. You can see where they have been placed on the map, but the incident we are talking about takes place in Rephidim, near Mount Sinai (where Moses and the Israelites are).



Here, as well as in v. 13 and in Joshua 10:28, 40 1Samuel 18:7, the name of Amalek stands for the tribe of Amalek. The Amalekites will be long-term adversaries of Israel, beginning here and extending all the way to the end of the Old Testament in the book of Esther (Haman, that vicious anti-Semite, was a descendant of Amalek).

Exodus 17:8b **...and [Amalek] fought with Israel in Rephidim.**

These first two phrases describe what happens overall: Amalek finds Israel and goes to war with them. However, the text which follows expands on that, giving us the details of what took place. We might even understand the first two phrases to be a title for this section.

At first, this appears to be an abrupt change. Whereas many people were afraid of Israel, or more specifically, the God that bought them, there are always those who are looking to take down the toughest kid on the block, and that was Amalek. Some are so brazen and arrogant that despite what happened to Egypt, they think that they can withstand Israel's God (if they are descendants of Esau, they may even believe that they have a similar relationship with the same God).

**Illustration:** There are many Arabic groups who have great animosity toward Israel; and they have gone to war against them on several occasions.

We will later find out that Amalek's attack was from the rear, where the weak and tired members of the exodus were (Deuteronomy 25:17–18—"Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, how he attacked you on the way when you were faint and weary, and cut off your tail, those who were lagging behind you, and he did not fear God." —ESV). Amalek found Israel, spied on them for a time, and then struck them from the rear.

We will cover Amalek in much greater detail in Numbers 24.

Exodus 17:8 Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

Amalek, like most of the groups in this region, knew about Israel and Egypt. Egypt had a lot of traders who came through Egypt; and they would have taken news of what they saw to many other places.

Exodus 17:9a And Moses said to Joshua,...

This is the first time that we hear Joshua's name, and he will be named 3 more times in this chapter alone. He appears to have been Moses' secretary, Moses' top general and Moses' successor.

Joshua was a truly great man because he understood authority and he believed in God. He would have been from Gen X, and was perhaps half Moses' age.

Exodus 17:9b ..."Choose us some men..."

It is clear that Israel must go to battle against Amalek, and Joshua is to select an army from Israel.

The men of Israel, despite their bad attitude, have been strengthened through their lifetime of slavery. They have worked hard at very heavy work for all of their lives, and that made them physically tough (however, they lacked mental toughness because they were slaves).

Exodus 17:9c ...and go out, fight with Amalek.

They were to advance towards the army of Amalek and engage them.



At this point, we know nothing about their weaponry. Was this all hand-to-hand combat? Did Israel take weapons upon their leaving Egypt? Did they all have staffs? This information is not given to us until v. 13 (where we are told that Israel defeated Amalek with the sword; which I assume is literal and not metaphorical).

Also, we do not know where Amalek came from or why they have engaged Israel in battle. If I were to make a guess on the final item, it would be that the people of Israel were easy to see from a distance (there were two million of them), and it was apparent that they had stuff and livestock with them. Therefore, let me suggest that the people of Amalek saw this and decided, "Let's kill them and take all their stuff." Throughout ancient history, there seem to be a great many wars fought over possessions and land.

Now Moses gives his plan:

Exodus 17:9d [Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill...](#)

Joshua is going to be commanding troop movement from below, at ground level against Amalek. Moses would be on a hill, so he can see the movement of both Joshua and Amalek.

Exodus 17:9e [...with the rod of God in my hand."](#)

Moses would have the staff of God in his hand.

Moses clearly knows that God has a plan for him and for the children of the Israel and he knows that they will survive this skirmish. He carries the rod of God, not as good luck, but God has caused Moses to use it repeatedly in a demonstrative way. One of the things that the use of his staff reveals is that the Israelites are protected by supernatural means (the staff represents God's power and God's actual presence).

What I believe the original plan was (I am speculating here), Moses had developed a set of hand and arm signals, using the staff, which he would use to communicate to Joshua. Joshua would be on the ground among the troops, right in the midst of the fighting. Moses would be able to take in the entire battleground from where he was and he could, from that vantage point, make good suggestions as to what Joshua ought do. Moses was not going to the top of this hill as a cheerleader. He was not going to hop up and down and make *attaboy* signs with his arms. He would be able to see where Amalek had his troops, he would be able to see how Joshua was arrayed against them, and he could determine how Joshua should move his troops about to best defeat Amalek. From human viewpoint, this was a brilliant approach (Amalek may have been doing the same thing).

However, what Moses appears to be forgetting is, his people are connected to the Living God. Have you noticed that Moses has not taken any time to confer with God?

God has made a real thing out of Moses and the children of Israel depending upon Him, and God has done everything necessary to provide for this people—even basic food and

water. Therefore, God will allow Moses to depend upon Him one more time (as we will see). Moses, when giving signals to Joshua, will notice something (again, it is speculation that Moses is giving signals to Joshua, but that seems to me to be the most reasonable explanation for what Moses is proposing here).

Exodus 17:9 And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand."

From Moses' unique vantage point, he could guide Joshua. He would be able to see both armies from up there. He will use his arms and the staff to make signals to Joshua below.

Exodus 17:8–9 Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." (ESV)

The original plan seems to be that Moses would be able to see what was happening from the hill and he would be guiding Joshua from there, perhaps motioning to where Amalek's men were and guiding Joshua in battle. Nothing is said about this; but that would be logical. Moses would be at the top of the hill and he would signal to Joshua using his staff. However, something else will take place; something that Moses did not plan on.

Also, Moses will be on top of that hill with at least two other men. Let me suggest that these were men, chosen by Joshua, for their excellent eyesight. They could see very well what was happening from that hill and could advise Moses on the movement of Amalek's troops. Bear in mind, much of what I am suggesting here is conjecture, but it is logical conjecture.

The way that many present this is, Moses is up on the hill, and when he raises up his arms in holy prayer, God allows the battle to go Israel's way; but when he drops them, Amalek begins to prevail. Instead, I believe what led to this is, Moses giving signals to Joshua on the ground, since Moses had a bird's eye view of the action. Moses' comrades were also carefully observing the battle and they informed Moses of anything which they saw.

Exodus 17:10a So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek.

Joshua gathers up an army and they went out to fight against the army of Amalek, just as Moses had commanded him to do.

A military combat unit must behave as a single unit; and having too many people is not a benefit, particularly if some people begin to run from the fighting. Joshua chose men that he believed would stand up to the Amalekites.

Exodus 17:10b And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

While Joshua and his army are squaring off against Amalek, Moses goes to the top of a prominent hill with Aaron and Hur (this is the first time that we hear about Hur).

From the hill, Moses and his cohorts could get a good view of the army of Amalek and its movement. I speculate that this was the original plan, and there is nothing wrong with this plan.

Moses went to this hill in order to guide the tactics of Joshua and his men below. However, when doing various signals, Moses is going to notice something a little strange.

Exodus 17:10 *So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.*

Moses, Aaron and Hur could view the battle from this hill while Joshua would be leading his army below.

Then Moses notices something, while giving various signals to Joshua.

Exodus 17:11a *And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed;...*

It is my guess that, Hur and Aaron are watching the battle, and telling Moses what is going on, and Moses is signaling with his staff to Joshua what he sees from the hill. This is good, solid thinking on the part of Moses. However, it is observed, probably by both Aaron and Hur, that when Moses raised up his hand (and the staff that was in his hand), Israel would prevail in the battle.

What did not happen was, Moses and his two comrades went up the hill and they tried out different arm and hand configurations to determine which resulted in victory over Amalek. They were up there for a reason; and the likely reason is to (1) observe the battle as it progresses and (2) help guide Joshua with hand and arm signals. However, while doing this, it became clear to Aaron and Hur, the men watching this battle take place, that whenever Moses' hand was up, battle was being won by Israel.

Exodus 17:11b *...and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.*

Notice that this has to be in a very visible place where all could see Moses. They had to see that supernatural means of battle had been employed by the Israelites and that they did not win based upon their own merit. There is also an illustration here: just as the arm of the Lord is the strength of Moses, and thereby is the strength of Israel; the arm of Moses here, as God's representative<sup>50</sup>, is the strength and the might of Israel. The staff that Moses held was symbolic of God's power and His justice. When Moses lifted the staff into the air, God would act on behalf of Israel as He did in Egypt. Perhaps you recall that every time God brought a judgment against Egypt, Moses would announce this with his arm and staff in the air. Not everyone could hear Moses and his proclamation, but they could see him and the staff; and this meant great destruction for Egypt.

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<sup>50</sup> Which might be a marvelous way to translate the words *prophet of God* so that we get a better understanding of those words

As long as Israel appeals to God (as symbolized by the raised arms of Moses), God will fight for Israel. As David wrote many years later: *The day I call out, my enemies turn back. This I know: Elohim [is] for me* (Psalm 56:9).

Exodus 17:11 *And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.*

As Moses made signals to the armies below, it was observed that when He lifted his hand (with the staff in it), the battle would go in favor of Israel. When he put his arms both down, then the battle went against Israel.

Exodus 17:10–11 *So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. (ESV)*

The Unlocked Dynamic Bible (along with others) suggest this same approach: *So Joshua obeyed Moses. He took some men to fight against the people of Amalek. While they were fighting, Aaron, Hur, and Moses went up to the top of the hill so that they could see the whole battle area. Whenever Moses lifted up his arms, the Israelite men started to win the battle; whenever he lowered his arms, the people of Amalek started to win.*

In order to be demonstrative, in order for God to get the credit for what occurred, Moses and Aaron had to be in a place where they could be seen by all—both the Israelites and the Amalekites. What would occur was not voodoo or magic, but something where both sides could see that God controlled the battle. Moses just had to be in a place where this could be seen. His arms being held up, with the staff in one hand, could be seen from below.

However, there is a problem. Even if the staff only weights 10 or 15 pounds (4–7 kg), holding it up is not easy, even for a man who is very strong.

Exodus 17:12a *But Moses' hands became heavy;...*

The word that we find here is quite interesting. It is *kâbêd* (כָּבֵד) [pronounced *kaw<sup>b</sup>-VAYD*], which means, *heavy, overweight, abundant, numerous, dull; hard, difficult, burdensome, grievous; severe; very oppressive, numerous, rich*. Strong's #3515 BDB #458. We find this word back in Exodus 7:14 9:7 where it was (incorrectly) translated *harden, hardened*.

At some point, the three men realized that, as long as Moses had his hands raised, Joshua and his army would be winning the war.

Now, as an aside, it is possible that, when Moses raised both of his hands, it meant to tell Joshua, go on the offensive and attack, attack, attack. We do not know what it meant; but, every time that Moses raised his arms, it was clear from that vantage point that Joshua would be winning. Therefore, Moses just kept his hands up.

The spiritual component was Moses raising the staff into the air. Recall that when Moses raised up his staff, when in Egypt, it was often to call upon God to act in some way or another against their enemies, the Egyptians. So, now, when Moses' hand with the staff is held up, God allows the battle to go in favor of the Israelites. So, Moses just kept his arms up. However, after awhile, his arms became tired and heavy.

Exodus 17:12b ...so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it.

Aaron and Hur, no longer needed to do anything, as Moses raising his staff and Joshua on the ground fighting seemed to have everything in hand. They knew that Moses needed some way to provide him with some help to keep his arms up. So they found a very large stone and moved that stone to where Moses could sit on it (which he did).

Exodus 17:12c And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side;....

Then, in addition to the stone for Moses to sit on, Aaron and Hur stood on both sides of Moses and helped him to hold up his arms.

So that no one would think that Moses would raise and lower his hands to see what would happen, and thereby place the sons of Israel into peril, his arms were only so strong. When he raised his staff, he became naturally tired. When he brought his arms down to rest, the battle would turn against Israel; and when he raised them, the battle would go in favor of the Hebrews. Eventually, Aaron and Hur held up his arms on both sides while Moses sat (recall that he is 80+ years old at this time).

You maybe thinking to yourselves right now, *who's Hur*<sup>51</sup>? We only find Hur mentioned twice: here and in Exodus 24:14. Joshua also seemed to come out of nowhere; however, these are two trusted believers—perhaps two of the elders—who have given their unqualified support to Moses because of their faith in Y<sup>e</sup>howah.

**Aaron and Hur Support the Arms of Moses (Exodus 17:12)** (a graphic); from [Facebook](#); accessed January 17, 2023.

Exodus 17:12d ...and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.



By doing this, Moses

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<sup>51</sup> It is more proper to think *who's she*?



was able to keep his arms up until the sun set (when Joshua could no longer look up and see what Moses was signaling).

Exodus 17:12 But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

So, what does this mean? Should we station our top general on a hill and have him lift up his arms in order to win our wars? The idea is, Moses is the spiritual Atlas of his generation. God has overlooked a great many of Israel's sins and He did not destroy Israel simply because of Moses (Moses' faithfulness was good enough for God). In Exodus 32, Moses will plead to God, on behalf of the people, not to destroy them all and start over with just Moses. Such a spiritual Atlas can make or break a nation.

Moses is showing his dependence upon God, and the people are to understand their dependence upon Moses.

Now, when speaking of our dependence upon God, this does not mean that we simply sit on a park bench and wait for God to bring stuff to us. Even though the battle is going in favor of the Hebrew army, they are still an army engaged in battle. God is not telling Israel to take a break while He kills the army of Amalek.

Moses, from Exodus through Deuteronomy, is often presented as a type of Christ. Our relationship to God is dependent upon Jesus Christ. He is the spiritual Atlas of the world. You and I do not have any relationship with God apart from Jesus Christ; and we do not win any battles in our lives apart from Him.

Exodus 17:13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

When it says that Joshua neutralized Amalek with the *mouth* of the sword, it could be looked upon in two ways. The more genteel way that when something is eaten, it is gone and the mouth of the sword refers to death on the battlefield. The more grotesque and graphic way of viewing this phrase is the sword biting chunks of flesh off of the enemies.

It is here that we find out the weaponry used. Although defeating the people *with the edge of the sword* could be understood as representative, we generally understand the Scriptures literally unless there is some pressing reason why we should not. The Israelites had swords primarily to fight with; and they had greatly weakened Amalek and his troops.

Bullinger expresses it this way: *...it is not a mere sword, but a sword with its sharp devouring edge, which is thus compared to a mouth.*<sup>52</sup>

In any case, this gives us at least the weapons of war. Although it was not spelled out for us earlier, the Israelites must have gotten swords from the Egyptians when they left. Or,

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<sup>52</sup> Bullinger, p. 407

perhaps when the Egyptian army was defeated by God, Israel retrieved some of their swords which were washed upon the shore. Or, during the battle with Amalek, the Israelites may have simply taken their swords from them in battle.

Either that, or the choice of the word *sword* refers just to death in battle and not to a particular weapon. I opt for the former approach, to understand *swords* as being literal. The swords used may have been the same ones that they used in the field to harvest with and to cut meat with.

The NASB tells us that Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and Owen tells us that he mowed Amalek down. The actual word used is the Qal imperfect of *châlash* (חָלַשׁ) [pronounced *khaw-LASH*] from a root which means *prostrate*. This word means *to weaken, to prostrate, to disable, to neutralize*. We also find this word used in Job 14:10 Isaiah 14:12. Strong's #2522 BDB #325.

Very few details are given as to what occurred in this battle. Just what was important. What was important was that Joshua prevailed over Amalek and to God they owed the victory. However, Joshua did not completely destroy all of the Amalekites because we will see that they will continue to return to harass the Hebrews.

#### **Lessons 273–274: Exodus 17:13–15a**

#### **Moses Builds an Altar**

In the previous lessons, Amalek stood up against Israel, going to war against them in the desert-wilderness. There was no reason for this to happen. Israel had done nothing provocative toward the people of Amalek.

When Israel went to battle against Amalek, Moses, Aaron and Hur viewed the battle from a high hill, at which time, Moses discovered that if he kept his hands held up in the air (he would have been holding his staff), the battle went in favor of Israel.

Exodus 17:13 *And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.* (ESV)

Moses kept his hands raised toward God, and Joshua is victorious over Amalek. Given what follows here and in later passages of the Bible, even though Joshua is victorious over Amalek, this does not mean that all of their forces were completely wiped out. A remnant of Amalek remains, and they will continue to challenge Israel.

We are never given anything by way of motivation. Why would the Amalekites attack the Hebrew people? From this point forward in human history, there will always be, in the souls of specific peoples, a deep hatred for the Hebrew people. Generally speaking, these people who hate the Hebrew people also hate God. This continues to be a factor even in modern times. Newsmen have interviewed Palestinians and asked, “Why do you fire off all of these rockets at Israel? In the long run, this is going to harm you and your people. Why not try to get along?” Their answers are filled with hatred and self-justification.

In the middle east, many parents bring their children up to despise the people of Israel; presenting them as somehow subhuman. This is how they were brought up and their parents before them.

Exodus 17:14a [Then the Lord said to Moses,...](#) (NKJV)

There appears to be a great deal of verbal interaction between Moses and God; and it is quite frequent. However, Moses, the author, rarely gives us any details, such as, *and Moses walked off to his tent and communed with God*. We don't know if God spoke to Moses right then and there; or if it happened that night in a dream; or if it happened the first time that Moses was alone.

Given the content of what Moses says, it seems to be very pertinent to what has just taken place.

Exodus 17:14b [...“Write this for a memorial in the book...”](#) (NKJV)

Throughout the four books of Moses (Exodus through Deuteronomy), God will tell Moses to write specific things down. This is the first time that this occurs. This book is further defined by the definite article, which is both found in the Greek and the English. This definite article suggests to me that Moses had already begun to keep a record of what has taken place so far. Given the scarcity of writing materials, it would be my guess that Moses wrote this down once, but that at least one portion of his book was appended to (recall back when we were studying the manna).

I believe that this is the first time that it has been recorded in Scripture that Moses has been told to record these events. Notice that the definite article is used with *book*; meaning a particular book. In this case, it was God's Word and this particle suggests that such a book was already in existence and that Moses knew which book God was referring to. The implication of the verse was that this being written down was to tell Joshua that at some point in time, Amalek would be blotted out (see also Num. 24:20). Joshua needed this to be written down because he would have several encounters with Amalek throughout his tenure as second in command and then as Commander General over the forces of Israel. This does not mean that this is the first time that God has told Moses to write this information down; just the first time this command was recorded.

It is my opinion that Moses has also had access to Genesis—or the documents from which Genesis came—for a very long time. I believe that Genesis was passed down orally for many hundreds of years, for reasons already discussed in the early chapters of Exodus.

By this time in the narrative, Moses has already decided to record some of the events which are taking place, which events make up the book of Exodus. We discussed this in great detail when God had destroyed the Egyptian army with the sea and Moses responded by writing a song that all Israel then sang in celebration. All of that had to take place then and there.

We are also aware that a certain amount of editing took place, although we do not know when or by who. There are some authors, who, because they are predisposed to reject miracles and prophecy, believe that much of this was written down hundreds of years later. However, this passage, compared to Exodus 16:35 tell us that some editing did take place. In Exodus 16:35, Moses tells us that the sons of Israel will eat manna in the desert for the next forty years. However, in this verse, Moses is told to record specific events in **the** book. Logically, this tells us that Moses either obeyed God's command when God gave it, as he was wont to do. Possibly later, Moses added a comment here or there, as in Exodus 16:35, which then became a part of God's Word (Joshua may have done this as well).

Exodus 17:14c ...and recount it in the hearing of Joshua,... (NKJV)

Moses is also supposed to tell this to Joshua. Joshua has just fought and routed Amalek. Moses is supposed to speak to Joshua about God speaking to him; and that God required all of this to be placed into *the book*.

Most importantly, God wants Moses to record this specifically:

Exodus 17:14d ...that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” (NKJV)

I believe that the Bible in Basic English gets the translation right: *And the Lord said to Moses, Make a record of this in a book, so that it may be kept in memory, and say it again in the ears of Joshua: that all memory of Amalek is to be completely uprooted from the earth.* Moses is both writing this down, but he will also speak to Joshua personally and repeat this promise of God's.

Joshua, who will lead the army of Israel into battle many times, needs to realize that God will remember this unprovoked attack by Amalek against Israel; and God will hold this act against them. This would be because this is more than a simple act of aggression; but that it also reveals the hatred of this people against Israel (and therefore their hatred of God).

Incidentally, God will hand off the authority over Israel from Moses to Joshua. I believe that this is something that both men came to recognize over time; and God will formally tell this to Moses at a later date.

Exodus 17:14d ...that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” (NKJV)

Amalek is a large enough people to attack Israel, with the intention of destroying Israel. They are the first people to attack Israel without provocation. God will make an example of them. At some point, this people would no longer exist, and this is a promise from God.

Now, although this sounds as if God was going to destroy Amalek completely right then and there, the next verse indicates that we should not take it in that way; and the fact that

Amalek continues to be a thorn in the side of the Israelites indicates to us that this is not the last battle between them (God will allow many such antagonistic nations to remain, and He will use them against Israel when Israel goes astray).

However, what ought to be clear is, we all know Jews today; however, no one today knows a single person who came from the tribe of Amalek. But we all know Jews.

**Exodus 17:14** (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#); accessed January 17, 2023. I was unable to find this translation and perhaps it is a common translation using *Yehovah* instead of *Jehovah*.

Exodus 17:14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." (NKJV)

This would suggest two things to us: (1) Moses is the one writing in the book. This may change as time progresses. (2) Moses is to speak to Joshua and tell him these words that came from God. At some point, God will, at least partly through Israel, completely destroy Amalek.



Exodus 17:15a **And Moses built an altar...** (NKJV)

Moses builds an altar to commemorate this event, this war between Israel and Amalek. Many people built many altars in the book of Genesis. This is the first time that Moses is said to build an altar (now, bear in mind, he may not have lifted a hand to do this, but ordered that it be done).

What Moses builds is a miz<sup>e</sup>bêach (מִזְבֵּחַ) [pronounced *miz-BAY-ahkh*], which means, *altar*; possibly *monument*. Strong's #4196 BDB #258.

There is no indication that God told Moses to do this; this appears to be a response of the soul of Moses to the faithfulness of God.

This entire doctrine is found online here: **The Altar** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).



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This abbreviated version is found in **Exodus 17**<sup>53</sup> ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)), **Deut. 27** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) and **2Sam. 24** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

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The ESV (capitalized) will be used below (unless otherwise indicated).

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### **The Abbreviated Doctrine of the Altar**

1. The Open Bible: *An altar was a platform or elevated place on which a priest placed a sacrifice as an offering to God. The Hebrew word for altar means “a place of slaughter or sacrifice,” but the altars of the LORD were not limited to sacrificial purposes. Sometimes an altar was built as a testimony of one’s faith for future generations (Joshua 22:26–29).*<sup>1</sup>
2. The primary Hebrew word for *altar* is *mizbêach* (מִזְבֵּחַ) [pronounced *miz-BAY-ahkh*], which may sometimes be translated *monument*, rather than *altar*. Strong’s #4196 BDB #258. This word occurs over 400 times in Scripture; therefore, we are not going to cover its every occurrence.
3. This word is first found in Genesis 8 when Noah and his family exit the ark. He offers up some of the clean animals upon an altar (of the clean animals, Noah took seven rather than a single pair). He built or constructed this altar, but there is no further information about this. Obviously, there must be some kind of structure in order for an animal to be offered as a burnt sacrifice. When the aroma reached the nose of God,<sup>2</sup> He was propitiated.<sup>3</sup> Genesis 8:20–21
4. Abraham builds an altar as well, after coming into the Land of Promise (Canaan), and offers up sacrifices to God in Shechem. This is where God appears to Abraham. Abraham built another altar between Bethel and Ai. Although most translations read, “*And there he called upon the name of the Lord;*” this could also be understood to read, “*And there, he proclaims the name of the LORD.*” The latter understanding seems to be the more accurate one. Genesis 12:7–8
5. After traveling about, Abraham built another altar between Bethel and Ai, when he returned to that area. Abraham moves again and builds an altar in Hebron. So, it appears to be a thing with Abraham to move from place to place (as God had told him to do), but to build altars in these various places and proclaim the name of God there. Genesis 13:4, 18
6. God told Abraham that He was giving him and his seed this land; and God wanted him to walk throughout the land and check it out. Genesis 13:14–17
7. The next altar which Abraham is said to build is on Mount Moriah where he would offer up his son. On all of these altars, there must be a place where the wood can be placed to burn and there must be a place above that where the animal carcass can be fastened. Given the narrative that we find in Gen. 22, the animals apparently had their throats slit first, so that they were not burned alive. Genesis 22:9–10
8. Both Abraham’s son Isaac and his grandson Jacob also built various altars as they moved about in the Land of Promise. Genesis 26:23–25 33:18–20 35:1–7

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<sup>53</sup> Exodus 17 is very similar to the week-by-week study of the book of Exodus. Exodus 17 also includes every single Hebrew word and its morphology. There are also three original translations presented in Exodus 17.

## The Abbreviated Doctrine of the Altar

9. After this point, no more information is given about altars being built until the giving of the Law. Moses builds an altar to celebrate the military victory over Amalek in Genesis 17:13–16
10. Finally, in Genesis 20:24–26, specific instructions are given by God concerning the building of an altar: **An altar of earth you shall make for Me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I cause My name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you. If you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stones, for if you wield your tool on it you profane it. And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness be not exposed on it.”** (ESV, capitalized) In other words, these altars were not to be fancy works of art or great artistic structures, but very utilitarian, being built out of the earth and stones just as these things are found on site. This means that all of the emphasis is placed upon sacrifice and not upon the altar. Apply that to this day, the teaching of the Word of God should be what is important within the church auditorium. The structure and beauty of the church building is not ever to be the focus.

11. One altar—called the Bronze Altar—was designed so that could be moved with the tabernacle, was to be constructed, and with some very specific directions. The acacia wood was to represent the humanity of Jesus Christ; the bronze overlay was to represent His Deity. This could only be touched and moved



The Bronze Altar from [Bible-history.com](http://Bible-history.com), accessed May 25, 2014

- about by putting poles through these rings, so that man did not have direct contact with the altar, being that it is holy to God. Like all of the furniture for the Tabernacle, this had a specific meaning and was intended to be operable for some time. It was kept outside of the Tabernacle, near the entrance. Exodus 27:1–7
12. Believers could not be unclean when coming before the altar. Exodus 28:43
  13. There would be a basin of bronze between the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and the Bronze Altar (also called the Altar of Burnt offering in Exodus 30:28). The priests who performed various rituals here had to clean their hands, to indicate fellowship with God. Exodus 30:17–21 40:5–7, 29–30, 32
  14. The Hebrews were also to construct an altar of incense, and this would be placed inside of the Tabernacle. The instructions given by God are as follows: **“You**

## The Abbreviated Doctrine of the Altar

shall make an altar on which to burn incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. A cubit shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth. It shall be square, and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and around its sides and its horns. And you shall make a molding of gold around it. And you shall make two golden rings for it. Under its molding on two opposite sides of it you shall make them, and they shall be holders for poles with which to carry it. You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. And you shall put it in front of the veil that is above the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is above the testimony, where I will meet with you. And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.” (Exodus 30:1–10; ESV, capitalized) The acacia wood overlain with gold refers to the 1<sup>st</sup> advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, where He was on earth in His humanity, but as God Himself. The gold represents His untarnished Deity and the wood represents His humanity. The bronze furniture outside the tent represents the Lord more in His Hypostatic Union on the earth in the 1<sup>st</sup> advent, subject to various harms.

15. These altars were to be built by craftsmen filled with God the Holy Spirit. Exodus 31:6–11

16. A significant portion of the book of Leviticus explains how the altars are to be used. Leviticus 1:5, 7-9, 11-13, 15-17 2:2, 8-9, 12 3:2, 5, 8, 11, 13, 16 etc.

17. The worship of the altar was not to be mixed in with the worship of foreign idols. Deuteronomy 16:21 Joshua 22:19

18. There were other altars built throughout the land, but they were not to be done by artisans with great skill. Deuteronomy 27:4–6 Joshua 8:30–31

19. Surprisingly enough, altars are not mentioned much in the book of Samuel.



From our [Daily Bread Missions](https://www.dailybreadmissions.com/), accessed May 25, 2014.

## The Abbreviated Doctrine of the Altar

David is only spoken of as building an altar in 2Samuel 24. This is because David was a type of Christ. Apart from references to altars, David, in his psalms and by his life, teaches us a great deal of Bible doctrine. Therefore, we learned to concentrate upon him and what he taught, rather than upon the symbolic nature of the altar and the animal sacrifices (which are also types even as David is a type).

20. Pagan altars are spoken of in both testaments, and they are viewed negatively. Deuteronomy 12:2–3 Acts 17:23
21. Except with regards to the two altars built for the Tabernacle (and later the Temple), the altars were more designed for function. Any altar where burnt offerings were offered, represents the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
22. The altars were never to be objects of worship—even the two special altars for the Tabernacle. They were to be treated with respect but never worshiped.
23. After Jesus went to the cross, altars and animal sacrifices ceased to be methods of worship, since we had the real thing. When the type is replaced with the antitype, the type is no longer needed. Hebrews 6:4–6 13:10
24. The altar and animal sacrifices are called types; Jesus on the cross is the antitype. We do not use types in order to worship once the reality has come.
25. Having anything at the front of a church called an altar is, at best, misguided.

<sup>1</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 438.

<sup>2</sup> God obviously does not have a nose; this is an anthropomorphism.

<sup>3</sup> *Propitiation* means that God is satisfied by or appeased by the animal sacrifice which was offered to Him.

### Lesson 275: Exodus 17:14–16

### The Lord is My Banner

So far, this is what we have studied:

Exodus 17:14 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” (NKJV)

God promises that He will destroy Amalek. Remember the Amalek stood against Israel in the desert-wilderness, but the Israelites were victorious.

Exodus 17:15a And Moses built an altar... (NKJV)

Moses builds an altar and this will be where Moses and the others temporarily worship God.

Exodus 17:15b ...and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner;...

Moses gives this altar a name: *Yehowah-nicciy*, *Jehovah-nissi* (these are the transliterated names). This means, *Y<sup>e</sup>howah [is my] banner*. Strong's #3071 BDB #651. *Y<sup>e</sup>howah my banner*.

What the Lord is, is *nêç* (נֶחֱ) [pronounced *nace*], which means, *standard, ensign, signal, sign*, and even *miracle*. This is not unlike a flag representing the advance and victory of an army. No doubt that this banner was placed high on the hill, where everyone could see it. It was somewhat of a rallying point which would give Israel comfort and confidence (ideally speaking). This is something which can be seen afar off.

Often, a banner, a flag or a guide-on is taken into war to signify one side or the other (just as we might plant our American flag in the ground when we conquer a particular piece of real estate). *Y<sup>e</sup>howah is my banner*, Moses says; it is *Y<sup>e</sup>howah* Who leads them into battle and gives them the victory.

What could the Hebrew warriors see? They could see Moses, afar off, making signals or supplication to God, as he had done when God brought judgments against Egypt.

Now, I have to point out here, I just came from a church, and people all over the damn place were lifting up their hands to heaven while the band played Christian-rock; and let me point out that, how you hold your hands does not improve your worship nor does it cause you to spiritually grow even a fraction of a millimeter. The people of Israel tended to be very demonstrative, and there was a reason for this—this way they could see what was going on. We know, without a doubt, that Joshua kept one eye on Moses for direction and guidance (knowing that Moses was guided by God); and Moses eventually just kept his hands held up straight in the air, to indicate that God is in charge of this battle.

So that there is no misunderstanding, the sons of Israel were engaged in war with the sons of Amalek. They were fighting and killing one another. Insofar as we know, Amalek got slaughtered that day, but not completely. They will return again and again to oppose Israel.

By the sacrifices which occurred on the altar and by the words that Moses said, the people understood that God did not just provide them with food, but God was protecting them continually, and even going to war with them, giving them victory.

Exodus 17:15 [And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner;...](#)

**Jehovah Nissi** (a graphic); from [KDMANESTREET](#); accessed January 17, 2023.



Exodus 17:16a ...for he said,  
"Because the Lord has sworn:..  
(NKJV)

What often happens is, a good translation tries to add as few extra words as possible, and yet still give an easy-to-understand verse.

Nevertheless, my translation than is much different from the one found here in the NKJV.

Exodus 17:16a Then he said, "[My] hand upon [this] banner of Yah, [swearing]... (Kukis moderately literal translation)



Many translators, by the word found here, believe that this is a word that means *to swear*. I believe that this means *banner*, but that Moses' hand upon this banner indicates that Moses is making a solemn pronouncement. Therefore, I believe that it is legitimate to indicate that Moses is swearing an oath here, essentially standing in for God, and making a sworn statement as if God made this statement directly to the people. We know this is legitimate because this statement is with us until this day.

The ISV interprets this as a fist of defiance being raised by Amalek against God. Moses built an altar and named it "The LORD is My Banner." "Because," he said, "a fist has been raised in defiance [The Heb. lacks *in defiance*] against the throne of the LORD, the LORD will wage war against Amalek from generation to generation." The New Living Testament gives a similar understanding: Moses built an altar there and named it Yahweh-Nissi (which means "the LORD is my banner"). He said, "They have raised their fist against the LORD's throne, so now [Or *Hands have been lifted up to the Lord's throne, and now.*] the LORD will be at war with Amalek generation after generation." My problem with this is, this just sounds too 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is nothing in the history that we know or in the words found here that anyone has a raised fist, as in the power fist known today. Moses' raised hand held this banner.

Instead, the Message portrays this as an imperative to the believer: He said, Salute GOD's rule! GOD at war with Amalek Always and forever!

The Good News Bible presents a similar interpretation: He said, "Hold high the banner of the LORD! [Probable text Hold ... Lord; Hebrew unclear.] The LORD will continue to fight against the Amalekites forever!"

The easy-to-read version suggests that this is something that the believer (or Moses) has already done: *Then Moses built an altar and named it, "The LORD is My Flag." Moses said, "I lifted my hands toward the LORD's throne. So the LORD fought against the Amalekites, as He always has."* Moses is saying that he has already lifted his hands towards God's throne, perhaps as a pledge, perhaps as a petition, perhaps as a recognition of God's sovereignty.

Exodus 17:16b *...the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.*" (NKJV)

War will continue between God and the people of Amalek from this point on, for many generations, until the people of Amalek are completely destroyed.

Bear in mind that, this is the first people to ever come out against Israel, to war against them. The war was unprovoked. Israel had no interest in going to war with anyone at this time. Israel was a nation that had been enslaved for centuries. They likely had little or no knowledge of Amalek and they harbored no feelings of animosity prior to this war.

Exodus 17:16b *...the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.*" (NKJV)

We know that this is true, in part because there are battles recorded in the Word of God between Israel and the Amalekites; but we also know that today, there are no more Amalekites left. You do not know a single Amalekite; but you know or know of many, many Jews. This is true of most of the enemies of God's people.

Exodus 17:16b *...[there will be] war between Y<sup>e</sup>howah and Amalek [lit., war to Y<sup>e</sup>howah against Amalek] from generation [to] generation.*" (Kukis moderately literal translation)

The last verse quote of God is difficult to fully ascertain. *The Emphasized Bible* gives two readings: "Because of a hand against the throne of Yah, Y<sup>e</sup>howah has war with Amalek from generation to generation." The alternate reading is "Surely the hand is on the banner of Yah. Y<sup>e</sup>howah has war with Amalek from generation to generation." NASB: "The Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war against Amalek from generation to generation." Owen: "'A hand upon the banner of Y<sup>e</sup>howah—war Y<sup>e</sup>howah will have with Amalek from generation to generation." The NRSV doesn't give us anything new by way of translation, but tells us that the Hebrew translation is uncertain.

The quote begins with the word *kîy* (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], which means, *that, when, because*. When we have two phrases tied together like this, a causal relationship is the likely choice. Therefore we will translate this *because*. This is followed by the word for *hand*. Had this been the word for *arm*, we would have looked at a connection between this verse and Moses lifting up his arms.

Then we have the preposition *‘al* (עַל) [pronounced *gahl*], which means *above, over, upon, against*. Owen translates the next substantive *banner*, but it is not the same word as we

have in the previous verse. This is the word that causes us the problems. Strictly speaking, it is kêç (כֶּחַ) [pronounced *kace*] and it is found here and only here. This could be an abbreviation for or a transcribing error of the word kîççê' (כִּי־חַ) [pronounced *kis-SEH*] which means *throne* (which is the choice of BDB) or it can be a transcription error for the word nêç (נֶחַ) [pronounced *nace*], our word for *banner, standard, flag*. Note how similar the Hebrew k (כ) and the Hebrew n (נ) are. So perhaps you are wondering where did the NASB come up with the translation *sworn*? That comes from Strong's; Strong says that this could be a transcription error for *banner*, and then places with this the word *sworn* (which is nothing like the word for *swear* in the Hebrew). Where does the idea that the word *swear* is in this verse come from? The hand being lifted up is a way of saying someone *solemnly swears*. This verse is obviously elliptical, as it is lacking in verbs, so some would insert after *hand* the words *lifted up*, to supply the additional meaning.<sup>54</sup> This could be a continuation of v. 15, because when Moses names something, he often gives a reason why (see v. 7).

This leaves us undecided for the first phrase.

The second (and last) phrase also has no verbs. It begins with the word for *war*, the lâmed preposition (*to, for, in regard to*), and Y<sup>h</sup>owah. Then we have the prepositional phrase *with Amalek*, and the phrase *from generation to generation*. So after all this time spent on this verse (you see only a paragraph or two but I have spent well over two hours on this), I still do not have a translation that I am happy with.

So we have two things that Joshua must know: eventually, Israel will prevail over Amalek; however, Israel and Amalek will war with one another for several generations. Also, if there is some sort of chronology to the first five books of the Law (I believe that these books were mostly written in chronological order), this would be Israel's first real battle with anyone (recall that Israel did not engage with Egypt at any point in the narrative, even though God did).

Exodus 17:16 ...for he said, "Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (NASB)

Exodus 17:15–16 And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD Is My Banner, saying, "A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (ESV)

Exodus 17:15–16 Moses then built an altar and he called it, *Jehovah my banner*. Then he said, "I place my hand upon this banner to make the following solemn declaration: that there will continue to be war between Jehovah and Amalek until Amalek is fully and completely destroyed." (Kukis paraphrase)

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<sup>54</sup> See Bullinger p. 880 for a further discussion of this, but be prepared; he will also give you further references to examine

I have obviously taken some liberties here with my paraphrase. Taking what Moses says here along with what God said in v. 14. Israel will not have war with Amalek throughout all of Israel's generations; but throughout all the generations of Amalek, *until* God destroys them completely and utterly.

## Lessons 276–277: Exodus 17:1–16

## A Brief Review

Exodus 17 is a relatively short chapter.

I used the Tree of Life Version for the basic text for this section where we review the chapter all at once.

The Bible translation used below is the Tree of Life Version. It has a few peculiarities.

Generally speaking, most English translations which might be called a *Hebrew Names* translation, because there are a number of common words or expressions which they transliterate instead of translate.

In my chapter-by-chapter studies, I have come up with the classification *Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles*. I have given this classification to 10–15 translations and versions of the Bible. Some of these versions/translations may be ultimately translated by Jews who do not believe in Jesus. However, the majority of these versions/translations are from Christian sources (which can be discerned simply by noticing if they have a New Testament or not). Most often, those involved with such translations are former Jews who have believed in Jesus Christ.

I do not mean *former Jews* in the sense of renouncing being Jewish; but by simultaneously affirming their new identity in Christ. In the Church Age, when someone believes in Jesus, they become a part of the church (or royal family). Paul writes in Galatians, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.* (Galatians 3:28–29; ESV).

If you examine the translations/versions by themselves, comparing verses, you cannot easily determine whether the translators have believed in Jesus or not. Their intent is to translate from the Hebrew into modern English. A Christian does not feel a need to change or massage the Old Testament in order to make it more *Christian*. Translators who are not born again, from their side, feel no need to make the English translation less Christian. There is personal integrity at stake here. That is, if a particular translation was massaged to make it more or less Christian, few would consider that translation reliable. We have a good modern example of this—the Jehovah Witness Bible<sup>55</sup> makes a few changes to suit their own theology. As a result, few people (other than other Witnesses) consider the JW translation to be worthwhile.

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<sup>55</sup> Yes, such a translation exists.

When I classify a Bible under the heading *Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles*, I am simply saying that many of the proper names and a few of the words are transliterated from the Hebrew. The one thing which tells you who did the translation is the existence of a New Testament in the final quarter of the Bible.

Generally speaking, regardless of the sentiments or religious persuasion of the translators, the translation is not dramatically different. For instance, if you see the Apocrypha as a part of the translation, the translation is usually approved for Catholics. If you see no New Testament, this is a translation made by Jews for Jews; and if you see a NT, then the translation was made by Christians or Jewish Christians. Nevertheless, when you go to a specific passage, like Exodus 17:1, there is very little difference between them. You won't read a chapter and say, "This was clearly translated in a way that is favorable to the Vatican." Finding a strong slant is rare; most translators do not slant their translation (the JWs are an exception to this).

Vocabulary from the Tree of Life Version		
Tree of Life	More common	Explaining the Tree of Life Version
<i>Bnei-Yisrael</i>	<i>sons of Israel, Israelites, sons and daughters of Israel</i>	The Hebrew reads b <sup>ē</sup> nêy Yishrâ'êl (בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced b <sup>ē</sup> -NEE yihsh-raw-ale] (which means, <i>sons of Israel</i> ); so this is a transliteration from the Hebrew.
<i>Adonai</i>	<i>Lord, YHWH, Jehovah, Y<sup>ē</sup>howah</i>	Rather than speak the sacred name of God, the readers of Scripture inserted their word for <i>Lord</i> instead, which is 'ădônîy (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced uh-doh-NEE]. However, in the actual Scriptures, YHWH is the word found here.

Originally, those who read the Jewish Scriptures aloud would see the word YHWH (not the actual English letters, but their Hebrew equivalent), but they would say the word *Adonai* aloud in the synagogue. This began as a result of Jews thinking that name too sacred to pronounce.

There have been a number of Jewish and Christian groups who write *G-d* rather than *God*, as if this is some spiritual thing. In the original Jewish Scriptures, there were no vowels anywhere. It was not just words for *God*, but words for *house*, *grain* and *conscience* were all written without vowels. What happened was, when reading these passages aloud, all words would be correctly pronounced from memory *except* for YHWH, and the reader said *Adonai* instead. As a result, after a few generations, the actual pronunciation for YHWH was lost. When vowel points were eventually added to the Old Testament (long after the 1<sup>st</sup> advent of Jesus), they were placed everywhere except in the word YHWH because they did not know what vowel points to insert.



Vocabulary from the Tree of Life Version		
Tree of Life	More common	Explaining the Tree of Life Version
Now, explain these simple facts to anyone who writes <i>G-d</i> instead of <i>God</i> , and tomorrow, they will continue to write <i>G-d</i> instead of <i>God</i> ; and they will continue to think that is the spiritual thing to do.		
<i>Torah</i>	<i>Law (of Moses)</i>	This is a transliteration of the Hebrew word translated <i>Law</i> .
<i>Shabbat</i>	<i>Sabbath, Saturday, day of rest</i>	Although <i>Sabbath</i> is a transliteration of the word found here, <i>Shabbat</i> is a more literal transliteration.

Exodus 17 is a relatively short chapter with two incidents being recorded: (1) Moses slams his staff against a rock, and water comes from that rock; and (2) Israel and Amalek go to war. That is the entire chapter in a nutshell.

Vv. 1–7      [Water from the Rock](#)  
Vv. 8–16     [Israel Defeats Amalek](#)

**Water from the Rock** (I simply used the section headings found in E-sword)

Exodus 17:1 *All the congregation of Bnei-Yisrael [= the sons of Israel] journeyed from the wilderness of Sin in stages, according to the command of Adonai [= the Lord], and camped in Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.*

In this chapter, the Jews have been traveling for a day or so and they suddenly realize that they are out of water and there appears to be no water anywhere around.

This is the second no-water incident. You may recall that the first time, there was water, but it was bitter. When a tree was thrown into the lake, it neutralized the bitterness (I believe this to be a simple chemical reaction). The tree represented the cross, which neutralizes the bitterness between God and man.

Like the first incident, this second incident will also be typical (that is, it will also point down the corridors of time to Jesus offering Himself on the cross).

The proper noun *Sin* is unrelated to our word *sin*.

Exodus 17:2 *So the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test Adonai?”*

The people quarrel with Moses because of this no-water situation, demanding that he somehow get water for them. Obviously, Moses and Aaron have no special abilities to

provide water. These men could do nothing. They were the Vanna Whites of their day.<sup>56</sup> They pointed at what God was going to do before God did it.

It should be obvious to this people that God is in charge of their provisions (God supplies them every morning with manna). Therefore, their approach to Moses should have been entirely different. They should have said, “God has made specific promises to His people. If we are dead, God cannot fulfill these promises. We must have water or we will die! Demand that God provide us with water!” That approach would have been entirely legitimate.

Exodus 17:3 But the people thirsted for water there, and they complained against Moses and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt? To kill us with thirst, along with our children and cattle?”

Then the people of Israel complained to Moses, accusing him of bringing them out of Egypt to kill them in the desert-wilderness. This is an amazingly irrational accusation; but one that the Israelites were apparently emotionally invested in.

People often adhere to slogans which they like, relate to, identify with; even when those slogans are false. Many times, in many ways, the Hebrew people made this claim against Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt? To kill us with thirst, along with our children and cattle?” Obviously, Moses had no devious plan like this to destroy his own people. However, he was accused of this on many occasions by many people. It was a stupid and inaccurate accusation.

Exodus 17:4 So Moses cried out to Adonai saying, “What am I to do for these people? They are about ready to stone me.”

Moses appears to speak with God in a tent outside the camp of Israel (Exodus 33:7–11). This may be the primary place where Moses has interacted with God throughout. We might understand this to be the pre-Tabernacle.

Moses goes to God, complaining that the people are about to stone him over this lack of water. The fact that he is their leader and that he has brought them to a place of no-water is their reason for blaming him. This is despite the fact that all Israel is following a pillar of fire at night and a pillar of cloud in the day. Moses had no control over the pillar of fire or pillar of cloud. He followed these pillars just as the rest of Israel did.

Exodus 17:5 Adonai said to Moses, “Walk before the people, and take of the elders of Israel with you, along with your staff with which you struck the river. Take it in your hand and go.

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<sup>56</sup> Obviously, I have just dated myself.

God tells Moses to take his staff—the one through which God has been acting. This staff has been primarily used to point out where God would act. Holding that staff in the air would make Moses more visible to a crowd of people.

It would make no sense for all two million Israelites to go for a walk after Moses. After all, he might not travel but for a mile or two mile. Therefore, Moses will only take the elders along with him. Furthermore, what was going to happen would be quite dangerous for families and children.

Exodus 17:6  
Behold, I will stand before you, there upon the rock in Horeb. You are to strike the rock, and water will come out of it so that the people can drink.” Then Moses did just so in the eyes of the elders of Israel.



God tells Moses that He will stand before him on the rock and Moses is to strike the rock with his staff. Water would come from the rock for the people to drink.

**Moses Striking Water from the Rock** by Niccolò Possino (1649); from [Wikimedia](#); kept at the [Hermitage Museum](#); accessed May 16, 2019. The problem with most of these paintings and drawings is, the amount of water shown would be good for about a thousand people or so, but not for two million. What takes place at this rock would have to be a large river or lake. In this painting, we appear to have a trickle of water (which is black, for some reason). In reality, the rushing water flow would have been massive.

You will note the economy of words, which is typical of Moses' style when writing narrative. The LORD said to Moses, "...you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so... (from Exodus 17:5–6; ESV)

Although this is a very significant incident in the travels of the Israelites, Moses covers it in a scant two verses.

Exodus 17:7 The name of the place was called Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of Bnei-Yisrael, and because they tested Adonai saying, “Is Adonai among us, or not?”

This place was called *complaining (of the people) and (their) testing (of God)*.

Instead of looking to God for deliverance, the people complained to Moses, as if he himself is to blame for their situation. This is their failure.

Let God be truthful and every man a liar.

So ends section 1 of this chapter.

### **Israel Defeats Amalek**

At this point, we have a complete change of topic:

Exodus 17:8 Then the Amalekites came and fought with Israel at Rephidim.

Although the Amalekites may have come from the Amalek previously mentioned in Scripture (I believe that he is the grandson of Esau), we do not know that for certain. Despite Jacob and Esau seemingly reconciling near the end of their lives, this does not mean that their descendants would get along.

Exodus 17:9 Moses said to Joshua, “Choose men, go out, and fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.”

Joshua is apparently a military leader under Moses (this is the first time that he is mentioned in Scripture). Joshua is supposed to choose men to go out and fight the Amalekites. Moses will observe this battle off on the top of a hill with the staff of God in his hand.

It is my guess that Moses went to this ideal vantage point to see Joshua’s army and the army of the Amalekites, with the intention of making signals to Joshua, to help guide him during the battle. Going with two other men (at least) would allow them all to concentrate on different areas of the battle. This is not specified anywhere in this chapter; but it seems like a very reasonable thing for Moses, Aaron and Hur to do.

Exodus 17:10 So Joshua did as Moses said, and fought the Amalekites, while Moses, Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

Moses went to the top of a hill from which he could observe the battle taking place below him. He went with his brother Aaron and Hur, also mentioned here for the first time.

Exodus 17:11 When Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed. But when he let down his hand, the Amalekites prevailed.



While giving hand signals using his staff to Joshua on the ground, the three men noticed something odd. When Moses held up the staff, Israel appeared to prevail. When he let down his hands (and staff), the Amalekites began to win.

Why was Moses lifting up the staff and his hands in the first place? Bear in mind that he had to do this several times in order for people to take notice that this affected the outcome of the battle. I would suggest that these were battle signs, in order to help guide Joshua tactically. However, it became clear that, when Moses' arms were in the air, outstretched toward heaven, that Joshua would clearly be gaining an advantage in the battle. So, the approach then became, just to hold his arms and staff up for awhile. As a result, the battle continued to favor Joshua and his army.

So Moses just kept his arms in the air, and the tide continued to go in favor of Israel.

Exodus 17:12 **Moses' hands grew heavy, so they took a stone, put it under him, and he sat down. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on each side. So his hands were steady until the sun went down.**

Holding up this staff for a long period of time became difficult for Moses (it would have been difficult for anyone). Aaron and Hur held up Moses' arms.

Aaron and Hur provided a stone for Moses to sit upon; and then they stood (or sat) next to Moses, to hold his arms in place.

**Aaron and Hur Holding Up Moses' Hands** (a graphic); a Wood Engraving American 1873 available on [Amazon](#); accessed January 18, 2023.

Exodus 17:13 **So Joshua overpowered the Amalekites and his army with the edge of the sword.**



AARON AND HUR HOLDING UP MOSES' HANDS.

As a result, Joshua and his army defeated the Amalekites. They were fighting with deadly weapons (swords).



Exodus 17:14 Adonai said to Moses, “Write this for a memorial in the book, and rehearse it in the hearing of Joshua, for I will utterly blot out the memory of the Amalekites from under heaven.”

Adonai spoke to Moses, telling him to write this incident down in the book (the very same book that we read and study today). God vows to wipe out the Amalekites entirely.

The words *and rehearse it in the hearing of Joshua* is literally, *and place it in the ears of Joshua*. This simply means that Moses will dictate this to Joshua and Joshua will write it down.

Exodus 17:15 Then Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Adonai-Nissi.

Moses builds an altar to commemorate this battle and promise of God. Adonai-Nissi means, *the Lord (is) my banner (flag, standard)*. This might be understood to be a guidon, which is a military standard flag which represents a unit, a squadron or even an entire military branch. Moses might be saying, “This altar to Y<sup>e</sup>howah is the guidon for Israel’s army.” This is because, in the end, they depended entirely upon God for the military victory. However, this does not mean that, everyone took a seat and God killed off the enemy. The people of Israel actively fought against Amalek and routed them.

Exodus 17:16 Then he said, “By the hand upon the throne of Adonai, Adonai will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

Moses also swears, speaking as a prophet, that God would make war with Amalek for many generations.

These final two verses were very difficult to translate. The translation came from the Tree of Life Version; and the explanation was based upon their translation. In this abbreviated view of this chapter, no additional time will be given to discussing the problems with this and other English translations.

## Lesson 278: Exodus 18:1a

## Introduction/Moses’ Father-in-Law Returns

### Jethro’s Advice

Exodus 18 is a marvelous chapter which brings Moses’ father-in-law back into the picture and allows us to see from where Moses received a great deal of his spiritual training. Moses left Egypt originally around age 40, having murdered an Egyptian slavedriver. He lived in Midian for about 40 years, attaching himself to this Midianite family, having married one of the daughters. The head of the family is a priest, and we should assume spiritual growth taking place in Moses over the next 40 years. Moses left Egypt because he killed a man; but he will return 40 years later as God’s man.

Given that Moses' father-in-law is a priest, let me suggest that there was spiritual growth experienced by Moses over those 40 years in Midian due to his personal contact with his father-in-law. Moses was extensively trained in Egypt for 40 years and because he is God's man for the exodus, it is reasonable to assume that he experienced spiritual growth in Midian over the next 40 years.

At the time of the book of Exodus, Moses would be a little over 80 years old. However, we do not really know the age of his father-in-law. He may even be younger than Moses.

Because Moses' father-in-law has come on the scene, we find out what happened to Moses' wife and children. Apparently when Moses had his wife circumcise one of his young adult sons, that she got pissed off and made a scene (Exodus 4:25–26). We do not hear from her until now because either Moses sent her back to her father or she grabbed up her children and deserted Moses in Exodus 4 or soon thereafter. Her reaction in any case reveals that she did not support Moses or the plan of God for his life. She was certainly not on board with what God had for Moses to do, given that she was against circumcision.

This right here is another pertinent lesson from the books of Moses written 3500 years ago—do not marry someone who is spiritually immature or who is not saved. Moses grew spiritually when he stayed with his new family. It is likely that this spiritual growth took place at the hand of his father-in-law, who was a priest. It would be logical that his wife would have also experienced some spiritual growth at the hand of her father, but she apparently had not. Because she did not, she either deserted Moses or Moses had to send her away when things began to get hairy in Egypt. In any case, Moses did not have the support of a wife during the most important crossroads of his life. Why? Because he had not chosen a wife carefully (this is conjecture based upon the few times we encounter her in Scripture). She was probably very beautiful with a great personality, but she was lacking in spiritual depth.

God has a plan for all of our lives—males and females both. If we choose to spend our lives with a spiritual moron, we have immediately compromised our service to God. We lose out on innumerable blessings in time and in eternity based upon this one poor choice. We may go through our entire life feeling that we have missed something or we are missing something. A tremendous feeling of a lack of fulfillment, of ennui. Even if we want to choose activities which are honoring to God, and even if we choose a course of action which is in God's plan for our lives, there will always be this anvil attached to our leg impeding our spiritual progress (I am not advocating divorce by saying these things).

If you have already made this choice and realize what a horrible mistake you have made, then you must do as Peter suggests: *In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives* (1Peter 3:1). Although there is no corresponding verse for the husbands, the counterpart is obvious: *In the same way, you husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the church, that they might be won without a word by the behavior of their husbands*. This is choice #1. Choice #2 is what happened to Moses, the

details of which we are not privy to. In any case, by v. 2, we will have a fairly good idea as to what happened.

What we will find out in this chapter is, despite Moses' excellent leadership of the Hebrew people, acting as a go-between God and the people, his administration was not perfect. He needed to actually work less and oversee more. Moses did not realize this, but his father-in-law saw it immediately. In this chapter, Moses' father-in-law will help him set up a more effective and efficient administrative system. Moses was judging all of the disputes and problems of two million people; and Jethro (his father-in-law) said, "You can't be doing all of this. You need to delegate, son."

Moses is humble enough to listen to Jethro and the system of justice in Israel improved because Moses worked less and delegated more. Although this seems like a pretty simple concept, it took a third party, whom Moses respected, to make these necessary changes. Because Moses is humble, he will listen to his father-in-law.

We, as believers, ought to be open to reasonable suggestions from others, no matter who they might be. When I first began writing commentary, a good friend of mine made negative remarks about the way I was doing the Greek and Hebrew. For every single verse, I would talk about the original language words and their morphology (much the way that R. B. Thieme, Jr. would teach in the 1970s and 1980s). As a result of Alex's criticism, I began to place all of the Greek and Hebrew into tables—tables which could be easily skipped over by those who did not want to hear anything about the Greek or Hebrew. Now, I will mention a few Greek and Hebrew words, but not constantly; and I do not name all of them in the explanatory text. That information is left in tables (in the [chapter studies](#)), and a person can refer to them or skip them over entirely. This change would have never happened if it wasn't for this person's suggestion. Oh, and as an interesting additional fact about this person, he was a holy roller. So it would have been easy for me to completely and totally ignore anything that he had to say; but I heard him, he was right, and I made the changes necessary to reflect the fact that not every person wants to read about the Greek and Hebrew in every paragraph.

Anyway, here, in the middle of the book of Exodus, Moses is taught by his father-in-law how to organize and how to delegate. This suggestion is going to keep Moses from working himself to death.

Exodus 18 is about Moses and his father-in-law (Moses' wife will barely be mentioned). Very importantly, Moses will hear and take the advice of his father-in-law. This reveals that Moses is truly an humble person. Often, we learn from the Word of God; but there are also times when very practical lessons come to us from individuals whom God places before us. Moses took direction directly from God. Moses could have arrogantly responded to his father-in-law, saying, "Listen, if God wants me to change things up, then let Him tell me that."

There are at least two other things that will come out of this chapter:

1. Jethro will very much parallel Melchizedek (making Jethro a type of Christ).
2. Disputes among the Israelites will be handled in an organized and civilized manner. In the previous chapter, Amalek did not like Israel coming through that particular region. Well, there were no plans for Israel to remain in that region. Even though it may not have been clear to Moses exactly why God was leading them where He was leading them, he was also aware that the eventual destination was Canaan, as this had been promised to Israel. Therefore, if Amalek was guarding its own territory, they really had nothing to worry about. This could have been handled without a battle (and this battle set the stage for the relationship between Israel and Amalek until the time that Amalek was finally wiped out<sup>57</sup>).

In vv. 1–4, we get some background information. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, hears about what has gone on in Egypt and that his son-in-law, Moses, is not too far from Midian. With Jethro are Moses' wife and two children (who could be young adults at this time).

In vv. 5–7 Jethro comes toward Moses with his wife and two children, sending messengers to Moses first. Having gotten this message, Moses comes out to meet his father-in-law.

In vv. 8–12, Moses shares all of the things which God has done for Israel, which Jethro appreciates and then offers up a burnt sacrifice.

For the rest of the chapter, vv. 13–27, Jethro observes his son-in-law at work, and makes a very valuable and practical suggestion to him.

There are several things to bear in mind as we begin this chapter.

### **Preparatory Points for Exodus 18 (Moses and his Wife)**

1. At some point, Moses' wife returned to her father, taking her children with her. This may have happened soon after she was required to circumcise her second son. We are not given any details of her return—not the timing, the manner, or the lead up to it. We are told in v. 2 that Moses sent them back home, but the prelude to this might be a series of marital arguments very similar to what we find when Moses' wife had to circumcise her second son. Let me suggest that there was marital discord very much related to what Moses was doing. However, we cannot discount the idea that Moses simply sent his wife home in order to protect her and their sons.
2. What happened between Israel and Egypt is being broadcast far and wide in the ancient world. People all over this part of the world are finding out about it.
3. Moses, as he leads Israel, is moving closer to Midian, where he spent the previous 40 years.
4. No doubt, Moses' Midianite family would be aware of all this taking place; and no doubt, his father-in-law is anxious to see Moses again.

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<sup>57</sup> I do not recall what end Amalek; just that, after a point in time, they were no longer a people.

## Preparatory Points for Exodus 18 (Moses and his Wife)

5. Like most fathers-in-law, Jethro would want to see the best done by his grandsons, which would be a unification of their family once again.
6. Just as before, Moses' will have a close relationship with his father-in-law; but apparently not the same close relationship with his wife. I say this based upon the fact that she and their sons are not mentioned again in Moses' writings.

We are given some basic information about Moses' marriage, but there is so much to speculate about. Although there is some speculation in the doctrine above, most of these points are reasonable approaches to this particular topic.

Exodus 18:1a *And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people...* (NKJV)

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, hears about what has been taking place. At the same time, Moses is out in the desert-wilderness leading the people of Israel.

We have already seen that Moses first knew Jethro as Reuel (Exodus 2:18) and later as Jethro (Exodus 3:1). The former name was possibly the more formal, as we men would originally address our (future) father-in-law's as *Mr. So-and-so* and then later as plain *So-and-so*. That is, we first address them by their last names and, after we have become comfortable with them and they have given us permission, we address them by their first names. Something along these lines is all that occurred here.

Jethro had been in Midian, but he hears about what has happened in Egypt. This suggests that people all over that part of the world heard about what God did to Egypt in order to deliver Israel. It was no doubt an amazing story.

What happened in Egypt has been broadcast throughout all of the ancient world, mostly by transient traders, the original on-the-spot coverage news team; and when 2,000,000 people are moving from point A to point B, this also makes news. So Jethro knew that Moses was moving in his direction. Midian is on the other side of the Gulf of Aqaba from where Israel is camped. There are some mountains in between, but there had been certainly a trade route which had been established that Jethro took. Jethro had a great fondness for Moses and Moses learned a great deal of spiritual information from Jethro (although he did not apply it and put it altogether until he had been in Egypt for a month). There is no hint of bitterness about his daughter having returned with two children who could now be in their late teens or young adults (remember that not a lot of time has actually passed since Moses originally returned to Egypt). Given that Moses lives in Midian for 40 years, the sons could even be 35 years old or so.



Moses is leading his people through the desert-wilderness, and not too far away in Midian, Moses' father-in law hears what is taking place.

Exodus 18:1a **And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people....** (NKJV)

Only a few months earlier, Moses left with his wife and two children in tow. However, at this point in time (a few months later), his wife went back to Midian. Did she choose to

leave Moses over the circumcision (which she did not like having to perform)? Or did Moses send her back for her safety?

Moses' marriage is somewhat a mystery to us. There are only two sons produced (they may be as old as 38 or 39 years). And, at this point in time, Zipporah, Moses' wife, is with her father, even though she originally left with Moses to go to Egypt.

Jethro, the father-in-law, knew Moses and he knew his own daughter. He does not appear to offer Moses relationship advice.

Exodus 18:1b **...—that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt.** (NKJV)

Somehow, Jethro heard what happened in Egypt. It would be my assumption that trading caravans conveyed much of the news of that era. They traveled from one city to the next, trading spices and wares, and bringing news from whatever places they have been to.



**Moses Goes Out to Meet His Father-in-Law** (a graphic); from [Blog Spot](#); accessed July 19, 2023.

Although I saw this picture in many places, I did not come across its actual name or the original artist. Moses is portrayed as much older than Jethro, which may have been the case. Zipporah, Moses' wife, stands to the side with two young sons. However, I suspect that these were no longer boys but older men, possibly in their mid-30s, at this time.

Exodus 18:1 **And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people—that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt.** (NKJV)

Probably by means of trading caravans, Jethro hears about what has taken place in Egypt and what his son-in-law was doing; and he wanted to make contact with Moses. He also had another reason for coming there.

Exodus 18:2a *Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife,...* (NKJV)

What appears to be the case, based upon this verse and the context, Zipporah was sent away from Moses or she deserted him. We do not know any of those details; although her angry reaction to having to circumcise one of her sons would suggest that she left Moses. In any case, at some point since Exodus 4, Ziporah returned to Midian with her two sons. However, now that Moses is moving in the direction of Midian, Jethro takes her to deliver her back to Moses.

The first (and only) verb in v. 2 is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *lâqach* (לָקַח) [pronounced *law-KAHK*] and it means *to take, to buy, to be taken in marriage, to take away from, to take to oneself*. Jethro is the subject and the direct object is Zipporah.

Zipporah means *bird*. Is the idea that, she is flighty? There are times in Scripture where I wonder if a person may have somehow acquired a more descriptive name that has stayed with that person rather than that person's given name at birth.

Exodus 18:2b *...after he had sent her back,...* (NKJV)

There are a couple of problems with the NKJV translation in this chapter, and this is one of them.

The phrase which follows *the wife of Moses* is two words. The first is the adverb 'achar (אַחַר) [pronounced *akh-AR*] and it means *behind, following part, after, afterwards, following*. Strong's #310 BDB #29. There is no problem with this word.

The second word after *wife of Moses* in this verse is the masculine plural noun *shilluachîym* (שִׁלּוּחַיִם) [pronounced *shill-loo-KHEEM*] which has a meaning that is difficult to pinpoint. This word only occurs here and in 1Kings 9:16 and Micah 1:14. In the latter two verses, it is *presents*, that is, a dowry; and if used here in the same way, it would mean *her dowry (presents)*. This is the noun cognate for the verb which means *send*. However, it can also mean *partings, farewell* and I believe that it could be translated in that way in all the passages without doing too much damage to the context. I am spending a lot of time with this one word which we will see very little of because most Bibles translate this as (or similar to) *after he had sent her away* (NASB, Owen, KJV, *The Emphasized Bible*, NRSV, *The Amplified Bible*). Why don't we translate it this way? Two reasons: (1) it is not a verb. (2) we only have a singular feminine suffix appended to this word; *there is nothing to indicate that Moses actively sent Zipporah back home*. What I am saying here is that she likely deserted him, Moses did not send her away. It is very possible that this means *after her parting, after her farewell*. That is much different than what we find elsewhere.

In the Hebrew, there is a simple, common verb which means *to send*. That verb is *shâlach* (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAKH*], and it is found nearly 900 times in the Old Testament! But, that verb is *not* found here. There is also a very common verb which means *to return*, and that verb is not used either. Whatever the exact meaning of this noun cognate is somewhat messy, and that might very well describe the separation of Moses and his wife.

With the noun, there is a 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine suffix. This is how I translated these two words:

Exodus 18:2b *...after her departing,...* (Kukis mostly literal translation)

Apparently, while with Moses, she had been sent away or she departed (the latter is more in keeping with the word here). Perhaps she complained incessantly; perhaps Moses felt this was too dangerous; perhaps her heart was just not in it (based upon the circumcision situation, does this not seem to be the most likely?). For whatever reason, she ended up back in Midian. Her father-in-law brings her and the sons back to Moses. The sons are probably in their mid to late 30s, given the narrative of Moses leaving Egypt and coming to Midian.

This gives us just one more reason to believe that Zipporah did the deserting. If she returns to Midian with her two sons, and she says, “Moses sent me back;” then it is less likely that Jethro would attempt to reunite the two. If she returned of her own volition, the father-in-law gives it some time, hears the Moses is near, and then proposes to take her back to him. That would seem reasonable if she simply left Moses; less reasonable if Moses sent her away. There is the possibility that Moses sent her away for her own safety, but the Hebrew people in Goshen were reasonably safe the whole time.

No matter what the case, this will be the last time that we read Zipporah’s name in the Bible.

Exodus 18:3a *...with her two sons,...* (NKJV)

Here, it appears that Zipporah left Moses with her two sons with her.

However, given v. 6, where Jethro brings her and the two children back, it appears that she left of her own volition (although the text is unclear).

This verse begins with the sign of a direct object, so that means we take the subject and the verb found earlier and apply it here. So, Jethro takes Zipporah and her two sons with him to Moses.

Her two sons—Moses’ sons—are now identified.

Exodus 18:3b *...of whom the name of one was Gershom...* (NKJV)

One of them is named Gershom. His name means *exile, refugee*.

It had been only a few months since Moses had seen this child. We do not know the ages of Gershom, but he is probably in his 30s (if Moses married soon after coming into Midian and likely began siring children soon thereafter). That appears to be what happened, although there is very little history given (Exodus 2:15–22). See Exodus 2 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

This is the son that Moses and his wife, Zipporah, set out with originally when they were coming to Egypt. At some point, she returned. This has to take place after Zipporah circumcised the second son, but we do not know how long after.

Moses lived in Midian for 40 years. He appears to have met Jethro and his family early on. How long did it take before Moses married Zipporah and how long was it before they had children? We do not know, but I would assume early in the marriage.

Exodus 18:3c *...(for he said, “I have been a stranger in a foreign land”)...* (NKJV)

Choosing this name suggests that Moses has just moved to Midian as opposed to him living there for 20 or more years.

Moses so named him *Gershom*, because there Moses was, living in Midian, a stranger in a strange land (this is also the name of a well-known science fiction book).

Goodreads lists 213 [books](#) which took their titles from the Bible.

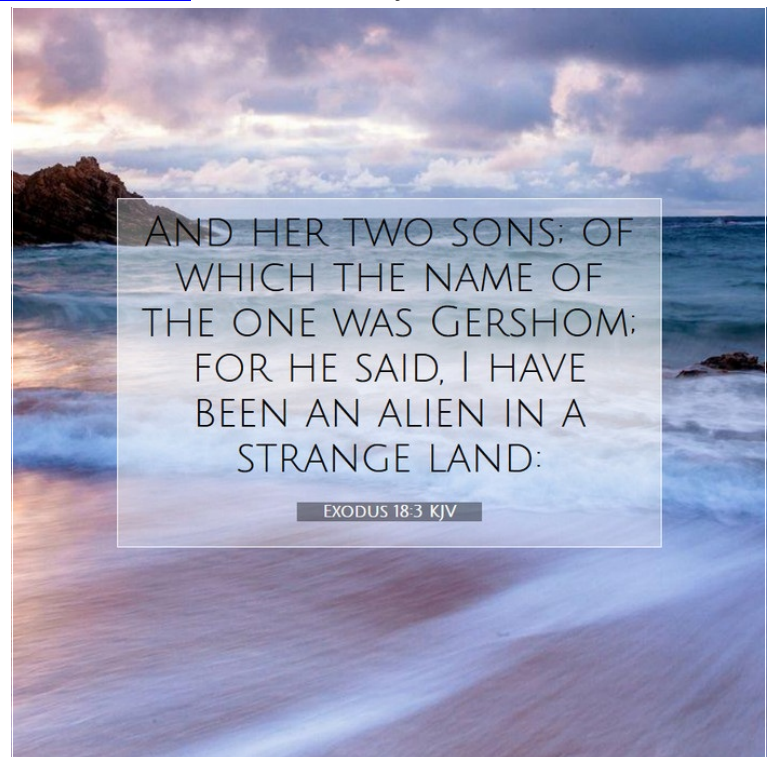
**Exodus 18:3 (KJV)** (a graphic); from [Scripture Images](#); accessed July 19, 2023.

Exodus 18:2–3 *Then Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses’ wife, after he had sent her back, with her two sons, of whom the name of one was Gershom (for he said, “I have been a stranger in a foreign land”)...* (NKJV)

Or, better:

Exodus 18:2–3 *Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses’ wife, after her departing with her two sons, the name of one of whom [is] Gershom, for he said, “I was a stranger in a foreign land;”... (Kukis mostly literal translation)*

Although Moses may have sent his wife back to Midian, given her response to circumcising her sons, it is more likely that she chose to go back to Midian.





The division of these verses is odd. *With her two sons* at the beginning of v. 3, should have been placed back with v. 2. Then v. 3 could have been all about one son, and v. 4 the other (or they could have been placed in the same verse).

Sometimes verse division is insightful; and there are other times when it makes no sense.

Exodus 18:4a *...and the name of the other was Eliezer...* (NKJV)

The other son was named Eliezer—also named by Moses—and his name means *God is [my] help*. We know that Moses named his sons because their names both related to his situation or circumstance at their birth.

Given that both of their names seem to speak of Moses only recently being in Midian, that would make both sons adults at this point in our narrative.

Exodus 18:4b *...(for he said, “The God of my father was my help,...* (NKJV)

God preserved Moses, allowing him to escape to Midian. Recall that he had killed an Egyptian slavedriver, and had to leave Egypt in order to escape punishment.

Eliezer’s name means *God is help*.

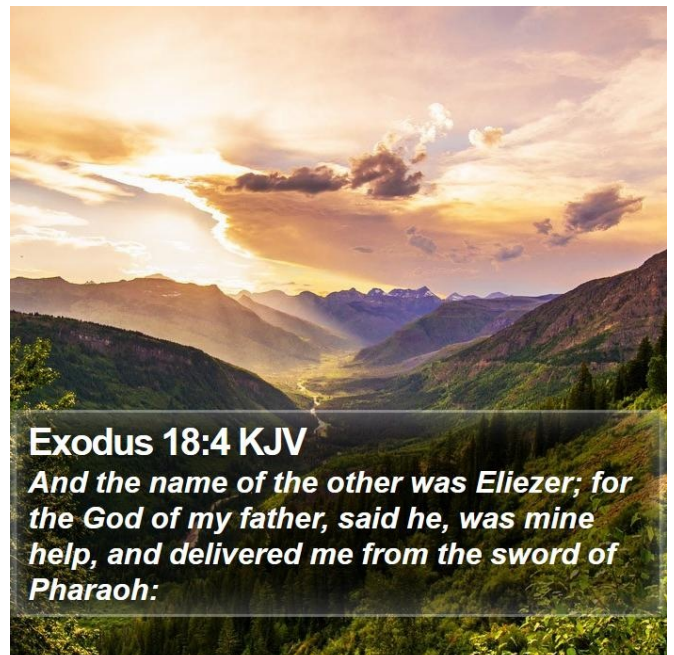
Exodus 18:4c *...and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh”);...* (NKJV)

God kept Moses safe from Pharaoh, who wanted to execute him. This took place after Moses left Egypt, in order to preserve his own life (after killing the Egyptian slavedriver).

This is the last time that we will hear of Zipporah. She will not be mentioned again throughout the rest of the Bible. She apparently returns with the two sons under the direction of her father; we have no reason to believe otherwise.

Does Zipporah stay, does she desert Moses? Did she go back to Midian? Does she die out with the others who complain? We never find out; but Moses will marry again, whatever the case (Num. 12:1).

Speaking of whom, all the fellowship in this chapter will be between Jethro and Moses. We will never hear about Zipporah and Moses. Interestingly enough, in v. 3; they are called Zipporah's sons. They are mentioned again by name until 1Chron. 23:15 where they are there called the sons of Moses.





It is somewhat sad that Zipporah married the most influential man of that era, yet she seemed to stand in his way on several occasions.

**Exodus 18:4 (KJV)** (a graphic); from [Scripture Image](#); accessed July 19, 2023.

Exodus 18:4 ...and the name of the other was Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh");... (NKJV)

When Moses named Eliezer, he had taken up residence in Midian and married Zipporah. They had two children, which is a relatively small number for that era (suggesting to me, chilly relations between Moses and Zipporah). Moses named his children in accordance with this experience. One child represented him living in a new, strange land; and the other represented him escaping execution by Pharaoh. In other words, Moses clearly named the children (which was commonplace). Furthermore, these names indicate that Moses has just moved to Midian.

## **Lesson 280: Exodus 18:2–6**

## **Jethro Restores Moses to His Family**

Exodus 18:2–4 Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home, along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land"), and the name of the other, Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"). (ESV)

Moses, when he first escaped Egypt, he went to Midian. He met a family with many daughters headed by a legitimate priest. Moses married one of those daughters—Zipporah—and had two sons by her: Gershom and Eliezer.

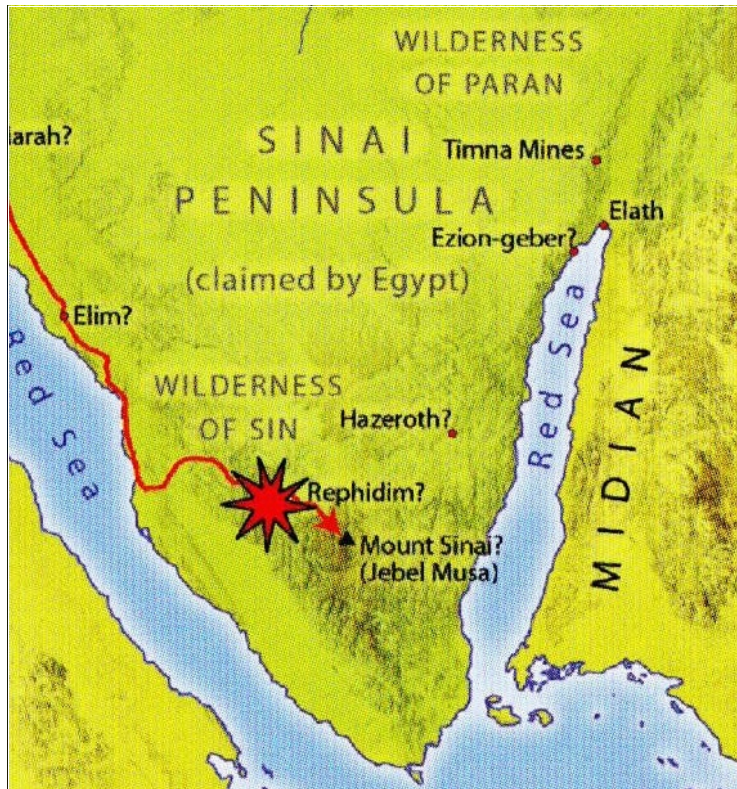
When following God's lead, Moses headed back to Egypt (40 years later). He left with his wife and two sons (meeting Aaron along the way), but he apparently lost his wife and family at some point. Although many translations say that Moses sent his wife back to Midian, that is not necessarily what the Hebrew says. One son was not circumcised; Moses began to die the sin unto death; and his wife had to circumcise that son. That was very problematic for her, and she returned to Midian sometime after that (it may have been immediately after that).

In any case, Zipporah will never be mentioned by name again in the Bible. Moses' sons will be named again in the birth records of Chronicles (1Chronicles 23:15–17 26:24–25). But they will not appear to play a significant part in the future of Israel.

At this point in the narrative, Jethro has not yet delivered Moses' family to him. He is going to warn Moses first what he is doing.

Exodus 18:5a ...and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness,.... (NKJV)

After hearing about what had been happening, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came out to where Moses was (which was not too far from Midian). He brought with him Moses' wife and two sons.



**The Sinai Peninsula, Rephidim, Mount Sinai** (a map); from [God's War Plan](#); accessed June 7, 2023. No one knows where Rephidim or Mount Sinai are. These locations are guesses, and they are not out of line with other guesses.

As an aside, this is quite an interesting [webpage](#), which I have come across quite back accident. The various battles of the Bible are found examined on these [pages](#).

Steven Rudd, who has also put a great deal of study into this, has Rephidim and Sinai in the area named Midian (his map is [here](#) and [here](#)). I lean toward the map which I have included on this page. This map may help with some potential confusion with

regards to the next few verses.

Exodus 18:5b ...where he [Moses] was encamped at the mountain of God. (NKJV)

There are two very different ways to interpret this phrase. Either Moses or Jethro is encamped by the mountain of God. If we are to understand that this is Moses (and that appears to be what all translations do<sup>58</sup>), we simply have Moses and the people of Israel encamped, and Jethro is moving toward him. The designation, the Mountain of God, is known previously in Exodus 3:1, 12. Therefore, we do not need the subsequent chapters (Exodus 19–20) to tell us that Moses is encamped by the Mountain of God. What I am saying here is that Exodus 18 belongs right here, chronologically speaking.

The narrative, written by Moses, places himself and the people of Israel at the Mountain of God (Exodus 18:5 19:3, 17). Jethro has Moses' family, and they are camped nearby. Moses, the writer of this history, would be very aware of where he is. We do not know if Jethro understands *where* they all are (which is not really an issue).

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<sup>58</sup> If there is an exception to this, I missed it.

Exodus 18:5b ...where he [Moses] was encamped at the mountain of God. (NKJV)

Previous to the context of our narrative, the mountain (or set of mountains) is associated with God. Whether that is related to the burning bush in Exodus 3 or not is not completely clear (my reading of chapter 3 is, this mountain or mountain range was already associated with God before Moses saw the burning bush).

As I see it, Moses is the one camped out by the mountain of God; and it had this designation previously. Although much more conversation could be given to *what if this is Jethro and not Moses being spoken of?* Or, *could Exodus 18 be out of chronological order?* I have thought about those topics and even written about them, but eventually decided that this discussion was not really profitable (I pretty much deleted that discussion).

Exodus 18:5b ...where he [Moses] was encamped at the mountain of God. (NKJV)

This designation, *mountain of God*, is curious, as Moses has not yet gone to speak to God upon the summit of that mountain. Therefore, there are two options here. (1) This mountain has had this name for quite awhile; and everyone knows it by that name; or (2) Moses is writing this after the fact, knowing all that has taken place, meeting God upon this mountain. (1) is the simplest explanation. (2) would suggest that Moses or Joshua edited the book of Exodus at a later time. I lean toward the simplest explanation.

Exodus 18:5 ...and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God. (NKJV)

Jethro favored Moses and was grace oriented himself. He was glad that one of his daughters married him and once all the news got back to Midian, Jethro was pleased to take her back to Moses. He recognized that Moses had a serious part to play in God's plan. Whether Zipporah herself was ever convinced of this, is quite another issue. What she said to her children and her attitude toward Moses could have affected their thinking for decades. This could explain why we hear virtually nothing about these two sons.

We will hear about Moses' brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, throughout the Pentateuch. We will also hear a great deal about Aaron's sons (who will continue a priesthood that began with Aaron<sup>59</sup>). We hear nothing about Moses' sons during this time period. They only are mentioned again in genealogies which come much later.

Moses is going one way (more or less) and Jethro appears to approach him from the other direction. They are about to meet up again. At this point in the narrative, they are camped out in separate places. Jethro will not simply walk into the Israelite camp; he will send a message to Moses first (that is what v. 6 is all about).

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<sup>59</sup> We have not covered this yet in the book of Exodus.

Exodus 18:6a Now he had said to Moses, “I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you... (NKJV)

Jethro, moving along with Zipporah and the two sons, probably figures, “Maybe I should contact Moses in advance and not spring his wife and children on him as a surprise.” So he sends messengers ahead. This would have give Moses the opportunity to send the messengers back, saying, “Listen, I have too much on my plate right now. Would you mind keeping her in Midian?” Moses does not send such a message back to Jethro, but Jethro’s message allows for that response.

Given that Jethro is not said to be the speaker, but these words begin with *I*, it is reasonable to suppose that a messenger came in to Moses to give him this message. Therefore, it would be reasonable to translate this, *one said to Moses*.

This is clearly a message, because Jethro, in person, would not say to Moses, “*I, your father-in-law Jethro, have come to you.*” V. 6 makes less sense if Jethro is standing right there speaking to Moses (Moses would be looking right at him). However, a message requires Jethro to identify himself.

The beginning of this quote is a disputed reading. The Samaritan, Septuagint and Syrian read *Lo, your father-in-law, Jethro, [is] coming to you* instead of *I, your father-in-law, Jethro [am] coming to you*. You might be thinking, examine the verb and that will tell us the subject. Unfortunately *no* because the verb is in the Qal active participle; there is no person or number. However, in the Hebrew, there is the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular pronoun; so, in the Hebrew, this is clearly *I am coming to you*.

In either case, it is not Jethro who speaks to Moses but someone else comes to Moses and relays to him the words of Jethro. Jethro sent a man ahead to tell Moses to break the ice, so to speak. In the alternative, it could have been one of Moses’ G-2 men guarding the perimeter.

Because Jethro was traveling with Moses’ estranged wife, it makes sense that Jethro wanted to prepare Moses for their presence.

Exodus 18:6b ...with your wife and her two sons with her.” (NKJV)

Jethro adds that Moses’ wife and sons are there with him.

If Jethro initiated this message (which is most likely), it is because he needs to make certain that he can get through Moses’ security system unscathed. Because of the altercation with the Amalekites, Moses had certainly organized some sort of a security system. Therefore, when Jethro or one of his servants came through the lines, Moses was immediately apprised of the situation. The person speaking to Moses in v. 6 is either a servant sent by Jethro; or a messenger from Moses’ G2 force. Whatever the case, Moses knows that his father-in-law, and his wife and two sons, are at the perimeter of the Israeli camp.



We have previously discussed whether Moses' wife deserted him or that she was sent back to Midian by Moses. Although I lean toward Zipporah deserting Moses, that interpretation is not set in stone. Based upon everything that we know, including the non-mention of Moses' family in the rest of the Pentateuch, I believe that my explanation is accurate.

Notice that far more is made of Moses reunion with his father-in-law than is made of that with his wife. This is not a male bonding thing (although they were apparently the only males for awhile in that family), but it was a spiritual bonding thing. Jethro and Moses were both spiritually mature and they had much more in common than Moses did with his own wife.

Jethro could relate to what Moses was doing (as much as anyone could); Moses' wife could not.

Exodus 18:6 Now he had said to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her." (NKJV)

Moses will actually go out to see Jethro in v. 7.

#### **Lesson 281: Exodus 18:7–10**

#### **Moses Goes out to Receive His Father-in-Law**

Apparently Moses is in his tent, and a messenger comes in and delivers the message that his father-in-law is nearby with Moses' wife and his two sons (who are likely adults).

Exodus 18:7a So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law,... (NKJV)

Therefore, Moses goes out to meet his father-in-law. Moses is going toward Jethro while Jethro is just outside the Israeli camp.

You may recall that Moses did not tell his father-in-law exactly why he was returning to Egypt. Moses apparently did not go to his father-in-law and say, "I have just spoken with God, and God wants me to return to Egypt." Moses was far more circumspect than that.

Therefore, at this time, Moses will give a much longer explanation and recounting of all that took place. Before, Moses was reasonably concerned that Jethro would think him a nutcase if he said, "God spoke to me out in the desert-wilderness, and now I need to go and free my people." Moses simply was not going to say something like that to his father-in-law. However, now that it has all happened, and his father-in-law knows some of the details, Moses can relay the entire story.

I believe this short passage barely summarizes what Moses said, but that this conversation could have taken an hour or two.

Exodus 18:7b ...bowed down,... (NKJV)



One commentator says that he does not know who bowed down to who. So, remember the rule, when we have a sentence where there is not a specified subject. Who was the subject of the verb previous to this one? Who is the subject of the next verb? Moses is the subject of the verb in v. 7a; he is the subject of the verb in v. 8a; therefore, we should understand that Moses is bowing down to his father-in-law and not the other way around. Moses had great respect for this man. Furthermore, Moses was a man of great humility. His position as ruler/leader over Israel did not go to his head.

Exodus 18:7c ...and kissed him. (NKJV)

This tradition of men kissing has gone by the wayside, for the most part; which I am quite happy about. Two men shaking hands is much more sensible to me. However, that was the culture at that time.

Exodus 18:7d And they asked each other about their well-being,... (NKJV)

Each man asked about the other's health and welfare.

Moses and his father-in-law, although they had seen one another a few months back (less than six) the men had a close friendship developed over the 40 years that Moses was in Midian. Jethro was, in a sense, Moses' spiritual father. Nothing is said about Moses and his wife who deserted him or Moses and his children—but a great deal is made of his reunion with Jethro.

It is fascinating that nothing is said about Moses and his wife and sons. It seems reasonable that they greeted one another and that he kissed his two sons. No doubt, Moses shows them whatever affection is appropriate, but none of this is conveyed in the narrative. However, Moses' great enthusiasm is to share what has happened with his father-in-law. This enthusiasm is shared, apparently, by Jethro, but not by the others.

Exodus 18:7e ...and they went into the tent. (NKJV)

Moses had a great relationship with his father-in-law; so they went into his tent to talk further about things. Jethro and Moses have a great deal to talk about. We have no idea about Moses' interaction with his wife or sons.

Jethro would have been very glad to hear about what the God of Moses had done. His wife, apparently, did not share her father's interest.

Exodus 18:7 So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him. And they asked each other about their well-being, and they went into the tent. (NKJV)

It is apparent that Moses had a great relationship with his father-in-law, but not so much with his wife and sons.

Exodus 18:8a [And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians....](#) (NKJV)

When Moses took his leave of Jethro, he did not tell him, apparently, about the burning bush or what God had called him to do. I would not be surprised if Moses felt all of it to be a bit surreal, and that telling Jethro might have been premature. Back then, Moses himself may not have been fully on board with God's plan. He may have had considerable doubt. Therefore, Moses apparently never told Jethro, "I am going to Egypt because I am on a mission for God." But, now that everything is accomplished, and now that Jethro knows, through the news, some of what has happened, Moses is more at ease with sharing all of what happened.

Jethro would have heard some details about what happened to Egypt; but he did not have the complete picture. Moses was able to fill him in on all that God did.

What Jethro had heard was second hand, and, no doubt, it seemed too fantastic not to have been exaggerated. There is nothing like hearing it from one who was there and a participant in all of the events. Moses had become pretty enthusiastic about the deliverance effected by Y<sup>e</sup>howah on behalf of the Hebrews.

Exodus 18:8b [...for Israel's sake,...](#) (NKJV)

God did all of this for Israel. God has promises which He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and those promises still stand, even though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are long gone.

Exodus 18:8c [...all the hardship that had come upon them on the way,...](#) (NKJV)

There is a technical use of this word, *the way*, which speaks of the spiritual life of believer in the time of Israel. However, here, it simply refers to events which transpired as Moses interacted with the Pharaoh.

At any time, Pharaoh could have ended the suffering. He had the volition at any time to submit to God. This was just too far from where his head was at, regardless of all the signs and wonders that he observed.

Exodus 18:8d [...and how the Lord had delivered them.](#) (NKJV)

In all that happened, God delivered Israel out of Egypt. This is all quite recent to Moses. Even though Moses worked closely with his brother and possibly his sister, they had not seen one another for at least forty years. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, was more like family to him. They seemed to vibe along the same wavelength, more so than Moses and anyone else whom he knew there. Therefore, Moses was extremely open and enthusiastic about sharing what happened when speaking with Jethro.

Bear in mind, only a few months have passed since Moses left Midian for Egypt. Some of the greatest events in Israel's history took place in about a six-month period of time (leaving Egypt, leaving slavery, following God to Mount Sinai, and then Moses receiving the Law of God<sup>60</sup>).

Exodus 18:8 *And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way, and how the Lord had delivered them.* (NKJV)

God has used Moses in a tremendous way, and his life for the past few months has been quite incredible.

Moses is quite pleased to have someone to share all of these things with. Jethro was more family to Moses and closer to Moses than anyone else that Moses knew. Remember, Moses has lived with this man and his daughters for the past 40 years. Moses married one of the daughters. Even though this marriage was not the greatest marriage ever, Moses was very close with his father-in-law.

Exodus 18:9a *Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good which the Lord had done for Israel,...* (NKJV)

Jethro fully understands what is going on, and he celebrates all that God has done on behalf of Israel.

Jethro, I believe, is and always has been a priest of the Revealed God. I believe that his understanding of God was greater than Moses', at the time that they met. Therefore, I believe that Moses grew spiritually due to his relationship with Jethro (this is logical conjecture on my part). Jethro's full-throated support for Moses and for the God of Israel would seem to confirm that understanding of Jethro and his spiritual understanding of the Revealed God.

Now, quite obviously, we have no idea how God revealed Himself to Jethro; and we do not know all the Jethro knows. However, after observing Moses for a very short time, Jethro is going to revamp Moses' very own system; and Moses is going to embrace this change enthusiastically.

Exodus 18:9b *...whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.* (NKJV)

Israel was under the hand (control) of Egypt, and God removed them from Egypt and from Egypt's control.

The verb *delivered* has with it the masculine, singular suffix, which is why it is translated *delivered him* rather than *delivered them*. What is being delivered by God is Israel (which word can refer to either an individual—Jacob—or to his descendants, as it does here).

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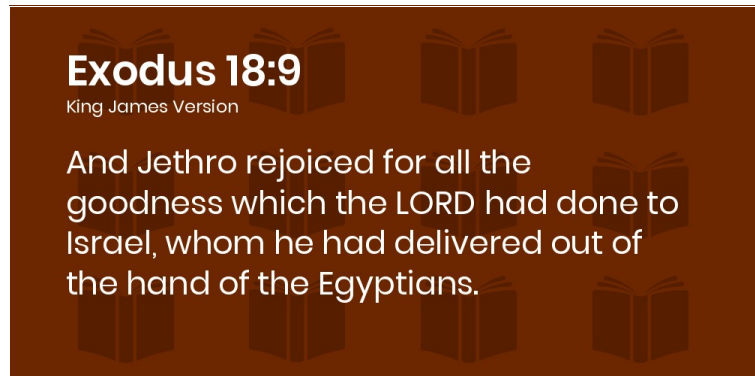
<sup>60</sup> We are not yet up to this last event in our study.

This narrative recaps what has already been covered and it indicates that this meeting took place very soon after the Sea of Reeds buried the men of Pharaoh. There is not a lot new here except to see the relationship between Jethro and Moses.

Exodus 18:9 Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good which the Lord had done for Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. (NKJV)

Jethro shares Moses' enthusiasm for all that had taken place. It seems apparent that they both worship the Same God.

**Exodus 18:9 (KJV)** (a graphic); from the [King James Version Bible](#); accessed July 19, 2023.



Exodus 18:10a And Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord,... (NKJV)

Jethro now speaks, indicating to Moses all that he knows and understands, based upon what Moses has told him.

*Blessed* means exceedingly happy and it is a term of worship and respect and adoration. Jethro, when he says *Blessed be Y<sup>e</sup>howah*, he is expressing respect, joy and adoration toward Y<sup>e</sup>howah, his God.

Exodus 18:10b ...Who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians.... (NKJV)

*You* is a 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural suffix, so Jethro is saying, "...Who has delivered you (all) out of the hand of the Egyptians..." God is to be praised and feared and respected because He rescued all Israel from Egypt.

Exodus 18:10c ...and out of the hand of Pharaoh,... (NKJV)

One might say that there are two entities involved: *Egypt*, as a nation; and *Pharaoh*, Egypt's leader.

God is praised because He rescued Israel from the control of Pharaoh.

What took place here is unprecedented in human history.

Exodus 18:10d ...and Who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. (NKJV)

We might better understand this that Israel was under the heavy boot of Egypt. Israel was enslaved to Egypt; and yet now, Jethro finds himself sitting in the midst of a free nation Israel, no longer under the control of Egypt.

## Lessons 282–283: Exodus 18:10–15

## Jethro and Moses

Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, has come to Moses in the desert-wilderness north of Midian. Moses and Jethro are visiting with one another in Jethro's tent.

**Exodus 18:10 (KJV)** (a graphic) from [Pray.com](https://www.pray.com); accessed July 19, 2023.

Exodus 18:10 And Jethro said, “Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. (NKJV)



The repeated use of the word *hand* emphasizes the power of the Egyptians. They were much stronger, vigorous, and more war-like than the Hebrews were. Under normal circumstances, the Egyptians could have quelled any kind of rebellion staged by the Hebrew people. However, these circumstances had not been normal. They were, for the most part, seemingly miraculous.

*Hand of the Egyptians* refers to power and control and might of the Egyptians. Its repetition emphasizes that it was a miracle for the Hebrews to be delivered from the Egyptians.

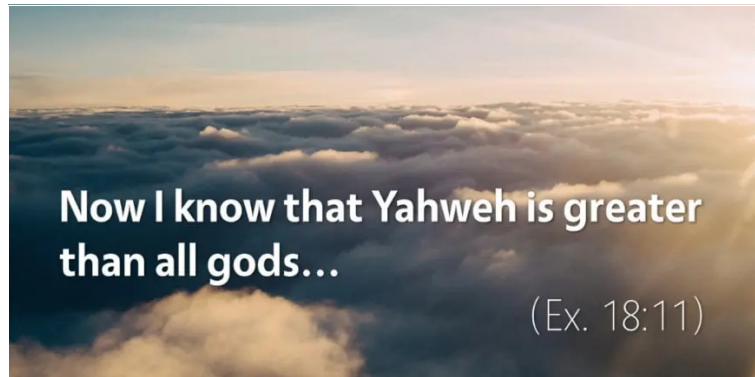
Jethro and Moses from the beginning seemed to be spiritually aligned, with the same trust and respect for the God of Israel. There was a good rapport between these men from the very beginning; and that love has grown deeper yet. Their personal love for one another is based upon the fact that they believe in the same God.

**Exodus 18:11a** (a graphic); from [Guard the Deposit](https://www.guardthedeposit.com); accessed July 19, 2023.

Exodus 18:11a Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods;... (NKJV)



We do not know how well Jethro understood or invested faith in Y<sup>e</sup>howah Elohim, the True God. However, he is a family priest. It is my opinion that Jethro has believed in the Revealed God long before he met Moses. Jethro knew things about God which were true; but given what we read here, that Jethro did not fully appreciate the connection between the Revealed God and the people of Abraham.



Jethro is called a priest and I suspect that he functioned as a priest to the true God, despite being a gentile. I suspect that Jethro's knowledge of God was greater than we might think. That is, he understood the necessity of animal sacrifices; and he understood a great deal about God's character and essence. However, he appears to be missing that very important link, between God and Israel. What Moses tells him solidifies that understanding in Jethro.

Those who misunderstand the Old Testament believe that only Jews were saved and some actually believe that they were saved by observing the Law. Jews and gentiles like were saved through faith in the Revealed God (Genesis 15:6).

Paul, when writing to the Romans, a congregation which would have included both Jews and gentiles, confirmed with several Old Testament citations that God saved the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Romans 15:8–12 **Now I say Christ Jesus has become a servant of [the] circumcision on behalf of the truth of God, in order to confirm the promises to the fathers, and the Gentiles to glorify God on behalf of mercy, just as it has been written, "For this reason I Myself will confess [or, will give praise] to You among Gentiles, and I will sing praise to Your name." [2Sam 22:50] And again it [or, he] says, "Celebrate, [O] Gentiles, with His people!" [Deut 32:43] And again, "Be praising the LORD, all youp Gentiles; and highly praise Him, all youp peoples!" [Psalm 117:1] And again, Isaiah says, "[There] will be the root [or, shoot; fig., descendent] of Jesse, and the One rising up to rule Gentiles [or, nations], Gentiles will hope on [or, trust in] Him." [Isaiah 11:10] (Analytical-Literal Translation)** Four times Paul quotes the Old Testament to confirm that gentiles were saved in the Age of Israel. Paul could have cited the passage that we are studying as further proof of gentile faith in the time of Israel.

Exodus 18:11a **Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods;...** (NKJV)

Both Moses and Jethro would have been aware of their being other gods. Now, were these simply inferior gods? Jethro may have seen them in this way; and Moses himself may have. However, no matter what, greater than any other god, real or imagined, was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Was Jethro previously filled with doubts? Was he an idolater? Was Jethro fundamentally a heathen? No to all of these things. Jethro lacked one fundamental piece of doctrine, that the God of Israel is the True God. Exodus 18:11a is Jethro's testimony of faith in this doctrine. Many Christians struggle with the duality of the nature of Jesus, but when they study the Hypostatic Union, it all becomes clear.

The entire context of this meeting of these men suggests that they are enjoying fellowship with one another in the Presence of God. For these men to see one another again is due to the Providence of Israel's God.

My reasoning that Jethro is not simply a believer, but a mature believer, is as follows: there are 40 years where Moses is closely aligned with Jethro, his father-in-law; and we know little about this time. Logically, Moses had to advance spiritually during this time (as God uses spiritually prepared men). Therefore, Jethro must have been instrumental in that advance. I would also make room for the idea that Moses brought the book of Genesis with him out of Egypt. I do not think that he carried an armload of scrolls, but that he learned this book from his Hebrew teachers the way that all believers learned that book—he memorized it. Again, when God told Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Moses did not stop God and say, "Am I supposed to know those guys?"

This spiritual fellowship between Moses and Jethro strongly suggests that Jethro operated on the same faith in the same God that we do. Now, at this point, he more fully appreciates God, having added to his faith a very important piece of information. He now better understood God in the light of all that happened (which things Moses has described). His faith perception has now been supplemented with clear empirical evidence of an even more personal and specific God.<sup>61</sup>

Exodus 18:11a *Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods;...* (NKJV)

A less literal translation of this phrase might be, *I now know from empirical evidence the Y<sup>e</sup>howah is greater than all other gods.*

There will be a time in our lives when we die and we go to be with God. Even those of us with strong faith, when we are face to face with God, things are going to be on a different level. So Jethro's faith has moved to a different level, temporally speaking.

Exodus 18:11a *Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods;...* (NKJV)

Why does God prefer faith perception over empiricism or rationalism? (1) Faith is the most fundamental form of knowledge; everyone exercises it and most of what people *know* is based upon faith (people *know* a great many things, true and false). (2) Seeing something with your own eyes is not always *proof enough* nor does it sustain. If viewing the acts of God could sustain, the Exodus generation should be the greatest generation of faith ever,

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<sup>61</sup> I write this in the middle of 2019, and this is one of the themes of R. B. Thieme III's recent teaching.

but it is just the opposite. (3) Finally, faith represents a choice. People often deny that; but they are making a choice, no matter what it is that they believe.

Let me speak to having sustaining faith based upon what one sees: those of the Exodus generation have seen more of the great works of God than any previous generation. In fact, one might argue that the empirical evidence for Israel's God is given to more people in a more universal way in this generation than in any other (Jesus offered empirical proof to those who came out to see Him, but, this did not extend, for the most part, to those who were disinterested). We will see, throughout our study of the Pentateuch that, this empirical evidence does not carry this generation of Jewish believers. At this point, logically, we should be able to say, *the Exodus generation should know that their God can do anything*; but this will not be the attitude of the Exodus generation, for the most part. They have seen great empirical evidence, they have all placed their faith in the Y<sup>e</sup>howah to Whom Moses speaks, yet they are unable to have a consistent spiritual walk. Throughout the book of Exodus through Numbers, the Exodus generation will clearly lack consistency.

Many years ago, Monty Python did a bit on the [ministry of silly walks](#). This would very much describe the spiritual walk of the Exodus generation.

We run into a problem with v. 11b. The problem is the NKJV, which is the translation which I have chosen as the base text.

Exodus 18:11b *...for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them.*" (NKJV)

I translated v. 11b: *...for in the thing that [took place], they acted arrogantly against them.*" (Kukis mostly literal translation)

Although this final phrase is confusing, I will interpret it to mean that the people of Egypt acted with arrogance against the people of Israel. This is what Jethro understands from what he has heard.

V. 11 is the first verse in this chapter which has some problems in the translation and the meaning. The first phrase translates easily and its meaning is clear. The second phrase is not.

The second phrase begins with *kîy* (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], which can mean *when, that, for, because*. It is followed by the *bêth* preposition (*in, into, with, among, at, by*) and the definite article. This is followed by *dâbâr* (דָּבָר) [pronounced *daw-BAWR*] which means *word, matter, thing*. This can mean, *...for in [by] the word [thing]...*

This is followed by *'ăsher* (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *ash-ER*] and it is a relative pronoun meaning *which, as to which, who, that, when, where, for as much as, in order that*; it is a connective link without a simple translation. This is followed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect of *zûwd* (זָוַד) [pronounced *zood*], which means *to deal arrogantly with*. This is followed by the

preposition *with, against, above* and the 3<sup>rd</sup> masculine plural suffix. This latter portion of the verse could be translated *inasmuch as they [the Egyptians] dealt arrogantly with them [the sons of Israel]*.

My translation of the second half of this verse is in accordance with the Modern Literal Version 2020, the ESV, Green's literal translation, and many others.

The problem is what is done with this final preposition. That preposition is 'al (עַל) [pronounced *gahl*], and it means, *upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside*. Strong's #5921 BDB #752. With this preposition is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural suffix. A handful of translations add in the phrase *He was* (which is not there), to get another sentence, *[He was] above them*. This sentence is constructed from a single preposition with the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural suffix. There is no reason to have a whole new sentence right here. This preposition and suffix fit fine into the sentence which proceeds them.

The Lexham English Bible gives both their interpretation (which I believe is sound) along with the literal rendering: *Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all the gods, even in the matter where they the Egyptians dealt arrogantly against the Israelites.*" [Literally "because in the thing that they dealt arrogantly over them"]

Modern Literal Version (2020)	<i>Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods, yes, in the thing in which they dealt proudly against them.</i>
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English Standard Version	<i>Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people.</i> " (the ESV adds the words <i>the people</i> in order for this sentence to make more sense to the casual reader).
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A number of translations add this additional sentence simply because the KJV does this. However, many of those which do also reveal that this *He was* is simply added. One of the translations in the *All in One* reads: Exodus 18:11 (BSB) Now<sup>01</sup> I know<sup>02</sup> that<sup>03</sup> [is] greater<sup>04</sup> YHWH<sup>05</sup> than all<sup>06</sup> the gods<sup>07</sup>; for<sup>08</sup> in the very thing<sup>09</sup> in which<sup>10</sup> they behaved proudly<sup>11</sup> [He was] above them<sup>12</sup>. (The numbers refer to the Hebrew word order). You can see that *He was* is simply added in where such an addition is unnecessary.

There are *translations* and there are *versions*. A translation goes back to the original Greek and Hebrew and builds a translated sentence from those words. A version takes the King James Version and attempts to update it. This is why so many *versions* have an additional sentence in v. 11 (the NKJV or the BSB are two examples).

The *All in One (EN)* provides a *revised version* of the BSB: Now<sup>V01</sup> I know<sup>V02</sup> that<sup>V03</sup> the LORD<sup>V04</sup> is greater<sup>V05</sup> than all other<sup>V06</sup> gods,<sup>V07</sup> for<sup>V08</sup> He did this<sup>V09</sup> when they<sup>V10</sup> treated Israel with arrogance<sup>V11</sup> ."

For those of you who really do not want to deal with the Greek or Hebrew, but want some additional insight on specific verses, let me recommend the All in One (EN) to you, which is a [module](#) available for free for E-sword. You must set up a free membership with Bible Support in order to get their modules. This is a mashup of five separate modules.

The end result is, this is the correct reading:

Exodus 18:11 [And now I know that Y<sup>e</sup>howah is greater than all \[other\] gods, for in the thing that \[took place\], they \[the Egyptians\] acted arrogantly against them \[the sons of Israel\].](#)” (Kukis mostly literal translation, with some additional information inserted in the brackets)

This verse should not be rendered:

Exodus 18:11 [Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them.](#)” (NKJV)

Because I chose the NKJV as my base text, I figured that I owed some explanation as to why I came up with a different translation.

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, recognizes that God is greater than all other gods, including the gods of Egypt. The people of Egypt acted with arrogance; yet God was far above them. Throughout the series of plagues, any Egyptian could have aligned himself with Israel and thus ended the plagues for himself and his family. However, there are only a few exceptions to the arrogance of the Egyptian people, those exceptions being called the *mixed multitude* who left Egypt with the Israelites.

Exodus 18:12a [Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to God.](#) (NKJV)

Jethro, to celebrate the situation and to celebrate what God has done, takes up a burnt offering and some sacrifices which he plans to offer up to God.

There is every indication that Jethro himself offers the burnt offering and these other sacrifices, since he is the subject of the verb. What is likely the case is, Jethro came with his daughter and grandsons and with a number of animals as well. He appears to recognize that a fellowship with the Hebrew God is based upon a blood sacrifice. I would further speculate that this has been his *modus operandi* for a considerable period of time, at least since he met Moses. It is my opinion that this approach to God (offering animal sacrifices) predated his first meeting Moses. Furthermore, at no time in the Bible is it ever suggested that Jethro is an idolater. At no time, is it ever suggested that he and Moses worship different gods. Based upon that, I believe that Jethro has been making sacrifices and conducting teachings as related to the Revealed God, Whom Jethro now understands to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (this is the update to Jethro's understanding of the Revealed God).



Everything which has come before indicates that Jethro was already a believer in the Revealed God (Who is Jesus Christ). Whereas this could be his initial confession of faith, it is my opinion that he is confirming his faith—that what happened with Pharaoh and Moses made it absolutely clear that Y<sup>e</sup>howah is the God of the Universe.

I believe that Jethro genuinely and accurately believed in the God Who had been revealed to him; but that he had not completely committed to faith in a personal God with a direct relationship already established with the Hebrew people.

Perhaps you object and say, “Well, that was not enough that Jethro simply believed in the Revealed God. He had to believe in the God of Israel for this to be complete. Now his faith is complete.” You would be wrong to say that.

At the moment a person is saved, he is unaware of all the theology related to his salvation. When we believe in Jesus, sometimes we understand the barest of truths about Him (**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved** is all that I knew at salvation). It is after salvation that we learn more Christology and soteriology. As we learn more about the Jesus in Whom we have believed, our salvation becomes greater due to knowledge (that is, its impact on our lives becomes greater). However, even without that additional knowledge, we are still saved. When I believed in Jesus, my faith was based upon: **believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved**. I had been to many churches prior to this, had scattered knowledge about this and that, but, quite frankly, I did not even know what happened to Jesus after the crucifixion. Even though I had the normal exposure to Easter over the course of the previous 21 years, I really did not *know* anything beyond the Easter bunny and finding my basket of goodies. When I realized that Jesus had been raised from the dead, I was firming up the doctrine in my soul; but my salvation (my base point in the spiritual life) was the same. Now, I obviously believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and I understand much better what that means. However, that understanding of Jesus was not a part of my salvation experience. I had but a threadbare understanding of God’s promise to me when I was saved. Since then, I have developed a much greater understanding of Whom I have believed.

My point in all of this is, Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, knew a great deal about the Revealed God. He may be learning right now at this point that this is the God of the Jews; or many this fact is being confirmed to him. However, Jethro already knew enough to be a legitimate priest; and that he was able to teach Moses about this God when Moses came to Midian.

When God first spoke to Moses from the burning bush, Moses knew Genesis (or he knew parts of Genesis). Remember that God said to Moses, **"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."** (Exodus 3:6; ESV) Now what sense does that make if you don’t know who Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are? God might as well have said, “I am the God of Moe, Larry and Curley.” But what God said had meaning to Moses. Therefore, Moses had some exposure to the book of Genesis, and this came either through his father-in-law in Midian, and/or through the teaching he received when in training to become pharaoh (I have no doubt that Moses received the best

education available in Egypt, and that some of this education came from Hebrew teachers).

In any case, Moses and his father-in-law Jethro are completely on the exact same page at this point. They both have knowledge of and faith in the God of Israel.

Exodus 18:12b *And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.* (NKJV)

Aaron and the elders of Israel come into the tent, where Jethro is, in order to become a part of his celebration, to also eat bread with Jethro before God. Sacrifices were not burned up; they were eaten. The eating of the sacrifice was a sign of faith.

This is Old Testament fellowship between believers. Sacrifices are offered to God and the meal of the sacrifice is shared. This is fellowship before God; fellowship based upon a relationship with God.

Exodus 18:12b *And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.* (NKJV)

The final few words, that this takes place in the Presence of God, indicates that Jethro worships the same God as Moses and the people of Israel.

At least two translations pose the question, *where's Moses?* One of them suggests, *well, he's serving the meal!* I don't know that we should view this as an important consideration. Moses is very likely right there (as Jethro referenced him in v. 10).

Exodus 18:12 *Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to God. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.* (NKJV)

What is important in this verse is, Jethro, a Midianite (gentile) priest, is enjoying fellowship with the Hebrew people and before the God of the Hebrew people.

*Ferrar Fenton: It is evident from this record that the exile of Moses in Arabia had been a period of spiritual education under Jethro, and that the Arabs had preserved the Faith of Abraham in greater purity than the Egyptised Hebrews.*<sup>62</sup>

It is clear that many in the Exodus generation did not have a full and complete faith in their God. They were saved, but ignorant of many things.

Jethro's relationship to Moses is extremely important, as was Melchizedek's to Abraham.

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<sup>62</sup> From [the Ten Commandments Ministry](#); accessed May 23, 2019.

## Comparing Jethro to Melchizedek (Gerber and Sailhamer)

From Jacob D. Gerber:

1. Jethro was a foreign (gentile) priest of Midian. Exodus 18:1
2. Jethro came to Moses immediately after a great military victory. God had destroyed the Egyptians in the Red Sea. Exodus 14
3. Jethro came to Moses immediately before God made a covenant with God's people. Exodus 19–24
4. Jethro blessed God for delivering (natsal) Israel from their enemies: "Blessed be Yahweh, Who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians." Exodus 18:10
5. Jethro brought bread to this meal of fellowship (which fellowship included both Hebrews and gentiles). Exodus 18:12

John Sailhamer:

1. Melchizedek was a foreign (gentile) priest of Salem. Genesis 14:18
2. Melchizedek came to Abram immediately after a great military victory. Abram and his 318 trained men rescued Lot from Chedorlaomer and his allies. Genesis 14:14–16
3. Melchizedek came to Abram immediately before God made a covenant with Abram (this would be a covenant of peace between Abram and a gentile; made before God). Genesis 15
4. Melchizedek blessed God for delivering (magan) Abram from his enemies: "...and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" Genesis 14:20
5. Melchizedek brought out bread and wine, which he will share with Abram. This is a spiritual fellowship being enjoyed by a gentile and a Hebrew. Genesis 14:18

Sailhamer: *The purpose of these parallels appears to be to cast Jethro as another Melchizedek, the paradigm of the righteous Gentile.*

From <https://guardthedeposit.com/2015/01/gospel-teaches-us-jethro-exodus-18/> accessed July 19, 2023.  
Edited.

Exodus 18:12 Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, took a burnt offering and some sacrifices to God to offer up to God. Aaron also came in, along with the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Jethro and to share in the sacrificial ceremony before God. (Kukis paraphrase)

Before we leave v. 12, let me ask the question: did Moses tend to his wife and sons? I am sure that he did. But we know from the circumcision incident that Moses' wife, Zipporah, was not fully onboard with the faith of Moses. I believe that she is saved—in that she has believed in the Revealed God—but that she has never developed her faith further and that she has never fully appreciated all that she had with Moses and her own father. That is, Moses' wife could have learned a great deal from her father and from her husband, but she

resisted the doctrine. This is quite sad, being that she is married to the greatest man of God in that era.

## Lessons 284–285: Exodus 18:13–19a

## Jethro Observes Moses at Work

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, knowing that Moses was near to Midian, brings his wife and two sons to him. Apparently Jethro is going to shadow Moses when Moses goes back to work.

Exodus 18:13a *And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people;...* (NKJV)

Even though Jethro has shown up with Moses' wife, it is very clear that Moses and Jethro get on famously. The wife and children are not mentioned again in the Pentateuch.

In any case, perhaps Moses invited Jethro to watch him judge the people, which means that he will mediate various disputes between them. Or perhaps Moses was doing this and Jethro searched him out to see what was going on. In any case, this was Moses' job, if you will; and Jethro was there to observe.

Exodus 18:13b *...and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening.* (NKJV)

Moses is judging the people and the people come and stand before him, and this goes on, from morning to night (they quit at sunset).

Recall that we are dealing with a very apostate, faithless generation of Hebrews (despite the fact that they are all believers). From this general character comes a great many disputes, disagreements, lawsuits, and altercations—particularly when 2,000,000 of them are traveling to where they know not and encountering trials for which they have no spiritual assets. Tempers will flair, men will be petty, and they have but one person over them who even has a clue as to what it is all about: Moses. Therefore, they bring every little problem to Moses for him to solve.

How many times have two Israelites nearly come to blows, and one of them says, "Let's take this to Moses. He'll tell you I'm right." And the other man agrees because he knows that he is in the right.

Exodus 18:13 *And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening.* (NKJV)

Moses took upon himself the great task of mediating all of the disagreements among the people. He would spend most of his day listening to these disagreements and then giving his final judgment on each dispute.

Wouldn't it be great if there was some sort of written guidance provided?

**Jethro with Moses as Moses Judges the People** (a graphic); from [Messiah, Prophecy and History](#); accessed July 19, 2023.

Having observed his son-in-law for a day, Jethro has something to say about what Moses is doing. However, he does not interrupt what Moses is doing in order to say these things.

Exodus 18:14a [So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people...](#) (NKJV)



Jethro observes all that Moses is doing on behalf of the people. He watches every case that day as mediated by Moses.

Jethro is a very intelligent man, and in a day, he was able to evaluate what Moses was doing; and he figured out how this could be better handled.

Jethro asks Moses a couple of pointed questions.

Exodus 18:14b [...he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people?"](#) (NKJV)

After observing for a day or more, Jethro volunteers his take on this situation. He asks a few questions to begin with: "What is it that you do for the people?" Jethro is going to explain that there are more efficient ways of having a court system and serving the people.

Jethro has no experience whatsoever in this field, but he did raise a brood of daughters.

Exodus 18:14c [Why do you alone sit...](#) (NKJV)

Jethro pushes this further, "You are sitting here, alone, by yourself..." The implication is, "You can't be the only smart and fair-minded person out of all these people."

I am certain that Jethro heard a great many cases which were trivial. No doubt he asked himself, "Why is Moses, the leader of the Israelite nation, judging this minor issue?"

Exodus 18:14d [...and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?"](#) (NKJV)

Then Jethro adds, "...and all of these people are standing around you." What Jethro does not say, but is probably a part of his concern: "Many of these matters being brought before



you to judge are trivial matters. Why on earth should you, the leader of this nation, be judging them?

Moses is trying to do everything. Before, when first called to lead the Hebrews, he wanted to stand back and watch and be an errand boy and have Aaron speak to the people. Now he is doing everything. He is leading the people, he is speaking to God, he is writing Scripture, he is offering sacrifices; and from morning until evening he is settling every single dispute that arose like an olden-day *People's Court*. With two million people, that is going to be quite the docket of court cases.

Interestingly enough, God does not stop Moses and say, "You need to delegate, son." It is possible that Moses has little time to come to God in the pre-Tabernacle and speak with Him.

Exodus 18:14 *So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?"* (NKJV)

Jethro, when he has time alone with Moses, asks him about the difficult tasks which he has taken on. That main task of solving everyone's problems was just too much.

You will notice that these are simply questions; and there is nothing negative that can be implied from them. These question may even get Moses to thinking about his situation.

Exodus 18:15a *And Moses said to his father-in-law,...* (NKJV)

Moses had a wonderful relationship with his father-in-law, and Moses answers him honestly, not necessarily understanding where his father-in-law might be going with these questions.

Exodus 18:15b *..."Because the people come to me to inquire of God.* (NKJV)

People came to Moses to resolve problems and disputes; to know what God's will is. Moses is obviously very connected to God and he knows divine viewpoint.

Now, I can just about guarantee you that Moses does not, after hearing the arguments, go off to his pre-Tabernacle and inquire of God. Probably, in every case, Moses simply says, "Listen, Charley Brown, you are in the wrong here, and you need to pay Lucy two days wages. Next case!"

It is interesting that, this people who often fought against Moses and against God; also come to Moses for judgments.

Don't misunderstand this verse. These people are not coming to Moses with questions about God; they are not coming to him for spiritual information. Insofar as they are

concerned, Moses is their personal Judge Wapner<sup>63</sup> and they go to him to get their revenge on someone else who has pissed them off. Ostensibly they say it is because Moses represents God to them and to let God judge over this matter of that; but, what it boils down to is they think they're right and they want everyone to know it. Furthermore, it was their entertainment of the day to go to court and watch these proceedings and to be able to tell someone else, "I was right and you were wrong."

Exodus 18:15 [And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. \(NKJV\)](#)

Moses puts the best possible spin on what it is that he is doing, but he, as the leader of Israel, is really wasting his own time. It is possible that, in answering these questions posed by Jethro, that Moses himself is beginning to evaluate exactly what he is doing.

Have you ever been in a situation where you had too much work—work that you needed to delegate—but it seemed to overwhelm you so that you had no time to delegate? That is Moses' situation here.

Moses continues answering Jethro's questions.

Exodus 18:16a [When they have a difficulty, they come to me,... \(NKJV\)](#)

Two people might have a dispute and they would come before Moses to have this dispute settled.

Kretzmann says that Moses is giving advice, but he is not just giving advice. Moses is not saying, "So, this is your dispute? Here is what I would suggest." Moses is not making suggestions; he is arbitrating and making judicial decisions. When people came to Moses, their case would be adjudicated and it was all over.

Exodus 18:16b [...and I judge between one and another;... \(NKJV\)](#)

Moses would be the one to make the final determination on how their dispute plays out.

Perhaps this is some subtle arrogance on Moses' part. Who doesn't want to run the lives of everyone else? When you are given the chance to tell someone else what is wrong with their lives and how they can straighten themselves out, you jump at the chance. Especially if it is someone whom you are jealous of or who does not work as hard as you or has more stuff than you, etc. Furthermore, Moses was one of the very few mature believers there. He did not know what else to do. People had disputes and these disputes needed to be solved. It might have begun with a few minor altercations but now Moses had a court docket which lasted all day long.

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<sup>63</sup> Well, that certainly dates me. [The People's Court](#). Had I said *Judge Judy*, that would have dated me as well. Perhaps I should have gone with Judge Marilyn Milian or Judge Mathis?

Exodus 18:16c ...and I make known the statutes of God and His laws.” (NKJV)

We have seen this before...a mention of the decrees and laws of God, prior to the Mosaic Law being given.

The first key word is the masculine plural construct of *chuqqîym* (חֻקִּים) [pronounced *khook-KEEM*], which means, *decrees, those things which are decreed; statutes; boundaries, defined limitations; appointed portions of labor, tasks*. Strong's #2706 BDB #349. Although this can be used as a specific, technical term; it can simply refer to the tasks or apportionment of labor set before the people of God by God. That would simply be their movement forward and any other things which God would have them do.

This is a construct, meaning that it is connected to the noun which follows, which is the masculine plural noun *’Ēlôhîym* (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced *el-o-HEEM*], along with the definite article. So that means, *of the God or of the Elohim*.

There is also the feminine plural noun *tôwrôwth* (תּוֹרוֹת) [pronounced *TOE-rowth*], which means, *instructions, doctrines; [human and divine] laws, directions, regulations, protocol; customs*. Strong's #8451 and #8452 BDB #435. Although this can be transliterated *Torah*, it is not so transliterated from the plural, for the most part. We can also understand this to be the less formal concept of *instructions, directions*. At this point, God has the people moving forward. God knows where they are going and what is going to happen; but this is not something that Moses necessarily knows.

At this point in our narrative, we do not have a list of laws or statutes specifically issued by God, apart from a few regulations involving the gathering of manna and yearly guidance when it comes to observing the Passover.

We also know the Mosaic Law to be a very formal, specific system of laws. There is no indication that this incident took place after the Ten Commandments were given; there is every evidence that this occurred in the time frame it appears to occur in, right after Moses has led the people into the desert-wilderness, after God overthrew the Egyptian armies of Pharaoh.

This phrase about the decrees and laws of God is found on several occasions prior to the giving of the Law; so there is no reason to try to fit this particular set of verses into a time period after the Law is given.

At this point in time, Moses was developing wisdom and the thinking of God; so he was able to make some divine viewpoint determinations. However, there was no specific set of laws given prior to this time, apart from the principles which were probably known to the people from Egyptian law and from the books of Genesis and Job (I assume they had the former, and possibly the latter).

Now, was Moses going out too far ahead of God? Did God have a plan and a set of laws, and Moses was making up his own? Here is how I see it: Moses is very steeped in law

(which he would have learned as an Egyptian) and in God's character, more than any other person there. Remember that he was in training to become a pharaoh, so he would have learned the laws of Egypt; and possibly from surrounding regions and countries (Acts 7:22). Whenever God gave the people an order, it would come through Moses. For the most part, there have been no actual societal laws given by God (apart from the manna and Passover regulations). Nevertheless, the people have had disputes. On occasion, Moses may have gone to God about these complaints; but the solution, in many cases, is simply, common sense and divine establishment thinking.

There appear to be some overriding principles—principles that the sons of Israel are slow to understand. God has taken them out of Egypt and is going to give them the land of Canaan; and God is guaranteeing their existence and care. We have seen several instances where the people reveal their lack of understanding by making their complaints to Moses as if he is somehow responsible for everything bad that happens to them.

Exodus 18:16 *When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws.*" (NKJV)

"This is what I do," Moses explains. "If they have a dispute or a problem, they come to me, and I settle the matter." What Moses would state—mostly operating on the Egyptian law which he learned as filtered through his understanding of God. He would consider this to be *the statutes of God and His laws*. My understanding here is, Moses is taking the law which he learned in Egypt and modifying it, when necessary, to fit the character of God. They don't have anything else at this point.

If you know the book of Exodus of the history of the Hebrew people, then you know what is coming; but Moses does not know what is next; and the people do not know either.

When it comes to the narrative which we are studying, I lean toward these things being written down as they happen. Throughout Exodus, we have gone from one place to the next; and these places and their order will be confirmed in the book of Numbers (one chapter is devoted to all the stops made by Moses and the people of Israel). There have been specific times—like the song sung after God killed the Egyptian soldiers—where all of the writing had to occur right then and there. That is, there was no place for Moses to write this song down a week or two later. They sang it right there when they were on the shore and as they walked away from that shore. That means that Moses wrote the song right then and there.

For these reasons, I understand this chapter to simply occur in the order that it falls in the book of Exodus. This is not the view of certain other commentators (who would be wrong at this point).

Exodus 18:17a *So Moses' father-in-law said to him,...* (NKJV)

Moses and his father-in-law had the sort of relationship, where his father-in-law could speak honestly and frankly with him. He could simply say, "Listen, here is what the

problem is.” Or, “Listen, I have an opinion on this.” Given the circumstances and the way the people have acted, there are few people who could do this.

Exodus 18:17b ...“The thing that you do is not good. (NKJV)

“What you are doing is not good,” Jethro explains to Moses. Moses is holding court from morning til night; and Jethro can tell that this is too much for him. However, Jethro does not appear to sugar-coat this or justify it. In fact, the first words spoken by Jethro are the words *not good*. When word occur at the beginning of a thought, this suggests that they are the most important words that Jethro has for Moses. “Not good,” Jethro says to Moses.

In this verse we have *dâbâr* (דָּבָר) [pronounced *daw-BAWR*] again, which can mean *word, matter, thing*. In this case, even *situation* is acceptable. The 2<sup>nd</sup> masculine singular personal pronoun plus the Qal active participle of ‘âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] means *what you are doing*. Jethro has some spiritual maturity and he can see that what Moses is doing is not working out as it should. Moses has shouldered far too much responsibility. What he needs to do is to delegate. A good executive can delegate.

**Application:** One of the things that can make a good president (or any political leader) is one who can choose a cabinet with integrity and then delegate responsibilities responsibly. A great company president can choose and promote outstanding vice presidents and administrative assistants to the top and delegate the responsibility to them. A great movie producer has to delegate authority to the director, the casting agency, the sound effects crew, the cameramen, etc. There is no way that one person can do it all. A good pastor is not sweeping up afterwards, typing thank you cards, making calls concerning repairs to be done on the church, counting and depositing money from the offering, turning out the lights at night and locking the doors; nor is he counseling as a third-rate psychologist. He is studying God's Word and presenting his findings to his flock. He has delegated the responsibility for the other things to those under him.

Moses is not delegating anything unless specifically told to do so by God.

Exodus 18:17 So Moses' father-in-law said to him, “The thing that you do is not good. (NKJV)

After what appears to be a day of observation, Jethro comes right out with it. “What you are doing is a bad idea,” he tells Moses.

He has more to say and Moses lets him have his say.

Exodus 18:18a Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. (NKJV)

“You will wear yourself out,” Jethro warns his son-in-law. This is not good for the people either, because they are standing there all day long waiting for their cases to be heard.



When the word gam (גַּם) [pronounced *gam*] is used twice in close succession, it means *both...and*. The demonstrative pronoun used with people is zeh (זֶה) [pronounced *zeh*] is properly rendered *this* rather than *these*. It is the near demonstrative pronoun and it could be rendered *this, here, this here, in this*.

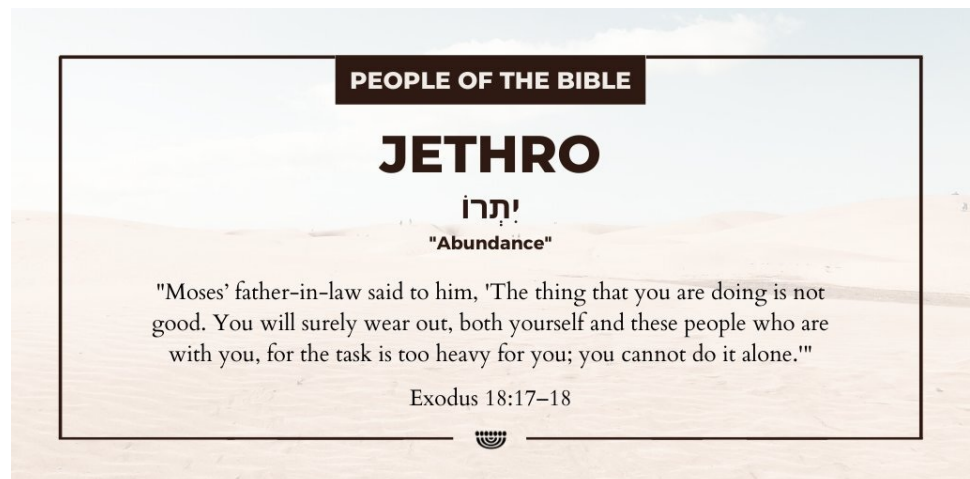
Exodus 18:18b **For this thing is too much for you;...** (NKJV)

"What you have taken upon yourself is just too much for any one man," Jethro explains. Obviously, he is a man who can objectively view what Moses is doing.

Exodus 18:18c **...you are not able to perform it by yourself.** (NKJV)

"Simply speaking," Jethro says, "This is not a job for one man. Not even if that man is you!"

Moses did have support personnel, but because of the large number of people coming to him, coming to that one place. If he had any aides, then his aides were being used inefficiently. Surely you can have two people do the same job with the same number of assistants and one can complete it and another can't even get it half finished. Even in both cases all parties involved can be working. Now it is possible that some of Moses' aides were standing around waiting for decisions to be made; but then if they were there 12–16 hours per day, each and every day except for the Sabbath, even if they just stood and did nothing for three or four hours a day, they were still exhausted and worn down.



**Jethro in Exodus 18:17–18** (a graphic); from [Bethany United Church](#); accessed July 19, 2023.

There is an additional problem, not mentioned by Jethro. If Moses attempted to do everything, he also would be setting a bad precedent. No one man can do everything. At some point in time, there will be a new leader. Is that man supposed to do everything?

Exodus 18:18 **Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself.** (NKJV)

Jethro tells Moses that what he is doing is inefficient. He has taken on too much.

Exodus 18:19a [Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel,...](#) (NKJV)

Jethro is now going to give Moses his opinion as to what he ought to do.

## **Lesson 286: Exodus 18:19–22**

## **The Counsel of Jethro**

Jethro has just seen Moses go through a full day's work as Israel's sole judge, and he has some comments—in fact, a critique. These are Jethro's words to Moses:

Exodus 18:19a [Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel,...](#) (NKJV)

He asks Moses' indulgence, that he might offer some valuable advice.

Exodus 18:19b [...and God will be with you:...](#) (NKJV)

Jethro even claims that, what he is about to suggest, God will be on board for it.

Exodus 18:19c [...Stand before God for the people,...](#) (NKJV)

Jethro has an idea as to how Moses might better give justice to the people, and save himself from being overworked.

Jethro has thought this out a great deal and he has a five-part plan. He states Moses' place as a priest to God—that is, Moses represents the people before God and he brings their cases before God. This does not mean that he prays to God about every single minor problem—Moses operates under his own wisdom and on a rare occasion, the difficult cases might be brought directly to God (at this point, we do not know any of the details about any case decided by Moses).

Exodus 18:19d [...so that you may bring the difficulties to God.](#) (NKJV)

Jethro is not saying, “Let's just stop hearing all of these disputes.” He tells Moses to continue bringing the disputes near to God (by bring a dispute to Moses, the people were bringing that dispute to God).

Exodus 18:19 [Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God.](#) (NKJV)

Bear in mind, after watching for a day, Jethro is telling Moses that he is doing it wrong; and Moses, the ruler of two million people, is listening carefully to his father-in-law. Jethro is saying this in a tactful way, but Moses is a brilliant man. He understands what is being said to him.

Let me suggest that Moses is listening for two reasons: (1) he is truly humble (grace oriented) and (2) he has listened to his father-in-law before, on many occasions; and it has benefitted him.

**Exodus 18:19** (a graphic); from [i-bible.com](http://i-bible.com); accessed July 19, 2023.

Exodus 18:20a *And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws...* (NKJV)

The first thing that Moses needs to do is present to the people his understanding of God's statutes and laws.

Jethro does not know what is about to take place. He is not aware that Moses will receive what we know as the Mosaic Law from God. Moses also does not know that this is about to happen.

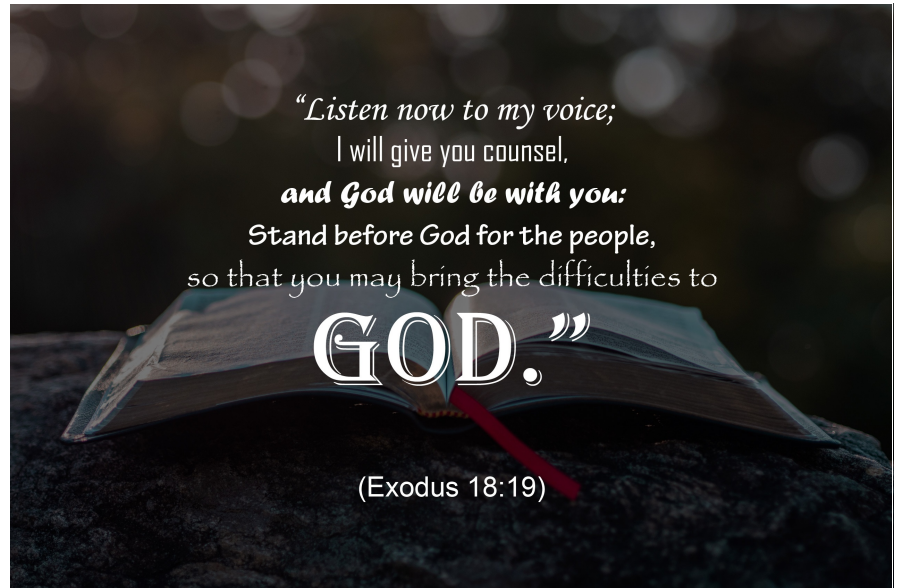
What Jethro is suggesting is, If Moses writes the statutes and the laws, and if Moses is subject to God, then these would be God's statutes and laws.

Exodus 18:20b *...and show them the way in which they must walk...* (NKJV)

Moses also needs to teach the people how to conduct themselves day-to-day. Moses needs to teach these various standards to the people so that they can learn to regulate themselves.

Jethro is saying, "We need standards; we need a set of social boundaries."

There is something extremely important alluded to here and in many previous passages which I have not yet covered. There are absolutes in this life; there are things which are right and wrong and these are the statutes and laws of God. We hope in our judicial system to mirror those statutes and laws. It does not matter that God has not delivered to the Hebrews the Law yet. This does not mean that it doesn't exist nor does this mean that there is no right and wrong yet. *For the Gentiles, who do not have the Law, do instinctively those things from the Law. These [Gentiles], not having the Law, are a law unto themselves in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them* (Romans 2:14–15).



Parts one and two of Jethro's plan: Moses needs to record God's system of laws and precepts and then make these things known to the people.

Jethro is saying, "You need to have clear laws and statutes and you must make certain that the people all know these laws and statutes.

Exodus 18:20c ...and the work they must do. (NKJV)

Moses needs to lay out what is expected of the people. When they understand what is required from them, they will be doing much of Moses' work by regulating themselves.

Exodus 18:20 And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. (NKJV)

All of this is taking place prior to the giving of the Law (Moses and Jethro do not realize that this is on their calendar). However, what Moses determines will be the laws of God—so says Jethro. That may sound like an odd thing to say, but rulers were thought to be one step away from God.

Let's view another translation of v. 20:

Exodus 18:20 Enlighten them as to the statutes and the laws, and show them the way by which they must walk and the work they must do. (Tree of Life Version)

Jethro, with these words, may have inadvertently exposed another flaw in Israel's present judicial system. Jethro and Moses will both concentrate on the system of judges in vv. 21–26, but they will bypass a very important piece of the puzzle—the legislative piece. Where are the laws presently coming from? Moses' own understanding of Egyptian law as modified by his relationship with God. These things have not been written down, exactly, although they may exist at this time as the precedence set by case law (that is, each decision that Moses makes establishes a precedence in the law).

Essentially what Israel has at this point in time are all of the cases which Moses has determined the proper judicial outcome. A record of these cases—clearly not preserved in Scripture—is essentially Israel's law. I say this, but quickly point out, Israel as a nation, has existed for approximately three months time (Exodus 19:1). Therefore, whatever law exists is pretty much what Moses has in his own soul.

Inadvertently, Jethro has set us up for the next two chapters and beyond. Moses does not just need a better system of judges; he needs a system of laws. God will deliver these laws beginning with Exodus 20. I say these things by way of a preview of coming attractions.

Let's return to the narrative at hand:

V. 21 is part Three in Jethro's plan: find responsible men of integrity that can be entrusted with responsibility.

Exodus 18:21a **Moreover you shall select from all the people able men,...** (NKJV)

The verb used here is not what you would expect. It is the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *châzâh* (חָזָה) [pronounced *khaw-ZAW*], which means, *to see, to behold; to perceive (mentally); to contemplate; to have a vision of; to see [God], therefore, to enjoy His favor, to know Him; to choose*. Strong's #2372 BDB #302. You will note that final meaning as being quite different from the others. So, I believe the idea here is *to contemplate, to have a vision of, to perceive* of what these men should be like. Moses determines in his own mind's eye first what he is looking for.

What Jethro is going to suggest is that Moses lighten his own load. He will need to consider the various men that he has led and choose a group of men from them who have natural authority. Some people can command such authority; some cannot.

Jethro is going to suggest four characteristics which Moses should look for in choosing men below him. These characteristics are good qualities to look for in a leader, even until today.

The key word here in the first phrase is *chayil* (חַיִל) [pronounced *CHAH-yil*] and it refers to strength and the many facets of strength. Therefore it is often translated as *strength, efficiency, army, wealth, virtue, valor*.

Exodus 18:21b **...such as fear God,...** (NKJV)

Jethro says to choose men who fear God; so this is more than exercising faith in God; these are men who have some spiritual maturity. They think about God; they consider God; He is a part of their daily existence. This cannot be in some esoteric sense. They have to know the attributes of God; they have to have an understanding of the essence of God.

Exodus 18:21c **...men of truth,...** (NKJV)

*Truth* is the Hebrew word *’ēmeth* (אֱמֶת) [pronounced *EH-meth*] and it means *faithfulness, truth, reliable, ethical*. They need to be truthful, reliable, ethical; and the truth has to be important to them.

These would be men who are dedicated to truth; they are interested in what is true; this is important to them.

**Illustration:** Few things are more important than the truth. One of the reasons that so many media sources are no longer trusted is, they no longer respect the truth. If they can back their favorite candidates by distorting the news in some way (or by not reporting some news), they do. They may think that they are being clever, but the public recognizes what



they are doing. Currently, media news is one of the least-trusted sources of news; and people are often seeking out alternative places to find their news.

**Illustration:** Rush Limbaugh was once asked, “What is an honest, middle-of-the road news program that we can watch?” He did not have an answer for this. There was not a single news program or website that he could recommend.

Exodus 18:21d ...[hating covetousness](#);... (NKJV)

This is a two-word description. First is the masculine plural, Qal active participle of *sânê'* (שָׂנֵא) [pronounced *saw-NAY*], which means, *hating, despising*. Strong's #8130 BDB #971. What is hated is the masculine singular noun *betsa'* (עֵצֶב) [pronounced *BEH-tsahg*], which means, *greed, materialism lust; bribery; unjust gain or profit [taken by bribery, violence, looting]; [enemies as] prey*. Strong's #1215 BDB #130.

These are men who hate bribery. They are men whose opinions cannot be bought.

Exodus 18:21e ...[and place such over them](#)... (NKJV)

Their authority will be over the people; but given everything else, this means that they place the good of the people above their own personal gain. This is the true concept of public service—a politician is to be a public servant, working for the good of the people and he is not there to line his own pockets with gold.

These men will assume positions of authority; in this case, they will become judges.

Exodus 18:21f ...[to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens](#). (NKJV)

These men will be placed over various groups of men. I do not know exactly the structure of this, apart from it being an organized structure based upon authority. I would assume that these thousands, hundred, fifties and tens all refer to groups of people. The exact structure is difficult to ascertain, however.

Part four: not only are men of great character going to be chosen but they will be organized into a hierarchy of authority. I taught in a school system where there was a hierarchy of authority. These authorities occasionally changed from year to year—but there was undoubtedly one in place. When I had a problem, I did not go immediately to the superintendent of the school district; nor when a student had a problem, they did not immediately go to the head principal of the school. There was a hierarchy of authority. We have the exact same thing with our judicial system (which is primarily what Jethro is organizing). Right now, everyone with a problem is coming to Moses. That is wrong and inefficient.

Exodus 18:21 Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. (NKJV)

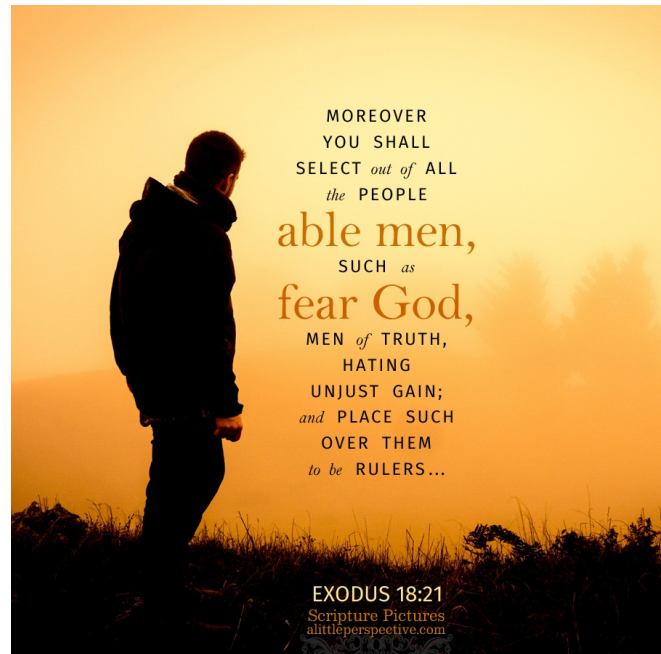
The key is delegation. One way you know that an organization is well-run is, the vice presidents are smart, hard-working and organized. The organization is even more impressive if the vice presidents have integrity.

Exodus 18:21 (a graphic); from [A Little Perspective](#); accessed July 19, 2023.

Exodus 18:22a And let them judge the people at all times. (NKJV)

These men will be in charge of rendering judgment.

“You need to retire from being a full-time judge for every person,” Jethro tells him.



Exodus 18:22b Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you,... (NKJV)

If it is an important or a very difficult matter, then that will be brought directly to Moses. Perhaps one which could not be decided, could be brought to Moses. So Moses would still have a function in the realm of judging.

Exodus 18:22c ...but every small matter they themselves shall judge. (NKJV)

However, for most matters—and people are very trivial when it comes to the courts—the judges which Moses appoints can handle those cases.

Bear in mind that Jethro has been in court all day long watching Moses, so he knows the caliber of disputes that are being brought before him.

Exodus 18:22d So it will be easier for you,... (NKJV)

This would lighten Moses' workload, because he was spending all of his time with these trivial cases, from morning til night.

Exodus 18:22e ...for they will bear the burden with you. (NKJV)

These judges will help bear much of Moses' burden.

Part five: these chosen men will take on some of Moses's responsibility and take off the constant pressure of people bickering over small matters from before him so that Moses can deal with the weightier matters.

## **Lesson 287: Exodus 18:22–23**

## **Moses is not arrogant with authority**

After spending a day at work with his son-in-law, Jethro determined that Moses was doing too much and that he was involved in a great deal of trivial activities. He has described the kind of men that Moses needed to choose to replace him.

So far, this is Moses' description of his duties followed by the advice of Jethro:

Exodus 18:16 “Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me to judge between one man and another, and I make known to them the statutes and laws of God.” (ESV; capitalized)

Moses allowed the people to come before him and he would judge their disputes. Moses would explain who is right and teach them the divine principles related to his decision.

Exodus 18:17–18 But Moses' father-in-law said to him, “What you are doing is not good. Surely you and these people with you will wear yourselves out, because the task is too heavy for you. You cannot handle it alone. (ESV; capitalized)

Moses' father-in-law could see that Moses was wearing himself out, judging all of these cases. It was just too much for him to take on.

Exodus 18:19–21 Now listen to me; I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their causes to Him. Teach them the statutes and laws, and show them the way to live and the work they must do. Furthermore, select capable men from among the people—God-fearing, trustworthy men who are averse to dishonest gain. Appoint them over the people as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. (ESV; capitalized)

Jethro told Moses, “You need a system of authorities and perhaps hundreds of people under you doing what you do.”

Moses was to appoint a large number of judges in tiers of authority. This would relieve him of the pressure of having to do almost everything.

Exodus 18:22 And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. (NKJV)

Jethro has told Moses, “You need to change this entire system of judging cases.” Moses listened to his father-in-law and followed his advice.

**Application:** It is quite important that you are not arrogant. There will be times that you will hear advice and something in that advice is worthwhile. Don't be a know-it-all. Don't reject someone out of hand for whatever reason. I had a close friend of mine make a complaint/observation about the work that I was doing. Now, I knew his situation and I knew that he had a long ways to go before he grew spiritually. Quite frankly, I knew him to be mixed up and a part of the tongues movement. Nevertheless, his observation was exactly right; and that changed how I approached my writing significantly in one respect because of the comments which he made.

**Application:** One of the most important responsibilities of a president is the ability to choose the right men to subordinate his policy to. And the men which he choose must also be able to choose the right men under them to get the job done.

**Application:** I originally began to write this chapter in 2019, and at that time, President Trump appointed Attorney General Barr to oversee the justice department. This is one of the most important positions for a president to fill, along with Secretary of State. Now, Barr does not study case law and go to court, and argue this or that case—he oversees the entire justice department and appoints men (or, more accurately, oversees men appointed by the president) who actually do the work. He sets the policy and acts as an intermediary between the function of government and the people of the United States. It appears that members of the previous administration have weaponized various departments of government to work against the opposing party (Trump's party). If this happened, then this is one of the most egregious abuses of power ever seen in United States history. The pick for Attorney General is so important because he cannot be seen as using his branch of government to go after the opposing party. They have to be investigated thoroughly, and if charges are brought against any members of the previous administration, then we have the potential of a veritable crap storm. 30–40% of Americans will automatically see this as a purely partisan act; and the attorney general will have to stand before American and give a very thorough explanation as to what is taking place, what laws were broken, and how important it is to prosecute these people. If no one from the previous administration is arrested and prosecuted, then, there will be 30–40% of Americans who are going to believe that there are two systems of justice, one for one party and one for the other party. Given the potential of this investigation dividing America even more than it is already, the current Attorney General has been given one of the most difficult jobs than an attorney general has ever had before. This ought to provide a good current example of just how important the delegation of authority is. President Trump cannot get personally involved in any of this, as the theory is, he was the primary person under attack by members of the previous administration. This particular choice of the delegation of authority will stand in American history as being one of the most important choices a president has ever made (it may not be presented like this by liberal historians, but it is). I write this now from the perspective of 2023, and time has shown Mr. Barr to be a poor choice.

Exodus 18:22 [And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. \(NKJV\)](#)

So Jethro tells his son-in-law, Moses, you need to delegate your authority and you need to be circumspect about the men that you choose. Since we live in a Constitutional republic, this is a concept which ought to be on your mind when you vote for people in authority. They need to be able to delegate responsibility; and they need to be able to choose good men under them (who, in turn, must be able to choose good men under them).

**Application:** Another important lesson which comes out of this is not just the concept of delegated authority, for the concept of levels of authority. When you work for a company (like Subway sandwiches), and deliveries of lettuce are not coming in as they should be, the sandwich maker does not call the CEO of Subway Corp. (I have no idea about their authority structure) and complain. There is a line of authority which he begins to climb to solve the problem. Similarly, let's say that Subway sends out men into the field to eat at various Subways and to give their evaluation (I don't think that they do this; I am simply making up an example). That person should not publically berate some person making a sandwich for him; and, in many cases, should not even make recommendations about a particular employee. He is going to turn in a report which may include some general remarks about the actions of employees. This is because they are not exactly in the same authority structure.

**Application:** In a previous administration of the United States (the Obama administration), there were people in positions of power who had no concept of the chain of command. So, if some White House person did not like what was happening in Afghanistan, it appears that they would actually call commanders in the field and attempt to micro-manage their affairs. This shows a total confusion about levels of authority, authority structure and the chain of command. Furthermore, it revealed great arrogance in those doing the micro-managing, as they would have had no actual experience in that which they are managing. At the same time, when people in the field made requests, going up the chain of command (such as those who worked at our embassy in Benghazi), these concerns appear to have been ignored. When someone properly goes up the chain of command, then those in authority must make good decisions and deal with expressed concerns. Even to this day (I began to write this in 2019), we have no idea where the President was when the attack on Benghazi was taking place, who was in the situation room when this was happening, who was giving orders or what orders had been given (logically, whatever response there was or monitoring there was would have made those in charge look very bad, so what they did or didn't do will remain unknown). Since all of these people work for the citizens of the United States, we should know where they were, what they did or did not do. We do not know any of these things and we may never know.

What I am doing here is taking some very important information—the delegation of authority and the chain of command—and making some modern-day applications.

Exodus 18:23a [If you do this thing,..](#) (NKJV)

Jethro ends his set of recommendations by saying, "If you try this out..."



*This thing* is two words in the Greek. The first word is *dâbâr* (דָּבָר) [pronounced *daw-BAWR*] and it means *word, speech, thing, matter*. Strong's #1697 BDB #182. It is followed by the masculine singular demonstrative adjective *zeh* (זֶה) [pronounced *zeh*]. Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260. Together, they mean, *this word, this thing, this matter*.

Exodus 18:23b ...*and God so commands you*,... (NKJV)

When Jethro adds *and God commands you*, he is adding, in his own way, *if this is God's will*. Jethro does not want to be presumptuous and propose something which would fall outside of the plan of God.

Jethro adds, if God approves this, if God wills this, if God commands this. Although Jethro is a priest to God, he did not fully appreciate or understand all the God was able to do. So, he is trying not to be arrogant here, and saying, "Listen, this is your only solution." If God requires a different approach, the Jethro was fine with that.

Exodus 18:23c ...*then you will be able to endure*,... (NKJV)

Literally, v. 23c is, *and you will be able to stand*. The word *to stand* is the Qal infinitive construct of *ʿamad* (עָמַד) [pronounced *gaw-MAHD*], which means, *to take a stand, to stand, to remain, to endure, to withstand; to stop, to cease*. Strong's #5975 BDB #763. Jethro could see, after a day, how wearing that this was on Moses.

Jethro has observed Moses and he is judging every single day, morning to night, without any sort of a break; and the court cases seem to continue to stack up. With what Jethro is suggesting, should allow Moses to continue his own work (writing and leading the sons of Israel), but without being totally worn out.

The people themselves would also find themselves becoming weary from standing for too long a time, waiting for Moses to make many legal decisions before coming to their place for justice. Waiting in such a courtroom could be quite difficult and lengthy; and standing there for so long made these people exhausted (and Moses too).

Exodus 18:23d ...*and all this people will also go to their place in peace*." (NKJV)

This will also allow the people to have their cases fully adjudicated and be able to return to their own place, without having to stand around for days to await judgment.

The other problem is, not only will the people hang around much longer than the situation warrants, but with the wrong judgment, they might find themselves rather unhappy about the outcome, and not feel as if they were given a fair shake. By choosing men who are fair, who are willing to learn God's laws, who are not tempted by a bribe, these men can make decisions which will line up with Moses' decisions.

Peace is exactly the word you think it is: shâlôwm (שָׁלוֹם) or shâlôm (שָׁלֵם) [pronounced *shaw-LOHM*] and it means *happy, in prosperity, in peace and well-being*. It means that the people will be pleased with the change.

Right away we notice that Moses is one who will listen to another person's point of view. He is not a person who, because God speaks to him directly, that feels he has no need to listen to another human being. Now certainly he would shun human viewpoint; but he is not above listening to the wisdom of his father-in-law.

Later, God the Holy Spirit will tell us that Moses was the meekest man on earth. This does not mean that he was some wimpy pushover that people liked to shove around. Moses was *grace-oriented*; his soul was meek (or, grace oriented) and he revealed it in situations like this where he listens to the advice of his father-in-law. Moses recognizes that Jethro's suggestions are well thought out, and he takes this advice. There are a number of areas and circumstances where I could have done much better had I been meek (grace-oriented) enough to take the advice of another person. Sometimes I have taken good advice and sometimes I did not.

Now, the reason that I don't believe Moses went too far with his authority is, he will show great humility here when interacting with his father-in-law. He could have said, "Listen, Jethro, this is my thing that I have going here; I know what I am doing. You just showed up out of nowhere, and you have spent just a single day observing how I do thing. Perhaps you ought to hang around a bit longer before you start giving me advice." That sort of answer would have been brimming with arrogance. Moses was not like that. He will listen to Jethro's advice, he recognizes it as good, and he will follow it.

**Illustration:** I began to write this commentary in 2019 and Donald Trump is the president of the United States. From what I have picked up, President Trump, like all presidents, makes the final decisions. However, he, probably more than any other president, listens to the advice of his aides and considers it. This is something that a man would learn from running many businesses. You learn that you do not know everything, so you surround yourself with men who know many things. This way, you can pick their brains legitimately. There is nothing smarter than a president who knows when to listen and when to take advice. Despite all of the propaganda concerning this president, I believe that is the kind of man that he is.

## Lessons 288–289: Exodus 18:23–27

## Jethro Departs

Jethro is Moses' father-in-law, and he has come to Moses in the desert to bring his wife and sons back to him. After observing Moses in court presiding over every single case of neighbor against neighbor (from a population of two million), Jethro has convinced Moses that he needs to parcel out some of his authority, and organize a number of judges as well as a system of courts. There would be levels of judges and levels of courts.

Jethro continues to advise his son-in-law.

Exodus 18:23 *If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace.*” (NKJV)

This is Jethro’s advice to Moses. If Moses follows this advice, he would be given the time and the strength and the ability to stand before the people, still as their ruler. The people going to their own dwellings in peace means that they will be satisfied with the situation. That is, justice will be meted out more quickly; they will have a chance to appeal to a higher court; and the laws will be made clear to them. As a result, the act of breaking a law will be a bit more obvious or interacting poorly with another Israelite might be made more clear to them.

Jethro is a very intelligent man and he, after being among the Hebrew people for a very short time (apparently, the day after the sacrificial meal), he sees a big problem that needs rectifying. No doubt, you have dealt with a problem or a situation, and someone has suggested, *we need to have fresh eyes on this*. This can mean one of two things: (1) everyone adjourns for the day and returns to consider this situation again tomorrow; or (2) someone from outside the inner circle needs to be brought in to take a look at the situation. Jethro is this pair of fresh eyes on the situation; and he sees immediately that Moses cannot hope to judge all the disputes and problems of 2 million people. This would be a never-ending thorn in Moses’ side, as well as a problem which would continue to get bigger.

We will learn two things about Jethro and Moses: Jethro is a wise man and Moses has genuine humility.

**Application:** Many times, a business brings a consultant in to review what is taking place in the business. It is not unusual for there to be more people in a business than is necessary. It is also not unusual for those heading the organization not being able to determine where cuts need to be made.

**Application:** Many businesses employ a very similar technique. Their company is stagnant, bloated, and/or stalled; so they bring in a consulting company to turn things around. Now, this is often presented in movies as a firing of hundreds of people, even though that is not the only thing that a consultant might come up with. Sometimes, the key is branding; sometimes the key is removing a division of the company which is leading nowhere and pulling the company down. What a consultant does is provide a fresh set of eyes on a company, most often with the intent of increasing profit. In many cases, this could save a company from bankruptcy, and thus save the company as well as hundreds of jobs.

**Exodus 18:22–23 (NIV—a summation)** (a graphic); from [Slide Player](#); accessed July 19, 2023.

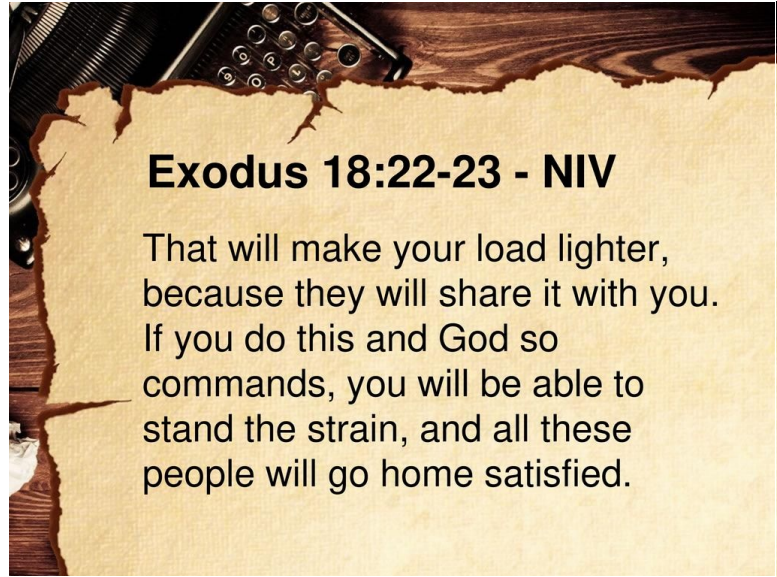
Exodus 18:24a **So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law...** (NKJV)

Moses recognized that this was good advice and he took it.

Moses also knew his father-in-law, and recognized him as being a brilliant man.

Do not reject advice without considering it.

Exodus 18:24b **...and did all that he had said.** (NKJV)



### Exodus 18:22-23 - NIV

That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.

Moses did all that his father-in-law suggested; it does not appear even that he modified anything.

Moses is a very sensible, intelligent man. Some men are too arrogant to listen to anyone else but themselves (I am using the word *man* in the generic sense). It doesn't matter if they are right or wrong or if their opinion has changed a dozen times; they will not listen to anyone else—not their spouses, their bosses, those below them, their parents, their children, their in-laws or their friends. Now certainly, there are a lot of people whose advice is nearly worthless. Being grace-oriented does not mean that you go out on the street like some reporter and solicit the stupid opinions of the masses. Any thinking person realizes that is generally a terrific waste of time. However, there are situations where we would do well to listen to others and Moses recognizes this. Moses recognizes that this is good advice; and he follows it. Note that he does not even have to run to God in prayer to get God's okay to make this decision.

Moses is spiritually mature. He recognizes things which fall into God's plan and things which do not. We have to make thousands of decisions each day. When God's Word is resident inside of us, we do not have necessarily need to pray about it, call our pastor up and bother him, consult our astrologer, etc. God's Word allows us to recognize that which falls within His will and that is all that Moses is doing. He recognizes the wisdom of his father-in-law and he runs with it.

Moses has the humility to hear a good suggestion and to take it.

Jethro may have thought that he had come to bring Moses' wife and children to him; but it turns out that God uses him to streamline the system of judgment in place.

An application of Jethro's suggestion: When studying a chapter from any book in the Bible, I end up producing three documents. The one that I begin with is a word-by-word chapter

study, going back to the original Greek or Hebrew, and then writing three translations based upon the original language. This document has a unique feature which was the result of someone who offered me a criticism of my exegetical approach to the Scriptures. When I first began to exegete the Bible, I might spend a paragraph or two writing, *and this is the Qal imperfect of this particular verb, followed by the direct object of this noun, which means...* I do not recall exactly what my friend told me, but it was a complaint about these paragraphs filled with many references to the Hebrew and he didn't like it. Now, I did it that way because this is the presentation I heard in Bible class from R. B. Thieme, Jr. However, the difference is, I am committing this material to writing, and his teaching was verbal. Sometimes a document better presents material in table form. My friend helped me to realize this by his criticisms.

What I decided on, not too long after Alex gave me his criticism, was the Hebrew exegesis tables that you see in the Exodus 18 study. ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). Most people who study from my notes (and the collection of the works of others) typically skip over this table and move into the written material. However, these tables are absolutely necessary for two reasons: (1) they help me develop a good translation set (I develop my translation apart from viewing any other translation). These tables are essential to the development of a good translation set (I produce three translations for every verse). (2) A reader may question my translation; or question my interpretation of a passage, so this table is immediately available to assist him in his critical examination of whatever it is that I have written. Having these Hebrew exegesis tables readily available, it makes it easy for a critic to consider, "Kukis has given this translation, and these other 5 translations differ; how can I make an informed choice here?" These tables are right here for such a person to peruse and consider. After all, these tables are essentially the basis for most of the commentary that I write.

In the back of your mind, you may be wondering, *what three documents?* Maybe you are wondering, *what three translations?*

### What three documents?

The Book of Exodus	The Weekly Study of Exodus	The Chapter Study of Exodus
This is a single document. When I complete <sup>64</sup> it, it will have a verse-by-verse examination of the entire book of Exodus.	The weekly study is stitched together to form 4–7 documents on Exodus (each document has 100 lessons)	Each chapter of Exodus is a separate document

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<sup>64</sup> It is actually complete, but I will update it every time I complete a chapter in Exodus.



<p>The summary referenced to the right becomes the basic verse-by-verse exegesis given in each chapter.</p>	<p>When I complete a chapter, I will summarize the entire chapter. You may have noticed that I spend 1–4 lessons summarizing each chapter.</p>	<p>This summary of a chapter is placed at the end of the overall document, in the chapter summary at the end of each chapter.</p>
<p>When I complete a chapter, I go back and review that chapter. All of these reviews are placed into a single document. Doing these chapter reviews is a recent development. Some of my full book studies were done decades ago. (It took me over a decade to work out this system here.)</p>	<p>I send out a weekly lesson of material which I write, rewrite, and rewrite several more times. Each weekly installment is 4–5 pages and sometimes I send out a double lesson (7–11 pages). These are completed literally the day that they are sent out.</p>	<p>This is the super-document, if you will. Each chapter contains the material in the previous two columns, along with: selections from 90<sup>65</sup> translations, three original translations based upon Greek or Hebrew tables of every word, a dictionary of terms, two final sections with additional material; and two of the translations are placed at the end on their own without commentary.</p>
<p>I saw that, no matter how much work I put into the other two documents, I had a great number of people accessing the single document of the book of Exodus (which I originally planned to phase out). I decided to improve it rather than to toss it.</p>	<p>I saw that some people wanted a reasonably in depth study but without all of the Greek and Hebrew words. Also, some people like having each lesson being <i>bite-sized</i> (that is, something that can be read in 10–20 minutes).</p>	<p>Some people want everything right there at their fingertips in a single document. The previous two documents are a subset of the chapter study.</p>
<p>Typically, each chapter is around 10 pages long.</p>	<p>Typically each document contains 100 lessons and is around 450 pages long. Each group of 100 lessons may contain four or five chapters.</p>	<p>Each chapter study is typically 100–500 pages long. One document = one chapter.</p>

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<sup>65</sup> 100+ translations for the New Testament.

This short document is designed for someone who wants a quick overall view of a book or chapter.	This approach is made for those who want a more in-depth study.	Each chapter study is designed for pastors, seminary students, Sunday school teachers or those who want a super in-depth study.
<a href="#">(HTML)</a> <a href="#">(PDF)</a> <a href="#">(WPD)</a> <a href="#">(Folder)</a>	<a href="#">(HTML)</a> <a href="#">(PDF)</a> <a href="#">(WPD)</a> <a href="#">(Folder)</a>	<a href="#">(HTML)</a> <a href="#">(PDF)</a> <a href="#">(WPD)</a> <a href="#">(Folder)</a>
Links are to this single document.	Links are to the first 100 lessons of Exodus. That lesson set has links to all the other lesson sets.	Those are links are to a single document (like a table of contents) that links to every chapter of the book covered.

The weekly lessons for Genesis are complete; the weekly lessons for Exodus and Luke are ongoing. There is additional material on other books found at [www.kukis.org](http://www.kukis.org)

When Exodus and Luke are completed, I will work on lessons in Leviticus and Acts. My website has many more books exegeted word-by-word, verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter.

I have actually never explained my thinking behind the three English translations which I come up with for each verse.

### What Three Translations?

When I began this project of translating and writing commentary for the Scriptures, I had no idea how far I would be able to go. But early on, I was stumped with how to translate each verse. Just how literal should I make the translation? And if I make a super-literal translation, would it be understandable? Very early on, I began writing two translations. One translation would be very literal, preserving word order where possible, including definite articles when called for, and preserving singular and plural nouns where they were found. The other would be very literal, but with an attempt at appealing to the sensibilities and conventions of English grammar. Soon thereafter, I came across the problem of giving a good literal translation, which was hard to understand; and playing with the language enough to give a less literal but more understandable translation.

Hence; three translations:

<b>Kukis slavishly literal</b>	I try to maintain word order if possible, singular and plural nouns and adjectives; and if there is a definite article, then I insert an English definite article.
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What Three Translations?	
<b>Kukis moderately literal or Kukis mostly literal translation:</b>	Greek, Hebrew and English all have their own peculiarities when it comes to sentence structure and the use of singular and plural nouns. In the slavishly literal translation, I made the English conform to the Greek and Hebrew; in the mostly literal translation, I made the Greek and Hebrew conform to English convention and syntax.
<b>Kukis paraphrase:</b>	I have given myself a rather free hand here. I determine what I believe the text is conveying, and then I try to convey that meaning without being concerned about maintaining a word-for-word (or short phrase-for-word) translation.

Although I could come up with designations for these translations without using my last name, there was always the possibility that some translator or translation group would also end up using that title, thereby causing some confusion in the future. I could be pretty much certain that no one would use *Kukis* when giving a name to a translation. That seemed like a simple fix.

In the beginning, I had no idea how many people would read these writings. I began writing in 1995. At that time, I don't recall if I knew what a website was; nor did I imagine having one. By the time began to use the internet regularly, I realized that posting this work on the internet would be the best way of going about this. I was not looking to gain money; I was not ever going to ask for an offering; and I wanted to post without advertising.

I found it much easier and more freeing to put together three translations rather than one. This way, I rarely wrestle with the problem, *this way is more literal* as over against *this way is more understandable*. Because the Greek and Hebrew tables are right there with the translations, one can compare my translation with the original language.

Exodus 18:24 [So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.](#) (NKJV)

Moses has a high opinion of his father-in-law and he was able to recognize good advice when he heard it. Therefore, Moses will take this man's advice. The key here to Moses' character is humility. Not at any point does he stop Jethro and say, "Listen, you're just a priest out there in Midian with a boatload of daughters. God put me in charge of an entire nation here!" You or I may have responded that way to Jethro's advice; but Moses listens Jethro and accepts the wisdom in it.

**Application:** Don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that every person who speaks to you has a special secret message from God; or that everyone has good advice. I am saying, there are times for you to listen; and doctrinally oriented believers should be able to recognize good advice (or accept reasonable criticism).

**Exodus 18:24 (WEB)** (a graphic); from [Scripture Images](#); accessed July 19, 2023.

Exodus 18:25a **And Moses chose able men out of all Israel,...** (NKJV)

Moses chose men of strength, authority and ability from Israel. He knew those who were dependable.

What Moses was doing is giving authority to others to judge in his stead.

The first thing that Moses does is choose those who are spiritually mature, who are honest and have integrity, and he sets up a hierarchy of authority. This change in the structure of their government was a precedent which lasted well into the days of the judges (during which time, some of these judges overlapped in time, as they did not judge over all of Israel at any time).

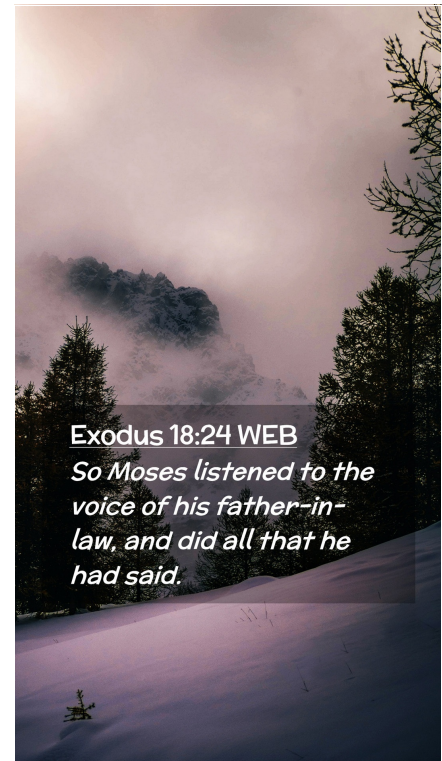
Exodus 18:25b **...and made them heads over the people:...** (NKJV)

These men were given authority over various groups of people. Right from the beginning, Moses established an authority structure. Let me suggest that the discussion and advice was much more detailed than is found here. One of the things to consider is, the people were used to Moses being in charge. What would stop the losing party from saying, in virtually every case, "I appeal to Moses!"? That would put Moses right back into it. Therefore, some sort of structure was set up which involved some sort of appellant system. This is what we find established below.

Exodus 18:25c **...rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.** (NKJV)

I believe that the precise nature of the system used is not fully explained here, as there is no particular system of government which the Bible recommends. Today, it is important that the government preserve our safety and our freedoms.

As I would understand this is, over several thousand people, there would be a ruler; and over hundreds of people there would be another ruler under the authority of the first set of rulers; and over fifties rulers who are subject to the first two rulers. This is not unlike our



system of city, state and federal officials. Perhaps the tens refers to some sort of appellate system, such as being over ten judges or ten courts. It makes less sense to me for one man to be over ten (or twenty or thirty) people.

Or is this a way to simply designate systematic, organized authority without spelling out exactly what that system is?

Throughout the Age of Israel there are a variety of forms of government; but key to the proper function of any government is the spiritual condition of the people. If the people are corrupt, then the government over them will be corrupt.

At this point in time, Israel could not have a better ruler than Moses. He is incorruptible and a man dedicated to God. However, the people themselves are very corruptible so that they will not advance spiritually as they should. The people of Israel do not realize, but in their near future, they will receive the Law, which will guide them for the next 1500 years. Then God will then take them to the border of their land, but they will fail there. As a result, they will languish in the desert for 40 years while one generation dies the sin unto death (this will take us to the final chapter of Deuteronomy).

Exodus 18:25 *And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.* (NKJV)

Moses sets up a very organized system of authorities. It was not going to be people, a few hundred authorities and then Moses. The structure was going to be more complex than that. Moses cannot simply be the second and final authority. So a structure—a system of authorities, if you will—was set up in between him and the people.

Exodus 18:26a *So they judged the people at all times;...* (NKJV)

These men would be in charge of judging the people. Every case would come before them.

Exodus 18:26b *...the hard cases they brought to Moses,...* (NKJV)

If they believed that a case was too difficult or too important, then they brought those cases to Moses.

Qâsheh (קָשֶׁה) [pronounced *kaw-SHEH*] means *hard, severe, difficult*; it has a variety of applications which are determined by context. This is a case where the men of integrity judging the matter realize that they cannot make a determination that they are comfortable with so they bring it to Moses. This is not a case that necessarily involves more money or greater damage but it involves greater jurisprudence and greater wisdom. A man of integrity is not afraid to go to his superior for guidance or to allow those over him to handle something which is outside his area of expertise or beyond his ability to judge correctly.



So, the way I read this is, a case does not go to Moses simply because one of the parties appeals it. It appears that a judge may make this decision.

Exodus 18:26c ...but they judged every small case themselves. (NKJV)

However, the majority of the cases involved small, easy-to-adjudicate matters. These authorities, as set up by Moses, handled those cases.

Exodus 18:26 So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves. (NKJV)

Bear in mind that the Law has not been given yet. Were they expecting a law to be given? Were these primarily disputes between people? My read of this is, the people do not know what is coming; and most that is being judged is one person complaining about mistreatment of some sort by one of his neighbors.

Exodus 18:27a Then Moses let his father-in-law depart,... (NKJV)

The NKJV and others translate that *Moses let his father-in-law depart*. In a way this is true, but it distorts the issue.

I don't believe that we should understand this to mean that Moses woke up one day and decided, I don't want my father-in-law around, so I am going to send him away. Moses is the ruler of the Hebrew people. He was like Pharaoh to them. So, they came and went as he ordered. For Jethro to return home, he needed to be ordered to go by Moses. Recall that Jethro had six other daughters and a business to run, so, as much as he might want to remain, he asked to be returned to his home.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect of *shâlach* (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAKH*] means *to release, to discharge, to give over, to cast out, to send away, to dismiss*. The Qal stem means merely *to send, to send forth*. The Piel is the intensive stem, which suggests that Moses issued the order for Jethro to depart. Moses is the leader of these 2,000,000 and it is proper protocol for him to issue orders and mandates.

Exodus 18:27b ...and he went his way to his own land. (NKJV)

### **Jethro returns to his own home.**

This is somewhat sad, because I would guess that, had he wanted to, Jethro could have remained with the people of Israel under Moses' authority. However, he chose to return home. Obviously, he had a great many responsibilities there to his large family.

Furthermore, there is very little intermingling between the Jews and other groups. A considerable number of wives have apparently come from outside Jacob's line. Joseph, quite obviously, would have married an Egyptian woman. Moses has married a Midianite woman. But what we do not have is another race in large numbers joining in with the Jews

(you may recall that this was more or less suggested by a family of Hivites back in Genesis 34).

Speaking of wives, you may wonder about the wife of Moses. We never hear about her again. Her spiritual life was pathetic and she had nothing to offer Moses and gave him no reason to record another word about her. How sad that she became this small in his eyes. His children, and probably her, remained with Moses, as they and their descendants are mentioned in 1Chron. 23:15–17. The children (unnamed) will be mentioned by God at a later time.

Exodus 18:27 **Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land.** (NKJV)

We all have a place where we belong. Jethro, a great unknown hero from the book of Exodus, has his place in Midian. Therefore, he is going to return there. He had come for the specific reason of bringing his daughter and her two sons back to Moses. He made a brilliant observation which had eluded the brilliant Moses; and this suggestion allowed Moses much greater freedom as leader over the Israelites.

You may recall that Jethro has many daughters and a large sheep business. Furthermore, he is a priest (perhaps over just his own family; perhaps over more). So he returns to his life in Midian.

Again, no additional information is given to us about Moses' wife or sons. She is with the Israelites and probably in close proximity with Moses; but Moses needs to advance and lead despite her influence.

One of the important points that we may take from Exodus 18 is, not only do the people of Israel need an organized legal system, but they need a law to go with this. Up to this point in time, Moses has been pretty much ruling by the seat of his pants. He was a good and fair judge; but he essentially made rulings based upon the Egyptian law that he had learned (while being prepared to become the Pharaoh of Egypt) along with his spiritual sensibilities. God will want Israel to have a more definitive law than this.

## **Lessons 290–291: Exodus 18:1–27**

## **A review of Exodus 18**

The basic Bible text for this section will be the Hebraic Roots Bible (any other translation used will be specifically noted). The HRB is an Old and New Testament translation ©Copyright Word of Truth Publications, 2009; Congregation of YHWH, Jerusalem. This background would suggest that these are Jewish Christians. If there is only an Old Testament which uses many Hebraisms, then the translation is the work of Jewish scholars (examples: the Complete Tanach; the Kaplan Translation, the Tanakh—1985). If a translation with Hebraisms has both the Old and New Testament, then, obviously, there are Jewish Christians involved (examples: the Complete Jewish Bible, the Exegesis

Companion Bible<sup>66</sup>, the Hebraic Roots Bible, Orthodox Jewish Bible, The Scriptures 2009, Tree of Life Version). The whole idea, of course, is to appeal to the Jewish reader, whether Christian or not (many of our Jewish brothers and sisters are Christians).

There is at least one Jewish Bible which is the New Testament only (the Holy New Covenant Translation).

If you read only the Old Testament translation, then, generally speaking, you cannot tell whether the translators are Christian or not. Most organizations which attempt to translate the Old Testament, the New Testament or both, do not necessarily come with a theological point of view built into the text (even though you would think that there would be).

One of the remarkable things which I have discovered are the many similarities between Catholic approved translations and Jewish translations (whether Christian or not). In the chapter studies that I do, I feature selections from about 90+ translations for my Old Testament work. At some point, many years ago, it seemed like a good idea to group the Catholic-approved translations together and the Jewish-name translations together. I have these two sections placed together, one above the other. Apart from the Hebraisms, one would be hard-pressed to find any remarkable differences between these two sections of translations. If you would like to see this for yourself, the links to Exodus 18: ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). You can look at every verse or passage, and read these two sections, and see that the sense of the Catholic Bible is no different from the Hebrew Bible. That is, you will never read a verse in the first group and say, "That sure sounds like a Catholic way of looking at things." Similarly, when you read from the second group of translations, you will never remark, "It really seems that, theologically speaking, these Jewish translators are trying to make a point."

With regards to the Hebraic Roots Bible, there are only a few words which may be different from what you are used to:

Although many believers recognize the words on the left, not all do.

Table for the Hebraic Roots Bible		
Hebraic Roots Bible	More Common designation	Additional comments
YAHWEH	Jehovah	The HRB is likely more accurate than <i>Jehovah</i> .
Elohe	God	This is <i>God</i> in the singular
Elohim	God	This is God in the plural (–im is the mark of the plural in the Hebrew)

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<sup>66</sup> The ECB provides the closest thing that I have seen to the Hebrew grammatical structure.

Elohim	gods	There should not be an s added to the –im ending in the Hebrew, but they do it anyway
Torah	Law, Mosaic Law, books of the Law	Like the other words, <i>torah</i> is simply a transliteration

Very often, a *Hebrew Names Bible* simply transliterates a number of Hebrew words. In the HRB, there are only a handful; in the Orthodox Jewish Bible, there are a lot.

Key to Exodus 18 is Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, who lives in Midian. It turns out that Jethro is not too far from where Moses and the people of Israel are in the desert-wilderness. Therefore, he drops in on Moses, bringing with him Moses' wife and two sons. Most of this chapter is going to be about Moses and Jethro interacting.

Having read and worked on this chapter over a period of several years (not nonstop, mind you), I wonder if there are things that are necessary in this chapter which move us right along to what God has planned for Moses? That is, perhaps Jethro coming up to see Moses was an important step in Moses' spiritual maturation.

Jethro is going to observe Moses on the job, and he is going to say, "Listen, you can't continue to do things this way. Here is what I advise..."

Moses could listen and take Jethro's advice (this would be the grace oriented response), or Moses could say, "Listen, God put me in charge of this nation of two million people, not you; so maybe I have a better idea about what how do do things. You think?" That would have been the response of arrogance.

One of the most important things that a leader can have is grace orientation. Leadership is not, *I'm the toughest, meanest, most stubborn man here, so what I say goes!!* Moses certainly has to be tough; but he also has to be grace oriented. We learn a great deal about leadership dynamics through Moses.

**Jethro's Advice** (this is the only heading for this chapter)

Exodus 18:1 *And Jethro the priest of Midian, the father-in-law of Moses, heard all that which Elohim had done for Moses and for His people Israel, that YAHWEH had caused Israel to go out from Egypt.* (Hebraic Roots Bible)

Moses, when he first left (escaped) Egypt, he went to Midian. Moses knew geography; it was a part of his training. So, in order to cleanly escape, he did not just take off running. He likely knew where he was going, and believed this to be the safest place to go.

In his training to become Pharaoh, Moses would be aware of how to get to any nearby country; and he would have known about the country's interactions with Egypt; and he

would have known things about that country's society, customs, language, military force, etc. This information guided Moses in choosing a destination for his escape.

Moses first met Jethro's daughters, and then he met Jethro. He married one of Jethro's daughters (probably the eldest, as that is how things were often done).

I suspect that Moses' marriage was much different than what he was expecting.

Exodus 18:2–4 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, (after Moses had sent her away), and her two sons, one's name was Gershom (for he said, I have become an alien in a foreign land;) and one's name was Eliezer (for the Elohe of my father was my Help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh). (HRB)

Moses married Zipporah (= *flighty*) and they had two sons. Although she began to come back to Egypt with Moses, she had to circumcise her youngest adult son and that apparently soured her on the relationship and this new adventure. At some point, she returned to Midian. Maybe right after the circumcision; maybe a few weeks later.

Although the text of this translation reads *after Moses had sent her away*, we previously studied this in great depth. That is not what the Hebrew text reads. Based upon her reaction to having to circumcise their second son, Zipporah seems to have been quite upset. Therefore, it is more likely that she simply up and left Moses, under the theme, "I don't need to put up with this."

A few months transpired, during which Moses was used by God to bring Israel out of Egypt. When this had been accomplished, Jethro began to receive reports of all that had been taking place (probably from trading caravans).

As Moses led the people through the desert-wilderness, he came closer and closer to Midian. This was not by means of Moses, but God. God led the people through the desert-wilderness through a very visible pillar of fire at night and pillar of cloud by day. Moses knew where they were, but he was very much following God's lead.

Jethro, hearing that Moses was not far from him, gathered up Zipporah and the two sons (who could have been in their 30s by this time<sup>67</sup>) and he brought them to Moses. Apart from a mention of the sons in the Chronicles genealogy, this family will not be mentioned again. Not by their names, anyway.

As an aside, this suggests a very interesting principle: Moses is the greatest Jew of his era (one of the greatest men in Israel's history). However, his sons are, by the Biblical account, unremarkable. It takes two people of character to raise great children. The influence of the wife cannot be understated. However, this is simply an implied principle. This chapter is not really about the reuniting of Moses and his family.

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<sup>67</sup> Remember that Moses arrived in Midian about 40 years previous.



The rest of this chapter will be about Jethro, a family priest, and his son-in-law Moses.

Exodus 18:5 [And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, and his sons and his wife came to Moses, to the wilderness where he camped, at the mount of Elohim.](#) (HRB)

Jethro knew where Moses and the Israelites were. They were not difficult to find. There are two million people in a desert-wilderness. He and his family camped nearby and Jethro sent a messenger to Moses.

The message sent to Moses is v. 6:

Exodus 18:6 [And he said to Moses, I, your father-in-law Jethro, and your wife, and your two sons with her have come to you.](#) (HRB)

What may not be clear by the words used is, Jethro first sent a messenger to Moses to let him know that he was nearby, and he had his wife and two sons with him. This would have been proper protocol. We know that this is a message and not Moses' father-in-law saying this directly to Moses. Moses has only been out of Midian for a few months so he would recognize his father-in-law and family.

Moses could have sent a messenger back saying, "Listen, too busy now; take the woman back with you. I have got too much on my plate."

Sometimes, we lose a sense of time is lost when studying a few chapters. This is Moses' family and he has spent the last 40 years with them (I am including Jethro as a part of his family). Moses has been leading Israel for maybe two or three months (this is going all the way back to when he first returned to Egypt). Despite having actual blood family members there in the desert-wilderness (Aaron and Miriam), Moses has had almost no contact with them over the past 80 years (recall that he was brought up in the Egyptian palace, away from his family). As far as Moses is concerned, his real family has just come to see him. Moses is very happy to meet with them. Moses has the messenger lead him to where Jethro is camped.

Exodus 18:7 [And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and bowed, and kissed him. And they asked each to his neighbor, as to their welfare. And they \[Moses and Jethro\] entered the tent.](#) (HRB)

Moses was very glad that his father-in-law had come to him. Moses did not send for them to be brought to him; Moses immediately went out where they were camped. This would indicate that Moses really wanted to see them all (however, Moses will spend most of his time with Jethro and not with his wife and kids).

It is Moses who bows before his father-in-law, not the other way around.

Moses calls himself the most grace oriented man on earth (Numbers 12:3), and we know that is true, as he wrote under the power of the Holy Spirit (2Peter 1:21). There are several

things in this chapter which reveal to us just how grace oriented Moses was. Bowing before his father-in-law is clearly an act of grace orientation. Moses does not come into Jethro's field of vision and say, "I am like a king here, so you bow to me!"

**Moses and Jethro Talk in the Tent** (by James Jacques Joseph Tissot) (French artist, 1836-1902); from the [Jewish Museum](#); accessed August 9, 2023.

Exodus 18:8 And Moses told his father-in-law all that YAHWEH had done to Pharaoh and to Egypt on account of Israel, all the trouble which they had found in the way, and YAHWEH had delivered them. (HRB)



Everything that we have been reading and studying, going back perhaps to Exodus 7 or so and up to the end of Exodus 17, is all that Moses told Jethro. This is the first time that Moses could share this information with someone that he was close to.

Moses had a 40-year relationship with Jethro; and Moses had been leading Israel only for a few months. Being able to see his father-in-law in the midst of all this was a real treat.

Exodus 18:9 And Jethro rejoiced regarding all the good which YAHWEH had done to Israel whom He had delivered from the hand of Egypt. (HRB)

Jethro recognizes that this was divine good that was taking place, God delivering Israel from the control of Egypt.

One of the reasons that we know Jethro to be a mature believer is, he is able to see contemporary history through the eyes of God. That is, Jethro has divine viewpoint; and is able to apply this to what he hears and sees.

Contrast this with some of the malcontents in Israel who claim that they were better off in slavery (Exodus 15:24 16:3 17:3). What would have been divine viewpoint? "Blessed You are, O God, for sending Moses to deliver us from slavery in Egypt." But how many times have we heard those sentiments expressed among the Israelites? Never?

Being on the internet and listening to a Christian radio station at times (as well as to National Public Radio), and it is clear that some people can look at the things taking place in the United States and understand why they are happening; and others cannot. NPR almost never understands or correctly interprets current events (many times, this is

intentional). However, there are many Christians who do not have a clue either. On the one hand, it is clear that the number of believers is decreasing in the United States; as are the number of mature believers. This would tell us that we are in for strong discipline as a nation (which discipline is taking place already). However, national discipline does not mean that these are signs of a soon-coming rapture.

I recall a Christian radio ministry headed by a very intelligent, knowledgeable man who, at some point, decided to predict the day of the rapture. If memory serves, he predicted this day at least twice. This was a man who should have known better, and his foolishness became fodder for Christian critics. This man became an embarrassment; and because this was on the radio, his foolish predictions were well known. God had given him a very important ministry, and he squandered it in the end.

Returning to our narrative, let's see what Jethro says about the recent events that Moses has just related to him:

Exodus 18:10 *And Jethro said, Blessed be YAHWEH Who has delivered you from the hand of Egypt, and from the hand of Pharaoh; He who delivered the people from under the hand of Egypt.* (HRB; capitalized)

Jethro blesses or celebrates what Y<sup>e</sup>howah has done. He seems to have a better grasp of what has taken place than the Israelites who were delivered by God. They actually saw all that God did with their own eyes, and yet they did not appreciate it. Jethro is hearing about this from Moses, and he fully understands and believes what has taken place.

As a mature believer, Jethro is able to properly interpret the historic events of his era. Because most of Israel had not grown spiritually, they are unable to correctly understand what is taking place.

We have heard the people of Israel and how they have responded to each and every difficulty which they face. Here is how Jethro understands these events:

Exodus 18:11 *Now I know that YAHWEH is greater than all the Elohim [that is, false gods]; truly, in the way in which He acted proudly against them.* (HRB)

Before we interpret this verse, we need to clear up some problems. In v. 11, the Hebrew Roots Bible should not have capitalized *elohims*; nor should they have added the s at the end. The *-im* ending is plural in the Hebrew. Context determines whether we translate this word *God* or *gods*. Here, we would correctly translate it *gods*; we would correctly transliterate this word as *elohim*. Since the Hebrew Roots Bible transliterates this word, they should have explained this choice in their introduction; and then have done it correctly. I am not saying that the HRB is a bad translation; I am simply correcting this passage.

Jethro had already believed in the Revealed God. He knew a great many things about God; and he taught Moses these things. However, it is at this point that Jethro recognizes that the God that he worships is the specific God of Israel. This would have been a great

revelation to him (although it is very likely that Moses recited and taught the book of Genesis<sup>68</sup> to Jethro during those 40 years).

Exodus 18:12 And Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, took a burnt offering and sacrifices to Elohim. And Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat bread before Elohim with Moses' father-in-law. (HRB)

Jethro offers up some animal sacrifices in recognition of the Person of Y<sup>e</sup>howah; and they ate a meal before God with all of the elders of Israel.

Exodus 18:13 And it happened on the next day that Moses sat to judge the people. And the people stood beside Moses from the morning until the evening. (HRB)

The next day was *take your father-in-law to work* day, and that is what Moses did. Jethro observed Moses from morning to night.

This was the earliest recorded version of *The Peoples' Court*.

Exodus 18:14 And Moses' father-in-law saw all which he was doing to the people. And he said, What is this thing which you are doing to the people? Why are you sitting by yourself, and all the people standing beside you from morning until evening? (HRB)

Once this was all over, Jethro says, "What the heck are you doing, Moses? You are going to run yourself ragged handling all of these cases! This does not work for the people either."

Exodus 18:15–16 And Moses said to his father-in-law, Because the people come to me to seek Elohim. When they have a matter, they come to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor. And I make known the statutes of Elohim, and the laws from His Torah. (HRB)

Moses explains, "The people have complaints against one another. They come to me and I give them a ruling, based upon my understanding of God. I make known to them the statutes and laws of God."

Moses is actually acting in accordance with Egyptian law (which he knows) as understood correctly by a believer in the Revealed God. Moses does not, at this time, have a set of statutes which he consults. He has common sense, a thorough understanding of Egyptian law (part of his training as a young man), and divine viewpoint in his soul. These things combined are called here *the statutes of Elohim, and the laws from His Torah*.

What Moses is saying applies to this point in time. He has learned a great deal about God in the past couple months; and under the teaching that Jethro gave him for 40 years. He

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<sup>68</sup> Moses would not have a number of scrolls which he carried; he would have the book memorized and in his head.

was working primarily from divine establishment principles. Moses has an inherent understanding of right and wrong.

But Jethro does not say, “That is great, Moses. I am proud of you, son.”

Exodus 18:17 [And the father-in-law of Moses said to him, The thing which you do is not good.](#) (HRB)

I would suspect that Moses was quite proud of what he did. Jethro observed Moses fairly judge case after case, and perhaps Moses determined 30 cases this day. For him, that would have been a good day.

Moses may have said, “Father, that was pretty much a typical day. What do you think?”

But Jethro does not praise him. Jethro tells Moses, “This is not good, what you are doing.”

That must have surprised Moses. He did not get much praise or appreciation from the Israelites, but surely his own father-in-law could see all that Moses had to deal with. But his father-in-law has a whole different opinion. Because Moses is grace oriented, he is going to hear his father-in-law out.

Exodus 18:18 [Surely you will wear out, both you and this people with you. For the thing is heavy for you. You are not able to do it by yourself.](#) (HRB)

Jethro continues: “This is way, way too much work for one man to do. Furthermore, it is inefficient.”

Exodus 18:19 [Now listen to my voice. I will advise you, and may Elohim be with you. You be for this people before Elohim, and you bring the matters to Elohim.](#) (HRB)

Then Jethro says, “Let me tell you what you should be doing.”

I don’t care how impertinent Jethro may sound, he is absolutely right. Moses cannot continue to lead his people in this way and judge their every dispute.

**Jethro Advises Moses** (AI-generated parsha illustration, by B. Spitz); from the [Times of Israel](#); accessed August 9, 2023. I had no idea that this was computer-generated except by its description.



Exodus 18:20 And you warn them as to the statutes and the laws of the Torah, and make known to them the way in which they should walk, and the work which they should do. (HRB)

“The first thing you need to do,” Jethro tells him, “is give them an idea of what laws and regulations they need to follow.”

At this point, these laws and statutes are going to come from Moses’ training under Jethro and what he knows about God from these past few months.



I don’t believe that Moses or Jethro had any idea what was going to happen next. Neither man thought, “I bet God is going to call for Moses to come up His mountain, and God is going to give all of these laws to him.” That was not on either man’s radar.

Nevertheless, wouldn’t it be great if Moses had an actual set of laws and statutes directly from the Lord to follow?

Exodus 18:21 And you, you shall look out men of ability out of all the people, who fear Elohim, men of truth, hating unjust gain. And you place these over them as rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. (HRB)

Occasionally, in these chapter reviews, I use a translation which requires some explanation. Believe it or not, *you shall look out men of ability* is a legitimate translation. Better, *you shall contemplate [or, have a vision of] men of ability*. We discussed this verb earlier in more detail.

“You need to hire some judges,” Jethro tells him, “with these qualifications. They must be honest and not open to bribery. You are going to have intermediary rulers under you.”

Exodus 18:22 And let them judge the people at all times. And it shall be that every great matter they shall bring to you, and every small matter they shall judge. And you make it easy on yourself, and let them bear with you. (HRB)

“These men are going to handle the small matters, and anything big needs to be brought to you.”

Exodus 18:23 If you do this thing, and Elohim command you, you will be able to stand; and also this people will go in peace to their place. (HRB)

“This is what you need to do in order to outlast this people. Otherwise, they are going to send you to an early grave!” is the essence of what Jethro is saying.

You may notice another oddity of this translation—let’s see this without the transliteration: *If you do this thing, and God commands you...* Do you see the difference between the two? *Elohim* is a plural noun, so it has the matching plural form of verb. *God* is a singular noun, so it has the matching singular form of verb. How does this read in the original Hebrew? *If you do this thing, and Elohim commands you...* Even though *Elohim* is a plural noun, it takes on the singular form of the verb (in the original Hebrew).

Exodus 18:24 *And Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law, and he did all that he had said.* (HRB)

This is a great example of Moses’ grace orientation. He does not resist the words of his father-in-law, and say, “What the heck do you know? You run a bunch of sheep in Midian and you have too many unmarried daughters. I rule over a nation of two million! What do you get the nerve to tell me what to do?” How many people would have responded in that way? But not Moses. Moses listens to his father-in-law, he evaluates the advice, and he follows it. Moses follows this advice because it is good advice.

Moses’ father-in-law has not praised Moses, saying, “You work so hard! I am impressed!” Instead, he says, “What you are doing is not good.” Then he told Moses how to do it better. Moses does not let his ego get in the way. His feathers are not ruffled. He does not go on the defensive. He listened to his father-in-law (really listened); recognized his advice as being good, and then he followed it.

Exodus 18:25–26 *And Moses chose men of ability from all Israel and made them heads over the people; rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all times; the hard matters they brought to Moses, and every small matter they judged themselves.* (HRB)

Moses does exactly what his father-in-law has suggested.

I believe that this response of grace orientation indicates that God can take Moses to even greater heights of leadership.

**Application:** Now, how do we apply this? I am not the ruler over a nation, nor would I want to be. You are not. Nevertheless, there are people in our lives who are able to view our lives and sometimes make a suggestion that is worth following. For many men, this is often the wife. Even though you have the authority over your wife, does that mean you ignore everything she says and periodically let her know your dictates from Mount Sinai? Of course not! There are times when your wife is going to make a suggestion, and it is a brilliant suggestion (just as Jethro’s suggestion was to Moses). Being the person in charge of anything does not mean you listen to just one voice, and that is your own. God gave you that woman as a help. Do not make the mistake of ignoring this great gift from God.

**Application:** Many companies have had suggestion boxes; and people who contribute their opinion here are often people with their eyes on the ground, knowing at ground-level what is taking place. Such a person can be invaluable to the prosperity of your organization.

**Application:** I was a teacher for about 25 years, and now and again, a very shy student would approach me after class and voice a complaint or a suggestion. I used to hand out evaluation forms at the end of my semester teaching at a community college. I took most of the suggestions seriously. This does not mean I changed everything I did from top to bottom, depending upon the commentary; but there were so many times when outside eyes made it obvious that I was doing X, but I should be doing Y.

**Application:** I have used the illustration of the chapter studies which I do. At one time, I would just start writing, in paragraph form, all about the grammar and vocabulary of the verse at hand. A friend of mine read this and suggested that it was gobbledy gook to him. If the first paragraph of explanation throws a reader for a loop, maybe that was not the best approach. It was because of him that I developed the Greek and Hebrew tables. Anyone who wants to pass over the Greek or the Hebrew of any passage can do so quite easily now. This has completely changed the look of my written work, but it was the right thing to do. See the studies of Exodus here: [www.kukis.org/Exodus](http://www.kukis.org/Exodus) This one change alone revolutionized the written work that I do; but I had to be open to the suggestion. Furthermore, the person making the complaint/observation was a charismatic—so I could easily have set aside what he said.

**Application:** Obviously, every complaint, criticism or suggestion that you will hear will not be valid; but don't simply skip over them because the person suggesting it does not have your full respect. He may actually have the insight which you lack.

Exodus 18:27 [And Moses let depart his father-in-law, and he went to his own land.](#) (HRB)

Jethro departs to return to his own household. He likely left his daughter and grandsons behind; but they will have no impact worth recording, despite their close relationship to the writer of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

To this point in Israel's history, Moses was pretty much the arbiter of right and wrong. He had been schooled in Egyptian law and he had a relationship with God. For these reasons, it made sense that he would judge between the people. However, clearly, as Jethro pointed out, this had become unworkable and impractical. So, together Moses and Jethro hammered out a system of judges and authorities. However, what they clearly lacked was a clear system of law to adhere to (they would have had case law based upon the cases where Moses had already made rulings; which rulings, I assume, were written down).

In Exodus 19, God will prepare the people for the reception of the Law, and, beginning in Exodus 20, God will personally give the people His Law. So, the Law that Israel needs right now—the perfect standard of behavior—is about to be provided for them.

Exodus 18 is very closely related to Exodus 19 and 20. In Exodus 18, we find that Israel lacked a carefully structured legal system. The Israelites essentially had one judge—Moses—and he was overworked when it came to judging two million Israelites. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, put together one piece of the puzzle when it came to legal disputes. "You need to set up a number of judges who are organized in such a way that they might execute justice among the people," was the gist of what Jethro had said. Moses, being convinced of Jethro's point of view, did what his father-in-law suggested.

Therefore, a system of judges and authorities was set up. Jethro had an idea for how to structure these judges (Exodus 18:21–22); and Moses followed Jethro's advice. Exodus 18:24–26 *So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. Moses chose capable men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. They judged the people all the time. The hard cases they brought to Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.* (Tree of Life Version)

Because of Moses' background, Jethro and the people of Israel took it for granted that Moses understood what a fair system of laws would look like. On the one hand, Moses certainly was able to, from his own mind, apply the system of law which he learned in Egypt. This system of law would be modified by his spiritual understanding. But, was there anything written down? If there was, it was likely nothing more than a recording of the decisions which Moses handed down (which was not preserved). Essentially this would be known as case law today. Let me suggest that such records existed, simply because, if Charley Brown and Lucy Van Pelt had a disagreement, then Moses would rule; and both Brown and Van Pelt would be subject to the decision of Moses. Did Moses want to see these two again? That is, what if they came back for another dispute saying, "I understood your ruling to be X" and the other saying, "I understood your ruling to be Y"? Logically, to keep these two out of court, a ruling would be delivered verbally and a record would also be kept of that ruling. So, in a sense, a system of laws was more or less in place, based upon Moses' rulings (he probably made 20–30 rulings a day). But what Israel really needed was a well-defined system of Law which the people could learn and, ideally speaking, obey.

God was aware of this and note the perfect timing. Jethro called Moses' attention to his never-ending time spent in court presiding over one case after another, telling him, "You need a better system." So Moses organized a better system, as suggested by Jethro. Now, here all Israel stands, at the foot of Mount Sinai. They are about to receive the ultimate Law from God, although none of them realize this as of yet.

Israel will be prepared to receive the Law of God in Exodus 19; and Israel will begin to receive that Law in Exodus 20.



**Israel's Route From Egypt to Sinai** (a map); from the [Daily Star](#) (in the UK); accessed October 31, 2023.

One reason to accept this map, at least in part: where you see the word *Aqaba* is the location of Midian. Jethro would have come to Moses when he was close to where Moses was camped.

One reason to reject this map: crossing the water at that point on the Gulf of Aqaba is a long distance from Egypt. That place was probably somewhere near the Gulf of Suez or at another river in that region which has since dried up. Recall that, when Moses and the people double-backed at some point, Pharaoh knew about it, meaning that he had eyes on the people of Israel after they left.



**Mount Sinai in Saudi Arabia** (a graphic); from the [Daily Star](#) (in the UK); accessed October 31, 2023. I don't know if this is an artist's depiction of what he believe this mountain to look like or whether this was designed based on reasonably contemporary photographs of this region.



Based upon my reading, we only are guessing as to where this mountain range is located (although, generally speaking, the map above could be reasonably accurate as to the location of Mount Sinai).

Even though this region is many times called a desert region or a wilderness, that does not mean that it was this dry back then. In that era, the word *wilderness* simply referred to a place which was mostly unoccupied. Man had not increased in numbers large enough to actually live in this place (as they do today). By



the descriptions which we have read so far in Exodus, the region that the Hebrew people are traveling through has lakes, rivers and oases. Everything that we read in Exodus and Numbers indicates that the land was better watered in that age than it is now.

## Israel at Mount Sinai

Because of Israel's tradition, it is not surprising that some of their writings continued to be set up in a chiasmic format. Maybe this is the influence of God the Holy Spirit, and maybe this sort of organization is in the psyche of the Israelites (as most of them had memorized the book of Genesis).

### Chiasm of Exodus 19–40 (from Ted)

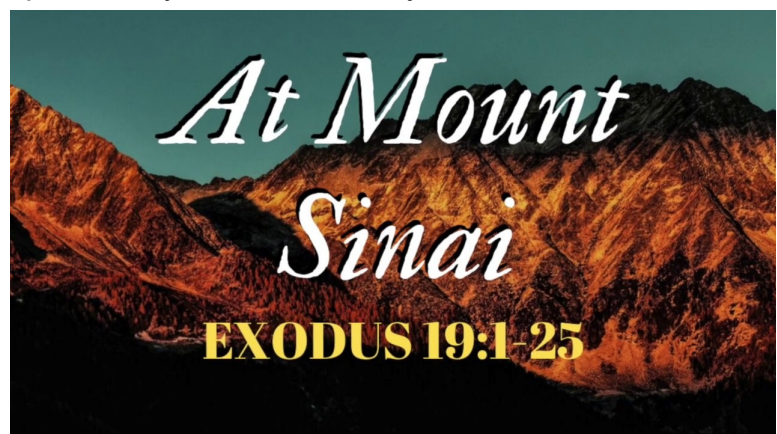
- A Covenant delivered 19:1—24:11
- B Tabernacle planned 24:12—27:21
- C Priestly instructions chs. 28—30
- D Craftsmen's direction 31:1-11
- E Sabbath instructions 31:12-18
- F Covenant broken ch. 32
- F' Covenant renewed chs. 33—34
- E' Sabbath reminded 35:1-3
- D' Craftsmen and construction 35:4—38:31
- C' Priests prepared ch. 39
- B' Tabernacle completed 40:1-33
- A' Covenant sealed 40:34-38

From [Fredericksburg Bible Church](#) accessed April 11, 2018.

**At Mount Sinai** (a graphic); from [YouTube](#); accessed October 31, 2023. There are better photos on this YouTube video, except that they are all incorrectly marked Exodus 18:1–25.

Exodus 19 is a preparatory chapter. The Israelites are about to receive the Law and chapter 19 prepares them for this.

In today's Christian community, one of the things which is almost ignored entirely is preparation. For example, some pastors might be prepared in a seminary for four years, which is barely enough time to get your feet wet (unless you have a good spiritual background prior to) and a few others of the clergy are prepared in the same way. Some just get saved and go out and start preaching the next day, which is wholly ridiculous.



Such people do not even know the gospel message yet; let alone anything that involves serious theology. Unfortunately, some even start churches this way. Preparation is for all Christians—there is no distinction between clergy and non-clergy when it comes to God's plan—is spiritual growth. Out from spiritual growth comes a productive spiritual life, and then eternal rewards.

Spiritual training should begin for children in infancy and be continued throughout their lives at home. Those who are saved later in life need to be daily prepared with God's Word. We are bombarded every day, for 16–18 hours a day, with human viewpoint and Satanic propaganda. We see it on TV, in advertising of all sorts, in the movies, we hear it on the radio, we hear it from every person that we come in contact with.

for example, based upon what we see on television, virtually every group of friends has close homosexual friends (or homosexual couples); and these people act exactly like heterosexuals except for liking the same gender (and if you are thinking, *they don't?*, then you have believed the lie<sup>69</sup>).

When someone becomes a Christian, it is Satan's strategy to neutralize that person and we are neutralized in our thinking. So we need that little hour a day of God's viewpoint taught by a pastor-teacher, from the Bible, verse by verse, line upon line, precept by precept. Every day, we need to hear the Bible exegeted with references back to the culture and history of that time period, with a view to the original languages and the idioms of the day. The end result is, that we may apprehend fully what God's Word says. Every day, we need to hear about certain doctrines, concepts and words explored categorically. Most believers ought to keep their conversion a secret for the first five years of their salvation so that they can grow and become prepared for God's purpose in our lives (depending upon when you are saved and educated, it takes a long time to reprogram a new believer).

If you do not follow God's plan for your life which is apprehended in one way and one way only—through His Word—then you will spend the rest of your life miserable due to self-induced misery and because you place yourself under discipline direct from God.

Secondly, it is in this chapter that we have the purpose of nation Israel stated, although many commentators miss this entirely. In case you never knew what it was, or you think that you know, but you are not certain, then stay tuned—that will be covered also.

There is a portion of this chapter which I found to be confusing. God sets a boundary about Mount Sinai, warning the people not to cross over that boundary onto Mount Sinai. However, He seems to allow for an exception in v. 13. [God is speaking] "[When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.](#)" (ESV) However, I do not recall a point at which God will summon the people up the mountain. If that is the case, why provide a circumstance where they might go up Mount Sinai? I must admit to being baffled by this short phrase. We will discuss this in greater detail when we come to it.

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<sup>69</sup> Statistically speaking, homosexuals and heterosexuals behave very differently.

One cannot separate this chapter from the chapter which is to come. God will actually speak directly to the people in the next chapter. Hearing God's voice will be very difficult for the sons of Israel. They will find it to be very disturbing.

Exodus 19:1a [In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt,...](#) (NKJV)

Israel left Egypt on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month (Exodus 13:4 Numbers 33:3). Exactly one month later, they began to receive manna in the desert-wilderness (Exodus 16:1, 14–15).

I don't believe that the movement described in these two verses is exactly 3 months later (after leaving Egypt), but that they arrive in Sinai in the third month; so, maybe this takes them 8.5 weeks, 9 weeks but no more than 12 weeks to go from Egypt to Sinai.

We don't know whether this is the beginning, middle or end of the third month. However, the Hebrews have been traveling for at least 60 days and they have seen the full moon thrice.

Furthermore, they will remain at the foot of Mount Sinai for almost a year (Numbers 10:11–12). In fact, the children of Israel will be camped at the foot of this mountain through to the end of Exodus, throughout all of Leviticus and for the first 9+ chapters of Numbers (this is more than 57 chapters devoted to this one year). By comparison, the next 26 chapters of Numbers encompass the next 38+ years of Israel in the desert-wilderness (which is present-day Saudi Arabia).

What this means is, from Exodus 3 all the way to Numbers 9, only a year and a few months of gone by. What an amazing concentrated period of time! In that short space of time, Israel is changed from being a very large collection of slaves into an actual nation with a constitution (that constitution being the Mosaic Law).

Although we often refer to the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy as the Mosaic Law, properly speaking, the second half of exodus and most of Leviticus make up the Law of God. Deuteronomy is Moses teaching the Law and the history of Israel to next generation. How well they appreciate this teaching is shown by how this second generation will succeed where their fathers failed.

In part, Deuteronomy is the application of the Law previous given. Other laws and customs will be put forth (for the most part, these are applications of the Mosaic Law to specific circumstances).

In any case, what God will say to Moses on Mount Sinai is actually laid out in half of Exodus and most of Leviticus. My intention is to get us through the book of Deuteronomy at least (so that you will have a far greater understanding of the Law than do most contemporary Jews).

Since we have spent such a great deal of time in Exodus, it be surprising to realize that the Israelites have been in the desert-wilderness for only 2–3 months, up to this point in our narrative. Even though some of you reading this know that the sons of Israel will stay in the desert-wilderness for 40 years; right now, what we have read and studied, is only a few months.

Exodus 19:1a [In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt,...](#) (NKJV)

At some point in the third month—perhaps the beginning of the third month—Israel finds herself right here, where God was leading them. If the children of Israel are at the beginning of the third month, then they have only been out from Egypt for 6–7 weeks.

Exodus 19:1b [...on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai.](#) (NKJV)

In the third month, Israel came upon the desert-wilderness of Sinai, where the mountain range Mount Sinai is located. This desert-wilderness would be adjacent to Mount Sinai. This is God's first primary stop for Israel since leaving Egypt.

The NKJV has this reading *the same day*; so are we talking the beginning of the third month? The end of the third month? Not that this matters too much, but I try to get the details correct. In glancing at the footnotes and commentary for this verse in the many translations to which I refer, there is no little disagreement over what this means. So it is not just me. Nevertheless, given what we have studied so far, I would lean toward this being the beginning of the third month (in which case, the Israelites have been out from Egypt for 1½ months).

Exodus 19:1 [In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai.](#) (NKJV)

To be precise, it is 1½–2½ months since Israel exited Egypt. At this point, they have come to the desert-wilderness of Sinai.

Vv. 1 and 2 are not chronically consecutive verses in Exodus 13. V. 1 gives us the big picture, taking us all the way from Egypt to Sinai. The second verse will put us back into the day-by-day narrative.

Exodus 19:2a [For they had departed from Rephidim,...](#) (NKJV)

According to [Num. 33:3–14](#), there appear to be about 10 stops between Egypt and Rephidim. However, the next stop after Rephidim is the desert-wilderness of Sinai. (The first half of [Numbers 33](#) will be briefly exegeted below.)

According to this passage, it has taken the Israelites 1½–2½ months to travel from Egypt to Rephidim, and then to Mount Sinai.

Rephidim was the place of no water (Exodus 17:1–7); and Rephidim was the site of Israel's first battle (Exodus 17:8–16).

Exodus 19:2b ...had come to the Wilderness of Sinai,... (NKJV)

Both Exodus 19 and Numbers 33 have Israel going directly from Rephidim to the desert-wilderness of Sinai.

The desert-wilderness of Sinai appears to run right along side the Sinai mountain range. God has them moving toward Mount Sinai (recall that God is guiding them with the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud).

Exodus 19:2c ...and camped in the wilderness. (NKJV)

The Israelites will camp here in the desert-wilderness of Sinai. It would seem like the desert-wilderness of Sinai ought to be more than one stop; but is only spoken of as one stop in [Num. 33:15–16](#).

God is leading them as a cloud by day and they are going in almost the opposite direction from the land of Canaan. Moses had traveled part of this area between Midian and Egypt, so he knows this. However, no one else in the group, other than possibly some of their converts, had ever traveled from Egypt to Canaan. God was not taking them directly to the promised land because this generation was too hinky in their spiritual lives. They were not yet ready to go and take the land which God had promised to the Israelites. Furthermore, before entering the land of promise, they need to have a national constitution. Recall in the previous chapter that Moses and his judgment on any given day appears to have been the *constitution* of nation Israel. That might work fine while Moses is alive, but, at this point, he is 80 years old. Does Israel really want a single individual calling the shots for them at any given time?

Besides a national constitution, Israel needed to understand who they were as a nation (which understanding will begin with this chapter). This people being led by Moses did not appreciate Who God is and how they are related to God.

Exodus 19:2d So Israel camped there before the mountain. (NKJV)

The sons of Israel camp out before the mountain, which would be the Mountain of God or Mount Sinai. This is likely an entire range of mountains. It appears that Horeb is often used for the overall mountain range and Sinai for a particular mountain of that range.

Today, we do not know the exact location of Mount Sinai. What Christians historians do is take out a map of the area, look at how long it might take to go from point A to point B and make reasonable guesses as to what route was traveled by the children of Israel.



Most maps agree that they are in the Sinai Peninsula, between the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba, a little over a hundred miles from the Red Sea. This places them in a valley at the foot of what today is Mt. Horeb. However, some scholars place Mount Sinai east of the Gulf of Aqaba (which is going further east). I realize that for some readers, these are meaningless words because you do not have a picture of the geography in your head. In the previous lesson, when introducing this chapter, a map was provided.

We left Egypt at the very end of Exodus 13, and in Exodus 13–19, we are traveling from Egypt to the mountains of Sinai. The parallel passage is Numbers 33.

Numbers 33 is a travelogue; it tells us where the Israelites camped from night to night. The Israelites only moved when God, revealing Himself as a cloud or as a pillar of fire, moved. So, these are not necessarily nightly stops. Also, some of these places probably had been given a name by the Egyptians (particularly those near Egypt's border), and other stops were given names by the people of Israel (or by Moses or Aaron) as they came to them. The ESV; capitalized is used below:

### A Brief Examination of Numbers 33:1–16

Scripture	Text/Commentary
Numbers 33:1–2 These are the stages of the people of Israel, when they went out of the land of Egypt by their companies under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Moses wrote down their starting places, stage by stage, by command of the LORD, and these are their stages according to their starting places.	<p>The stages (also called <i>stage by stage</i>) reference each campsite of the Israelites, when the cloud or pillar of fire would stop. When the pillar stopped advancing, then Israel would stop and camp.</p> <p><i>By their companies</i> simply means that Israel did not move as a mob, but as organized into groups, with leaders and discipline.</p> <p>Only a handful of people among the Israelites understand the geography of where they are.</p>
Numbers 33:3–4 They set out from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month. On the day after the Passover, the people of Israel went out triumphantly in the sight of all the Egyptians, while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had struck down among them. On their gods also the LORD executed judgments.	<p>We can compare the time frame given here to the time cited in Exodus 19:1.</p> <p>The Israelites went out of Egypt on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, that month being Abib, which was the beginning of Spring. This also marked the beginning of Israel's independence.</p>

## A Brief Examination of Numbers 33:1–16

Scripture	Text/Commentary
Numbers 33:5–6 <i>So the people of Israel set out from Rameses and camped at Succoth. And they set out from Succoth and camped at Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness.</i>	<p>They traveled from Rameses to Succoth to Etham, which was right at the edge of the desert-wilderness (meaning that this land was uninhabited, but not necessarily barren).</p> <p>The final judgment on Exodus was the killing of everyone's firstborn. At that point, Egypt wanted Israel gone.</p>
Numbers 33:7 <i>And they set out from Etham and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, which is east of Baalzephon, and they camped before Migdol.</i>	<p>They traveled from Etham to Pi-Hahiroth, which represents a turning back or a turning around from where they were. This move is probably what caught the attention of the Egyptians. Remember, they were being watched, even though Pharaoh told them to pack up and leave Egypt.</p>
Numbers 33:8 <i>And they set out from before Hahiroth and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, and they went a three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham and camped at Marah.</i>	<p>Numbers 33 glosses over the destruction of the Egyptian army which took place after Israel passed through the midst of the sea. The focus is upon Israel and where they stopped.</p> <p>From the other side of the sea, Israel traveled for 3 days in the desert-wilderness of Etham, camping at Marah (where they complained).</p>
Numbers 33:9 <i>And they set out from Marah and came to Elim; at Elim there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they camped there.</i>	<p>From Marah, they traveled to Elim, where the 12 springs of water and 70 palm trees were. This was the perfect place for them to camp, as if God had designed this place for them in eternity past.</p>
Numbers 33:10–11 <i>And they set out from Elim and camped by the Red Sea. And they set out from the Red Sea and camped in the wilderness of Sin.</i>	<p>It appears that they traveled along the east side of the Red Sea, and went from there into the desert-wilderness (the uninhabited region) of Sin.</p>
Numbers 33:12–14 <i>And they set out from the wilderness of Sin and camped at Dophkah. And they set out from Dophkah and camped at Alush.</i>	<p>They traveled from the desert-wilderness of Sin to Dophkah to and then to Alush. Dophkah and Alush are only named here; they are not mentioned in Exodus.</p>

## A Brief Examination of Numbers 33:1–16

Scripture	Text/Commentary
Numbers 33:14 And they set out from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.	From Alush, they traveled to Rephidim. At Rephidim, there was no water for them to drink. The sons of Israel faced three no-water tests. This was test #2.
Numbers 33:15–16 And they set out from Rephidim and camped in the wilderness of Sinai. And they set out from the wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth-hattaavah.	From Rephidim, they camped in the wilderness of Sinai. From Sinai, they went to Kibroth-hattaavah. Israel will spend a year here.

You will note that the marvelous experiences of Israel are not mentioned here.

Exodus 19:2 For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain. (NKJV)

Rephidim is where they had no water. You may recall that Moses struck the rock and from it flowed Living Waters. Insofar as Moses was concerned, he was simply following the directives of Y<sup>e</sup>howah. We understand the meaning of that event to be more than simple obedience.

The desert-wilderness is where to come to Mount Sinai. They will remain here for a year. They will be here from Exodus 19 to Numbers 11:34.

Exodus 19:1–2 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain. (NKJV)

In any case, it appears that it took Israel about 2 months to go from Egypt to Sinai, where they were now encamped before Mount Sinai.

It is interesting that God can apparently speak to Moses at any point in any place. God spoke to Moses in Midian, several times in Egypt, and many times along this trip from Egypt to Mount Sinai. However, at Mount Sinai, God's Presence—we might even say, His Shekinah Glory—will be greatly intensified. Because of this intensity, Moses will meet God upon Mount Sinai.

### Lesson 294: Exodus 19:1–4

### Israel and the Miracles of God

Exodus 19:1–2 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. For they had departed from

Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain. (NKJV)

To this point, Israel has seen a great many miracles and judgments. We might even understand them to be somewhat jaded by this experience. They have little appreciation for all the miracles which they have seen.

Given all that has happened, it is clear that God is very theatrical. We have seen Him interact with mankind on many occasions, and when the situation calls for it—here, because He is dealing with two million+ people—He will be very theatrical. That is, God will *go big*, so to speak, so that all Israel understands what is being said and done.

When a miracle was done, all Israel experienced that miracle in some form or fashion. God did not do some private miracles for Moses and Aaron, and then expect them to stand before the people and describe those miracles and share their experience. Everyone personally experienced the power of God. Throughout the Bible, all of God's miracles are audience appropriate. Everyone there participated in the miracle in some way. When God did a great work, no random person was left out, so that he had to have the miracle recounted and explained to him.

We would think that when it comes to being unstoppable and great, this is how we should have been able to describe the Exodus generation. We would think this, based upon all of the miracles which they all personally experienced. However, that is not the case. This was a generation of failures. Experiences—even miraculous ones—do not affect the soul *unless* the believer takes that miracle and transfers it into his soul along with what that miracle tells him about God. The spiritual life is never carried by experience. The spiritual life is moved forward by Bible doctrine in the soul. Even if our experience confirms that doctrine; we have to consciously affirm what our experience teaches us.

Let me give you an example. The Hebrew people, six days a week, are getting manna provided for them by God. This will take place six mornings a week for every single week over a period of 40 years. No one will grow spiritually one iota based upon having this experience. They went outside, they found the manna, and then gathered enough for the family. Everyone ate it. No one grew spiritually as a result of finding manna or eating manna. We understand this manna to be their logistical grace. If we understand that concept and believe it, then we are getting more out of their experience than they did.

If the individuals in Israel do not understand that concept and believe it, the manna—which is a daily miracle for the entire Exodus generation—is of no spiritual benefit to them. You see, if they recognize that these miraculous wafers are being provided by a faithful and loving God, and they put that information into their souls, that would result in spiritual growth. That information is truth; it is Bible doctrine. If this is how they understand the manna, then they will grow spiritually. If they simply gather the manna each day (except on Saturday) and eat it, but not relate this to the faithfulness of God, then it is of no spiritual benefit to them.

**Application:** Let's take this concept and apply it to our own lives. You may know charismatic Christians, and how they are often moved by how they feel and what they experience. But that wears off, so they have to go back next Sunday or midweek to get more of that same experience. In other words, this experience is like a drug, and they need to get this drug at regular intervals. If they don't get it, then they feel that their spiritual life is shite. If you fill your soul with the truth, you will grow spiritually. If you titillate your emotions with this or that experience, then things might be great for a few minutes to maybe an hour. But, at some point, it has to be renewed. You need another shot of it. Like a drug.

**Application:** Now, you may know some charismatics and you will claim, "But they seem to be doing okay. They are not that crazy." And this is true of some charismatics, and the key is this: if the charismatic adheres to the laws of divine establishment as the basis for their life, then they will live a pretty decent life (this is true of anyone who is guided by the laws of divine establishment in life). So they can do the crazy stuff, but there is enough of their life tied to God's laws for living that they are stabilized by those laws.

The Exodus generation—particularly the older ones (I call them Gen X)—are going from experience to experience; but the meaning of these experiences is not being placed into their souls. Because they do not have truth in their souls, their personal experiences mean nothing. If no truth is deposited into the soul, then there is no spiritual growth taking place.

You may have the most well-stocked kitchen and refrigerator on the planet, but if you do not eat the food from your kitchen, then you will wither away and die. That is what is happening to this generation. God is keeping them physically alive, but they do not realize it or profit spiritually by it.

Exodus 19:3a [And Moses went up to God,...](#) (NKJV)

The people are encamped by Mount Sinai. Moses goes up Mount Sinai.

I would assume that many people there see Moses walking towards the mountain and up into the smoke and cloud surrounding it.

Exodus 19:3b [...and the Lord called to him from the mountain,...](#) (NKJV)

One way that we could understand this is, Moses went up the mountain *because* God called to him from there. The other way to understand this is, Moses went up the mountain (we don't know why exactly) and God calls to him while Moses goes up.

In any case, Moses is moving up Mount Sinai (we assume) and God is calling out to him.

Now, in the past, God has spoken to Moses on many occasions. It is likely that God audibly spoke to Moses more than any other person ever. In fact, interestingly enough, it is very possible that Moses heard the voice of God more often than Jesus in His humanity



heard God's voice (since Jesus operating in His humanity, He rarely heard God's voice, despite His continual communion with God).

Moses became a great man of God due to spiritual growth. He was able to take his experiences and combine them with Bible doctrine; and store that Bible doctrine in his human spirit. Moses understood what these experiences meant; but the Exodus generation did not.

Exodus 19:3c ...saying [God is speaking to Moses], "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:..." (NKJV)

God begins with the adverb *kôh* (כֹּה) [pronounced *ko*], which means *like this, here, in this manner, thus, here, hither*. I don't think this is too damaging to translate this as, *this is what you will say to the house of Jacob and tell the people of Israel*. When emphasis is needed, the way this is done is to say the same thing twice, but in slightly different ways. That is what is done here.

Every person descended from Jacob is a Hebrew. God also gave Jacob the name *Israel*, yet he is continually referred to be both names (unlike Abram, who was, from the point that God renamed him, always called *Abraham*). Generally speaking, *Jacob* refers to the fallen nature of Jacob; or to the all-too human aspect of Jacob's nature. *Israel* often refers to regenerate and spiritually mature Jacob.

Exodus 19:3 And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:..." (NKJV)

God will speak to all Israel through Moses—to those who are not advancing and to those who are. God will speak to Moses from Mount Sinai.

**Israel camped before Mount Sinai**  
(a graphic); from [bible.ca](http://bible.ca); accessed October 31, 2023.

Exodus 19:4a ...'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians,...' (NKJV)

More than any people on this planet, the Exodus generation have seen God's awesome power.



The Egyptians also saw this great power. God's signs, miracles and plagues were designed to be viewed by everyone in Egypt. No one in Goshen and Egypt was untouched by the plagues. This was a personal experience for every Egyptian. Now, the Jews in Goshen were not subject to every plague, but they were fully aware of what was going on around them. Therefore, when it comes to recognizing the power and provision of God, the sons of Israel were without excuse.

Exodus 19:4b ...and how I bore you on eagles' wings... (NKJV)

I had noticed with the first few things which God said that His words appear to be someone poetic. The two addresses for the people of Israel—while actually meaning something—are also poetic.

Quite obviously, no one of Israel flew atop eagles. So we understand not to take these words literally. What is the advantage that an eagle has? They can see a very large area and choose the best way to go from point A to point B. Quite obviously, God did all of the guiding and God knew how to guide the Israelites through the desert-wilderness. It is as if God is over them, determining by which trail to bring the children of Israel, so that they might survive a 2 month trek through the desert-wilderness and yet be preserved alive.

As an aside, I have heard it said that Israel was lost in the desert-wilderness and wandering. Israel was were never lost in the desert-wilderness. Moses could have guided them anywhere he chose, because he had training in geography. Quite obviously, God could have guided them anywhere He chose. They will remain in the desert until Gen X (the generation of adults of who left Egypt) die out in the desert-wilderness, almost all of them dying the sin unto death. Even though they all initially believed in the God of Israel, most of them experienced little or no spiritual growth after that.

Exodus 19:4c ...and brought you to Myself. (NKJV)

God has brought Israel to Himself right there to Mount Sinai.

God is omniscient, but for our benefit, He will manifest Himself in a finite area; here that place is Mount Sinai. He reminds the Hebrews (this will be spoken by Moses to the sons of Israel) of what has occurred so far. The Hebrews were short-sighted and required reminding. God will continue to remind them of being delivered out of the land of the Egyptians.

Why didn't God manifest Himself earlier than this? Throughout this entire trek through the desert-wilderness, God has manifested Himself, as a pillar of cloud or a pillar of fire. He had to take Israel beyond the point where Egypt was a threat. Further, God brought them all to Mount Sinai, because God is theatrical. What Israel will see and hear at this mountain will be remarkable.

Exodus 19:4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. (NKJV)

God is a God of grace. God brought the Israelites to this place. God brought His people to Himself. God will manifest Himself to the people of Israel right there where they are, at Mount Sinai. The Israelites have seen manifestations of God for about two months. So what happens at Mount Sinai has to be every bigger.

Exodus 19:3–4 And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. (NKJV)

Moses will speak to the Israelites on behalf of God. The words which Moses will speak are Bible doctrine. If the Israelites hear and believe this words, they will experience some spiritual growth.

## Lesson 295: Exodus 19:3–5c

## Conditional Blessing

Exodus 19:2d–4 There Israel encamped before the mountain, while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. (ESV; capitalized)

God simply tells the people, through Moses, that He brought them all to Mount Sinai, where He has concentrated His Presence.

Exodus 19:5a Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice... (NKJV)

God is telling Moses what to say to the people. At first, Moses is to speak to the people in place of God. However, God will speak the Ten Commandments aloud to the sons of Israel. When hearing the Ten Commandments directly from God, the people will cry out for God not to speak to them directly. They will desire that Moses listen to God and then to tell them what God had said.

God says to Israel, “If you will hear My voice.” The Hebrew word *to hear* suggests that there is some obedience involved. Also, the verb is doubled, meaning that God is emphasizing the verb.

Green’s literal translation And now if listening you will listen to My voice,...

English Standard Version Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice... Most translations use the words *indeed obey*.

Charles Thompson trans. Now therefore if you will hearken diligently to my voice...

We have the word *shâmaʿ* (שמע) [pronounced *shaw-MAHG*] used twice. It means simply *to hear*. However, several things can be implied: *to listen with interest*; *to listen and understand*, *to listen and consent*, *to listen and agree and obey*.

The verb first occurs in the Qal imperfect construct, which either acts as a verbal noun or, when the verb is found twice, it acts to intensify the meaning. Then it is found in the Qal imperfect, 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular. To give you an idea how some translators render this phrase:

Owen	Now therefore, if utterly you will obey my voice
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Now therefore, if ye will indeed hearken to my voice
NASB	Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice
<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Now therefore, if you obey My voice in truth
NRSV	Now therefore, if you obey My voice
KJV	Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed

Also, prior to voice, we have preposition *to*, found only in *The Emphasized Bible*. The additional use of *shâma'* strengthens the word *hear* to mean *hear and obey*.

The next thing that God requires of them is this:

Exodus 19:5b *...and keep My covenant,...* (NKJV)

The word translated *to keep* is *shâmar* (שָׁמַר) [pronounced *shaw-MAR*], which means, *to keep, to guard, to protect, to watch, to preserve*. Strong's #8104 BDB #1036. God is looking for the people of Israel to be cognizant of His covenant (His existing covenant) and for them to maintain and preserve this covenant. That simply means that they continue to know this covenant, to believe this covenant and to teach it to their children. They will also be required to write the words of God's covenant down (God will tell Moses to do this several times in the Mosaic books of the Law).

The very fact that you have a Bible before you with an Old Testament is a testimony to Israel preserving God's covenant (which is enshrined in the Old Testament). When it comes to faithfulness to God, Israel has an imperfect history. However, clearly, they preserved and protected the words of God's covenant.

Do we consider this covenant to be the existing covenant or is God looking forward to the covenant that He will establish? The covenant that God has made with Israel has been primarily one-way: God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that they would become a great nation and that this nation would reside in Canaan. God has a lot more to say. Logically, God is telling Israel what He expects them to do; and then He will give them all the words of His covenant (which is essentially going to be Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).

Exodus 19:5c *...then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people;...* (NKJV)

The people of Israel would be a special possession of God; they will be His valued property.

What Israel is called is צֵּהָלָה (צֵּהָלָה) [pronounced *seh-gool-LAWH*]; and this is found in a half-dozen places in the Bible. We have to be careful here; words change their meaning from time to time, depending upon the context. This word does mean a *peculiar treasure*, but primarily later in the history of Israel (1Chron. 29:3 Eccles. 2:8 Mal. 3:17). However, early on, this word means *valued property, peculiar people, prized possession*. Israel is called God's own possession; God has set Israel apart from all of the other nations on the earth. God did not come to the Egyptians, to the Canaanites, to any other people or civilization; He came just to the sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In His perfect plan, He knew of Abraham's great faith (not fully demonstrated until age 99). God also knew that the Israelites would turn to Him and turn away from Him. God knew that some would be great heroes of the faith and He knew how many of them would be losers (spiritually speaking). God knew exactly how they would react to His plan and direction. He chose Israel out from all the nations, but it is important to understand that God is not just a local God, but He is the Ruler of all the earth; the Creator of man and the Creator of the universe.

Now, when it comes to God choosing this people, it is because He knows, from His omniscience, what Israel will do and where they will end up. In fact, this is the true difference between Israel, for instance, and the Edomites (the descendants of Esau). It was not the fact that every Israelite would be a believer and every Edomite would reject God. It was that these two lines had a future, and God knew what that future would be for Israel and what it would be for Edom.

Exodus 19:5a-c **Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people;... (NKJV)**

When it comes to conditional blessing, we have to be careful. So let's take this in points:

### Conditional Blessing

1. God blesses us in several ways; the first is basic, provisional grace (aka, *logistical grace*). After salvation, God gives us food, shelter, clothing and Bible doctrine (if we have any interest in it). God gives us Bible doctrine by which we grow spiritually.
2. God gives us temporal blessing based upon having been saved
3. God gives us temporal blessing based upon our association with certain people (mature believers in Jesus Christ). This association may come from being related to such a one, working in the same office with them, living on the same street, having a mature believer in your circle of friends, etc.
4. If God has done the most for us at salvation; then after salvation, He does for us much more than the most. However, this blessing does us very little good if we have no capacity for it. Nothing can ruin right man right woman more quickly than a premature introduction (or a premature marriage). Although we have a lot of people who have flat out married the wrong people and will never have a chance with the right person; we have a very large number of couples who were right man/right woman who have split up. The point of this is that God withholds many



## Conditional Blessing

- blessings from us, waiting for us to grow spiritually to the point where we can actually enjoy and appreciate His blessings.
5. We have to be careful to avoid thinking that if we give to the church, we will be blessed; if we say five nice things about someone we cannot stand that we will be blessed; if we sacrifice in some way or do something nice that we do not want to do, etc., that we will receive blessing from God (or that we deserve blessing from God).
  6. All that we receive from God is undeserved. When we are out of fellowship, we reap what we sow; when we are in fellowship and growing spiritually, we reap what God sows.
  7. When we are out of fellowship, no matter what human act of goodness or kindness that we perform, none of it counts as divine good; and none of it results in any blessing from God.
    - 1) Let me caveat that by pointing out, although it is certainly within the realm of likelihood that there might be simple cause and effect rewards associated with following the laws of divine establishment. For instance, if we are kind and giving to those in our periphery, there is a greater chance that they will respond in kind. So we can reap some benefits in life simply by adhering to the laws of divine establishment.
    - 2) In fact, as an aside, this describes the lives of many believers. They are not filled with the Spirit; they are not in fellowship; but they continue to act within the laws of divine establishment, and are blessed as a result.
  8. Where we see a great deal of blessing is when we stay in fellowship for extended periods of time; when we study God's Word and grow spiritually through that study; and when we endeavor, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to obey the mandates of God (such as, *grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ*).
  9. In the Old Testament, things were somewhat simplified. All believers were not filled with the Spirit, so the key was remaining in fellowship and learning God's Word and following God's mandates. That person individually and collectively could receive blessing and reward. Israel failed here innumerable times. Had the Hebrews been better stewards of the Word, undoubtedly their nation would have been even greater and the blessing that they received would have been far superior to that which is recorded in Scripture.

To sum up, the key to blessing in time is spiritual growth (although there are other ways to enjoy divine blessing).

Exodus 19:5a-c **Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people;... (NKJV)**

These are the words of God to be spoken to the people of Israel. "Listen to My voice and obey Me; keep My covenant (which meant for them to learn and understand and believe

it).” Then God said that this would lead to: “Then all of you will be My special treasure, above all other peoples on this earth.”

Then God explains why He is able to do this:

Exodus 19:5d ...for all the earth is Mine. (NKJV)

God is able to make this covenant and keep His covenant; and God is able to call His people from among all the peoples of the earth, because the earth is God’s. God *never* presents Himself as a narrow, limited God. He is the Creator of the Universe. Everything is subject to His control. He is the God of all mankind; not just the God of Israel.

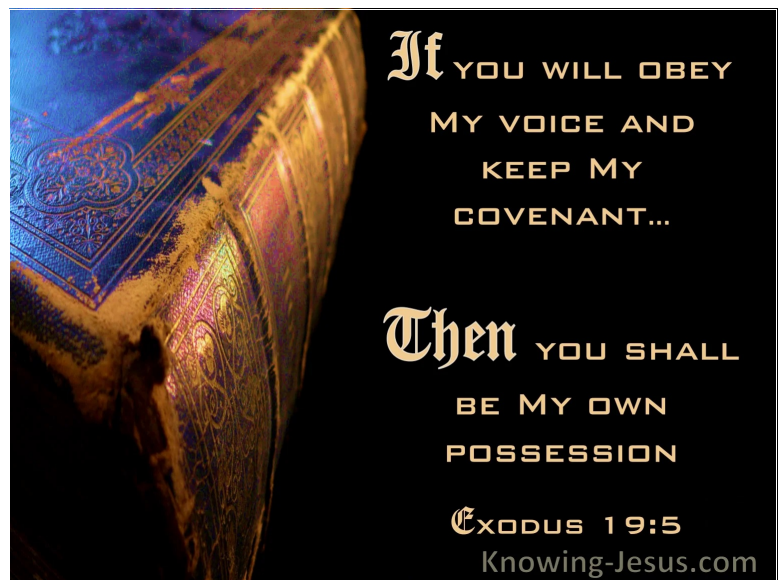
Exodus 19:5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. (NKJV)

Moses was to speak these words to the people of Israel. If they understood these words and believed them, then they would benefit by knowing them and obeying them.

God was requiring that Israel obey Him. He required them to guard and preserve His covenant. Because Israel did this, the entire Old Testament was preserved. What they preserved has been a blessing to all mankind over thousands of years.

As a result, Israel would be a special treasure to God. Israel is described variously as God’s Own possession, His treasured possession, His asset, His special property, God’s Own People, God’s peculiar people (*peculiar* not meaning *odd* or *weird*; but *particular* or *specific*). In other words, Israel had a relationship with God that no other people or nation had.

**Exodus 19:5** (a graphic); from [Knowing Jesus](#); accessed November 1, 2023.



God is presenting speaking to Moses, words which he will say to the sons of Israel.

Exodus 19:4–5 You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine;... (ESV; capitalized)

God has brought Israel to Mount Sinai, where He will manifest Himself. Now, speaking to Israel through Moses, God tells them to obey His voice and to keep (guard, preserve) His covenant, which is found in His Word. Israel will be a treasured possession of God's.

Exodus 19:6a And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' (NKJV)

On top of this, Israel will be a kingdom of priests to God. A priest represents man to God; and nation Israel will act as a priest nation, representing all of the nations to the God of the Universe.

Israel will also be a nation set apart to God. There has only been one particular nation known throughout the world as being set apart to God, and that is Israel.

Now, there have been client nations to God; the United States is presently a client nation to God. Prior to the United States, Great Britain was a client nation to God. However, there has only been one priest nation.

Here is the purpose of Israel. It is covered by this word *priest*. We have already studied the priesthood, but to sum up: a priest is a man who represents other men to God. Man cannot go directly to God because man is unclean—man is born with a sin nature; he has Adam's imputed sin (making him condemned before God at birth, and he has committed personal sins. On the other hand, God is holy, just and good—God cannot have contact with sin; therefore, God cannot have fellowship with fallen man. God cannot even will Himself to have a relationship with fallen man, as that violates God's perfection. Therefore, there must be someone who stands between God and man—a Mediator—one who can stand before God and bring before Him the people. Throughout the Old Testament, this is a major concern. At this point in time, Moses must stand between God and the people. God does not speak directly to the Israelites but primarily to Moses who then speaks to the people (there will be an exception to this).

The logistics here are more difficult because God could make Himself heard to each and every Israelite and say things just one time. However, Israel too must recognize that there must be someone who stands between them and God. Israel will, in fact, demand this of Moses.

The institutional stand-in between man and God was a priest, in the economy of Israel. However, the many types (shadows, figures) of Christ were, in one way or another, mediators of sorts, men who could stand between man and God.

When it comes to offering sacrifices for men who have stumbled and sacrifices which speak of our Lord's work on the cross—these are all offered by a priest to God (throughout the economy of Israel). The children of Israel did not offer their own sacrifices in the Levitical system. A priest would have to offer the animal sacrifices (the priest acted as a mediator).

In the economy (dispensation) of the church, we will find out that the Priest who stands between man and God—to represent man to God is Jesus Christ, our High Priest. When God the Father looks at man, He sees Jesus Christ and His having satisfied the requirements of the Law and having paid for our sins in His own body on the cross. We are in Christ and in Him we are pure and able to come to God. This is only true because we are in Christ.

Exodus 19:6a *And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'* (NKJV)

Similarly, just as an Israelite has a go-between to get to God (the Levitical priest system which includes the High Priest), the nations of the earth will have a go-between nation to give them an intermediary between them and God. Prior to the birth of our Lord, those who wanted salvation could not pray to their own local gods in sincerity and be saved—they had to go through Israel. Israel was a priest nation to God; a nation through whom all other nations could come for salvation. The things which God did for Israel were known throughout the ancient world (e.g., the Israelites and the exodus, the Queen of Sheba coming to Solomon because of his wisdom; Rahab the prostitute in Joshua) and the dealings that God had with other nations through Israel were well-known (such as, Jonah and the Assyrians). This did not mean that a person had to become a Jew in order to be saved (although many did just that, just as some Christians will move 2000 miles to hear God's Word taught correctly face-to-face). But the other nations recognized, in times of lucidity, that the God of the Universe was the God of Israel and that they must believe in Israel's God for salvation (the other term often used for this God is *the Revealed God*). The idea is not that we have to somehow search for God; but that God must choose to reveal Himself to us (this is for the era of Israel).

Israel, having the Law and the prophets, acted as a go-between for these other heathen nations. The degenerate, heathen nations went through Israel, whom God had sanctified unto Himself (*you will be My own possession*) to come to Him. This is Israel's purpose as a nation—to represent the world to God. She had other functions as well—the writing, preservation and dissemination of God's Word chiefly within nation Israel. There are few functions in life which are nearly so important as these. Apart from Israel, there is no Bible.

Were there other options for men unaware of Israel? We would have to see this the same way that we think about heathen today—if someone has positive volition at God consciousness, then God must provide for them the gospel. Exactly what that would have

been, apart from nation Israel, I could not say (however, the book of Job revealed God to gentiles; and the first 11 chapters of Genesis revealed God to the gentiles, apart from nation Israel).

A priest is also a shadow of the things to come. The priest, through the various animal sacrifices, represents fallen man to God. Jesus Christ, through the sacrifice of Himself, represents us as depraved sinners to God; it is only through Him that we have representation before God and a bridge to God.

Today, all believers may act as priests. We can represent ourselves to God and we represent God to others. Peter wrote these words: **You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession that you may proclaim the virtues of Him Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light** (1Peter 2:9; Exodus 19:5–6). Peter takes the very words that we are studying, and gives them a new and different meaning and application (this often happens in the New Testament). These same words which we are studying in Exodus right now are all about the people of God (the sons of Israel who are regenerate) and the nation of Israel acting as a priest nation. Peter takes those same words and applies them to believers of the Church Age (and Peter does this even without fully apprehending himself this new age in which he lived—as Peter also wrote, “If you want to understand more about that, try the Pauline epistles.”).

Note the words of the writer of Hebrews: **Since then we have a great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession [that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God]. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.** (Hebrews 4:14–16; ESV; capitalized). The true High Priest is Jesus Christ.

Because we represent Jesus Christ to an unsaved world, we ought to be careful about who we tell that we are Christians. Some of us with our behavior and ignorance put people off with our phoniness and hypocrisy. Now I certainly know the Scripture: **"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp and place it under the peck-measure, but [they place it] on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven"** (Matthew 5:14–16; ESV; capitalized). My point is, make certain that you actually have some actual light before you go off shining for someone. That requires spiritual growth. Get some light (knowledge of Bible doctrine) and then you will have something to shine in the darkness.

This is where we started this study:

Exodus 19:6a **And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'** (NKJV)

God is speaking to Moses, who will say these words to the people of Israel. God is proclaiming Israel as His priest nation.



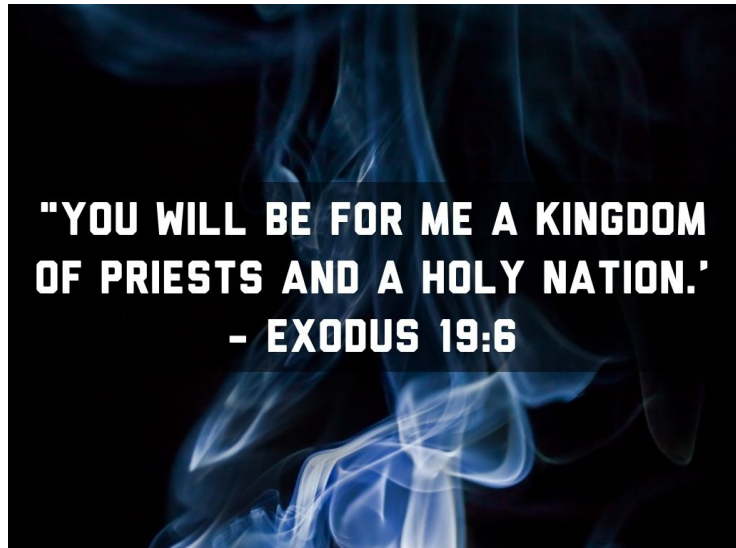
Exodus 19:6b *These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.*" (NKJV)

What God just said is what Moses is to say to the people of Israel. At this point in time, God speaks to Moses and Moses speaks to the people. When the Ten Commandments are given, that will change. God will give the Ten Commandments directly to His people.

**Exodus 19:6** (a graphic); from [haikudeck](https://www.haikudeck.com); accessed November 1, 2023.

Exodus 19:6 *And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." (NKJV)

The simple concept of Israel being a nation is brand new. God tells the people of Israel, through Moses acting as a go-between, that they are to God *a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*. We have studied the book of Exodus over a fairly long period of time. In the weekly emailed lessons, it has been nearly 200 weeks, which is a period of nearly four years. My own work on Exodus began in 1995. When I began to work on the book of Exodus chapter by chapter was 2016 (it is now 2023); and we are not yet at the halfway mark in terms of number of chapters. But from the time that Moses went back to Egypt to this point in the narrative, less than six months have transpired between Exodus 3 and Exodus 19. At the point in time of Exodus 3, Israel was a very large collection of slaves. They were not a nation. At this point in the narrative—which may seem like a very long time to us, given the length of this study—less than six months have transpired and God is talking about Israel as a nation.



The term which is properly applied to Israel is *priest nation*. Let's look at vv. 5–6 and embellish it somewhat:

Exodus 19:5–6 (this is God speaking to Moses) *"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you [the people of Israel] shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*' These are the words which you [Moses] shall speak to the children of Israel." (NKJV)

With these words, God is beginning to define what Israel will be as a priest nation to Him. The covenants of God, given to Abraham and to Isaac and then to Jacob, will now be given to the entire nation of Israel. As a nation, the covenants are for Israel. As a nation, Israel will assemble the Word of God; and they will preserve and protect the Word of God.

As a people, the Israelites represent God to the world; and as a nation, they represent their God to the other nations.

Many nations—those surrounding Israel—hated Israel because they hate God. They tried to destroy Israel, but they could no more destroy Israel than they could destroy God.

**Exodus 19:3–6** (a graphic); from [Daily Devotional in Christ](#); accessed October 31, 2023. God speaks to Moses, telling him briefly what Israel is going to be as a nation before God. And the words which God spoke to Moses, these words will be placed into the hands of the Israelites for them to preserve and protect these words so that even today, you and I can read and understand these words.

Just as God designed meat and fruits and vegetables to become a part of our physical bodies, building us up physically; so God has designed His Word to help build us up spiritually. In fact, it is these very words which become a part of our human spirit. These words actually build up our human spirit. Therefore, could there be anything more important to preserve and protect?

Regarding nation Israel, which does not yet (in our narrative) occupy its own land, Israel is absolutely unique in every respect.

God is telling Israel what He has done, bringing her to this point in history; and He tells her what Israel will be to Him.



## Exodus 19:3-6

- 3 "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: 4 You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, 6 but **you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.** These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites."

### The Uniqueness of Israel

(This doctrine will be expanded later in this document)

1. The name of Israel and what it stands for is unique.
  - 1) In the Hebrew, this is Yisʿrāʾēl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced *yis-raw-ALE*].
  - 2) *Israel* means, *God prevails; contender; soldier of God*.
  - 3) Strong's #3478 & #3479 BDB #975.
  - 4) This was a second name given to Jacob and, on occasion, the names are contrasted. *Jacob* refers to the person of Jacob, with all of his foibles and weaknesses. *Israel* refers to the noble man Jacob, the man chosen by God and regenerated by God.
2. Israel has a unique origin (to be expanded below).
3. Israel has a unique history. What nation was first a large collection of slaves whom God loved and took out of the nation enslaving them?

4. Israel has a unique relationship with God. What nation has such a unique relationship with God? Up until the men, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who was preserving and protecting God's Word?
5. Israel will have a unique system of laws, the basis of which forms the basis for all establishment law.
6. Israel has a unique status as a priest nation or as a client nation.
7. Israel has a unique future

Let's now look at one of these points:

The uniqueness of the name Israel is based upon its unique origins, so let's deal with that first:

### **Israel's Unique Origin**

1. The first Israelite is Abraham. One day he was a gentile and the next day he became a Hebrew (a Jew).
  - 1) The primary designations of this people are Hebrew, Israel, Israelite, and Jew. Hebrew is primarily an Old Testament term; and Jew is its New Testament equivalent.
  - 2) What changed in Abraham was circumcision. He was physically circumcised, which represented the circumcision of his heart. Before circumcision, he was a gentile; after circumcision, he became a Hebrew (a Jew). Although circumcision is often connected to regeneration, Abraham had exercised faith in the Revealed God long before he was circumcised. Genesis 15:6
  - 3) The three fundamental races of man were established after the flood by the sons of Noah (Shem, Ham and Japheth). Genesis 9:18–19 God established a fourth race perhaps 1000 years later. The Jews are established as a race in Genesis 12–50. God will bring Israel forward as a nation in the book of Exodus.
  - 4) There is no reason that we ought to know Abraham or anything about him. He was a man who moved from Ur of the Chaldees (present-day Iran) to Canaan (present-day Israel/Palestine). Genesis 12–15
  - 5) Abram was not a king or a famous warrior; he did not invent anything. Although there is no human reason why we should know his name or anything about him, Abraham is the most well-known man of his era (roughly 2100–2000 B.C.). He is well-known because God chose for him to have a worldwide impact. Genesis 12:1–3
  - 6) God spoke to Abraham and told him to separate from his family and move to the land of Canaan, a land that God would give to his descendants. The very fact that God spoke to Abraham indicates that there was already a relationship between Abraham and God. That is, Abraham had already believed in the Revealed God. If God is giving Abraham an unconditional covenant, obviously, Abraham must already be born again (regenerated).

## Israel's Unique Origin

- 7) Abraham (actually Abram, at the time), obeyed God half way. He went with his father, his nephew and other family members. He got about half way to Israel and his father decided, "Here is a good place to live." So they just stopped. Abram had not fully followed what God told him to do. He was to separate from his family and go to the land of Canaan. He separated from some of his family and went halfway.
- 8) Once his father died, Abram began to follow God's words more better. He went with his wife to Canaan; and they took with them Lot (Lot was family, and God told Abram to separate from his family).
- 9) Part of God's covenant (contract, agreement) with Abram is for him to have a son. At age 86 or so, Abram was apparently not going to have a son by his wife, Sarai; so Sarai had a suggestion. "Let's help God," she suggested (not in those exact words). Abram listened to his wife and had a son by her handmaid, an Egyptian girl named Hagar. That son was Ishmael and he became the father of many Arab nations. Despite Abram loving him, Ishmael was not the son God had promised him. Genesis 16
- 10) Thirteen years later, when Abraham was long past being able to copulate and Sarai was long past being able to have children, God transformed them. He told Abram to be circumcised, and Abram then became Abraham and his wife became Sarah. He was suddenly capable of copulation again; and he and his wife (at ages 100 and 90) had a child, Isaac. Abraham was a Jew; but Ishmael, his first son, was a gentile (an Arab). Isaac, Abraham's second son, was a Hebrew (like his father). Genesis 18:9–15

### 2. Isaac.

- 1) Isaac was a Hebrew born to a Hebrew father Abraham. Abraham was 100 years old at the time. Genesis 21:1–7
- 2) Abraham separated their families. Hagar and her son Ishmael were sent away; leaving Abraham, Sarah and Isaac. Genesis 21:8–21
- 3) When Isaac became a man (around age 40), Abraham sent a servant back to where he and his family had stopped originally. Abraham apparently traveled with a large number of family members and they were all living where Abraham first stopped halfway to Canaan. Again, this was the result of Abraham not doing all that God asked him to do.
- 4) Abraham did not want Isaac to leave the land of promise (Canaan) at all. Therefore, he sent servant to fetch Isaac a wife. The servant brought back Rebekah, and she became the wife of Isaac. Incidentally, it is this particular chapter of Genesis which tells us, more than any chapter in the book of Genesis, that our book of Genesis has more than one author. Even in the English, the style and cadence of this chapter is massively different from all the others (there are actually many styles of writing in Genesis, but this one is perhaps the most jarring). Genesis 24
- 5) Later, Isaac and his wife produced two sons—twins—Esau and Jacob. Genesis 25:19–28

## Israel's Unique Origin

### 3. Jacob (Israel) Genesis 25–33

- 1) The story of Esau and Jacob is an odd one and it becomes clear in the study of those chapters of Genesis that Esau is probably a lot nicer guy than Jacob was.
- 2) Jacob, on two occasions, took from Esau the promise traditionally given to the firstborn. When Esau had come in from a very unsuccessful few days of hunting, he was starving. Jacob agreed to share his soup with Esau if he gave Jacob his birthright. Esau agreed to this, reasoning, “What good is a birthright to me if I am dead?” Genesis 25:29–34
- 3) The second time, Jacob and his mother Rebekah schemed to receive the blessing of Abraham by Isaac pretending to be Esau. Their plan worked. A virtually blind Abraham gave his final blessing to Jacob, thinking that he was Esau, passing along all of the blessings from God to Jacob. When Esau found out about this, he was ready to kill Jacob. Jacob was quickly sent to his Uncle Laban, ostensibly to find a wife, but mostly to keep him from being killed. Genesis 27:1–28:5
- 4) Jacob went to Paddan-aram. Although he was far away from his brother who wanted to kill him, Jacob would find out that Laban was even more duplicitous than he had been. Since Jacob came to Laban with nothing, Laban used his labor of seven years to pay for his wife. Jacob believed that he would be marrying his true love, Rachel; but he was fooled by Laban. He spent his marriage night (in complete darkness) with Laban’s older daughter Leah. When Jacob woke up the next morning, he found that he was laying next to Leah, not Rachel. Because they had had sex, they were married. Jacob was not married to the woman he loved but to her older sister, to whom Jacob was not really attracted. Just as Isaac deceived his father, so he was deceived in the same way.
- 5) Jacob went to Laban to complain, and Laban said, “I see your dilemma. Let me help you out. You can marry Rachel, but you will need to work another seven years for her, since you came here with no assets.”
- 6) Fourteen years after arriving in Paddan-aram, Jacob had two wives, who were rather competitive; and each wife had her own personal handmaid. By this time, Jacob has four sons by Leah.
- 7) Anytime there are two wives, there is a competition taking place. This was quite well-defined. Jacob loved Rachel; but he did not really love Leah. However, Leah was producing sons for him, and Rachel was not.
- 8) Rachel, upset at not producing a child for Jacob, instructs him to go into her handmaid for a son; he sires another child by Rachel’s personal servant (not that unusual for the ancient world).
- 9) This sort of thing continues, until Jacob has fathered 11 sons (and at least one daughter) by Leah, Rachel, and their two handmaids. Genesis 29–30
- 10) Jacob decides that they need to return to the land of Canaan. Genesis 31
- 11) On the way there, Jacob—hard-headed Jacob—finds himself in a wrestling match with the Lord, and God gives him a permanent injury which results



## Israel's Unique Origin

in a limp. Jacob will limp for the rest of his life. This was representative of how many times Jacob had gone his own way instead of God's. Genesis 32

- 12) Eventually, Jacob is back in the land of promise. He has two wives, two mistresses, and twelve sons. Rachel, when giving birth to her second son, Benjamin, dies in childbirth. She had given Jacob his two youngest sons, Joseph and Benjamin. Genesis 33

### 4. Joseph. Genesis 37–50

- 1) Obviously, I am summarizing 30+ chapters of Genesis into the space of about three pages. Stuff happened with Jacob's oldest sons—and with Judah. But, Joseph, the son that Jacob most loved, was sold into slavery by his brothers (who hated him because they were jealous of him). He is first sold to some Midianite traders and is then sold as a slave in Egypt.
- 2) Through a series of incidents—pretty much as amazing as anything we have studied so far—Joseph ends up in Egypt in a very high position of power, and he is setting aside loads of grain for an upcoming depression.
- 3) Jacob, a very sad and bitter man, lives with his 11 sons in Canaan, convinced that his favorite son, Joseph, had been mauled by a wild animal (that was the false story told by his other sons to cover up what they had actually done). When the economic depression comes, this affects residents of Canaan and Egypt. Egypt is kept alive by Joseph, who put aside tons of grain. Jacob, seeing that his fields were drying up, sends his sons (but not Benjamin) to Egypt to buy some of their grain.
- 4) So the ten sons come face to face with Joseph. Because Joseph looks like an Egyptian, they do not recognize him. However, Joseph recognizes his brothers.
- 5) Joseph sends his family back with the grain they purchased; but he slips in the silver that they paid with so that they would not discover it until they got back home to Jacob in Canaan.
- 6) They have to return a year later for more grain. They still do not know who Joseph is. They bring their youngest brother Benjamin, to show that they were not lying about him. Joseph sends them back with grain; but he slips a silver chalice into Benjamin's sacks of grain. As they begin to return, Joseph sends his soldiers out, they find the chalice; and Benjamin is kept in Egypt as a prisoner.
- 7) At this point, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. He invites them to live in Egypt (since their land is not producing crops). Joseph asks for them to get their things and their father and return to Egypt.

### 5. Israel in Egypt.

- 1) Every person with any Jewish blood is packed up and brought to Egypt.
- 2) The sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are carefully segregated from the rest of Egypt, although they are fully made welcome by the Pharaoh of Egypt and by the people.
- 3) Jacob undergoes a transformation of character while he is in Egypt so that

## Israel's Unique Origin

- even the Egyptians come to love and respect him. Prior to this, he was not a very lovely man.
- 4) Eventually, this family dies out, leaving a large new generation behind. Jacob is buried in the land of promise. Joseph is not buried, asking to be buried in Canaan when God takes them back there.
  - 5) A pharaoh arises who does not know Joseph, and all Israel is put into slavery to Egypt.

This summarizes the Hebrew line through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and Jacob has twelve sons, establishing the twelve tribes of Israel.

Obviously, no other nation has a history like this.

We have just had this doctrine, but now we are expanding it.

## Uniqueness of Israel—Expanded

1. Simply put, the name of Israel and what it stands for is unique.
  - 1) Jacob, who was not a very nice person, was duplicitous and scheming.
  - 2) Nevertheless, despite all of his faults, God gives him a new name, Israel. This, by the way, is very illustrative. No matter how nice and swell we are, before God, we are like Jacob, overflowing with faults. When we are regenerated (having exercised faith in Christ), we are given a new name, as it were. Saved and justified.
  - 3) Israel can be used to stand for all the people with the genes of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
  - 4) Israel can be used to stand for nation Israel.
  - 5) But most importantly, Israel stands for those with the genes of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who are born again. True Israel are those men who have believed in the Revealed God, the God of Israel; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For not all Israel is Israel. Also, these same men needed to advance spiritually in the plan of God (that is, they had to grow spiritually). Romans 9:4–8
2. Israel has a unique origin. This was just covered in some detail.
3. Israel has a unique history.
  - 1) The family of Jacob—about 75 people—move to Egypt. They are not an actual nation; they are simply a large extended family. Everyone in this family remains together as a unit when they move to Egypt.
  - 2) The family of Jacob remains in Egypt for about 400 years—most of that time enslaved to Egypt—yet their population continues to grow quickly. By the time of the exodus, there are about two million Israelites. These people are isolated from the Egyptians. Throughout their time, some Egyptians would have come into the family of Israel (women would marry into the family), but this would be reduced dramatically after Israel was

## Uniqueness of Israel—Expanded

- enslaved.
- 3) With great signs and wonders, God, through Moses, leads the people of Jacob out of Egypt. All of them go. Not a single person remains behind.
- 4) Even though this is a nation where every person has believed in their God; they are still disobedient and rebellious. The believer does not lose the sin nature after being regenerated (born again).
- 5) When in the desert-wilderness traveling toward Mount Sinai, the people are many times tested by God and mostly they fail the tests.
- 6) We have much more to find out about this generation. We are only halfway through the four books which are written by Moses (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).
- 4. Israel has a unique relationship with God.
  - 1) The way that God called Israel into existence, by making Abraham the first Jew, is unique.
  - 2) God preserved and isolated the Jews, throughout their early history as simply a family; but also when they were in Egypt; and also when they left Egypt (although a number of non-Israelites will exit with them—these people will be assimilated into the Jews).
  - 3) God will give Israel the Law on Mount Sinai.
  - 4) God will lead Israel back into Canaan.
  - 5) Israel will take the land of Canaan by destroying the people of Canaan, as per God's instructions. (This is the book of Joshua.)
  - 6) God will continue to interact with the people of Israel as no other nation. Many times, God will send His prophets to Israel.
- 5. Israel will have a unique system of laws, the basis of which forms the basis for all establishment law.
  - 1) God will give Israel the Ten Commandments; and then, through Moses, God will give them a massive spiritual infrastructure.
  - 2) These laws are primarily found in the second half of Exodus and throughout all of Leviticus.
  - 3) In his final address to the nation, Moses will speak to Israel about the application of these laws (this is the book of Deuteronomy). What is really happening here is, Moses is reiterating to a new generation the Law and Israel's relationship to God.
  - 4) There are two generations of Israel to consider: (1) Those who are adults when they left Egypt. I call these Gen X. (2) Those who are younger than 20 at leaving Egypt or who are born while Israel is in the desert-wilderness. This is the generation of promise.
  - 5) Gen X will die in the desert-wilderness. This is why Israel remained in the desert-wilderness for 40 years. No one was lost.
  - 6) The generation of promise are raised up, and they will go into Canaan and take the land given them by God.
- 6. Israel has a unique status as a priest nation or as a client nation. We will study this in greater detail in the future.

## Uniqueness of Israel—Expanded

7. Israel has a unique future. Israel still has seven years to play out as a part of the Age of Israel. Then God will bring nation Israel into the Millennium, and Jesus will rule from Jerusalem the entire world. At that time, there will be perfect environment. Man, however, will still have a sin nature.

This is described throughout the Bible. Genesis 12–50 Acts 7 Romans 9

### Lesson 298: Exodus 19:7–9

### Moses, the Mediator Between Man and God

God has already spoken to Moses in Exodus 19:4–6 and now, as a result, Moses has some things to teach to Israel. However, what follows is not going to be a repetition of those words. Recall that, in recording these incidents, Moses often economizes on words. That is, when God tells Moses, “X, y and z”, and Moses records this in Scripture, the next paragraph is not, “And Moses spoke to the elders and he told them, “God says, ‘X, y and z.’” Nor do we have another set of verses where the elders say these same words to the people. If Moses has written those words once, he generally does not repeat them.

Exodus 19:7a *So Moses came....* (NKJV)

Moses then came back down from the mountain (we have no idea how far up he went or how long he was gone). He comes back and convenes the elders.

Logically, Moses went up to speak to God for a very short period of time—perhaps less than an hour—and then he returns to the people with words from God. The couple sentences which we read was only a small portion of what God said to Moses.

Exodus 19:7b *...and called for the elders of the people,...* (NKJV)

There is no way that Moses can speak to 2,000,000 people, so he speaks to the elders and they will in turn address the people in town meetings, if you will.

Moses primarily dealt with the elders of the people and they would relay whatever needed to be said to the rest of the people. This is a very organized system which continues, even though Moses does not specify these individual steps.

Exodus 19:7c *...and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him.* (NKJV)

In this verse we have the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel perfect, 3<sup>rd</sup> masculine singular suffix of *tsâvâh* (צָוָה) [pronounced *tsaw-VAW*] which means *to charge, to command*. There were no imperatives in God's words to Moses so *command*, the choice of most translators here, is not the best of translations. *Charge* is a marvelous translation, but it is anachronistic. A young person (and even an older person) when seeing the English word

*charge* will think of a dozen different meanings before lighting upon the correct one (see what I did there?). This is where my well-used copy of Roget's Thesaurus comes in handy and we could go with *admonish, exhort, enjoin, stipulate, require, impose, decreed, ordain, prescribe*. Several of these choices would require the addition of a preposition to smooth out the meaning: *imposed upon him, prescribed to him, ordained to him, decreed for him, required of him*, etc.

My mostly literal translation: **He put before them these words which Y<sup>e</sup>howah had mandated.**

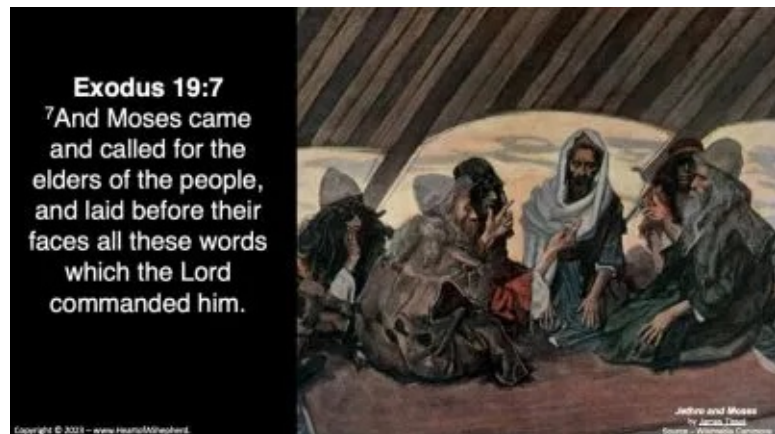
Moses told the elders all that God said to him. He let them know what God required.

In this chapter, God will gather the elders and give them the words from God. In the next chapter, God will speak to all of the people directly. However, the people will be unnerved by hearing God speak to them in an audible voice. They will beg Moses to be God's intermediary.

Hearing God's voice would have been just a dash too real for them.

Exodus 19:7 **So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him.** (NKJV)

These would have been the words which we studied in the previous lesson.



**Exodus 19:7** (a graphic); from [Heart of a Shepherd](http://www.HeartOfAShepherd.com); accessed November 1, 2023.

Exodus 19:8a **Then all the people answered together...** (NKJV)

I would assume that, by *the people*, the elders are meant, as representatives of the people. At the same time, it is very possible that this is a response given by the people themselves. Each elder would gather a large group of people and speak to them, and the people in every case would answer as a group.

The people would say these words:

Exodus 19:8b **...and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do."** (NKJV)

The people said, that they would do all that God said to them. They agree to God's terms.



God often gets our approval or ratification of His laws; not because it makes them any more right, but because what we say stands as a witness against us (or for us). This is the reasonable answer of the people to Moses. Unfortunately, this will not be characteristic of their actual dedication to God's Word.

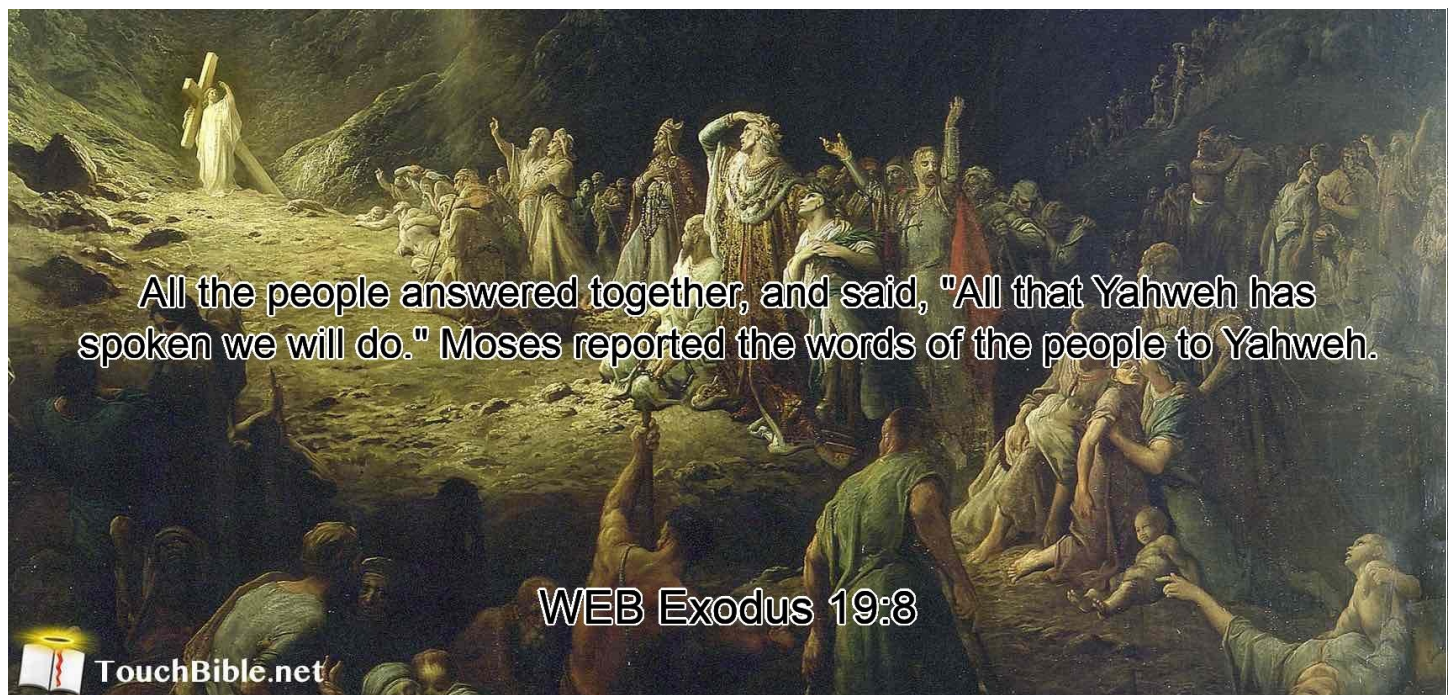
Exodus 19:8c [So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.](#) (NKJV)

Moses returns to God with the affirmation of the people. Moses goes back onto the mountain, where he speaks to God once again. Moses said, "The people are on board with whatever it is You say."

Exodus 19:8 [Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.](#) (NKJV)

The people affirm to the elders, who then affirm their affirmation to Moses. The people agree that they will do all the Lord has said; and Moses reports these words back to God.

**Exodus 19:8 (WEB)** (a graphic); from [Touch Bible](#); accessed November 1, 2023.



Exodus 19:7–8 [So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.](#) (NKJV)

These interactions are always interesting. God clearly knows what the people have said. God is not anxiously waiting atop Mount Sinai, wondering, “What are the people going to say? How will they react to My demands?” God knows what they said and what is in their hearts because He is omniscient. He knew this information from eternity past. Nevertheless, God requires Moses to repeat God’s words to the people, and then to bring back their answer to Him. This affirms their response to God through Moses, as a neutral third party. Moses is a witness to their response and he brings that response back to God. This is an oath.

The people are to understand God in two ways: (1) He is a localized Presence, determining Himself where, when and how He will manifest Himself; and (2) He is an omniscient Being. These two concepts are present together in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 19:9a [And the Lord said to Moses,...](#) (NKJV)

Moses has gone to God—presumably he climbs this mountain again—and he tells God what the people said. Quite obviously, God knows what the people have said (and He knows exactly what the people would do in the future). However, this is done this way so that God’s response can be made known to the people.

Exodus 19:9b [...“Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud,...](#) (NKJV)

God would come down to Moses as a thick cloud. Previously, God has revealed Himself as a pillar-cloud to all the people, but this is going to become even more intense. This cloud would be thick. It would be all around Moses and this mountain.

When we come to Exodus 20, things on and around Mount Sinai will become more intense (which intensity will be discussed at the end of this chapter).

Exodus 19:9c [...that the people may hear when I speak with you,...](#) (NKJV)

God is going to speak audibly to Moses and so that the people will hear God’s words firsthand. They will hear exactly what God is saying. There will be no need for a system of authorities to hear God’s most essential commands.

And as they hear these commands, there will be a fearful majesty about the Mountain of God.

God will do this so that there is no question about God speaking to Moses. The people will hear these words of God themselves.

Exodus 19:9d [...and believe you forever.”](#) (NKJV)

God will also speak audibly to all of the people so that they believe that He is God and that no one thereafter will question Moses’s interactions with God. They will hear God’s voice; and this testimony will be recorded and preserved by the people of Israel. As a result,

despite their rebellious nature, they will believe Moses and Moses' close connection to God forever.

Furthermore, the details of this incident are written and then passed down to every generation since this day. In fact, here we are, 3500 years later, studying these same words.

A massive number of angels (both fallen and elect) were also viewing these events. We, through the near-magic of words and imagination, find ourselves at the foot of Mount Sinai observing these events as well.

A multitude of artists have told us, over a period of a thousand years, how they saw these events (a painting being a snapshot of an artist's imagination at some point in their own experience of reading or being read these very same words).

Exodus 19:9e [So Moses told the words of the people to the Lord.](#) (NKJV)

God told Moses what to say, which included the fact that He, God, would speak to all of the people from a thick cloud. Moses relayed all of this information to the elders, which was then brought to the people.

God, by repetition, is reminding us that this generation of believers in the Exodus generation agreed to God's requirements.

Exodus 19:9 [And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever."](#) (NKJV)

[So Moses told the words of the people to the Lord.](#) (NKJV)

Moses is about to record the famous Law; when God speaks of the Israelites believing Moses forever. He is not referring to their lives then and later in their resurrection bodies (although that is certainly in view) but God is referring to all Hebrew people throughout their succeeding generations to the end of time. Moses will be recording God's Word so it is important that this be believed both here and forever.

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**Lesson 299: Exodus 19:7–12****The People Are to Be Consecrated**

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We are currently at the foot of Mount Sinai. God is speaking to Moses, Moses is speaking to the elders, and then Moses is returning to tell God of the affirmation of the people.

Exodus 19:7 [So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him.](#) (Berean Study Bible)

God has been speaking to Moses, so Moses comes down and speaks these words to the people.

Exodus 19:8 And all the people answered together, “We will do everything that the LORD has spoken.” So Moses brought their words back to the LORD. (BSB)

Upon hearing the words of God, the people affirm their allegiance to Him. Moses goes back to God with this affirmation.

Exodus 19:9 The LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear when I speak with you, and they will always put their trust in you.” And Moses relayed the words of the people to the LORD. (BSB)

God indicates to Moses that things will become very visual with the intent that the people of Israel will place their trust in Moses (which they have done, to some extent, even today).

Exodus 19:10a Then the Lord said to Moses,... (NKJV)

It appears that there are two meetings between Moses and God over a very short period of time. Moses hears the testimony of the people (v. 8) and brings that information to God (vv. 8–9). This necessitates Moses going up Mount Sinai (v. 3), coming down (v. 7) and then going up again (vv. 8–9). Obviously, Moses will have to come back down from Mount Sinai (v. 14). So, this is the second meeting with God on Sinai over a very short period of time.

Exodus 19:10b ...“Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow,... (NKJV)

Moses is to go to the people and prepare them for what was about to take place. They were to be sanctified or consecrated over the next two days.

*Consecrate* is the word qâdash (קָדַשׁ) [pronounced *kaw-DAHSH*] and it is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular, Piel perfect, 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix and it means *to set apart as holy unto God, to consecrate [by purification], to honor as sacred*. Strong's #6942 BDB #872. When interacting with God, the people must be purified; they must be clean. God in perfect righteousness cannot come into contact with unrighteousness. This is all ceremonial, but this is what this purification means.

One of the themes that we find in giving the law is that no unclean thing shall come into contact with any clean thing; this is a shadow which explains that God's perfect righteousness cannot come into direct contact with man's unrighteousness (or even with man's relative righteousness). Therefore, the people must be cleansed by ceremony.

This ceremonial cleansing does not actually cleanse the people. It is illustrative of what has to take place. God and man cannot interact without man being *clean*. We must possess God's righteousness in order to have fellowship with God.

Exodus 19:10c ...and let them wash their clothes. (NKJV)



Part of the consecration process was, the people would wash their clothing. Much of what took place in the Old Testament was ceremonial. This does not mean that God saves white collar workers but not blue collar workers. It simply emphasizes the need for us to approach God in His righteousness. Our unrighteousness, our self-righteousness and/or our relative righteousness are not good enough.

Cleansing oneself prior to worshiping the true God was known probably in the earliest time; although we do not have our recording of this until Genesis 35:2–3: *So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments. Then we will arise and go up to Bethel and I will make an altar there to God."* (NKJV)

Today, the corresponding Scripture is for us to rebound (name our sins to God) prior to taking in God's Word; it is in this way that we are cleansed from all unrighteousness. There are many parallel passages on this cleansing: *Therefore, putting aside all wickedness, in humility receive the implanted word which is able to deliver your souls* (James 1:21). *If we confess our sins then He is faithful and just to forgive us sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1John 1:9). *Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full confidence in doctrine, having our hearts washed from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water* (Hebrews 10:22). *He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy by the washing of regeneration and the renewing by the Holy Spirit* (Titus 3:5; the renewing of the Holy Spirit is the end result of naming one's sins to God). See also 1Corinthians 6:11 Ephesians 5:26 Hebrews 9:10 1Peter 3:21 (properly exegeted in context).

Today, physically cleansing oneself and one's clothes and using deodorant prior to going to church is a matter of good manners to keep from being a distraction to those around you. Beyond good manners, it has no spiritual significance (unless, of course, you shower while filled with the Holy Spirit).

Satan certainly developed his counterfeit to rebound. Pagan rituals also required the cleaning of one's clothes prior to entering into a pagan temple. If they were wearing a dirty cloth, then they had to put on a clean one, or stop and clean that one themselves before entering into their temple, according to Freeman who quoted from Roberts' *Oriental Illustrations*.

Exodus 19:10 *Then the Lord said to*





Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. (NKJV)

**Exodus 19:10 (ASV)** (a graphic); from [Scripture-images](https://www.scripture-images.com/); accessed November 1, 2023.

Exodus 19:11a [And let them be ready for the third day.](#) (NKJV)

There may have been additional instructions. Moses was to give these instructions in order to prepare the people.

What is about to happen will be an amazing encounter between God and the people of God.

Exodus 19:11b [For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.](#) (NKJV)

There are certain recurring themes throughout the Bible. One of them is the third day. Jonah was three days and three nights in the great fish; Jesus Christ was three days in the grave (although His spirit was with God the father and His soul preached to the spirits in prison). The three days gave His disciples time to ponder what had occurred, as only John and the women seemed to have a clue (although even they did not believe in the resurrection until they saw Jesus with their own eyes).

These three days give the children of Israel the same time for introspection to reflect upon what these various rites mean. Despite all of this time for introspection, the people will not be prepared for what is about to take place. They are going through the motions, they are following the rituals of cleansing, and they may even think that they are ready for what is to come, but they will not be ready.

On the third day, the people were to be prepared for God. Y<sup>e</sup>howah-Elohim would come down from Mount Sinai so that He might be seen and heard by the people (obviously, people cannot see God; they are only able to see in whatever way He has chosen to manifest Himself).

Exodus 19:11 [And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.](#) (NKJV)

God would clearly manifest Himself to all of the people on Mount Sinai.

Let me suggest that, for anyone looking to identify Mount Sinai today (if it still remains in a similar form today), is, this has to have a valley before it where two million people might gather, and yet, allow them to see what is taking place on the mountain. We have observed over and over again, when God does great works, He does these works in accordance with His audience, whatever its size. In other words, no one is going to be sitting in such a place where they cannot see or cannot appreciate what is taking place on God's mountain. The setting here is probably very much a natural amphitheater. It will not

be designed for 10,000 or 20,000 people, but for 2,000,000. There may even be a gentle curvature upwards from front to back. However, given the conditions of this region today, that aspect may or may not exist.

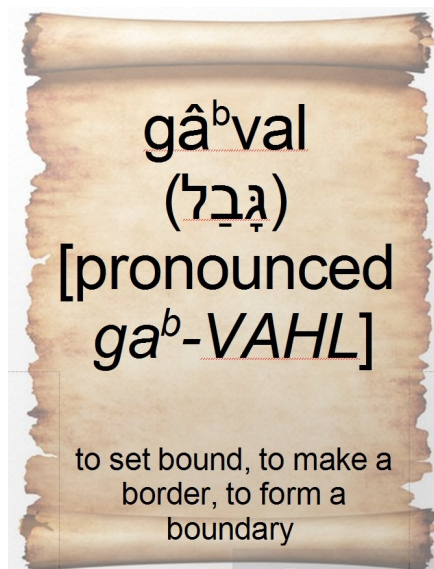
Exodus 19:10–11 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. (NKJV)

The people must be ceremonially cleansed as they will hear God’s actual voice tomorrow. It will not be warm and soothing like Morgan Freeman’s voice. It will not be wry and clever like George Burns’ voice.

Exodus 19:12a You shall set bounds for the people all around,... (NKJV)

There will be a specific boundary set about the mountain. I would guess that, this is an obvious boundary which Moses also sets.

I believe that Moses setting this boundary indicates that he will make this boundary known to the people of Israel. Setting up such a boundary I believe is the act of making it known to the people.



**Gâbal** (a Hebrew word graphic). Background from [Pixers](#); accessed November 1, 2023.

A separation must always be maintained between God and the people.

Exodus 19:12b ...saying, ‘Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain... (NKJV)

The verb is the 2<sup>nd</sup> masculine plural, Niphal imperative of shâmar (שָׁמַר) [pronounced shaw-MAR] and in the simple Qal stem it means *keep, guard, watch, preserve*. In the Niphal, it means *to take heed, be one one’s guard, take care not to*; even though there is no negative in this verse, and the Niphal is passive in meaning, not reflexive. BDB reasons that it could mean *keep oneself, refrain, abstain*; which is the clear use here, as well as in

Genesis 31:29 1Samuel 21:5.

*Going up* is the Qal infinitive construct of ‘âlâh (עָלָה) [pronounced gaw-LAWH] and it means *to ascend*. The infinitive construct is generally a verbal noun; here it means *to ascend, to go up*. The Kukis mostly literal translation of v. 12b: ...[and] say, ‘[You all] will abstain from going up into the mountain...

The people were not allowed to go over the boundary onto the mountain. The mountain is where God will be considered staying, and no one will be allowed onto the mountain (this is where Moses is right now). Again, God is not actually staying somewhere on this mountain. He is simply giving the people a visual manifestation.

Exodus 19:12c ...or touch its base. (NKJV)

The people are not even to move close to the mountain and touch the base of the mountain. Logically, there would be space between the people and the mountain.

Exodus 19:12d Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. (NKJV)

Any person who approaches so closely as to touch the border will certainly be executed.

We also have the Qal active participle of *nâga'* (נָגַע) [pronounced *naw-GAHG*] and that means *to touch, to reach, to strike*. Strong's #5060 BDB #619.

One common figure of speech in the Old Testament is the *polyptoton* [pronounced *po-LIP-tō-ton*], which is the repetition of the same part of speech with a different morphology. In this case, it is the same verb found twice, but in a different tense. The word is *mûwth* (מוֹת) [pronounced *mooth*] and it means *die*. It is found first in the Qal infinitive absolute and then in the 3<sup>rd</sup> masculine singular, Hophal (the passive causative) imperfect. Literally, this would be translated, *in dying, he will be caused to be put to death*. You may recall a similar construction in Genesis 2:17 (which used different verb forms of the same word; Adam was warned, "In dying, you will die."). In this case, it emphasizes the severity or certainty of the punishment and is often translated, *he will certainly [or, surely] but put to death*. Most often, a repetition of the same verb, but in a different form, indicates the certainty and here, the severe results, of disobedience.

God continually sets up a clear delineation between that which is holy and that which is profane. God cannot under any circumstance compromise His perfect righteousness. There can be no fellowship between light and darkness. All religions set up a relationship between a so-called holy God and sinful man. However, there can be no such relationship; there can be no such union. We cannot go into heaven, into God's presence in our filth. Imagine if you will the most elegant dinner in the most elegant restaurant. Everyone is wearing white, everyone looks incredible, and everything is perfectly clean. The wonderful smell of the food permeates the room. Then someone walks into the room covered with feces and urine, as if he has been swimming in a sewer, where that awful smell now permeates the room. That is you standing before God (and me too). We do not even get to walk into the same room; we do not get to come close to God in any way. This is how repugnant man is to God.

It is only human arrogance which makes us believe that there is something that we can do which is good enough for God. All our righteousnesses are as menstruous rags in His sight (Isaiah 64:6b). There is none righteous—not even one (Psalm 14:1b Romans 3:10). For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men—the man Christ Jesus

(1Timothy 2:5). How can we be so arrogant to think that our piddling good deeds and our smiley faces and our pleasant attitude is good enough to win God's approval? **There is no fellowship between the clean and the unclean. What partnership has righteousness and lawlessness; or what fellowship has light with darkness?** (2Corinthians 6:14b). **God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all** (1John 1:5b). **Consecrate the house of the Lord, the God of your fathers and carry the uncleanness out from the holy place** (2Chronicles 29:5b).

When you do not grasp the significance of the Scriptures, when you do not realize that they are a shadow of the good things to come, putting someone to death for touching a mountain seems rather severe. However, this is God's clear, unadulterated Word setting up the clear delineation between that which is sacred and that which is profane; and God will not allow the two to mix, not even in shadow form.

This chapter emphasizes the gap between God and His people; and how there is no easy union between God and His people. God is about to give a set of laws which define how far we are from God behaviorally (and man is unclean before God in several ways; behavior is simply one of them).

Exodus 19:12 **You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.** (NKJV)

Man cannot have direct contact with the holiness of God. Wherever God is, man cannot come. The single exception will be Moses, who will act as a mediator between God and man. By this, Moses will illustrate Jesus the Messiah. Moses will be a type of Christ.

### **Lesson 300: Exodus 19:13–14**

### **The Cleansing of the People**

Exodus 19:12 **You will set a boundary for the people round about, [and] say, '[You all] will abstain from going up into the mountain or [from] touching the border. Every [person who] touches the hill, dying, he will be executed.** (Kukis mostly literal translation)

The people of God are at the foot of Mount Sinai, and God has set up a clear delineation of space between the mountain and the people. That separation illustrates the separation which must be maintained between our sinfulness and God's perfection.

Exodus 19:13a **Not a hand shall touch him,...** (NKJV)

The people will not even be allowed to reach out and touch the man who has violated the border prohibition. This was deadly serious.

Most translators understand this to mean, *you will not touch him*, referring to the person who has crossed this border and touched the mountain (as opposed to, *you will not touch it*, a reference to the border). The man who has crossed that border will be executed and then left to rot in place.

Exodus 19:13b ...but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow;... (NKJV)

Again we have the Qal infinitive absolute of the word *stoned* along with the Niphal imperfect of the same word. The Niphal is the passive verb form.

The verb *yârâʿ* (אַרַי) [pronounced *yaw-RAW*] can mean several things: *throw, shot [with an arrow], cast or rain*. Here, in the context of execution, it means *to shoot with an arrow*. God will not even strike these people dead Himself—He will expect the congregation of Israel to do that. This means that God is deadly serious when it comes to the separation between that which is holy and that which is profane.

Anyone who violated these conditions—maintaining a separation between themselves and the mountain (which is where God is)—would be surely stoned to death or shot through with an arrow.

God is making a clear separation between Himself and the people. He is holy and the people, despite being cleansed (ceremonially), are not. No amount of ceremony will ever make a person clean enough to be near God.

Exodus 19:13c ...whether man or beast, he shall not live.' (NKJV)

Whether a man or beast violates the boundary, he (or it) will be executed. In this passage, God has said this 3 times. This prohibition could not be made any more clear; and the penalty for violating God's requirement here is death. The doubling of the verbs indicates that an execution would certainly take place.

The emphasis is not really upon that day and time, and that God is worried about people rushing the mountain. This emphasis upon not crossing the border under penalty of death can be understood symbolically (or *typically*) to indicate that man cannot have any sort of contact with God without that contact resulting in death. There is a holiness to God that no man is able to breach.

Exodus 19:13d When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain." (NKJV)

When we have the trumpet blast, *then* they will come toward the mountain. There is a verb which is often used in the Old Testament which means *to come near*. That is not the verb used here. The verb found here is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural, masculine singular of *ʿâlâh* (עָלָה) [pronounced *gaw-LAWH*], which means, *to go up, to ascend, to come up, to rise, to climb*. Strong's #5927 BDB #748. Despite the use of this verb, the sons of Israel are not being given the all-clear to come up the mountain. Apparently what is being described is the land leading up to the mountain is going up. However, as previously described, there will be a specific border, and the people are not to cross that.

When they are clean (they have spent 3 days in ceremonial cleansing), then they will be allowed, in God's time, when the trumpet sounds, to go up to the mountain.



We do have another sounding of the trumpet at the end of the Church Age. **For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall all be changed (1Cor. 15:52b). For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ will rise first (1Thess. 4:16).** At that point, we will be brought into the Presence of Jesus, because the barrier between man and God has been opened up.

Exodus 19:13d **When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain.”** (NKJV)

This final phrase is quite interesting to me. In some ways, this mountain is described for us. It would be a mountain which has experienced some volcanic activity (but not an eruption). It is large enough to where the people can all camp near the mountain. There is apparently a plateau at the base of the mountain that is slanted up toward the mountain. The people are allowed to come to that plateau and even walk on it, but there will be a border that they cannot cross. We have this boundary about God, and no man can hope to penetrate that boundary. So even with this sloped region around the mountain, there is still a clearly defined boundary between it and the mountain.

Only Moses has permission to come up the mountain when there is the loud blast of the trumpet in v. 16.

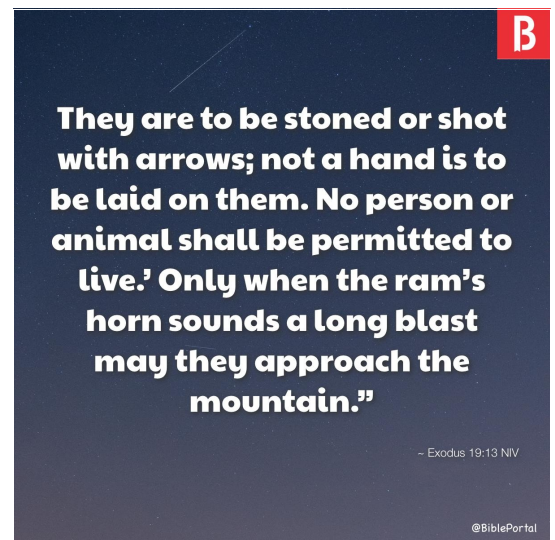
When the people are summoned to the mountain and they will stand at the foot of the mountain (v. 17), which appears to be a rising plateau at the base of the mountain (v. 13b).

Exodus 19:13 **Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live.’ When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain.”** (NKJV)

**Exodus 19:13 (NIV)** (a graphic); from [Bible Portal](#); accessed November 1, 2023.

Exodus 19:12–13 **You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, ‘Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live.’ When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain.”** (NKJV)

God has set clear boundaries for the people to observe, which boundaries are representative of God’s holiness (or set-apartness).



Moses has been receiving these directives from God on the mountain, so now it is time for him to come down the mountain and give these directives to the people. As usual, we are not going to have an exact repeating of what has come before. Moses continually exhibits an economy of words.

Exodus 19:14a *So Moses went down from the mountain to the people....* (NKJV)

Moses has just finished talking to God and is going to come down with directions from Him. Not all of the directives are given to us in this record.

Exodus 19:14b *...and sanctified the people,...* (NKJV)

The sanctification process is what God has delineated in v. 10. They are to wash themselves and their clothing. All of this is ceremonial.

The people were to consecrate or sanctify themselves as they were about to encounter God. Therefore, they needed to be ceremonially clean before God. No one is able to make himself actually clean before God. We simply do not possess that ability (which is the fundamental problem of all religions).

Exodus 19:14c *...and they washed their clothes.* (NKJV)

Part of the ceremonial cleansing would be the cleaning of the people's clothing. They were to appear clean before God.

This is the ceremonial cleaning which Moses takes the people through. We cannot understand the gospel or any other spiritual information unless God the Holy Spirit reveals it to us. This is something that I can only describe from personal experience. I do believe in clearly presenting the gospel; however, the first time that I recall hearing the gospel, it was the most garbled mess that you have ever heard. I knew one thing and that there was a decision to be made; although I did not have a clue at the time as to what that decision was. That is because there was a Christian filled with the Spirit witnessing to me and God the Holy Spirit made that real to me. It took me some time to figure out what the decision was (which was better illuminated for me in the book of John).

These Hebrews and others who read this material or who know of these rituals are witnessed to by means of these rituals. Satan did not know what they all meant in the Old Testament—not as fully as we do now. I don't think that Satan understood that there was going to be a cross upon which Jesus would pay for our sins, despite Satan being the greatest angelic student of the Old Testament. Although Satan no doubt understood Who Jesus was (to a limited degree, at least), during New Testament times, he did not anticipate what was going to occur on the cross. This was unknown to him in all his great intelligence because that is spiritual information which is spiritually understood; this is why millions of people in the Old Testament were saved through hearing the gospel in one way or another, yet Satan did not know what exactly was going on. He saw the rituals, he read about the rituals, he studied the rituals and he counterfeited the rituals, but it was never

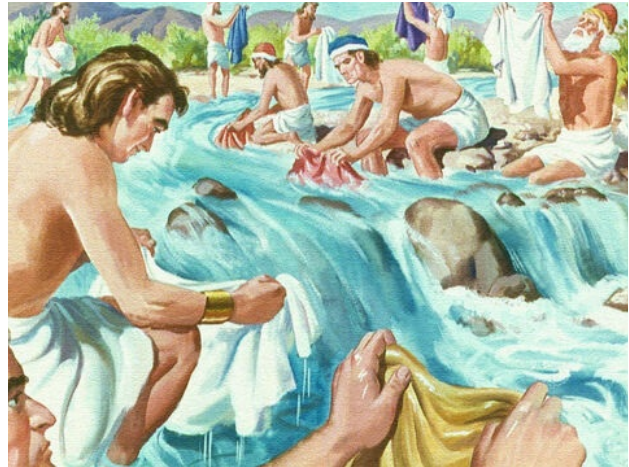
clear to him what they all meant until after the cross. Don't misunderstand me here. I am not implying that Satan could somehow be saved; I am simply stating that he, despite his brilliance, did not have the full picture during Old Testament times despite studying the prophecies.

However, thousands of years before he knew, one person right after another was saved through hearing the Hebrew gospel, often by means of a ritual, where God the Holy Spirit made it real to them and they believed and trusted in Y<sup>e</sup>howah Elohim, the Revealed God.

**The People Washing Their Clothes** (a graphic); from [Free Bible Images](#); accessed November 1, 2023.

Exodus 19:14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. (NKJV)

Moses guides the people in becoming ceremonially pure in preparation for what is about to take place.



Exodus 19:15a And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day;... (NKJV)

The people were given 3 days to prepare, so there was more going on in this cleansing ceremony than simply Moses saying a few words or the people washing their clothing. I would assume that there were animal sacrifices involved.

What was happening is, within 3 days, God would speak directly to all of the people of Israel. God would audibly give the Ten Commandments. Even though the people will be ready, this will really shake them up. Despite all of the signs that the people observed, these commandments coming directly from God, is going to unnerve them.

Exodus 19:15b ...do not come near your wives." (NKJV)

Interestingly enough, intimate relations was seen as something which robbed a man of his purity.

Symbolically, men were about to be joined to God so this precluded their joining with women. It again was a symbolic gesture of purity and being joined to Jesus Christ (Who is known in the Old Testament as Y<sup>e</sup>howah Elohim).

There is an implication here that there may have been some laws or ceremonies in effect for the Hebrew people which are not recorded in Scripture. Whether these arose out of tradition or whether God has revealed some of these ceremonies is up for speculation.

Exodus 19:15 And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives." (NKJV)

One portion of the purification process was not having relations with the wife.

Exodus 19:14–15 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives." (NKJV)

The people were given time to purify themselves.