

## EXODUS

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Most of this was written by me but the excellent notes of Arthur Cundall make up a major part of this exegesis and his notes are informative and very well researched and I thank him.

This exposition could do with some editing but time does not allow for that luxury

According to some scholars, they want to turn Abraham, Joseph, Moses and even King David into legends and myths and the wholesale effect is the rejection of both the Bible and of Israel.

The exodus story is often regarded as a total myth. Did the plagues happen? Can we believe that about 603, 000 Israelites left Egypt and how did the Israelites cope? Can we believe that Pharaoh and his army perished in the sea? It does not definitely say that Pharaoh drowned nor that the sea was the Red Sea and if scholars are wrong on these points, they could be wrong on many other things.

The first chapter reminds us of the cruel bondage of Israel's 400 years in Egypt. At first they were welcomed as Joseph's family, all 70 of them, but the Pharaoh who did not know about Joseph was probably Sethos I. Now the Israelites had multiplied. They had been a useful labour force but now there were too many and were regarded as a potential threat and this resulted in a policy of elimination. The midwives to the Hebrews had to obey the evil law to kill male Hebrew children but they believed that their loyalty to God was more important. Later, Pharaoh put this responsibility on all his subjects involving individual parents and probably his own people in his murderous scheme. He ordered all baby boys to be thrown into the Nile.

The birth of Moses is the main theme of chapter two. A Levite married a Levite woman and they had a son which the mother hid for three months and then, because of the oppression, she made an ark of bulrushes and daubed it with slime and pitch and put it into the Nile. The daughter of Pharaoh saw it and realised it was a Hebrew child and took it home. She then enquired of a nurse to care for the boy and the one found was the child's mother. The child grew and was accepted as the child of Pharaoh's daughter. She called him Moses because she had drawn him out of the water.

When he was older, Moses saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew and was angry and, looking both ways, he slew the Egyptian. But he was seen by two Hebrews and Pharaoh heard of this and sought to kill Moses who fled to Midian. Moses helped the seven daughter of the priest of Midian carry their water. They thought he was an Egyptian. Moses was invited to a meal and stayed and was married to Zipporah, one of the daughters of Jethro, and they had a son, Gershom.

Meanwhile, the king of Egypt died and the Hebrews cried and groaned because of their being oppressed.

Science has explained the validity of the burning bush in Exodus 3 and also explained the plagues as natural phenomena rather than miracles.

Moses turned aside to see the burning bush and the Lord called Moses and spoke with him but first he had to remove his shoes for he was on holy ground. The first lesson that Moses learnt was that God is holy and reverence is always due to His name. Would that churches today recognised this! The Lord said that He was the God of Moses father, and of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And Moses was afraid to look at God who said that He has seen the affliction of His people and heard their cries and that He was going to deliver them and bring them into a land of milks and honey and that Moses was to be sent to Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go. Moses protested, Who am I to do this? And asked God's name.

The reply was I am that I am. In other words, He alone is God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, the Alpha and Omega. He is the God of truth and justice and righteousness and all that is good. The second lesson for Moses concerned the character of God.

God tells Moses to gather the elders of Israel together announcing to them that God will deliver them from the Egyptians and will smite them. He also reminds Moses to tell the elders that God is the father of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and He will lead them into a land flowing with milk and honey. But that the king of Egypt will not let the Hebrews go.

**Exodus 4** shows us Moses as probably the greatest figure in the Old Testament. He was reluctant to accept the Divine commission. He had previously objected on the grounds of his unsuitability but, in the first verse of this chapter, he fears rejection. He had set out to be the champion of his people but was rejected as seen in 2.11. God grants two miracles for Moses who casts his staff on the ground which becomes a snake and picks it up and it is a staff again. The other miracle was that Moses's hand became leprous then as white as snow

The Lord is angry because Moses now states that he is not eloquent and so God chooses his brother Aaron to be his mouthpiece Moses goes to his father in law and says he is going back to his people, the Hebrews, and so he, his wife and son set out on this journey.

Exodus 4.24 onwards creates a problem. Why would the Lord seek to kill Moses who was destined to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt? It is true that Moses had sinned. He had been instructed to warn Pharaoh or his firstborn would die. Moses had been groomed for this service for decades but his life had to be in order first. How could he be the spiritual leader of his people and direct them if he did not keep the law.? He had rejected the law of circumcision (Genesis 17) and his wife was probably against it as it would mean shedding the blood of her son and she found this practise revolting (verse 25), hence her temper. Whatever we or anybody else thinks of this law it was the law of God which law was a covenant and meant Divine ownership

C H Mackintosh suggests that Moses was considering the feelings of his wife rather than the law of the Hebrews. He yielded to Zipporah in this matter.

Scholars believe this text about 'the Lord sought to kill Moses' to be ambiguous. That is to say it is open to or having several possible meanings or interpretations, of an uncertain nature and unclear.

What matters is that Moses went on to be the deliverer of the Hebrews. Moses had to be obedient to God and His law.

The next chapter has Moses and Aaron going to Pharaoh and saying to him The Lord God of Israel says, Let my people go. Pharaoh replies, Who is the Lord. I do not know Him. I will not let the people go. You will not take them from their work

Moses and Aaron had wanted to go three day into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord so that the plagues that were to come would not touch the Israelites. Pharaoh was incensed. He now took the overseers not to bring the straw to the Israelites but that they would have to collect it for themselves but the quota must be maintained as before or there would be beatings

The people were told this and complained to Pharaoh who would not be moved. Then the Israelites complained to Moses and Aaron blaming them for this new development saying, Why have you brought this trouble upon us? We are even more abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh. Moses explains his distress to the Lord, Why have you treated these people with evil? I spoke to Pharaoh as Thou directed and he has treated them with more evil and Thou hast not delivered thy people.

**Exodus 6** has God comforting Moses saying Thou wilt see what I shall do with Pharaoh. He reminds Moses that He is God and know to the patriarchs as Jehovah. He has heard the cries of His people and will bring them out of bondage in Egypt. He says to Moses, tell the people this that I will redeem them and take them as My people and I will bring them to the land which I promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I will give it to as a heritage I am the Lord.

Moses conveyed all of this to the people but they did not listen because of the cruel bondage. Moses is obstructed to go again to Pharaoh and demand the release of the captives. Moses complains that the Hebrews will not listen to him

There follows a list of the tribes and the Lord tells Moses to go again to Pharaoh. Moses replied, I am of uncircumcised lips. Why should he listen to me?

Uncircumcised lips is a strange expression. It really means faltering lips. Moses was not eloquent.

The name Jehovah is the name I am. It is Yahweh.

### **Exodus 7**

Moses is encouraged to go to Pharaoh. God has made Moses to be God in Pharaoh's eyes and Aaron a prophet who will speak to Pharaoh to let the people go. But his heart will be hardened and God will multiply the signs and wonders He will do in the land of Egypt. The Lord will stretch forth His hand over Egypt.

It says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart but as Bible scholar point out this was indirectly and was to show God's glory and power.

Moses was 80 and Aaron 83. Pharaoh will ask for a miracle. Tell Aaron to cast his rod before Pharaoh and it will become a serpent. Pharaoh called all his sorcerers and they did likewise by their enchantments. They cast down all their rods but Aaron's rod swallowed up theirs.

Pharaoh's heart was hardened. He would not let the people go. The Lord told Moses to wait until the morning and stand by the river where Pharaoh comes and take the rod with you. Moses tells Pharaoh to let the people go and he will not listen. The instruction of the Lord for Aaron was to smite the river and waters with the rod and all the waters became blood and all the fish died and even the water in each household was turned to blood so it could not be drunk.

And Pharaoh's magicians and sorcerers with their enchantments did likewise. Pharaoh's heart was still hardened and he would not let the people go. The Egyptians searched high and low for water and dug up various sites. The waters were smitten for seven days.

**Exodus 8** deals with the plague of frogs and Aaron stretched forth his rod and frogs in great abundance sprang up and were even found in bedrooms. And Egypt's sorcerers did likewise so that the land of Egypt was infested with frogs. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron to remove the frogs and he said that he would let the people go. Moses said that the frogs would go and be resident in the rivers. When Pharaoh saw this result of the frogs withdrawal He hardened his heart again and would not let the people go.

Many of the plagues were directed against the important gods of Egypt. The Nile itself was sacred and frogs were connected with the gods Hapi and Hekt particularly as a symbol of fertility. The pollution of the Nile would certainly have provided breeding grounds for the plagues of frogs and then the flies

The next plague was of lice (17) which the sorcerers could not reproduce and said, This is the finger of God. Moses met Pharaoh at the water which he frequented and told him to let the Hebrews go. If not, the next plague will be of flies (v 21) but none will be in the land of Goshen where the Hebrews were. Elsewhere there were enormous swarms of flies. These flies may have been mosquitoes, fleas or sand flies.

Pharaoh called for Moses saying, Go to your God, but Moses said it was not appropriate but they would sacrifice the heathen gods of the Egyptians. Pharaoh allowed Moses to go but not far away to sacrifice to the Lord and he entreated Moses to request the Lord to remove the flies which he did hoping that Pharaoh would respond favourably but he did not after the flies had gone and he hardened his heart again.

The conflict escalates in chapter nine. Pharaoh is again told to let the people go and the next disaster was the cattle plague which is plague five, Cattle which would include horses and donkeys died but none of the cattle belonging to the Hebrews perished. Still Pharaoh would not yield.

The next plague was of boils. Moses sprinkled the dust of ashes before Pharaoh and the people of Egypt suffered boils over their bodies which were painful, embarrassing and disfiguring. The sorcerers were so badly affected that they could not approach Moses who again appears before Pharaoh pleading for him to let the Hebrews go or the full force of the plagues will occur. Moses added, We could have wiped all of Egypt off the face of the earth. Tomorrow there will be a severe hailstorm the like of which has not been seen before and unless the people and the cattle are sheltered they will die. For the first time human life will be involved. An exceptionally violent thunderstorm takes place. Pharaoh admits his guilt for all of this but he was prompted by fear and not a change of heart, Crops and other food supplies were destroyed. Moses spreads his hands before the Lord and the storm ceases. But Pharaoh remains intransigent

The next chapter follows the same pattern. The Lord refers to Pharaoh's hardness of heart which God will use to display His power. Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh and explain, The Lord has said, How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go that they may serve Me. If you do not, then tomorrow I will bring locusts and they shall cover the earth so that the ground will not be seen. They shall be everywhere even in houses..

Locusts are feared as one of the worst catastrophes in the East. In a short time they will destroy all that is green and this could result in famine. Now the Egyptians themselves complain to Pharaoh for all the devastation so far and urge Pharaoh to let the people go. Pharaoh says to Moses and Aaron, Go, but how many should go?

The locusts came and they were dreadful and there were grievous consequences. They destroyed crops and fruit that survived the hail.

In verse 16, Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron urgently and admits that he has sinned and asks for forgiveness and the removal of the locusts and the Lord took them into the sea. But Pharaoh would not let the people go. In obedience to the Lord, Moses stretched forth his hand and darkness fell upon Egypt for three days.

Pharaoh tells Moses to go but leave his livestock but Moses refuses. But Pharaoh would not let the people go and threatened Moses with death saying that he did not want to see him again

**Exodus 11** introduces the Divine announcement of the final plague. At about midnight on an unspecified day all firstborn males would be slain as would the firstborn of all cattle. And there were four days to the Passover.

The Hebrews went to Egyptians for gold and silver which may be deceitful but could be regarded as compensation for their slave labour. Any price to get rid of the Hebrews.

Despite what Pharaoh said about not seeing Moses any more he does, and hears about the forthcoming slaying of all the firstborn. Pharaoh tells Moses to go. All of Moses's other threats came to pass and the final plague to come would surely subdue Pharaoh. Would the Egyptians maintain their support for their revered leader?

**Exodus 12** is one of the more significant chapters in the Bible. The Lord tells Moses that this month in which He is speaking will be the first month of the year and on the tenth day of this month every man is to take a lamb or, if he is poor to share one with a neighbour, which lamb should be a male of a year old and without any defect and care for it until the fourteenth day when it will be sacrificed. But you must take of its blood and put on the sides and top frame of your houses and be fully dressed and have sandals on you feet and your staff in your hand. Roast the meat and eat quickly for on that same night I will pass through Egypt and slay all the firstborn of males and cattle but when I see the blood on your houses I will pass you by. It is the Lord's Passover.

And in years to come when children asked for an explanation of these events they were to be told how God delivered His people from the Egyptians,

This Passover must be commemorated annually

One day after the Passover and for seven days you will eat unleavened bread. On the first day you will remove all yeast from your houses This is a solemn festival. It is the Feast of Unleavened bread. On the seventh day as on the first day you shall not work only in preparing food. Unleavened bread was known as the bread of affliction referring to the Hebrews years of affliction, It contained no sweetness.

Moses told the people all that the Lord had said and they followed the Divine instructions. On that night the Lord visited Egypt and a great wailing went because of the deaths in the homes of the Egyptians.

The Hebrews left Egypt and journeyed from Rameses to Succoth about 600 men on foot plus women and children. and in verse 38 others joined them and are referred to as a mixed multitude

There follows regulations about the Passover. A slave who has been brought by money can partake if he is circumcised, a foreigner or hired servant could not partake. If a stranger joins the Hebrews and his sons are circumcised then he can partake of the Passover, We may not fully understand this but today there are assemblies of Christians who wish to be sure that anyone partaking of the breaking of bread meeting are genuine in their love and devotion to the Lord Jesus. Some people dismiss this as exclusivism but this is shown in God's regulation for the Hebrews at Passover.

**Exodus 13** deals with the consecration of the first born.

The Hebrews had been spared the slaughter of the firstborn in Egypt and this was significant. Moses tells the people of the mighty hand of God in their deliverance from Egypt and that they were to eat no bread containing yeast for seven days and on the seventh day there would be a festival to the Lord. When your son asks, What does this mean? You shall tell him that this speaks of what the Lord did for us in bringing us out of bondage in Egypt with a mighty hand. This will be like a sign on your hand and forehead and the law of God will be in your mouth. You must keep this ordinance yearly. This is the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The Lord states that every first born male and animal must be given to the Lord.

The Lord speaks of a day when your son should question you in this and you shall say that this is a reminder of God's mighty deliverance from Egypt

The donkey was a vital domestic animal and was defined as an unclean beast and could not be sacrificed and so a lamb had to be offered to redeem it, and if it was not redeemed the donkey's neck had to be broken. Leviticus 11 deals with clean and unclean beasts.

Clean beasts were those with cloven or divided hooves and those that chewed the cud.

When the people left Egypt, the Lord did not lead them through the land of the Philistines although it would be a shorter route and, if war broke out, the Israelites although they had weapons ready for a battle, they might want to return to Egypt.

Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made an agreement with the Hebrews that if they left Egypt they would take his bones with them (Genesis 50.25)

They moved from Succoth to Etham on the edge of the desert. The Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud in the day and a pillar of fire by night and these guiding signs remained,

### **Exodus 14**

The Lord tells Moses to encamp near Pi Hahiroth near the sea. The people are confused wandering about by the desert. God says that the Philistines will be hardened and pursue after you but I will gain glory for Israel and the Egyptians will know that I am God.

When Pharaoh was told about the Hebrews moving he said, What have we done? We have lost the services of the Israelites

So he made his chariot ready with 600 chariots and a few more with his officers and they journeyed to Pi Hahiroth.

The Israelites saw them and panicked complaining to Moses, Why have you brought us out here to die in the desert. Didn't we say to you in Egypt leave us alone It would be better to serve the Egyptians than die in the desert

Moses stood firm saying, The Lord will fight for you. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again,

The Lord gave further instructions, Tell the Israelites to move on.

Moses is to stretch his staff over the sea and you will go through on dry ground and the Egyptians will follow you.

The angel of the Lord went behind the pillar of cloud coming between the Israelites and the Egyptians.

Moses stretched over the sea and a strong east wind took effect making a dry path for the Hebrews to cross over. The Egyptians went after them and were thrown into confusion as the sea returned covering the chariots and horsemen and the entire army perished.

The Israelites saw the mighty hand of God and rejoiced

## Chapter 15

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:

“I will sing to the Lord,  
for he is highly exalted.  
Both horse and driver  
he has hurled into the sea.  
The Lord is my strength and my defense;  
he has become my salvation.  
He is my God, and I will praise him,  
my father’s God, and I will exalt him.  
The Lord is a warrior;  
the Lord is his name.  
Pharaoh’s chariots and his army  
he has hurled into the sea.  
The best of Pharaoh’s officers  
are drowned in the Red Sea.  
[b]The deep waters have covered them;  
they sank to the depths like a stone.  
Your right hand, Lord,  
was majestic in power.  
Your right hand, Lord,  
shattered the enemy.  
“In the greatness of your majesty  
you threw down those who opposed you.  
You unleashed your burning anger;  
it consumed them like stubble.  
By the blast of your nostrils  
the waters piled up.  
The surging waters stood up like a wall;  
the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea.  
The enemy boasted,  
‘I will pursue, I will overtake them.  
I will divide the spoils;  
I will gorge myself on them.  
I will draw my sword  
and my hand will destroy them.’  
But you blew with your breath,  
and the sea covered them.  
They sank like lead  
in the mighty waters.  
Who among the gods  
is like you, Lord?  
Who is like you—  
majestic in holiness,  
awesome in glory,  
working wonders?  
“You stretch out your right hand,  
and the earth swallows your enemies.  
In your unfailing love you will lead  
the people you have redeemed.

In your strength you will guide them  
to your holy dwelling.  
The nations will hear and tremble;  
anguish will grip the people of Philistia.  
The chiefs of Edom will be terrified,  
the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling,  
the people of Canaan will melt away;  
terror and dread will fall on them.  
By the power of your arm  
they will be as still as a stone—  
until your people pass by, Lord,  
until the people you bought[d] pass by.  
You will bring them in and plant them  
on the mountain of your inheritance—  
the place, Lord, you made for your dwelling,  
the sanctuary, Lord, your hands established.  
“The Lord reigns  
for ever and ever.”

From the NIV used with permission.

When Pharaoh’s horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea, the Lord brought the waters of the sea back over them, but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground. Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron’s sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing. Miriam sang to them:

“Sing to the Lord,  
for he is highly exalted.  
Both horse and driver  
he has hurled into the sea.

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah). So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What are we to drink?” Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink.

There the Lord issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test. He said, “If you listen carefully to the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you.”

Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there.

## **Exodus 16**

The Hebrews grumbled about Moses and Aaron. They would rather have died in Egypt where they had plenty of food than starve in the desert.

The Lord said that He would rain down bread from heaven and that the people would gather it every day and enough for the day, and test them to see if they will obey His instructions. On the seventh day, they are to gather twice as much as other days.

Moses tells the people this and reminds them that the Lord delivered them from Egypt and that they will see the glory of the Lord who has heard their grumblings.

When the people assembled, they saw the glory of the Lord in the cloud.

That evening quail covered the cloud providing meat for the Hebrews.

In the morning, dew was on the ground around the camp. Then flakes of what looked like frost appeared on the desert ground. Moses said, This is the bread from heaven. As so the people gathered it and ate it for forty years. They called it manna.

None of this bread was to be saved to the morning or it would smell and attract maggots and this did happen to those who did retain it. The manna was white like coriander and like wafers with honey. A jar of it was kept for future generations.

Notice the first reference to the sabbath in verse 29.

## **Exodus 17**

The Israelites grumbled again as they camped at Rephidim. There was no water to drink. This was one of two crises recorded in this chapter.

Moses asked, Why do you quarrel with me? The people replied, Why did you bring us out here to die of thirst?

He appealed to the Lord, What shall I do with these people?

The reply was for Moses to stand before the people. The Lord said, I will stand by you by the rock at Horeb. Stretch your staff which you stretched over the Nile and strike the rock and water will come forth. So Moses did this before the elders of Israel and water did come forth. He named that place Massah (testing) and Meriah (quarreling).

The Amalekites came to attack the Israelites and Moses told Joshua to select men to fight them.

As long as Moses held his hands up, Israel prevailed but when he was tired and his hands dropped the Amalekites were winning. Aaron and Hur would hold up his hands and Joshua won the battle.

Moses told the people to write this down on a scroll as a memorial and to tell Joshua of it. The Lord had said that He would blot out the Amalekites.

An altar was built by Moses calling it Jehovah nissi which means The Lord is my banner because the Lord had sworn that He would have war with the Amalekites from generation to generation.

## **Exodus 18**

Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, heard of all that had been done and came to visit him bringing Zipporah and her two sons. Gershom and Eliezer.

Moses' last encounter with his wife was less than cordial (4.24) and he regarded himself as a stranger in a foreign land and a stranger with his wife.

Events were discussed in Moses' tent and Jethro prepared a burnt offering and other sacrifices and a meal was eaten.

The next day, Moses took his seat as judge dealing with disputes and many cases which occupied him from morning to evening. Jethro queried this and Moses answered including saying that the people wanted to know the will of God. Jethro was a man of discretion and said, This is too much. You will wear yourself out. Select good men who fear God and have them serve the people as judges. It will lighten your load.

Moses did as Jethro suggested making officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens which dealt with more straightforward cases but Moses presided over the complex cases as if it were a High Court.

Jethro returned home.

## **Exodus 19**

The people came to Mount Sinai.

God tells Moses to remind the people what He did to Egypt and how He brought the Israelites to Himself. He continued, If the people fully obey Me and keep My covenant the they shall be my treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.

Moses told the elders this and they said that they would do all that the Lord said.

This was taken back to the Lord by Moses.

The Lord said to His servant, I will come down to you in a dense cloud and the people will hear me speaking to you. Consecrate the people and have them was their clothed and on the third day I will come down to Mount Sinai. The people are not to approach me or touch the mountain. If they do they shall die. Only when they hear the sound of the ram's horn could they approach.

Moses consecrated their people and their clothes were washed. They were to be pure and refrain from sexual intimacy.

The Lord reminded Moses of these thing which Moses repeated to the people.

The main message here was the respect for God's being.

## **Exodus 20**

This chapter gives us the ten commandments isolated from other laws and mediated through Moses. The ten commandments were spoken by God and even some atheists and agnostics have said it is the finest moral teaching anywhere.

The text begins by introducing the Lord who brought Israel out of Egypt.

The first law is, Thou shalt have no other god before Me. There is only one God

Here follows a few verses to emphasise this (There are many more).

Deuteronomy 4.35 The Lord, He is God. There is none beside Him.

Isaiah 43.10 Before me, there was no god formed nor will there be after me

Isaiah 44.6 I am the first and I am the last and besides me there is no god

1 Timothy 1.17 Now to the king eternal immortal, invisible, the only wise God be honour and glory for ever.

The second is, Thou shalt not make any graven image or of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water underneath. Thou shalt not bow down or serve them for the Lord thy God is a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the third or fourth generation of those that hate me but showing mercy to thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.

A graven idol refers to an idol that is worshipped and venerated and false gods have man made images.

In today's thinking, some say that a graven image/ idol is anything that a person enjoys and prefers before God such as a house, car, yacht etc,

People complain that God is unfair in visiting later generations but note these later generations hate Him.

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His Name in vain

This often refers to swearing and blasphemy but it refers to any thing that is dishonouring to God or irreverence and much of that lack of reverence is with us today and some of it is in modern worship. It is lack of respect for the Lord and robbing Him of His Holiness. We do well to remember that one day every knee will bow to the Lord Jesus (Philippians 2. 19 ff),

Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days thou shalt work but on the seventh, which is the sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt not do any work nor thy son, daughter and maidservants nor thy cattle nor any stranger within thy gates. For in six days did the Lord make heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in and rested on the sabbath day. The Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

For the Christian, the Lord's day is the day of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Honour thy father and mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God has given you.

We are to prize and value them and such honour is in action and attitude (Mark 7.6) but not if they are ungodly (Ezekiel 20.18ff)

Thou shalt not kill.

What is meant here is unlawful killing. The exceptions are self defence, capital punishment and one's own welfare

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

This is sexual relationships with some one already married. On a wider scale it could refer to sexual deviance, voyeurism, pornography and such things.

Thou shalt not steal.

This originally referred to kidnapping and abductions and the next chapter deals with the rights of slaves. It also refers to taking what is not yours

Thou shalt not bear false witness.

This includes speaking lies, equivocating, devising and designing to deceive another with damage and prejudice to their reputation

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, his wife, nor his manservant or maid servant nor his ox or his ass or anything that is his.

This is obvious as it is the desire to have what is not theirs to be had, and it can become possessive and lead to other things.

And the people saw and heard the thunder and lightnings and the mountain smoking and they were afar off. The people asked Moses to speak to them. They feared the Lord. Moses reassured them, Fear not. The Lord will test you so sin not.

The Lord's message to the people was that they do not make idols. An altar was to be erected for sacrifices and whenever you do this He will bless you

There is an interesting footnote. The Lord says, Neither shall ye go up to the altar that thy nakedness be not seen.

Dr Robert Gordon in A Bible Commentary for Today, Pickering and Inglis ISBN 0 7280440 writes:

You must not go up steps to any altar for with the short tunics and other clothes that you wear people may see up your tunic and discover your undergarments which is nakedness. Neither shall you perform sacrifices as do the heathen in ordinary clothes or wearing no clothes at all.

How does this relate to modern day fashion and short skirts?

## **Exodus 21**

If you buy a Hebrew slave he is to serve you for six years and then go free. If he comes alone he goes alone but if he has a wife, she goes with him. If the master gives the slave a wife and she bears children the woman and the children belong to the master. But if the slave says that he loves his wife and children then the matter is taken before the judges and the slave has his ear bored with an awl he will be the master's servant for life

If a man sells his daughter as a slave she should not go free as male servants do. If she does not please her master he must allow her to be redeemed. He must not sell her to foreigners. If she is chosen for the master's son she must have the rights of a daughter. If the son marries another woman he must not deny the first wife of her food, keep and marital rights,,if not she must be freed.

Anyone who strikes another with a fatal blow shall be put to death unless it is unintentional then they can flee to a place God will choose.

Anyone who attacks a parent or curses a parent shall die.

If someone hits another with a stone or a fist and the victim does not die he attacker must pay compensation. Anyone who beats a slave who dies must be put to death.

If a pregnant woman is injured and gives birth prematurely the offender must be fined if the injury is not serious. The principle is life for life, an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot and so on.

An owner who destroys an eye of a slave must let the slave go and this applies to knocking out a tooth.

If a bull gores someone to death, the animal is to die but not be eaten. However, if the bull often gores people and the owner has been warned about this and these injuries reoccur the bull is to be stoned to death and its owner must die. However, if payment for injuries is demanded the owner of the animal may redeem his life by payment.

If an uncovered pit causes an ox or donkey to fall into it, the owner of the pit must pay for the loss and take the dead animal in exchange.

### **Exodus 22 and 23**

I quote completely from Arthur Cundall's excellent notes.

The theft of an ox was more serious than that of a sheep, not only because it was more valuable, but because it involved a man's livelihood.

To kill or sell a stolen animal made the crime more serious.

Nathan's judgement on David is an interesting example of the application of the principle involved here (2 Samuel 12. -15).

The death of burglar in daytime is viewed differently because, at first, assistance would have been more readily available and, secondly, his identity would have been more easily established, so that he could have been brought to trial. There is an allowable difference of responsibility when an item has been entrusted for care, borrowed or hired with its owner, a further distinction being made when the person receiving it is in no way responsible.

The coming near to God (verses 8 -9) to determine guilt or innocence presumably involved the use of the priestly oracle. The sanctity of an oath made before God is evident and shows how real God was for both parties.. It was to be taken seriously not as a mere formality as is often the case in legal procedure today.

It must be noted that a consecrated people must have corresponding moral standards, complete dedication to God is necessary. This involves absolute separation from idolatry and heathen customs. God is so uniquely unrivalled that any recognition of, or compromise with heathenism in any form is unpardonable. Stewardship was to be joyous and spontaneous not grudgingly. The dedication required here is particularly illustrated in the presence of the firstborn in lieu of the first born who were spared at the time of the Passover.

Compassion must be shown to strangers and the underprivileged were they to bear in mind their own background and bondage. The despairing agony of their own distress ought to make them sensitive to the needs of others.

Within the covenant community there must be brotherliness. This was to extend even to the animals of their enemies. Those properly related to God \re also related to each other like the spokes of the wheel. John stresses the same point in the New Testament (1 John 4, 20-21).

A separated people must have distinct standards. This, inevitably, involved negative aspects (22,19. 31). But true religion is much more than a series of prohibitions. Foremost among the positive aspects in this section is the unswerving pursuit of justice without fear or favour (23.1-3, 6=8) — compare Deuteronomy 16.20. The man of God must show complete integrity.

Note : The harvest connection of Israel's principal feasts are evident (23, 14 - 17). Only the first (Unleavened Bread) has a historical connection, although later the 'feast of the harvest' (or weeks) was traditionally connected with the giving of the law at Sinai and the feast of ingathering (Tabernacles of Booths) celebrated the wilderness period.

Verses 20.33 of chapter 23 deals with the principle of Israel's history and attention is switched to the future. The principle was that obedience leads to blessing while disobedience leads to disaster frequently called 'Deuteronomic' since it is most clearly expressed in that book. It is also found throughout the Old Testament. Experience shows that those who cooperate with God, mindful of His wise commands and living in harmony with others and their environment, usually prosper. Later, Israel ran into grave difficulties when a stereotyped theology attempted to force a general principle into an unflexible equation which allowed no exception. Job, Jeremiah and the Psalmists called into question or violently attacked the perversion (Job 21 1-26, Psalm 7, Jeremiah 12. 1-4).

Incidentally, the Book of the Covenant, like contemporary secular covenants, ends with a series of blessings and warnings.

The blessings promised are protection (30), guidance (20,23) preparations (20,27) success in war (22,11), prosperity, health, fertility, longevity(26), and national security (31). Only during the regimes of David and Solomon were Israel's frontiers approximate to the ideal (verse 31). This was because the conditions outlined were not met. Israel failed to give complete obedience (21,22) and uncompromising separation from evil (verses 24, 32, 33) to the Lord (25) and the warnings of these verses were largely unheeded, If only Israel had been obedient.

An angel or messenger appears in verses 20-23. This reference could be to Moses or Joshua but 'my name is in him' suggests a divine being, and an oblique reference to the activity of God.

Hornets (verse 28) could be taken literally although there is no historical evidence of any massive plague. Or it could refer to Egyptian raids or policy which weakened the Canaanites capacity to resist a major invasion.

## **Exodus 24**

In this chapter the covenant is sealed. The solemn ratification of the covenant indicated here connects firmly with contemporary procedure and is a further indication of the antiquity of the record. The committing to writing (verse 4), the public reading and unreserved acceptance and the special manipulation of blood all witness to the seriousness of this occasion. God, represented by the elders, and the people are systematically conjoined by sharing in the one blood and their participation in a sacramental meal.

For a short period in Israel's history, there was complete unity in promising obedience to the Lord and His requirements (compare Deuteronomy 5. 27-29). This is the honeymoon period referred to by Hosea and Jeremiah (Hosea 2.15, 13.9, Jeremiah 2. 2-3) when both look back nostalgically to an initial period of purity in Israel's relationship with God. Unfortunately it was too short-lived. Indeed, of those who were especially privileged here. Nadab and Abihu were soon to be destroyed because of their unforgivable presumption (Leviticus 19 verses 1 -3) while Aaron and Hur (verse 14) were to fail in the temporary leadership entrusted to them (chapter 32) There was, however, no element of failure in Joshua who is mentioned here for the second time (13).

A theophany is a manifestation of God.

The two theophanies (10, and the second in verses 13-17) are typical of the Old Testament in that more is concealed than revealed suggesting God's ultimate responsibility. Thus there is no conflict with 33.20, In the first (10) reference is made solely to the dais on which God stood, whilst the cloud and fire (15-17) like the thick darkness more than hint at God's hiddenness.

## **Exodus 25**

### THE TABERNACLE

There is a lot of detail in these chapters and we will only deal with outlines. These are only notes. It is up to others to interpret and explain its connections and relevance in our day.

The Lord sets out the offerings or requirements for the tabernacle in which He says, Make me a sanctuary, The list is

gold, silver, bronze

blue, purple and crimson yarn

fine linen

goats hair and tanned rams skins

fine leather

acacia wood

oil for the lamps

spices for the anointing oil and fragrant incense

onyx stones and gems for the ephod, the priestly garment, and breastplate

The Ark of The Covenant was to be made and overlaid with pure gold and so should the carrying poles. The 'lid' was the mercy seat also to be made of pure gold and inside the ark was to be placed the covenant which the Lord would give. From there, He would give the Israelites His commands.

The next item was to be the Table of Presence made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold with carrying poles of the same wood overlaid with gold. The unleavened bread will be set on the table before the Lord always. This was the consecrated bread, the showbread and its exact purpose has never been explained. It was also known as the bread of presentation.

Then comes the Lampstand made of pure gold with six branches with seven lamps three on each side and the central one which was the main stem. It was known as the Menorah. Each of the six branches and the central column had cups which gave light in the tabernacle.

## **Exodus 26**

This chapter deals at first with ten indoor curtains of fine linen with blue, purple and crimson thread. The curtains were in two groups of five linked together

There were also outdoor curtains, eleven of goats hair as the covering for the tent and, above that, a covering of rams skins dyed red and, above that, a covering of badgers skins

We come to the boards of the tabernacle the upright wooden walls to be sunk in silver sockets and there are the crossbars or horizontal bars from which curtains were hung including the veil of blue, purple and scarlet, crimson, thread and woven linen. The Ark of the Covenant was behind the veil which veil was a divider between the holy place and the most holy. The Table of the bread of presence was outside the veil on the north side and the lampstand was on the south side.

There was a screen for the door of the tabernacle made of the same material as the veil hung from five wooden pillars overlaid with gold as was the veil. One could remark how particular the Lord was and here all the materials came from but we must remember that God deserves the best and what He accomplished for the Israelites were sensationally marvellous.

The tabernacle was 44 foot by 15 by 15 and, of course, portable for people on the move.

### **Exodus 27**

Instructions are given to make a four square altar overlaid with bronze with four horns at each end with details about pans for the ashes, a brass grate and staves to carry it.

Then there are instructions for the outer court, dimensions of which are given above in the last chapter. There are details about the hanging or screen at the gate of the court and how Aaron and his sons had to keep the tabernacle in light from morning to evening as it had no windows. It would be a statute for generations for the children of Israel.

### **Exodus 28**

This chapter deals with priestly garments particularly those of Aaron although his sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar are involved. The Lord says, Make sacred garments for Aaron to give him honour and dignity for his consecration as priest.

The ephod was to be of gold with blue, purple and scarlet yarn. Take two stones and engrave the names of the sons of Jacob on the two stones and make the stones of gold filigree and fasten them on the shoulders of the ephod.

The breastplate for seeking directions is to be made like the ephod and of fine linen. It has to be square. Four rows of precious stones are to be put on it with gold filigree. There are to be twelve stones each bearing the name of a tribe of Israel. The Urim and Thummin were in the breastplate, but no one really knows what this is. When Aaron enters the holy place he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart.

Make a robe entirely of blue cloth with an opening for the neck at the centre. Make pomegranates and golden bells around the hem. Aaron is to wear this when he ministers. When he enters the holy place the bells will sound and when he comes out they will also sound so that death is denounced.

Make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it Holiness unto the Lord. Attach it to the turban so that it will be on Aaron's forehead and he will bear the guilt involved in any iniquity involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrated. The plate will be on Aaron's' forehead continually and be acceptable to the Lord

Weave a tunic of fine linen as the tunic. The tunic for Aaron and his sons will give them dignity and honour. Make undergarments which must be worn from the waist to the thigh when they minister in the holy place so that they will never incur iniquity or die.

## **Exodus 29**

We now come to the consecration of the priests. A young bull and two rams and some unleavened bread are made ready.

Aaron and his sons come to the entrance of the tent of the meeting, are washed and dressed in their priestly attire and anointed with oil and thereby ordained.

The Lord gives instructions.

Take the bull and the priests shall lay their hands on it. It is killed and some of its blood is put on the horns of the altar with the finger. The other blood is poured out at the foot of the altar. Take all fat that covers the entrails, liver and kidneys and burn them upon the altar. The flesh of the bull, its hide and entrails are burnt outside the camp. It is a sin offering.

One of the rams is offered as a burnt offering after the priests have laid hands on it and is a sweet fragrance unto the Lord.

The second ram is killed after the priests have laid hands on it. Some of the blood is put on the right ear lobes of the priests, thumbs of the right hand and big toes of the right foot. Blood is to be splashed at the sides of the altar and some with anointing oil is sprinkled upon the priestly garments thus consecrating them. Take the fat that covers the entrails, liver and kidneys and the fat organs with the fat of them and some of the bread and wave it before the Lord as a wave offering. The ram is sacrificed but the breast of the ram is also to be a wave offering. This is the ram of ordination. Aaron and his sons shall eat of its breast.

The Lord continued, Do for Aaron and his sons all that I have commanded you.

Every day sacrifice a bull as a sin offering to make atonement. Purify the altar over seven days. It is to be most holy.

Each day you will offer two lambs one in the morning and the other at evening. With the first include a measure of flour with oil and wine. It is a drink offering.

The other lamb in the evening is to be as the morning sacrifice.

These offerings shall be continuous burnt offerings throughout your generations performed at the door of the tent of the meeting where I will meet with you and the Israelites and speak to you. I will dwell with my people. I am the Lord their God.

## **Exodus 30**

Of this chapter, I have Arthur Cundall's permission to quote his notes

"The altar of incense is here mentioned for the first time possibly to highlight the importance of the altar for sacrifice (often referred to simply as the altar) in the main legislation (27, 1-8). The former is often called the golden altar to distinguish it from the sacrificial bronze altar. Verse 6 could be read as implying the altar of incense was within the holy of holies but 49:10, 29:27

makes it clear that it was in the holy place, before the veil, and between the table of shewbread and the lampstand

In the ancient world, and among primitive people today and as late as the eighteenth century in Britain it was considered dangerous to take a census (see 2 Samuel 24). A compulsory ransom payment, binding on all without distinction (verses 11-16) was levied to secure protection from God's anger. In Nehemiah's time the tax was reduced to one-third of a shekel. Assuming that this referred to the lighter Babylonian shekel this was about half the amount required here and in the New Testament times (Matthew 17.24). Possibly this reduction was due to the considerable poverty in the early post-exilic period

It is surprising that no specifications are given for the bronze altar. It was made of the mirrors of the ministering women and served as a reminder of that cleanliness, inward and external, necessary before undertaking any service for the Lord.

Anointing was regularly associated with consecration to a task or function and with healing. It also had a secular use as a cosmetic. The anointing oil was made of the finest ingredients, myrrh from Arabia, cinnamon, cassia from China and aromatic cane from India. Everything connected with the tabernacle was anointed except the mercy seat and the cherubim, which represented God's throne. As with the incense there was to be no secular use. It was reserved exclusively for the Lord. Incense usually meant something that went up from the sacrifices which the deity could smell and, in a sense, assimilate (Genesis 8.21) It also served to veil God from human eyes (Leviticus 16.13). At an early date, it signified the prayers of the faithful (Psalm 141.2, Revelation 5.8, 8.3)."

### **Exodus 31**

And the Lord spoke to Moses, I have called Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur of the tribe of Judah filling him with the Spirit of God and knowledge of workmanship in gold, silver and brass, stone cutting and wood carving.

I have given him Aholiah of the tribe of Dan to whom I have given wisdom that they may make all that I have commanded you, the tabernacle, the candlestick, furniture, altar of incense, altar of burnt offerings, the laver, the holy garments for Aaron and his sons, the oil and the sweet incense.

Moses is instructed to impress upon the Israelites to keep the sabbath and if it is defiled the guilty person is to die and if anyone works on the sabbath they shall also be cut off. Six days are for work. The sabbath is to be preserved throughout all generations. The Lord resteth on the seventh day.

Moses was still on the mountain with God who had made two tablets containing the commandments written by the finger of God.

### **Exodus 32**

I can do no better than begin by quoting A E Cundall's notes on chapter 32

"In this chapter, Moses is on the mountain taking instructions and statutes from the Lord. The Israelites are getting impatient about his absence and persuade Aaron to make a golden calf that they can worship. This was a dreadful action by the Israelites and it might seem inexplicable had we no knowledge of the frailty of human nature. Israel had been spectacularly delivered from Egypt, encountered God at Sinai and solemnly sworn obedience to God (19.8, 24.7). How soon it evaporated. Their desire for a visual focus of worship is not unique.

Calf is misleading. Young bull would be more accurate referring to the chief image of procreative power. That the Israelites became involved in play is also misleading since it was sexual play. It was a drunken, licentious orgy typical of Canaanite Baal worship. Loss of clothes, inhibitions and decency were evident and all in a mainly public area.

Aaron appears to be weak and non-existent. He timidly went along with the demands of the people and personally hand-sculptured the image. He may have been sincere in his personal desire to retain the worship of the Lord although it is doubtful that the people shared that desire. The whole episode reveals his spineless compromise. Earlier, details of the tabernacle, priestly duties and the garments were set out."

We ask, What about the commandments, Thou shalt not commit adultery and Thou shalt not covet?

The Lord tells Moses to go down into the camp. Joshua speaks of the noise from the camp but it is not the noises of victory but defeat. Moses was angry and smashed the two tablets of stone on which were written the ten commandments. He burned the golden calf and ground it into powder and put it in the water supply and made the Israelites drink it. He was angry with Aaron for allowing this despicable and unruly behaviour.

Moses calls out, Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me.

An instruction is given to kill those who were still engaged in this debacle and about 3000 were put to the sword.

Moses pleads with the Lord to forgive the people but He does not and sends a plague among them.

It must be taken into account the severity of what the Israelites were doing, the total disregard for God's law, and they had shattered the covenant they made with God. It was gross disobedience to God and it was blatant idolatry akin to the worship of Baal. God condemns nakedness, as in the final verses of chapter 20 where clothing is inadequate, and as well that, God condemns nudity.

Leviticus 18 has much to say about this.

### **Exodus 33**

The Lord tells Moses to move on and that an angel will go on ahead and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. But I will not go with you for the people are stiff-necked and I might destroy them on the way.

The people were upset at being called stiff-necked.

Moses used to have a tent pitching it some distance from the camp where people would come to him for guidance and advice. When Moses went into the tent the people arose and stood up, As he entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend to the entrance and the people would worship God and the Lord would speak to Moses.

Moses asked the Lord to teach him His ways that he must know Him and has found favour in God's eyes. This people, added Moses, are Your people.

The Lord's reply was that He would go with them and that He would give Moses rest. Moses replied, If Thy presence does not go with us, do not send us away from here. You must go with us to distinguish us from all the other nations.

The Lord replied that He would go with them and that He was pleased with Moses. Moses then asked if he could see God's glory.

The answer was that there was a place nearby and the Lord said, When My glory passes by I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover your eyes. You will see My back but not My face.

### **Exodus 34**

The Lord instructed Moses to prepare two stone tablets like the two that he smashed and that God would write on them the same as on the first set. Moses was told to come up to the mountain alone tomorrow and not even the herds were to be nearby.

Moses did as he was bidden and the Lord appeared in a cloud saying that He was the God of mercy, forgiveness, slow to anger, full of love and compassion but that He would punish the guilty to the third and fourth generation (of those who deliberately disobeyed Him)

Falling on his face, Moses worshipped the Lord and pleaded for the people to be forgiven.

The Lord said that He was making a covenant with the people and that He would perform wonders driving out the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. The Lord said, Obey what I command you this day. Do not make any treaty with the people who live in this land. Destroy their altars Do not worship any god but Me for I am a jealous God. Marriage with the heathen will lead your people astray.

Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The firstborn even of animals belongs to Me.

The seventh day is the day of rest.

Keep the Feasts of Weeks and the Feast of Ingathering.

Three times a year will all males appear before Me.

No blood sacrifice will be accompanied with anything containing yeast.

Bring the first fruits of the soil to the House of the Lord.

Do not cook a goat in its mothers milk.

Moses was with the Lord forty days and forty nights without food or water and was told to write all this down.

When he returned to the people his face shone and he was radiant but did not realise this. He told the people what the Lord had said. After which he put a veil on his face and did so whenever he spoke with God.

### **Exodus 35**

This chapter deals with the regulations for the sabbath which is the holy day. the seventh day when no work is to be done. Anyone who breaks the sabbath is to be put to death and no fires were to be lit in any dwelling.

The materials for the tabernacle are again set out as in chapters 25 and in the following chapters, and the senior workmen, Bezalel and Aholiab, are mentioned as in Chapter 31.

### **Exodus 36**

This is another repetition of what has been said in previous chapters although the people are told to give no more as what was given was enough, Verses 8 to 38 repeat the work needed to build the tabernacle and its contents and furnishings.

### **Exodus 37**

This repeats the details of the building of the Ark, Exodus 25. 10, the Table Exodus 25. 23 the Laver, Exodus 30. 17 and the Altar of incense, Exodus 30.1

### **Exodus 38**

Another account of the Altar of Burnt offerings, Exodus 27.1, the courtyard, Exodus 27.9, the materials used and the community's giving.

### **Exodus 39**

This repeats the details of the priestly garments as in chapter 28, 1 ff., the ephod, chapter 28.2, the breastplate, 28.8. The work of the tabernacle is completed according to the Lord's instructions given to Moses.

### **Exodus 40**

These notes are by Arthur Cundall.

The further repetition serve to underline the sanctity and solemnity of this period in Israel's history. We constantly read of Moses 's obedience and a further seven times in the erection of the tabernacle and the placing of its accessories (19, 21,23, 25, 27, 29. 32). The recurrence of the 'perfect number ' is probably not accidental The total value of the whole is incalculable and yet every item had been made possible of mainly poor people recently delivered from slavery. Flittingly the erection of the tabernacle marked the first anniversary of the deliverance from Egypt (1, 2, 17)

God had promised... Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst (25.8). The people had kept their part and now God honoured their commitment (34-38). God was in the midst of His people but His awesome majesty even prevented Moses from the tabernacle. The cloud and fire would be a continuous Divine presence and guidance (36-38) but we do not read of a triumphal entry into the Promised Land.

The robe of the ephod was doubtless similar to the robe worn by Christ at His crucifixion(John 19. 23) which may hint at His High priesthood.

(11,113)

