

Moses and the Commandments by Rembrandt (1606-1669)

THE STRUGGLE WITH GOD

A Study of Genesis through Deuteronomy

by

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Covenant Bible Studies

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Dedicated

to

THE CONGREGATION

OF

OUR LORD'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

New Berlin, Wisconsin

I was privileged to be the pastor of this wonderful congregation from 1977 to 1982. It was this congregation that tolerated my Biblical illiteracy, and it was this congregation that helped me find a new path to Biblical literacy. When I admitted my Biblical illiteracy to this congregation and invited people to meet with me to study the Bible, a number of people from this congregation met with me every Sunday evening and every Thursday morning to study the Bible, ask questions about it, and make practical applications from the insights that we had discovered together.

It was also to this congregation that I had to announce one Christmas Eve that I was being appointed to The United Methodist Church of Oconomowoc. The move was too soon, for we had not finished studying the whole Bible, but I accepted the appointment. The insights I gained from this wonderful congregation I took with me and they have enhanced my entire ministry. I can only say that I'm sorry that I left you at such a time and thank you for your love and understanding.

The bishop did offer to rescind the appointment, and I was tempted to continue my ministry at Our Lord's United Methodist Church forever. I'm not sure that would have been good for the congregation or for me. I moved on, but I'll never forget what this congregation did for me. I only hope that I contributed something to them.

James T. Reuteler, Ph.D.

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COVENANT BIBLE STUDY

Background

Having majored in the Humanities in College (which had a good dose of Religion and Bible Courses), Systematic Theology and New Testament in Seminary, and Social Ethics and Missiology in Graduate School, I expected to emerge Biblically literate. I was wrong.

One day in my office, I came to the realization that I was Biblically illiterate, after I had earned a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Divinity, and a Ph.D. The first step to becoming Biblically literate is to confess that you are Biblically illiterate. That is precisely what I did in the summer of 1979. My first step out of illiteracy was to read the Bible for an hour each morning before I began my workday, but I found that lonely and unsatisfying.

This led me to a second step that changed me, and my ministry forever. It also enabled me to see how little the Church knows about the Book it claims as its source for faith and morality. The tragic thing is that most people do not recognize that they are Biblically illiterate, and so they go on quoting Scripture as though they know what they are talking about. In my second step I invited members of my congregation to join me in the study of Scripture on Sunday evenings. I was not sure what I was going to do, but I knew that I had to do something. About a dozen parishioners were willing to confess that they were also Biblically illiterate, and so we entered into a Covenant to study the Bible every Sunday evening at 6:00 p.m. It took us six years to study from Genesis through Revelation, taking a major section each year. Below is a list of the way in which we proceeded:

- The Books of Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy)
- The Books of History (Joshua through Esther)
- The Books of Wisdom (Job through the Song of Solomon)
- The Books of Prophecy (Isaiah through Malachi)
- The Gospels and Acts
- The Letters and Revelation
- The Apocrypha

The most difficult part was not working through all those laws, but through one hundred and fifty Psalms. By the time we finished there were two groups meeting with me. The second group met on Thursday mornings at 9:30 a.m. As both groups reflected on our ordeal through the Psalms, we decided not to do that again. There had to be a better way.

Not yet realizing what that better way might be, I moved to another congregation, where I started four groups, the two new ones meeting on Sunday night at 7:30 p.m., following the 6:00 p.m. group, and another one on Wednesday afternoon at 1:00 p.m. As we began our journey through the Bible, some of the participants suggested studying the Apocrypha as well. That gave me an idea. I included the Apocrypha with the Wisdom Books, and began using a Psalm as a meditation prior to beginning each session. Occasionally, I

selected a Psalm to fit what we were studying; but at other times, I just used the Psalm for the week.

In spite of our difficulty with the Psalms, I still believe in studying the Bible just the way it is written. After we have done that, we may begin to explore its themes and topics, but not before. We must first do our homework. This holds for youth as well as for adults. The following reason was given in the October, 1985 issue of *The Christian Herald*:

For teens, studies of Bible books are preferable to studies of topics. Teenagers accustomed to only thematic Bible Studies may find themselves and their friends in a vulnerable and dangerous spot when they get to college. Cults that focus on reaching college students use topical-style Bible studies that select verses throughout the Bible to “prove” their false doctrines. A solid foundation in Bible-book studies will help young people not to be taken in by cultic teachings. Studies on topics are helpful after a group has done a number of Bible-book studies.

The difficulty with Bible Study in the manner that I am proposing is the tendency to get bogged down, or to spend too much time on a few passages. I would like to suggest that you keep moving. That is why I have broken each book into a number of lessons. You should move on, even if you have not finished your discussion. All this assumes, of course, that you are studying with other people, which I believe to be an absolute necessity. Very few people continue studying the Bible on a regular basis without the discipline of meeting with others. This is necessary because others contribute to your understanding and they keep you honest about your conclusions.

Methodology

At first I called what I was doing *In-depth Bible Study*, but after proceeding through the Bible three times, I decided to change the name to *Covenant Bible Study*. My goal had been to take six to twelve chapters in an hour or hour and one-half session. I liked the longer sessions better, but I am aware of the contemporary expectation to finish everything within an hour. Covering that much material in such a short time can hardly be called dealing with it in depth. My goal was however to get the stories or passages on the table, answer questions about them, and apply them to modern life. This required a Covenant between pastor and people. We covered each major section in nine months, meeting around thirty times in the course of that time. I am not worried that we did not spend enough time on a section, for I have found many themes coming up again and again. Our purpose was to study the whole Bible in Covenant together, trying to understand how the various components relate to one another.

One thing I insisted upon from the beginning—everyone has a right to their own opinion without having to fear criticism from anyone in the group. I have also advertised what we were doing in the newspaper, and have managed to pick up people from all kinds of traditions. Their contributions have greatly enriched the Bible Study Groups, keeping us honest about their traditions. Without their presence, we would not have treated their traditions fairly. One tradition that was never represented, although I wish it were, was

modern Judaism. Covenant Bible Study is best done in an Ecumenical context, but that of course, raises some other questions. Does it mean that we are trying to win or convert people of other traditions to our own? My answer has always been, "No!" Their traditions need to be treated with respect, and they are encouraged to stay within their own traditions. The purpose of Covenant Bible Study is to expand our understanding of the whole Bible, and the only way we can do this is to include people of other traditions, without trying to convert them.

Dr. Harrell Beck, from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University suggested some principles I have used. He was addressing a group of pastors at a School for Christian Ministry, and he stressed how important it was to teach the Old Testament to children, believing that it could be done. His methodology was very simple, tell them a story, give them an opportunity to ask questions about the story, and work together on the practical application of that story. This gave me the idea for working with adults.

Summarizing the Material

In a typical session, I make assignments to those who will accept them. Not everyone is willing to accept an assignment, and that is okay. I try to encourage those who are too shy to take on an assignment, that it is okay just to sit there. I keep assignments to one or two chapters. The breakdown of assignments is listed right below the title to every session, and I generally pass a sheet of paper with the breakdown around the table, asking those who would take an assignment to simply write their name down next to the assignment they would like to choose. Their task is to read those one or two chapters more carefully than the rest of the assigned material for a session. When we begin our session, I ask those who have accepted assignments to simply summarize their chapters to the group. They may refer to a few scriptures now and then, but they are not to read everything in class. They are to highlight the story, or if there is no story, the essence of what they have read. They are to recognize that someone else might handle it differently, but that is okay. Their assignment is to get the story or the essence of the material on the table.

There are always some people who, though they are unwilling to take an assignment, are willing to read in class. In the assignments I handle myself, I try to find a verse or two in each section, which summarizes things. I then ask persons, who do not take assignments, to read those verses. In the charts that accompany the Bible Studies, you will *sometimes* find these brief references, which point to the essence of things. These are the portions I ask people to read in class. The first third of our session is dedicated to the above task. We may run over, but our intention is to get the content on the table for further discussion.

Questions and Answers

In the second third, our purpose is to ask questions. This does not mean that I answer all the questions. Sometimes, while I am thinking, someone else answers the question, having discovered it in a Study Bible, or commentary. While I do not encourage everyone to use commentaries, I do encourage the use of a good Study Bible. I have also written

my own commentary, which I pass out in advance to all participants. I did not do this the first year, but I found people wanting to know where I was getting some of my information, and so I decided to pass the material out. Those who accepted assignments seemed to feel more comfortable when they knew what I knew ahead of time. Some people had a tendency to read only my commentary, but I have always told them, "If you do not have enough time to prepare, read the Bible rather than my commentary." Most people have done that.

Practical Application

The final third of the session has to do with making a practical application of the material that we have studied together. To help people along, I prepare two things: a one page chart of all the material so that they can see it in its entirety, and no more than two pages of my own thoughts on the practical application of what we have studied. These two things seem to be enough to get the discussion moving. All of my materials are made available prior to our meeting. Everyone has them while they are doing their own studying. It is difficult to give enough attention to this final third when you meet for only one hour. This is why I prefer an hour and one-half. As the discussion moves along, it is difficult to stop and there is a tendency to move beyond the allotted time. The group should stop on time. There will always be some people with other commitments. The issues will come up again, and so they should not force you to extend the time of a session.

Leadership

I have found the above method of studying the Bible with groups very rewarding. This method does not need a clergy person. The problem lies in the willingness of other laity to accept a layperson as their leader. Many of the participants in my Bible Studies were competent people, fully able to lead sessions. You do not need an expert to lead you. All you need is a good Study Bible, a couple of good commentaries, and four or five other people willing to enter into a Covenant to study the Bible. It will be helpful to set up some questions for discussion. *The Serendipity Study Bible*, which contains 20,000 questions, will help you; but even without it, you can assign different persons to think up questions on chapters or sections to be studied. You do not have to aim at becoming Bible Scholars. The purpose of Bible Study is not knowledge, but reverence for God and discipleship. Do not be too worried if you cannot remember everything. "Its authors," wrote Frederick Herzog, "never expected to provide literalistic guidelines for the 20th century. But they did want to communicate the power of God (cf. I Cor. 4:20)."

Among some groups I have found resistance to taking assignments. When I have felt this resistance, I have used a different approach. Instead of asking people to summarize chapters, I have asked them to mark their Bibles in a certain way. The following scheme has been used, and it always inspires much more discussion than time permits:



Mark those verses with a heart that offer special insight into religious experience.



Mark those verses with a lamp or light bulb, which offer special insight or illumination.



Mark those verses with a star, which might be used to give guidance or application to daily living.



Mark those verses with a cross, which are difficult to follow or obey.



Mark those verses with a check, which are important to you, but do not fall under any other categories.



Mark those verses with a question mark that you do not fully understand.

When I ask people to mark their Bibles as discussed above, I begin each session with an introduction and a brief video segment. We then attempt to answer questions, share insights, talk about applications, and discuss how to deal with the difficult passages.

Final Comments

The Use of Videos and DVDs

Two final comments need to be made. The first has to do with the use of video, which can add much to a Bible Study session. I have found a number of videos helpful, but I always limit the amount of video that I might use to less than fifteen minutes. This requires previewing video sources, which is very time consuming; but I think that it is very important to limit the use of video to illustrating relevant points. I am reluctant to list the most helpful videos because new ones are being introduced all the time.

The Need for Balance

My second comment has to do with balance. John Wesley called for that balance when he said, “Let us now unite the two so long divided, knowledge and vital piety.” This is my purpose in Covenant Bible Study. Some will think that I give too much attention to the academic side of things, while others will say that I do not give it enough attention. The attempt to apply what we learn is aimed at vital piety. I think that the two must be held together, but I do not view the Bible as a book of rules. For me, “The Bible,” to quote Luther, “is the manger in which we find Christ, the swaddling clothes in which he is wrapped.” Covenant Bible Study helps us sort through all that straw in the manger to discover the Christ, who reveals God and his Will to us. For those who only want to use the Bible devotionally, I say, “You must first study it, hear what its characters are really saying, and then learn the lessons of history, in which God really is present.” These are the tasks of Covenant Bible Study.

The Purpose of Bible Study

One participant, overwhelmed by the pessimism of the prophets, asked, “Is there anything that we can do to break the vicious cycle of the rise and fall of nations (and individuals)?” I firmly believe that there is something we can do. Our first obligation is to study the Scriptures to find out what they are really saying. We have spent enough time manipulating them to say what we want them to say, New and Old Testaments alike; it is now time to enter into Covenant with one another to study them completely, allowing them to speak to us. That is a task that will take us the rest of our lives, but we can begin the journey now. The second step in this journey is to begin applying the truths we learn from our study. Jesus, in Matthew 7:24-25, told us that we should be building our houses (nations and lives) on solid rock, on foundations that will stand. Not to do this, says Psalm 73:18, would be to set our feet “in slippery places.” The purpose of Covenant Bible Study is to help us find our way back to the God of the Bible and build our lives and nation on the solid rock. In the Scriptures we can discover the steppingstones of history, which will enable us to walk on the waters of faith.

Discovering the Main Points

As I wrote my commentary on the Bible, I wrote a short article, which can be found at the end of each lesson. My purpose in doing this was to focus on what I thought was the main point in each of the lessons. Obviously, there is more than one point; but I thought it might be helpful for someone to look for a theme. That is what I have attempted to do.

Studying the Bible is like looking at the many sides of a diamond. Light comes from unexpected places. I would recommend that everyone in a Bible Study Group look for that which sparkles most and attempt to describe what they see. That is what I am attempting to do here. It is only one person’s opinion, but it is worth doing, even if only for that one person.

Not everyone will feel capable of doing what I have done, but everyone should be able to raise a couple of questions about the section to be studied. If that is all you can do, go with it. You will be surprised at how much you will learn, even by asking questions. Remember how, according to Luke 2:46-47, Mary and Joseph found Jesus, “...sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.” As you grow in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, people will be amazed at your questions and answers as well.

My only advice is that my commentary and these articles are not to be studied in place of the Bible. Your textbook should be *the Bible*. If this commentary and these articles can help you understand and apply what you read there, then they will have contributed to their purpose. Just keep in mind that they do not represent the last word on the subject. They are but descriptions of the light shining from the diamond, which is God’s Word as it has been communicated through human authors.

The Purpose of Bible Study

When we read the Bible, we are really asking two questions:

1. Do I expect to meet God?
2. Am I willing to obey God?

Applying the Bible

1. Is there an example for me to follow?
2. Is there a sin for me to avoid?
3. Is there a command for me to obey?
4. Is there a promise for me to claim?
5. What does this passage teach me about God or Jesus Christ?
6. Is there a difficulty for me to explore?
7. Is there something in this passage I should pray about today?

A Covenant for Studying Together

Entering into Covenant to Study the Bible together is one of the most important decisions we can make in our lives, and it requires a special Covenant, which will not be easy to follow. Of all the Covenants I have read concerning studying together, I like the one proposed by Augustine:

Let us, you and I lay aside all arrogance.
Let neither of us pretend to have found the truth.
Let us seek it as something unknown to both of us.
Then we may seek it with love and sincerity
 when neither of us has the rashness nor
 presumption to believe that he (she) already
 possesses it.
And if I am asking too much of you,
 allow me to listen to you at least,
 to talk with you as I do with beings whom,
 for my part,
I do not pretend to understand.

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

The Law is a way of life for the redeemed, not a way of salvation for the lost. God called Moses to lead the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt before he gave them the Law; hence, they were set free by God's Grace. The Law came later as God gave it to them through Moses on Mount Sinai. God sent Jesus to those who were enslaved by sin, and he set them free by his words and his life. His crucifixion and resurrection became symbols of God's grace confirming him as God's Messiah (anointed King) just as Moses was confirmed as God's Prophet in the crossing of the Red Sea. Jesus never did away with the Law. In fact he says in Matthew 5:17 (NRSV), "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill." Chapters 5 through 7 in the Gospel of Matthew illustrate what it means to obey the spirit of the Law, and they conclude that anyone's life that is built on anything else will fall as a house built on sand (Matthew 7:24-27).

While we might be able to obey the *letter* of the law, Jesus has made it impossible for us to obey the *spirit* of the Law. We can say with Paul in Romans 7:24-25 (NRSV): "Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Grace alone set the Hebrew people free from slavery in Egypt, and grace alone sets us free from sin in our world. Does this mean that we no longer need the Law? God forbid. We need the Law even more, but we need to recognize first what the purpose of the Law is. It does not exist to save, but to set us free and to fulfill our lives. "You shall keep my statutes and my ordinances;" says God through Leviticus 18:5 (NRSV), "by doing so one shall live: I am the LORD." Psalm 119 lifts up the importance of the Law, as the Psalmist cries in Psalm 119:45 (NRSV), "I shall walk at liberty, for I have sought your precepts."

Law is still important in our world. Without traffic laws, we would be hopelessly ensnarled in traffic jams. Without Robert's *Rules of Order*, the process of decision-making would be lost in chaos. Laws enable us to move freely about, and Laws help us to make decisions one at a time, moving us beyond chaos to order. The purpose the Law is to set us free.

This does not mean that every law must be obeyed. Not every law is moral, and immoral laws should not be obeyed. One of the best examples of disobeying an unjust law was the civil disobedience of Martin Luther King, Jr., who said:

We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. We will not hate you, but we cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws. We will soon wear you down by our capacity to suffer. And in winning our freedom, we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process.

On the other hand, not everything that is legal is moral; and we, as Christians, need to discern that. Gambling may be legal, but that does not make it moral. The same could be said of many other issues with which we have to deal every day.

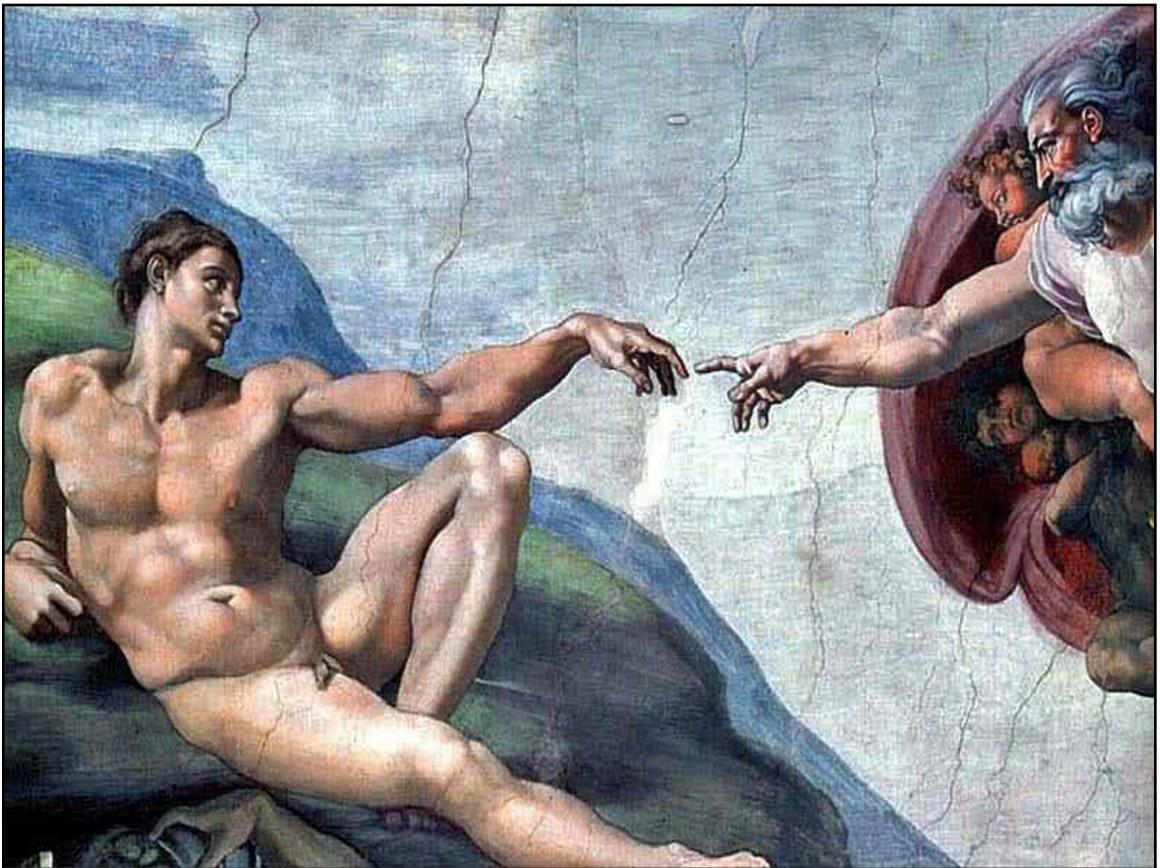
It would be nice if all the Laws in the Bible were divinely given, but we encounter all kinds of Laws there, including Ceremonial and Dietary Laws of a bygone era. Our task is to discern the Divine Law of God in the midst of Natural Law and Human Law. We can only do this together, as we share our insights.

An example from the computer may help us to find our way. Computers come in many varieties, but Microsoft Windows and Macintosh operating systems seem to dominate. Different rules govern the use of these competing systems. You can buy all kinds of software programs for either system, and the rules for using one program will not work for another. There is some hope for computer users in that both systems are setting some standards. With the achievement of standards will come a new freedom for computer users. They will only have to learn one set of rules instead of many. The same applies to religion.

There are many kinds of religions in the world, but Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism dominate. Their Laws are as different as the rules governing computer software programs, but there are also some similarities too; and Christianity is not the only religion to teach that the purpose of the Law is freedom and order in life. It will be more difficult to discern God's Law in religion than to establish common standards for computers, but it is our human task, and if we fail, our families, our nations, and our world will fall like houses built on sand. If we succeed, then there is hope for the future. Understanding the purpose of Law and discerning between human and divine Law is extremely important.

GENESIS

The Beginning



Creation by Micheangelo (1475-1564)

1. The Beginning

Genesis 1:1 – 2:5a

1. THE BEGINNING (1:1—2:4a)

1. What does *Genesis* mean?

“In the Beginning”

2. Who wrote the Book of Genesis?

J=Yahweh (Southern Judah), E=Elōhim (Northern Ephraim), P=Priestly,
N=Nomadic, D=Deuteronomic

3. When was the Book of Genesis written?

400 B.C.E.

1. Light	Genesis 1:3-5	God imposes order over chaos, and light symbolizes this by penetrating the darkness.
2. Firmament	Genesis 1:6-8	The firmament divides the primordial waters into an upper and lower register.
3. Dry Land: Earth, Seas & Vegetation	Genesis 1:9-13	Vegetation is indirectly created. God works with us.
4. Heavenly Bodies: Sun, Moon & Stars	Genesis 1:14-19	They are not gods, but articles created by God. They are used to tell time and seasons.
5. Fish and Birds	Genesis 1:20-23	Fulfills or harmonizes nature.
6. Animals and Man	Genesis 1:24-31	God desired to extend himself, and he did this by creating creatures in his image.
7. Rest or the Sabbath	Genesis 2:1-4a	God created the work week with one day of rest.
How many times does God call creation good? Seven	When does each new day begin? In the evening	What does it mean to be created in the Image of God? To have the same feelings and characteristics

1. THE BEGINNING

Genesis 1:1—2:4a

ASSIGNMENTS		
The Universe 1:1-19	Life 1:20-31	The Sabbath 2:1-4a

INTRODUCTION

The Name

The Hebrew name for the Book of Genesis is *Bereshith*, which means “in the beginning.” This title comes from the first word in the book. The English title is Greek in its origin and comes from the word *Genesos*, which appears in the Greek translation, which is called the *Septuagint*.¹ Depending upon its context, it can mean “birth, genealogy, or history of origin.” The book deals with origins. A few examples would be as follows:

1. Origin of the world
2. Origin of life
3. Origin of the Sabbath
4. Origin of marriage
5. Origin of sin
6. Origin of crime and death
7. Origin of language
8. Origin of nations (especially Israel)
9. Origin of covenants

The Authors

Three literary traditions unite to affirm the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Some authorities include two other traditions.

1. Judean Author (J)—Yahweh or Jahweh (Southern Source)
2. Ephraimite (Author E)—Elohim (Northern Source)

¹ The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Septuagint, which means 70, refers to the 70 scholars who translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. The first five books were finished by the middle of the third century B.C.E.

3. Priestly Author (P)
4. Nomadic Author (N)
5. Deuteronomic Author (D)

Conservative scholarship has insisted that Moses authored the Book while he was wandering in the wilderness.

The Date

The Book of Genesis deals with events that happened thousands of years ago. This is very late in history. The Rock of Ages, a massive formation in Carlsbad Caverns is 60,000,000 years old. The materials of Genesis were compiled around 400 B.C.E. If Moses wrote Genesis during his wilderness wanderings, an approximate date of 1400 B.C.E. would have to be given. We cannot be precise with dates in the first five books.

Outlines

There are many ways to outline the Book of Genesis. I would like to suggest two possible ways, which are as follows:

Outline One

- A. Primeval History (1-11)
 1. Adam and Eve
 2. Cain and Abel
 3. Noah and the Flood
 4. The Tower of Babel
- B. History of the Patriarchs (Fathers of Israel) (12-50)
 1. Abraham (12-25)
 2. Isaac (26-36)
 - a. Esau
 - b. Jacob
 3. Jacob (37-50) (Jacob is also called Israel)
 - a. The Twelve Sons (Tribes)
 - b. Joseph

Outline Two

- A. Introduction (1:1—2:3)

B. All Humanity

1. Heavens and Earth (2:4—4:26)
2. Generations Of Adam (5:1—6:8)
3. Generations of Noah (6:9—9:29)
4. Generations of the Sons of Noah (10:1—11:9)
5. Descendants of Shem (11:10—11:26)

C. The Chosen Family

1. Descendants of Terah (Story of Abraham) (11:27—25:11)
2. Descendants of Ishmael (25:12-19)
3. Descendants of Isaac (Story of Jacob) (25:20—35:29)
4. Descendants of Esau (36:1—37:1)
5. History of the family of Jacob (Story of Joseph) (37:2—50:26)

1-11	12-25	26-36	37-50
All Humanity	Abraham	Jacob	Joseph

CREATION (1:1-2)

A priest wrote the account of creation. It is not geology, biology, or any other science; rather, it is theology. He does not deal with when or how the world was created. His purpose is strictly theological. In contrast to those who worship nature, he insists that nature is God's creation. Creation begins with God bringing order to chaos.

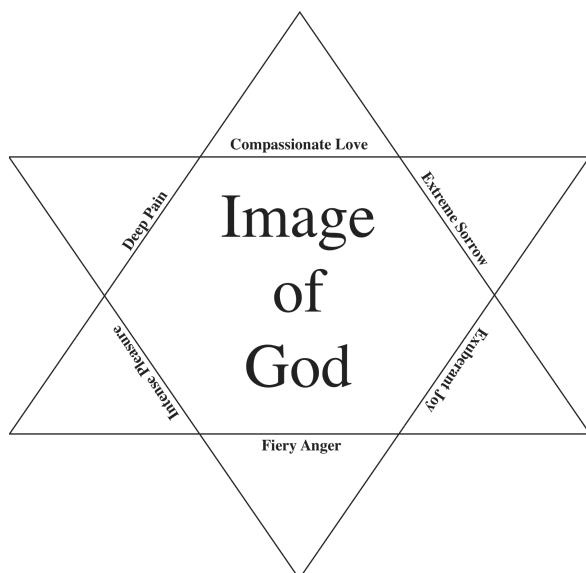
THE SEVEN DAYS (1:3—2:3)

The seven days are not to be understood as seven, twenty-four hour days. This is not a scientific, but a theological account, and so we must look for the theological meaning.

1. Light. (1:3-5) Light is the most obvious sign of order. It makes day and night possible.
2. Firmament. (1:6-8) The writer believed that the firmament was a solid dome which separated the upper (heaven) from the lower (earth) waters.

3. Seas and Vegetation. (1:9-13) The earth was separated from the seas, and vegetation was created indirectly. The earth brought forth the vegetation.
4. Sun, Moon, and Stars. (1:14-19) The sun, moon, and stars are not divine powers that control human destiny. They are nothing but objects of creation. They have been created by God to provide us with light and time, seasons and the calendar. Worship of the heavenly host is strictly forbidden.
5. Birds and Fishes. (1:20-23) There was an ancient tradition that birds as well as fishes were produced by the water. Even the sea monsters owe their creation to God. There is no idea of the various species coming from a single pair. Many were created at the same time.
6. Animals and Man. (1:24-31) The Hebrew word for *man* is “Adam.” It is a collective term referring to all humanity. Man was considered above the animals (1:26), and has dominion over them. Man’s food is provided with vegetables and fruit, but the Bible is silent about eating meat at this point. The question is often asked, “In what way is man different from the animals?” The answer given is usually that man is a *reasonable, moral, and creative* creature. The creation of man in God’s image is often defined in terms of *reason or love*. Being created in the image of God means that man bears some of the same feelings as God.

Defining the Image of God is difficult. I’d like to suggest three different, but in some ways similar, approaches. In the first approach the Star of David is used to illustrate the contrasting emotions of God, which we also have.



There are three sets of contrasting emotions. These emotions are certainly expressed by God in the stories of the Hebrew Covenant, but they are also descriptive of God in various portions of the Christian Covenant. We have these same emotions because we have been created in the Divine Image.

First Set	Second Set	Third Set
Compassionate Love	Exuberant Joy	Intense Pleasure
Fiery Anger	Extreme Sorrow	Deep Pain

Doug Wingeier, in *Working Out Your Own Beliefs*, defines the Image of God in a similar manner. He describes God's feelings first in the Old Testament, where God is pictured as feeling anger (Exod. 4:14; Isa. 34:2), wrath (II Kings 22:13; Ps. 90:7), hatred (Isa. 1:14; Amos 5:21), sorrow and grief (Gen. 6:6, 7), displeasure (Ps. 2:5; 60:1), jealousy (Exod. 20:5; Zeph. 1:8), Pity (Joel 2:18), compassion (Ps. 78:38; Mic. 7:19), steadfast love (Exod. 34:6, 7; Lam. 3:22), love (Hos. 11:1-4; Jer. 31:3), delight (Deut. 1:15), pleasure (I Chron. 29:17), patience (Jer. 15:15), and rejoicing (Isa. 65:19)."¹

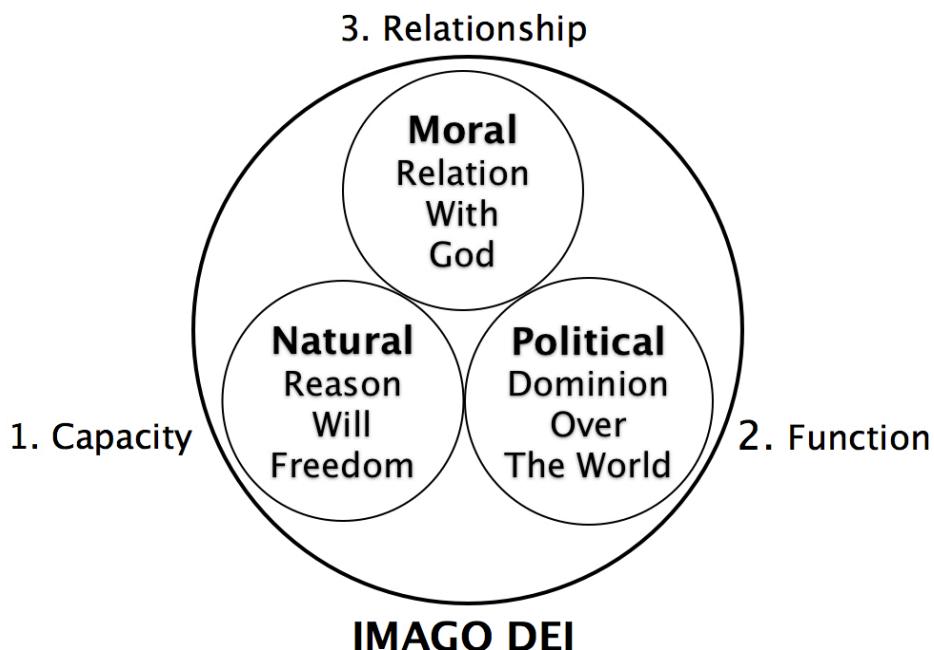
In the New Testament, "In the person of his son, Jesus Christ, God felt pain inflicted by Pilate's soldiers, fear in the garden, rejection at the last supper, discouragement over Jerusalem, impatience with the disciples, and loneliness on the cross. On the other hand, he also knew the pleasure of a wedding feast, the security of a carpenter's home, the love of an understanding mother and loyal followers, a sense of achievement from healing and teaching, a feeling of fulfillment in being faithful, and a sense of wholeness through serving as the means of reconciling the world to himself."²

John Wesley viewed the image of God in three ways, as the natural image, the political image, and the moral image. The first of these, the natural image,

¹Doug Wingeier, *Working Out Your Own Beliefs*, p. 52-53.

²Ibid., p. 53.

consists of the human capacity to use reason, will, and freedom, the abilities to care for the earth and all that inhabit it. The political image is the second way in which we reflect our Creator. Just as God is Ruler over all creation, so humanity is caretaker and “governor” of this world. This function or role includes all of God’s creatures and the environment in which we all live. The third characteristic of the image of God is the moral image, which is the chief mark of our relationship with God. This is the one most easily distorted. It is not simply a question of obeying rules, but of entering into a relationship with God. When we fail to live up to our calling, we stand in need of salvation. Salvation is not simply a matter of preparing for heaven; it is a matter of preparing for life on earth as well.¹



7. Sabbath. (2:1-3) The basic reason for the Sabbath is to rest, but in later times, religious reflection and worship were included as part of its purpose.

SUMMARY (2:4a)

In looking back at the priestly account of creation, we might say several things, which are all theological statements, rather than scientific, about creation.

1. God created by Design. (1:3-5) Creation was no accident. God intended to do it, and because he created the world and all that is in it, he is the absolute Lord of creation.

¹ See Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), pp. 13-14.

2. God's Creation is Good. This word occurs seven times. (1:4; 1:10; 1:12; 1:18; 1:25; & 1:31) In the last verse the adverb *VERY* is used.
3. God sustains his Creation.
 - a. Through seedtime and harvest. (1:11-12)
 - b. Through animal reproduction. (1:22)
 - c. Through human reproduction. (1:28)
4. God created us in his Image. (1:26-27) We are considered higher than the animals, and we are the creatures through which God manifests his rule on earth.
5. God created the Workweek. (2:1-3) God worked six days and rested one. If God needed to rest from his work, so do we, his creation.

THE MEANING OF CREATION

"In the beginning," says Genesis 1:1, "God created the heavens and the earth." What could this possibly mean for us today? What difference does it make?

The first thing it means is that we are not here by accident. God made order out of chaos and introduced light into darkness. The Bible does not tell *how* this happened. The seven days of creation are poetical attempts to describe the indescribable. The author was not there to observe it; but under divine inspiration, he does affirm it.

We make a mistake when we put religion on a collision course with science. This is not a scientific account of creation. It is a theological statement affirming that God is the Creator. Creation is intentional, not accidental. That is why there is order and light.

Light was created even before the stars and planets. Light emanates from God. In the end, as in the beginning, there will be light that is not dependent upon stars or suns. "And there will be no more night;" says Revelation 22:5, "they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever." That same light is available to us today, and has entered into our world in a new and fresh way in Christ. John 1:5 describes it: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

We can play more with this image of light, as did Thomas Aquinas, who allegorizes it. When he interpreted Genesis 1:3, he said, "'Let there be light,' thus: historically, it refers to the act of creation; allegorically, 'let Christ be love,' morally, 'may we be mentally illuminated by Christ;' analogically, 'may we be led to glory by Christ.'" The creation story cannot be taken literally, but must be understood theologically. God stands behind creation, and in all of nature we perceive his handiwork.

The second meaning of creation is that all that “is” are but objects of creation. Nothing, including the sun, the moon, and the stars, are to be worshipped. According to Genesis 1:26-27, men and women are special because they have been created in God’s image. That makes them sacred, but it does not make them divine. Why were we made? The answer is not that God was lonely, but that he desired to grant the gift of life to us. Why do we want to have children? We want to extend our lives, and by so doing, we share life and participate in the creative processes of God. Psalm 8:3-5 asks the same question:

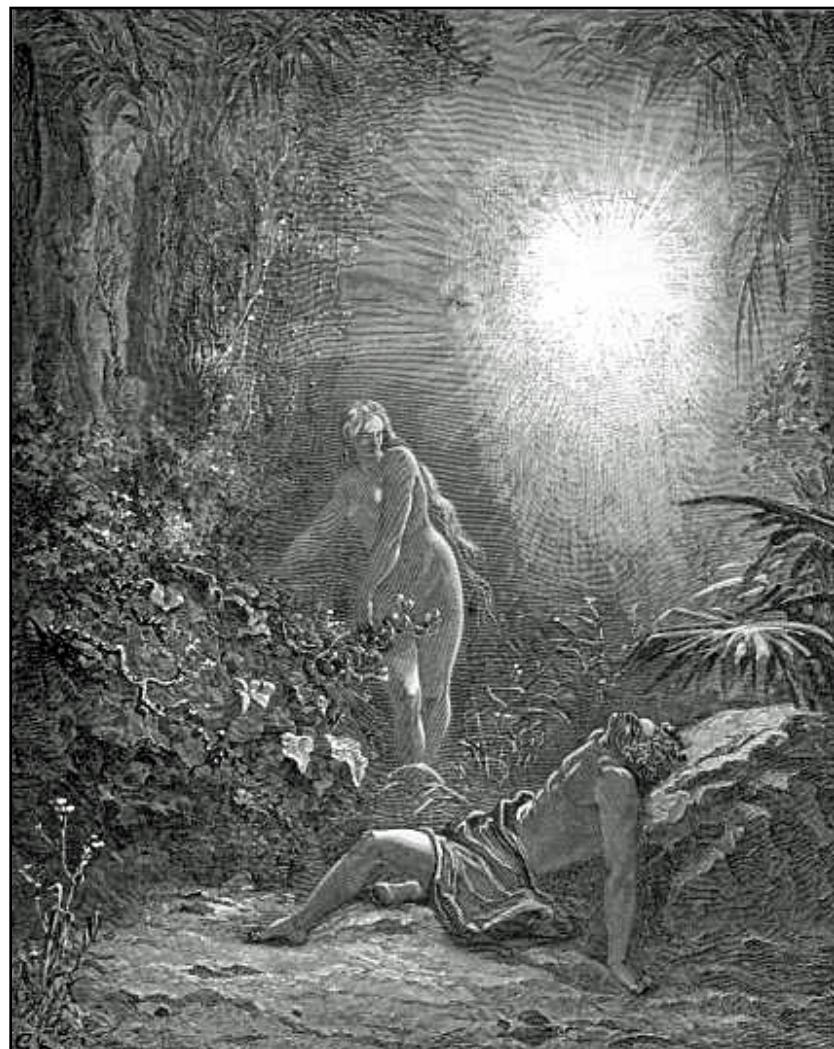
When I look at your heavens,
 the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you
 have established;
what are human beings that you
 are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for
 them?
Yet you have made them a little
 lower than God,
and crowned them with glory
 and honor.

The third meaning of creation is to remind us of who we are. We are “lower than God.” We only reflect his image, and we are prone to forget this. That is why the Sabbath was made sacred. If God rested, so should we. God’s hallowing of the seventh day makes it more than a mere day of rest. It becomes a day for spiritual reflection, reminding us of where we have come from so that we might know who we are and where we are going. We are part of God’s *good* creation, and we will never experience the fullness and the richness of life apart from God.

The creation story reminds us that we ought not to take things for granted, which is something we tend to do very often. It sometimes takes things like cancer to put us back on track. Marvella Bayh, as she began to cope with cancer, wrote about her experience: “The little details of life leap out at me: stars are brighter, snow is whiter, bird songs more melodic, a child’s laugh more magical. All of creation is a wonder, a blessing to behold.” Is this not saying the same thing that Augustine said in a prayer long ago, “Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it rests in thee.” Creation reminds us that we only live when we live in relationship to God, who is our Creator.

GENESIS

The Beginning



Adam and Eve by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

2. The First Family

Genesis 2:4b—6:8

2. THE FIRST FAMILY (2:4b—6:8)

THE PARENTS			
The Creation of Adam and Eve (2:4b-25)		The Fall of Adam and Eve (3:1-24) (3:1-2e)	
Adam: (930) (5:5) “Man” or “Earthling”	Eve: “Mother of all Living”	The Two Trees (2:9)	Results of the Fall
The Setting: (4 Rivers)	The Six Gifts of God	The Tree of Life The Tree of Knowledge	Shame & Guilt (2:25; 3:7, 10) Blame (3:12-13) Pain & Toil (3:16-19) Death (3:19)
The Pishon The Gihon The Tigris The Euphrates	Life (2:7) Work (2:15) Freedom (2:16-17) Mate (2:18) Power (2:19-20) Marriage (2:24)	The Fall: (3:1-6) The Snake The Woman The Man	The Cherubim (3:24) (1 Kings 8:6-7/Ezekiel 41:18-19) Looks: Human with face of a Lion Function: Guards sacred objects
THE KIDS			
Cain: “Spear or Smith”	Abel: “Breath”	Seth (912) (5:8)	The Sons of God & Daughters of Men
Work: Farmer Offering: Some Fruit of the Soil	Work: Shepherd Offering: Firstborn of the Flock	Work: ? Offering: ?	Who are the Sons of God? (Sethites) Who are the Daughters of Man (Cainites)
Cain’s Sin:	His Fate:	His Descendants:	Offspring:
He murdered Abel	He was murdered	Enosh (905) (5:11) Kenan (910) (5:14) Mahalalel (895) (5:17) Jared (962) (5:20) Enoch (365) (5:23) Methuselah (969) (5:27) Lamech (777) (5:31) Noah (500) (5:32)	Great Size & Strength The Nephilim: “Fallen Ones”

2. THE FIRST FAMILY

Genesis 2:4—6:8

ASSIGNMENTS				
Creation of Adam and Eve 2:4b-25	The Call of Adam and Eve 3:1-24	Cain Abel Seth 4:1-26	Descendants of Adam 5:1-32	Wickedness of Humanity 6:1-8

The Priestly (P) author wrote Chapter 1 of Genesis. Chapter 2 was written by the Judean (J) source. This means that we have a second account of creation set along side of the first one.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN (2:4b—3:24)

The Creation of Adam and Eve (2:4b-25)

Adam means “man” or “earthling” and *Eve* means “the mother of all living.” With creation God enters into a Covenant. Creation of man and woman takes place in a garden, out of which flows, four rivers, two of which cannot be identified. The rivers are the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates. Only the latter two can be identified, but then this story does not properly belong to history. The writer has a theological purpose, which is to explain the six gifts God gave to his creation.

1. The Gift of Life (2:7)

We are psychophysical beings, made of dust, and animated by God. God breathed life into us. We do not consist simply of body (soma) and soul (psyche). That would be the Greek concept.

2. The Gift of Work (2:15)

Work was given prior to sin, but work became a curse after sin. (3:17-19)

3. The Gift of Freedom and Responsibility (2:16-17)

The first couple was given the freedom to eat from any tree; but in Genesis 2:17, they were warned against eating from the tree of good and evil. They may do it, but the

warning is that death would result. They were given freedom and expected to act responsibly, heeding God's warning. "There are two freedoms," said Charles Kingsley, "the false where a man is free to do what he likes, and the true where a man is free to do what he ought." Both kinds of freedom were available, but God's desire was that they have the latter. He wanted his creatures to have life, and so he provided them with the tree of life. After the Covenant was broken, they no longer had access to the tree of life. It is not mentioned again until the last book of the Bible. In that book it stands beside the river in the city of the new Jerusalem, where its leaves provide for "the healing of the nations." (Revelation 22:2) True life depends upon our response in freedom to God, who always knows what is best for us.

4 The Gift of a Mate (2:18)

Man and woman compliment one another. They belong together because originally they were one flesh. They need each other to be fully human. Protestants have emphasized the idea of companionship while Roman Catholics have emphasized procreation (1:28).

5. The Gift of Power (2:19-20)

Power is expressed through permission to name things. This does not give us the right to destroy nature. We are stewards of God's creation.

6 The Gift of Marriage (2:24)

Marriage and sex are considered good. The two becoming one is usually given to support the idea of a monogamous marriage, although it does not strictly say in Genesis 2:24 that additional wives are prohibited.

The Fall of Adam and Eve (3:1-24)

In the story the serpent tempted the woman, who reminded him of the consequences of eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; but the serpent assured her that death would not result. Listening to the serpent, she ate and gave some of the fruit to her husband. Their eyes were opened and they saw their nakedness. They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. God confronted them with their sin and passed judgment on all three of them: (1) The serpent was to crawl on his belly, (2) the woman was to experience pain in childbirth and be subservient to her husband, and (3) the man was to experience toil in his labor. Following this experience Adam named the woman Eve, and the two of them were chased out of Eden and prevented from returning by Cherubim.

The serpent, later considered evil, was portrayed here as the clever tempter. The cherubim were guardians of sacred areas (1 Kings 8:6-7) and were represented as winged creatures, and like the Sphynx of Egypt, they were half human and half lion (Ezekiel 41:18-19).

In disobeying God, the man and woman broke their Covenant with God, for which there were four consequences: (1) shame and guilt (2:25 & 3:7, & 10); (2) blame and destroyed relationships (3:12-13); (3) pain and toil (3:16-19); and (4) death (3:19). Death here meant much more than the end of physical life. It also meant the end to a certain quality of life. Life was equated with fulfillment, meaning, and purpose. Death brought about the end of the Garden of Eden and the quality of a relationship that existed between God and his creation. Not only was that relationship destroyed between the man and woman; it was also destroyed between human beings and God as well. The man and woman exchanged life for knowledge, and knowledge did not bring fulfillment, meaning, and purpose. It did not establish a relationship between humanity and God, nor did it establish the kind of relationship that ought to exist between human beings. Knowledge was and is often used for selfish ends; hence, it destroys those who misuse it. More important than knowledge is the quality of life.

CAIN, ABEL, AND SETH (4:1-26)

Cain, which means “Spear or Smith” and *Abel*, which means “Breath” were born of Adam and Eve. Cain, the elder son, was a farmer; and Abel, the younger son, was a shepherd. They both offered a sacrifice to God. Cain’s sacrifice was the fruit of the ground and Abel’s sacrifice was the firstlings of his flock. God rejected Cain’s offering. It is difficult to understand why, but Hebrews 11:4 indicates that Cain’s problem was his lack of faith. Some scholars see in the rejection of Cain’s offering the author’s attempt to lift up the nomadic life over against that of the settled farmer. Others see in Abel’s offering the need for a sacrifice in which blood is spilled to make up for human sin. Sin, which separates one from God, results in death; and it is only through another death that reconciliation is possible. Abel’s offering was better because it consisted of a lamb, which could be slain for human sin. This theme runs throughout the Bible and is later symbolized by lifting up Jesus as the Lamb that was slain for our sins.

Cain became angry when his offering was not accepted and took out his anger on his brother by leading him into a field where he killed him. God held him accountable for his anger and sent him to *Nod*, which means “wandering” and is described as being East of Eden. Actually, nothing is known of Nod. Cain becomes known as the “Father of Civilization” because he built the first city, which he named after his first son, Enoch. Those who were related to Cain were later called the Kenites. His descendants learned to play and enjoy music. They also learned to forge iron and bronze. One of Cain’s descendants was Lamech, who was the first to take two wives. He boasted to his wives of his murders, which outdid that of Cain’s. It is interesting to note that 85% of all murders take place within the family or among so-called friends. According to 1 John 4:20-21, one cannot even hate anyone, however, without violating God’s Covenant.

THE DESCENDANTS OF ADAM (5:1-32)

In Chapter 5 the priestly writer (P) traces Adam’s descendants to Noah. It is difficult to explain why they lived so long or what those large numbers really mean. If one takes them to mean actual years, then Methuselah lived 14 years after the flood. Noah would

have lived into Abraham's sixtieth year and Shem would have outlived Abraham to see the birth of Esau and Jacob. What one cannot help but notice in the Old Testament is the decreasing life span, ranging from 900-1000 years (Adam to Noah), to 200-600 years (Noah to Abraham), to 100-200 years (the patriarchs), to 70-80 years (Psalm 90:10). Could the diminishing life span be the priestly writer's (P) equivalent to the J story of the Fall? What one cannot do is to calculate the length of the whole period by simply adding up the figures given.

The only person in the list who did not die was Enoch, who lives on earth for 365 years and was taken by God because, as Genesis 5:24 says, he "walked with God." According to Genesis 6:9, Noah also walked with God, and for this he was spared from the flood; but unlike Enoch, he still had to face death.

THE WICKEDNESS OF HUMANITY (6:1-8)

The sons of God lusted after the daughters of men, and the children born out of these relationships were the Nephilim (giants). This story explains the existence of a race of Nephilim (supermen or giants) on earth who were the subject of popular hero tales.

What does it mean to say that the Nephilim had divine fathers? At least two conclusions have been drawn to explain this. In the first one the sons of God mentioned are members of the heavenly court, like angels, who participated with God in creation (1:26). These divine fathers did not however give them immortality; in fact, their life span was reduced to 120 years.

In the second explanation, the sons of God are godly men from the lineage of Seth, who marry the daughters of men from the lineage of Cain. Godly men marrying sinful women, results in wicked children. They are giants in the cause of wickedness. For this reason, their life span is reduced to 120 years.

In either case, sin caused God deep pain. What we do to ourselves may hurt us, but it grieves God even more (6:7).

LIVING UP TO THE IMAGE

According to Colossians 1:15 and 19, Jesus Christ "...is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation...." "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell...." If we want to know what it means to be made in the image of God, we look at Jesus. He is the window through whom we see God, and begin to know what God intended for us to be like. He is also the mirror into which we discover what it means to be fully human. In fact, God has built into us a mirror by means of which we can perceive God himself; and that image of God is clearer than any knowledge of God we can perceive in nature. In nature we can only see the handiwork of God, but in Jesus and in our own selves, we can see the heart of God.

But we must be careful, for we live after the Fall. We do not live up to the image that has been placed within us. The Fall has marred that image, and in trying to recover it, we need to compare ourselves with Jesus Christ. Jurgen Moltmann warns that "...the image of God must not merely be sought for in human individuality; we must look for it with equal earnestness in human sociality."¹ "A person is only God's image in fellowship with other people: 'In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them' (Gen. 1:27)."²

Why can we not live up to the image of God? The Biblical answer is the *Fall*. To be fully human, Adam and Eve had to be free, free to choose life, symbolized by the tree of life, and free to choose death, symbolized by the tree of the knowledge between good and evil. Those choices had to exist, or they would have been mere puppets. In choosing to disobey God's warnings, they thought they knew better than God. "Sin," says Charles Colson, "is essentially rebellion against the rule of God. This is why Jesus coupled the message of the kingdom with the call to repent and believe."³ Sin is thus the violation of the image of God within us, and being ourselves means living up to the image of God. This is what Paul calls Christians to do in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple."

What then does it mean to live up to the image of God? It means first to obey what we know to be God's will, for God knows what is best for us. To disobey him is to invite disaster. Sin, which is rebellion against the rule of God, leads to two inevitable results, which are "separation from God," symbolized by the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden, and "alienation from one another." Following the Fall of Adam and Eve, this alienation began to build. It was not very long before the first murder was committed, and it took place right within the family. Cain murdered his brother.

In light of our having been created in the Image of God, two popular comments are troublesome. The first has to do with people who try to justify failure or sin. They express themselves by saying, "Well, I'm only human." The second is similar to it, but usually expressed by people when they see someone else mess up. The comment is usually, "Well, now we know you're human." They are talking about what it means to be human after the Fall, but being "fully human" means living up to the image of God.

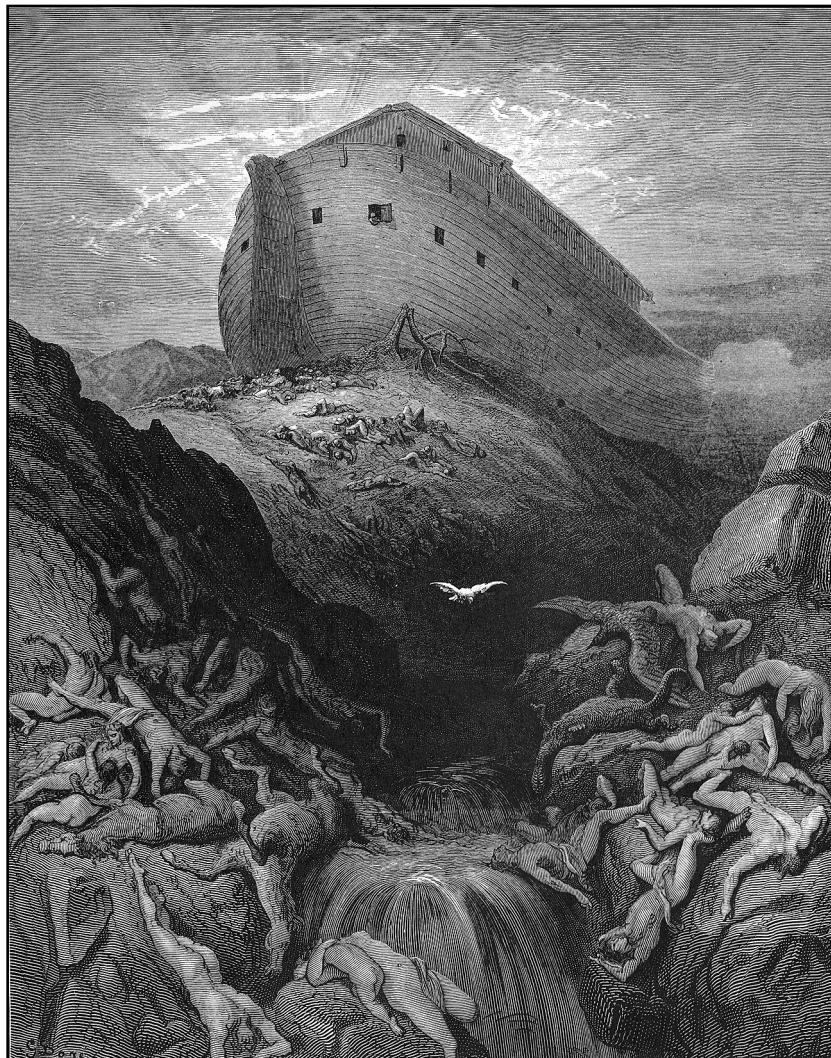
¹Jurgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (San Francisco: Harper and Two, Publishers, 1981), p. 199.

²*Ibid.*, p. 155.

³Charles Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict* (Grand Rapids: William Morrow and Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), p. 86.

GENESIS

The Beginning

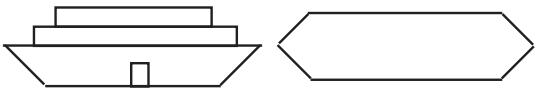


A Dove is Released by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

3. The Covenant with Noah

Genesis 6:9 – 11:32

3. THE COVENANT WITH NOAH (6:9—11:32)

NOAH'S SONS (6:10)			THE ARK (6:14-16) (Cypress Wood)
Japheth	Shem	Ham	
NOAH'S COMPANIONS IN THE ARK			
Two of Every Kind (6:19)	Seven of Every Kind (7:2-3)		
NOAH'S AGE (7:11 & 9:28-29) (600+350=950)			Length of the Ark: 450 Feet Height of the Ark: 45 Feet Number of Decks: Three
THE FLOOD			
The rain began on... The 7th Day (7:4)	The rain lasted for... 40 Days & Nights (7:12)	The Ark floated for... 150 Days (7:24)	The waters subsided in... 150 Days (8:3)
The raven... flew back & forth (8:7)	The first dove returned... immediately (8:8-9)	The second dove returned... with an olive leaf (8:10-11)	The third dove ... did not return (8:12)
GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH			
Three Covenants		Scriptural Basis	Symbols
1. Noah 2. Abraham 3. Moses		Genesis 9:13 Genesis 17:11 Genesis 31:16-17	The Rainbow Circumcision The Sabbath
THREE DECISIONS GOD MAKES			
Food (9:3-4) Meat drained of blood can be eaten	Judgment 1 (9:15) The world will never again be destroyed with a flood	Judgment 2 (2 Peter 3:3-7) The world will be destroyed with a great fire	
THE DESCENDANTS OF NOAH'S SONS			
Japheth Indo-European Peoples	Shem Semitic Peoples	Ham African Peoples (Canaan: "Land of Purple")	
THE TOWER OF BABEL (11:1-9)		PENTECOST (Acts 2:1-12)	

3. THE COVENANT WITH NOAH

Genesis 6:9—11:32

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Flood 6:9—8:19	The Covenant with Noah 8:20—9:17	The Sons of Noah 9:18—10:32	The Tower and Genealogies 11:1-32

THE FLOOD (6:9—8:19)

Noah “walked with God,” and had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Everyone else was involved in corruption and violence. Judgment was God’s response to human disobedience and sin. The way in which God’s judgment was expressed was through a flood which destroyed everything but Noah, his wife, his sons, their wives, and all the animals and birds, which they took with them into an ark. The story of the flood is similar to the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic with one difference. In the Babylonian story the flood is the result of the capriciousness of many gods; while in the Genesis account, the Flood was God’s expression of judgment.

Even though God destroyed the world with a flood, he desired to call Noah into a new Covenant so that he could start over. Noah was told to build an ark. *Ark* means “box” or “chest.” The ark was not built for the purpose of sailing, but to give protection to Noah and his companions. The size of the ark was 450 feet long, 45 feet wide, and 75 feet high. There were three decks. Into this ark were taken a pair of every kind of animal and bird (6:19). According to another source there were seven pairs of clean animals and birds and one pair of unclean (7:2-3). Seven days after they entered the ark the rain began to fall, and it fell for forty days and forty nights. The waters of the flood were not simply the result of the rain. They came as a result of the “fountains of the great deep” and the “windows of the heavens.” (7:11) The waters covered the highest mountain by 22 1/2 feet (15 cubits). The flood lasted for 150 days, after which the waters receded for another 150 days. Noah then sent a raven out which could not find a place to rest. A dove was sent out which returned. Seven days later another dove was sent out which returned with an olive leaf. Seven days later it was sent out again never to return. This signaled the end of the flood. It was now safe for everyone to disembark from the boat. The place where the boat rested was in the Ararat Mountains. Noah was 600 years old with another 350 years to live.

THE COVENANT BETWEEN NOAH AND GOD (8:20—9:17)

After the flood Noah built an altar and made an offering of every clean animal and bird. This was out of gratitude for having been spared from God's wrath. God decided never to judge humanity in such a way again; and even though he knew that evil was deeply entrenched in the human heart, he decided to let nature take its regular course. Human beings now had permission to eat meat as long as blood was drained from it (9:3-4). God initiated a Covenant with Noah and every living creature. If Noah and his descendants obeyed God's commandments, they would enjoy God's blessings (9:9-10). God guaranteed his Covenant, which intensified under Abraham, Israel, and finally reached its peak in Jesus. The sign of God's Covenant with Noah was the Rainbow (9:13). The rainbow had been considered God's weapon from which arrows of lightning went forth. (See Psalm 7:12-13 and Habbakuk 3:9-11) God placed his weapon in the heavens as a sign or token that his wrath has ended; and in laying aside his bow of war, he promised his everlasting mercy to those who would keep the Covenant. This is supposed to mean that he will never again destroy the earth. According to 2 Peter 3:3-7, God's patience will wear thin again; and when this happens, the world will be destroyed by fire. The Church will represent a new ark carrying God's people into his eternal Kingdom.

THE SONS OF NOAH (9:18—10:32)

As soon as the earth began to yield fruit again, Noah became irresponsible (9:20-21). He planted a vineyard and made and drank too much wine. Noah lived another 350 years, and his sin spread quickly through his descendants.

Noah's three sons were named and related to territorial and political regions. (1) Shem became the father of the Semitic peoples; (2) Japheth became the father of Indo-European peoples; and (3) Ham/Canaan became the father of the African peoples. Japheth was the eldest son, with Shem in the middle. Shem's descendants were called Shemites, later shortened to Semites. There is some confusion as to whether the youngest son bore the name of Ham or Canaan. At any rate the curse was made on him for viewing his drunken, naked father, and it was passed on through his descendants. Canaan's subjugation to Israel was the result of the curse on Ham/Canaan.

THE TOWER OF BABEL (11:1-9)

In the land of Shinar, the Kingdom of Nimrod the hunter (10:9-10), the people got together to build a city and a tower with its top in the heavens. The tower was obviously a Ziggurat, a Mesopotamian type of Temple consisting of a number of stories forming a stepped pyramid. *Babel* meant "Gate of God" but has come to mean "confusion," following the story. The desire was for fame, unity, and security. The tower was built to gain fame and equality with God. The city was built to preserve the unity of humanity. Human arrogance was again brought down by God's judgment, which was expressed in language barriers and the scattering of all peoples everywhere, the very thing they were trying to avoid. The reversal of the tower of Babel is found in the story of Pentecost (Acts

2), where the Holy Spirit brought them together and enabled everyone to understand in his or her own language.

GENEALOGIES TO ABRAHAM (11:10-32)

The line from Shem led to Terah's three sons, and especially to Abraham, showing how God chose Abraham from all the families of the earth. Terah had three sons: Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran, the father of Lot, died early. Terah departed from Ur of the Chaldeans and took Abram, Sarai, and Lot with him. In Haran Terah died.

Nahor married Milcah, his brother Haran's daughter, but nothing more is said of them in this chapter. Abram married Sarai. *Abram* means "the (my) father is exalted." *Sarai* means "princess" and probably referred to a moon goddess in Haran. Through these genealogies we are prepared for a major shift of focus in the Book of Genesis. Chapter 12 begins with what most scholars assume to be history.

THE CYCLE OF JUDGMENT

Following the Fall, symbolized by Adam and Eve yielding to the first temptation, sin penetrated all of society. Whether that transmission was biological or sociological makes little difference. What is important is that the human "will" rebelled against God, and God's response was to destroy that which had gone astray. "So the LORD said, 'I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created — people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.'" (Genesis 6:7)

Judgment was symbolized by the coming of a great flood in which God provided a way of saving a remnant. Noah was instructed to build an ark, in which his family, and all life, could survive, the impending storm. Following the flood, God made a Covenant with Noah, and promised never to destroy the world again with a flood. This did not mean that he would not destroy the world in another way. 2 Peter 3:5-7 informs those *who refused to believe* that Christ will return to judge, and that the world will be destroyed again, only this time by fire.

They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless.

Judgment, however, is not something that took place in the distant past, and will not happen again for a long time. Judgment is cyclical. Albert Camus, in *The Fall*, said: "Don't wait for the Last Judgment. It takes place every day."¹ When we violate God's

¹Albert Camus, *The Fall* (Quoted in *Time*, March 19, 1979, p. 94.)

natural laws, there is a consequence; and when we violate God's moral laws, there is another consequence, which we call judgment.

The heart of human rebellion against God was illustrated in Adam and Eve's thinking that they knew better than God, and again in the people who proposed and then began to build a tower into the heavens. "Come," they said in Genesis 11:4, "let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." The tower was never finished, for the judgment of God brought it down. What happened there "...was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth." (Genesis 11:9) Judgment was described in terms of God's action, but it was really human arrogance that caused all the confusion. The cycle of judgment is not God's fault. It is brought about by human rebellion.

Let us illustrate this cycle of judgment from the Bible and then from history. The first Psalm illustrates how judgment is always at work. The righteous and the wicked are compared. The righteous person is like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding good fruit. The wicked person is like chaff, which the wind drives away. The wicked will not stand in the final judgment, but neither will they stand in the present, "...for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." (Psalm 1:6) We can observe that happening continually, and that is why there can be no peace as long as there is wickedness and injustice.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus interprets the Mosaic Law and adds new dimensions to the meaning of righteousness. Then he concludes with the following warning:

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall! (Matthew 7:24-27)

The rains continue to fall and the floods continue to come. As long as evil and wickedness persist, they cannot be stopped. Let us examine two examples that tell us why. The first concerns Abraham Lincoln's desire to save the union "half slave and half free." It could not be done. The union could only be saved, by abolishing slavery. Judgment can only be stopped, by aiming at justice.² In the second example, Abraham Heschel tells us why we had to endure the storm of World War II: "We have failed to fight for right, for justice, for goodness; as a result we must fight against wrong, against

²Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944).

injustice, against evil. We have failed to offer sacrifices on the altar of peace; thus we offered sacrifices on the altar of war.”³

Although it is easy enough to understand how the cycle of evil and judgment continues, it is very difficult to know how to stop it. Perhaps it is even impossible, but that does not mean that there is nothing for us to do. The followers of Jesus gathered at Pentecost to receive the Holy Spirit, and as they experienced it, “Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.” (Acts 2:3) As they began to speak, they spoke in other languages, and there were present people from every nation under heaven, and, “...each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.” (Acts 2:6) When people respond humbly to the Holy Spirit, the Tower of Babel is reversed, and the cycle of judgment fades.

³Abraham J. Heschel, *Between God and Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1959), p. 256.

GENESIS

The Beginning



Abraham's Journey by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

4. The Faith of Abraham

Genesis 12:1–16:16

4. THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM (12:1—16:16)

THE DEPARTURE	FOUR PROMISES	THREE ALTARS	
From: Haran (1900 B.C.E.) To: Canaan Age: 75 Companions: Sarai & Lot	Land (12:1 & 17:8) Nationhood (12:2) Blessings (12:1 & 18:18) Forever (13:15 & 17:7)	The Places Schechem Between Bethel & Ai Hebron	The Altars Tree of Moreh (12:6-7) Not Described (12:8-9) Trees of Mamre (13:18)
THE TRIP TO EGYPT (12:10—13:1)		THE TRIP HOME (13:2-18)	
Why did they go? (12:10) How was Sarai passed off to the Pharaoh? (12:11-13) What happened to the Pharaoh (12:17-20)	Famine As Abraham's Sister Serious Diseases	Why do Abraham & Lot separate? (13:6) Who got first choice? (13:9) What did he choose (13:12)	The land could not support both Lot Sodom and Gomorrah (People of Moab & Ammon)
THE OPPRESSING KINGS (14:1 & 5-7)			
THE FOUR KINGS	THE COUNTRIES	THE CONQUERED	THE COUNTRIES
Amraphel Arioch Chedorlaomer Tidal	Shinar Ellasar Elam Goiim	Rephaites Zuzites Emites Horites Amalekites Amorites	Ashteroth Karnaim Ham Shaveh Kiriaathaim Seir Kadesh Hazazon Tamar
THE OPPRESSED AND REBELLIOUS KINGS (14:8-18)			
THE FIVE KINGS	THE COUNTRIES	THE BATTLE	
Bera Birsha Shinab Shemeber ?	Sodom Gomorrah Admah Zeboiim Bela (Zoar)	When did they rebel?? Where did they rebel? Did they win? Who was captured? To whom did they appeal? How many were needed? How far were they chased? Who received a tithe? What did he share with them?	In the 13th Year In the Valley of Siddim No Lot Abraham 318 To Dan and Hobah Melchizedek Bread and Wine
THE COVENANT PROMISE OF LAND (15:5—16:16)			
THE ANIMALS	THE SYMBOLS	THE DISPLACED	THE PROBLEMS
Heifer (Cut in Two) Goat (Cut in Two) Ram (Cut in Two) Dove Pigeon	Smoking Firepot Blazing Torch	Kenites Kenizzites Kadmonites Hittites Jerizites Rephaites Amorites Canaanites Girgashites Jebusites	Apparent Heir: Eliezer Hagar's Son: Ishmael Abraham: 86 Bondage in and Exodus from Egypt

4. THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

Genesis 12:1—16:16

ASSIGNMENTS				
Abraham and Sarah 12:1—13:1	Abraham and Lot 13:2-18	Abraham rescues Lot 14:1-24	Ratification of A Covenant 15:1-21	The Birth of Ishmael 16:1-16

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM (12:1-9)

“When Terah leaves Ur with Abraham they cross the Euphrates and this gives their descendants the name *Hebrews* or *Ivrium*, i.e., those who have crossed over.”¹ In the call to Abraham a second leg to the journey was undertaken, one which gave rise to the birth of a people and nation. Abraham left Haran at 75 years of age and roamed through the land of Canaan for 100 years. In his 100th year, his wife Sarah gave birth to a son, whom they named Isaac. This number suggests perfection—100 years to claim the promise both of a son and of the land. At the ripe old age of 175 Abraham died.

The Promises of the Covenant (12:1-3)

The promises, which came out of Abraham’s Covenant, were fourfold.

1. To receive a Land. (12:1) According to Genesis 15:18, it included all the land “from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.” Genesis 17:8 says that it included all the land of Canaan.
2. To become a Nation. (12:2) God declared Abraham the Father of many nations. (See Genesis 17:2, 4-6)
3. To give a Blessing. (12:3 & 18:18) This was hard for them to understand. The Hebrews saw it as God calling them to special privileges, while God saw it as an obligation to mediate a blessing to the whole human family. Election always includes responsibility.

¹Jacque Ellul. *The Ethics of Freedom* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), p. 347.

4. To last Forever. The land would belong to God's chosen people forever. (Genesis 13:15 and 17:7) Even if the people strayed, God committed himself to faithfulness. This land would be theirs forever.

The Hebrew Scriptures do not make any sharp distinctions, and the four promises of the Covenant combine both the material and the spiritual. The Covenant was based upon divine promises and human trust. The Bible uses the word *Covenant* to describe the enduring relationship between God and his people. In Abraham we find a man who received and trusted in God's promises.

The Response of Abraham (12:4-9)

Abraham, Sarai, and Lot are the main characters in this story. Their response to God's call was symbolized by their going to three places, two of which became sacred. The first place to which they went was Shechem, the commercial crossroads of Canaan, located in a pass between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. Nearby was the Oak of Moreh, a sacred tree. The Lord appeared to Abram there saying, "To your offspring I will give this land." (12:7) In response, Abram built an altar at the sacred tree. The next place to which they went was a mountain with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. He built an altar there as well and called upon the name of the Lord. The third place to which they journeyed was the Negeb, which is a desert region marked out roughly by a triangle drawn with its points at Gaza, the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba, and the southern tip of the Dead Sea. By the careful and ingenious systems of water conservation and irrigation, the ancient inhabitants of the Negev were able to cultivate the land more than seems possible today. The journeys to these three places symbolized Abram's response to God's call and the beginning of a new nation.

ABRAHAM AND SARAH IN EGYPT (12:10—13:1)

Abram took Sarai to Egypt because of a severe famine. Thinking that the Egyptians would desire his beautiful wife of 65, he decided to tell them that she was his sister. In fact she was his half-sister. She was the daughter of his father, but not his mother (20:12). Since she lived to be 127, her sixties would be equivalent to our thirties or forties. In Egypt it was the Pharaoh himself who was attracted to her. When his household began to experience plagues, he assumed that something was wrong and inquired of Abram, who admitted what he had done to deceive him. In order to avert further disaster, the Pharaoh sent them away. They returned to the Negev with Lot.

ABRAHAM AND LOT SEPARATE (13:2-18)

Abraham had cattle, silver, and gold; Lot had flocks, herds, and tents. Both of them needed land, and because of the strife that developed between their herdsmen, Abram saw the need to separate. The first choice was given to Lot, who chose the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar, which included Sodom and Gomorrah. He went to live in Sodom. Abram, on the other hand, remained in Canaan and was given all the land he could see from the place where he first built an altar to the Lord between Bethel and Ai. Since the

view from Bethel may not be as panoramic a view as that near Hebron, a later writer may have inserted verses 14-18 to make the Oaks of Mamre the center of the new land. Abram built an altar there to acknowledge his acceptance of the Covenant. Lot's descendants became the people of Moab and Ammon.

ABRAHAM RESCUES LOT AT DAMASCUS (14:1-24)

Lot was captured in a war to secure trade routes to Egypt and southern Arabia. The area where Lot lived was under the control of men like Chedorlaomer and his friends. In an effort to maintain control they attempted to put down a rebellion in the Valley of Siddim. In putting down the rebellion, they captured Lot. Upon hearing this news, Abraham took 318 men and pursued Chedorlaomer and three other Kings as far as Dan, which did not receive this name until the time of the Judges. The term *Dan* is used to refer to a place familiar to the reader. The real battle, however, was fought at Hobah near Damascus. Having defeated Chedorlaomer and his three allies, Abraham returned home to the Oaks of Mamre (Hebron), and Bera and Melchizedek went to thank him and bless him for what he had done. The central figure here is Melchizedek, whose name means "King of Righteousness" or "My King is Zedek/Sidqu." (a Canaanite god) He was the priest of the Canaanite cult and served as both King and Priest of Salem (Jerusalem). Melchizedek brought bread and wine to bless Abraham and was recognized not only as God's representative, but also as a foreshadowing of the Messiah (Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews 7:1-10). Abraham responded by giving Melchizedek a tithe (1/10th) of the loot, which Melchizedek did not want, but Abraham insisted that he take it. He did not want anyone to think that Melchizedek made him rich.

The Rebellion: The Valley of Siddim (The Dead Sea)

The rebellion was to obtain freedom from the oppression of Chedorlaomer and his allies, who had ruled over them for 12 years. The rebellion took place in the 13th year, but was successfully put down by the four Kings.

The Pursuit

Abraham gathered together 318 men and pursued the four kings to Dan and finally defeated them at Hobah near Damascus. There, Abraham rescued Lot and took back some possessions and loot.

THE OPPRESSORS (The Attacking Side)	
KINGS	COUNTRY
Amraphel	Shinar
Arioch	Ellasar
Chedorlaomer	Elam
Tidal	Goiim

THE OPPRESSED (The Rescued Side)	
KINGS	COUNTRY
Bera	Sodom
Birsha	Gomorrah
Shinab	Admah
Shemeber	Zeboiim
(?)	Bela (Zoar)

THE RATIFICATION OF A COVENANT (15:1-21)

Abraham had a vision. In the Old Testament no clear distinction was made between a vision and a dream. Abraham's call is the first appearance in the Bible of the vision or dream, but it will not be the last. The Bible takes for granted that this is one way that God speaks to his people. In the vision, Abraham expressed doubt concerning God's promises, mainly because he had no heir. He was afraid that Eliezer of Damascus, an apparent slave, might have to become his heir. God assured him that he would have a son and that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars (15:5). Abraham believed God and was considered righteous because of his faith. In preparing to ratify the Covenant, God instructed Abraham to take a three-year-old heifer, goat, and ram. They were to be cut in two and lined up in two rows. The turtledove and pigeon were to be placed in one of the rows, but neither of them was to be cut in two.

After Abraham fell into another deep sleep, God informed him that his descendants would end up as slaves in Egypt for four hundred years, but that they would eventually be led back to Canaan. After the sun set, a smoking fire pot and flaming torch passed in between the two rows of animals. This ritual symbolized the confirmation of a treaty. By cutting and dividing the animals, both parties to the treaty made it clear that the penalty for breaking the treaty was death, but here only God confirmed the treaty by passing between the pieces. (See Jeremiah 34:18ff) Darkness, smoke, and fire symbolized the presence of God here, as they also did at Sinai (Exodus 19:18 and Hebrews 12:18). The Covenant was sealed and a vast amount of land was promised to Abraham's descendants. The area mentioned in 15:18-21 was not realized until the Kingdoms of David and Solomon were fully established.

In responding to God's call, Abraham expressed faith in God. Although an imperfect man, he was counted as righteous because of his trust in God. A man who lied to keep his wife from harm and save his own life was also the man whom God called into a Covenant relationship. In Abraham's response to this Covenant, many scholars see the beginnings of monotheism. At least one can say that Abraham rejected many gods (polytheism) in order to follow one God. He probably believed in the existence of other gods, but he responded only to the one who called him. This was at least the beginning of monotheism, even if Abraham's faith was not completely monotheistic.

THE BIRTH OF ISHMAEL (16:1-16)

Because Sarai did not seem to be able to bear a son for Abraham, she gave him Hagar, her Egyptian maid. Hagar is related to an Arabic word, which means “flee.” Both *barenness* and *fertility* were thought to come from God in these times. In giving Hagar to Abraham, Sarai actually thought she was following God’s will, and Abraham would have believed the same thing in accepting her. Hagar became pregnant and mutual contempt emerged between Hagar and Sarai. Sarai dealt with her harshly and Hagar finally fled. She met the Lord in flight, who told her to return to Abraham. Her son was called *Ishmael*, which means “God Hears.” He is described as “a wild ass of a man,” which is the way in which the Hebrew people looked upon the Ishmaelites (Arabs), who lived in the southern wilderness. Later, Ishmael was married to an Egyptian girl (21:21); and eventually, all Ishmaelites would be considered Arabs by the Jews.

THE LEAP OF FAITH

The faith that took Jesus to the cross is the same faith that drove David out to meet Goliath single-handed. It is the same faith that caused Moses to defy the Egyptian Pharaoh and get away with it. It is the same faith that caused Abraham to leave his country and set out for the land of Canaan at the age of seventy-five (Genesis 12:1 and 4-5). “When you weigh this faith in the balance,” said John Calvin, “it makes the whole power of earth and hell lighter than a feather.”

Biblical history and the leap of faith begin with Abraham. The Covenant made between God and Abraham is rooted in history. It happened. God spoke to Abraham in a dream or vision. In the Bible no clear distinction is made between dreams and visions. Genesis 15:5-6 describes the heart of Abraham’s dream:

He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’” And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

How frequently do we act on our dreams? We usually disregard them. Abraham acted on his, which is to say he took the leap of faith.

Before describing what it means to take the leap of faith, let us first look at what God promised Abraham if he would take it. The promise is fourfold. If Abraham would enter into a Covenant with God, then God would give to him land (Genesis 12:1 & 17:8), nationhood (Genesis 12:2), blessings (12:3 and 18:18), and all this would last forever (Genesis 13:15 & 17:7). Abraham believed God, entered into that Covenant, and began to act upon it. He took the leap of faith.

Abraham believed, and that means he acted upon his belief. If we believe, we obey. If we do not obey, then we do not believe. Faith is belief put into action. “Belief is a truth held

in the mind,” said Joseph Fort Newton, “Faith is a fire in the heart.”¹ Faith depends entirely on our *will*. There are huge risks, and that is why we call it “the leap of faith.” We stake our whole life on what we believe, but there is nothing to fear. As the Reverend Hae-Jong Kim, a Korean pastor put it, “Faith is an adventure into the future.” As long as our mind and will remain open to make course adjustments, we can begin that adventure immediately.

If we could see where we were going, it would not be faith. Faith is based upon hopes and dreams, but they are not just our hopes and dreams. The focus of faith is on the living God. “Hope,” said Rubem Alves in *Tomorrow’s Child*, “is hearing the melody of the future. Faith is to dance to it.”²

Everyone lives by some kind of faith. It is impossible to live without faith, either in religion or in science. We have to set some kind of course, or we do not go anywhere. “Faith,” said Tolstoy, “is the force by which men live. The total absence of it, anhedonia, means collapse.”³ Whether or not we take the leap of faith is not an option. What is an option is which leap of faith we take.

Faith has to do with invisible things, but that does not mean that we cannot see. Faith is seeing with the mind and heart, and then acting by means of our *will* upon what we see. Faith is easier for us than it was for Abraham, for he had to make his leap of faith without knowing about Jesus of Nazareth, or any other person of great faith. God planted faith inside of Abraham, and he does the same for us. It is easier for us because we can base our faith on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Christian faith is belief in, trust of, and obedience to that same God of Abraham, who revealed himself to Moses, and finally to us through Jesus Christ. “It is not our faith that makes Jesus the Christ;” said Jurgen Moltmann, “it is Jesus as the Christ who creates faith.”⁴ It is on his vision that we take our leap of faith, but we stand in a great tradition. History has verified what began in Abraham.

¹Joseph Fort Newton, *Pulpit Resource*, October-December, p. 5.

²Rubem A. Alves, *Tomorrow’s Child* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972), p. 195.

³Quoted in William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Garden City: Image Books, 1978), p. 486.

⁴Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975), p. 197.

GENESIS

The Beginning



The Three Angels by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

5. The Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 17:1–21:34

5. THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM (Genesis 17:1—21:34)

THE AGES	THE NAMES	THE SIGN OF CIRCUMCISON (17:24-26)	
Abraham (17:1): 99	God: <i>El Shaddai: God Almighty</i> Abraham: <i>Father of a Multitude</i> Sarah: <i>Mother of Nations/Kings</i> Isaac: <i>He Laughed</i>	Who is Circumcised?	At What Age?
		Abraham	99 Years
Sarah (17:17): 90	Sarah: <i>Mother of Nations/Kings</i> Isaac: <i>He Laughed</i>	Ishmael	13 Years
		Isaac	8 Days

THE WICKEDNESS OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH (18:1—19:38)

Three Visitors approach Abraham (Near the Trees of Mamre)	Two Angels approach Lot (In Sodom)		
The Promise (18:10) Sarah's Response (18:13-15) The Warning (18:16-33) The Bargain (18:22-33)	You will have a Son She laughed and lied The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah 50/45/40/30/20/10	The Men of Sodom (19:4-5) The Response of Lot (19:6-8) The Punishment (19:10-11) The Escape (WHO?) (19:15) The Escape (WHERE?) (19:17-22) The Sin (19:30-38) The Elder Daughter's Son The Younger Daughter's Son	Desire sex with the angels Take my 2 Virgin Daughters The Angels struck them blind Lot, Daughters, and Wife Zoar (Mountains too far) Incest Moab (Moabites) Ben-Ammi (Ammonites)

ABRAHAM AND ABIMELECH (20:1-18)

ABRAHAM AND ABIMELECH (20:1-18)	THE BIRTH OF ISAAC (21:1-34)		
Abimelech's Kingdom (20:1) Abraham's Fear (20:11) Abraham's Response (20:2) Did Abraham Lie? (20:12) Abimelech's Sin (20:2) God's Judgment (20:18) Abimelech's Payment (20:16)	Gerar (Between Kadesh & Shur) No fear of God in Gerar He called Sarah his sister No, they had the same father He took Sarah as his mistress He closed up their wombs 1000 Silver Shekels	Isaac's Circumcision (21:4) Abraham's Age (21:5) Hagar & Ishmael's Fate (21:14) Ishmael's Vocation (21:20) Ismael's Wife (21:21) Treaty at Beersheba (21:22-23) Abraham's Gift (21:29) Well at Beersheba (21:30) Abraham's Tree (21:33)	On the Eighth Day 100 Years Old Wandered to Desert of Beersheba An Archer An Egyptian Peace with Abimelech & Phicol Seven Ewe Lambs (Sheep/Cattle) Abraham dug the Well Tamarisk Tree

5. THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

Genesis 17:1—21:34

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Symbols of the Covenant 17:1-27	The Visit of the Angels 18:1-33	The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah 19:1-38	Abraham and Sarah in Gerar 20:1-18	Isaac and Ishmael 21:1-34

THE SYMBOLS OF THE COVENANT (17:1-27)

A New Name (17:5 and 15-16)

Abram meant “the (divine) father is exalted” and *Abraham* meant, “father of a multitude.” *Sarai* and *Sarah* both meant “princess,” but implied in the name change is the idea that she will become the “mother of nations and kings.” The change of names marked a turning point. It meant that this elderly couple was on the doorstep of a new event. They begin to believe two things: (1) that they will have a child, and (2) that a new nation will emerge from this child’s descendants. In the light of Abraham’s age of 99 and Sarah’s age of 90, all this seemed impossible; but it was God’s promise and he would fulfill his part of the covenant. The child was to be called *Isaac*, which means, “he laughed.” (17:19) Both Abraham (17:17) and Sarah (18:12-15) laughed when they first heard the promise.

A New Sign (17:10-14)

The new sign was circumcision, which on Abraham was done at the age of 99, but on the eighth day of life thereafter. (17:12) The custom is extremely old and was known to be practiced among the Egyptians in 3,000 B.C.E., but it was not practiced among the Canaanites. The purpose of circumcision had been (1) to prevent disease, and (2) to initiate one into membership in a tribe or nation. In the former case it had to do with cleanliness and hygiene and a preparation for marriage by facilitating intercourse. In the latter case it symbolized the taking on of the duties of manhood. Circumcision represented the removal of impurity and was thus considered as an act of purification. The move from purity to righteousness was not very great. The circumcised were seen as clean and righteous, and the uncircumcised were seen as unclean and unrighteous. Uncircumcision was also viewed figuratively in three ways. (1) The Uncircumcised Heart. An uncircumcised heart is closed and a circumcised heart is open. (Deuteronomy

30:6; Romans 2:28-29; and Colossians 2:11) (2) The Uncircumcised Lips. Such a person was a poor or unpersuasive speaker. Moses considered himself to be a man of uncircumcised lips. He was not an eloquent speaker; therefore, he needed Aaron to be his spokesman. (Exodus 6:12, 30) (3) The Uncircumcised Ears. The ears were considered uncircumcised when a person could not listen. The ears were thus closed in the same manner as the heart. (Jeremiah 16:10) Circumcision was only a sign. More important was one's relationship to the God of the Covenant. Baptism has become the sign of the new Covenant, and it symbolizes both a cleansing from sin and an initiation into the Community of Faith. Circumcision is actually a third sign. The first two were sabbath observance (2:1-3) and abstinence from eating blood (9:4). Circumcision did become the central sign, and so at this point, every male was circumcised, including Ishmael (17:20). Arabs, who see themselves as descending from Ishmael, are circumcised at the age of 13. (17:25) Circumcision for them symbolizes their transition from childhood to manhood and full participation in community life.

THE VISIT OF THE THREE ANGELS (18:1-33)

The Entertaining of Angels (18:1-8)

The visit took place at the Oaks of Mamre, where Abraham demonstrated oriental hospitality at its best. In the middle of the noontime fiesta, he had their feet washed and served them a meal of cakes, curds, milk, and veal. The relationship of the Angels to the Lord is confusing, but what is clear is that entertaining *strangers* is like entertaining *angels* or the *Lord*. Hebrews 13:2 says, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Jesus made the same point in Matthew 25:31-46. The point however in these verses is that God announces the miraculous birth of Isaac through angels, just as he announces the miraculous birth of the Messiah through angels (Luke 1:26-38).

God promises Abraham and Sara a Son (18:9-15)

It has already been mentioned that both Sarah and Abraham laughed at the possibility of having a son at their age. The main purpose of the angels' visit was to inform them that they would indeed have a son.

The Pleading for Sodom and Gomorrah 18:16-33)

In becoming the Father of a great nation, Abraham was acknowledged as a man who would do righteousness and justice. What was about to happen to Sodom and Gomorrah was not to be hidden from him, and so the Lord informed him about the problem. Abraham did not judge Lot by his environment, and began to bargain with the Lord. He pleaded for Sodom and Gomorrah to be spared if some righteous men could be found there. Six times he pleaded for the sake of 50, 45, 40, 30, 20, and finally 10 righteous men, but only Lot was considered righteous and that was not enough. A few righteous people could have saved Sodom and Gomorrah. This is the reverse of one rotten apple spoiling the whole bushel. The survival of Sodom and Gomorrah did not depend upon the

majority of all the people being righteous, but on just a few. This shows God's patience and mercy. In the absence of a sufficient number of righteous people, God then proceeded to save the righteous in the midst of the destruction of the wicked.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH (19:1-38)

The Sin of Sodom (19:1-11)

Two angels came to Sodom in the evening. Lot invited them in to spend the night, but they politely declined. Lot urged them to come in off the street, and they took his advice. He must have known how dangerous it would be to spend the night on the streets. After giving them a feast, all of the men of the city, young and old, surrounded Lot's house and demanded sex with these two men (19:5). According to oriental hospitality, if someone eats in your house, you must guarantee protection for them. This is why Lot was willing to let the men have sex with his two daughters, rather than to let them have the two visitors. In the end, the two men (angels) interceded and struck the men of Sodom blind.

Some scholars do not see this as a rejection of homosexuality; rather, they see it as merely a rejection of homosexual rape. Another question raised by many scholars has to do with the third angel. What happened to him? Could the third angel have been the Lord?

The Fleeing of Lot's Family (19:12-29)

The angels warned Lot to gather his family together and get out of Sodom. When Lot approached his future sons-in-law, they thought he was joking. Even Lot hesitated and only left at the angels' insistence. He refused to make for the hills and asked for permission to go to the small city of Zoar.¹ Permission was granted, but only Lot and his daughters made it. The sons-in-law refuse d to go, and Lot's wife looked back (19:26). Brimstone and fire destroyed the city, and Lot's wife was overwhelmed in this catastrophe of rain and salt. Such a catastrophe, which emptied this area of human occupation, is known from archaeology. The cause of the destruction was probably an earthquake and an explosion of gases. The whole area is now under the Dead Sea. The story shows how hopelessly righteousness and wickedness are mixed, for even Lot's daughters later tricked Lot into incest, although opposition to incest had not yet been given the status of Law.

The Sin of Lot's Daughters (19:30-38)

Lot and his daughters left Zoar to live in a cave. For some reason Lot feared living in Zoar. His two daughters had no one and so they got their father drunk in order to have sex with him. Both became pregnant and bore children. The eldest daughter gave birth to Moab, from whom came the Moabites; and the younger daughter gave birth to Ben-Ammi, from whom came the Ammonites. This story was told to give the origin of the

¹ Zoar means "small."

Moabites and Ammonites, who were a constant snare to Israel and who were frequently denounced by the prophets. The story also shows the bankruptcy of Lot's morals. His descendants are no longer the people who follow the Lord; instead, they chase after other gods.

ABRAHAM AND SARAH IN GERAR (20:1-18)

Abraham moved to the Negeb, where he lived between Kadesh and Shur. On a trip to Gerar, he decided again to pass off his wife as his sister. This is the second time that he underestimated the morality of a person of another race. He thought no one feared God enough in Gerar to guide their actions and so he passed Sarah off as his sister to avoid personal injury to himself. Abimelech, the King of Gerar, took Sarah; but before he could have sex with her, God appeared to him in a dream. Having understood the problem, Abimelech restored Sarah to Abraham and inquired as to why Abraham would do such a thing. Upon restoring Sarah's honor and his own innocence, Abimelech gave gifts of sheep, oxen, slaves and 1,000 pieces of silver to Abraham and Sarah. God rewarded Abimelech and his people by opening the wombs of their women again. Apparently they had been closed when Abimelech took Sarah from Abraham.

Although Abraham claimed that Sarah really was his sister (20:12), most scholars question the morality of Abraham at this point. Abimelech comes out better than does Abraham.

ISAAC AND ISHMAEL (21:1-21)

When a son was born to Sarah and Abraham, he was named *Isaac*, which means: "he laughed." Both parents laughed when they first heard the promise that they would have a son at such an old age. Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah 90. On the eighth day, Isaac was circumcised. One day the two were playing as equals. Isaac had already been weaned and so he might have been about 2; and since Ishmael was 14 years older than Isaac, he was probably around 16 at the time. (See 16:16 and 21:5) This appearance of equality angered Sarah, who asked Abraham to cast both Hagar and Ishmael out. Abraham was displeased, but God ordered him to obey Sarah. Both sons were promised a great future. Hagar was given some bread and water and sent into the wilderness of Beersheba. She soon became discouraged as the water ran out and cast Ishmael under a bush to die. Not being able to watch, she turned away. An angel comforted her and assured her that God had heard her cry and would provide for her and the child. A great nation would be formed from his descendants. God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water, where the two of them refreshed themselves again. Ishmael grew up in the Wilderness of Paran, and Hagar obtained an Egyptian wife for him.

ABRAHAM'S AGREEMENT WITH ABIMELECH (21:22-34)

Wells were precious. The monthly rainfall for January was four inches, but that dropped to nothing during the four summer months. The agreement or dispute with Abimelech is confusing and might consist of two separate stories weaved together to explain the origin

and meaning of Beer-sheba, which later became the southern most boundary for the monarchy. In the first story, Abimelech guaranteed Abraham's loyalty by an oath, in which case *Beer-sheba* meant, "well of the oath." In the second story, one of Abimelech's servants seized a well that had been built by Abraham. Although Abraham was wronged, he initiated the peace-making process. He did this by offering seven lambs to him as a peace offering. In this story *Beer-sheba* meant, "well of seven." The seven lambs are a witness to Abraham's peace-making efforts. Abraham also planted a Tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba and called upon the name of the Lord. Following that he went to the land of the Philistines. Most scholars believe this last statement to be incorrect, for the Philistines did not come into Canaan until after 1200 B.C.E.

THE THIRD SIGN OF THE COVENANT

The third sign of the Covenant was circumcision, the first two being the observance of the Sabbath (Genesis 2:1-3) and abstinence from eating blood (Genesis 9:4). Why circumcision? A number of reasons might be given. First, it was a hygienic measure; and secondly, it symbolized initiation into the tribe. The Jewish people were not the first to use it to symbolize their covenant with God. It was practiced as early as 3000 B.C.E. among the Egyptians, although it was not being practiced in Canaan in Abraham's time.

Circumcision, like the observance of the Sabbath and the abstinence from eating blood, distinguished the children of Abraham from their pagan neighbors. If one of them were captured in war, they could not hide who they were. It would be obvious to their enemies, and that helps us to understand why it was used as the third sign of the covenant. One could not tell by looking at people whether or not they observed the Sabbath or abstained from blood; therefore, this third sign marked the children of Abraham in a physical way, so they could not deny their identify.

While the earliest reasons for circumcision might have had to do with hygiene, the step from cleanliness to righteousness was not very great. Even John Wesley used to say, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." The circumcised were seen as clean and righteous, and the uncircumcised were seen as unclean and unrighteous.

Although circumcision was physical, it served as a sign of something deeply spiritual. This is illustrated in three ways, the heart being the most important, but not the only symbol. The others are the need to circumcise the lips and ears.

Moses considered himself to be a man of uncircumcised lips. In response to God's calling him to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, he complained to God, "Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me; how then shall Pharaoh listen to me, who am a man of uncircumcised lips?" (Exodus 6:12 & 30, RSV) This implies that circumcision of the lips is an opening up of the lips so that one might speak eloquently for God. To pacify Moses, God appointed Aaron to be Moses' spokesman, that is to be Moses' "mouthpiece" or "prophet."

Another part of the body that needed circumcision was the ears. A person with uncircumcised ears was one whose ears were closed. In predicting the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah indicated that the only way it could be avoided was through the circumcision of the ears, that is to open them up and listen to God and then to obey him. Unfortunately that was not happening, and so Jeremiah said, “To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? See, their ears are closed, they cannot listen. The word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it.” (Jeremiah 6:10) Jeremiah knew that his words were falling on deaf ears, and so even though the people bore the marks of physical circumcision, they lacked the spiritual circumcision of the ears.

The most important spiritual symbol for circumcision was and is that of the heart. An uncircumcised heart was a closed heart, and a circumcised heart was an open one. Several passages, both from the Old and New Testaments speak of the spiritual dimension of this third sign.

Deuteronomy 30:6: “Moreover, the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live.”

Romans 2:28-29: “For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart — it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.”

Colossians 2:11-12: “In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.”

What does all this mean for us today? John the Baptist illustrated the main message when the Pharisees and Sadducees came to him for baptism. He saw through their motives, called them to bear the fruit of repentance, and not simply to say, “We have Abraham as our father.” They might have been prone to say that because they bore the marks of circumcision and could trace their ancestry back to Abraham. John’s response to them was, “...I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.” (Matthew 3:9) To be truly circumcised is to have open ears, lips, and especially an open heart. Such people will be recognized, even if they are not physically marked. In fact the physical marking of a person does not guarantee true circumcision. The distinguishing mark of a true follower of Christ, said John Wesley, “...is not either outward circumcision, or baptism, or any other outward form, but a right state of soul, a mind and spirit renewed after the image of him that created it....”¹

¹John Wesley, “Circumcision of the Heart,” (Nashville: Discipleship Resources), p. 1.

GENESIS

The Beginning



Sacrifice of Isaac by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

6. Abraham and Isaac

Genesis 22:1–28:9

6. ABRAHAM AND ISAAC (22:1—28:9)

THE TESTING OF ABRAHAM (22:1-19)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who went with Abraham? 2. When did they reach their destination? 3. What did Abraham carry? 4. What did Isaac carry? 5. What did they expect God to provide? 6. What did God provide? 7. What did Abraham call the place? 8. Name three of God's blessings! | <p>Two Servants and Isaac (22:3)
 On the third day (22:4)
 Fire and a Knife (22:6)
 The Wood (22:6)
 A Lamb (22:8)
 A Ram in the Thicket (22:13)
 The Lord will provide (22:14)
 Descendants; Land, and a Blessing</p> |
|---|--|

NAHOR'S FAMILY (22:20-24)	DEATH OF SARAH (23:1-20)	WIFE FOR ISAAC (24:1-67)	ISHMAEL'S SONS (25:13-15)
Uz Buz Kemuel Chesed Hazo Pildash Jidlaph Bethuel	Milcah (Wife) Rebekah (Daughter)	When did Sarah die? 127 (23:1) Where was Sarah buried? Machpelah (23:9) What did Abraham pay Ephron? 400 Shekels (23:15-16)	Who was Rebekah's Father? Bethuel How was Rebekah chosen? She watered the 10 camels What gifts were given to her? Gold Nose Ring & 2 Gold Bracelets What was Laban's request? A 10 day delay Was the request granted? No Did Isaac love Rebekah? Yes
Tebah Gaham Tahash Maacah	Reumah (Concubine)	The Wife: Keturah (25:1-11) The Children: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, Shua Abraham's age at death: 175 Ishmael's age at death: 137	Nebaioth Kedar Adbeel Mibsam Mishma Dumah Massa Hadad Tema Jetur Naphish Kedemah
ISAAC & REBEKAH (25:19-34)	IN GERAR (26:1-15)	THE WELLS (26:16-33)	JACOB & ESAU (27:1—28:9)
Isaac's Age at Marriage? 40 (25:20) Isaac's Age as a Father? 60 (25:26) Nations symbolized by... Esau: Edom (Red) (25:30) Jacob: Israel Who did Rebekah favor? Jacob (25:28)	Why did they stay in Gerar? Because of a famine (26:1) Who was the Philistine leader? Abimelech Isaac passed Rebekah off as... His sister (26:7) The Philistine response was? To fill up his wells (26:14-15)	The Four Wells 1. Esek (Dispute) (26:20) 2. Sitnah (Opposition) (26:21) 3. Rehoboth (Room) (26:22) 4. Shibah (26:32-33) The Fourth well means... “Well of the Oath/Seven” City named after this well? Beersheba (26:33)	What Jacob took from Esau? The Birthright and Blessing How did Jacob deceive Isaac? Goatskin on hands and neck What was Esau's response? He wanted to kill him What was Rebekah's response? Sent him to her brother Laban
WIVES OF ESAU (26:34-35)	NATIONALITY OF THE WIVES		
Judith (26:34-35) Basemath (26:34-35) Mahalath (28:9)	Hittite Hittite Ishmael		

6. ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

Genesis 22:1—28:9

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Testing of Abraham 22:1-24	The Deaths of Sarah and Abraham 23:1-20 25:1-18	A Wife for Isaac 24:1-67	The Stories about Isaac 26:1-25	Jacob and Esau 25:19-34 27:1—28:9

THE TESTING OF ABRAHAM (22:1-19)

Abraham was told by God to take his son to the land of Moriah. The name *Moriah* is unknown in the rest of the Bible, but the place where Abraham went is generally identified with one of the hills in Jerusalem. According to 2 Chronicles 3:1, it is the one identified as Mount Zion on which the Temple was finally built. Today, the Dome of the Rock, an impressive Muslim mosque, built in 691 C.E., stands on this site. The Samaritan tradition, however, located the scene on Mount Gerizim near Shechem. The title “mount of the Lord” (22:14) indicates that the location had to be an important place.

Abraham took an ass, two young men, his son, and the firewood. The fact that he took firewood along with him suggests a site other than Jerusalem. If he were going to Jerusalem, he would not have needed firewood; hence, the treeless ranges of Sinai near Kadesh have also been suggested as his destination. If he were going there he would have needed to take firewood along. After three days travel, he went ahead with his son and the wood. Isaac carried the wood and Abraham carried the fire¹ and a knife. When asked about the sacrificial lamb, Abraham told his son that God would provide one. Then he bound Isaac and prepared to sacrifice him. At just the right moment God told him not to proceed and provided him with a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. Abraham named the place “The Lord will Provide.” Then he returned to Beer-sheba.

C. S. Lewis was concerned about the testing of Abraham’s faith. “If God is omniscient,” he asked, “He must have known what Abraham would do, without any experiment; why,

¹ Bruce Feiler, *Walking the Bible* (Perennial: New York, 2001), p. 90. It was so difficult to make fire...that they carried a charcoal ember. Bedouin do it even now.... They have a special plant, like cane. They put the charcoal inside the husk, wrap it in cotton, and it burns slowly all day. At night they break the cane, blow on the charcoal, and start the fire.

then, this needless torture?”¹ As Augustine pointed out, whatever God knew, Abraham did not know. The testing was to teach him about his own faith. He was to demonstrate his faithfulness by doing something that did not seem right to him, nor could it have seemed right to his neighbors. Abraham submitted to offering Isaac as a sacrifice believing that God knew what he was doing. Hebrews 11:17-19 states that he believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead and that the promise of many descendants would still be in effect; hence, Isaac is portrayed as a type of Christ. He was Abraham’s only true son, and future faith depended upon him. In the New Testament, Jesus is the son, but he is sacrificed. When faith is tested, a way out is not always found. Sometimes death does occur, but we must believe, nevertheless, that God knows what he is doing.

There is another way of looking at this story. Sacrifice was part of the religious rituals of many ancient cultures. Some of those cultures, including the Canaanite culture, practiced child sacrifice. This account from Abraham’s life may have functioned to prevent child sacrifice in the Hebrew religion. It may also have served to legitimize the sacrifice of animals in their place.

THE DESCENDANTS OF NAHOR (22:20-24)

The purpose of this genealogy was to introduce Bethuel, Rebekah’s father, thus preparing us for the Isaac and Rebekah story in Chapter 24.

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF SARAH (23:1-20)

Sarah died at the age of 127 at Kiriath-arba (Hebron). The word *Kiriath-arba* can mean “town of Arba,” who was a prominent member of a tribe living there, or “City of four (quarters),” which refers to the place where Anak and his four sons lived. Abraham offered to buy a burial site from the Hittites, who were in control of Hebron at the time; but the Hittites, acknowledging him as a “mighty prince,” wanted to give him whatever sepulchre he might choose. He settled for the Cave of Machpelah, which was owned by Ephron. Ephron wanted to give it to him, but Abraham insisted on purchasing it. The price agreed upon was 400 shekels of silver, which was an exorbitant price; but it included the entire field and all of its contents. The cave became the family burial place. By purchasing a burial place in Canaan, Abraham was indicating that Canaan was his new homeland. While a family sepulchre did not lay legal claim to Canaan as a possession, it did become a prophetic sign that God would fulfill his promise to Abraham and his descendants. In addition to Sarah, Abraham (25:9-10), Isaac (35:27-29), Rebekah (49:3), Jacob (50:13), and Leah (49:31) would all be buried there. Canaan was to become a possession of Abraham’s descendants.

A WIFE FOR ISAAC (24:1-67)

Here we have a beautiful story that describes how oriental marriages were arranged. Abraham did not want Isaac marrying a Canaanite girl, and so he sent one of his servants

¹C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan Publishing:, 1977), pp. 101-102.

to Nahor, which was near Haran, to find a wife for him. The servant, possibly Eliezer (15:2), was asked to take an oath by placing his hand under Abraham's thigh (on his genitals). This old form of oath taking (47:29) reflected the view that the fountain of reproductivity was sacred to the Lord. Isaac himself was not to go along on the trip. The servant took ten camels and some choice gifts.

The little group stopped by a well outside the city of Nahor in the evening. This was the time when most women would go to the well to fetch water. The servant intended to ask a maiden, "Please offer your jar that I may drink." The maiden who answered, "Drink, and I will water your camels," would be the woman God had chosen for Isaac's wife. The girl who answered in this manner was Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel. Her brother's name was Laban. A gold ring was given to her for her nose (weighing 1/2 shekel), and two bracelets for her arms (weighing 10 shekels). The servant asked Rebekah for permission to lodge in her house. As they approached Rebekah's house, Laban ran out to meet them. Food was offered to the party, but it was denied until Abraham's servant had an opportunity to make clear his errand. Both Bethuel and the servant seem to think that the selection of Rebekah was by divine guidance (24:40 & 50-51). They ate, drank, and spent the night.

Rebekah's mother and brother asked for ten days, but the servant was in a hurry to return home. He might have suspected that Abraham would not live much longer and wanted to finish his errand before his master's death. After Rebekah was consulted, they started for Canaan. Isaac had apparently moved from Hebron to Beer-lahai-roi¹, where he went out into a field to meditate one evening. As he was meditating he looked up to see them bringing Rebekah to him. The story ends with Isaac's acceptance of her as his wife, and the statement that "he loved her." (24:67)

THE DEATH OF ABRAHAM (25:1-18)

Other Descendants of Abraham (25:1-6)

Abraham took another wife, Keturah, who bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shua. While he gave gifts to these sons, he gave all he had to Isaac.

The Death of Abraham (25:7-11)

At the age of 175, Abraham died, and Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah.

The Descendants of Ishmael (25:12-18)

Ishmael had twelve sons and died at the age of 137. His descendants occupied Havilah to Shur, which includes Sinai and northwest Arabia. The names of Ishmael's sons were:

¹ Beer-lahai-roi was located about 50 miles southwest of Gerar. It refers to a well, which was necessary to sustain life.

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Nebaioth | 7. Massa |
| 2. Kedar | 8. Hadad |
| 3. Adbeel | 9. Tema |
| 4. Mibsam | 10. Jetur |
| 5. Mishma | 11. Naphish |
| 6. Dumah | 12. Kedemah |

JACOB (ISRAEL) AND ESAU (EDOM) (25:19-34)

The birth of Jacob and Esau (25:19-26)

Isaac married Rebekah when he was 40 years old. Rebekah, like Sarah, was barren, and did not bear children for 20 years, and then she became pregnant with twins. She had such a struggle with them that she consulted the Lord, who informed her that both would become mighty nations, but the younger would dominate the older one. Isaac was 60 years old when the twins were born. The Hebrew word *red* is a play on the word *Edom* and *hairy* is a play on the word *Seir*, the region of the Edomites. *Jacob* is a play on the Hebrew word for *heel*, for he “takes by the heel,” that is, “he supplants.” Jacob dominated his brother from birth.

The Shepherd and the Hunter (25:27-28)

Jacob was a quiet man who dwelt in tents. Although it does not say so here, he also became a shepherd. In contrast to Jacob, Esau became a hunter and was quite the opposite. Shepherd and hunter represented the two rival ways of life.

Esau sells his Birthright (25:29-34)

Esau sold his birthright over his hunger for a cup of soup. The loss of his birthright symbolized his weakness, but it also signifies a kind of godlessness. He refuses to accept what was considered to be a divine responsibility, and whenever that happens, God chooses someone else through whom to work. The birthright meant two things: (1) Leadership of the Family, and (2) A Double Share of the Inheritance.

STORIES ABOUT ISAAC (26:1-35)

Isaac at Gerar (26:1-25)

Most of the following incidents parallel stories already told about Abraham. A famine came, but Isaac was told to remain at Gerar and keep the covenant. Fearing the Philistines, he pulled Abraham’s trick of passing his wife off as his sister. Abimelech saw through this deception and warned his people not to touch Rebekah, lest they bring upon themselves guilt and punishment.

The Lord blessed Isaac, and he became rich with crops and flocks and herds. The Philistines envied him, and Abimelech had the wells filled in that had been dug in the

days of Abraham. Isaac had them dug up again. Arguments arose between Isaac's servants and the herdsmen of Gerar. The first well was called *Esek*, which means "contention." The second well was called *Sitnah*, which means "enmity," but over the third well there was no quarrel, and so they called it *Rehoboth*, which means "room" or "broad places."

Isaac reaffirmed the covenant with the building of an altar, the pitching of a tent, and the digging of another well. The God of Abraham was not known in general or abstract ways; He was known in his concrete, historical relationships with his people.

The Agreement between Isaac and Abimelech (26:26-33)

Abimelech was not the same person with whom Abraham dealt. The term *Abimelech* was either a family or a throne name. Abimelech took his adviser Ahuzzath and his military commander Phicol and met with Isaac. He recognized that the Lord was with Isaac and offered to take an oath or covenant with him. A feast was prepared and they ate and drank together to seal the covenant. Isaac's servants informed him that another well had produced water, and the well was named *Shibah*, (oath or seven) which became the city of "Beer-sheba" (well of the oath or well of seven). This was another explanation of the origin of the city and explains the background behind Isaac's shrine there.

Esau's Foreign Wives (26:34-35)

At the age of 40, Esau took two Hittite wives, Judith and Basemath. A third wife, Mahalath, is added in Genesis 28:9. Although this story is out of order, it explains the animosity that existed within the family. They made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.

ISAAC'S BLESSING OF JACOB (27:1-45)

As Isaac approached death, he called his eldest son Esau to prepare for the blessing. Esau was to go hunting and prepare some savory food for his father, after which he would receive the blessing. Rebekah overheard the plans and plotted with Jacob to deceive Isaac. Jacob got two kids from the flock, which Rebekah prepared. To deceive Isaac she put Esau's clothes on Jacob and skins from the kids on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. Jacob took in food and wine to his father, and was blessed by him. When Esau returned and Isaac discovered the mistake, it was too late. The blessing could not be called back. Esau became so angry that he was determined to kill his brother, and so Rebekah advised Jacob to flee to Laban.

No one in the family comes out very well in this story. Morality seems to be forgotten. Esau sold his birthright and lost his father's blessing. Jacob, with the help of Rebekah, tricked him and took both. Isaac's senses told him that something was wrong, but he did not pay any attention to them. It seems strange that God should work through Jacob, who lied and cheated to get his own way. It must have been a real struggle for God to get his will done in the world by working with someone like Jacob.

THE SENDING OF JACOB TO LABAN (27:46—28:9)

In this section Jacob was sent to Paddan-aram (Plain of Aram) to obtain a wife. Nothing is said about Esau's desire to kill Jacob. Esau's Hittite wives troubled Rebekah, and so Isaac sent Jacob to Rebekah's brother's house to get a proper wife. Recognizing that his Hittite wives were not favored, Esau attempted to please his parents by taking one of Ishmael's daughters as a wife. This made no difference. Jacob was still the one who had the birthright and blessing, and he would be the one through whom God would work.

THE TORTURE OF TESTING

The testing of Abraham is a puzzling story. Why would God ask anyone, even in testing him, to kill his own son? That is to put someone through sheer torture. Perhaps the only answer that can be given is that although God knew that Abraham would pass the test, Abraham did not yet know it. The torture of the test was to teach him about his own faith and the high price which is involved in faith. He was asked to demonstrate his faithfulness by doing something that his pagan neighbors might have expected of him, but when it came down to actually doing it, he was relieved of the act. Abraham was operating in a time when child sacrifice was common, and in this strange story, God finally called him to abandon what everyone else was doing. One of the reasons why the Canaanites were to lose their land had to do with their practice of child sacrifice.

In Hebrews 11:17-19, which is part of that famous chapter describing the heroes of faith, this story is explained in terms of Abraham's belief that God could raise Isaac from the dead.

By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom he had been told, 'It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you.' He considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead—and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

The passage from Hebrews is however a backward look at Abraham's faith, for in Abraham's time, resurrection was not part of their theology. The promise made to Abraham was that his descendants would be as numerous as "the dust of the earth" (Genesis 13:16) or "the stars" of the sky (Genesis 15:5). All this was to take place through Isaac, and nothing is said about the possibility of raising Isaac from the dead. The only thing Abraham could do was to obey God, believing that God would find some way to fulfill his promise.

Jesus went through this same torture, not as the father, but as the son; and what makes his experience so horrifying, is that no ram could be found in the thicket (Genesis 22:13). He became the Lamb that was slain. That he experienced the torture, not of Abraham, but of Isaac, can be seen in his prayer in Gethsemane, where he cried:

I am deeply grieved, even to death.... Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want. (Mark 14:34 & 36)

Luke describes the agony: "...his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground." (Luke 22:44) The test was agonizing, and no escape was possible. Jesus was to become the sacrifice, and even the knowledge of resurrection would not make the torture any easier.

The torture actually began in the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, following his baptism, when he was tested in the wilderness. Those three tests had to do with the temptation to use economic, spiritual, and political power to bring in the Kingdom of God. That was such an ordeal, that Matthew 4:11 says that "suddenly angels came and waited on him." The test of faith for Jesus was as tortuous as it was for Abraham and as it might be for us. God may know how things are going to turn out, but we need the experience of being refined in the test of faith.

No one enjoys the torture of testing, but we endure it so that we might know how genuine our faith is. In writing to Christians about to be persecuted for their faith, the author of 1 Peter 1:6-7 said:

In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

If Abraham and Jesus could take the risk of faith when everything seemed lost, then certainly we can follow in their footsteps. We do not need to succeed in this world; we just need to be faithful. God can raise children for Abraham out of stones (Matthew 3:9), and he can put flesh on any old dry bones (Ezekiel 37:12). What all this amounts to is that we can risk the leap of faith even when everything seems lost, for God has promised both our own personal resurrections and the establishment of his eternal Kingdom. Our faith hinges not on our successes, but upon his eternal promises. Abraham based his faith on that, and so should we.

GENESIS

The Beginning



Jacob's Dream by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

7. The Growth of Jacob

Genesis 28:10–31:55

7. THE GROWTH OF JACOB (28:10—31:55)

<p>Jacob was traveling... Between Beersheba and Haran Jacob had a vision in a place called... Bethel (Luz) What was in Jacob's Vision A Stairway and Angels What was Jacob's Response? A Tithe (28:22)</p>	GOD'S COVENANT WITH JACOB (28:13-14)		
	1. Land	3. Blessing to All	
	2. Descendants	4. God's Presence	
JACOB'S WIVES, THEIR SERVANTS, AND THE CHILDREN (29:1—30:24)			
Wife #1: "Cow" Leah (Her Sons)	Leah's Servant Zilpah (Her Sons)	Wife 2: "Lamb" Rachel (Her Sons)	Rachel's Servant Bilhah (Her Sons)
1. Reuben (Behold a Son) 2. Simeon (God Hears) 3. Levi (Joined) 4. Judah (Praise) 9. Issachar (Hire/Reward) 10. Zebulun (Dwelling)	7. Gad (Good Fortune) 8. Asher (Happy)	11. Joseph (May God Add) 12. Benjamin (35:16-18) (Son of the Right Hand) (Son of the South)	5. Dan (A Judge) 6. Naphtali (My Wrestling)
(Her Daughter) Dinah (One Who Judges)			
JACOB RETURNS HOME WITH HIS FAMILY (30:25—31:55)			
The Bargain:	These Sheep and Goats are to be Jacob's The Speckled The Spotted The Black Ones	Jacob's Deceit:	The Branches were made from Poplar Almond Plane
Who sent Jacob home?		God (31:3)	Years worked for Leah: (7)
How many times were Jacob's wages changed?		Ten Times (31:8, 41)	Years worked for Rachel (7)
How long passed before Laben knew Jacob left?		Three Days (31:22)	Years worked for flocks (6)
How long did it take Laban to catch Jacob?		Seven Days (31:23)	Jacob & Laban' Covenant
What did Laban accuse Jacob of stealing?	Terephim (Household Gods)		Mizpah (31:49)
Who really stole it?	Rachel		Jacob: Galeed
Where was it hidden?	Inside Saddle (31:34)		Laban: Jegar Sahadutha

7. THE GROWTH OF JACOB

Genesis 28:10—31:55

ASSIGNMENTS				
Jacob's Dream at Bethel 28:10-22	Leah and Rachel 29:1-30	Jacob's Sons and Daughter 29:31—30:24	Jacob and Laban 30:25-43	Jacob returns Home 31:1-55

This particular story took place over a period of approximately 20 years and can be divided into three parts, the first two parts lasting 7 years each and the final part lasting 6 years.

JACOB'S DREAM AT BETHEL (28:10-22)

Jacob reached Bethel, 60 miles north of Beer-sheba, just as darkness fell. In this desolate spot and in a moment of unutterable loneliness Jacob experienced the presence of God (28:16). This experience makes up the core of the covenant. One needs to experience such a presence in order to be guided by God. God not only guides, he also promises to protect. The experience came to Jacob in a dream. Angels of God are pictured as ascending and descending on a ladder. The ladder was in fact a stairway like that found on the Ziggurat. Jesus used this same kind of imagery with Nathanael (John 1:51).

God identified himself as the God of Abraham and Isaac and renewed the same promise to Jacob. When Jacob awakened from his dream he recognized that God had been present with him, and in return he responded in three ways. First, he built an altar by pouring oil upon the stone on which he had slept, which was his way of consecrating it (28:18-19). This altar became an important place of worship in the future, and the story helps to explain the origin of Bethel. Secondly, Jacob offered his life. This means he accepted the Lord as his God. Thirdly, he offered a tithe (28:22). The tithe was mentioned first in Genesis 14:20 in connection with Abraham and Melchizedek, but in that case the tithe was promised from the booty of war. In the case of Jacob, the tithe was given from the produce of the land. In the case of Abraham, the tithe was connected to Jerusalem (Salem), but in the case of Jacob, it was connected to Bethel. From these origins the concept of the tithe developed, and although its misuse was condemned in Amos 4:4, Malachi 3:8, and Matthew 23:23, the concept was never eliminated. There were three levels of giving: (1) Collections, (2) Tithes, and (3) Offerings.

JACOB'S TWO MARRIAGES (29:1—30:24)

Jacob meets Rachel (29:1-14)

“The people of the east” in verse 1 were the Arameans, Jacob’s ancestors. The large stone covering the well in verse 2 was there to insure that everyone received their fair share. The stone was bigger than one person could lift, and so access to the well had to wait until several people gathered to help one another. As Jacob approached the well, he met some shepherds and asked them about his uncle Laban. They pointed Rachel out to him, who was coming to the well to water her father’s sheep. Jacob rolled the stone away for her, kissed her, and wept aloud. She ran home to tell her father about his nephew Jacob. Laban welcomed him, accepting him as part of the family. That is what it meant to say, “Surely you are my bone and my flesh.” (29:14)

Jacob's Marriage to Leah and Rachel (29:15-30)

Jacob could not pay the price required to marry Rachel, and so he had to work for Laban for seven years. At the end of the seven years, Laban tricked him into marrying Leah. She was heavily veiled and so Jacob did not recognize her until morning. He had to finish out the week of marriage festivities before he could marry Rachel, for whom he also had to commit himself to another seven years of labor. The marriage to Leah, whose name means, “cow,” had to take place before the marriage of Rachel, whose name means “ewe.” Rachel was younger than her sister Leah, and could not marry prior to her sister. Each of them was given a maid by Laban, Zilpah for Leah and Bilhah for Rachel.

The Children of Jacob (29:31—30:24)

There developed considerable rivalry between Leah and Rachel. In order to make up for Leah’s lack of beauty, the Lord opened up her womb so that she would be the first to bear children. Unable to bear children, Rachel encouraged Jacob to have children through her maid, which Leah also did. Then Reuben came home one day with some mandrakes, the roots of a potato-like plant, thought to stimulate conception. Leah had two more sons and a daughter, and finally Rachel conceived a son. Eleven sons of Jacob were born in Aramean territory, with only Benjamin being born in Canaan (35:16-18).

LEAH

Reuben (1)
Simeon (2)
Levi (3)
Judah (4)
Issachar (9)
Zebulun (10)

ZILPAH (Leah's Maid)

Gad (7)
Asher (8)
Leah's Daughter
Dinah (11)

RACHEL

Joseph (12)
Benjamin (13)

BILHAH (Rachel's Maid)

Dan (5)
Naphtali (6)

JACOB'S BARGAIN WITH LABAN (30:25-43)

The time came when Jacob wanted to return home with his wives and children, but Laban was not too anxious to see him go. They discussed wages for all of Jacob's work, and Laban asked him what he would like for his labor. Jacob suggested that he be permitted to take all the speckled and spotted sheep and goats and the black lambs. This seemed like a good deal in that such animals were rare. Laban had nothing to lose. To make sure Jacob did not get very much, he immediately put his sons in charge of all such animals and sent them three days travel away from where Jacob was working. Jacob took some fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane and peeled back the bark, creating stripes on them by exposing the white inner wood. These rods were then placed in the water troughs where the flocks would come to drink and breed. Ancient cattle breeders believed that the female was influenced by visual impressions, which would affect the color of their offspring. This was Jacob's intent. He produced speckled, spotted, and black animals by placing these rods in front of the female's eyes while they were breeding. Jacob only did this with the stronger animals. He did not do it with the feebler animals, which then remained Laban's. In the end Jacob grew rich through his deceit.

JACOB RETURNS HOME (31:1-55)**Jacob's Plan to go Home (31:1-16)**

Having fallen out of favor with Laban, Jacob decided to go home. He attributed his decision to the Lord, who commanded him to go home. First, he consulted his wives, who were still considered part of the property of the household of Laban. Jacob needed their consent to take them with him. In talking with them, he attributed his wealth to God, who gave him their father's property, the flocks and herds.

Jacob's Flight from Laban (31:17-55)

Jacob's Flight (31:17-21)

Jacob chose the busy shearing season in which to flee from Paddan-aram to Canaan. While Laban sheared sheep, Rachel stole the household gods (teraphim). The household gods insured a man's leadership in the family and a claim on the property. They had much more than religious significance and so their loss was taken very seriously. Jacob and his wives crossed the Euphrates to travel towards the hill country of Gilead.

Laban's Overtaking of Jacob (31:22-32)

Laban heard what had happened on the third day after Jacob left, and so he pursued Jacob, for seven days, until he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead. He was angry with Jacob for taking his daughters, grandchildren, and household gods. Jacob, not knowing that Rachel had stolen the household gods, called for the death penalty to be inflicted upon the guilty person.

Rachel and Laban's Idols (31:33-42)

Laban immediately began to search the camp for his household gods, but was unable to find them. Rachel had hidden them under the camel's saddle and excused herself from rising because of her condition. When Laban could not find them, Jacob complained that Laban was unjustly treating him. He had worked fourteen hard years for Leah and Rachel and another six for the flocks.

Jacob's Covenant with Laban (31:43-55)

Laban yielded his claims, and the two men agreed on a covenant, which seemed to have two traditions. In the first one, a "heap of stones" was named "Galeed," which is probably the source of the name for Gilead. It symbolized Laban's permission to his daughters to leave his household, provided Jacob would promise to treat them well and marry no rival wives. In the second tradition, a "pillar" marked a territorial boundary at "Mizpah," which was probably a play on the Hebrew word for "pillar." The two men sealed their covenant with a sacred meal, each invoking god to witness the agreement and punish any violation of the boundary of the other. A definite break was made here between Jacob (the Israelites) and Laban (the Arameans). The famous Mizpah Benediction (31:49) was a prayer that the gods would oversee the covenant since neither Jacob nor Laban could trust one another. The gods would guarantee that both of them would live up to the contract. For Jacob that god would be the God of Abraham, but for Laban it would be the God of Nahor.

THE GENESIS OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

One can hardly call Jacob's religious experience at Bethel the first one, but it does tell us something of the origin of religious experience in human life. Prior to the Fall, a relationship between God and Adam and Eve was simply taken for granted. Following the Fall, they were banished from the garden, and might we dare to suggest, from God's presence. This does not mean that God had ceased to communicate with them, only that they had constructed a barrier between themselves and God. Genesis 3:24 suggests that God constructed that barrier, but that was only after Adam and Eve had disobeyed Him. Their disobedience drove a wedge between themselves and God, and that is true for all of us.

It does not have to be the case. Genesis 5:24 tells us that, "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him." For those who respond to God, every barrier is

broken down. That is what the Bible means when it indicates that Enoch did not die, but was taken directly into heaven. This only happened to one other person, Elijah (2 Kings 2:11); although, some have suggested that Moses ascended directly into heaven as well. The Bible however is silent in regard to the ascension of Moses. What could these stories possibly mean? One might suggest that when a good person dies, God takes that person to be with himself; but we must be careful of this because Enoch was not taken for his righteousness. Enoch was taken because he learned how to walk with God. A little girl, in trying to explain this verse, said: “Enoch and God used to take long walks together. And one day they walked further than usual; and God said, ‘Enoch, you must be tired; come into My house and rest.’”¹ In learning to walk with God the barriers between God and ourselves are broken down. God is always attempting to break them down, but he has to wait for us to respond to his initiatives. Many times those initiatives are experienced in our weakest or loneliest moments, and frequently, our resistance to those initiatives is strongest when everything is going well for us.

With the rupture in human relationships between Jacob and his brother Esau, Jacob was sufficiently weakened so that he might indeed experience God’s initiative. Even in such moments, many people succeed in resisting God; but this was not the case for Jacob. He had to leave home, not only to find a proper wife, but to save his own life, for Esau now hated him and was intent on killing him (Genesis 27:41). All this formed the background for what was about to take place for Jacob at Bethel.

The story is very simple. In travelling from Beer-sheba to Haran, Jacob came to a place where he decided to spend the night, for the sun had already set. Taking one of the stones he found on the ground, he made a pillow of it and went to sleep. In his sleep, God spoke to him in a dream. The dream, like many dreams, had vivid imagery; and Jacob interpreted it as a religious experience. In it he saw God making promises to him, and expecting a certain kind of response in return. The promises were certainly not based on Jacob’s righteousness, for he had just cheated his brother out of his Birthright and Blessing. Jacob was no Enoch. God was breaking down the barrier and offering to walk with Jacob.

When Jacob woke up, he cried, “Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it!” (Genesis 28:16) He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” (Genesis 28:17) The barrier had been smashed, and the way had been opened to walk with God, as did Enoch.

This does not mean that Jacob was immediately made into a righteous person. He had a long way to go, but this was the beginning. He symbolized his positive response to God’s *preventive* grace in three ways: (1) by erecting the stone as an altar and naming the place Bethel (House of God) (Genesis 28:18-19), (2) by making a vow to serve God (Genesis 28:20), and (3) by promising to pay God a tithe (one-tenth) of his possessions and livelihood (Genesis 28:22).

¹*Altars of Earth* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1922), p. 136.

No one has to approach God in righteousness. If that were even possible, men like Martin Luther and John Wesley would have had no difficulty at all; but they quickly realized that their best efforts were insufficient. It was in their weaker moments, when they felt deeply their failures that the grace of God finally broke into their consciousness. This did not make them less concerned with their morality; rather, it gave them a new motive for striving to do even more. Spiritual rebirth always leads to doing more than is required of the Law, not less.

Jacob called that place *Bethel*, “the House of God;” but in reality, he himself became “the House of God.” George Macdonald describes what happens to everyone who responds to God’s initiative to break down walls that stand between those whom he has created and himself:

Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on... But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage; but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.¹

¹Quoted in C. S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1943, 1945, 1952), p. 174.

GENESIS

The Beginning



Jacob wrestles with an Angel by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

8. A New Generation

Genesis 32:1—39:23

8. A NEW GENERATION (32:1—39:23)

JACOB'S RECONCILIATION WITH ESAU (32:1—33:20)

Jacob met a company of angels at a place he called...	Mahanaim (32:2)				
Jacob sent messengers to Esau in...	Seir (Edom) (32:3)				
Esau set out to meet Jacob with how many men?	400 (32:6)				
Jacob responded by dividing his family into how many groups?	2 (32:7-8)				
Jacob made the following gifts to Esau:	Jacob wrestled with a Man (Angel)				
Females 200 Goats 200 Ewes 30 Camels	Males 20 Goats 40 Cows 20 Rams	Females 40 Cows 20 Donkeys	Males 10 Bulls 10 Donkeys	Where? What was dislocated? What was his new name? Jacob called the place...	Jabbok River (32:24) His hip (13:25) Israel (32:28) Peniel/Penuel (32:30)

Jacob prepared to meet Esau by organizing his wives and children in three rows (33:1-3)

Maidservants and their Children	Leah and her Children	Rachel and Joseph
What did Jacob do when he first met Esau? How did Esau respond to Jacob's initiative? Esau returned to.... Jacob settled in... Jacob bought a plot of land in Schechem Jacob built an altar on his land and called it...	He bowed down seven times (33:3) He kissed him (33:4) Seir (Edom) (33:16) Succoth (33:16) He paid 100 pieces of silver to Sons of Hamor El Elohe Israel (33:20) <i>God, the God of Israel</i>	

SHECHEM'S VIOLATION OF DINAH (34:1-31)

Following the rape of Dinah, what did Hamor request? What demand did Jacob put upon the whole family? Who killed all of the men with their swords? What was the inevitable consequence?	Marriage for Shechem and Dinah (34:8) Circumcision for everyone (34:13-17) Simeon and Levi (34:25) Canaanites and Perizzites became Enemies (34:30)
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JACOB'S JOURNEY TO HEBRON (MAMRE) (35:1-24)

What did Jacob bury under the Oak of Shechem? Why did Jacob bury these things there? What was the name of Rebekah's Nurse who died? Where did Rachel die? What did Rachel name her Son? What did Jacob rename his Son? What was Reuben's Sin?	Foreign gods and ear rings (35:4) This was where God first revealed himself (35:7) Deborah (35:8) Ephrath (Bethlehem) Ben-oni (35:18) Benjamin Sex with Bilhah
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8. A NEW GENERATION

Genesis 32:1—39:23

ASSIGNMENTS					
Jacob's Reconciliation with Esau 32:1—33:20	Shechem's Violation of Dinah 34:1-31	Jacob and Esau 35:1—36:43	Joseph is sold into Slavery 37:1-36	Judah and Tamar 38:1-30	The Integrity of Joseph 39:1-23

JACOB'S RECONCILIATION WITH ESAU (32:1—33:20)

Jacob Preparation for Esau (32:1-21)

In preparing to meet Esau, Jacob first met a company (army) of angels at *Mahanaim*. This place has not yet been identified by archaeologists. It could have been any place in the area. The name simply refers to two armies or companies, one of God's angels and the other of Jacob's followers. Jacob sent messengers to Esau, who had settled in Seir (Edom). When Jacob heard that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men, he was afraid and divided his people, flocks, and herds into two companies. If Esau's intent was hostile, at least one of the companies could escape. Jacob prayed in preparation for the encounter, but he also sent some of his servants to intercept Esau and make a gift of the following animals to him: (The gift included animals in the proper proportions for breeding.)

200 she-goats	30 camels
20 he-goats	40 cows
200 ewes	10 bulls
20 rams	20 Donkeys
	10 Donkeys

Jacob's Wrestling with an Angel (32:22-32)

That night Jacob prepared to cross the Jabbok River. Having sent his two wives, two maids, and eleven children across, he spent some time alone. In that time he wrestled with a man (angel), during which time he asked for a blessing and was crippled. Following that, he was given a new name and made into a new man. The place where this happened was called *Penue,l* which means "the face of God." The name given to Jacob was *Israel*, which originally meant "God rules," but was interpreted to mean "He who

strives with God.” (32:28) Israel became the name for Jacob’s descendants and God’s people.

Jacob’s Reconciliation with Esau (33:1-20)

Before meeting Esau, Jacob divided his children among Leah, Rachel, and two maids. He went on ahead of them and bowed down before Esau seven times, an act of homage fit for a King. Esau graciously accepted him by embracing him, falling on his neck, and kissing him. Jesus undoubtedly was thinking about this reconciliation when he told the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:20). After the brothers met, Esau returned to Seir and Jacob went on to Succoth, where he built a house, and some time later to Shechem, where he built an altar. He called the altar *El-El’ohe-Israel*. This means “God, the God of Israel.” He was accepting God as his own personal God.

SHECHEM’S VIOLATION OF DINAH (34:1-31)

Shechem, the son of Hamor, raped Leah’s daughter, Dinah. Shechem, the most honored in his family and a prince of the land, wanted to marry her. Jacob was the first to learn of what had happened, but Simeon and Levi, who were full brothers to Dinah, reacted in anger. In deceit they agreed to marriage between Shechem and Dinah if *all* the household of Hamor were circumcised; but on the third day, while all the men were still sore, Simeon and Levi took swords and killed them, including Hamor and his son, Shechem. They took Dinah home and plundered the city taking the women, flocks, herds and asses. Jacob worried about this because he knew that the Canaanites were larger in number than his own family. The story talks about individuals, but its purpose might be to explain the animosity that emerged between the Canaanite city of Shechem and the early Hebrew tribes.

JACOB’S JOURNEYS TO HEBRON (MAMRE) (35:1-29)

Jacob’s Journey to Bethel (35:1-15)

Jacob and his people were to put away all foreign gods, and so God commanded Jacob to build an altar at Bethel. This meant getting rid of their earrings, which were worn as magic amulets. These were placed under the Oak near Shechem. The process of purification took place through the washing and the changing of clothes. Bethel was to become an important religious shrine. While they were at Bethel, Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died and was buried there. It was at Bethel that God reaffirmed the covenant with Jacob. Jacob was now the Father of Israel

The Death of Rachel and Birth of Benjamin (35:16-21)

On the way to Ephrath, identified here as Bethlehem, Rachel gave birth and called her son *Benoni*, which means “Son of my Sorrow,” after which she died. Jacob changed the name to *Benjamin*, which means “Son of my right hand” or “Son of the South.” “Son of the South” may refer to Benjamin’s birthplace in the South. All the other children were

THE CHILDREN OF JACOB			
Leah's Children	Zilpah's Children	Rachel's Children	Bilhah's Children
Reuben Simeon Levi Judah Issachar Zebulun	Gad	Joseph	Dan
	Asher	Benjamin	Naphtali
THE GENERATIONS OF ESAU (36:1-43)			
Wives:	Adah (36:4)	Oholibamah (36:5)	Basemath (36:4)
Children:	Eliphaz	Jeush Jalam Korah	Reuel
Why did Jacob and Esau separate? What kind of a Monarchy did the Edomites have?	There were too many possessions (36:7) An elected Monarchy (36:31)		
JOSEPH IS SOLD INTO SLAVERY (37:1-36)			
How old was Joseph at this time? Describe the symbol of Jacob's favoritism of Joseph!	17 (37:2) Robe with long sleeves (37:3)		
What are Joseph's two dreams and what do they mean?			
The shearers bow down before one sheaf (37:5-7)	The sun and moon and 11 stars bow before Joseph (37:9)		
Joseph will be elevated in Egypt.	Joseph's father, mother, and brothers should bow down to him		
What two options did Joseph's brothers consider Which brother interceded for him? Which brother decided to sell him? To whom was Joseph sold and for how much? What was the the Egypthon who bought Joseph?	Kill or Sell him Reuben (37:21) Judah (37:21) Ishmaelites and Midianites for 20 Shekels (37:28) Potiphar, the Captain of the Guard (37:36)		
JUDAH AND TAMAR (38:1-30)		THE INTEGRITY OF JOSEPH (39:1-23)	
Judah's three sons Tamar married... What happened to them? What did Judah do? What was Judah's sin? What gave him away? Name Tamar's two sons! David descended from...	Er, Onan, Shelah Er and Onan (38:3-4) They died Withheld Shelah Adultery with Tamar Signet, Cord, Staff (38:18) Zerah and Perez (String) Perez	Potiphar's Vocation... The Lord was with... Joseph was in charge of everything but... Joseph considered every sin against...	Captain (39:1) Joseph (39:2-3, 20-23) The Food (39:6) God (39:5)

born in the North. When facing East the left hand would be facing North and the right hand South. “Son of my right hand” and “Son of the South” would mean the same thing.

The Sons of Jacob (35:22-26)

Reuben engaged in sexual relations with Bilhah, Rachel’s maid; and this resulted in Reuben’s loss of prestige as the first born son (49:3-4). Reuben might have been trying to usurp his father’s authority, but like Simeon and Levi, he disqualified himself as a leader. This story may be told to explain the primacy of Judah, the fourth born son. In summary, the twelve sons are re-named along with their mothers and the place of their births.

The Death of Isaac at Mamre (Hebron) (35:27-29)

Jacob and Esau buried their father, who died at the age of 180, just as Isaac and Ishmael had buried their father, Abraham (25:9).

THE GENERATIONS OF ESAU (36:1-43)

This chapter follows the main series of stories having to do with Jacob, and gives us a chance to catch up with that other branch of the family. Esau had three Canaanite wives: (1) Adah, (2) Oholibamah, and (3) Basemath. The children from these wives were Eliphaz (Adah), Jeush, Jalam, Korah (Oholibamah), and Reuel (Basemath). Many other descendants, too numerous to name, are also listed. The reason why Esau left Canaan is because both he and his brother had too many possessions to live together. Because of their cattle, the land simply could not support them both. Esau took his family and moved to Seir (Edom). This description of the generations of Esau is similar to a description of the generations of Ishmael, which is given at the conclusion of the stories concerning Abraham. One very interesting fact included in chapter 36 is the emergence of a monarchy among the Edomites. This monarchy emerged at least 150 years before the Israelite monarchy, and some scholars say that it differed in that it was elective rather than dynastic. (See Genesis 36:31 and Numbers 20:14).

THE SELLING OF JOSEPH INTO SLAVERY (37:1-36)

Jacob’s Love of Joseph (37:1-4)

As the story about Joseph begins, he is described as 17 and favored by his father. This created hostility between Joseph and his brothers, but his father did not seem to be conscious of it.

Joseph’s Two Dreams (37:5-11)

The first dream had to do with Joseph’s sheaf and his brothers’ sheaves, which all bowed down before Joseph’s. The second dream had to do with the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars, which all bowed down before Joseph. The eleven stars referred to the eleven constellations, which were pictured in animal form. For Joseph, the sun and moon

symbolized his parents, and the eleven stars symbolized his brothers. The two dreams were a prophetic statement of his future elevation in Egypt.

The Selling of Joseph to the Ishmaelites (37:12-36)

This story is hard to follow, and this may be due to a variety of sources all mixed together. It begins with Jacob sending Joseph to Shechem to check up on his brothers. When he arrived, his brothers were not there. A man asked him who he was looking for, and then directed him to Dothan. When his brothers saw him coming they conspired to kill him. They disliked him for four reasons: he gave ill reports of them to Jacob (37:2); he enjoyed the preferential treatment of Jacob (37:3-4); his dreams disturbed them; and he was spared manual labor. Anyone who wore long sleeves did not have to do manual labor.

By his Brothers

The brothers decided to kill him and tell their father that wild beasts devoured him, but Reuben talked them out of it. They put him in a pit, and took time out to eat lunch. Judah suggested that they sell him to the Ishmaelites, their second cousins.

By Midianite Traders

Before anything could be done, some Midianite traders came along, drew him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for 20 shekels of silver. The Ishmaelites took him to Egypt. Meanwhile, Reuben discovered his absence from the pit. The brothers killed a goat, dipped Joseph's robe into the blood and related the original story to Jacob about wild beasts devouring him.

To Potiphar

In Egypt, Potiphar, an officer of the Pharaoh, bought him from the Midianites. The story does not clarify the relationship of the Midianites to the Ishmaelites. Were they traveling together, or were they two distinct groups? It might be that the Midianites were a subgroup of the Ishmaelites.

JUDAH AND TAMAR (38:1-30)

Judah became a resident of Adullam, which is near Bethlehem. He married the daughter of Shua, and they had three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. A marriage was arranged between Er and Tamar; but because Er was wicked, the Lord slew him. Onan was supposed to fulfill the Levirate marriage obligation (Deuteronomy 25:5-10), which says that the surviving brother was to provide a descendant for the deceased in order to perpetuate his brother's name and provide someone for the inheritance. Onan did not want to fulfill this obligation and so he spilled his semen on the ground (38:9). This displeased the Lord, who then slew him as well. By this time, Judah suspected that Tamar

was the source of the problem, and so he withheld Shelah from her. He told her to wait until he grew up, but even after he was full grown, he did not give him to her.

When Tamar heard that Judah was going to shear sheep with his friend Hirah (an Adullamite) at Timnah, she took off her widow garments and put on a veil to entice Judah to fulfill the Levirate marriage obligation. She sat at the entrance to Enaim, which was located on the road to Timnah. When Judah saw her he thought she was a cult prostitute, a devotee of the mother-goddess, Ishtar, and so he asked her if he could have sex with her. This might have been one way to worship the nature gods of fertility. She asked him what he might give her, and he offered her a kid from the flock. Since he could not give it at the time, she asked for a pledge until it was sent to her. The agreed upon pledge was his signet, cord, and staff. The signet was an object used to stamp his signature or identity in clay, and it was usually worn around the neck. Archaeologists have found such objects throughout the near East. Later on, Judah sent a kid through his Adullamite friend, but Tamar could not be found. Three months later Tamar was accused of playing the harlot because she was with child. Judah responded by saying that she should be burned. The usual punishment was by stoning (Deuteronomy 22:23-24), but in exceptional cases burning was the method used (Leviticus 21:9). When Tamar was accused, she revealed the signet, cord, and staff as belonging to the person who was responsible for her pregnancy. Judah immediately recognized that she was more righteous than he.

When Tamar delivered, she had twins. One of the babies stuck his hand out first and those in attendance tied a scarlet thread around the wrist so that they could recognize the first born. In the end, the other baby came out first, and became the more important of the two. The twins were named Zerah and Perez. Zerah had the scarlet thread around his wrist, but Jesus' ancestry is traced through David to Perez. The reason that this story interrupts the Joseph story is to show the relationship to King David. A secondary reason might be to demonstrate the danger Israel faced in relating to pagan tribes. Esau's family married Canaanite women and they adopted Canaanite religion and culture. Jacob's family resisted that temptation and adhered to God's covenant with Abraham.

THE INTEGRITY OF JOSEPH (39:1-23)

The Prosperity of Joseph (39:1-6a)

It was an Egyptian, Potiphar, an officer of the Pharaoh and captain of the guard, who purchased Joseph from the Ishmaelites. He was impressed with Joseph and made him the overseer of his house. The only thing that Joseph did not do was to oversee his food. Potiphar was not afraid of Joseph. He took care of his own food for ritualistic reasons.

The Temptation of Joseph (39:6b-18)

Since Joseph was handsome and good-looking, Potiphar's wife tried to get him to lie with her. Joseph resisted the temptation, but eventually found himself alone with her in the house. She tried to force him to lie with her. As he ran out of the house, he left behind a piece of his clothing, which she then used against him. She accused him of attacking her.

The Imprisonment of Joseph (39:19-23)

In Israel the punishment for adultery of free men was death. Joseph's punishment as a slave was quite light, for he was simply imprisoned. The point being made by the author is that the Lord was with Joseph both in success and adversity. The keeper of the prison was so impressed with Joseph that he put him in charge of the other prisoners.

THE MATURATION OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Once we have responded positively to God's initiating (prevenient) grace, our relationship with other people must be transformed. It may take some time for this to happen, but it must happen or else the wall that was brought down begins to rebuild itself.

When Jacob decided to go home, he knew that there was unfinished business at home. He was still estranged from his brother Esau. That is why he sent messengers ahead to find out how severe the alienation was, and that is why he offered gifts to Esau. In these simple acts his religious experience was maturing.

Alone at Peniel, Jacob wrestled with a stranger, possibly an angel, until the break of dawn. He was struggling with God and refused to let Him go until he had experienced a divine blessing. The man had already put Jacob's thigh out of joint, but even then, he insisted, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." "What is your name?" asked the stranger. Jacob told him, and the stranger said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." (Genesis 32:26-28) Jacob in turn asked the stranger's name, but received a blessing instead of an answer (Genesis 32:29).

Jacob called that place *Peniel*, which meant "the face of God," giving his reason: "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." (Genesis 32:30) This was Jacob's second religious experience, and although it weakened him, it also matured him. He was now ready to meet Esau, whom he had earlier alienated. He was not sure what to expect, but Genesis 33:4 describes it beautifully: "But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept."

With the alienation overcome, Jacob saw his brother in a new light. He still tried to give him his gifts, which Esau did not want; but now, the gifts were not offered to save his own life. They were offered in gratitude, for Jacob's religious experience weakened and matured him. When he looked into his brother's eyes, he now saw the image of God; and he said to him, "...to see your face is like seeing the face of God—since you have received me with such favor." (Genesis 33:10)

Religious experience matures when our consciousness of God moves beyond good feelings about God and causes us to see God's image in others. This begins in our relationship with relatives and friends, but it does not fully mature until we also see God's

image in the enemy. “A friend’s relation to a friend,” said Martin Buber, “is a ‘simile of the relation to God.’”¹

Religious experience based on nature is less than mature, for nature only expresses the *hands* of God, while religious experience based on human relationships is more mature, for it expresses the *heart* of God. Leslie Weatherhead defined the differences:

...if God can get near to us in inanimate things, He must be able to get much nearer to us through our fellows? If He can speak to me in the tones of the wind, cannot he say much more to me in the vibrant tones of my friend’s voice? If the sight of a flower can speak to me of tenderness—and I think that is His voice—then, as I look into the eyes of my friend, how much nearer can God come, how much more clearly can He speak?²

Seeing the image of God in a friend is the sign of a maturing religious experience, but seeing the image of God in the enemy, a potential friend is the sign of the highest maturation of religious experience. Jesus commends it in Matthew 5:43-48, for it represents the focus of Christian faith.

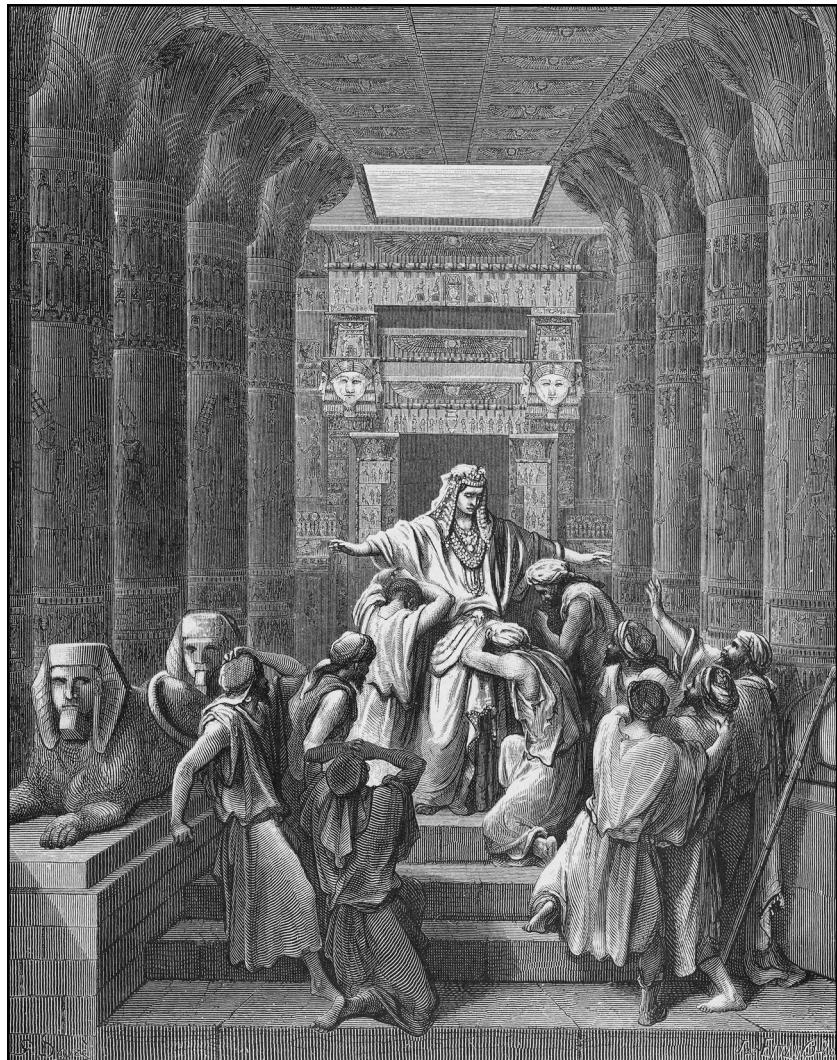
You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

¹Martin Buber, quoted in Alan Loy McGinnis, *The Friendship Factor* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979), p. 131.

²Leslie Weatherhead, *The Transforming Friendship* (London: The Epworth Press, 1962), p. 92.

GENESIS

The Beginning



Joseph reveals Himself by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

9. God Keeps Hope Alive

Genesis 40:1—50:26

9. GOD KEEPS HOPE ALIVE (Genesis 40:1—50:26)

JOSEPH INTERPRETS THE PRISONERS' DREAMS (40:1-23)

The Chief Butler			The Chief Baker		
3 Branches <i>3 Days</i>	Cup of Wine <i>Favor</i>	Chief Butler <i>Restored</i>	3 Baskets <i>3 Days</i>	Birds Eating <i>Disfavor</i>	Chief Baker <i>Hanged</i>

THE PHARAOH'S DREAMS AND JOSEPH'S ELEVATION (41:1-57) [2 Years later]

1st Dream: 7 cows sleek & fat eaten by 7 cows gaunt & thin	2nd Dream: 7 ears of grain plump & good eaten by 7 ears thin & blighted
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What do these dreams mean? 7 good and 7 bad years

What does Joseph suggest? Save 1/5 during the Good Years

Symbols of Joseph's Authority

Signet Ring		Linen Robes	Gold Chain	
His Egyptian Name: <i>Zaphenath-Paneah</i>	His Egyptian Wife: <i>Asenath</i>		His Age <i>30</i>	His 2 Sons <i>Manasseh & Ephraim</i>

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS GO TO EGYPT (42:1—43:34)

The First Trip (42:1-38)			The Second Trip (43:1-34)		
Benjamin stayed home (42:3)	Simeon was Imprisoned (42:24)	Reuben offered his sons (42:37)	Judah took responsibility (43:8-10)	The Astonishing Seating Order (43:34)	Benjamin's portions 5 times the others (43:34)

JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS BROTHERS (44:1—45:28)

Food and Silver in the Sacks (44:1)	A Silver Cup in Benjamin's Sack (44:2)	Judah's offer to be Imprisoned (44:18 & 33-34)	Their Response of Fear and Terror (45:3)	Joseph saw it as Divine Providence (45:7)	Their New Home in Goshen (45:10)
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JACOB AND HIS FAMILY MIGRATE TO EGYPT (46:1—47:26)

70 Migrate	Judah went ahead (46:28)	Egyptians hated Sheep (46:34)	Jacob was 130 (147:9)	They went to Rameses (47:11)
Joseph's Agrarian Reform involved buying grain with....		Priests Exempted (47:22)		Joseph lent seeds, but required 20% of Harvest
Money (47:13-15)	Livestock (47:16-17)	Land (47:18-22)		

9. GOD KEEPS HOPE ALIVE

Genesis 40:1—50:26

ASSIGNMENTS				
Joseph's Dreams 40:1—41:57	Joseph's Brothers go to Egypt 42:1—43:34	Joseph Reveals Himself 44:1—45:28	Jacob Migrates to Egypt 46:1—47:26	Jacob's Blessings 47:27—50:26

JOSEPH'S INTERPRETATION OF THE PRISONERS' DREAMS (40:1-23)

The Prisoners (40:1-8)

There were two men, the butler and the baker, who offended the Pharaoh. For their offense they were placed under the custody of the captain of the guard, who put Joseph in charge of them. Both of them had a dream that troubled them. Egyptian sages had dream manuals to help them interpret dreams, but Joseph did it differently. He believed that God-given dreams had to be interpreted with God-given inspiration (40:8). He believed that he had the gift and so he interpreted two similar dreams with two opposing interpretations.

The Chief Butler (40:9-15)

The task of the butler was to take care of the Pharaoh's cup. His dream had to do with grapes appearing on three branches. The grapes were pressed into the cup and made into wine. The cup was then placed into the Pharaoh's hand. Joseph interpreted this to mean that the Butler would be restored to office after three days.

The Chief Baker (40:16-19)

Having heard this very favorable interpretation, the chief baker asked Joseph to interpret his dream. In his dream three cake baskets appeared on his head. In the uppermost basket were all sorts of baked food for the Pharaoh, but the birds were eating out of one of the baskets. Joseph interpreted this to mean that after three days the Pharaoh would decapitate him and hang him on a tree. The birds would then eat his flesh.

The Fulfillment of the Dreams (40:20-23)

On the third day both dreams were fulfilled; only, the chief butler did not remember his promise to Joseph. Joseph had wanted him to use his influence with the Pharaoh to set

him free. He did not like imprisonment and insisted that he had been stolen out of the land of the Hebrews.

THE PHARAOH'S DREAMS AND JOSEPH'S ELEVATION (41:1-57)

The Dreams Interpreted (41:1-37)

Two years later the Pharaoh had a dream he could not understand. This caused his chief butler to remember his promise to Joseph, and so he told the Pharaoh about Joseph's ability to interpret dreams. After Joseph was shaven and dressed in linen, he appeared in court before the Pharaoh. It was an Egyptian custom to be clean-shaven and dressed in linen to make a court appearance.

The Pharaoh had two dreams. The first one had to do with seven cows sleek and fat, which were eaten up by seven cows gaunt and thin. The second dream had to do with seven ears of grain, plump and good, which were eaten up by seven ears, thin and blighted. The two dreams, according to Joseph, meant that things were fixed by God and unchangeable. The interpretation of the dreams given by Joseph was that Egypt would experience seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine. He suggested that they save one-fifth of their crops during the years of plenty in preparation for the years of famine.

The Elevation of Joseph (41:38-57)

The Pharaoh was impressed with what Joseph had to say and put him in charge of the plan. Scholars indicate that this Pharaoh was one of the Hyksos pharaohs who ruled from 1720 to 1550 B.C.E. and were pro-Semitic. This explains why Joseph was able to rise so high in Egyptian society. In thirteen years Joseph went from a slave to prime minister (Vizier). He was given several symbols for his new position. The first was a ring, which symbolized his authority. Its possession gave him a blank check to issue orders in the Pharaoh's name. This symbol was not restricted to Egyptian society. The second symbol was his linen dress, which was necessary for court appearances. His gold chain, the third symbol, was given as a reward for services rendered.

Joseph was also given permission to ride in the second chariot. Horses and chariots represented one of the reasons why the Hyksos pharaohs were able to gain power in Egypt.

In addition to these symbols, he was given an Egyptian name, Zaphenath-Paneah; and an Egyptian wife, Asenath. She was the daughter of the priest of On (or Heliopolis). Heliopolis was a cult center (for the Sun god) which was located a few miles northeast of the modern city of Cairo. The priests of On were the most learned in history at the time. Joseph became identified with Egyptian culture to the extent that he named his two children with Egyptian names. The first was called *Manasseh*, which means "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house;" and the second *Ephraim*,

which means “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.” That he felt at home in Egypt was symbolized by the fact that he made no effort to contact his father.

THE FIRST JOURNEY TO EGYPT (42:1-38)

As the famine overtook Canaan, Jacob sent his ten sons to Egypt in search of grain. Only Benjamin was not allowed to accompany them. When they arrived, they dealt with Joseph; but none of them recognized him. Joseph recognized them and accused them of being spies, sent to check out the weakness of the land. They denied it, but Joseph had them put into prison. He told them that he would believe them if they brought their younger brother down to Egypt, but that they would have to leave one of them behind while they returned home. Reuben related their plight to what they had done to Joseph. They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, for he had been speaking to them through an interpreter. Listening to them was so painful to Joseph that he turned aside to weep. Joseph had Simeon bound and sent the rest of them home with their bags of grain. He had their money placed in the grain bags as a gift. They noticed it on the way back and were afraid that they would be accused of stealing it. When Jacob was informed of the situation, he refused to let any of them return to Egypt. Reuben offered his two sons if they should fail, but Jacob was not willing to risk the loss of his second most favored son.

THE SECOND JOURNEY TO EGYPT (43:1-34)

The famine grew worse, and so they realized that a second trip to Egypt was necessary. The sons refused to go without Benjamin because they knew they could not purchase the grain. Jacob expressed his dissatisfaction with them for even revealing the presence of a younger brother. Judah finally offered to accept the responsibility for Benjamin’s welfare. Presents of food (fruit, nuts, etc.) were sent along with twice as much money. When they arrived, Joseph arranged to have a noonday feast with them in his home. While that was being arranged, they admitted their guilt to one of Joseph’s stewards. The steward assured them that they had received the money for the grain and that nothing was wrong. Simeon was released and all were seated for a feast according to their ages. This amazed them. The Egyptians ate separately from the Hebrews because of dietary restrictions and their belief that foreigners defiled the food. That Benjamin received five times as much as anyone else has significance, but just what it means remains a mystery.

THE TESTING OF THE BROTHERS (44:1-34)

Joseph instructed his steward to fill his brothers’ sacks with food and the money, which they had paid for it. In addition to that, the steward was to place a silver cup in Benjamin’s sack. This silver cup was used for divination. Water or oil was poured into the cup and conclusions were drawn from the motion of the liquid as small objects were dropped into it. Oil may have been dropped into the water as well, but we are not certain as to just how this was done. As the brothers began the journey home, the steward was instructed to overtake them and accuse them of stealing the silver cup. This was considered a very serious crime. The brothers denied the crime and agreed that anyone caught with the cup should be put to death, and if anyone of them were found to be guilty,

the rest would submit to slavery. When the silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack, they rent their clothes and were returned to the city. When questioned by Joseph, Judah told the story of why it was necessary for Benjamin to return home. In the end, Judah offered himself as a slave in place of Benjamin.

THE REVELATION OF JOSEPH (45:1-28)

After sending all the Egyptians out of the room, Joseph made himself known to his brothers in a very emotional scene. His brothers were dismayed, and probably felt very guilty; but Joseph relieved them of their guilt by telling them that it was God's plan that he go to Egypt. There followed a joyful reunion with plenty of hugging and kissing. Since there were five years of famine left, the suggestion was made to bring Jacob and the rest of the family down to Egypt. The Pharaoh offered wagons to take them to the land of Goshen where they could reside. Joseph provided them with provisions for the journey, and so they returned home to consult with Jacob. At first Jacob did not believe them, but when he saw the wagons, he agreed to make the journey into Egypt. The purpose of this whole story about Joseph was to explain how the Israelites ended up in Egypt.

THE MIGRATION OF JACOB AND HIS FAMILY TO EGYPT (46:1-27)

Before making the journey, Jacob stopped off at Beer-sheba to offer sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac. In visions of the night, God told him not to be afraid to go to Egypt where he would become a great nation, and eventually be brought back to Canaan. In counting the number who ended up in Egypt, there seems to be an attempt to round off the number at seventy. There are actually fourteen persons counted in Genesis 46:8-15, including Dinah. Although wives are not counted, sisters are, even if there are only two, Dinah and Serah. How do we explain the miscount? If we look at parallel accounts of Simeon's children, we find that Ohad is omitted. (See Numbers 26:12-13 and 1 Chronicles 4:24) Ohad may represent a duplication of Zohar, since the two names look very similar in Hebrew. A Scribe may have mistakenly added it, thinking that it represented another son, which it did not. Such persons as Er and Onan, who died in Canaan, and the sons of Joseph, who were born in Egypt, were included in the count. Seventy must have already been an important number.

THE SETTLING IN GOSHEN (46:28—47:12)

Why Judah went on ahead is not explained, but when they arrived, they settled immediately in Goshen. In a very emotional scene, Joseph and Jacob met. Joseph prepared his family for meeting the Pharaoh by instructing them to lie about their vocation as shepherds. He did this because shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians, who raised cattle. When five of his brothers actually appeared before the Pharaoh, they did not lie about it. The Pharaoh did not seem to get angry, but simply instructed the able-bodied to take charge of the Pharaoh's cattle. They were given permission to dwell in Goshen because this would isolate them from the Egyptians who raised cattle. This Egyptian prejudice proved useful. Had it not been for this isolation, the

Israelites might have been assimilated into Egyptian society. Joseph also took his father before the Pharaoh. The Pharaoh asked him his age, which, was 130. Jacob in turn blessed the Pharaoh. Joseph wanted his family in Goshen (the land of Rameses) because it was close to the Delta, where he himself lived. “The land of Rameses” was the name given to it later under Rameses II. (47:11)

JOSEPH'S AGRARIAN PROGRAM (47:13-26)

The famine became very severe, and so Joseph came up with a program. The author is not praising Joseph’s program. He is only giving credit to Joseph for helping the people survive the famine. When the people had spent all their money, cattle, and lands to purchase food, they then sold themselves into slavery. In the end, all the land belonged to the Pharaoh. All of Egypt was in slavery. Only the priests were exempted. They received a fixed allowance from the Pharaoh and did not encounter the same problem as everyone else. What about the Israelites? Nothing is said, but perhaps this also explains how they eventually became slaves in Egypt. After the Pharaoh had all the land, he gave the people seed to sow the land and asked for one-fifth of the harvest. Egyptian sources testify to the fact that such a feudalistic system was indeed introduced between 1700-1500 B.C.E.

JACOB'S BLESSING AND DEATH (47:27—50:26)		
Jacob		
Jacob spent 17 years in Egypt	Jacob died at the age of 147 (47:28)	Jacob desired burial in Canaan (47:30)
Jacob's Blessing of his Grandsons (48:13-14)		
He placed his left hand on Manasseh		He placed his right hand on Ephraim
Jacob's Blessing of his Sons		
The Royal Blessing (Lion): Judah (49:8-10)		The Greatest Blessing: Joseph (49:22-26)
Jacob was buried in the Cave of Machpelah near Mamre		
The Death and Burial of Joseph		
Joseph died at the age of 110 (50:26)		Joseph desired burial in Canaan (50:25)

JACOB'S BLESSING OF EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH (47:27—48:22)

Having lived in Egypt for seventeen years, Jacob approached death. He lived to the ripe old age of 147. Before dying he made Joseph promise, by placing his hand under his thigh, to carry him back to Canaan to be buried with his fathers at Machpelah. When it

came time to give the blessing, Jacob gave it to Joseph through his two sons; hence, the two grandsons took on equal status to Jacob's eldest sons, Reuben and Simeon. Joseph tried to guide his father's hands in blessing Manasseh and Ephraim, but Jacob crossed his hands and blessed the youngest, Ephraim, with his right hand and Manasseh, the eldest, with his left hand. This angered Joseph, who tried to correct his father's blessing, but his father reminded him that he knew what he was doing. Both were to receive equal tribal status, but Ephraim would be the more important. Joshua came out of this tribe later and it became the most powerful tribe in the northern Kingdom. In fact, *Ephraim* was frequently used to refer to the northern Kingdom as a whole. The "One mountain slope" in 48:22 is a play on the name *shechem*, which means "shoulder." Shechem became the most important city in the northern Kingdom.

JACOB'S BLESSING OF HIS TWELVE SONS (49:1-28)

As he prepared to die, Jacob blessed, or in some cases, cursed his sons. Reuben, the first born, was destined for political obscurity because of his adultery with Bilhah (35:22). Simeon and Levi were cursed because of their involvement in the massacre at Shechem (34:25 & 30). Nothing is said about Levi and the priesthood. The Tribe of Levi never received any land of its own, for it was given the task of the priesthood and that involved being scattered throughout the land. This brings us to Judah, from whom the royal line of Israel emerged. Both David and Jesus (the Messiah) came out of this tribe. Joseph, through his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, received the longest blessing; and eventually, Ephraim became the dominant tribe of the northern Kingdom. Judah played that same role in the southern Kingdom.

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF JACOB (49:29—50:21)

Jacob died at the age of 147 (47:28) and in preparation for burial at Machpelah, his body was embalmed. The length of time it took to embalm a body was forty days. Joseph asked permission of the Pharaoh to take his father home for burial. Before leaving Egypt, seventy days of mourning were observed. In respect for Joseph, his father was given a royal funeral. Only two more days would have been allotted for the mourning period of the Pharaoh himself. In taking the body to the cave at Machpelah, they stopped off at the threshing floor of Atad and mourned for seven days. Jacob was the last one to be buried at Machpelah.

After Jacob died, Joseph's brothers were afraid that he might take revenge out on them. They knew that Joseph had treated them well, but they feared that this was only out of respect for their father. Now that he was dead, would Joseph's attitude change towards them? They were probably relieved to discover that it did not.

THE FINAL DAYS OF JOSEPH (50:22-26)

Joseph lived to see his grandchildren and died at the age of 110. In Egypt 110 was considered to be an ideal age. According to the tradition, Joseph's body was eventually

carried out of Egypt by Moses for burial in Shechem (Genesis 33:19; Exodus 13:19; Joshua 24:32; and Acts 7:16). This meant that it had to be mummified at his death.

MAKING THE BEST OUT OF A BAD SITUATION

If anyone had mountains and valleys in his life, it was Joseph. Some of these he brought on himself by his arrogance, which made his brothers angry. Being the favored son of Jacob and Rachel, he was probably spoiled rotten. This might have been the reason why his brothers sold him as a slave to the traders. It was not a legitimate reason. No one has the right to sell anyone into slavery.

Joseph made the best out of a bad situation. He got along well with Potiphar, the officer of Pharaoh, who bought him; but he did not fare so well with Potiphar's wife, who accused him of rape. Joseph ended up in prison, where he got along well with the jailer and his fellow prisoners. He made the best out of a bad situation.

Having helped two of his fellow prisoners in dream interpretation, you might think that some appreciation might have been shown to him, especially by the Pharaoh's Chief Butler, whose dream he interpreted positively. The Chief Butler was released from prison and promptly forgot about Joseph until the Pharaoh had need for dream interpretation two years later. Because of his success in dream interpretation, Joseph was elevated to high rank within the Egyptian government. While dream interpretation was common in Egypt, Joseph attributed his ability to God (Genesis 40:8). Jacob also attributed his dream to God, and took his whole family down into Egypt to live with Joseph, his favorite son (Genesis 46:2-4).

When Jacob died, Joseph's brothers feared the worst. After all, they had been responsible for selling their own brother into slavery; but when Joseph first revealed himself to his brothers, he assured them that he held nothing against them. "I am your brother, Joseph," he said in Genesis 45:4-5, "whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life." Following their father's death, Joseph continued to assure them that they had nothing to fear. "Do not be afraid!" he said in Genesis 50:19-20, "Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today." In making the best out bad situations Joseph helped individuals in prison, his family in need, and the Egyptian nation in the midst of famine.

This is how God operates in history to fulfill his ultimate purpose, with patience, mercy, and grace. We are to do the same, even when we are wronged. This is the heart of Jesus' teaching, that we should not judge (Matthew 7:1-5 and Luke 6:37-38) and that we should love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48 and Luke 6:32-36). Joseph has demonstrated for us that the teachings of Jesus were also practiced in Old Testament times, and Jesus confirmed that we are still dealing with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob today. If anyone ever made the best of a bad situation, it was Jesus on the cross; and he calls all of us to take up our crosses daily to follow him (Luke 9:23).

We do not have to fear the cross or any other bad situation. Jesus could forgive those who crucified him, and we can forgive those who put us into bad situations. For, as the Apostle Paul put it in Romans 8:28, “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” Nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord,” and so “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.” (Romans 8:39 and 8:18)

This is not only a New Testament idea. Joseph was thrown into a pit and sold as a slave, and Jesus was treated as a slave and crucified like a criminal. Both made the best out of bad situations, and God worked through both of them. Joseph was reconciled to his brothers and Jesus reconciled the world to himself. If our bad situations seem to go on forever, it is only the patience of God being exercised. We have been created in his image, and one of his qualities is patience. Knowing how it will all come out makes it possible for us to make the best out of bad situations, for it enables us to express the attitude of the author of Psalm 40:1-3:

I waited patiently for the LORD;
 he inclined to me and heard my cry.
He drew me up from the desolate pit,
 out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
 making my steps secure.
He put a new song in my mouth,
 a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear,
 and put their trust in the LORD.

EXODUS

The Deliverance



Moses and the Burning Bush
St. Isaac's Cathedral, St. Petersburg, Russia

10. A New Leader

Exodus 1:1–6:1

10. A NEW LEADER (1:1–6:2)

ISRAEL'S BONDAGE IN EGYPT (1:1-22)

Jacob's Sons: 12 (1:2-5) and Jacob's Descendants: 70 (1:5)

Reuben
Simeon
Levi

Judah
Issachar
Zebulun

Benjamin
Dan
Naphtali

Gad
Asher
Joseph

Two Dating Schemes

Conservative: 1446 B.C.

Liberal: 1290 B.C.

The above is based on the Exodus taking place 480 years prior to the 4th year of Solomon's Reign. The Pharaoh would then be Thutmose III and Amunhoten II. The new Pharaoh would be Amunhoten

Under this view, the Pharaohs would be Seti I and Rameses II. The new Pharaoh would be Ramses II (1:8).

The Slave Cities (1:11)

The Hebrew Midwives (1:15)

Pithom

Rameses

Shiprah

Puah

Instructions from the New Pharaoh

Boys: Kill them!
(1:16)

Girls: Let them Live!
(1:16)

Midwife Excuse: The Women give birth before they can get there. (1:19)

THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF MOSES (2:1-22)

Moses' Tribe:
House of Levi
(2:1)

Moses' Parents:
Amram and Jochebed
(6:20)

Moses Hidden:
Three Months
(2:2)

Moses placed in...
the Nile River
(2:3)

Who got a Nurse?
Moses Sister, Miriam
(2:7)

Moses killed...
An Egyptian
(2:12)

Moses fled to...
Midian
(2:15)

Moses met Reuel...
And his 7 Daughters
(2:18)

Other Names for the Priest:
Jethro/Hobab
(3:1 & Numbers 10:29)

The Daughter Moses Married:
Zipporah
(2:21)

The Name of the First Son:
Gershom
(2:22)

10. A NEW LEADER

Exodus 1:1—6:1

ASSIGNMENTS			
Bondage in Egypt 1:1-22	Birth and Early Life of Moses 2:1-22	The Call of Moses 2:23—4:17	Moses Confronts the Pharaoh 4:18—6:1

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS

The Name

Exodus comes from a Latin word, which is derived from the Greek *Exodos*, which means: “to exit.” It has to do with “the going out” or “the departure” of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

The Authors

The same sources were used for Exodus as for Genesis. Tradition has it for both books that it was Moses, but we now attribute authorship to the J (Yahwist), E (Elohist), and P (Priestly) writers. There is only slight evidence for a D (Deuteronomic) source.

The Date

As is the case for Genesis, much of Exodus was already written down by 900 B.C.E. The one event that is crucial for Jewish history is the date of the Exodus, which divides scholars along conservative and liberal lines. M.F. Unger suggested the date of 1440 B.C.E., which most conservative scholars accept; and K.A. Kitchen suggests 1290 B.C.E. as the date, which most liberal scholars accept. Both have supporting and contradicting evidence, and so we must choose for ourselves. The later date, 1290 B.C.E., makes the most sense to me.

The Purpose

Exodus lays a foundation for theology, ethics, and worship. We discover profound insights into the nature of God in his name. To know “Yahweh” is to know God and his character. God revealed himself not only to Moses at the burning bush (3:2), but also to the Egyptians in the plagues and at the crossing of the Red Sea (14:25), and to the

Israelites at Mount Sinai (19:17). God told Moses that his name was “I Am.” (3:14) God’s name indicated that God was present and active among them. The Jews, to this day, think of God’s name as too holy to speak, and so whenever the letters JHVH or YHWH appear in the Scriptures, they say “Adonai,” the Hebrew word for “LORD.” Most Bibles translate *Yahweh* as “LORD.” Some Bibles use *Jehovah* for God’s name, but there is no such Hebrew word. It is a mistaken attempt to place vowels into the Hebrew JHVH, which had no vowels.

The foundation of biblical ethics is also found in the Ten Commandments, which God gives to the people with whom he makes a covenant. The people have been delivered from slavery before they received these commandments. The commandments help them to understand how to maintain their freedom. There are three kinds of commandments, the *moral* (20:1-17), *ceremonial*—to aid in worship; and the *civil*—to encourage people to serve others.

The book concludes with an elaborate discussion of the theology of worship as the Israelites are given instructions on how to build the Tabernacle, which symbolizes God’s presence with them.

The Outline

A. THEOLOGY: Redemption from Egyptian Bondage. (1-18)

B. ETHICS: Sealing of the Covenant at Sinai. (19-24)

C. WORSHIP: Preparations for God's Abiding Presence. (25-40)

1-18	19-24	25-40
The Exodus	The Commandments	The Tabernacle

ISRAEL'S BONDAGE IN EGYPT (1:1-22)

Three hundred years have passed since Joseph’s death. The Israelites have been in Egypt for 370 years. Their population has increased tremendously, but they have lost their special status. What has happened? A new king has come into power (1:8), a king that did not know Joseph. Joseph had risen to power under the *Hyksos*, “rulers of foreign lands.” (1750-1570 B.C.E.) They were Asiatic kings who were known to place Semetic people in places of power. Political events have changed.

The Book of Exodus begins with the 19th Dynasty after the Hyksos Pharaohs have lost control. In this new context there were two Egyptian Pharaohs: (1) Seti/Sethos, (1308-5/2-1290 B.C.E.), and (2) Ramses/Raamses/Rameses II, (1290-1224 B.C.E.). As they began to focus on the Delta, the Egyptian capital was moved from Thebes to the Delta. The earlier Pharaohs ruled from Thebes and Memphis, but these new Pharaohs began developing a new capital and residence for the Pharaoh in the Delta. They also used the Israelites, who lived there for slave labor. The Hebrews were considered a security risk anyway, and so this gave them some control over them. The new capital was named after Rameses II, who was the main Pharaoh responsible for building it. Other names given to this city in former times were: *Avaris*, *Zoan* (Hebrew), and *Tanis* (Greek). Even though the Israelites were used for slave labor, the Pharaohs did not want them to multiply too quickly. The first step they took to limit their growth was to instruct the midwives to kill all the male babies, but the midwives feared God and refused to do it. When asked why, they simply said that Hebrew women gave birth before they could get to them. The next step the Pharaohs took was to instruct everyone to cast Hebrew (Israelite) male babies into the Nile.

THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF MOSES (2:1-22)

The Birth of Moses (2:1-10)

Moses was born of parents (Amram and Jochebed) from the Tribe of Levi. The family lineage was important. Levi was the third son of Jacob and Leah. When hiding Moses for three months began to get risky, Moses' mother hid him in a papyrus basket, which was then placed in the river. Miriam, his sister, watched as the daughter of one of Pharaoh's concubines discovered him; then, she asked if she should call one of the Hebrew women to nurse him. Pharaoh's daughter said, "Yes," and Miriam brought Moses' mother to her. Wages were agreed upon and Moses' mother raised him. When he was grown, he was returned to Pharaoh's daughter, who named him *Moses*, which means in Egyptian "to beget a child" and in Hebrew, "to draw out." That his sister's name was Miriam comes from Numbers 26:59, which also tells us of his older brother, Aaron.

The Killing of an Egyptian (2:11-15a)

At the age of forty, Moses began to identify with the Israelites. In watching an Egyptian use violence on one of his people, he got very angry and killed the Egyptian. Next he watched two of his own people struggle with each other and tried to mediate between them, but they responded with hostility. The news was out that he had killed an Egyptian, and when the Pharaoh heard about it, he sought to have Moses killed.

The Flight to Midian (2:15b-22)

Moses fled to Midian. The Midianites were descendants through Abraham's second wife, Keturah. Having gone to Midian, Moses sat down by the well. The seven daughters of the priest of Midian came to draw water from the well, but, some shepherds drove them off. Moses not only helped the seven daughters get some water, he helped them to water their

flocks. When they told their father about the incident, they described Moses as an Egyptian. In gratitude their father gave Zipporah to be Moses' wife. They were married and she gave birth to a son, whom they named Gershom. There is some confusion over the name of Moses' father-in-law. According to Exodus 3:1, 4:18, and 18:1 his name is Jethro, but he is sometimes called Hobab (See Numbers 10:29 and Judges 4:11). According to Exodus 2:18 and Numbers 10:29, Jethro or Hobab is the son of Reuel.

THE CALL OF MOSES (2:23—4:17)					
Name of the Mountain: Horeb [Sinai] (3:1)		Symbol of Reverence: Removal of Shoes (3:5)			
Moses' Excuses and God's Responses					
<i>Moses Five Excuses</i>		<i>God's Five Responses</i>			
1. Who am I that I should go? 2. What shall I say to them? 3. They will not believe me. 4. I am not eloquent. 5. Send some other person!		1. I will be with you. 2. YAHWEH (I Am) sent me. 3. What is that in your hand. (Snake/Leprous hand/Blood) 4.. Who has made man's mouth? 5. Aaron will speak for you.			
Plunder Taken from the Egyptians (3:21-22)					
Silver	Gold	Clothing			
Displace the Following Tribes! (3:8 and 17)					
Canaanites	Hittites	Amorites	Perizzites	Hivites	Jebusites
MOSES RETURNS TO CONFRONT THE PHARAOH (4:18—6:1)					
Who needs Circumcision? Moses' Son (4:24-25)	What was Moses to say to the Pharaoh?	What would happen if they didn't do this?	What was the Pharaoh's Response?		
Who Circumcised Him? Zipporah (24:25)	Let the people make an offering in the Desert (3:18 and 5:1)	They would suffer from plagues and the sword (5:3)	Get your own straw, but make the same number of bricks (5:7)		

THE CALL OF MOSES (2:23—4:17)

Seti I died (2:23) and Rameses II (the new King) continued the oppression against the Hebrew slaves. They called out to God for help, and God remembered his covenant with

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This same God appeared to Moses when he was leading his father-in-law's flock in the wilderness near Mount Horeb. God appeared to him there and called him to come into his presence near a burning bush. Fire symbolized the divine presence (Genesis 15:17; Exodus 19:18, Psalm 104:3-4; Ezekiel 1:27; and 1 Timothy 6:16). Mount Horeb is the same as Mount Sinai, and according to tradition, it is to be identified with modern Mount Gebal (Jebel Musa), which is located on the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula. The mountain stands 7,363 feet high. From this same mountain, God later gave Moses the Law; but at this time, he simply called upon Moses to go to Egypt and assist him in liberating his people from slavery. Moses was reluctant and gave excuses, all of which God dealt with one by one. To prove his power to Moses God turned his rod into a snake and made his hand leprous. If this is not enough, he continued, I will provide you with more signs.

God

A few things must be said about God at this time. The God of Abraham was El Shaddai (God Almighty or God, the one of the Mountains). This same God identified himself to Moses as Yahweh. To avoid using the divine name itself—out of reverence for it—the Hebrews used Adonai (Lord) whenever they came to the word Yahweh. Adonai (Lord) was less personal. Yahweh was very personal and was considered God's name. Names were important in that they described one's personal character. The word Yahweh is related to the verb "to be." The verb goes beyond "to exist" and means, "to be actively present." The traditional ways of translating the word are as follows: (1) "I am who I am." This phrase suggests his continuous presence and reminds us that God determines his own nature. (2) "I will be what I will be." This means that God is always able to act in new ways. (3) "I cause to be." He is the creator, not a creature. (4) "I am here, really present, ready to help." The name Yahweh does not refer primarily to God's eternal being, but to his action and presence in historical affairs. By telling people his name, God reveals his inmost character. Yahweh is the God who is actively present with his people. He reveals himself as the God who saves his people and overthrows their adversaries. (3:13-16). Yahweh became the name by which this God was known among the Hebrew people. It was and is the "Covenant" name for God. That Moses asked him his name indicated a polytheistic environment. This new name began with Moses and is mentioned approximately 6,800 times in the Old Testament. It is part of the glorious "Hallelujah" which means "Praise Yahweh." In translating the following passage, the following names for God are used:

God (Elohim) also spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the LORD (Yahweh). I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by my name 'The LORD' (Yahweh) I did not make myself known to them." (Exodus 6:2-3)

Three things are known about God from his call to Moses. They are as follows: (1) God is holy (3:5); (2) God is personal (3:14); and (3) God acts in history. (3:20)

Moses

Moses expressed the frailty of his humanity by offering five excuses to the God who called him. In every case God had an answer for him. These excuses show the weakness of Moses and the fact that God uses imperfect people.

1. Moses: "Who am I that I should go?" (3:11)
God: "I will be with you." (3:12)
2. Moses: "What shall I say to them?" (3:13)
God: "I AM has sent me to you." (3:14) God revealed himself as the God of Moses' ancestors, and as the God who was and is present.
3. Moses: "But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me?" (4:1)
God: God provided him with three signs.
 - a. Rod to serpent. (4:2-5)
 - b. Leprous hand. (4:6-7)
 - c. Water to blood. (4:9)
4. Moses: "I have never been eloquent." (4:10)
God: "Who gives speech to mortals?" (4:11) God made him and He will help him to speak.
5. Moses: "Please send someone else." (4:13)
God: God offered Aaron to be his spokesman. (4:14 & 7:1) Aaron was to become his "Nabi" or Prophet.

God used people, such as Moses, who have murdered and committed what we might consider to be awful sins. From this we realize that Moses was no perfect man. He was frightened and weak like any of us would be. He expressed anger, fear, and courage; but God used him to set his people free from slavery in Egypt. In spite of our human weaknesses, God wants to use us too.

MOSES RETURNS TO EGYPT (4:18-31)

Having responded to God's call, Moses asked permission of his father-in-law to return to Egypt. The task was not to be easy, for God promised to harden the Pharaoh's heart. This simply means that the Pharaoh would not respond. It has nothing to do with moral determinism. Moses took his wife and sons (Gershom and Eliezer) along with him, but the author does not name the second son until Exodus 18:4. On the way the Lord threatened to kill Moses for not having circumcised his son. Circumcision was already a sign of the covenant (Genesis 17:14), and so it was necessary. These verses reflect an ancient belief in demonic attack, which is then warded off by Zipporah's quick circumcision of their son. Before returning to Egypt, Aaron and Moses met in the

wilderness, where Aaron was brought up to date on Moses' mission. When they arrived in Egypt, Aaron did the talking and the people accepted them and God's mission for them.

MOSES AND AARON CONFRONT THE PHARAOH (5:1—6:1)

Moses and Aaron asked the Pharaoh to free the people in the name of the Lord. The Pharaoh asked whom the Lord was that he should even listen to him. When told, he did not recognize the Lord and refused to set the people free from their slavery. Moses and Aaron only asked for permission to take them for a three-day journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to the Lord. Even though Moses and Aaron explained the reason for the sacrifice in terms of satisfying God so that he would not strike them with "pestilence" and the "sword," the Pharaoh saw it all as an attempt to take the people away from their work. Thinking that the people did not have enough work to keep them busy, the Pharaoh made their work even harder by making them collect their own straw. They were to make the same number of bricks as before, but without being supplied with the straw. The foremen and the people blamed Moses and Aaron, and so Moses turned to the Lord for an explanation. He wanted to know why he was not successful in dealing with the Pharaoh if God was supposed to be with him. God's response was to have patience and watch what he was about to do to the Pharaoh.

THE CALL IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

If there is any symbol which reminds us of the purpose for religious experience it is fire. When Moses fled from the problems of his people in Egypt, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a burning bush (Exodus 3:2). The bush continued to burn without being consumed, and so Moses moved closer to get a better look. As he did, he gained three insights into the nature of God; and they were, that God is holy (Exodus 3:5), personal (Exodus 3:14), and active in history (Exodus 3:20).

Moses is given this insight into the nature of God because God has something for him to do. God is aware of the enslavement of his people in Egypt, and he intends to set them free through Moses. The burning bush was used by God to get Moses' attention. That is the purpose of every religious experience. God makes himself known to us, and then he calls us to do something for him. We, like Moses, do not always want to respond to God's call; but there is a call in every religious experience.

The call that went out to Moses was clear. He was to return to Egypt and confront the Pharaoh, asking him to set free the enslaved Israelites. That calling did not appeal to Moses, and so he came up with the following five excuses:

1. Who am I that I should go? (Exodus 3:11)
2. What shall I say to them? (Exodus 3:13)
3. The people won't believe me! (Exodus 4:1)
4. I am not an eloquent speaker! (Exodus 4:10)
5. Please send someone else! (Exodus 4:13)

It is clear that Moses did not want to respond positively to God's calling, but with God's nudging and his promise to send Aaron as his mouthpiece (prophet), Moses went to set the Israelite slaves free. Even though Aaron was sent to speak for Moses, it was not very long before Moses began speaking for himself. The burning bush found its way into his heart, and he could not help but speak.

Isaiah and Jeremiah had similar experiences. They experienced the same three characteristics of God's inner nature, which Moses experienced. For Isaiah it took place in the Temple. Isaiah experienced God as holy, deeply personal, out of which came his calling to act on his behalf. Not feeling any more up to the calling than did Moses, Isaiah confessed his unworthiness, only to have a seraphim (an angel) touch his mouth with a burning coal (Isaiah 6:6-7). Out of that experience, he heard the voice of God saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah responded more eagerly than did Moses, and cried, "Here am I; Send me." (Isaiah 6:8) He was not to be as successful as Moses, and was warned that he would be called to preach to people, whose ears, hearts and eyes were closed (Isaiah 6:9-10).

Jeremiah was sent into an even more hopeless task than Isaiah, and he responded with the same reluctance as Moses. He complained that he was too young and lacked the ability to speak to assume such a responsibility, but God called him anyway (Jeremiah 1:6-9). He promised to go with him as he went with Moses. That however did not make the task any easier, but it did remind him constantly of his calling. God's presence with him was like a fire in his heart. Jeremiah described how impossible it was to ignore God's presence: "If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot." (Jeremiah 20:9) The burning bush had entered into his heart calling him to preach to those whose hearts were hardened and who would never listen, and the fire consumed his heart without going out. That was because God's word itself is like a consuming fire.

That same fire continues to burn in the hearts of all who will listen. The two on the way to Emmaus listened to Jesus explain the scriptures to them, and then they recognized him, and as he vanished out of their sight, they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32) They turned right around and went back to Jerusalem, found the other disciples and began to proclaim the Good News of Christ's Resurrection from the dead.

In an age of reason, Blaise Pascal (1623-62) invented the first workable calculating machine, and made many other contributions to science and technology, but he also discovered a calling in this same burning bush. On Monday, November 23, 1654, from about half-past ten in the evening to about half-past twelve, he experienced a new sense of calling. He inscribed the following details of his experience on a piece of parchment, which he then sewed into his coat as a reminder:

FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!
God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,
Not of philosophers and scholars,
Certainty, Joy, Certainty, Feeling, Light, Joy,
God of Jesus Christ...
Forgetting of the world and of all save God,
He is only to be found in the ways taught in the Gospel.¹

He then set about the task of responding to his new calling by writing an Apology for the Christian Religion. He never finished it, but he left the world with a series of remarkable notes, later published as *Pensees* (Thoughts). The work is a classic in Christian literature. One of his most penetrating thoughts was: “What a vast distance there is between knowing God and loving him.” John Wesley was to struggle with that problem for years before he finally discovered his true calling at Aldersgate, where the burning bush finally penetrated his heart, and he stood up to cry, “I felt my heart strangely warmed.” The fire that lit his heart “kindled a land into flame with its heat.” He, like Moses, set millions free from slavery, both physical and spiritual.²

¹Eerdmans' *Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), p. 485

²Halford E. Luccock & Paul Hutchinson, *The Story of Methodism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1949), pp. 66-67.

EXODUS

The Deliverance



The Firstborn are Slain by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

11. The Signs and Wonders

Exodus 6:2—13:16

11. THE SIGNS AND WONDERS (6:2—13:16)

THE LINEAGE OF MOSES AND AARON (6:2—7:7)

Ancestors	Age at Death	Family	Names
Levi (6:16)	137	Their Mother	Jochebed (6:20)
Kohath (6:18)	133	Aaron's Wife	Elisheba (6:23)
Amram (6:20)	137	Aaron's Four Children (6:23)	Nadab Abihu Eleazar Ithamar
Aaron's Age	83 (7:7)		
Moses' Age	80 (7:7)		

THE TEN SIGNS AND WONDERS (7:8—11:10)

Aaron's Staff became a Snake (7:10)

Blood (7:14-24) Frogs (7:25—8:15)	Gnats (8:16-19) Flies (8:20-32)	Cattle (9:1-7) Boils (9:8-12)	Hail (9:13-35) Locusts (10:1-20)	Darkness (10:21-29) First Born (11:1-10)
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THE PASSOVER AND RELATED FEASTS (12:1-28)

The Food		The Dates of the three Feasts
A Lamb was obtained on the 10th Day of Nissan (12:2-3) The Lamb was to be One Year Old (12:5)	Bitter Herbs (12:8)	Passover (14th Day of Nisan)
The Lamb was to be slaughtered on the 14th Day of Nissan		Unleavened Bread (14th to the 21st of Nisan)
The Lamb's blood was to be smeared on the sides and top of the doorframe (12:7) The Lamb was to be roasted over a fire (12:8)	Unleavened Bread (12:8)	Firstfruits (21st of Nisan)

THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT (12:29—13:16)

Firstborn killed at Midnight (12:29)	Tribes to Lose their Land (13:5)	Consecration of Firstborn
They took silver, gold, and cloth with them (12:35) 600,000 men left (12:37) 603,550 men left (38:26) The Mixed Multitude (12:38) 430 years spent in Egypt (12:40)	Canaanites Hittites Amorites Hivites Jebusites	Why? The Egyptian firstborn died for them. How? They were to remember what happened with a feast, which was to be a sign on the hand and forehead.

11. THE SIGNS AND WONDERS

Exodus 6:2—13:16

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Lineage of Moses and Aaron 6:2—7:7	Ten Signs and Wonders 7:8—11:10	The Special Feasts 12:1-28	The Exodus from Egypt 12:29—13:16

THE CALL OF MOSES AND THE APPOINTMENT OF AARON (6:2—7:7)

When Moses informed his people of God’s promise to deliver them from slavery and of his mission to confront the Pharaoh on their behalf, they refused to listen to him. The Lord then ordered him to go directly to the Pharaoh. Moses complained that he was a man of “uncircumcised lips.” This means that he thought of himself as a man “poor in speech.” God quickly appointed Aaron to be his “mouthpiece,” which means “Nabi” or “Prophet.” Moses was eighty years old when he was chosen to confront the Pharaoh.

The purpose of the genealogy is to trace Aaron and Moses back to Jacob through his son Levi. The genealogy is intentionally selective, and although it mentions Aaron and Moses’ relationship to Levi through Kohath and Amram, this does not mean that Amram was their father. It means that their lineage runs through Amram. Contrasting Aaron’s and Moses’ age of 83 and 80 with the ages of the deaths of Levi (137), Kohath (133), and Aram (137) emphasizes to us that they were in mid-life, mature and vigorous enough to carry out God’s call. Comparing their ages to our time would make them somewhere between forty and fifty.

THE TEN SIGNS AND WONDERS (7:8—11:10)

In Exodus 9:14 the ten signs and wonders are described as plagues, but in 7:3 and 10:1-2 they are called “signs,” and in 7:3 and 11:9 they are called “wonders.” In Psalms 78:43 and 105:27 they are called “miracles.”

Confrontation with the Pharaoh (7:8-13)

A series of Judgments followed this confrontation to teach the Pharaoh who the Lord is and to show him the extent of his power over all creation. When the Lord acted, the Pharaoh, his magicians, and all the gods of Egypt were powerless to reverse his

judgments. A preliminary miracle began with Aaron's rod turning into a serpent. In Hebrew the word really refers to a dragon. After Aaron's rod turned into a serpent, the Egyptian magicians performed a similar trick, but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart follows. What does this mean? It means that God allowed him to go against His will. It does not mean that God interfered with his freedom. The Pharaoh was allowed to go his own way. He hardened his own heart, and God let him do it.

The Ten Signs and Wonders (7:14—11:10)

1. Blood (7:14-24)

The first sign took place as Moses confronted Pharaoh by touching the waters of the Nile with Aaron's rod. The Nile was the heart of the nation's economy and worship, and the Egyptians worshipped Hopi (Hapi), its god. As the source of life and fertility, the people believed that the Nile had its source in the subterranean ocean. As the rod touched the water, it turned to blood, killed all the fish, and became so foul that no one would drink it.

The color of the river actually reflects a natural phenomenon. The Nile became a reddish color, which was due to the red particles of earth or minute organisms found in its water. This occurred naturally whenever the river reached its height during the summer months. The Egyptian magicians repeated the feat in an attempt to discredit Aaron and Moses. The Egyptians could not drink the water because of its foul taste and odor, and so they responded by digging for fresh water.

2. Frogs (7:25--8:15)

The second sign to Pharaoh consisted of a plague of frogs. The mud from the Nile, after a seasonal overflowing, was a natural place for frogs to generate. Egypt was spared the frequent occurrence of this pestilence by the frog-eating bird, the Ibis. The Pharaoh momentarily recognized the Lord as Israel's God (8:8). The Egyptian magicians had repeated the feat, but were not able to get rid of the frogs. Moses then set the time for their disappearance (8:7 & 10), and although they disappeared, the Pharaoh again hardened his heart.

3. Gnats (8:16-19)

The gnats were brought about by Aaron's rod striking the dust of the earth. They were like the mosquitoes, which plagued Egypt every autumn. The Nile, with its overflow receding, left stagnant pools of water in which the insects could breed on the dead fish, and perhaps on the dead frogs. The magicians were unable to repeat this feat and attributed it to the "finger of God," but the Pharaoh would not listen and continued to harden his heart.

4. Flies (8:20-32)

This could be a variant of the third sign, but here we have the absence of any plague around Goshen, where the Hebrews lived. Moses got permission to offer sacrifices, but he wanted to take his people for a three-day walk into the wilderness because their sacrifices would be offensive to the Egyptians. The cow, bull, and ram would be abominable sacrifices in the eyes of the Egyptians, and Moses feared that they would be stoned. The Pharaoh was not willing to let them go that far, and so in the end they were not set free. The Egyptian magicians begin to recede into the background as the signs and the wonders continue. The sudden removal of the flies was a greater miracle than their arrival and tends to draw attention away from naturalistic explanations.

5. Livestock (9:1-7)

Included among the cattle in this plague were horses, asses, camels, and sheep. The plague seems to have resulted from conditions left by the diseases spread by the mosquitoes and flies. The cattle probably caught anthrax. The Pharaoh was given 24 hours notice, but he did not heed the warning. To demonstrate the miraculous, only the cattle owned by the Egyptians died.

6. Boils (9:8-12)

Moses threw ashes from the kiln into the air in plain sight of the Pharaoh, and this created a fine dust that settled over everyone. A similar kind of disease, consisting of boils, broke out on the people as had broken out on the cattle; but only the magicians and Egyptians were affected, which demonstrated God's miraculous power.

7. Hailstorm (9:13-35)

This sign took place sometime between January and March when the crops began to mature. The hail and thunderstorm destroyed the flax and barley, but not the wheat and spelt (an inferior kind of wheat), which would have matured later. Since only the crops of the Egyptians were affected, this again demonstrated the miraculous power of God. Some of the Pharaoh's officials feared the Lord and took their slaves and cattle inside (9:20). The Pharaoh repented (9:27-28), but it did not last very long, for as soon as the hail stopped, he went back on his word and refused to let the Israelites go (9:34-35).

8. Locusts (10:1-20)

The locusts were a familiar pestilence to the farmers of the Near East. The plague was threatened, and in response, the servants of the Pharaoh applied pressure to let the people go (10:7). The Pharaoh agreed to let them go, but he wanted to hold the women and children as hostages (10:10-11). Moses and Aaron did not agree, and so the plague of locusts came. The miracle rested on a natural phenomenon that was most likely to occur in March or April. An east wind brought the locusts in, and following the Pharaoh's

temporary repentance a west wind drove them out into the sea again. Following the miracle, the pharaoh again hardened his heart.

9. Darkness (10:21-29)

In this ninth plague, darkness was created only for the Egyptians. This was an insult to the Egyptians who worshiped Re (Ra), the Sun god. The Israelites alone continued to live in the light. The darkness was created by a hot wind—a Khamsin sand storm, which blew in from the desert during the Spring (March to May) bringing in much dust and sand. The air was darkened and breathing became very difficult. It lasted for three days.

Finally the Pharaoh said that they could go, but they would have to leave their flocks and herds behind. Moses refused because they needed them for sacrifices. This angered the Pharaoh, who threatened to kill Moses the next time he saw him. Moses responded by assuring him that he would never see him again.

10. The First Born (11:1-10)

Announcement of the final sign (11:1-10) Just prior to the final plague, the Lord told Moses precisely what would happen. The first-born of all the Egyptians would die at midnight. After that the Israelites would depart from Egypt. Not only would they take their flocks and herds, but they would also take the Egyptians' gold and silver. Exodus 11:10 summarizes this whole section.

THE FIRST PASSOVER (12:1-28)

Having heard the cry of Israel, God acted through Moses to deliver his people. Egypt blocked God's plan, for the covenant could not be fulfilled while Israel was enslaved. How could God free the children of Israel without destroying Egypt? In a sense, Egypt destroyed itself by holding another people in slavery.

As a remembrance of this great event, God instructed his people to observe a feast. The first part of this feast is called Passover and it initiates the religious New Year. The Jews took over an ancient nomadic spring festival and reinterpreted it as a memorial of the Lord's deliverance. Passover took place on the evening before the 14th day of Nisan (late March or early April). It means, "to pass over" and refers to the passing over of the first-born of the Hebrew people. It was also the beginning of the seven-day period known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The following three kinds of food were eaten that night:

1. Roast Lamb. The Lamb was to be one year old and killed in the evening. The blood was to be spread on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the house.
2. Bitter Herbs. These herbs were to symbolize the suffering they had experienced in Egypt.

3. Unleavened Bread. There was no time to wait for the bread to rise, and so yeast was not used. They had to be ready to go.

The feast lasted for seven days, and the days following Passover became known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These days reminded them of their hasty departure from Egypt. Memory connects the present to the past and serves as a foundation for the future of God's people.

THE EXODUS (12:29-51)

At midnight all of the firstborn of the Egyptians were killed; and the Pharaoh, in desperation, called Moses and Aaron to send them away and to ask for their personal blessing (12:32).

They had been in Egypt for 430 years. This means that they went into Egypt around 1720 B.C.E. or at about the time of the Hyksos invasion. The end of the 430 years would date the Exodus during the reign of Ramses (Rameses) or approximately 1290 B.C.E.

There were approximately 600,000 men in the Exodus, but the total number of people, including women and children, would have been about two and one-half million. Even this number is rounded off, and given as 603,550 in Exodus 38:26. That is a rather large number, and many scholars believe it to be exaggerated. According to Exodus 12:38 a "mixed multitude" accompanied them. Who were they? They were probably Egyptians who had intermarried with them and other Semites who had entered Egypt and had been enslaved along with them.

After they left Rameses, they stopped at Succoth. The precise location of these two cities is uncertain. Some suggest that Rameses was built over the Hyksos capital called Avaris, which was later called Zoan in the Old Testament and Tanis in Greek writing. Others name Qantir as the location of ancient Rameses. Succoth may have been located in the eastern part of Wadi Tumilat, between Pithom and Lake Timsah.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE FIRST-BORN (13:1-16)

According to an ancient belief, the consecration or sacrifice of the first-born of human and beast to God was necessary for fertility and wellbeing. Since the Israelites believed that their freedom was purchased through the death of the Egyptian first-born, they were willing to dedicate their own first-born to God. Since child sacrifice was forbidden, the consecration had to be one of life, not of death. It had to be done in the month of Abib, following the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Abib is an earlier name for Nisan, the first month of the Jewish religious year.

As a reminder of their deliverance, Exodus 13:1-10; 11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; and 11:13-21 were to be written on separate strips of parchment and placed inside two small leather boxes, called *phylacteries*. They may have taken this kind of a practice over from the Egyptians, who wore amulets, which contained written words within. The practice of

actually wearing the *phylacteries* on the forehead and left arm for prayer did not take place until after the Babylonian Exile.

THE MIRACLES OF DESTRUCTION

A miracle can be defined as “an event, whether natural or supernatural, in which one sees an act or revelation of God.”¹ The signs and wonders used by Moses and Aaron have the purpose of revealing to the Israelites that God is intent on leading them out of Egypt, and that they should warn the Egyptians to go along with it or catastrophe will be their lot. Most of the ten signs and wonders, called miracles in Psalms 78:43 and 105:27, can be explained as natural destructive events occurring at just the right time. The Egyptian magicians were able to duplicate some of them without any difficulty, and so this made it easy for the Pharaoh to disregard them as having nothing to do with the God of Moses and Aaron.

An event does not have to violate the laws of nature in order to be considered miraculous, and even those that appear to violate the laws of nature may not. “A miracle is not contrary to nature,” wrote Augustine in *The City of God*, “but contrary to what we know as nature.”² The purpose of a miracle is not to demonstrate God’s power to change or overcome nature, but a name we give to an event in which we see the power of God operating. The laws of nature do not have to be broken for that event to be miraculous. Our difficulty is that we are not yet familiar with all of the laws of nature, and frequently, we do not consider that which is familiar to us as being part of the miraculous. “Seeing, hearing, feeling are miracles;” wrote Walt Whitman, “and each part and tag of me is a miracle.” Nothing is a miracle to the unbeliever, and everything is miraculous to the believer. That is why Elizabeth Barrett Browning could say, “Earth’s crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God.”³ Moses and Aaron could see that, but the Egyptian Pharaoh and his magicians could not; and because they could not, the miracles of liberation destroyed them.

Why then are miracles used against the Egyptians if all that happens is a deeper hardening of the Pharaoh’s heart? They are not used for the benefit of the Egyptians, but to encourage the Israelites that God is truly at work setting them free. Anyone that enslaves them will experience the wrath of God. The miracles are destructive for them.

We usually think of miracles in terms of healing or raising people from the dead; but there are destructive miracles in the Bible, even in the New Testament. The most notable example is Jesus’ destruction of the fig tree in Mark 11:12-14. C.S. Lewis explains the symbolic and destructive meaning of this miracle:

The miracle is an acted parable, a symbol of God’s sentence on all that is “fruitless” and specially, no doubt, on the official Judaism of that age. That is its

¹*The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. III (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 392.

²Quoted in, *The Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. VIII (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), p. 668.

³Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, Book VIII, p. 820.

moral significance. As a miracle, it again does in focus, repeats small and close, what God does constantly and throughout Nature.¹

What is true for Nature is also true for History. Those who oppose and go against God's intention for History will become fruitless, and they will wither up and die, right down to the roots, as did the fig tree (Mark 11:20).

Signs and wonders and miracles will not help them because they do not believe in them anyway, for they believe them to be tricks, which any magician could easily duplicate. Those who believe in miracles do not need events that violate nature, for they see God operating in nature as well. This is why Jesus cannot give signs or perform miracles for the Scribes and Pharisees, and tells them point blank in Matthew 12:39, "An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." The heart of that sign was that the people heeded Jonah's message and were led to repentance, avoiding the judgment of God. Had they not listened, they would have suffered destruction. The same is true for the Pharaoh and the nation he rules. Had he been able to see God operating in those miracles, he could have avoided the destruction that those miracles were bringing down upon him. Moses and Aaron tried to warn him, but he would not listen. The inevitable consequence was that the miracles nurtured Moses and Aaron, but they hardened the Pharaoh's heart and brought much destruction to the Egyptians. This is why, in Exodus 9:14, they are described as "plagues" to the Egyptians.

The laws of nature do not have to be violated for a miracle to occur. Miracles can occur through very natural events too. The effect of every miracle is either to heal or to destroy; and the difference lies in our perception of God in the natural events as they take place. When we respond positively to him, those events heal; but when we respond negatively, they destroy. We need to learn how to read the signs of history as well as of nature; and Jesus made that warning very clear when he said in Matthew 16:2-3:

When it is evening, you say, "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red." And in the morning, "It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening." You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.

¹C.S. Lewis, *The Joyful Christian* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1977), p. 62.

11. THE TEN PLAGUES

1. Blood

Water turns to blood (7:20)	Magicians repeat (7:22)	Hardened Heart (7:22)
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2. Frogs

Frogs appear (8:6)	Magicians repeat (8:7)	Go Sacrifice (8:8)	Hardened Heart (8:14)
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3. Lice/Gnats

Gnats appear (8:17)	Magicians could not (8:18)	"Finger of God" (8:19)	Hardened Heart (8:19)
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4. Flies

Except in Goshen (8:22 & 24)	Magicians not Present	Sacrifice 3 days away (8:27)	Hardened Heart (8:32)
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5. Livestock (Cattle, Horses, asses, camels, and sheep) (24 Hour Notice)

Only Egyptian Cattle (9:6)	Hardened Heart (9:7)
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6. Boils

Only Egyptians/ Beasts	On Magicians (9:11)	Hardened Heart (9:12)
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7. Hailstones

Only on Egyptians (9:23-26)	Pharaoh Repents (9:27-28)	Hardened Heart (9:34-35)
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8. Locusts

East Wind (10:13ff)	Men Only can go (10:11)	Hardened Heart (10:20)
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9. Darkness

Only on Egyptians (9:22-23)	All but Flocks/Herds (10:24)	Hardened Heart (10:27-28)
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10. Death of Egyptian First Born (12:29)

EXODUS

The Deliverance



The Egyptians Drown in the Sea by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

12. The Rescue at Sea

Exodus 13:17–15:21

12. THE RESCUE AT SEA (13:17—15:21)

THE BEGINNING OF THE JOURNEY (13:17-22)

They took with them the body of Joseph (13:19)

The First Three Cities (13:20)

Ramses

Etham

Succoth

They were led... (13:21)

...in the day by a Cloud

...in the night by a Pillar of Fire

ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE (14:1-31)

The Deliverance
at Pi Hahiroth/Baal-Zephon

600 Chariots
pursued them

An East Wind
divided the waters

TWO SONGS OF PRAISE (15:1-21)

The Authors

Moses (15:1-18)

Miriam (15:19-21)

How many times is “LORD” used in these two songs?

Eleven Times in Moses’ Song (15:1-18)

Once in Miriam’s Song (15:19-21)

Miriam’s Song is shorter and to the point; therefore, it is probably the oldest..

The Four enemies who will hear about this and tremble are... (15:14-15)

Philistia

Edom

Moab

Canaan

The Lord will finally dwell in his Mountain in Jerusalem (15:17)

12. THE RESCUE AT SEA

Exodus 13:17—15:21

ASSIGNMENTS		
The Beginning of the Journey 13:17-22	Israel's Deliverance 14:1-31	The Songs of Praise 15:1-21

THE BEGINNING OF THE JOURNEY (13:17-22) (1250 B.C.E.)

As we deal with the beginning of the journey, four things must be explained.

The Philistines (13:17-18)

Instead of taking the direct route to Canaan, Moses turned south. Why? The Book of Exodus explains that it was out of fear of the Philistines, an enemy of the Israelites. Scholars dispute this because the Philistines did not enter that area until around 1200 B.C.E. In 1972 evidence was found in the Gaza strip indicating that Egyptians were present, and so the reason why they turned south might have been to avoid the Egyptian fortresses. The direct route was also more dangerous and so God providentially led them by the way of the wilderness. The Bible says that God did not lead them on the direct route lest they become afraid and turn back to Egypt and continued slavery.

Another puzzling thing is that they left Egypt equipped for battle. What does this mean? It probably refers to the way in which they organized themselves for the trip. It does not mean that they possessed weapons, although weapons cannot be completely discounted, for they later engage in battle against enemies that appear in the wilderness.

Joseph's Body (13:19)

They kept faith with a request Joseph made of them four hundred years earlier, that when God rescued them, they would carry his remains back to Canaan. (See Genesis 50:24-25) This indicates that our historical roots are important. We cannot throw off the past without losing the basis of our faith. Faith is rooted in history.

The Route (13:20)

They began at Raamses and moved on to Succoth and then to Etham, an Egyptian border fortress. Etham has not been located, but it is thought to have existed on the edge of the desert, east of Succoth.

The Cloud and Fire (13:21-22)

The cloud and fire reflect the ancient custom of carrying a burning brazier at the head of a marching army or caravan to indicate the route by day and night. Whatever the nature of the phenomenon, the cloud and fire became the traditional way of expressing God's presence and guidance.

ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE (14:1-31)

The places mentioned, Pi-ha-hiroth, Migdol, and Baal-zephon, like Etham, were probably Egyptian frontier fortresses. The Israelites were unable to break through and were thus caught near Pi-ha-hiroth, which was located between Migdol and Baal-zephon. Pharaoh pursued them with his army of 600 chariots overtaking them there; but with the help of an angel, the cloud, and the darkness, the Israelites were protected. The people were afraid nevertheless and wanted to return to Egypt, but Moses began to pray to the Lord. God told him to stop praying and start marching (14:15), and so Moses lifted up his rod and the sea separated allowing them to cross over. The Sea, known as the Red Sea, is the Sea of Reeds. It was a shallow body of water to the North of Lake Timsah. The actual crossing probably took place on the lower part of Lake Menzaleh. At this point there is a wide stretch of shallow sea bed well suited for the purpose of letting a great host of people cross over on foot, but when the area became flooded, chariots and men wearing armor simply did not have a chance of making the crossing. A strong east wind blew all night making the sea dry land. After the Israelites crossed over safely, the sea returned to its normal position, drowning all the Egyptians (14:21 and 28). God worked through normal acts of nature, but the timing of these "events" with the "need" of the Israelites made them miraculous. Nature was God's servant, and God was responsible for saving the Israelites and killing the Egyptians. At least this is the message of the Book of Exodus.

TWO SONGS OF PRAISE (15:1-21)

The Song of Moses (15:1-18)

Both songs praise the Exodus as an act of God. Exodus 15:1 and 15:21 say essentially the same thing, but the Song of Moses expands upon God's deliverance. For this reason it has been suggested that it was written much later. It praises God for helping his people during their later journey through Edom, Moab, and into Canaan, the promised land, and it ends by rejoicing over God's establishment of them in Jerusalem (15:17). Some scholars think it was written during the time of Solomon. The whole song shows God as a God of

power, who delivers his people, blesses them, dwells with them, and becomes the object of their worship.

Two similar poems in the Old Testament are also attributed to Moses. Deuteronomy 31:22 describes Deuteronomy 32:2-43 as a Song of Moses, and Psalm 90 is called “A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.” By attaching the name of Moses to these three poems, the Hebrews believed they were honoring him above all others as a leader who proved to them the need for faith and reliance upon God.

The Song of Miriam (15:19-21)

This is more than a song; it is also a victory dance. It is thought to be an eyewitness account, and it is the oldest poetic couplet in the Old Testament. It tells only of the passage through the Sea of Reeds.¹

THE MIRACLE OF DELIVERANCE

Many things enslave us. Political and economic oppression continue to enslave people even though slavery as an institution has been discredited. Depriving people of their rights or paying less than living wages are modern ways of enslaving people. As bad as political or economic enslavement is, there is another kind of enslavement that is even worse, and that is the spiritual. The Old Testament seems to focus on liberation from political and economic slavery while the New Testament focuses on deliverance from spiritual slavery. Deliverance from any and every kind of enslavement is a miracle.

The message of the Bible is that God hears the cries of enslaved people, political and economic. He also hears the cries of those whose spirits have been crushed; and he calls people to participate in bringing about their deliverance, even people who are not enthusiastic about getting involved. Moses was called upon to deliver the Israelites from political and economic slavery, and he had plenty of reasons why God should choose someone else. When the Egyptians were breathing down his back, he stopped to pray; and the Lord urged him on, saying, “Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground. (Exodus 14:15-16) God then divided the waters, a miracle that coincided with a strong east wind (Exodus 14:21), which divided the waters, creating some dry land; and then, just as the Egyptians were ready to cross, the winds ceased and those same waters fell back upon them, covering their

¹Three authors’ accounts are weaved together. If you want to read them separately, you would have to follow them accordingly: (1) Exodus 14:5-7, 9a, 10-14, 19b-20a, 21b, 24, 27cd, 30-31, 15:1-18, 21bc, 22b-25a. (2) Exodus 13:17-19, 14:19a, 20b, 15:25b. (3) Exodus 13:1-2, 20, 14:1-4, 8, 9b, 15-18, 20c-21a, 21c-23, 26-27a, 28-29, 15:22a, 27. The first author is “J,” the second “E,” and the third “P.” They all agree that beyond ordinary human planning and determination, the Hebrew slaves gained their freedom. The God of the Bible is a God who steps into human history and sets his people free.

chariots and horsemen in the mud. The Israelites were delivered from slavery; at the same time, their Egyptian pursuers were trapped in the receding waters.

Jesus was called to deliver people from spiritual slavery; and anticipating the consequences, which would be suffering, crucifixion, and death, he struggled with both the method and the ultimate price he would have to pay. In his temptation in the wilderness, he decided upon methods that would lead ultimately to his demise. Even as he faced the cross, he pleaded for another way. In Matthew 26:39, he cried, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” God does not seem to intervene as he did for Moses, but an even greater miracle follows three days later when God raises Jesus up from the dead.

The Enslavement in Egypt and the Exodus from Egypt make up the foundation of the Jewish Faith, just as the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus make up the foundation of Christian Faith. There is however a tremendous difference in the way in which God acts. In the Exodus, God violently punishes the Egyptians, and leads the Israelites out of their slavery into freedom. In the Cross of Christ, Jesus suffers at the hands of his enemies before God raises him up from the dead, providing a way to deliver people from their spiritual enslavement. The reason for the difference lies in the kind of deliverance that is taking place. You can deliver people from political enslavement by means of violence, but you cannot deliver people from spiritual enslavement by violence or force.

What is going on with God in the Bible? Does he act differently with Moses than he does with Jesus? Perhaps! Perhaps it is just Moses’ understanding, but that understanding has some consistency throughout the Old Testament. Moses does not kill the Egyptians. They kill themselves by resisting God’s liberation of the Israelites, and it is God who allows them to drown in the receding waters. This still does not explain God’s command to the Israelites to kill men, women, and children as they take the Promised Land. God seems to advocate a kind of violence in the Old Testament that he does not exercise in the New. If anyone has ever combined the two into one, bringing about a miracle of liberation, it would have to be Martin Luther King Jr., with his non-violent resistance, who wrote:

We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. We will not hate you, but we cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws. We will soon wear you down by our capacity to suffer. And in winning our freedom, we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process.¹

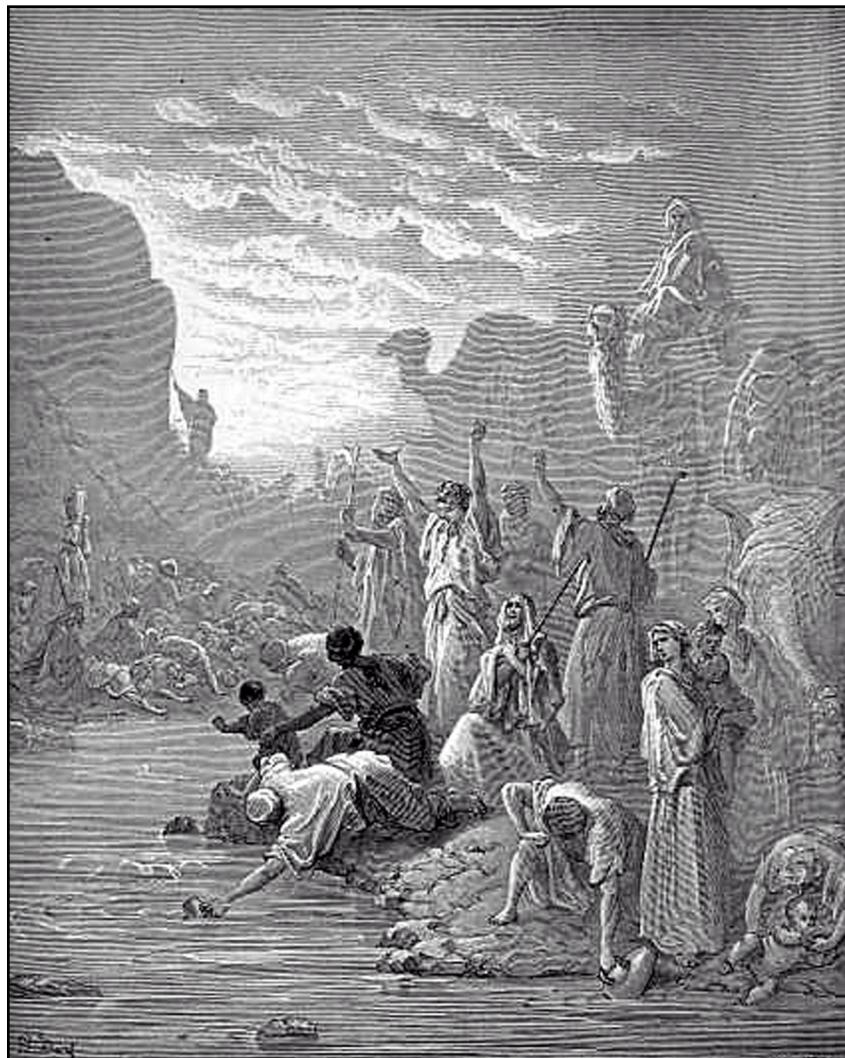
Perhaps, what we are dealing with is not a conflict in two different methods, but a progression. In the Old Testament, the Egyptians cannot be liberated. Even the miracles of destruction do not change them. They have been given fair warning, and they have hardened their own hearts. The same might be said of the Canaanites. As history moves on, however, God penetrates our world in Christ, and reveals himself through suffering.

¹*Time*, April 12, 1968 (Asia Edition), p. 23.

He is not dealing with Egyptians, but with the descendants of Israelites. Martin Luther King Jr. was not dealing with pagans, but with professing Christians. God's action might be different if he were dealing with the descendants of the Canaanites, whose tradition was idolatry, child sacrifice, and sacred prostitution. How God decides to act, depends upon who the oppressors are. A modern example might be the way in which Gandhi liberated his people from the British. It has been said that he might have had to use different methods had the enemy been the German Nazis. Perhaps the point is worth pondering.

EXODUS

The Deliverance



Moses Strikes the Rock by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

13. The Wilderness

Exodus 15:22–18:27

13. THE WILDERNESS (15:22–18:27)

TWO PROBLEMS IN THE WILDERNESS

Water	Food
<p>The Wilderness of Shur or Elam (15:23 & Numbers 33:8)</p> <p>Three Days without Water (15:22)</p> <p>The Water at Marah was Bitter (15:23)</p> <p>Moses threw a tree into the Water (15:25)</p> <p>Obeying the Lord will prevent the Diseases of the Egyptians (15:26)</p> <p>In Elim they found 12 Springs and 70 Palm Trees (15:27)</p>	<p>The Wilderness of Sin (Between Elim and Sinai) (16:1)</p> <p>They travelled for One Month (16:1)</p> <p>They missed the Pots of Meat (16:3)</p> <p>They grumbled against God (16:8)</p> <p>God provided Manna and Quail (16:12-15)</p> <p>Greed caused the food to become wormy and foul (16:20)</p> <p>An Omer was kept as a Memorial (16:32 & 34)</p>

TWO PROBLEMS AT REPHIDIM

Water	War
Moses struck a Rock	The Amalekites Attacked (17:8) Joshua led the Battle
Moses named the place	Aaron and Hur supported Moses in Prayer
Massah (Test)	They were to remember the Blotting out of the Amalekites (17:14)
Meribah (Contention)	Moses built an Altar (17:15) (The Lord is My Banner)

JETHRO'S VISIT

Jethro's Ancestry can be traced back to Abraham and Keturah	
Moses probably sent his family to live with Jethro when he returned to Egypt	
Moses' wife was Zipporah	Moses Sons were Gershom and Eleizer
Jethro's Advice to Moses: Choose able men to help	
Qualifications:	Size of the Groupings
Fear God Be Trustworthy Hate Bribery	1,000 and 100 50 and 10

13. THE WILDERNESS

Exodus 15:22—18:27

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Lack of Water 15:22-27	Manna and Quail 16:1-36	Water from the Rock 17:1-7	War with the Amalekites 17:8-16	Jethro's Good Advice 18:1-27

THE GRUMBLING BEGINS (15:22-27)

They began the journey through the Wilderness of Shur. In Numbers 33:8 the name “Wilderness of Etham” is used. Are two different places being named, or did they have two different names? Since *Shur* (Hebrew) and *Etham* (Egyptian) both mean “fortress wall,” Exodus and Numbers are probably referring to the same area. After three days of being burned by the sun by day and chilled by the low temperatures at night, they began to grumble, as their possessions grew heavy.

The Lack of Water

Their first problem they encountered was the lack of water. They never lacked water in Egypt, and they could remember the fish, vegetables and fruit. In the wilderness they had freedom, but they lacked food and water.

Marah [Bitter] (15:23)

In Marah the water was very bitter. Moses cried to the Lord, who instructed him to throw a tree into the water to make it sweet. It was believed that the leaves or bark of certain trees had magical properties for sweetening water, and so Moses was probably sweetening the water with leaves and bark from these trees.

Elim [Large Trees] (15:27)

In Elim they found twelve springs of water. Water was used by God to demonstrate His presence. Noah was saved from the flood. The Israelites passed through the sea to freedom. Joshua passed through the Jordan into the Promised Land. Jesus was baptized to become the Messiah, and baptism is our initiation into the church. Water has become highly symbolic of our dependence upon God.

A Lesson in Dependence (15:26)

They began to realize how dependent they were upon God. They were told to obey the voice of God in order to avoid the diseases put on the Egyptians. God took them into the desert to teach them a lesson on dependence. He taught them to obey Him in order to survive. The very next thing that happened to them was to discover the twelve springs at Elim.

THE MANNA AND THE QUAIL (16:1-36)

Next they moved into the Wilderness of Sin, which is located between Elim and Sinai. One month had passed. When they complained again about the lack of food, the Lord provided them with manna and quail.

The Manna

Every morning they were instructed to collect enough manna for their own needs. What is manna? Some scholars suggest that it is a sticky substance produced by the Tamarisk-bush, which is very common in the desert areas of the Middle East. Some believe that certain insects produce it. As they feed on the sap of desert plants, some insects excrete a sweet, sticky substance. It is easy to gather in the morning when it is solid, but as the sun warms the desert air, the manna evaporates. Some scholars say that it does not evaporate, but that ants eat it and are attracted to it in the warmth of the day. The manna had to be eaten each day in that it could not be stored. Worms would get into it and turn it foul and cause it to spoil. Each Israelite was to gather an omer (about two dry quarts).

Manna became their staple food for the forty years they lived in the wilderness. They ceased using it after they entered Canaan. (Joshua 5:10-12) Aaron placed some before the testimony (the Ark of the Covenant).¹ He placed it near the Ark as a symbol or reminder of the miracle, which God had accomplished for the Israelites. Paul linked this wilderness experience to the Lord's Supper. (See Corinthians 10:1-17). Today Christians regard the bread in the Lord's Supper as their manna—a sign and symbol of God's continuing presence.

The Quail

Quail were not common in the deserts around Sinai. They were probably migrating across the desert toward the Mediterranean Sea. Whenever they stopped to rest, the Israelites captured them easily in the evening time. They were not eaten as frequently as was the manna.

¹ See Exodus 30:6.

The Sabbath (16:22-30 and 34)

The references to the *Sabbath* and the *Testimony* (Ark of the Covenant) make us think that all of this was written later, after the Law had been given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Manna and the Quail were not to be gathered on the Sabbath.

TWO PROBLEMS AT REPHIDIM (17:1-16)

Water from the Rock (17:1-7)

The next stop was Rephidim, where the people rebelled because there was no water to drink; and under God's instructions, Moses took the rod he used to part the waters of the Red Sea and used it to strike the rock, from which water flowed forth.

The Sinai desert receives less than ten inches of rain per year, and whole tribes depend on the skill of their chiefs to lead them and their animals to cool springs. Water is essential to their survival. Moses was serving his people like a shepherd and the *rod* is understood now as a shepherd's staff. Water did lie just below the limestone surface in the region of Sinai; and so this, too, can be seen as a natural phenomenon. It is also used to symbolize the salvation of God.

Moses called that place *Massah*, which means "test," and *Meribah* which means "contention;" and these two words became symbols of Israel's faithlessness and rebelliousness. Leadership was not easy for Moses. The people he tried to lead came close to stoning him.

War with Amalekites (17:8-16)

Once again Moses used the rod as a symbol of God's power at Rephidim. As Amalek engaged Israel in battle, Moses chose Joshua to lead Israel's forces. Moses observed the battle from on top of a hill with Aaron and Hur. Whenever Moses held the rod up, Israel prevailed over Amalek, but when he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed over Israel. Aaron and Hur helped Moses hold his arms in the air, a posture for prayer, so that Israel could defeat Amalek. The battle was won, but the feud with the Amalekites persisted until the tribe was finally exterminated during the reign of Hezekiah (1 Chronicles 4:41-43). This nomadic tribe was a branch of the Edomite race, descending from Esau (Genesis 36:12 & 16). When Balaam saw them later, he described them as first among the nations (Numbers 24:20). This means that God's people were going up against a formidable foe, the competition for which was probably water. Although the Israelites won this battle, they were defeated by the Amalekites at Hormah (Numbers 14:45), after they refused to enter the Promised Land from the south.

JETHRO'S VISIT (18:1-17)

The Return of Moses' Family (18:1-12)

This story might be out of order. The mention of the mountain seems to indicate that it belongs behind Exodus 19:2. (See 18:5) Zipporah and her two children, Gershom and Eliezar were brought to Moses. Apparently he sent his family back to Jethro following the circumcision (Exodus 4:24-26). The Midianites also worshiped, or at least recognized, the God of the Israelites. To offer a sacrifice was to recognize the God to whom one yielded some obedience. That Jethro shared a meal with Aaron and the elders of Israel was significant, for such a meal was sacred and shared in the name of Yahweh.

The Appointment of Judges (18:13-27)

Moses soon became overburdened with the task of settling arguments. Jethro suggested that Moses share this task with able men. This would enable Moses to spend more time governing and leading the people. Moses could handle the cases without any legal precedent and let the ordinary cases be dealt with by lay leaders and appointed judges. He chose men who feared God, were trustworthy, and hated bribery, and then he made them rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. After this, Jethro went home to Midian.

At this point the Midianites seem to be friendly. They were, after all, descendants from Abraham and Keturah (Genesis 25:1-6); but as time goes on, they become minor enemies of Israel. We see this in Numbers 22 and again in Judges 6-8.

NO ONE IS INDISPENSABLE

I was once a workaholic. No, I cannot say that. I am a recovering workaholic. People become workaholics for two reasons: (1) they like their work, and (2) they actually believe that they are indispensable. No one else can do it as well as they can. This is my illness, and these are my reasons.

It took the chairperson of the pastor parish committee to shake me out of my addiction. He confronted me, warning that I was on a dangerous path, which would only lead to my own undoing. The thing he feared most was that it would destroy my marriage, and he did not want to see that happen. He sounded convincing, and since I respected him, I began taking one day off every week. I have been told that it might be better for a workaholic to take two days off, but since I am only recovering, I have not taken that advice. Perhaps I should, but you see, I still like my work and feel indispensable.

There is another reason for becoming a workaholic, and that is the one that plagued Moses. He thought that God spoke only through him. I am thankful that I do not bear that burden. Fortunately Moses had a father-in-law who confronted him, as the chairperson of my pastor parish committee confronted me. The dialogue between them is almost amusing if it were not so tragic at the same time.

Jethro: (Moses' Father-in-law) "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?" (Exodus 18:14)

Moses: "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make known to them the statutes and instructions of God." (Exodus 18:15-16)

Jethro: "What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. (Exodus 18:17-18)

It is easy to feel indispensable when you think that you alone have a direct line to God, and everyone else is depending upon you to help them solve their problems.

We do look to our leaders for answers, and we will continue to do this, whether they are religious or political leaders. There will always be plenty of people out there willing to let their leaders become workaholics. One of the compliments such people will make, even if their leaders work themselves to death is, "He or she was a workaholic." To many, this is a sign of how much they loved us; but what we fail to see is how our compliment indicates how little we loved them. If we had loved them, then we would have confronted them.

Jethro confronted Moses with more than criticism. He gave him some good advice.

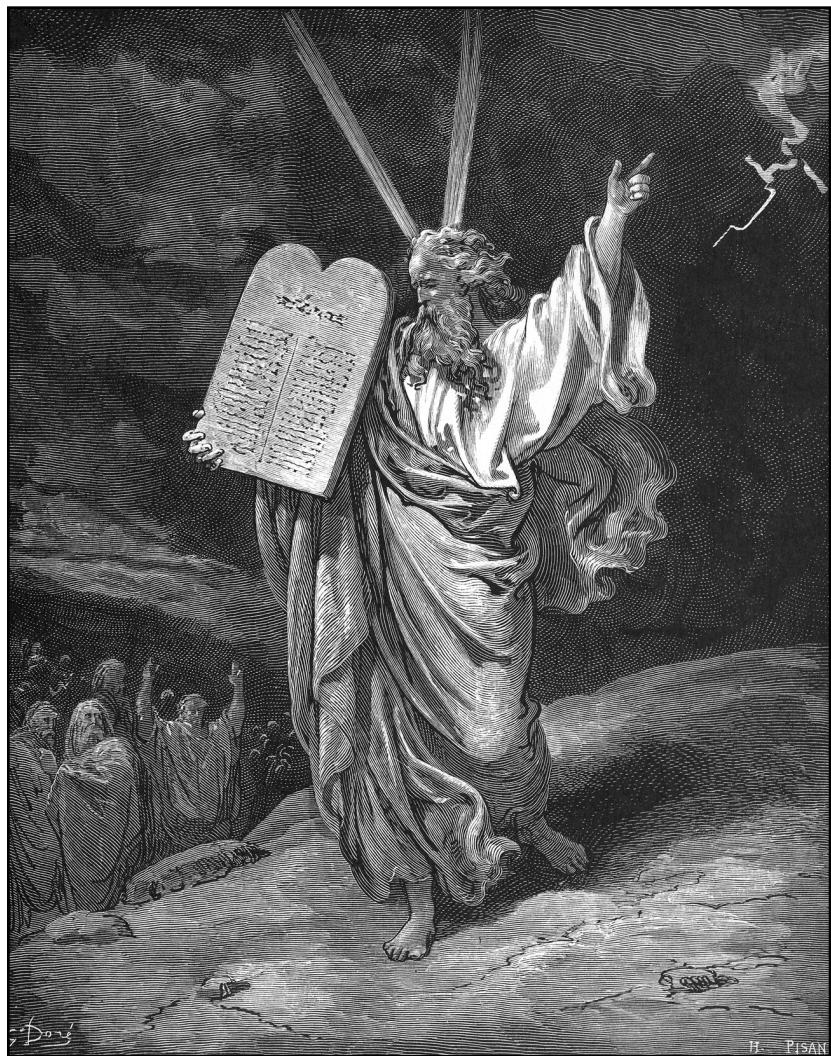
Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases before God; teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do. You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace. (Exodus 18:19-23)

Jethro's advice was worthy of following, and it was the only kind of advice that could be given. He did not deprive Moses of his special gift of discerning the will of God, but called upon Moses to exercise it by teaching the divine principles to a chosen group of trustworthy and honest people, who would then apply them to the easier cases. The difficult cases could still be brought to Moses, but he would not have to spend all his time on things that others could do for him. Numbers 12:3 tells us that Moses was a "very humble (meek)" man, and that is precisely what humility (meekness) is. It is the ability to take good advice when it is given, and not to try to defend yourself when you know that you are wrong.

One last, but weak, defense from a recovering workaholic who is not as meek as Moses. I have difficulty discerning who the trustworthy and honest people are; and once I put them in place, I sometimes have trouble living with their decisions. It is also difficult for me to remove them when I begin to discern that they are not so trustworthy, honest, or worse yet, moral as I would like them to be. Jethro did not promise Moses an easier job, only a method of making it more manageable within the constraints of time. Someone who cannot make those tough decisions is surely dispensable, and that should help me in my recovery as a workaholic. Only God is indispensable, and he tolerates our representing him. He also rested and told us to do the same.

EXODUS

The Deliverance



Moses with the Commandments by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

14. Encounter at Sinai

Exodus 19:1—23:33

14. ENOUNTER AT SINAI (19:1—23:33)

THE GATHERING (19:1-25)

In the Wilderness of Sinai (19:1)	In the Third Month (19:1)	On the Third Day (19:10)
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What happens to those who cross God's Set Limits? (19:13)

They are stoned to Death	They are shot with Arrows
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Aaron Invited to Join Moses (19:24)

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (20:1-17)

Jewish	Catholic/Lutheran	Protestant
1. No other god	1. No other god	1. No other god
2. No graven images	2. No misuse of the name	2. No graven images
3. No misuse of the name	3. Remember the Sabbath	3. No misuse of the name
4. Remember the Sabbath	4. Honor parents	4. Remember the Sabbath
5. Honor parents	5. No murder	5. Honor parents
6. No murder	6. No adultery	6. No murder
7. No adultery	7. No stealing	7. No adultery
8. No stealing	8. No false witness	8. No stealing
9. No false witness	9. No coveting a man's wife	9. No false witness
10. No coveting	10. No coveting his property	10. No coveting

THE COVENANT CODE (20:22—23:33)

The Altar was to be made of Earth and Rock (20:23)

Slaves	Punishment	The Three Feasts	Israel's Enemies
Six Years (21:2) Three Rights: <i>Food, Clothing, and Marriage</i> Price for Killing: <i>30 Shekels of Silver</i>	Principle: Eye for Eye... Capital Crimes: Murder, Dishonoring Parents, Kidnapping, Sorcery, Sodomy, and Idolatry Restitution: 5 oxen/4 sheep for 1 Fornication: Married or a fine Interest: Not for poor/strangers	Unleavened Bread (Passover) Harvest (Weeks/Pentecost) Ingathering (Tabernacles)	Amorites Hittites Perizzites Canaanites Hivites Jebusites

THE LAND WHICH GOD IS GIVING TO THE ISRAELITES

In the North The River (The Euphrates)	On the West Sea of the Philistines (The Mediterranean)	In the Southeast The Red Sea (The Gulf of Aqaba)	In the Southwest The Desert (The Sinai Peninsula)
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14. ENCOUNTER AT SINAI

Exodus 19:1—23:33

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Gathering at Sinai 19:1-25	The Ten Commandments 20:1-21	Slaves and Crime 20:22—21:36	Restitution and Morality 22:1-31	Justice and The Feasts 23:1-33

THE GATHERING AT SINAI (19:1-25)

After two months of traveling through the wilderness, the Israelites gathered at Sinai. The people were to prepare themselves to receive the Covenant (19:3-6) which Moses would mediate to them. This preparation involved the washing of their garments (19:10) and abstinence from sexual relationships (19:15). The presence of God was finally portrayed in the imagery of a violent thunderstorm, a thick cloud, and a loud trumpet blast (19:16). On the third day after their arrival, God appeared and requested that Moses and Aaron climb the mountain. The people were to be warned about crossing over the boundary. The setting of a boundary reflected the ancient view of holiness as mystery, awe, wonder, and majesty. Punishment for crossing that boundary without permission was death.

St. Catherine's monastery is located at Mount Sinai, but we are not certain of the exact location of the mountain. The story assumes that the Lord dwells in heaven and a high mountain is the closest point to heaven. The Hebrew word for *holy* means “to be set apart.” We are set apart for the task of mediating God’s will to the world. Exodus 19:6 supports the priesthood of all believers. God’s people are to mediate God’s will to the whole world. (See also Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6).

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (20:1-17)

The Hebrew word means “ten words,” and the “decalogue,” which has Greek origins means the same thing. These same ten laws can be found in Deuteronomy 5:6-21, but they are a later copy. The writer carefully introduced the decalogue by referring to the salvation history of the Israelites, which culminated in the heart of their divinely inspired law.

The Commandments have to do with the family, sex, property, speech, and thought; and they can be divided into two tablets or tables: (1) those having to do with God, and (2)

those having to do with one another. The first four have to do with God and the last six have to do with human relationships. Violating any of the Law, however, is a sin against God. Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments into his Great Commandment and followed this same twofold division (Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; and Luke 10:25-28). Loving God or the neighbor is not enough. Like the ancient Israelites, we are called to love both God and the neighbor. God is to govern all of life.

1. *You shall have no other gods.* (20:3) This first commandment is the most important. It requires the Israelites to worship only this God. They were too often tempted to worship the gods of other nations in addition to their own. (See 1 Kings 18:17-19 and Hosea 8:4-6).
2. *You shall not make graven images.* (20:4) Other nations made images of their gods, but Israel was not to make such a representation, for God was invisible.
3. *You shall not take God's name in vain.* (20:7) Pagans used the names of their gods in magical spells and rites for evil purposes, but Israel was only to use the Lord's name in prayer and praise.
4. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.* (20:8) No work was to be done. The Sabbath was a day of rest and reflection (See Deuteronomy 5:15).
5. *Honor your father and mother.* (20:12) The commandment is made to adults, not children, and has to do with caring for the elderly when they are unable to care for themselves.
6. *You shall not (murder) kill.* (20:13) This does not include “war” or “capital punishment,” which is not murder, but legalized killing.
7. *You shall not commit adultery.* (20:14) The sanctity of marriage must be respected.
8. *You shall not steal.* (20:15) Property is also to be respected. The worst kind of stealing was to rob God (See Malachi 3:8).
9. *You shall not bear false witness.* (20:16) Truth is to be respected, and the whole truth must be told in legal proceedings.
10. *You shall not covet.* (20:17) Human thoughts and desires are not hidden from God, and fall under His law.

The Ten Commandments originally consisted of short concise statements. They were expanded later on to help people know what they meant.

THE ISRAELITES' REQUEST (20:18-21)

The people were afraid to face God and so they asked Moses to be their mediator. This was later overcome in the New Testament where the presence of God was open to everyone. The people feared that they would die in the presence of God. Moses assured them that God had come, not that they might die, but that they might not sin. God comes not to punish, but to deliver us from sin.

THE COVENANT CODE (20:22—23:33)

The Covenant Code reveals God's interest in morality. He is to govern all of life, and his laws display several distinctive characteristics, which are as follows:

1. The whole code rests on the authority of God, not of a King.
2. There is no division between civil and religious law. Legal, moral, and religious laws are inseparable, showing God's concern for all of life as a whole.
3. There is one law for all, whatever a person's status. Regulations protect the weak and helpless (slaves, orphans, widows, and foreigners).
4. A high view of human life is demonstrated by fixed, limited penalties—one crime, one punishment.

The Covenant Code was based on the oldest record of the Jewish Law. It was an expansion of the Ten Commandments, which were concise statements. The interpretation of those commandments presuppose a settled agricultural society; therefore, they reflect a situation following Israel's invasion of Canaan, when prevailing laws were borrowed and adapted to the covenant tradition. Some say that these laws look forward to that settled agricultural life in Canaan. We just do not know whether they do this or are a later addition.

Laws concerning the Altar (20:22-26)

The altar is to be simple. It is not to be like pagan altars with images of silver and gold. It is to be earth and rock. Burnt offerings of sheep and oxen were to be made upon the altar, and the earth was much more capable of absorbing the blood.

Laws on Slavery (21:1-11)

Slavery was limited to six years, unless of course, the slave voluntarily desired slavery as a permanent condition. The pierced ear symbolized such an agreement. While it might seem strange that the Israelites would possess slaves, having just been delivered from slavery, they did have laws requiring the humane treatment of their slaves. Three rights of a slave were food, clothing, and marriage (21:10).

Laws about Violent Acts (21:12-27)

Three violent acts demanded capital punishment. They were premeditated murder, the dishonoring of parents, and kidnapping. Accidental manslaughter did not carry the death penalty, and was considered an “act of God” because God allowed it to happen (21:13). A place would be provided to which an accused person could flee for refuge. For non-fatal offenses compensation was required on the basis of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” or in the case of violence against slaves, freedom was to be granted.

Laws concerning (animal) Property. (21:28-36)

Similar laws applied when animals were involved. If one’s ox killed someone, the ox was to be killed; but the owner was not to be punished, unless of course, the owner had been previously warned and failed to keep the ox properly penned up.

If a victim’s family is willing to accept payment instead of the death of the animal, then one could redeem his animal’s life by paying a ransom.

The killing of a slave by an animal was considered less serious, and only required the compensation of thirty shekels of silver.

The loss of an ox did not require the death penalty of the offending animal, but a fair compensation to the owner.

Laws concerning Restitution (Repayment) (22:1-15)

Restitution for the ox was higher than for the sheep because the ox was more valuable than the sheep. Killing a thief at night was considered an understandable accident, but thieves were to be captured so that they could make restitution. For stealing they were to make a fourfold or fivefold restitution (22:1) and for possession of stolen property the restitution was twofold (22:4,7, & 9). Thieves were not to be intentionally killed.

Laws on Religion and Morality (22:16-31)

The laws against sorcery, sodomy, and idolatry all carried the death penalty.

Fornication (22:16-17) In ancient Israel the daughter, like the wife, was considered part of a man’s property; and if a man seduced a virgin, he was either to marry her or compensate her father. Fornication lowered her value as a potential bride.

Sorcery (22:18) Sorcery was the attempt to secure information from the beyond or to bring supernatural influences to bear on persons or situations by other than the regular means of religion. The laws against sorcery, sodomy, and idolatry all carried the death penalty.

Sodomy (22:19) This involved sexual intercourse with animals, and like adultery, carried the death penalty.

Idolatry (22:20) This involved the worship of other gods, which was a violation of the first and most important commandment.

Strangers, Orphans, Widows, and the Poor (22:21-27) People were not to be exploited. Charging interest to the poor was considered a form of exploitation. A person's clothing could not be used as collateral, for they needed it as a covering at night.

God and Rulers (22:28) Both God and political Rulers were to be respected.

Offerings (22:29-30) Religious obligations had to be taken care of on time, for they belonged to God. Withholding them was the same as stealing.

Unclean Flesh (22:31) Since the people were considered consecrated or holy, they were to be subject to the same dietary laws as the priest. The meat was considered unclean because it had not been properly drained of the blood (Leviticus 22:8).

Laws on Justice and Fairness (23:1-9)

Justice was to extend to everyone, even to strangers and enemies (Deuteronomy 22:1-4) Majority opinion counted for nothing. This is a commentary on the ninth commandment not to bear false witness. God is interested in justice for all.

Laws for the Three Main Feasts (23:10-19)

The Agricultural Sabbath (23:10-13)

This was the first time the Sabbath was given a humanitarian meaning in addition to its religious meaning. The fields, vineyards, and olive orchards were to be used every seventh year to provide for the needs of the poor. The Sabbath occurred every seventh day and every seventh year, and was to be observed.

The Three Main Feasts (23:14-19)

These feasts are only named. They are treated elsewhere in much more detail.

1. *The Feast of Unleavened Bread* (23:15) This feast was part of Passover, which commemorated the death of the Egyptian firstborn, enabling the Hebrews to be set free from slavery.

2. *The Feast of Harvest* (23:16) (See Leviticus 23:15-21) This feast became known as Weeks (7 weeks) or Pentecost (50 days), and commemorated their receiving of the Law at Mount Sinai.

3. *The Feast of Ingathering (Autumn)* (23:16) This feast became known as Booths or Tabernacles, and commemorated their wandering through the desert.

The Kid boiled in its Mother's Milk (23:19)

This was a protest against a Canaanite method of preparing a sacrifice.

Conclusion to the Covenant Code (23:20-33)

God assured the Israelites that He had prepared a place for them, and He then appointed an angel to lead them into the Promised Land. “Preparing a place” was a guarantee of God’s continuing love for His people. God Himself, through the angel, led the Israelites. If the Israelites would get on God’s side, God promised to be on their side. This comes through very strongly, and even the language of Holy War is used (23:27-28).

The area of David’s control, not actual occupation, is outlined. The *Red Sea* refers to the Gulf of Aqaba in the southeast, the *desert* refers to the Sinai Peninsula in the southwest, the *Sea of the Philistines* refers to the Mediterranean Sea on the west, and the *River* refers to the Euphrates in the north (23:31).

HEARING THE COMMANDER

Law seems to lie at the foundation of our morality. Whenever we try to decide what ought to be done, or not done, we usually ask, “What is the law?” Even those who appeal to principles, to escape what they believe to be the rigidity of the law, still appeal to something very close to law. I do not make much of a distinction between laws and principles. They are essentially the same thing, with principles being a little more flexible. Laws and principles are to be followed. At best principles allow exceptions.

Are the Ten Commandments laws or principles? I do not think that we should waste time trying to decide. The Ten Commandments are concise statements of that which sets people free, and so they represent the Will of God for all human beings, made in God’s image. When they were given to the Israelites, Moses had already led them out of Egyptian bondage into freedom. These are divine statements telling people how to hang on to their freedom.

A study of the Ten Commandments can get very involved indeed, for if you really want to obey them, you have to begin asking what they mean before you can understand what breaking them involves. This gets very complicated and has been the task of lawyers for centuries. Much of the material surrounding the Ten Commandments in the Book of Exodus is nothing but commentary and attempts to define what these commandments mean. A study of the Law always makes it more complicated.

What then should we do? The answer for developing a morality that makes sense involves becoming acquainted not with the Law, but with the one who gave the Law. or the commander. Martin Luther wrote: “He who merely studies the commandments of

God is not greatly moved. But he who listens to God commanding, how can he fail to be terrified by majesty so great.” Not everyone wants to become familiar with the commander, even when they know it is a possibility. After the Ten Commandments were given, the people were afraid and trembled and said to Moses: “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die.” (Exodus 20:19) Moses tried to calm them down by saying: “Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin.” (Exodus 20:20)

There have always been some who have heard the commander. We call them the prophets, and prophets are “messengers of” or “spokesmen for” God. They did not develop their morality from laws, but from their personal acquaintance with the commander. Amos, the first of the writing prophets, prefaced everything he said with the words, “Thus says the LORD...” (Amos 1:3) How did he know? He listened, as did Elijah before him, to the still small voice, which is not always accompanied by thunder and lightning as it was on Mount Sinai (1 Kings 19:12). This experience is not limited to professional prophets. Martin Luther described the experience himself: “I do not know it and do not understand it, but sounding from above and ringing in my ears I hear what is beyond the thought of man.”¹

Studying the commandments may help prepare us for hearing the commander, but we must always recognize that our goal is not developing commentaries on the law, but sensitizing ourselves to the voice of the commander of those laws. Jesus tried to help people do that in Matthew 5. He started out by stating clearly that he did not come to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them (Matthew 5:17). He resisting making long lists of laws and tried to help people understand God’s original intention. One example should make this clear. In Matthew 5:21-22, he said, “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment....” Jesus makes the laws more difficult to obey; and he does this without making more of them. In fact, in response to a question on which commandment is first of all, he replied by reducing Moses’ Ten Commandments to two: “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:29-31)

Placing the proper emphasis on the first four commandments of Moses and on the first commandment of Jesus will help you to become acquainted with the commander, and then the fulfillment of Moses’ last six commandments or Jesus second commandment will be much easier. Our first goal is to know the commander, and not to worry too much about understanding and obeying every detail.

¹Quoted in Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1957), p. 179.

Jesus himself was frequently accused of violating the commandment to observe the Sabbath. Sometimes he violated it by plucking heads of grain (Matthew 12:1) or healing a man with a withered hand (Matthew 12:10). Those who focused on the study of the Law saw these acts as violations of the fourth commandment, which carried a death penalty, but Jesus knew the commander, and insisted that the Sabbath was made for rest and reflection; and that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:12).

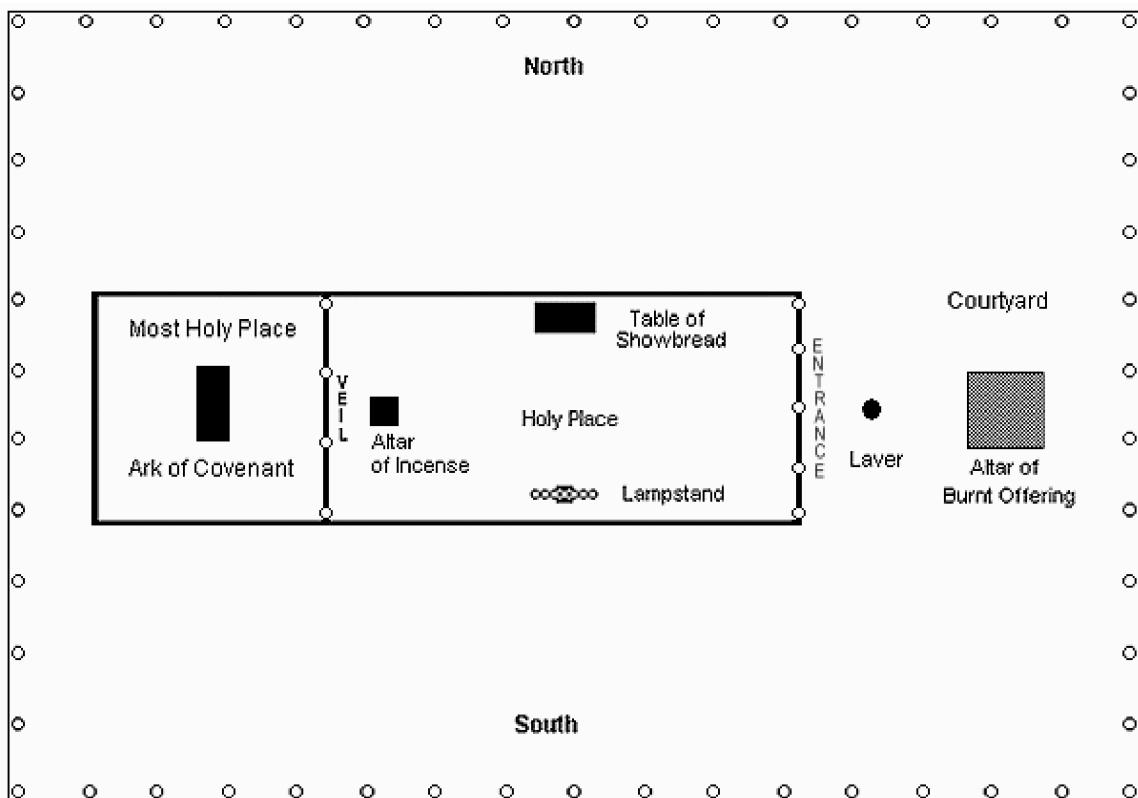
Does all this give Christians the right to do less than the law commands? That is not what Jesus did, nor was it what the early Christians did. We read in the early Letter to Diogenetus these words about the early Christians: “They obey the laws that men make, but their lives are better than the laws.”¹ They also obey the laws that God makes, but they obey the spirit as well as the letter of the Law. The only way they could do this is to know the commander. That is also our primary task.

For Christians the Law has three purposes, which are: (1) convicting people of their sin, (2) bringing them to Christ, and (3) guiding them in their Christian life. To help people used the Law in this way, John Wesley offered the General Rules, which were in brief: (1) to do no harm, (2) to do good, and (3) to attend all the ordinances of God. These General Rules were to guide people to know God (the Commander) and give them direction in their lives to do his Will. For Wesley *grace* never meant release from the obligation to obey God’s Law. There is no faith without obedience and obedience is a testimony to the presence of faith. Obedience is the doing of God’s Will on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 5:10)

¹Quoted in Waldo Beach and H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christian Ethics* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1955), p. 68.

EXODUS

The Deliverance



15. The Tabernacle

Exodus 24:1–31:18 and 35:1–40:38

15. THE TABERNACLE (24:1–31:18 & 35:1–40:38)

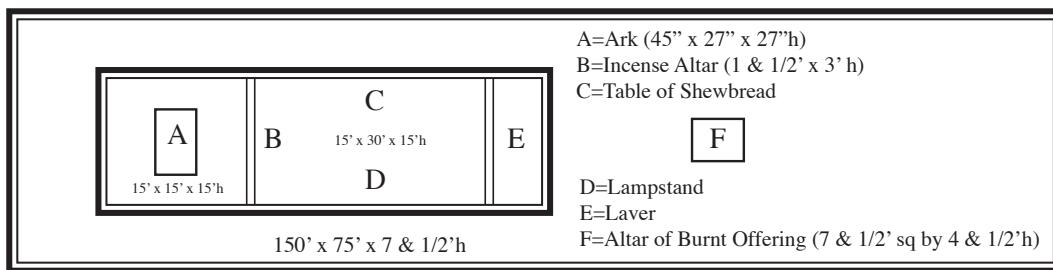
THE PRIESTS

The High Priest	High Priestly Clothes	The Other Priests	Other Priestly Clothes
Aaron	Breastpiece Ephod Blue Robe Coat of Checker Work Golden Diadem Girdle Linen Breeches	Four Sons of Aaron: Nadab Abihu Eleazar Ithamar	Coat Girdle Cap Linen Breeches
Acts of Ordination:			
Wash Dress Anoint			

THE GEMS ON THE BREASTPIECE

First Row of Gems First Row of Tribes	Carnelian/Ruby Reuben	Chrysolite/Topaz Simeon	Emerald/Beryl Levi
Second Row of Gems Second Row of Tribes	Turquoise Judah	Sapphire Dan	Moonstone/Emerald Naphtali
Third Row of Gems Third Row of Tribes	Jacinth Gad	Agate Asher	Amethyst Issachar
Fourth Row of Gems Fourth Row of Tribes	Beryl/Chrysolite Zebulun	Onyx Joseph	Jasper Benjamin

THE TABERNACLE: Its Dimensions and Furnishings (Dwelling Place)



POLL/TEMPLE TAX	BUILDERS	MATERIALS	MEN OVER 30
Age 20 One-Half Shekel (30:13-14)	Bezalel (37:1) Oholiab	Gold: 2,195 pounds Silver: 7,550 pounds Bronze: 5,310 pounds	603,550

Note: In the four rows of gems, the first one is from the NRSV and the second one is from the NIV translations of the Bible. When only one is named, the NRSV and the NIV agree.

15. THE TABERNACLE

Exodus 24:1—31:18 & 35:1—40:38

ASSIGNMENTS				
Ratification of the Covenant 24:1-18	The Tabernacle is Built 25:1—27:21 36:8—38:31	The Priests, their Duties, their Vestments 28:1—30:38 39:1-31	The Craftsmen, the Sabbath, Contributions 31:1-18 35:1—36:1	Consecration of the Tabernacle 40:1-38

RATIFICATION OF THE COVENANT (24:1-18)

Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders were called to meet God. Moses, however, was to have the most personal encounter with God while the others stood some distance away. Moses wrote down everything God said to him. He then built an altar and erected twelve pillars representing the twelve sons (or tribes) of Jacob.

A burnt offering and peace offering were to be made. Half the blood was to be stored in basins and the other half thrown on the altar and people. The blood sprinkled on the altar and people symbolized the uniting of two parties in an agreement or covenant. For the Israelites, as for Christians, blood serves as a symbol of new life in the covenant. In making a covenant each person was to swear to keep the sacred promise on the pain of death.

Nadab and Abihu (24:1)

These were two of Aaron's sons, who later died for committing sacrilege. (Leviticus 10:1-2)

Hur (24:14)

Hur was a man of standing in Israel. He and Aaron held Moses' hands up in prayer during the battle with the Amalekites. (17:12)

The Numbers

The cloud covered Sinai for six days. On the seventh day God spoke. This reminds us of the creation story, and it marks the origin of the Sabbath. The people's response to the

covenant was a special sacrifice, and a covenant meal, which was eaten by their representatives in the presence of God. Moses alone was called to the top of the mountain in the midst of a cloud. He went into the cloud for forty days and forty nights. The round number *forty* occurs at almost every new stage of Israel's history: e.g., at the flood, the journey of the spies into Canaan, Elijah's journey to Horeb, Jesus' time in the wilderness, and the time between his resurrection and ascension.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TABERNACLE (25:1—27:21)

The Offering (25:1-9)

The people made an offering for their first sacred tent or portable sanctuary. The materials came from the booty, which they took with them as they left Egypt. In contrast to their forced labor in Egypt, the offerings and labor were voluntary. What followed served as a pattern for the temple that Solomon was to build, with the exception that Solomon resorted to forced labor. (See 1 Kings 5:13-18)

The Ark (25:10-22)

The Ark was a portable wooden chest, which was regarded as a throne. The cover for the ark was called the mercy seat, which was regarded as the throne upon which the Lord was invisibly enthroned. Blood was spilled there by the high priest once a year on the Day of Enthronement. The dimensions of the Ark were 45 x 27 x 27 inches (25:10). It was called the Ark of the Testimony because it contained the two tablets of the Law, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod.

The Table (25:23-30)

Bread was placed on the table before God as a special offering. It was a symbol of God's everlasting covenant with his people.

The Lampstand (25:31-40)

The purpose of the Lampstand or Menorah was to illuminate the interior of the holy place. There was a curtain, which separated the holy place from the most holy place (holy of holies), where the Ark was kept. This lamp was to contain an eternal flame symbolizing God's eternal presence, power, guidance, and glory.

The Pattern for the Tabernacle (26:1-37)

The Hebrew word for *tabernacle*, means "dwelling place." This was the normal dwelling place for the people in the wilderness, and so a tabernacle was to be built for the Lord as well. The tabernacle was to be 45 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 15 feet high. It contained three parts: (1) the curtains, (2) the tent over the curtains, and (3) the covering of skins over the tent. Descriptions of curtains, clasps, frames, bars, a veil, and a screen are given.

The screen is the entryway into the tabernacle, and the veil of blue, purple, and scarlet divides the most holy place (holy of holies) from the holy place (sanctuary). On this curtain were to be cherubim, which symbolized the presence of the Lord. The entryways faced east.

The Altar and the Court (27:1-21)

The Altar (27:1-8)

The altar was 7 and 1/2 feet square and 4 and 1/2 feet high, overlaid with bronze. This contrasts sharply with the previous command to make a plain altar (see Exodus 20:25), and might reflect a Canaanite influence. The former was commanded in the Covenant Code.

The Court (27:9-19)

The court was 150 feet by 75 feet and 7 1/2 feet high. The entrance was 30 feet wide and was located on the east side.

The Sevenfold Lamp (27:20-21)

The lamp was to burn as a sign of God's presence. According to Jewish tradition, only the center lamp burned continuously. The other six lamps were to be lit each evening and extinguished each morning. The people were to furnish the finest oil, and the priests took care of the lamps.

THE PRIESTS AND THEIR DUTIES (28:1—30:38)

Priestly Vestments (28:1-43)

If God's tent was to be a place of beauty, then the priest had to be properly clothed. The New English Bible says that it was "to give him dignity and honor." (28:2) It was to give him dignity and honor because he has been chosen to serve God and represent his people.

The persons mentioned for the priesthood are Aaron and his sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. The various pieces of the priestly vestments for Aaron, the high priest, are as follows: (1) the breastpiece, (2) the ephod, (3) the blue robe with bells and pomegranates attached, (4) the coat in checker, (5) the turban (6) the gold plate or diadem, engraved to say "Holy to the Lord" (28:36), (7) the girdle, and (8) the linen breeches. Aaron's sons, the assistants to the high priest, wear only coats, girdles, caps and linen breeches (28:40 & 42).

The Ephod (28:6-13)

The ephod was a kind of apron, made of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet material, joined at the shoulders with two onyx stones, upon which were engraved the names of the twelve

tribes in order of their birth. Six names were engraved on one stone, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, and Naphtali. Six names were engraved on the other, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. In this way the high priest represented Israel by bearing the names of the twelve tribes upon his shoulders.

The Breastpiece (28:15-29)

Made of the same material as the ephod, the breastpiece has a similar but differing function. Twelve precious stones have the names of the tribes engraved upon them, and the priest wears them over his breast, or heart, and intercedes for the twelve tribes of Israel before God. Also connected to the breastpiece are the urim, and thummim, which enable the high priest to make decisions for the twelve tribes.

Urim and Thummim (28:30)

These were the sacred lots carried in a pocket or pouch by the priest to obtain oracular decisions from God. We do not know what they were made of, but each one probably had a symbol on it to signify an affirmative or negative answer from God on questions put to him by the priest. Another way in which this might have been done was to have two precious stones of different colors, one representing the positive and the other the negative.

Urim, which means “curses” symbolized the negative, and *thummim*, which means “perfections” symbolized the positive. The Hebrew word for *Urim* is “arar” and for *Thummim* is “tamam.” The first letter of *arar* is “aleph,” the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet; and the first letter of *tamam* is “taw,” which is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Following David and Solomon the Urim and Thummim are no longer mentioned. It could be that with the rise of prophecy they were no longer needed; however, as prophecy declined, the Urim and Thummim reappeared. (See Ezra 2:63 and Nehemiah 7:65 and my comment on Deuteronomy 33:8.)

Golden Bells (28:33-35)

Two uses have been suggested: (1) the protection of the priest from demonic attacks, and (2) the announcement of the presence of the priest as he enters the holy place. The work of the priest could be dangerous if he took a light view of his responsibilities before the Lord. The laity needed to know that everything was okay, and the ringing of the bells would indicate that. According to one Jewish tradition, a rope was tied to the high priest’s ankle. When the bells stopped ringing, it was assumed that something was wrong. They could test this assumption by tugging on the rope.

Priestly Ordination (29:1-37)

This was a seven-day ceremony, in which there were several parts. Offerings were to be made every day. The main offerings consisted of one young bull, two rams, and

unleavened bread and cakes. Aaron was to be ordained as the high priest and his sons as priests. Their clothes were to be removed and they were to be washed with water. The vestments were to be placed on them and they were to be anointed with oil; hence, they were to become known as the Lord's anointed. It was because of sin that they had to be cleansed, robed, and anointed. Their sins had to be expiated by sacrifice so that they could take office. All this points to the otherness or holiness of God.

The priests were to lay their hands on the head of the bull as it was killed at the door of the tent of meeting (the tabernacle). Some of the blood was to be placed on the horns of the altar with a finger. The rest was thrown at the base of the altar. The fat, liver, and kidneys were to be burned on the altar, and the flesh and skin were to be burned outside the camp as a sin offering. Two rams were to be sacrificed. The first ram was to be burned on the altar as a burnt offering. The blood was to be thrown against the altar. The blood of the second ram was to be placed on the tip of the right ear, the right thumb, and the great toe. The rest of the blood was to be thrown against the altar. Part of the blood on the altar and the anointing oil was to be sprinkled upon Aaron and his garments. The remains were to be burned on the altar. The flesh of the ram was to be boiled, and Aaron and his sons were to eat it at the door of the tent of meeting. Anything remaining was to be burned.

The Daily Sacrifices (29:38-46)

Two daily sacrifices are to be offered at the altar of burnt offering. One is to be offered in the morning, and the other in the evening. Both are to be one-year-old lambs, and they are to be offered with a cereal offering and its libation. The one-tenth measure of fine flour is about two pounds, and one-quarter of a hin of oil and wine equals about one quart. The tabernacle provides a sacred environment in which God will meet the people through their priestly representatives.

Other Priestly Matters (30:1-38)

The Altar of Incense (30:1-10)

The altar was to be made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold, and located within the tent in front of the veil. It was to be 1 and 1/2 feet square and 3 feet high. The priest (Aaron) was to burn fragrant incense on it. This was to be done every morning and evening. The fragrant smoke symbolized the prayers of God's people.

The Poll Tax (30:11-16)

At the age of twenty every man was to pay a poll tax to support the priesthood. It was to be paid by the rich and poor alike. The amount was to be one-half shekel, which was a quantity of metal weighing less than one-half an ounce, which everyone could afford. This was the tax Jesus voluntarily paid in Matthew 17:24-27 by taking it from the mouth of a fish.

The Bronze Basin (30:17-21)

The basin was called a laver and was used to wash the hands and feet of the priest. The priest was not allowed to go near the altar to minister without first washing, lest he die.

The Anointing Oil (30:22-33)

The anointing oil was to be used on the priest and the equipment in the tabernacle, but it was not to be used on ordinary men. The penalty for its misuse was separation from God's people by banishment or death. The recipe for making it was as follows: 12 pounds (shekels) of liquid myrrh, 6 pounds of sweet smelling cinnamon, 6 pounds of aromatic cane, 6 pounds of cassia, and 1 gallon (hin) of olive oil.

The Incense (30:34-38)

The incense was to be used before the testimony in the tent of meeting, but it was not to be used elsewhere. Banishment, or death, was again the penalty. The recipe for making it was equal parts of stacte (a resinous material from the balsam tree), onycha (the root of an herb), galbanum (a gum from an unknown plant), and pure frankincense. It was to be seasoned with salt.

APPOINTMENT OF THE CRAFTSMEN (31:1-11)

Bezalel (in the shadow or protection of God), from the tribe of Judah, and Oholiab (tent of the divine father), from the tribe of Dan, were appointed to construct the tabernacle. What is said about these craftsmen symbolizes the total integration of life among the Israelites. The skill of the craftsman, the wisdom of the sage, the artistry of the poet, and the insight of the prophet were all related to the Spirit of God.

THE SABBATH LAW (31:12-18)

The way the Sabbath Law was kept was an indication of the nation's spiritual health. Those who refused to obey this most important law were to be put to death.

SETTING UP THE TABERNACLE AND THE PRIESTHOOD (35-40)

This section shows how the instructions of Moses were carried out. The tabernacle became the focal center of worship for the next three hundred years, or until Solomon built the temple.

The Sabbath Law (35:1-3)

The violation of the Sabbath carried the penalty of death. As important as the building of the tabernacle was, it was even more important to observe the Sabbath. Construction did not have to proceed seven days a week.

The Contributions (35:4—36:7)

Contributions of materials and service were voluntary. Nothing was obligatory, and still there was an overabundance. Below I have listed parallel passages for comparative purposes.

Offerings for the Tabernacle (35:4-9) (Exodus 25:1-9)
Articles for the Tabernacle (35:10-19) (Exodus 39:32-43)
The Offerings of the People (35:20-29)
The Craftsmen (35:30--36:1) (Exodus 31:1-11)

Bezalel (Judah)
Oholiab (Dan)

The Overabundance of Offerings (36:2-7)

Building the Tabernacle (36:8—38:31)

The tent of meeting was just another name for the tabernacle. Since all these items were dealt with in the instructions given to Moses, they are simply listed here with parallel passages for comparative purposes.

The Tabernacle (36:8-38) (Exodus 26:1-37)
The Ark of the Covenant (37:1-9) (Exodus 25:10-22)
The Table of Shewbread (37:10-16) (Exodus 25:23-30)
The Lampstand (37:17-24) (Exodus 25:31-40)
The Altar of Incense (37:25-28) (Exodus 30:1-5)
The Anointing Oil and Incense (37:29) (Exodus 30:22-38)
The Altar of Burnt Offerings (38:1-7) (Exodus 27:1-8) The size was 7 1/2 feet by 7 1/2 feet by 4 feet.
The Bronze Basin (Laver) (38:8) (Exodus 30:18) The female singers mentioned are related to 1 Samuel 2:22. The writer was referring to what later became the female singers of the temple, but they did not exist when the tabernacle was built.
The Court (38:9-20) (Exodus 27:9-19) The size of the court was 150 feet by 75 feet by 7 1/2 feet high.
A Statistical Summary (38:21-31)
Metals: Gold - 2,195 pounds (29 talents and 730 shekels)
Silver - 7,550 pounds (100 talents and 1,775 shekels)
Bronze - 5,310 pounds (70 talents and 2,400 shekels)
Men: There were 603,550 who were 20 years old or more. This age was important for military purposes, but a census sometimes symbolized lack of faith.

The Priestly Vestments (39:1-31)

What follows is just a comparison with what was said about the priestly vestments earlier.

Making the Garments (39:1-7) (Exodus 28:1-14)

Making the Breastpiece (39:8-21) (Exodus 28:15-30) No mention is made of the urim and thummim (Exodus 28:30)

Carnelian/Ruby, Chrysolite/Topaz, Emerald/Beryl

Turquoise, Sapphire, Moonstone/Emerald

Jacinth, Agate, Amethyst (39:10-13)

Beryl/Chrysolite, Onyx, Jasper

Making the Other Garments (39:22-31) (Exodus 28:31-43)

Completion of the Work (39:32-43) (Exodus 35:10-19)

Consecration of the Tabernacle (40:1-38)

Setting up the Tabernacle (40:1-33)

According to the priestly chronology the workers erected the tabernacle nine months after the arrival of the Israelites at Sinai. (Compare 40:17 to 19:1) How long did it take to build? Jewish rabbis note that it took seven days to create the world, seven months to build the tabernacle, and seven years to build Solomon's Temple. Aaron and his descendants became the priests.

The Pillar of Cloud and Fire (40:34-38)

These two pillars symbolized the presence and guidance of God. (See also Numbers 9:15-23)

ON THE MOVE

We tend to build our sanctuaries in one place. They are like fortresses. They do not move. We have to go to them. That was not how the tabernacle was built. In spite of all the elaborate work that went into its construction, it was a sanctuary that had to be ready to move out at any time. Exodus 40:36 states that “Whenever the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out on each stage of their journey....”

It was David who first wanted to build a temple that would sit in one place. In 2 Samuel 7:2, the King said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.” At first Nathan agreed with him, and encouraged the King to do something about that difference; but after he consulted with the Lord, he was told in 2 Samuel 7:5-6, “Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the

people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle.” Even though David did not build the temple, Solomon did. Solomon did recognize that the temple could not hold him, and said so in his prayer, which is recorded in 2 Chronicles 6:18: “But will God indeed reside with mortals on earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built!” What he did not deal with was how the tabernacle or sanctuary had now become a fortress.

Another image that is frequently understood in fortress terms is the Church. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus tells Peter, “...on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” If the Church is on a rock, how can it move? This sounds like a static image of the Church, but we must look deeper. “The gates of Hades,” or as the King James Version puts it, “the gates of Hell,” cannot prevail against the Church. The Church is on the move smashing down those gates. Hades or Hell is on the defensive.

Martin Luther's hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is our God” tends to reinforce the image of the Church as a fortress, and while it is God who is called the fortress, the hymn seems to place our ancient foe, Satan, on the attack. One hymn that peace activists would like to dispense with is “Onward Christian Soldiers.” Their objection to it is its militaristic language. The language may be militaristic, but it is not advocating violence. It projects a new kind of battle, one in which the Church is on the attack. Its army is on the move.

Like a mighty army
Moves the Church of God;
Brothers, we are treading
Where the saints have trod...

Gates of hell can never
against that Church prevail;
We have Christ's own promise,
And that cannot fail.

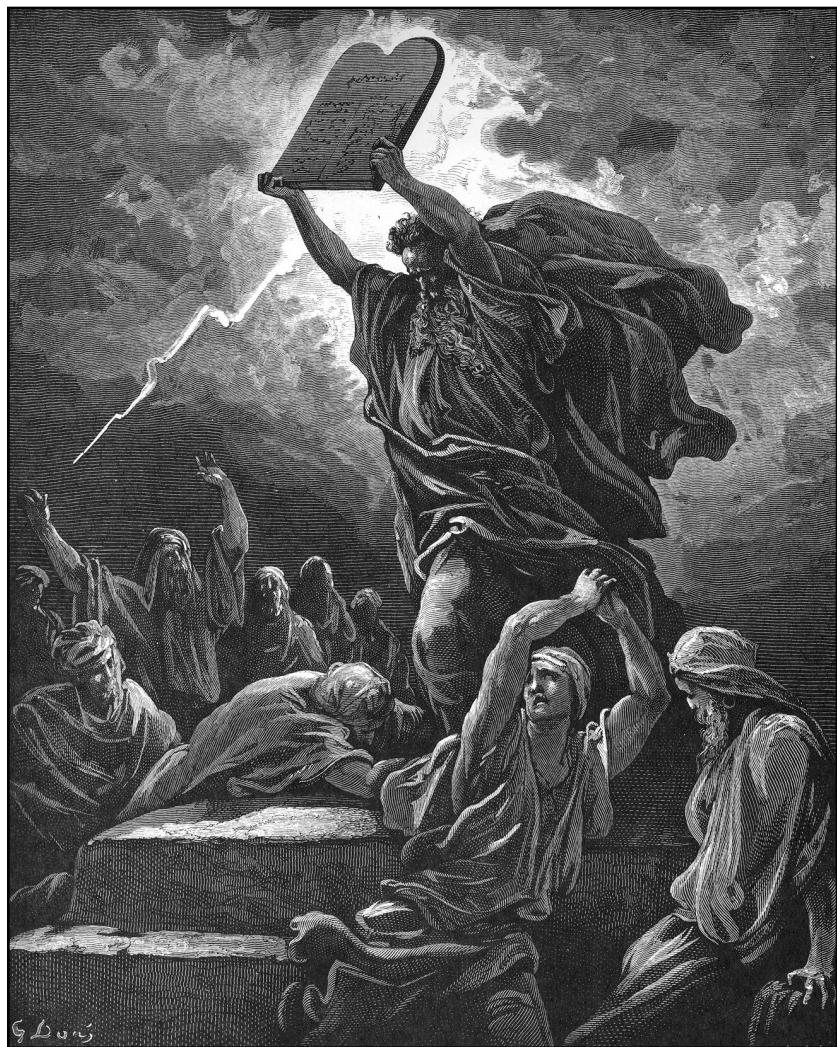
We need imagery that projects the Church on the move. The Church is no fortress defending itself from the world. It threatens the world with a new way of doing things. It is indeed an army on the move, and evil has something to fear.

How do we get back to a tabernacle ready to follow the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night? Obviously we cannot use tents for the Church, and even if we did, it would not be the same. We are not nomads getting ready for a journey through the wilderness. Buildings are necessary, but they must never be understood in terms of a fortress. They should not even look like fortresses. God does not live in them. Church buildings are meeting places for the people of God, and they should be functional. They exist to enable the people of God to see that pillar of cloud and that pillar of fire. Churches are not places to retreat from the world, but places for strategizing for the army that is about to march up against the gates of hell. I believe that it was C.T. Studd, who said: “Some wish to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I want to run a Rescue

Shop, within a yard of hell.” I would like to rephrase that a bit: “Some wish to live within the protection of the Church; I want the Church to attack hell itself.”

EXODUS

The Deliverance



Moses breaks the Tablets by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

16. Idolatry and Judgment

Exodus 32:1—34:35

16. IDOLATRY AND JUDGMENT (32:1—34:35)

THE BREAKING OF THE COVENANT (32:1-35)

Aaron makes a Golden Calf from the Peoples' Earrings (32:3-4)	God tells Moses about the Golden Calf (32:7-8)	The Levites stand with Moses (32:26)	The Levites kill 3,000 People (32:29)
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The Three Forms of Punishment given by God

Drink Gold mixed with Water (32:20)	Death (32:28)	A Plague (32:35)
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THE LORD'S GUIDANCE (33:1-23)

An Angel Shall lead Them (33:2)

The Enemies to be Defeated (33:2)

Canaanites	Amorites	Hittites	Perizzites	Hivites	Jebusites
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The Promised Land

Milk Honey

The Pillar of Cloud at the Tent's Entrance (33:10)

God showed His Back to Moses (33:23)

THE RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT (34:1-35)

Moses chisels out the Stones	Children will be Punished to the 3rd and 4th Generations	The Asherah Poles must be cut down (34:13)
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Six Things the People must do to keep the Covenant

Worship no other gods (34:14)	Make no idols (34:17)	Keep the Sabbath (34:21)	Celebrate Three Feasts (34:23-24)	Offer their First-born and Firstfruit (34:19-20 & 26a)	Not cook a Young Goat in Mother's Milk (34:26b)
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Moses spends 40 Days and Nights with God

16. IDOLATRY AND JUDGMENT

Exodus 32:1—34:35

ASSIGNMENTS		
Breaking the Covenant 32:1-35	The Lord's Guidance 33:1-23	Renewal of the Covenant 34:1-35

THE BREAKING OF THE COVENANT (32:1-35)

Six weeks after they made their covenant with God, the people broke it and clamored for idols.

The Golden Calf (32:1-6)

The story says that Moses' delay caused the people to become impatient and request Aaron to make them gods who would go before them (32:1). Aaron responded to the request by asking for everyone's earrings. A golden calf was fashioned and placed on an altar. The next day they celebrated with a feast, which was accompanied with burnt and peace offerings.

Why a golden calf? Is this what they experienced in Egyptian religion? The people were familiar with the Egyptian god *Apis* (later called *Serapis*), who was represented in the form of a bull. The idea of a golden calf also was present in Canaanite religion. The calf or young bull was the cult animal of the Canaanite god, *Baal*. This story might have been used by Jeroboam in opposing the establishment as he set up sacred shrines in Dan and Bethel, which included a golden calf at each place (1 Kings 12:28). The reason for setting up the shrines was to keep people from going to Jerusalem following the division of the Kingdom following the death of Solomon. At any rate, the Israelites soon forgot the second commandment prohibiting images (Exodus 20:4) and sought a visible representation of a deity.

How does the golden calf differ from the two cherubim, which sat on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant? The golden calf was a representation of the deity, while the cherubim were angelic beings on the throne of an invisible God.

The Lord's Anger (32:7-10)

When the Lord saw what the people did, he instructed Moses to return to them. He also informed Moses of his personal anger over their violation of the covenant and his intention to express that anger in judgment.

Moses' First Intercession (32:11-14)

Moses reminded God of what the Egyptians might say about his judgment on the very people he led out of Egypt. The Lord listened to Moses and repented of the evil he intended to do to his people.

The Breaking of the Tablets (32:15-20)

Moses came down from the mountain with the two tablets in his arms. They had writing on both sides. When Moses saw what the people had done, he was angry and threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them. The broken tablets symbolized the broken covenant. He then had the golden calf ground up and mixed with water. The people were forced to drink the water. The demand that the people drink the water mixed with gold was a trial by ordeal. Those who suffered some ill-effects would be considered guilty, and those who didn't, would be considered innocent.

Aaron's Excuse (32:21-24)

Aaron refused to take the blame; instead, he gave the weak excuse that when the gold was thrown into the fire, out jumped a golden calf.

Punishment by the Levites (32:25-29)

Moses asked for those who were on the Lord's side to take part in the slaughter of 3,000 persons guilty of violating the covenant. All the sons of Levi did as Moses commanded; and thus, they ordained themselves (32:29). Herein lies the reason for the elevation of the Levites to the priestly tribe. They responded to Moses and did the Lord's will; but since this was also Moses' own tribe, they might have simply been standing up for Moses.

Moses' Second Intercession (32:30-34)

Moses returned to the Lord to intercede for his people a second time. He pleaded with the Lord to either forgive the peoples' sin or blot him, Moses, out of the book. The book is a register of the members of God's community (32:32), an idea that might have emerged out of the custom of groups keeping registers of their citizens.

As Abraham pleaded to save the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:22-33), Moses pleaded to save the Israelites. God turned down his request and told him that those who sinned would be blotted out of the book. Moses was to go on and lead the people

into the Promised Land. Another similar intercession was given on behalf of the Jews by the Apostle Paul in Romans 9:3-5.

The Lord's Punishment (32:35)

The Lord sent a plague upon the people for their disobedience. Summing up, we discover three separate forms of punishment given for the idolatry. Perhaps they come from three different literary sources. (1) Moses made them drink the gold and water mixture, (2) the Levites killed 3,000 people, and (3) God sent a plague on them.

THE LORD'S GUIDANCE (33:1-23)

The Command to Go (33:1-3)

They were given an angel to lead them into the Promised Land. God would not personally go with them, lest his holiness consume them.

The Peoples' Repentance (33:4-6)

When the people heard that God would not be leading them directly, they stripped themselves of their ornaments. This symbolized their broken pride and repentant spirit.

The Tent of Meeting (33:7-11)

As they began their journey, they were to carry the tabernacle with them and set it up at each new location. The tabernacle came from an older practice with a “tent of meeting” in which a tribe assembled to hear the interpretation of an oracle from the divine. We know that the Tent of Meeting mentioned here is not the Tabernacle, for the Tabernacle had not yet been built. The Tent of Meeting was on the edge of the camp while the Tabernacle was to be placed in the center of the camp. The placing of the ark into the Tent of Meeting was a way of combining two traditions. Joshua was responsible for assembling people before the Tent of Meeting, but Aaron became the High Priest in the new Tabernacle. Joshua was only the custodian of the Tent. The expectation of Moses was to represent the people to God and God to the people. It is noted that he used to speak to God face to face, as one speaks to a friend (33:11), but this seems to be changing.

Moses' Glimpse of God (33:12-23)

Moses pleaded for God's presence and guidance. God informed him that he could not look directly into his face, lest his holiness consume him; but God was willing to give Moses a glimpse of his back (33:20 and 23). The point being made is that God remains hidden even when He manifests his presence. Human sinfulness becomes an obstacle to seeing the fullness of God and understanding his will completely. God will be present, but human sinfulness blurs our perception of his presence.

THE RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT (34:1-35)

This chapter should follow chapter 32. In chapter 33 they seem to be leaving the region of Sinai, but in chapter 34 they are still there.

The Second Set of Tablets (34:1-9)

Moses was told to cut two new tablets of stone. According to verse 1, God was to write on them, but according to verses 27-28, Moses was to write what God dictated to him. Moses was alone with God on top of the mountain to receive the law a second time.

The Renewal of the Covenant (34:10-28)

Asherim (34:13)

The Asherim referred to the sacred poles which symbolized *Asherah*, the mother goddess of Canaanite religion, and wife of *El*. The Asherim may have been trees, which symbolized the tree of life as well as the mother goddess.

Abib (34:18)

Abib is the first month of the Jewish calendar, which was later called Nisan.

The Ritual Code (34:17-26)

The ritual code was molded after the Decalogue. It is probably a priestly summary of it. In renewing the covenant with the ritual code, the Israelites became a distinct people. They were to (1) serve only the Lord, 34:14; (2) make no idols, 34:17; (3) remember the Sabbath, 34:21; (4) keep the three major feasts, 34:23-24; (5) offer their first-born and first fruits to God, 34:19-20 & 26a; and (6) Not boil a kid in its own mother's milk (34:26b). The command not to boil a kid in its own mother's milk had to do with Canaanite beliefs that this would increase the fertility of the kid (34:26). This idea was to be rejected by the Israelites.

The Transfiguration of Moses (34:29-35)

When Moses came down from the mountain with the tablets of stone, his face radiated with the glory of the Lord. He had to wear a veil (or mask) when talking with his people. The veil was removed whenever he talked with the Lord. One can compare this to the transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17:1-13) and Paul's use of the imagery in regard to our new relationship with the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:7-18).

In some European medieval pictures, Moses was portrayed with horns on his head. This was due to Jerome's Latin translation of this passage in which he confused "shone" or "was radiant" with "horn." The two ideas are related in Hebrew, but "was radiant" became the preferred translation.

A SECOND CHANCE

When we do something wrong we want a second chance. We are convinced as we plead for it that it really will not happen again; but second chances frequently become third chances, fourth chances, and fifth chances. We do not call them that. We prefer to say “second chance” even when it is a third, fourth, or fifth chance that we are requesting.

If someone else asks us for a second chance, we are usually willing to grant it once; but we do not like granting second chances too frequently. We feel used, and we want the person to learn from the experience. Every time a second chance is granted we move closer to the time when we finally say, “Enough is enough!”

The Israelites made God angry when they made the golden calf, and God had three thousand of them put to death (Exodus 32:28). It was Moses who stepped in to plead for a second chance. “Alas,” he says in Exodus 32:31-32, “this people has sinned a great sin; they have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will only forgive their sin—but if not, blot me out of the book that you have written.” Moses confessed their sin for them and was willing to risk being blotted out of God’s book for the sake of gaining a second chance for them.

When the Jews resisted the Gospel of Christ, Paul pleaded for them as Moses did for the Israelites. “For I could wish,” he wrote in Romans 9:2, “that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh.” As they were rejecting the New Covenant, Paul pleaded with God for a second chance. Both Moses and Paul were willing to perish with those for whom they were requesting a second chance. This is intercessory prayer at its finest.

How many chances can be given? In the Old Testament God does not seem too willing to give second chances, much less third chances, fourth chances, etc. In the Book of Amos we find an interesting formula: “For three transgressions...and for four, I will not revoke the punishment” (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6) Second chances that lead to third and fourth chances lack sincerity. When the cycle continues, doom becomes inevitable.

This does not mean God does not give second chances. The story of Jonah is a good example of a second chance that worked, even though Jonah did not want God to give the Ninevites a second chance. At the end of the story, Jonah is angry with God. God attempts to explain his position in giving a second chance. He has done it for the sake of the innocent (Jonah 4:11).

That God gives second chances is clearly stated by Jesus in his discussion about forgiveness with Peter (Matthew 18:21-22). It was Peter who initiated the discussion by asking Jesus, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” He thought he was being generous in giving that many chances. Amos seemed to indicate three chances, with the fourth resulting in judgment. Peter doubled that and added an extra one for good measure; but Jesus introduced something new, by replying, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven

times.” That does not mean four hundred and ninety. It means an infinite number of times. There is no end to the number of second chances that must be extended, at least as far as God, and the Christian, is concerned.

A word of caution is in order. God may give second chances, but taking them for granted is dangerous to our spiritual health. To take things for granted leads to confusion over good and evil, and Isaiah 5:20 clearly warns against such confusion: “Ah, you who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!” This has become known as the sin against the Holy Spirit, and Jesus too warns against it in Mark 3:28-29: “Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin....” Sin itself is forgiven, and from God’s side second chances abound; but it is dangerous to take them for granted, for at some unknown point spiritual discernment is lost. When that happens we confuse good and evil and find ourselves opposing the Holy Spirit. This is what the Old Testament means when it refers to God hardening the heart of the Pharaoh, or anyone else (Exodus 34:21; 7:3, 13; 14:4, 17; etc.). The opposite kind of advice is given: “Do not harden your hearts.” (See Psalm 95:8; Hebrews 3:8, 15; and 4:7.) Hebrews 10:26-31 puts the whole thing into perspective:

For if we willfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy “on the testimony of two or three witnesses.” How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by those who have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know the one who said, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

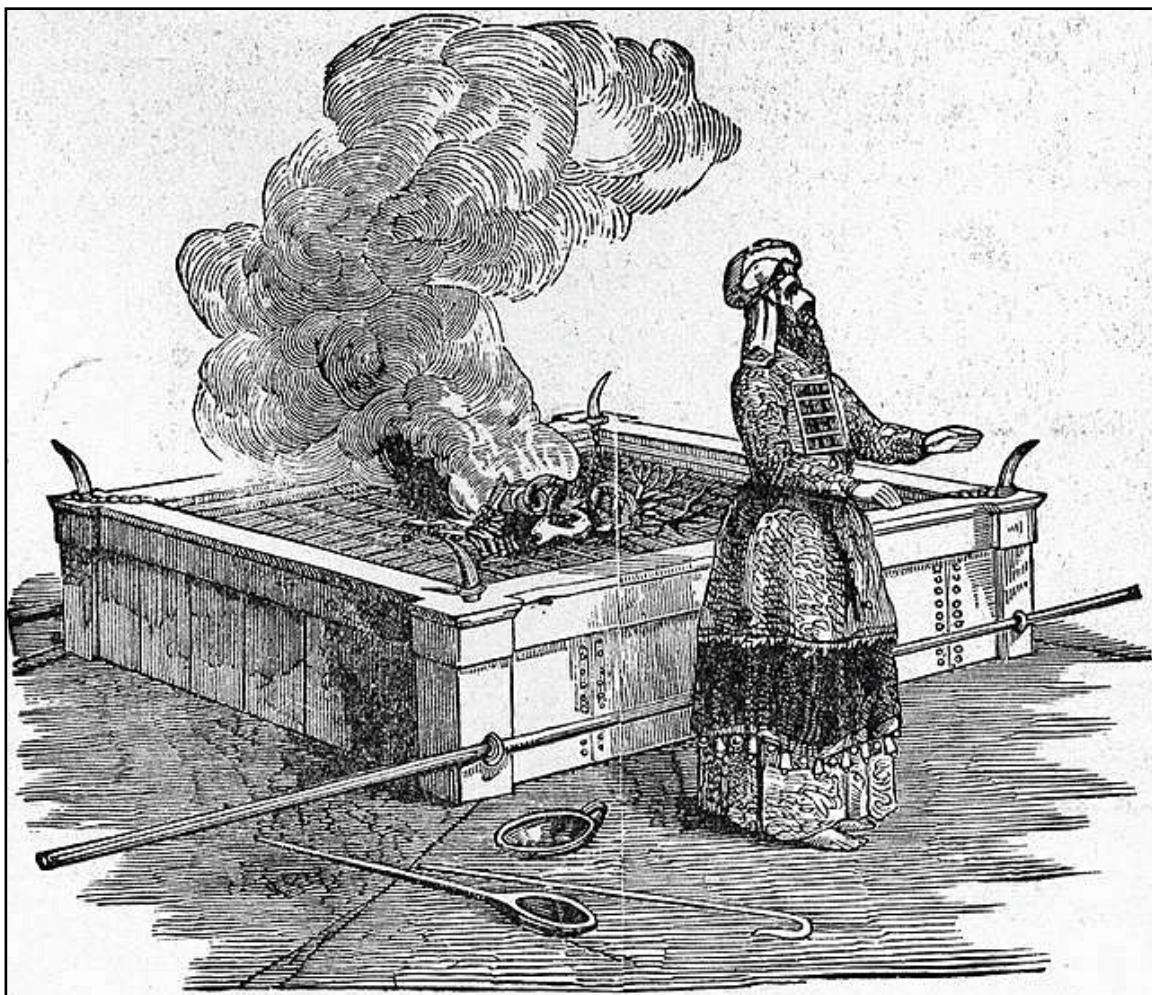
From God’s side, second chances are always available, but we ought never to take them for granted. Our purpose in life is to be directed by the Holy Spirit and not to go up against it. To go up against it also affects our sense of God’s presence. E. Stanley Jones describes the problem:

He is in control. He uses you as the instrument of His purposes, provided you cooperate. We retain the Holy Spirit as long as He retains control. When we take over, He quietly steps out—not completely out, but He shuts off the sense of His presence and power till we decide to give Him the reins again.¹

¹E. Stanley Jones, *The Way* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1946), p. 298.

LEVITICUS

The Laws



17. Offerings and Sacrifices

Levitcus 1:1–7:38

17. OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES (1:1—7:38)

TYPES OF OFFERINGS	VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY	ELEMENTS OF THE OFFERINGS	PURPOSE OF THE OFFERINGS	PROHIBITIONS OF THE OFFERINGS
Burnt Offering (1:1-17) (6:8-13)	Voluntary	Male Cattle, Sheep, or Goat Dove, Turtledove, or Pigeon	“Odor pleasing to God” (1:9, 17)	No Blemish (1:10)
Grain Offering (2:1-16) (6:14-23)	Voluntary	Fine Flour Unleavened Cakes Seasoning Roasted Grain	“Odor pleasing to God” (2:2, 9; 6:15, 21)	No Yeast or Honey
Peace Offering (3:1-17) (7:11-36)	Voluntary	Any sex from the Herd or Flock	“Odor pleasing to God” (3:5, 16)	No Blemish (3:1) Fat and Blood not to be Eaten (7:24-27)
Sin Offering (4:1—5:13) (6:24-30)	Mandatory	Priest Young Bull Community Young Bull Ruler Male Goat Common People Goat or Sheep Poor Turtledove or Pigeon Very Poor 1 Pounds of Flour	Purification “Atonement for Sin” (Unintentional Sin)	No Olive Oil or Frankincense (5:11) Clay Pots cannot be Reused
Guilt Offering (5:14—6:7) (7:1-10)	Mandatory	God Ram Offended One 20% of Value	Reparations “Atonement for Sin”	No Blemish (5:15& 18)
Summary (7:37-38)				

SPECIAL WORDS USED IN LEVITICUS

BLOOD: Life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11, 14) or the blood is life (Deuteronomy 12:23). The blood of animals was used in offerings for sin and the blood of animals slaughtered for food was to be poured out on the ground. Blood was withheld by God from human consumption and reserved for purposes of atonement (Leviticus 17:11).

FAT: Abel offered the fat of the firstlings of his flock to Yahweh (Genesis 4:4) The principle laid down is that the fat of sacrificed animals belongs to the Lord (Leviticus 7:23, 25). Neither the fat nor the blood could be eaten (Leviticus 3:17). In view of the settlement in Canaan and the remoteness of the majority of the people from the altar, this provision was abolished with respect to animals slain solely for food (Deuteronomy 12:15-16, 21-24).

SALT: Salt is a preservative and a condiment. It preserves from corruption and renders food palatable. A covenant of salt was a covenant of permanent continuance and perpetual obligation. (see Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19; II Chronicles 13:5; Matthew 5:13)

17. OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES

Leviticus 1:1—7:38

ASSIGNMENTS				
Burnt Offering 1:1-17 6:8-13	Grain Offering 2:1-16 6:14-23	Peace Offering 3:1-17 7:11-36	Sin Offering 4:1—5:13 6:24-30	Guilt Offering 5:14—6:7 7:1-10

INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS

The Name

From the Hebrew *Wayyikra*, the title is “And [the Lord] Called [to Moses].” It is from the *Septuagint* and the *Latin Vulgate* that we get the word *Leviticus*, which means “Book of the Levites” or “Priests’ Manual.” It was Aaron, from the Tribe of Levi, and his sons who attended to the practical work of the Tabernacle. Leviticus is like a Book of Worship.

The Authors

According to tradition Moses wrote the book, but Leviticus is probably the work of a later, unknown author, who edited the core of the Mosaic materials making up the book. It may even be the work of priestly editors (P), who wanted to make sure that Israel never again ignored God’s call to holiness, leading the nation into disaster.

The Date

Part of Leviticus dates from the period of the Exodus and the years immediately following, but the book was probably put in its present form much later, possibly during the Babylonian Exile (586-538 B.C.).

The Purpose

Leviticus is a Book of Worship. It pertains to the Levitical priests who were set apart to minister at the sanctuary, and guide the worship of the people of God. It is a continuation of the priestly tradition (Exodus 25-31 and 35-40), and continues through Numbers 1-10. The Laws of Leviticus show God working in harmony with his own natural laws for the good of his people. The inclusion of sacrifices demonstrates that God, in his mercy,

accepts a substitute—the death of an animal, perfect and blameless—in place of the offender.

The key word in this book is “holiness.” Chapters 1 to 16 show God’s people how to become holy, and chapters 17-27 show them how to remain holy. Key verses illustrating this can be found in Leviticus 11:44 and 19:2.

The Outline

- A. Laws concerned with Offerings and Sacrifices. (1-7)
- B. Consecration of the Priests. (8-10)
- C. Laws distinguishing Clean and Unclean (Ritual Purity). (11-15)
- D. Ritual for the Day of Atonement. (16)
- E. The Holiness Code. (17-26)
- F. Laws concerned with Vows and Tithes. (27)

1-7	8-10	11-15	16	17-20	21-22	23
Sacrifices	Priests	Holiness	Day of Atonement	Holiness	Priests	Feasts
27 Vows and Tithes						

OFFERINGS

Offerings Involving The Individual's Attitude Toward God (Voluntary)

- 1. Burnt Offering (1:1-17)** The animal was entirely burned up, representing the consecration of one’s total self to God. People, animals, possessions, and time should all be set apart for God’s purposes.
- 2. Grain Offering (2:1-16)** This offering was an expression of gratitude for God’s blessings. It dramatized the principle of putting God first by giving him the best of everything.
- 3. Peace Offering (3:1-17)** The person making this sacrifice was invited to eat part of the offering with the priests, symbolizing restoration to fellowship with God.

Offerings Concerning The Individual's Sin (Obligatory)

4. **Sin Offering (4:1—5:13)** This offering was for unintentional sin. The sinner could be restored to fellowship with God through a process of purification, such as putting blood on the altar, and taking away the evil, such as burying the remains.
5. **Trespass or Guilt Offering (5:14—6:7)** This offering was to take away the guilt, but there was disagreement in regard to whether it could take away the guilt for deliberate sin.

The geographical context for Leviticus is somewhere near Mount Sinai. The Tabernacle has been built, but the people have not yet left for Canaan. God expects them to be holy, and in these first chapters they are told how to proceed. They are to make offerings. The Hebrew word is *corban*, which can mean “offering” or “gift.” Jesus used the word as “gift” in Mark 7:11.

There was a standard ritual for making an offering. The worshiper brought a physically perfect animal from his flock or herd to the forecourt of the tabernacle. In the case of the poor, doves or pigeons were brought instead. The person laid his hand on the animal, which symbolized that the animal represented him, and then he slaughtered it. If it was a public offering, the priest did this. The priest would then take the basin of blood and spatter it against the altar. He burnt a specified part with certain portions of fat. The remainder was then eaten by the priests, or by the priests and their families. In the case of the peace offerings, the priests and the worshipers ate together. In the case of burnt offerings, the entire animal was burned and nothing remained for eating.

Offerings were to be brought by the individual Israelite on a voluntary basis. They were not mandatory requirements to be made during public feasts and fasts. Even the sojourner, resident alien, or foreigner was permitted to present an offering (1 Kings 8:41-43).

Sacrifice was universal among ancient peoples. Israel’s sacrifices have some similarity, but there are also some differences and some very unique characteristics present in the sacrificial system. They are as follows:

- Israel’s absolute belief in one God, at least for them
- The emphasis on ethics and morality, stemming from God’s own absolute moral holiness; sin as a bar to communion; the need for repentance and atonement; and the insistence on obeying both the ceremonial as well as the moral law.
- The complete absence and prohibition of magic or sorcery

- The high tone of the sacrificial system; no frenzy, or prostitution, orgies, fertility rites, human sacrifices, etc.

THE BURNT OFFERING (1:1-17)

The burnt offering, which means literally “that which goes up in smoke,” was the oldest kind of sacrifice. In this kind of offering, the whole sacrifice was consumed on the altar. It was given as “a pleasing odor to the Lord.” (1:9 and 17) Making such an offering meant that the worshiper recognized God’s ownership of all his possessions.

Animal Offerings (Cattle/sheep/goat) (1:1-14)

The sacrifice was to be a male without blemish. If it was cattle, a bull was to be killed at the door of the tabernacle. When an animal was taken from the flock (sheep or goat), it was to be killed on the north side of the altar. The person making the offering was to lay his hand on the animal (1:4). In this way he designated this animal as his representative. This symbolized either the transmission of “power” or “sin.” In the latter case, the animal was to be killed for his sin. The priests were to present the blood on behalf of the person.

The throwing of the blood against the altar symbolized God’s participation in the atonement ceremony (Exodus 24:6-8). Blood was considered sacred to God and the shedding of the blood was efficacious in forgiving sin and reconciling a person to God. The offering was burned and the odor was “pleasing to God” (1:9). This goes back to an era when sacrifices were thought to be food for the gods.

Bird Offerings (Dove/turtledoves/pigeons) (1:15-17)

The poor, who could not afford sacrifices from the herd or the flock, made these offerings.

THE GRAIN (GRAIN) OFFERING (2:1-16)

Abel’s offering was from the flock. Cain’s was a grain offering. Both were expressions of gratitude and praise. The grain offering denotes “a gift to gain favor,” and was often an accompaniment of the burnt and peace offerings. As Israel moved from the pastoral to an agricultural community, this offering became more functional and popular. The grain offering was made up from the daily food of the people, and the oil used in connection with it symbolized the presence of the Holy Spirit in illumination and sanctification. Oil was also used in the golden lamp stand and in the anointing of priests. In voluntarily making this offering, the people acknowledged that they received their daily food from God. The “memorial portion” was burned as “a pleasing odor to the Lord.” (2:2 & 2:9) The main ingredients in this offering were as follows:

Fine Flour (2:1-3)

The flour was mixed with olive oil and frankincense (incense). Aaron burned some of it, but the remainder was left for Aaron and his sons (2:3).

Unleavened Cakes (Bread) (2:4-10)

Fine flour mixed with olive oil was to be baked and made into unleavened cakes. A portion was to be burned (2:9) and the rest eaten by Aaron and his sons (2:10).

Seasoning (2:11-13)

No leaven or honey could be used because these things were associated with the process of fermentation. Salt was used for seasoning, but it also symbolized the covenant relation upon which the whole sacrificial system rested. Salt stood for permanence and incorruption; hence, the phrase: “a covenant of salt forever before the Lord.” (Numbers 18:19)

Roasted Grain (2:14-16)

Because first fruits had to be offered up before the new grain crop could be eaten, they were brought roasted rather than milled. The offering was again to be mixed with olive oil and frankincense.

THE PEACE (FELLOWSHIP) OFFERING (3:1-17)

While the burnt offerings were sacrifices of gratitude and praise, the peace offerings were a covenant meal in which the worshiper was sacramentally related to the Lord and to fellow-Israelites. Any sex from the herd or flock could be used, but only certain parts were burned. The priests and the people consumed the rest of the parts in a communion meal. The fat and blood were never eaten. The fat was considered God’s portion of the sacrifice, and the blood represented life and was used by God for atonement. The offering became “a pleasing odor to the Lord.” (3:5 and 16) No provision was made for the poor. The worshiper was expected to share this meal not only with his family and friends, but also with the poor and needy. A bird would not be adequate for such a purpose; and since the poor could not afford a sheep or goat, they were to be invited by their friends and neighbors who could.

THE SIN (PURIFICATION) OFFERING (4:1—5:13)

The Kind of Sin (4:1-2)

The sins—to be removed—had to do primarily with “uncleanness,” and “ritual impurity,” which were thought to alienate people from God. Although these sins were unintentional, rather than deliberate, something had to be done about them. The purpose of the sin offering was to make atonement with God (5:13).

Persons making an Offering (4:3-35)

The High Priest (4:3-12)

He had to offer a young bull without any defects. The bull was to be killed at the entrance to the tent. Blood was to be taken into the tent. The high priest dipped his finger into the blood and sprinkled some in front of the sacred curtain seven times. Some blood was to be put on the projection at the corners of the incense altar and the rest poured at the base of the altar. The fat was to be burned on the altar.

The Community (4:13-21) (Young Bull)

The Ruler (4:22-26) (Male Goat)

The Common People (4:27-35) (Female Goat or Sheep)

Cases requiring a Sin Offering (5:1-4)

There is some confusion in the text between what is called a sin offering and a guilt offering. The confusion can be straightened out if we think of a sin offering relating to purification and the guilt offering relating to reparation. Four reasons are given why one might need to make a sin offering. They are:

1. Failure to give evidence in court. (5:1)
2. Touching anything ritually unclean. (5:2)
3. Touching anything unclean of human origin. (5:3)
4. Careless vows. (5:4)

The Confession of Sin (5:5-6)

A confession of sin had to precede the offering, which was to be a female lamb or goat. The rite alone was not magical and could not atone for sin. There had to be a confession and turning away from sin.

The Offering of the Poor (5:7-13)

The poor and the very poor have less costly options. The very poor's option does not involve the shedding of blood, which raises a question about the necessity of shedding blood to obtain forgiveness. Hebrews 9:22 says, "...under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." While it is difficult for us to think of someone so poor that they could not provide some kind of animal for an offering, the law makes forgiveness available to everyone, even the poorest of the poor. The technicality of the necessity of blood does not stand in the way of God's grace.

Two Turtledoves or Young Pigeons (5:7-10)

One was to be a sin and one a burnt offering. The priest was to make the offering on the person's behalf.

Two Pounds of Flour (5:11-13)

No olive oil or frankincense was to be mixed with the flour. The priest was to burn some of the offering at the altar and the remainder was to belong to him.

GUILT (REPARATION) OFFERING (5:14—6:7)

The purpose was to discharge liability for material damage or loss, either to God or another person. Withholding offerings and the tithe would be considered an act against God. Restitution had to accompany the offering. While a ram was to be offered to God, 20% interest was to be paid to the offended one, along with the return of what was taken (See 5:16 and 6:5). (On the Ram, see 5:15, 18, and 6:6). The purpose of the guilt offering was to make atonement with God (6:6b).

INSTRUCTIONS TO PRIESTS CONCERNING SACRIFICES (6:8—7:38)

Burnt Offerings (6:8-13)

Burnt offerings were to be offered both in the morning and evening (Exodus 29:38-42 and Numbers 28:3-8). The offering was to be continual, and the fire was never to go out. The eternal fire symbolized Israel's perpetual service to the Lord. The priest had to change his clothes before he could take the ashes outside the camp to a clean place.

Grain Offerings (6:14-23)

Priests were permitted to eat a portion of the offering, except when the offering was made during their ordination. Then they could not eat of it.

Sin (Purification) Offerings (6:24-30)

Animals were to be killed on the north side of the altar. Any male priest could eat of the offering in the court. The holiness of this offering was stressed. Holiness is contagious. That is why the porous clay pots had to be broken while metal pots could be scrubbed and used again.

Guilt (Reparation) Offerings (7:1-10)

Animals were to be killed on the north side of the altar. Sin and guilt offerings were almost identical. One difference was that while the blood of the sin offering was taken into the tabernacle, this was not done with the blood of the guilt offering.

Peace (Fellowship) Offerings (7:11-36)

Animal and unleavened bread

The peace offering was essentially a feast of the worshiper and his family and guests. There had to be enough guests to consume all the meat on the day of the offering.

Fat and blood could not be eaten or drunk.

This prohibition was also given in Leviticus 3:16-17, but now it extends to animals dying outside of the Sanctuary. Anyone eating fat or blood was to be cut off from the congregation.

A portion belongs to the priest.

The portions given to the priests were the breast and right thigh. He would wave it before the Lord, which symbolized that it was an offering to the Lord.

Summary (7:37-38)

The Law was revealed. These five offerings were not just adaptations of Egyptian or Canaanite offerings. The people had been warned not to adopt the customs and practices of their neighbors. There were similarities, but there were also differences. One of the main differences was ethical. No child sacrifice or sacred prostitution was allowed.

When these offerings are related to Christian Faith, we see Jesus' death as a sin and guilt offering. Our participation in the Lord's Supper resembles a peace offering. Our dedication of ourselves completely to God is a burnt offering. It may be stretching things too far to make these connections, but Christian theology did grow up out of this Jewish sacrificial background and the death of Christ can only be understood from within it.

THE PURPOSE OF SACRIFICE

The most difficult thing to understand in the Bible is how the shedding of blood can take away sin. Hebrews 9:22 states clearly: "...under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." The assumption goes all the way back to the laws on sacrifice and offering in the Old Testament, allowing for only one exception—the very poor (Leviticus 5:7-13). Only the very poor may bring two pounds of flour for their offering. Everyone else must offer a sacrifice, whose blood will be spilled.

When the first covenant was made with Abraham, it was symbolized with a fire pot and flaming torch passing between sacrificed animals (Genesis 15). The promise made to Abraham was that he would become the father of a great nation and that they would inherit a new land. This could only take place with the shedding of the blood of the firstborn of their Egyptian oppressors (Exodus 12:29-32) and those who lived in the land

which they were about to inherit, who would be vomited out of the land because of their sin (Leviticus 18:25). The same fate awaited God's own people (Leviticus 18:28). It could only be avoided by learning how to deal with sin.

Sin is serious and must be dealt with. Since no one can obey the Ten Commandments, including Christians, we need to find ways of dealing with sin; and that involves two things: forgiveness and sanctification. Forgiveness is primary, and unfortunately, seems to require the shedding of blood. This is true in both the Old and New Testaments. Sanctification ought to follow forgiveness, but let us set this aside for another time.

How did offering animal sacrifices bring about forgiveness in the Old Covenant, and how did the sacrifice of Jesus Christ bring about forgiveness in the New Covenant? The answer to the first question is that it did not, and the answer to the second question is that Jesus' sacrifice inspired his followers to offer their bodies as living sacrifices.

In dealing with King Saul, Samuel knew of the ineffectiveness of animal sacrifice, and asked in 1 Samuel 15:22, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams."

Three prophets, Amos, Hosea, and Micah, focused on the ineffectiveness of sacrifices and offerings:

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. —Amos 5:21-24

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. —Hosea 6:6

With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? —Micah 6:6-8

Two things are required: (1) to know God so that we can walk humbly with Him, and (2) to involve ourselves in justice using his righteousness as our standard. Animal sacrifice was ineffective in bringing this about. Sin could not be dealt with through the sacrificing of the blood of animals, and so the whole sacrificial system had to be set aside. In its

place came the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ, which we symbolize today with the Lord's Supper.

I once made a foolish statement to a Sunday School class. The discussion revolved around whether or not Jesus had to die on the cross. Without thinking, I suggested that his death was not inevitable. If people would have listened to him, I reasoned, then he would not have had to die. All this sounded very reasonable to me, but I have since changed my mind. Jesus had to die on the cross. He himself said this at least three times. Let us look at the first passage in Mark 8:31, which says: "Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." The other two passages are Mark 9:30-32 and 10:32-34. Jesus is certain of two things: he will have to die, but he will also be raised up from the dead on the third day. His blood will have to be shed to make possible the forgiveness of sin.

That sacrifice only makes possible the forgiveness of sin. It does not force forgiveness on anyone. The principle of sacrifice still operates in the world, and as long as sin is alive, sacrifice will be required. One of the finest examples of this is Martin Luther King, Jr. When his life was threatened in St. Augustine, Florida, he said: "...if physical death is the price that I must pay to free my white brother and all of my brothers and sisters from a permanent death of the spirit, then nothing can be more redemptive."¹ That is the purpose of sacrifice, to free us all from the death of the spirit.

¹Bianchi, *The Religious Experience of Revolutionaries*, p. 127.

LEVITICUS

The Laws

*Moses and Aaron entered the tent of meeting,
and then came out and blessed the people;
and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people.
Fire came out from the LORD and consumed
the burnt offering and the fat on the altar;
and when all the people saw it,
they shouted and fell on their faces.*

Leviticus 9:23-24

18. Work of the Priesthood
Leviticus 8:1—16:34

18. WORK OF THE PRIESTHOOD (8:1–16:34)

OFFERINGS	PRIESTS	PEOPLE	CHILDBIRTH	LEPERS	HOUSES	MENSTRUAL DISCHARGE	SEMINAL DISCHARGE
Burnt	2	2	1	3		2	
Cereal		3		4			
Peace	3	4					
Sin	1	1	2	2		1	
Guilt				1			

PURPOSE: “that the glory of the LORD may appear to you” (9:4, 6, 23) and “you shall be holy , for I am holy.” (11:44-45)

NUMBER OF DAYS	PRIESTS	PEOPLE	CHILDBIRTH	LEPERS	HOUSES	MENSTRUAL DISCHARGE	SEMINAL DISCHARGE
Ordination Uncleanness Purification	7 Reminder: 7 Days of Creation		Boys 7/Girls 14 Boys 33/Girls 66	8		7	Until Evening
AARON'S SONS	RULES FOR PRIESTS	RECOGNIZING CLEAN ANIMALS	Mammals	Chew the Cud Cloven Hoofs	FATE OF LEPROS	DAY OF ATONEMENT	
Nadab Abihu Eleazar Ithamar	Unfaithful Unfaithful Faithful Faithful	No Mourning Loose Hanging Hair No Strong Drink	Acquatic	Fins Scales	Isolation Torn Clothes Unkept Hair To Cry Out	Once a Year 10th of Tishri (7th Month) Sin and Burnt Offerings Scapegoat offered to Azazel	

18. WORK OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Leviticus 8:1—16:34

ASSIGNMENTS				
Aaron and His Sons 8:1—10:20	Cleanliness and Purification 11:1—12:8	Skin Diseases 13:1—14:57	Bodily Discharges 15:1-32	Day of Atonement 16:1-34

CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS (8:1—10:20)

The Ordination of Aaron and his Sons (8:1-36)

Ordain meant, “to fill the hand of.” Moses ordained Aaron and his sons before the whole congregation. What he did was based on Exodus 29, but of course, it could not take place until after the Tabernacle had been constructed (Exodus 40). Moses’ consecration of the priests demonstrated the superiority of the prophet over the priest. What happened can be described as follows:

- A. The priests were washed in water (8:6)
- B. The priests were dressed in their priestly garments, including, the urim and thummim. (8:7-9)
- C. The priests and the tabernacle (with its furnishings) were anointed with oil (8:10-13)
- D. The following offerings were made:
 1. Sin Offering (bull) (8:14-17)
 - a. Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the bull’s head.
 - b. Moses killed the bull and put blood on the four horns of the altar and threw blood at the base of the altar.
 - c. Moses burned the special parts, such as the fat, liver, and kidneys on the altar.
 - d. Moses burned the skin and flesh outside the camp.
 2. Burnt Offering (ram) (8:18-21) The treatment of the offering was similar to that of the bull with the exception that the burnt offering was burned in its entirety.

3. Ordination Offering (ram) (8:22-29) The blood on the tips of the ears, right thumbs, and great toes of Aaron and his sons symbolized their total dedication to God. This ordination offering was similar to a peace offering. Moses acted as the priest and Aaron and his sons acted as lay donors. As priests, however, they could only make an offering of unleavened bread. The further inclusion of a wave offering or cereal offering is confusing. The final consecration was done with oil and blood (8:30).
- E. The ordination period lasted for seven days (8:35) During each of the seven days the ordination ritual was repeated. The priests were required to remain in the court of the Tabernacle for the entire seven days. To disobey these instructions invited death.

Aaron and his Sons take Office (9:1-24)

In the following section we discover the reason why sacrifices and offerings were made: that the glory of the Lord might appear (9:4, 6, and 23).

Preparations for the first offerings (9:1-7)

Preparation took place on the eighth day, the first day following Aaron's ordination. He had become a priest, and now it was his turn to offer the sacrifices. He first offered them for himself and his sons, and then for the people. His sons assisted him.

An interesting sequence can be observed. A sin offering of a one-year-old calf (bull) preceded the burnt offering of a one-year-old ram. First there had to be atonement for sin, which could then be followed by total dedication. The peace offering, which consisted of a fellowship meal, had to wait for atonement and dedication. This had to be shared with the people, and consisted of a bull and ram along with grain mixed with oil.

Aaron and his Son's Offerings (9:8-14)

The offering for Aaron and his sons only consisted of a sin and burnt offering. Aaron was learning his lesson, which was to minister "as the LORD commanded Moses." (9:10) He was not to operate according to the wishes of the people, but according to God's will as revealed through Moses.

The People's Offerings (9:15-21)

The sequence of offerings for the people began the same way as it did for the priests, but it included the cereal and peace offerings, which were sacramental in nature. The wave offering was part of the peace offering, and should not be thought of as a separate offering. In Leviticus 14:10-20 we find the guilt offering preceding the sin offering. This was done in the case of leprosy, which was believed to be the result of sin, to emphasize the need for restitution before one could approach God. Jesus expressed the same thing

when he said, “So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24) The animals used in the various offerings were as follows:

- A. Sin Offering. A male goat
- B. Burnt Offering. A bull calf and lamb
- C. Cereal Offering. Cereal mixed with oil
- D. Peace Offering. Ox and ram

Aaron's Blessing (9:22-24)

The blessing resulted in the glory of God appearing to the people. Another familiar example of Aaron's threefold blessing can be found in Numbers 6:23-26. In summing up, the sequence of the offerings was vitally important. The sin offering was given to obtain forgiveness and cleansing, the burnt offering to dedicate oneself totally to God, and the peace offering represented the enjoyment of restored fellowship and communion. All this resulted in joy as they “shouted” and awe as they “fell on their faces.” (9:24)

The Sin of Nadab and Abihu (10:1-20)

They were destroyed for making an unauthorized offering before the Lord. Unholy fire refers to incense which was offered in defiance of the rules of the community (Exodus 30:34-38 and Numbers 16). The remaining priests were to abstain from (1) mourning, (2) loose hanging hair, and (3) strong drink. Perhaps the two men made the unauthorized offering under the influence of strong drink.

The error committed by Eleazar and Ithamar in failing to eat the priestly portion of the sin offering was not considered as deadly as the error made by Nadab and Abihu. Moses reprimanded them, but accepted their reasons. It seems as if Aaron was at fault. He did not think it proper that his sons should be eating the priestly portion on the day that their brothers were killed. Moses was satisfied with that explanation. One lesson learned from this is that no one, not even a priest is indispensable to God; and those who disobey God will be written out of the covenant. God can raise up children of Abraham from stones (Luke 3:8).

LAWs DISTINGUISHING CLEAN AND UNCLEAN (11:1—15:32)

The purpose of the priesthood was to make distinctions for people between that which was clean and unclean and to provide them with the proper rituals for purification. The distinction between the clean and unclean was sometimes related to hygiene and health, but not always. No such relationship seems to be consistent.

Clean and Unclean Animals (11:1-47)

A distinction must be made between the *ceremonial* and *moral* law. Chapter 11 deals with the ceremonial law. Unclean does not mean sinful, but that does not mean that avoiding the unclean is less important than avoiding sin. Failing to do what God commands is sin, and that holds for violations of the ceremonial as well as the moral laws. God's people are called to be holy, and that includes obedience of the ceremonial law. While Christians may have pulled away from the ceremonial laws, Jews have no justification for doing so; and even Christians, are called into holiness (1 Peter 1:15-17). We are also called to respect the dietary laws of others (1 Corinthians 8:9-13). Holiness is the *key concept*, and it applies to everyone, not just to the priest.

Below are listed the clean and unclean animals. Most of the clean animals are not named, but described. Their classification does not reflect scientific analysis, and that raises the question as to whether the organization is divinely given or the result of human observation.

A. Clean Animals.

1. Larger Mammals (beasts). (11:1-8) This category includes animals, which chew the cud and have cloven hoofs.
2. Aquatic Creatures. (11:9-12) This category includes all sea creatures with fins and scales.
3. Birds. (11:13-19) The clean birds are not listed.
4. Swarming Things. (11:20-21) Certain kinds of insects are listed. While these insects do not sound appealing to us, Elijah and John the Baptist lived off of them in the desert (Matthew 3:4). They were considered clean.
 - a. Locust
 - b. Bald Locust
 - c. Cricket
 - d. Grasshopper

B. Unclean Animals. The same four categories named above do not fit neatly into the unclean animals listed below:

1. Larger Mammals (11:4-7) The rock badger, hare, and swine are also included in this category.
2. Predatory Birds (11:13-19) Eagle, vulture, osprey, kite falcon, raven, ostrich, night hawk, sea gull, hawk, owl, cormorant, ibis, water hen, pelican, carrion vulture, stork, heron, hoopoe, and bat.

3. Winged Insects (11:20 & 23) The winged insects are those insects that travel on all fours.
4. Vermin (11:29-30) Weasel, mouse, great lizard, gecko, land crocodile, lizard, sand lizard, and chameleon.
5. Shellfish

Purification of Women after Childbirth (12:1-8)

The Time Period

What follows does not mean that sex was considered dirty. The woman was considered unclean because of bodily discharges. It was a matter of hygiene.

- A. Male Child. The woman was considered to be unclean for seven days and had to undergo thirty-three days of purification. The child was then to be circumcised on the eighth day, as Abraham had done (Genesis 21:4).
- B. Female Child. The woman was considered to be unclean for two weeks and was expected to undergo sixty-six days of purification. Why was the time doubled for the birth of a girl? No reason is given.

The Offerings

At the end of the purification, a lamb was to be given as a burnt offering and a young pigeon and turtle dove as a sin offering. If the woman was poor, she was to give two turtledoves and two pigeons, one each for the burnt and sin offerings. The mother was not considered unclean because she gave birth, but because of her bodily discharges, mainly the flow of blood (12:7).

Uncleanness due to Skin Diseases (13:1—14:57)

Diagnosis of Skin Diseases (13:1-59)

This chapter was written in the technical jargon of the priest and was to be used as a practical guide to help diagnose and distinguish between “acute” and “chronic” forms of the various diseases. The word “leprosy” was used very loosely and is not to be confused with “leprosy” as we think of it today, with our more narrow definition. The role of the priest here is not curative. He simply examines, suggests seven days of isolation, and determines whether or not the condition is ceremonially unclean.

A. Kinds of Skin Diseases (13:1-44)

1. Leprosy (Tubercular Leprosy). (13:1-8) This begins with reddish patches and progresses into nodules and deformities.
2. Leprosy (Anesthetic Leprosy). (13:1-8) It paralyzes the nerves so that the limbs become numb and lifeless.
3. Chronic Leprosy. (13:9-17)
4. Boils. (13:18-23)
5. Burns. (13:24-28)
6. Itch (Ringworm). (13:29-37)
7. Rash (Vesicular Skin Disease). (13:38-39)
8. Falling Hair. (13:40-44) Baldness is not unclean unless it is accompanied with other symptoms that have caused it.

B. The Fate of the Leper. (13:45-46) The Leper was to go into isolation with torn clothes, unkept hair, covering the upper lip, and crying, “Unclean, Unclean.” One could not come out of this isolation until the disease was gone and one had undergone the rites of purification under the direction of a priest.

C. Clothing. (13:47-59) What is described here cannot be considered leprosy; rather, it was mold, mildew, or fungus. The solution was to isolate the clothing for seven days; and if that did not do any good, then it was to be burned.

The Cleansing of Skin Diseases (14:1-57)

Recovery without treatment was common enough that a ceremonial method of restoring such persons to the community had to be established. The treatment included three ceremonies; one on the first day, one on the seventh day, and one on the eighth day. The one on the first day was also used for the purification of a house.

A. The Cure for the Ordinary Leper. (14:1-20) The following made up the instructions for the purification of an ordinary leper.

1. On the First Day. (14:1-8)
 - a. Go to the priest. (14:2)

- b. Take two birds, cedarwood, scarlet stuff, and hyssop. Take blood from one of the birds and dip the living bird and other things in the blood over running water. (14:4-6)
 - c. Sprinkle the blood on the person to be cleansed seven times. This is to be followed with the release of a living bird. (14:7) Slaying the first bird symbolized the leper's former life, and the setting free of the second bird symbolized his return to freedom and the community of God's people. Although one might see a relationship between the release of the bird and the sending out of the scapegoat (Leviticus 16:21f), there is none. They do not even mean the same thing.
 - d. Wash clothes, shave hair, and bathe. (14:8)
 - e. Dwell outside the tent in camp. (14:8)
2. On the Seventh Day. (14:9) Shave off all the hair, including the beard, eyebrows, and hair. Then wash clothes and bathe the body.
3. On the Eighth Day. (14:10-20)
- a. Offer two male lambs without blemish and one ewe lamb one year old. Cereal offerings of fine flour and a log (2/3 pint) of oil are also to be made. (14:10)
 - b. Guilt, sin, burnt, and cereal offerings are to be made by the priest. Blood is placed on the tip of the right ear, thumb, and large toe. (14:11-20) This is similar to the ordination ceremony for a priest.
- B. The Cure for a Poor Leper. (14:21-32) The poor only needed to give one male lamb, the flour and oil and the log (2/3 pint) of oil, two turtledoves or two pigeons. The sin, burnt, guilt, and cereal offerings were still to be made. The rest was the same as for anyone else.
- C. The Cure for a House. (14:33-57) The discussion concerning a house was for when they arrived in Caanan. It seems to indicate that God was responsible for making the house leprous. If that were the case, the reason for his doing so would be sin. The actual ceremony used to get rid of the disease was similar to that used to exorcise demons, which people thought were responsible for disease; but for the Israelites, the thought was that God caused the disease, not demons. When a house was infected, the priest was to enter the house only after it had been emptied out. If greenish or reddish spots appeared on the walls, which were deeper than the surface, the priest was to lock up the house for seven days. On the seventh day he was to make another inspection. If it had spread, then the infected stones were to be removed and disposed of in an unclean place. New stones were to replace the old ones. Anyone who entered

the house while it was infected was considered unclean until evening, and anyone who lay down or ate in the house was to wash his or her clothing. If the disease had not spread, the priest could pronounce it clean. In any case, the house had to undergo a similar purification to that of a person, but it was not as lengthy. The ceremony was similar to what took place for a person on the first day (14:1-8), with the living bird released outside the city in an open field.

Uncleanness Due to Bodily Discharges (15:1-32)

Regulations were given for both normal (seminal and menstrual) and abnormal, possibly malignant, discharges. *The Interpreter's Bible Commentary* describes the abnormal discharges as male and female pathological discharges. In the case of male seminal discharges, the person was considered unclean until evening; but in the case of female menstrual discharges, the person was considered unclean for seven days. The longer purification time for women may have been due to the fact that menstrual discharges involved blood and took place over a longer period of time.

Purification required two turtledoves or two young pigeons. One was for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. These secretions were not considered evil, nor was sex considered taboo. Sexual relations were prohibited on the night before worship in the sanctuary and during the conduct of a holy war. Discharges, from other parts of the body, such as the nose and ears, were not considered unclean.

RITUAL FOR THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (16:1-34)

The Day of Atonement (16:1-19)

The High Priest was to enter the Holy Place once a year. He was to make two offerings for himself and two offerings for the people.

Sin Offering

He was to offer a young bull for himself and two goats for the people.

Burnt Offering

He was to offer a ram for himself and a ram for the people.

Before entering the holy place, he was to bathe himself and dress up in the linen clothes (coat, breeches, girdle, and turban). (16:4) This of course meant that the flashy priestly garments were not used in the most holy of places on that day.

The blood of the sin offering was to be sprinkled seven times on and before the mercy seat, and on the horns of the altar. At the end of this act, the linen garments were to be removed, the priest was to bathe and put his clothes on. Then he was to make the burnt

offerings. The fat of the sin offering was also to be burned on the altar. The skin and flesh of the sin offering was to be taken outside of the camp to be burned.

The Scapegoat (16:20-28)

The priest was to cast lots to see which of the people's two goats became the sin offering and which one became the scapegoat. Scapegoat is the shortened version of "escaping goat." The priest was to lay his hands on the head of the live scapegoat, confess the iniquities of the people of Israel and send the scapegoat into the wilderness. This goat was then to be offered to Aza'zel, which refers to a place in the wilderness, or the name of a demon or evil spirit. Originally, the rite may have been for the purpose of driving away a demon by this name in a goat, but by now it had come to signify the *no return* to which the people's sins were consigned.

The Observance (16:29-34)

The Day of Atonement was compared to the Sabbath, but it was to be observed only once a year. The date was to be the tenth day of the seventh month. This seventh month is called Tishri and falls in September/October. Following the Babylonian Captivity, the Ark disappeared, and the ritual had to be altered. Following the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 C.E., it had to be abandoned. What took its place was Yom Kippur, a day of repentance and fasting. For Christians, an annual day of atonement was no longer needed, for Christ became our eternal sacrifice that no longer needed repeating (Hebrews 9:11-14).

THE INNER CLEANSING

Sacrifice was a necessary part of realizing forgiveness, and an inevitable result was the concern with cleanliness. "Cleanliness" said John Wesley, "is next to godliness."¹ That was not original with him. Many think he was quoting a Hebrew saying. Roger Bacon, on the other hand, in *The Advancement of Learning*, Book II, says, "Cleanness of body was ever deemed to proceed from a due reverence to God."² Some uncleanness, such as skin diseases, was believed to be the result of sin. Both sin and uncleanness required sacrifices.

The Pharisees and the Scribes were so preoccupied with cleanliness that when they observed the disciples eating without having first washed their hands, they asked Jesus, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" (Mark 7:5) Jesus replied with a quotation from Isaiah 29:13, which says, "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines." (Mark 7:6-7) He concluded with his own words, "You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition." (Mark 7:8) Then Jesus called the people to him, and said, "...there is nothing

¹John Wesley, "On Dress," Sermon 93

²Bergen Evans, ed. *Dictionary of Quotations* (New York: Avenel Books, 1978), p. 110.

outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile." (Mark 7:15) Even the disciples did not understand and asked him what he meant, and he answered them, "Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) (Mark 7:18-19)

What is the message here? The heart is not made clean by washing the hands. It is the other way around. Clean hearts result in clean hands. What then about the disciples, who did not wash their hands before eating? What about priests who do not properly bathe themselves prior to taking on their sacred duties, as the Law requires? Are we just talking about the traditions of men, or has not Divine Law called for cleanliness too? Jesus does not really argue with this at all. He just perceived that the Pharisees and Scribes were concerned about cleanliness, but they were not even aware of their inner filth, that also needed cleansing. All the water in the world will not clean that up, but when that is cleaned up, the rest will eventually follow. It may take awhile, as every Christian knows, but this is what happens to those who experience that inner cleansing.

Water cannot bring about this inner cleansing, nor can the blood of animals. The blood of Jesus Christ alone has the power to clean out the heart. Hebrews 9:11-14 describes it:

But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

But how does this inner cleansing work? What animal sacrifice and water could not do, the sacrifice of Jesus did once and for all. The shedding of his blood brought us face to face that in crucifying Christ it was God who was being crucified. Even the Roman soldier at the cross, noted that. Instead of experiencing judgment over it, humanity has experienced grace, undeserved love. The shedding of his blood has brought about an inner cleansing, which also works its way up to our hands and faces. Our awareness of holiness results in both spiritual and physical cleanliness. That is why William Cowper's hymn is so beautiful to those who have experienced this inner cleansing, but incomprehensible to those who have not.

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.¹

¹"There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood," *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1989), #622.

LEVITICUS

The Laws

*The Lord Spoke to Moses, saying,:
“Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel
and say to them:
You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”*

*You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge
against any of your people,
but you shall love your neighbor as yourself:
I am the LORD.*

Leviticus 19:1-2 and 18

19. God's Call to Holiness

Leviticus 17:1—27:34

19. GOD'S CALL TO HOLINESS (17:1—27:34)

GOD'S HOLY PEOPLE

The Key Verses	Holy People don't...	Obedience leads to LIFE (18:5) Disobedience leads to being vomited out of the Land (18:28 & 20:22)	Canaanite Sins Sacrifices to Molech (18:21) Sacred Prostitution
Sexual Sins Incest (18:6-18) Adultery (18:20) Homosexuality (18:22) Beastiality (18:23)	10 Commandments Call to Holiness by keeping the Commandments (19:1ff)	Things to do... Provide for the Poor (19:9-10) Love the Neighbor (19:18)	Things Forbidden... Augury (19:26) Witchcraft (19:26) Tattoos (19:28) Mediums (19:31) Wizards (19:31)

GOD'S HOLY PRIESTS

The Priests	The High Priest	They must not have any defects...	They must treat their offerings with respect...
They cannot shave their Beards (21:5) They must marry a Virgin (21:7)	They cannot let their hair hang loose They must not go close to a dead body (21:11) They must marry a virgin (21:13-14)	Blind Lame Mutilated Deformed Crippled (21:18-20)	and not eat them by mistake (22:1-2 & 14)

Various Priestly Duties (24:1-23)

Sanctuary Lamp (24:1-4)	Bread of Presence (24:5-9)	Death Penalties (24:15-17)	Law of Retaliation (24:19ff)
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THE CALENDAR

HOLY DAY	DATE	BIBLICAL	AGRICULTURAL
SABBATH (23:3)	Every Seventh Day	Rest and Recall of Creation	
PASSOVER (25:4-8)	Nisan/Abib 14 (Mar/Apr)	Remember Deliver- ance from Egypt	Barley Harvest Fes- tival

19. GOD'S CALL TO HOLINESS

Leviticus 17:1—27:34

ASSIGNMENTS			
God's Holy People 17:1—20:27	God's Holy Priests 21:1—22:31 24:1-23)	God's Sacred Calendar 23:1-44 25:1-55	The Covenant 26:1—27:34

THE HOLINESS CODE (17:1—26:46)

Because the God of Israel was holy, his people were expected to be holy as well. The concept of the holy existed in other religions, but only among the Israelites did the concept of a holy people emerge. Holiness emanated outwards from God to the priests, to the nation, and to humanity. The laws found in Leviticus were for holy living. These unique people were called to separate themselves from sin and become holy. Insofar as it was possible, they were to be like God. They were to enter into a covenant with God. This covenant not only brought them blessings, it also gave to them a responsibility for others.

The Holiness Code is very similar to the Covenant Code (Exodus 21:1—23:19). Scholars believe that it was written long after the time of Moses because many different kinds of laws from various periods of Israelite history can be found in it. Christians have seen the same call to holiness in Jesus' call to his followers. "Be perfect," he says in Matthew 5:48, "as your heavenly Father is perfect."

The Sacredness of Blood (17:1-16)

Chapter seventeen deals with two related laws: (1) that all slaughtered domestic animals were to be brought to the altar as peace offerings, and (2) that blood was not to be eaten. Offerings had to be made in the right place and to the right person. They were not to be made to the Satyrs (demons) (17:7).

In the wilderness period their main diet was manna and quail, but they could eat ox, lamb, and goat that were given as peace offerings. They were not to make these offerings to the Satyrs (demons), which was the practice of their pagan neighbors in Canaan. As they settled in Canaan provision had to be made to provide opportunities to make offerings in local shrines, but this led to a great deal of abuse. Josiah tried to combat this

abuse by centralizing animal sacrifice in Jerusalem, but centralization was only practical if animals could be slaughtered for food without first becoming peace offerings. This was necessary because many people lived far away from Jerusalem. Provision had to be made for them to eat meat without it being part of an offering made by the Priests in Jerusalem.

While the initial laws had to be modified to provide opportunities to eat meat without it being part of the peace offering, one rule had to be followed which related to the offering. It had to do with the blood. The key verse is 17:11, which tells us that blood was considered sacred; therefore, it was taboo to eat. It was the principle of the sacrifice of life for life. The shedding of blood was viewed as efficacious in obtaining forgiveness from sin and bringing about reconciliation with God. The act of throwing blood against the altar symbolized God's participation in the atonement ceremony. Blood was to be drained out of the meat whenever it was eaten.

Forbidden Sexual Relations (18:1-30)

These laws were directed against Egyptian and Canaanite practices. In their pagan practices they worshipped and deified sex, reserving "holy ones" for their cult prostitutes. The reference to Molech (King) was a reference to an Ammonite deity. Among the Phoenicians, children were placed in the arms of an idol and burned to death. Some equally horrible practice was in the mind of the writer in referring to Molech. Both child sacrifice and cultic prostitution were considered an abomination. Sexual relations were forbidden with parents, siblings, half-sister/brothers, grandchildren, aunts/uncles, in-laws, women in menstruation, persons of the same sex, and animals. Some of the above sexual unions had been customary in patriarchal and Mosaic times, and persisted right into the early monarchy.

The warning here was that the Israelites were to be given the Promised Land because of the abominable practices of the Canaanites; but if they followed Canaanite immorality, they themselves would be *vomited* out of the land. This later happened. Had they followed the Law of God, they would have lived (18:5) a rich and happy life in the land. The purpose of the Law was to bring freedom and life (Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12). The Law was to become a way of life for the Redeemed, not a way of Salvation for the lost. God delivered them out of Egypt and then gave them the Law. In order to remain delivered, however, they had to keep the Law.

Laws of Holiness and Justice (19:1-37)

There is a blending of the Ten Commandments in this section. The keynote of the holiness code can be found in 19:2. In 19:19-25 some references are made that are difficult to understand. Wool and linen were prescribed for the curtains of the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:1, 31, and 36). Such a mixture was considered holy and therefore forbidden to the laity. Similarly, a field sown with two kinds of seed was holy (Deuteronomy 22:9b) and could not be used by the lay owner. If everyone is to be holy, then why are such distinctions made? Several concerns were lifted up in regard to anyone taking on holiness. They can be summed up as follows:

The Poor. (19:9-13)

One was to leave part of the harvest for the poor. The poor have rights to it. There was a difference between oppressing and robbing the neighbor. Oppressing had to do with *withholding* what was due the neighbor. Robbing had to do with forcibly taking something from the neighbor. Not leaving the gleaning for the poor was oppression.

Magic (19:26 & 31)

All magic was to be rejected. Included in magic was augury, witchcraft, mediums, and wizards.

The Neighbor (19:18 & 33-34)

One was to love the neighbor as one loved oneself. In Israel the neighbor came to be defined as a fellow-Israelite, but this law included the stranger or sojourner in the land. It was this law that Jesus had in mind when he gave the Great Commandment. (See Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; and Luke 10:25-28). He broadened its meaning to include anyone who was in need. The Parable of the Good Samaritan illustrated Jesus' expanded definition (Luke 10:29-37).

Penalties for Disobedience (20:1-27)

Some of the offenses have been mentioned before. They include such things as child sacrifice (to Molech), turning to or becoming mediums and wizards, cursing parents, and the range of sexual sins already mentioned. The offenses are considered to be against God and his people, and are not offenses against property. The penalties are very severe, and they include at least four kinds: (1) death by stoning, (2) death by burning, (3) separation from God and his people, and (4) childlessness. The fourth penalty was considered the supreme punishment.

The people were called into holiness, and if they did not respond to that call through keeping the Law, they would be *vomited* out of the land in the same manner as the Canaanites (20:7, 26 and 20:22)

The Holiness of the Priests (21:1-24)

Priests had a special status. They were to be holy to God and separated for divine service. They were to marry a virgin, not a widow or divorced woman. They were to be men without any blemishes. In contrast to Egyptian religion, death imparted some sort of severe impurity. In Egyptian religion the burial place of the dead was considered equal to the Temple in its sanctity. The Israelites rejected this concept of holiness and saw impurity in death.

The Holiness of the Offerings (22:1-31)

Only the best that one could give was worthy to offer God, whether it was the priest himself or one of the sacrificial offerings. The priest could not approach holy things in an unclean state. He first had to be purified. Rules governing who could eat the priest's share had to be followed, and those who ate from it by mistake had to make restitution. They had to add a fifth of the value to it. Violation of any of these rules was tantamount to profaning the Lord's name.

The Sacred Calendar (23:1-44)

The special feasts, like the weekly Sabbath, reflected a pattern of events—pointing back to God's hallowing of the seventh day at creation. Three of these feasts were required as national celebrations. They are marked with an asterisk.

The Sabbath (23:1-3)

The only day that was to be observed every week was the Sabbath. All other special feasts were to be observed annually. The Sabbath was viewed as the holiest of them all, and that was why it was to be observed weekly. We tend to do the opposite today. Christmas and Easter are considered holier days than Sunday, the Lord's Day. This was not the intention of God.

When: On the Seventh Day. (Friday 6:00 p.m. to Saturday 6:00 p.m.)

What: A day of rest. Later it became a time to remember what God had done for them.

**Passover (23:4-5)*

Passover was followed on the seventh day with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. (23:6-8)

When: 14th day of the first month (Nisan) (March/April).

What: Remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt.

Firstfruits (23:9-14)

Following Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was Firstfruits, which was then followed seven weeks later by Pentecost.

When: (April) The day after the ending of the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

What: According to the older law in the holiness code, the first sheaf of the Barley Harvest was to be brought to the local sanctuary.

THE CALENDAR			
HOLY DAY	DATE	BIBLICAL	AGRICULTURAL
UNLEAVENED BREAD (23:4-8)	Nisan/Abib 15-21 (Mar/Apr)	Remember the Hurried Departure	
FIRSTFRUITS (23:9-14)	Nisan/Abib 16 (Mar/Apr)	Recognize the Bounty of the Land	The Barley Harvest
WEEKS (23:15-22) Shavuot or Pentecost	Sivan 6 (May/Jun)	Giving of the Law through Moses	The Wheat Harvest Festival
TRUMPETS (23:23-25) Rosh Hashanah	Tishri/Ethnanim 1 (Sep/Oct)	Creation and Judgment	Secular New Year
ATONEMENT (23:26-32) Yom Kippur	Tishri/Ethnanim 10 (Sep/Oct)	Cleanse Priest and People	
TABERNACLES (23:33-44) Succoth, Booths, Ingathering	Tishri/Ethnanim 15-21 (Sep/Oct)	Remember the Wilderness Journey	Fruit Harvest Festival
SABBATICAL YEAR (25:1-7)	Every 7th Year		A Year of Rest for the Entire Land
YEAR OF JUBILEE (25:8-17)	Every 50th Year on Tishri 10	Stabilizes gap between rich and poor	
THE COVENANT			
The Obligation (26:1-2) Reject Idolatry Keep the Sabbath Respect the Sanctuary	The Blessing (26:3-13) Peace and Prosperity	The Punishment (26:14-46) Sevenfold Punishment Fatal Disease and Famine Wild Beasts and War	
Vows: "To gain success or healing" (27:1-29)	For Persons For Animals	Tithes: Firstborn, Firstlings, Firstfruit (27:30-31)	A vow cannot be made from the tithe, which already belongs to God; but both can be redeemed by paying their value plus one-fifth.

**Pentecost (23:15-22)*

The modern name is Shavuot or Weeks. Other names that have been used are Feast of Weeks and Harvest Festival. Pentecost follows Firstfruits, or the beginning of the Barley Harvest, by seven weeks.

When: (June) The day after the seventh week following Firstfruits.

What: It indicated that the wheat harvest was sanctioned for ordinary use.

Because it came fifty days after the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits, it was called Pentecost. Pentecost is a Greek word meaning fifty.

New Year (23:23-25)

The modern name is Rosh Hashana. Other names that have been used are the Feast of Trumpets or New Moon. This was the first of three festivals which took place in the seventh month. In view of the sacredness of the number “seven” it was only natural that this month be given more emphasis than the others. The beginning of the month was marked by the blowing of the ram’s horn (shofar) on the first day.

When: (September/October). The first day of the seventh month.

What: The Secular New Year.

Day of Atonement (23:26-32)

The modern name for this holiday is Yom Kippur.

When: The tenth day of the seventh month.

What: The essential purpose was to purify the sanctuary of its year-long defilement by man. The aim of it was confession and atonement.

**Tabernacles (23:33-44)*

Modern name is Succoth. Other names that have been used are Booths, Ingathering, and Thanksgiving.

When: Fifteenth day of the seventh month.

What: Agricultural thanksgiving at the end of the fruit harvest. It was also a reminder of their tent-dwelling days following deliverance from Egypt.

The people lived for seven days in shelters made of branches. (23:41) This was to remind them of their temporary shelters when they traveled through the wilderness.

Various Priestly Duties (24:1-23)

The Sanctuary Lamp (24:1-4)

The priests were to keep the lamp burning through the night as a sign of God's presence, and the people were responsible for maintaining the supply and quality of the oil needed.

The Bread of the Presence (Showbread) (24:5-9)

The twelve loaves were to remind the twelve tribes of their dependence on God's provision. They were not put there for God to eat (as in pagan religion). Aaron and the priests were to eat them.

The Death Penalty

Blasphemy was considered as serious a crime as murder. An example is given. The congregation was made responsible for stoning the guilty person (24:14). This was a communal mode of execution in which the community purified itself of the evil it found in its midst. Punishment was to be carried out against the native and the sojourner alike. No distinctions were to be made for (1) blasphemy (the 3rd Commandment 24:15ff.) or (2) murder (the 6th Commandment 24:17ff.).

Law of Retaliation (24:19ff.)

For other violations of the Law, punishment was less severe. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" was actually a restriction, controlling the feelings of revenge. Without this law people were inclined to take more than an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The penalty was to fit the crime. This was a more humane law than practiced by their pagan neighbors. It was intended to be a law of precise justice, which could not be carried out by individuals, but only by the community. The phrase was not to be taken literally. It was only a principle to carry out social justice and to limit personal vengeance.

The Seventh and Fiftieth Years (25:1-55)

Based on the story of creation, both property and persons were to be given a rest. This offered people a chance to start over.

The Sabbatical Year (25:1-7)

People were neither to sow on the land nor harvest anything that happened to grow. The land was to have a complete rest.

The Year of Jubilee (25:8-17)

The idea of the Jubilee came from an early Hebrew word *Yobbel*, which meant "Ram's Horn." A later word, *Shofar*, was also used. The horn was blown to proclaim the Year of

Jubilee, which began on the tenth day of the seventh month (the Day of Atonement). Scholars do not agree on whether the Year of Jubilee was an ideal or whether it was actually practiced. There is little evidence to support its practice; in fact, most evidence seems to suggest that it was not practiced. The intent had to do with proclaiming liberty throughout the land, and this phrase from verse 10 was inscribed on our Liberty Bell.

Laws Governing the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years (25:18-55)

Below is a brief outline of the laws affected by the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years, and the purposes for which they were to be carried out. The one that is most difficult to understand has to do with the fact that Israelites could not be enslaved for life, but non-Israelites could. Non-Israelite slaves could also be passed on through inheritance, and were not subject to release in the Year of Jubilee.

1. The Laws:

- A. Restoration of Property (25:23-34)
- B. Loans to the Poor (25:35-38)
- C. Release of Slaves (25:39-55)

2. The Purpose:

- A. To prevent the wealthy from amassing land (25:10, 13, 17)
- B. The land belongs to God (25:23)

The Two Ways (26:1-46)

The Holiness Code concludes with the following divine promises and warnings:

The Covenant (26:1-2)

The most important aspects of the covenant have to do with the rejection of idolatry, the keeping of the Sabbath, and reverence for the sanctuary.

Blessings for Obedience (26:3-13)

The theme of the Holiness Code is given in 26:11-13, and is best described as God's dwelling in the midst of sinful people, whom he calls into holiness. The reward for obedience is peace and prosperity.

Punishment for Disobedience (26:14-46)

At least four calamities can be found in this very detailed list of punishments for disobedience. Ezekiel made a similar list for disobedience (Ezekiel 14:12-21). The list is as follows: fatal disease, famine, wild beasts ravaging the land, and war leading to exile.

The intensity of God's punishment is emphasized four times in the statement that the punishment will be "sevenfold." (26:18, 21, 24, and 28)

The above punishments were to be given out for disobedience; but even in disobedience, God promised to respond to anyone who genuinely repented. Meanwhile the land would rest in a kind of Sabbath. If the people would not observe the Sabbath, they would be driven into Exile, and the Land would observe the Sabbath they forsook.

LAWS CONCERNED WITH VOWS AND TITHING (27:1-34)

A vow was a promise made to God in hopes that one's suffering or sacrifice might result in gaining something from God, such as (1) success, or (2) recovery from illness. Several kinds of vows are mentioned: (1) persons, (2) animals, (3) houses, and (4) land. Age and sex made a difference in the value of persons, and that value was measured in shekels, which was a weight of metal. The coinage of money had to wait until 700 to 600 B.C.E. Males had more value than females. Age also had an impact on value. Both must have been related to an agricultural economy in which men in their prime did most of the work. If one wanted to regain the person or property vowed, there was a price of redemption to be paid. Below are the redemption prices for persons. Property was treated differently.

1 month to 5 years
Male - 5 shekels
Female - 3 shekels
5 years to 20 years
Male - 20 shekels
Female - 10 shekels
20 years to 60 years
Male - 50 shekels
Female - 30 shekels
60 years and above
Male - 15 shekels
Female - 10 shekels

Valuation of land was determined by when the vow was made and the relationship of that time with the Year of Jubilee. If the vow concerning land was too close to the Year of Jubilee, when all the debts were cancelled, then the land was not as valuable. If one wanted to buy back what one had vowed to the Lord, there was an interest charge of 20% or 1/5th. This held for everything but "clean" animals, which were not redeemable. Originally, a vow of a person called for a human sacrifice, but substitutes of animals or payment in silver became established.

Firstborn sons, firstlings of flocks or herds, and the firstfruit of the field belonged to God. God accepted part (1/10th) for the whole, but if one wanted to make a vow, one could not do it with that which already belonged to God.

THE ENERGY OF LOVE

Nothing is so easily misunderstood as holiness. Leviticus 19:2 seems clear enough: “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.” Moses was to declare this not just to priests, but to the entire congregation. The command was first given in Exodus 19:5-6, where God introduced Moses to the subject of holiness:

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, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.

Jesus ended his interpretation of some of Moses’ commandments in Matthew 5:48 with the words: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” In Luke 6:36, the parallel to Matthew, the word is “merciful.” In each case, Jesus has just been discussing how his followers should love. Their love must be different from that expressed by tax collectors and Gentiles (Matthew 5:46-47); they are sons of the Most High (Luke 6:35) and so they must love as he loves. His love moves beyond the neighbor and includes the enemy. It moves beyond the Jew and includes the Gentile. Holiness is to exercise the energy of divine love. It is the perfection of love.

Holiness has frequently been referred to with other terms, such as sanctification and Christian perfection. John Wesley used the terms without any hesitation, but he did have to interpret them so that others might understand. Dr. Gibson, Bishop of London, had difficulty understanding what Wesley was talking about, but upon hearing his explanation, he said to him, “Mr. Wesley, if this be all you mean, publish it to all the world.” What kind of explanation did he give? What follows was his definition:

Entire sanctification, or Christian Perfection is neither more nor less than pure love—love expelling sin and governing both the heart and life of a child of God. ... Perfect love is...“loving God with all our heart and serving Him with all our strength. Nor did I ever say or mean any more by perfection than thus loving and serving God.”

As can be seen from this definition, Wesley is not discussing what one believes, nor is he discussing personal piety, whether one smokes, drinks, or gambles. It is not perfection in overcoming bad habits or believing all the right things. In discussing beliefs in his famous sermon on The Catholic Spirit, he said:

Is thy heart right with God? Is thy faith...filled with the energy of love? Is thy heart right towards thy neighbor? Do you show your love by your works? If it be, give me thy hand.

I do not mean, “Be of my opinion.” You need not. I do not expect or desire it. Neither do I mean, “I will be of your opinion.” If thine heart is as my heart, If thou lovest God and all mankind, I ask no more: Give me thine hand.

It is easy to see the energy of love attempting to fulfill the Great Commandment, where Jesus says, "...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." A direct result of that effort is his second commandment, where he concludes "...You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:29-31) In telling the scribes that these two commandments made up the heart of the Law, Jesus was simply quoting from Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18. With his Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) he gave a new interpretation to "neighbor" and redefined the meaning of holiness. Holiness is the perfection of the art of loving, but it always gets its energy from the Grace of God. We love because he first loved us, and when he did, he poured God's love into our hearts, giving us the energy of love. If we are justified by his grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), then we are sanctified by his love through the Spirit (Romans 5:5 & 8). To be sanctified means to be energized with love.

Every pastor, who expects to be ordained in the Wesleyan connection, must deal with holiness. Nineteen questions are asked at his or her ordination, and the first four questions deal directly with holiness. They are:¹

1. Have you faith in Christ?
2. Are you going on to perfection?
3. Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?
4. Are you earnestly striving after it?

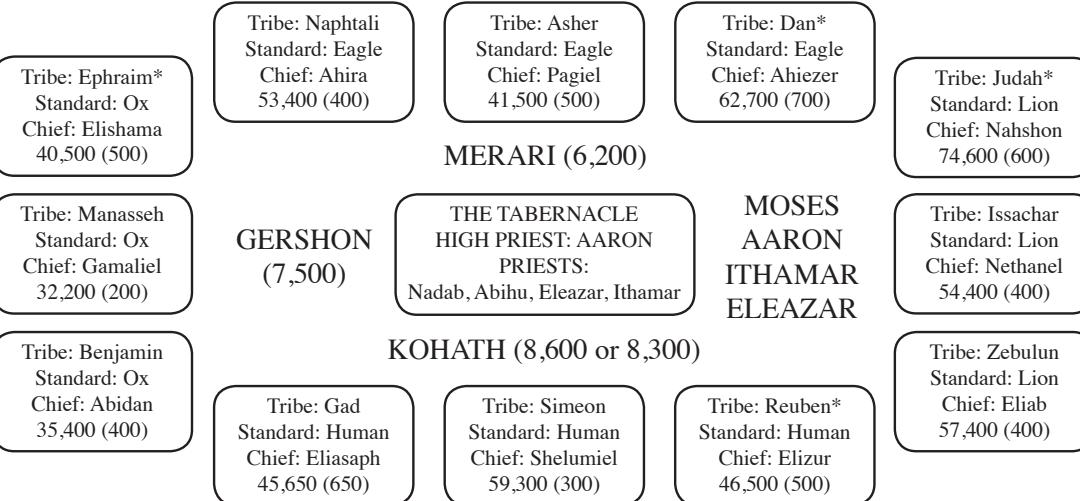
Holiness is not just for the clergy. Laity are also called into holiness. God calls everyone to be holy, that is, to be set apart to accomplish his will in the world. 1 Peter 2:9 describes it perfectly: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Holiness is not something we have to achieve. It is God's gift to us. John Wesley claimed it, and said, "The greatest gift the people called Methodists possess is that of Christian perfection." To possess the energy of love is indeed a great gift, and it is not to be hoarded, but shared. The world stands in desperate need of this kind of holiness, an energy of love that will never give up, no matter how hopeless things might appear. Every Christian is called to declare the wonderful deeds of God and to love as he loved, for every Christian knows that beyond the cross there is always the resurrection.

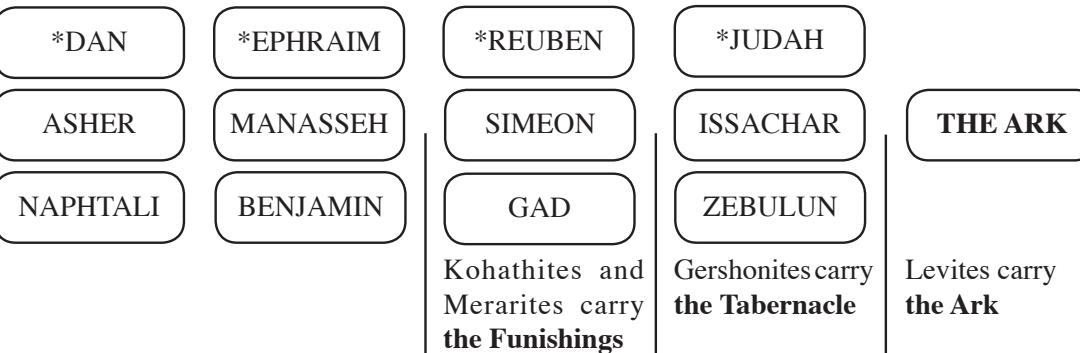
¹*Book of Discipline*, (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), Paragraph 425, p. 226.

20. THE FINAL DAYS AT SINAI (1:1—10:10)

THE ENCAMPMENT



THE MARCHING ORDER



The Departure took place two years after the Exodus (Numbers 1:1)

NUMBERS

The Census

*The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.*

Numbers 6:24-26

20. The Final Days at Sinai

Numbers 1:1—10:10

VARIOUS LAWS OF THE PEOPLE (5:1-31)

The Unclean (5:1-4) “Lepers, Discharges, and the Dead”	The Need for Restitution (5:5-10) “20%”	Adultery (5:11-31) “Trial by Ordeal”
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THE NARIRITE VOW (6:1-21)

Abstain from Strong Drink	Do not cut Your Hair	Avoid a Dead Body
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AARON'S BLESSING (6:22-27)	OFFERINGS OF LEADERS (7:1-89)
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CONSECRATION OF THE LEVITES (8:1-26)

The Seven Lamps are Placed and Kept Lit at Night (8:1-4)	The Levites are Purified (8:5-26)	
	Outer Cleansing by Washing and Shaving	Inner Cleansing by Blood Sacrifice

RULES ABOUT PASSOVER (9:1-14)

Everyone must observe Passover	Those who were Ritually Unclean must do it One Month Later
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THE FINAL DEPARTURE (9:15—10:10)

The Cloud by Day and the Fire by Night leads Them (9:15-23)	Two Trumpets Both summon People and One the Leaders, for Feasts or War (10:1-10)
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20. THE FINAL DAYS AT SINAI

Numbers 1:1—10:10

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Census and Arrangement 1:1—2:34	Levites and The Census 3:1—4:49	Various Laws and The Nazirite Vow 5:1—6:21	Leaders and Levites 7:1—8:26	Passover and The Departure 9:15—10:10

INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS

The Name

From the Hebrew word *Bemidbar*, the title is “In the Wilderness.” The Greek Septuagint and Latin Vulgate give the title *Numbers*, referring to the two numberings or censuses in chapters 1 and 26, but the numbering of the tribes is only a very small part of the whole book. The numberings were primarily for military purposes.

The Authorship

Like the other books of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Law), tradition has named Moses as the author. It is clear to scholars today that scribes or editors made contributions from later periods in the history of Israel, and so this book cannot be ascribed to any known author or authors.

The Date

Numbers is comprised of early documents and was set down in its present form around 500 B.C.E. It is part of that body of material, which includes Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, which was written over a longer period of time, perhaps as early as 900 B.C.E., but not compiled until the end of the Exile, or around 500 B.C.E.

The Purpose

The Book of Numbers describes the wanderings of the Israelites in the Wilderness. During this time the people were faithless, rebellious, and blind to God’s signs; while, on the other hand, God guided, sustained, and disciplined his people so that they might know their utter dependence upon Him and be prepared for their historical pilgrimage. They

spent forty years in the wilderness (Numbers 33:38 & Amos 5:25), although the greatest part of that time, thirty-eight years, was spent at Kadesh-Barnea. Very little time was spent wandering in the wilderness.

The Outline

- A. The Final Days at Sinai (1:1—10:10) (20 Days)
- B. The Period in the Wilderness (10:11—20:29) (38 Years)
- C. The Occupation of Transjordan (21:1—36:13) (6 Months)

Summary of Events

- A. Exodus to building the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:2) (1 Year)
- B. Legislation of Leviticus (Numbers 1:1) (1 Month)
- C. Organization of Israel at Sinai for wilderness travel and life (20 Days)
- D. Israel leaves Sinai (Numbers 10:11) (19 Days after the Census)
- E. Moses' farewell address (Deuteronomy 1:3) (End of 40 Years)

1:1—10:10	10:11—20:29	21:1—36:13
Preparation	Rebellion	Conquest
Mount Sinai	The Wilderness	Moab
2nd Year/20 Days	38 Years	40th Year/6 Months

The departure began two years after the escape from Egypt and 38 years before the entrance into Canaan. Only three men survived to the end (Moses, Joshua, and Caleb), and only two of them entered into the Promised Land (Joshua and Caleb).

THE CENSUS OF THE TRIBES (1:1-54)

One year after the Exodus, and one month after the construction of the Tabernacle, the tribes took a census to determine their military strength. Qualified males had to be twenty years of age or older. They alone were counted, for they were obligated to serve as soldiers.

The Twelve Tribes (1:1-46)

The twelve-fold pattern was maintained by counting the tribe of Joseph as two tribes. The names Ephraim and Manasseh were Joseph's sons, and were given equal status to the sons of Jacob.

Tribe	Clan Chief	Number	Subsection
Reuben	Elizur	46,500	500
Simeon	Shelumiel	59,300	300
Gad	Eliasaph	45,650	650
Judah	Nahshon	74,600	600
Issachar	Nethanel	54,400	400
Zebulun	Eliab	57,400	400
Ephraim	Elishama	40,500	500
Manasseh	Gamaliel	32,200	200
Benjamin	Abidan	35,400	400
Dan	Ahiezer	62,700	700
Asher	Pagiel	41,500	500
Naphtali	Ahira	53,400	400
		603,550	5,550

Some people have been troubled by the large number, which would have meant that there were two to three million people out there in the desert. The Hebrew word for *thousand* can also mean “family” (clan), “captain,” or “subsection.” (31:14) If it meant something like “subsection” or one of the other terms, then Reuben would have 46 tribal subsections with a total of 500 men. Counting like this would render a total of 5,500 fighting men. The years in the wilderness did cause their numbers to dwindle some, but not significantly. In this census there were 603,550, and at the end of the 38 years, there were 601,730. (Compare 1:46 and 2:32 with 26:51)

The Levites (1:47-54)

The Levites were not to receive any land, nor were they expected to fight. Their task was to look after the Tabernacle; hence, they were not included in this census, which had a military purpose.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE TRIBES (2:1-34)

This arrangement was used in camp as well as when they were marching. There is an earlier tradition in Exodus 33:7-11 which indicates that the Tabernacle was to be set up outside the camp rather than in the midst of the twelve tribes. The two accounts do not seem to be consistent. Each group of three has a standard with a symbol on it and a leader. The symbols of a lion, human head, ox, and eagle come to us out of an ancient

tradition, and are not named here in Scripture. The leaders assisted in taking the military census.

East Side (Judah/Lion)

Judah had a favored position, and was the tribe that took the lead. The east was the favored position because it faced the rising sun. According to Jewish tradition, Judah had for its standard, a Lion; Reuben, a human head; Ephraim, an ox; and Dan, an Eagle. The persons who helped in the census also exercised a leadership role in the tribe.

1. Judah	Nahshon	74,600
2. Issachar	Nethanel	54,400
3. Zebulun	Eliab	57,400
186,400		

South Side (Reuben/Human Head)

With Judah to the east and the Levites in the center, the next camp named was located to the south. The author moved clockwise around the Tabernacle. The sequence described was also the sequence used in moving out on a march.

1. Reuben	Elizur	46,500
2. Simeon	Shelumiel	59,300
3. Gad	Eliasaph	45,650
151,450		

Levites (Middle)

The Levites occupied a special position, for they had been given the responsibility of caring for the Tabernacle. They had to be in the center, where they could be insulated from the outside.

West Side (Ephraim/Ox)

Ephraim and Manasseh together made up the tribe of Joseph. It was felt that there had to be twelve tribes, excluding the Levites, who cared for the Tabernacle. This was accomplished by giving a double portion to the favored son, Joseph. Sometimes Ephraim was listed first (Genesis 48:13-14) and sometimes Manasseh (Numbers 26:28).

1. Ephraim	Elishama	40,500
2. Manasseh	Gamaliel	32,200
3. Benjamin	Abidan	35,400
108,100		

North Side (Dan/Eagle)

When Canaan was finally occupied, these three tribes were located in the vicinity of one another. This was coincidental, since the same was not true for all of the other groupings.

1. Dan	Ahiezer	62,700
2. Asher	Pagiel	41,500
3. Naphtali	Ahira	53,400
157,600		

THE LEVITES (3:1-51)

Aaron's Sons (3:1-4)

They were to serve as priests, but Nadab and Abihu were killed because they offered an “unholy fire before the Lord.” (3:4) Although Eleazar and Ithamar sinned as well, their sin was not considered as serious, and so they were allowed to live.

Appointed to Serve the Priests (3:5-13)

The members of the tribe of Levi were appointed to substitute for the first-born sons of the other tribes. They were not to serve as priests, but simply to serve Aaron and his sons, who were the priests. Anyone who tried to do the work of a priest was to be put to death (3:10).

Census of the Levites (3:14-39)

They were divided up into three groups, named according to the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Every male above one month was counted because that was the age at which parents were required to pay 5 shekels to the priests.

1. Gershon (West/Behind the Tabernacle) 7,500
 - A. Sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei
 - B. Leader: Eliasaph
 - C. Duties:
 - 1) Tabernacle
 - 2) Tent with its covering
 - 3) Screen for the door of the tent meeting
 - 4) Hangings of the court
 - 5) Screen for the door of the court, which is around the Tabernacle and altar
 - 6) Cords

2. Kohath. (South) 8,600 [8,300] Some believe that a copyist error was made here, and that the number should be 8,300; but this would make the numbers come out, making the redemption money of verse 46 unnecessary.

A. Sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel

B. Leader: Elizaphan

C. Duties:

- 1) Ark
- 2) Table
- 3) Lampstand
- 4) Altars
- 5) Vessels of the Sanctuary
- 6) Screen

Eleazar was the chief over the leaders of the Levites and he had oversight over those who took care of the sanctuary.

3. Merari (North) 6,200

A. Sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi

B. Leader: Zuriel

C. Duties:

- 1) Frames of the Tabernacle
- 2) Bars
- 3) Pillars
- 4) Bases and Accessories
- 5) Pillars of the court, bases, pegs, and cords

4. Moses, Aaron, and Sons. (East) Moses, Aaron, and their sons have the most important responsibilities, that of the rituals and rites of the sanctuary.

The total number given was 22,000 (3:39). The numbers for the individual groupings total 22,300. No explanation is given for the error.

Census of the First-Born (3:40-51)

The first-born were counted and totaled 22,273. Some conclude that this is too low a number for a population in excess of two million. The surplus of 273 has also been a problem, but assuming that it was correct, redemption had to be paid to Aaron and his sons. The price was 5 shekels apiece or 1,365 shekels. A shekel was not a coin, but a weight of 10 grams. The surplus was a problem because according to the numbers, the Levitical census totaled 22,300, and so there was no need to pay any redemption money, unless one of the individual figures was an error. If the three figures were right, then the total came to 27 more than the first-born.

THE SECOND LEVITICAL CENSUS (4:1-49)

In this census everyone between 30 and 50 was counted. The age limits for the service of the Tabernacle varied at different times, and that is the reason for the discrepancies found in the various portions of the Bible. Numbers 8:24 and 1 Chronicles 23:24-27 respectively offer 25 and 20 as the starting age, and the suggestion has been made that there might have been a period of apprenticeship. Nothing is said about this, however, in the Scripture itself, and so we are left to guessing.

Kohath (4:1-20)

They were responsible for carrying the sacred objects after the priests dismantled and covered them. They were not to touch, or even look at, any of the sacred objects, and to do so meant death (4:15 & 20). Eleazar supervised their work (4:16).

Gershon (4:21-28)

They were in charge of transporting the curtains and coverings of the Tabernacle, as well as the forecourt. Ithamar supervised their work. (4:28)

Merari (4:29-33)

They looked after and transported the framework—pillars, pegs, cords, etc. Wagons drawn by a yoke of oxen were provided for them. There were 4 wagons for the sons of Merari and 2 wagons for the sons of Gershon (7:7-8). Ithamar supervised both groups (4:33). No wagons were provided for the sacred objects. They had to be carried by hand.

The Census (4:34-49)

1. Kohathites	2,750
2. Gershonites	2,630
3. Merarites	3,200
TOTAL	8,580

VARIOUS LAWS FOR THE PEOPLE (5:1-31)

Unclean People (5:1-4)

Because of the sanctity of the Tabernacle, lepers, persons with bodily discharges, and persons having contact with the dead had to be put out of the camp.

Restitution (5:5-10)

Repayment had to be made, plus 20% to the person wronged, a relative, or a priest. One could not approach God without first making restitution. This idea persisted on into the New Testament, where Jesus made a similar demand (Matthew 5:23-24).

Trial by Ordeal (5:11-31)

A wife suspected of adultery was given some holy water with dust from the floor of the Tabernacle mixed into it (bitter water). If she was guilty, this was supposed to cause her body to swell and cause a miscarriage. It is not clear whether the water contained some herbs, which might cause the miscarriage. Both physiological and psychological factors played a part in this test, which focused on the woman.

The Torah provides no procedures for a woman who suspects her husband of adultery. The man could have several wives, even concubines; but he was not allowed to commit adultery with another man's wife. The woman's punishment for playing around was the inability to bear children, which was considered a very serious condition. The ability to bear children was what gave a woman her worth in ancient times.

THE NAZIRITE VOW (6:1-21)

The word *Nazirite* refers to one "separated" or "consecrated." This was a special vow made by male or female, for consecrating themselves fully to the Lord. It was usually for a limited period of time, although Samson made a lifelong vow (Judges 13-16). Samuel might have been a Nazirite as well. Several things were required of them.

Abstinence from Wine and Strong Drink

This included anything having to do with the vine. Not even the skins or seeds could be consumed.

Uncut Hair

The rapid growth of hair was a symbol of divine strength, and that is why the hair was not to be cut.

Avoidance of a Dead Body

If one could not avoid contact, one had to make the appropriate sin, burnt, guilt and peace offerings. This involved turtledoves, pigeons, lambs, a ram, and various cereal offerings. It also involved the burning of one's hair and a wave offering, all of which was a part of the purification process.

AARON'S BENEDICTION (6:22-27)

This was used in the Temple later, as it is currently used in Synagogues and Churches today. Its essence lay in the placing of the divine name (notice the threefold repetition) on God's people (6:27). "Face to shine upon you" and "Lift up his countenance" refers to "divine favor." See Psalm 31:16 and 80:3, 7, and 19 for the former, and Psalm 4:6; 44:3; and 89:15 for the latter.

The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.

OFFERINGS OF THE TRIBAL LEADERS (7:1-89)

The purpose of the twelve tribal offerings was to dedicate the altar (7:11 and 7:84). This chapter, the longest in the Pentateuch, is thought to be out of order. Offerings, like these, were probably made following the events of Exodus 40:17. (Compare Numbers 7:1 with Numbers 1:1).

The Contents of the Offerings

The contents were the same for each tribe, consisting of the following:

1. The Cereal Offering: 1 Silver Plate and 1 Silver Basin, full of fine flour mixed with oil.
2. 1 Gold Dish with Incense.
3. The Burnt Offering: 1 Bull, 1 Ram, 1 Year-Old Lamb.
4. The Sin Offering: 1 Male Goat
5. The Peace Offering: 2 Oxen, 5 Rams, 5 Male Goats, and 5 Year-Old Male Lambs.

The above represents an enormous number of animals sacrificed, but when one thinks of the total population, it becomes a small number. What might be confusing is the presence of so many animals belonging to people who were previously complaining about the lack of food.

The Order of the Offerings

They took 12 days to make the 12 offerings. The order follows the same order for marching, beginning with the eastern triad, moving to the southern, then the western, and finally the northern.

Tribe	Leader
Judah	Nahshon
Issachar	Nethanel
Zebulun	Eliab
Reuben	Elizur
Simeon	Shelumiel
Gad	Eliasaph
Ephraim	Elishama
Manasseh	Gamaliel
Benjamin	Abidan
Dan	Ahiezer
Asher	agiel
Naphtali	Ahira

CONSECRATION OF THE LEVITES (8:1-26)

Placing the Lamps (8:1-4)

The seven lamps made up the prototype of the well-known Jewish Menorah, which stood before the table for the bread of the presence in the Temple. The lighting of these Lamps was the work of the Aaronic priests.

Purification of the Priests (8:5-26)

Those who served God had to be clean and between 25 and 50 years of age (8:24). After they reached the age of 50 they had to retire, although they could assist and engage in voluntary service. A possible reason for Numbers 4:3 giving a different starting age has already been mentioned. There was possibly a five-year apprenticeship, and so regular service might not have begun until age 30. Because of a change in the situation, David seems to have lowered the starting age to 20 (1 Chronicles 23:24-27). Was an apprenticeship still necessary? Nothing is said about it, but the idea makes sense. Dealing with sacred objects was considered a very important task, and the young men set aside had to be trained in some way. All this began with their purification, which consisted of the following:

1. They were washed and shaved to ensure outward cleanliness.
2. The blood of the sacrifices symbolized their cleansing from the inward stain of sin. One bull was used as a sin offering and another bull for a burnt offering. They were to be totally dedicated to service in the Tabernacle.

RULES ABOUT THE PASSOVER (9:1-14)

The date mentioned in verse one is the same as that found in Exodus 40:17, but it differs from the date given in Numbers 1:1. The difference is only one month, but we cannot

explain it. Everyone was to observe the Passover. When some men asked Moses why they were not permitted to observe the Passover because they had touched the body of a dead person, Moses sought instructions from the Lord. He was told that persons who were ritually unclean or absent at the time when the Passover was to be observed, were to observe it one month later. Persons who had touched the body of a dead person were considered ritually unclean and unable to approach the Tabernacle for seven days. Persons who were present and ritually clean, but did not observe the Passover, were to be cut off from the community of God's people. The Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:28-30), like the Passover, is considered a very important observance. Because of the rebelliousness of the people, this observance did not take place again until Joshua had led them into Canaan (Joshua 5:10).

THE DEPARTURE FROM SINAI (9:15—10:10)

The Cloud and Fire (9:15-23)

The cloud and fire symbolized the presence and guidance of God. When they appeared over the Tabernacle, the people camped, but when they moved on, the people followed.

The Silver Trumpets (10:1-10)

Two silver trumpets were made of long, straight, slender tubes, which were blown by the sons of Aaron, and the priests. They were blown on occasions such as: (1) to summon the congregation, (2) to summon the tribal leaders, (3) to go to war, and (4) to announce feasts. Blowing both trumpets summoned the congregation and blowing one trumpet summoned only the tribal leaders. They were also used to break camp. After the first one was blown, the camps on the east side would set out, and after the second one was blown, the camps on the south side would set out. Although nothing is said here about those camped on the west and north, it can be assumed that they were to follow. The Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) includes a reference to the western and northern camps.

GOD'S SIDE

The first military census took place in Numbers 1:45-46: "So the whole number of the Israelites, by their ancestral houses, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war in Israel — their whole number was six hundred three thousand five hundred fifty." Can this census be compared with a national draft? Yes, it was a kind of draft, but it was also an organization of their army, which included the Levites.

Does the Bible consistently support the idea of a census? David took an unpopular military census in 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21. In 2 Samuel 24:1, God seems to be commanding him to take the census, but when he tries to carry it out, Joab, his commander, resists. He does not think it is necessary. Apparently God does not either, for he gives David a choice of three punishments. He can choose a three year-famine, three months of fleeing from his enemies, or three days of pestilence. David chose the latter, as lesser of the three evils, but 70,000 people died in the pestilence that followed. By the

time 1 Chronicles 21 was written, a theological transition occurred; and so the author replaced God with Satan as the initiator of the census (21:1). If counting one's military strength was sinful, it could not be God who required it.

A census, as taken by David, was symbolic of depending upon military power over against divine guidance. God did not oppose organization. Gideon, in Judges 7, started out with 32,000 men; and the Lord told him that he had too many. In two swift acts, he lost 22,000 and 9,700, leaving him with a final force of 300 men to deal with the Midianites. The attack on the Midianites was well organized with a precise number of men. God was not against counting nor was he against organizing. What he was against was depending upon human effort. Dependence was to be upon him.

The problem does not lie in counting troops, nor does it lie in organizing them. God expects these things to happen, but he also expects his people to be on his side. We can never take for granted that he will always be on our side. As Abraham Lincoln put it: "We know that the Lord is always on the side of the righteous. But it is my constant concern and my prayer that I and the nation might be on the side of the Lord." That of course requires that we are sensitive to where God is leading us. Can we still discern the pillar of cloud in the day, and the pillar of fire at night?

The priesthood was needed to help the military discern where God, through the pillar of cloud and fire was leading his people; hence, a census was taken of the Levites, the priestly class. In Numbers 3:39 the Levites were counted, who were older than one month, and their number was 22,000 or 22,300, depending upon how one understands the actual count recorded in Numbers. This number was compared with the first born, who numbered 22,273. This seemed to be important because the priests were to somehow equal the number of the firstborn. Since children were not all that helpful in discerning divine providence, Numbers 4:2-3 called for a census of the Levites between 30 and 50 years of age, and Numbers 8:23-26 lowers the minimum age to 25. 1 Chronicles 23:24, 27; 2 Chronicles 31:17; and Ezra 3:8 lower the minimum age to 20. These younger ages might reflect some kind of priestly apprenticeship or else a variety of traditions. The numbers are not as important as the fact that a census and organization of the Levites was as important to the overall military strategy as a census and organization of those young men who might engage directly in warfare.

The Levites were not simply chaplains to look after the religious needs of the Israelite soldiers. At times the Tabernacle was in the middle of the marching troops, and at other times it led them. Without divine guidance, they were on the wrong side. The Levites were an integral part of every military operation to assure them that they were on God's side.

Is there any insight from the New Testament to help us understand how the clergy might relate to the military today? The answer would have to be, "No." Chaplains do not fulfill the role of the Levites, nor do modern religious leaders march into battle with the troops. The closest religious leadership has come to fulfilling the Levitical role is the development of principles for fighting the Just War. Early Christianity tended to oppose

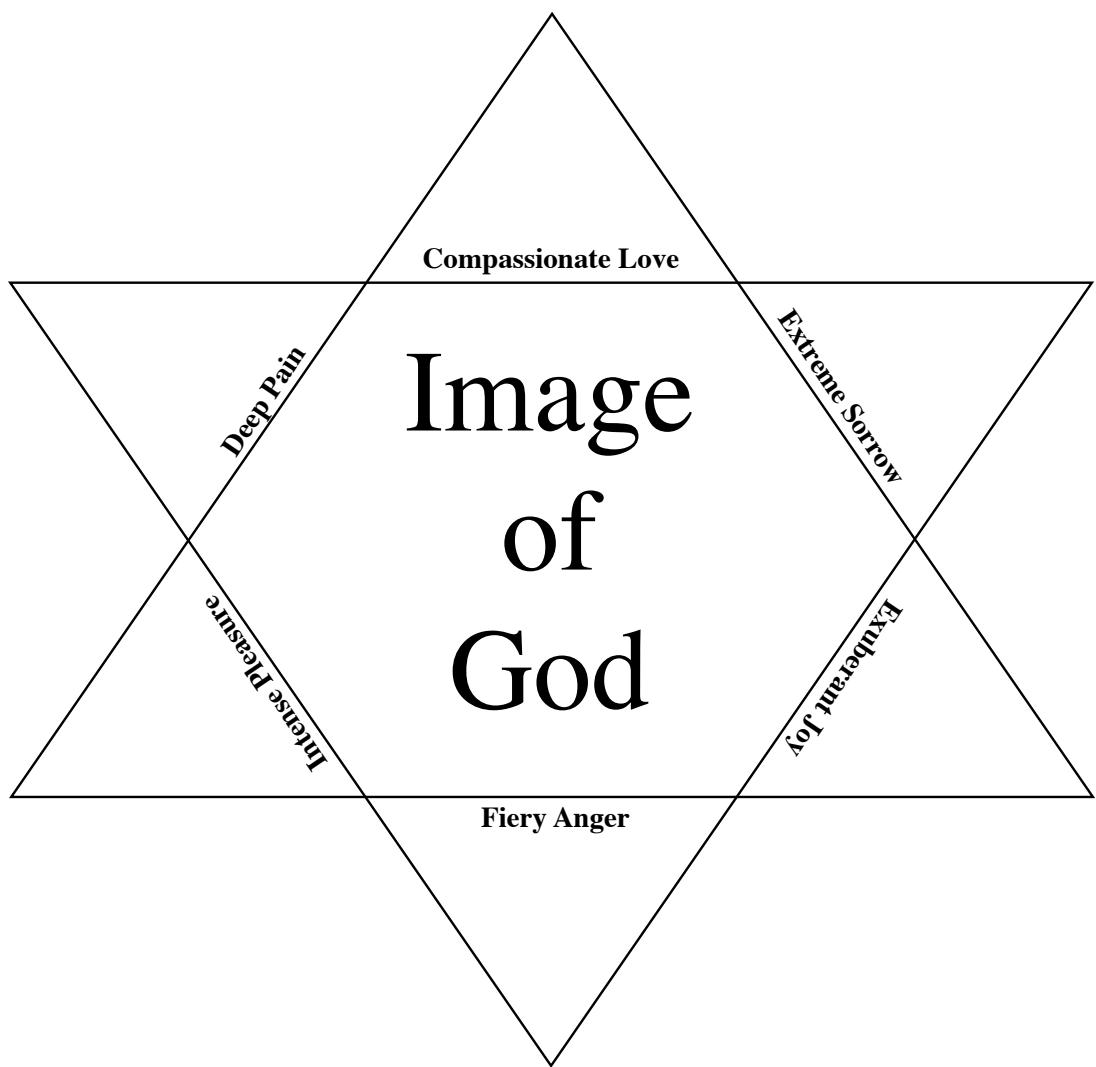
war completely, but after Christianity became a religion of the State, it had to give some kind of rational guidance. Ambrose and Augustine shaped early Just War theory, which is explained below:¹

The just war theory has come to provide a series of criteria by which the permissibility of war in a particular situation can be weighed. Some of these criteria have to do with the origins of war: Is there a just cause (for example, a clear injury which needs to be redressed)? Has every reasonable attempt been made to get redress without bloodshed? Will war be declared by a legitimate authority? Other criteria concern the way in which the war is fought. Is it to be waged solely by legitimate and moral means? Is the damage which is likely to be incurred by the war less grievous than the prior injury? Is success likely? If the answers to these questions are “Yes”, one may justly declare war.

Another position, made very popular during the Christian Crusades, is that of the Holy War. Urban II proclaimed just such a war against the infidel Muslims in 1095 C.E. and sent troops to reclaim the Holy Land for the Christian Faith.² Today Christians are embarrassed by the Crusades, and few would support the Holy War concept. Most would be more supportive of the Just War, and large numbers would support Pacifism, particularly as nuclear weapons have been developed. Only the Political and Liberation Theologians take on the role of the Levites in identifying whose side God is on, and then legitimizing the use of violence to overthrow the oppressor. Some Political and Liberation Theologians take the position of Christian Pacifism, but they advocate nonviolent resistance. They do take on the role of identifying the enemy who must be conquered. Among themselves they only disagree on methods.

¹Alan Kreider and John H. Yoder, “Christians and War,” *The History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), p. 24.

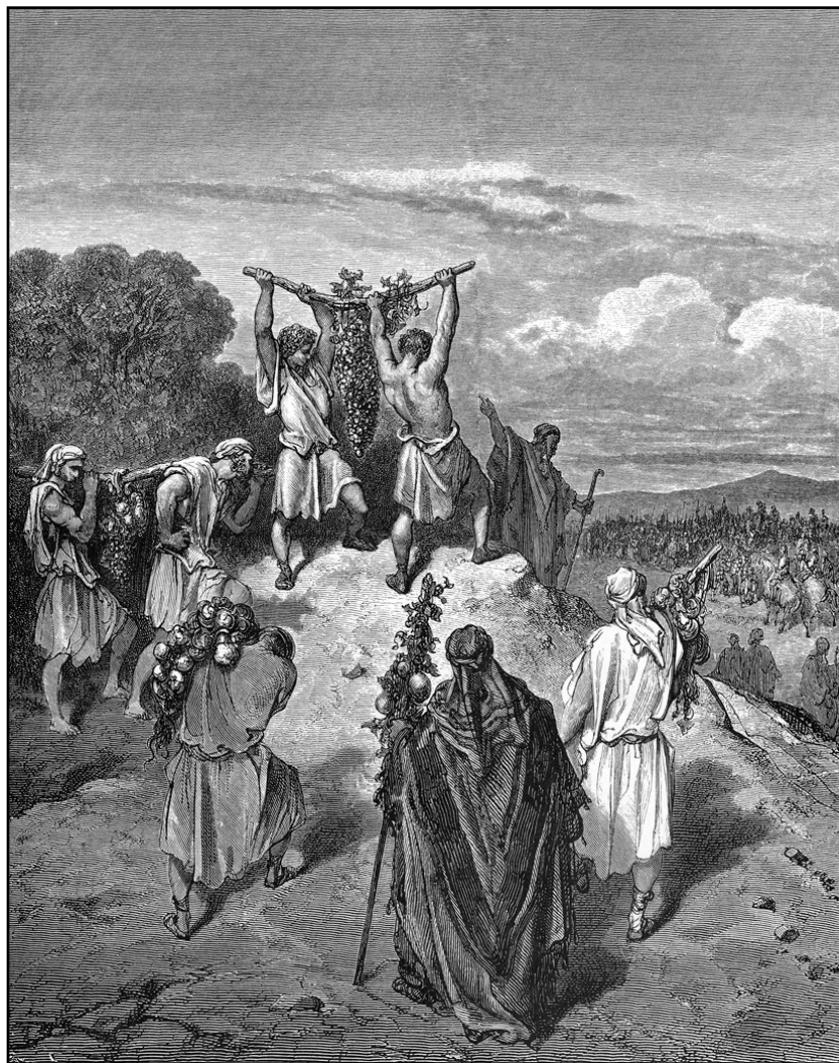
²*Ibid.*, p. 24.



“A Star shall come out of Jacob.”
Numbers 24:17

NUMBERS

The Census



The Spies Return by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

21. In the Wilderness

Numbers 10:11—20:29

21. IN THE WILDERNESS (10:11—20:29)

SINAI TO THE DESERT OF PARAN (10:11—12:16)

Departure from Sinai “Pillars of Cloud and Fire”	Taberah “Burning” (11:1-3)	Kibroth-Hattaavah “Groves of Craving” (11:31-35)	Hazeroth (12:1-16)
11 Months after Sinai 2nd Year, 2nd Month, 20th Day after Egypt (10:11) The Ark leads and the Tabernacle is set up in Advance (10:21) Hobab (Jethro) Guides (10:29)	Complaints about the Manna (11:4-15) The Seventy Elders (11:16-30)	Complaints about the lack of Meat God’s Provision of the Quail	Aaron and Miriam Rebel Miriam is punished with Leprosy, and her punishment lasts for 7 Days

THE SPIES (13:1—14:45)

Tribes: Spies	Areas of Espionage	The Reports
Reuben: Shammua Simeon: Shaphat Judah: Caleb Issachar: Igael Ephraim: Hoshea/Joshua Benjamin: Palti Zebulun: Gaddiel Manasseh: Gaddi Dan: Ammiel Asher: Sethur Naphtali: Nahbi Gad: Geuel	<i>Hebron:</i> Home of the Anak (Nephelim) <i>The Negeb</i> Home of the Amalakites <i>The Hill Country</i> Home of the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites <i>The Sea and Jordan River</i> Home of the Canaanites	<i>Description:</i> Land of Milk and Honey Land of Fortified Cities Land of a Mixed Population <i>Conclusion</i> Should we Attack? Majority Report: (10 votes: NO!) Minority Report: (Joshua and Caleb: YES!) The Aborted Attack

THE WILDERNESS (15:1—20:29)

Judgment	Various Laws (15:1-41)	Rebellion (16:1-50)	Priests (17:1—18:32)	Red Heifer (19:1-22)	Kadesh Barnea (20:1-29)
Punishment: 40 years in the Wilderness Reward: Joshua and Caleb and those under 20 can enter Canaan	Sacrifices Unintentional and Intentional Sin Sabbath (15:32-36) Tassels (15:37-41)	Korah (Levi), Dathan and Abiram (Reuben), and 250 from the Congregation. Censers destroy 250 in fire and 14,700 in a Plague	Aaron’s Rod/Sons Priests care for Sanctuary Levites tithe to Priests Levites care for Tabernacle People tithe to Levites	Ritual Purification Sacred Blood Sacred Number Sacred Tabernacle	Death of Miriam Water from the Rock Rebuff by Edom Death of Aaron

21. IN THE WILDERNESS

Numbers 10:11—20:29

ASSIGNMENTS				
Sinai to Paran 10:11—12:16	The Spies and An Attack 13:1—14:45	Various Laws and Rebellion 15:1—16:50	Priests and Levites 17:1—18:32	The Red Heifer and Kadesh Barnea 19:1—20:29

THE DEPARTURE FROM SINAI (10:11-36)

They left eleven months after their arrival at Sinai (Exodus 19:1) and nineteen days after the census was taken (Numbers 1:1). The precise date was the second year of the second month on the twentieth day after they departed from Egypt. They marched as instructed and followed the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. The Tabernacle and its furnishings went on ahead of the Ark. Sometimes the Ark led, but according to verse 21, the Tabernacle was to be set up prior to the Ark's arrival in the place where they were to camp.

Hobab was asked to guide them. There is some disagreement over who Hobab was. Some suggest that Hobab is another name for Jethro, and this would make him Moses' father-in-law. Others suggest that Reuel, another name for Jethro, is the father-in-law, and Hobab, his son, would then be Moses' brother-in-law. That Hobab is described as a Kenite in Judges 4:11 creates another problem, but it can be resolved by pointing out that the Kenites were a clan within the Midianites. It was not unusual for a person to have more than one name. Jacob, for example, took on the name Israel, and the two words are used interchangeably. There is some doubt about Hobab actually guiding them (10:31), but Judges 1:16 indicates that he did.

MURMURING IN THE WILDERNESS (11:1-35)

The Fire at Taberah (11:1-3)

Taberah means “burning,” but could mean, “pasture” as well. It refers to an unidentified place, where fire came down from heaven and destroyed those who had been complaining. Is this a description of lightning, which set small fires, and was thus interpreted as an act of God? It is not clear just what happened, but it was indeed

understood as an act of God against those who complained. Moses interceded on their behalf. Fortunately the fires were small and only consumed the fringes of the encampment.

Complaints about the Manna (11:4-15)

They got tired of the manna and yearned for some of the seasoned meat dishes they had enjoyed in Egypt. The manna, which once tasted like wafers made with honey (Exodus 16:31), became tasteless when that was all they had to eat.

The Seventy Elders (11:16-30)

Moses shared his power with seventy elders. He did not feel threatened by two men, Eldad and Medad, who prophesied; rather, he wished that all might prophesy. Jesus did not allow his disciples to stop others from preaching and healing in his name.

The Quail (11:31-35)

Because the people complained that they had no meat, God provided them with so much meat that they got sick. Their complaints were seen as lack of faith. When the quail appeared, they all gathered up more quail than they needed. The least gathered was 10 homers. One homer was equal to one donkey load, and so 10 homers consisted of something like 60 to 100 bushels of Quail. The Lord punished them for their gluttony with a plague. They called that place *Kibroth-hattaavah*, which means “graves of craving.” It must have been the place where they buried people who died from their gluttony. They then moved on to Hazeroth.

THE REBELLION OF MIRIAM AND AARON (12:1-16)

Miriam and Aaron challenged Moses by claiming that he was not the only one through whom God speaks. The problem was not that Moses married a foreign wife, but that he was representing himself as primary mediator between God and the people. His wife was described as a Cushite woman, which, generally referred to an Ethiopian, but here it included the Midianites and other Arabic peoples. Since she has not been named, questions have been raised over her identity. Is she Zipporah or has Moses taken on a new wife? There is no way of knowing.

God came down on the side of Moses and informed Aaron and Miriam that while he spoke with the prophets in dreams and visions, he communicates with Moses face to face. Miriam was punished for her part in the rebellion by leprosy (12:9-10), for she was probably the one who initiated it. This would explain why Aaron was not punished. Aaron was upset by the punishment and expressed his feelings to Moses. Moses asked God to heal her. She was healed, but not for seven days, which had to be spent outside of the camp. The group had to delay its departure until Miriam was returned to the camp.

The departure to the Wilderness of Paran is confusing. Had they not already departed from Paran (10:12 & 11:35)? Perhaps Hazeroth was located within the Wilderness of Paran.

THE TWELVE SPIES (13:1-33)

Eleven days after they left Sinai, Moses sent twelve spies into Canaan from Kadesh, on the edge of the Wilderness of Paran and the Wilderness of Zin, to find out what it was like and what kind of resistance they might encounter there. The spies were not the same men as the tribal leaders. (See Numbers 1:5-15)

The Tribe	The Spy
Reuben	Shammua
Simeon	Shaphat
Judah	Caleb
Issachar	Igal
Ephraim	Hoshea (Joshua) (13:16)
Benjamin	Palti
Zebulun	Gaddiel
Manasseh	Gaddi
Dan	Ammiel
Asher	Sethur
Naphtali	Nahbi
Gad	Geuel

Where they went?

They went into the Wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath. They went to Hebron, Ahiman, Sheshai, Talmai; and in the Valley of Eshcol, they cut down some grapes and brought back some pomegranates and figs as well. Their primary mission was to find out whether the people were strong, weak, many, or few; whether the land was good, bad, rich, or poor; and whether the cities were residential camps or military strongholds.

Who they found?

They went into Canaan only to find several groups of people.

Around Hebron

Around Hebron and in the Valley of Eschol they found descendants of Anak (Anakim). “Anak” meant “necklace,” and so they were called the “necklace people.” They were giants and so they were thought to be descendants of the Nephilim, who were descendants of the sons of God and the daughters of men as described in Genesis 6:4.

In the Negeb

As expected, the Amalekites, desert nomads and traditional enemies of Israel, were to be found in the desert.

In the Hill Country

Three groups were found in the hill country. They were the Hittites, who were offshoots of the powerful Hittite Empire in Asia Minor; the Jebusites, who were a Canaanite group that managed to hold on to Jerusalem right up to David's time; and the Amorites, who were desert peoples, sometimes referred to as Canaanites.

By the Sea and along the Jordan

As can be seen from the discussion above, *Canaanite* tended to be a generic term, which included a number of tribes, many of who lived by the Sea and along the Jordan.

Their Report

The report consisted of three important points: that it was indeed a land of milk and honey, that its cities were well fortified, and that its population was mixed, consisting of some powerfully strong peoples. Caleb wanted to go in and occupy the Promised Land anyway (13:30); but the others said, "No!" (13:31). Joshua sided with Caleb, and so the report of the group was not to invade. Caleb and Joshua voted for invasion, but they were a minority.

THE DECISION TO ATTACK (14:1-45)

The people listened to the majority report. Only Caleb and Joshua wanted to enter the Promised Land. The rest wanted to go home to Egypt. Moses interceded on their behalf, but punishment for the people's weakness was that none of them above the age of 20 would enter the Promised Land (14:29-30), and that they would have to endure forty years in the wilderness. Why forty years? The answer is that they will have to live one year for every day the spies spent doing their espionage (14:34). Other reasons offered are that forty was just a rounded off number representing a generation and that they had to spend one year in the wilderness for every day they murmured against Moses and Aaron and God.

The ten spies, who recommended that they not attack, were killed in a plague. Only Caleb and Joshua were to be permitted entrance into Canaan with the children and future descendants. When they did finally enter, Caleb conquered the Anakim or the giants (Joshua 14:6-15). Against Moses' advice and without the Ark, the people tried to make up for their bad judgment by attacking, but the Amalekites and the Canaanites, who dwelt in the hill country, defeated them. They pursued them back to Hormah, near Beersheba.

VARIOUS LAWS (15:1-41)

Chapters 15 to 19 seem to be an interlude breaking up the narrative. They are an attempt to justify the priestly tradition and its connection with the tribe of Levi, from which Aaron and Moses came.

Laws about Sacrifice (15:1-31)

Here we find a description of some sacrifices to be made upon entering Canaan. The description includes the cereal and drink offerings that are to accompany a burnt or peace offering. These would not be valid for sins committed with a “high hand” (deliberately or defiantly), but they would be valid for sins committed unwittingly (in ignorance).

The Law Concerning the Sabbath (15:32-36)

Death was to be the punishment. (See Exodus 31:14-15 and 35:2) The man caught in the act of gathering sticks presented them with an unclear case, and that explains why they did not know what to do with him. It was clear from Exodus 35:3 that fires were not to be lit on the Sabbath, but what about just gathering sticks? The word from the Lord was that the whole community should participate in stoning him to death.

Laws about Tassels (15:37-41)

Tassels were to be reminders of the Law. They were to be placed on the corners of their garments with a blue cord attached to each tassel. The blue thread symbolized holiness.

REBELLION OF KORAH, DATHAN, AND ABIRAM (16:1-50)

Korah (from the Tribe of Levi) was concerned about the monopoly of the priesthood. Dathan and Abiram (from the Tribe of Reuben) were concerned about Moses’ inability to lead them into the Promised Land. These three, along with 250 leaders of the congregation blamed Moses for his failures and his monopoly of the priesthood. They claimed that the whole congregation was holy. Moses and Aaron interpreted the rebellion as being against the Lord (16:11) and challenged them. They were to approach the altar with the censers (fire pans) to see whom the Lord would accept. The earth opened up and swallowed up these men and their families. Fire, perhaps lightning, consumed the 250 leaders who were offering incense, and 14,700 more were killed in a plague before Aaron interceded and made atonement for the people with a censer (fire pan). The English Version of the Bible calls the censers bronze fire pans. Eleazar was then instructed to collect the censers (fire pans) and hammer them into plates and cover the altar with them. This was to be a reminder that anyone who is not a priest should not burn incense before the Lord.

AARON'S ROD (17:1-13)

To finally settle things about who was the high priest, every tribe was to produce a rod with the tribe leader's name on it. Aaron's name was to appear on the rod that represented the Tribe of Levi. The rods were then placed in the Tabernacle. God promised to make the rod sprout, which represented the priestly leader. Of all the rods, Aaron's rod sprouted and blossomed into ripe almonds (17:8). From that time on the rod was placed next to the testimony (10 Commandments) and the jar of manna (Exodus 16:33-34) as a symbol of Aaron's priestly office. This proved that God had chosen him, and that the others were to follow him.

DUTIES OF PRIESTS AND LEVITES (18:1-32)

The Levites were given responsibility for taking care of the Tabernacle, and the priests were to minister at the altar and in the sanctuary. They were to guard the purity of the sanctuary.

Neither the priests nor the Levites were to have a share in the inheritance of the land. God gave the priests the remainder of all the sacrificed offerings, the firstfruits, and the firstlings. The firstborn were to be redeemed for 5 shekels when they were one month old. The Levites were to be given the nation's tithes (1/10th of all the flocks, herds, and produce). They in turn were to give a tithe to Aaron and the priests, who were his sons.

THE ASHES OF THE RED HEIFER (19:1-22)

The large number of deaths in the previous chapter may have caused the author to follow up with the ritual of the red heifer, which was the remedy for those who had defiled themselves through contact with a dead body. The ashes were used along with water in the ritual of purification. The sacred blood, the sacred number (7), and the sacred tent of meeting all combined to make the ritual efficacious. To minimize the risk of accidental defilement, tombs were later painted white. (See Matthew 23:37)

END OF THE STAY AT KADESH (20:1-29)

The Death of Miriam (20:1)

Thirty-eight of the forty years in the wilderness were spent in Kadesh Barnea. At the end of this long stay, Miriam, Aaron, and Moses died, all within one year. "The first month" might mean the first month of the fortieth year, but this cannot be concluded with certainty.

Water from the Rock (20:1-13)

As they did at the beginning of the wilderness journey, the people grumbled about the lack of water and food. Moses and Aaron went before the Lord, who told them to call forth water from the rock. He did not tell them to strike the rock. In anger and with

disrespect Moses struck the rock twice and water came forth for the people and their cattle. Moses and Aaron were condemned for not obeying God's instructions. Striking the rock was interpreted as distrust and disrespect of God, and their punishment was that they would not enter the Promised Land. (See Deuteronomy 32:50-52) This place, like the other, was called Meribah (to strive, content), although the other place was also called Massah (testing).

Rebuff by Edom (20:14-21)

The people of Edom were descendants of Jacob's brother Esau. By the 13th century B.C.E., Edom had already developed a non-hereditary monarchy (Genesis 31:39). The Israelites were asking for access to the King's Highway, which was the main route leading from Ezion-geber (Gulf of Aqaba) to Damascus (Syria). Access was denied.

The Death of Aaron (20:22-29)

Aaron died on Mount Hor, and after 30 days of mourning, his son Eleazar took his place. Mount Hor might be Jebel Madeira, northeast of Kadesh, on the western border of Edom; but nothing is known for sure about its location.

IS THE MAJORITY ALWAYS RIGHT?

"Democracy is not prescribed in the Bible," writes Charles Colson, "and Christians can and do live under other political systems. But Christians can hardly fail to love democracy, because of all systems it best assures human dignity, the essence of our creation in God's image."¹ In spite of our commitment to democracy, we must admit that the majority is not always right. It is *only* right when it coincides with the Will of God, and that is the *only* time when it *must* be obeyed.

There are many examples in the Bible illustrating the minority in touch with God, and to follow the majority, in such cases, leads to disaster. In such times, our leaders must decide against the majority. The first clear example of this can be found in the sending of twelve spies into the Promised Land. When they returned, they took a vote, which was based on three criteria. It was indeed a land of milk and honey, and a single cluster of grapes was so large that they had to carry it on a pole between them (Numbers 13:23). They admitted this, but two other criteria overwhelmed them; hence, they reported: "We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Yet the people who live in the land are strong, and the towns are fortified and very large; and besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there." (Numbers 13:27-28) The two negative criteria are (1) "they are stronger than we" (13:31), and (2) "all the people we saw...are of great stature." (13:32). Since there were two good reasons for backing off, and only one good reason for entering the Promised Land, ten of the spies concluded,

¹Charles Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), p. 322.

“We are not able to go up against this people....” (13:31) Joshua and Caleb, however, said the following:

The land that we went through as spies is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD is pleased with us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only, do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they are no more than bread for us; their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them. (Numbers 14:7b-9)

But the congregation refused to listen, and went along with the majority. By the time they realized their error, and tried to rectify it by attacking, it was too late. They missed their golden opportunity, and now they had to suffer the consequences, which would be forty years in the wilderness, one year for every day they spent spying out the land (Numbers 14:34). Only Caleb and Joshua, and those who were under twenty at the time, would ever enter into the Promised Land (Numbers 14:29-30).

Authority does not lie in the majority, but in the Will of God; and that Will is revealed through chosen leaders. When Aaron and Miriam, Moses’ brother and sister, challenged his political leadership, God came down on Moses’ side, saying: “With him I speak face to face — clearly, not in riddles; and he beholds the form of the LORD.” (Numbers 12:8) There was also a rebellion, on the part of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram against the authority of Moses’ leadership and of Aaron’s priesthood (Numbers 16:3). God came down on the side of Aaron, symbolizing his authority with a rod that sprouted and bore ripe almonds (Numbers 17:8).

As divinely led leaders, Moses and Aaron should have acted against the majority. It would have made a great difference and saved forty years in the wilderness. Political and religious decisions are like that. The right decision is not always reflected in the majority vote. Democracy is not designed to get at the Will of God, but as Reinhold Niebuhr said: “...democracy is a method of finding proximate solutions for insoluble problems.”¹ The goal of democracy is to go with the will of the people, and frequently, in fact usually, that does not coincide with the Will of God. If we cannot depend upon democracy to lead us to the Will of God, then what are we to do? It is too easy to say, “Listen to the Prophets.” God usually raises them up when he needs them, but we usually close our ears to them. We also tend to confuse political and religious authorities, both of who are supposed to follow the Will of God. As Charles Colson wrote: “Prophets should make religious claims. Political leaders should not—otherwise they can become ayatollahs.”² Moses represented the political, and Aaron represented the religious. These two authorities are related, but they do not reside in one and the same person. The checks and balances of democracy are needed, but it is dangerous to think that the majority will always be right. We need to trace the footprints of God from the past to the present to enable ourselves to

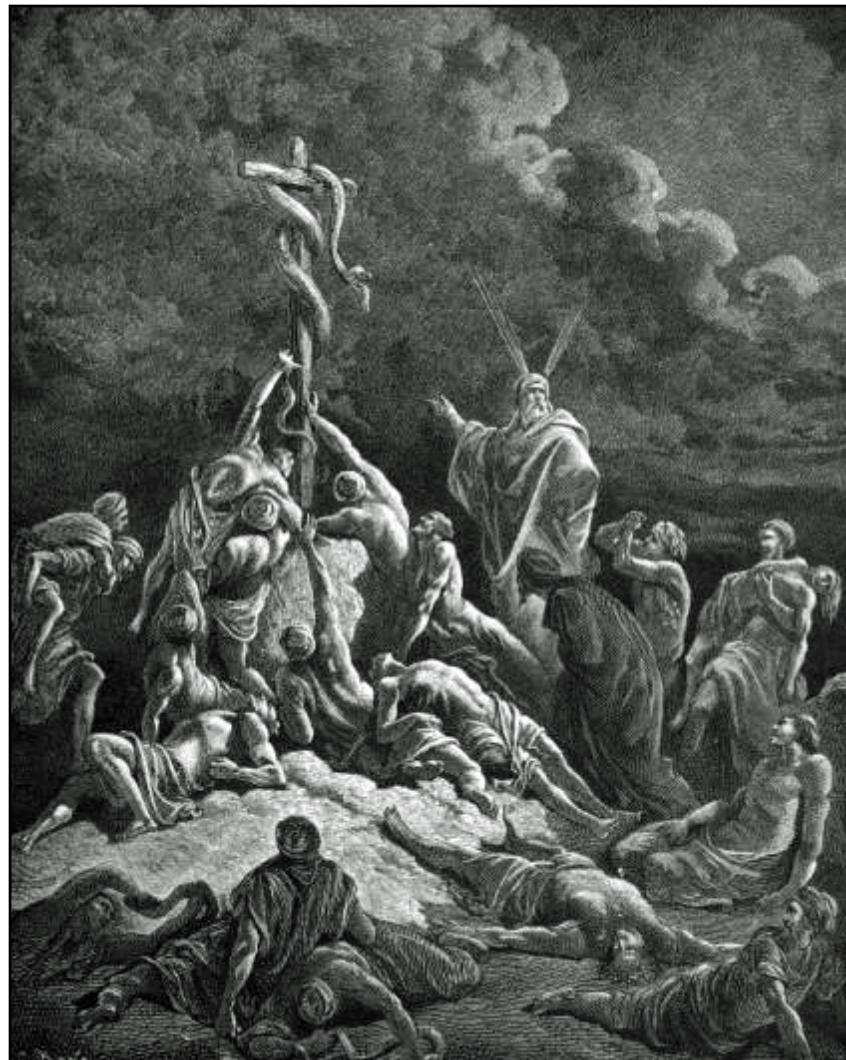
¹Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1944.), p. 118.

²Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict*, p. 304.

judge every political and religious claim; and what finally convinces us is not what the majority decides, but the ring of divine truth that we hear sounding in our ears. To hear it clearly requires an understanding of the past, sensitivity to the present, and the courage to go against the will of the majority. Jesus points the way, but even in his church the majority do not always follow.

NUMBERS

The Census



The Bronze Serpent by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

22. Occupation of Transjordan I

Numbers 21:1–25:18

22. OCCUPATION OF TRANJORDAN I (21:1—25:18)

EVENTS ALONG THE WAY (21:1-35)

The Battle at Hormah (21:1-3)	The Bronze Serpent (21:4-9)	Progress through Transjordan (21:10-20)	Victory over Sihon (21:20-32)	Victory over Og (21:33-35)
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THE BALAAM STORY (22:1—24:25)

Balak and Balaam (22:1-40)	Balaam's First Prophecy (22:41—23:12) Bamoth-baal (High Places of Baal)	Balaam's Second Prophecy (23:13—26) Field of Zophim (On Top of Pisgah)	Balaam's Third Prophecy (23:27—24:13) (On Top of Peor)	Balaam's Fourth Prophecy (24:14-25) (Star of Jacob) (24:17)
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IDOLATRY IN MOAB (25:1-18)

The Incident in Peor (25:1-5) (25:1-3 and 31:8 and 16)	Phinehas' Zeal (25:6-18) (Phinehas killed Zimri and Cozbi to stop a plague from spreading) (1 Corinthians 10:8 quotes 23,000)
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22. OCCUPATION OF TRANSJORDAN I

Numbers 21:1—25:18

ASSIGNMENTS				
Events along the Way 21:1-35	Balak and Balaam 22:1-40	Balaam's first Prophecies 22:41—23:26	Balaam's latter Prophecies 23:27—24:25	Idolatry in Moab 25:1-18

EVENTS ALONG THE WAY (21:1-35)

The Battle at Hormah (21:1-3)

This seems to be a second, more optimistic, account of the Battle of Hormah. (See 14:39-45 for the pessimistic account). It is another story of Israel's attempt to penetrate Canaan from the South. In the first story the Israelites lost, but in this story, they won. This story seems out of place here, and was probably an addition. If the battle was won, why did they not just continue on in from the South? Why did they turn in a southerly direction towards the Red Sea?

The Bronze Serpent (21:4-9)

They moved in a southerly direction from Mount Hor by way of the Red Sea, which meant they followed a caravan route leading from Kadesh to the Gulf of Aqaba. The people began to grumble about the manna, which symbolized their spurning of God's grace; and so fiery serpents attacked them. The snakes were interpreted as a means of divine judgment upon the people's rebellion against God, and the bronze serpent on a pole was the means of redemption for those who would turn to it in simple faith (Isaiah 45:22). If, however, they worshipped the bronze serpent, that was idolatry; and apparently, they did just that. Seeing them worship the bronze serpent, Hezekiah destroyed it (2 Kings 18:4). In that time the bronze serpent was referred to as *Nehushtan*. Jesus used this same image to talk about his own death on the cross and what it would mean to sinners who would turn to him. They, too, if they believed, would be spared. (See John 3:14-15)

Progress through the Transjordan (21:10-20)

Here we have an incomplete list of the places through which they marched from Mount Hor to the Valley of the Moabites.

Victory over Sihon (21:21-32)

Sihon was an Amorite King who lived in Heshbon. A request was made to pass through his Kingdom (21:22), but he refused. When the Israelites met him at Jahaz, they easily defeated him.

Victory over Og (21:33-35)

Og was an Amorite King who lived in Bashan. A similar battle was fought with him at Edrei. No survivors were left (21:35).

THE BALAAM STORIES (22:1 —24:25)

Balak's Sends for Balaam (22:1-21)

“Across the Jordan from Jericho,” is confusing. What were they doing there already? At any rate, the Israelites were a threat to Moab and Midian, who now joined together against them. Balak (the Moabite King) sent for Balaam (a Mesopotamian diviner) to put a curse on the invading Israelites. Balaam was told by God not to cooperate because the Israelites were blessed. Balaam said he would not go beyond the command of the Lord, not even for a house full of silver and gold (22:18). In the end, he was told by the Lord to play along with Balak, but he was to obey God at the same time.

Balaam and his Donkey (22:22-35)

After Balaam set out with the princes of Moab, God seemed to be angry with him for going, and so He sent an angel to appear in front of his donkey. Balaam struck the donkey three times to get her going, but the donkey, seeing the angel, refused to budge. Finally, the donkey talked, questioning Balaam’s right to strike her. Then Balaam saw the angel himself and received instructions from the Lord to go along with Balak, but to listen only to the Lord (22:35).

The story of Balaam and his talking donkey is an example of Israelite storytelling and humor. Although Balaam was an expert in animal divination, his donkey saw what he could not see. The talking donkey reminds us of the talking serpent in Genesis 3. Neither of these two incidents are to be taken literally.

Balaam's Encounter with Balak (22:36-40)

Balaam met Balak at the City of Moab (Ar), and promised only to speak what God put into his mouth. Ar was probably located on the Arnon River.

Balaam's First Prophecy (22:41—23:12)

The first prophecy was delivered from Bamoth-baal (high places of Baal), where Balaam instructed Balak to build seven altars, on which they would offer seven bulls and seven rams. Babylonian diviners frequently resorted to this kind of a sacrificial ceremony in order to obtain an omen (23:1-6). Balaam read the omen that he was not to curse, but rather, to bless Israel. Balak could not understand this, for he had asked Balaam to curse Israel. The whole thing was backfiring on him.

There is an interesting side note on Numbers 23:10. Upon the death of George Whitefield, John Wesley chose this verse to begin his eulogy:

Let me die the death of the upright,
and let my end be like his.

Balaam's Second Prophecy (23:13-26)

Balak took Balaam to another place where he could get a closer look at the Israelites. They went to the field of Zophim on top of Pisgah and built seven more altars and offered seven more bulls and rams, but Balaam still refused to pronounce a curse on Israel.

Balaam's Third Prophecy (23:27—24:13)

Balak tried still another place where he could get a closer look at the Israelites. They went to the top of Peor. They went through the same ritual with the altars, bulls, and rams. This time Balaam did not even bother to look for an omen. He insisted on saying what the Lord told him to say and so he refused to curse Israel.

Balaam's Fourth Prophecy (24:14-25)

This final prophecy was given without any preparatory rites of divination. Balaam accurately predicted the future conquest of Moab and Edom in the time of David (2 Samuel 8:2, 13-14). Balaam and Balak then separated and returned to their own homes.

Some see three additional prophecies in Numbers 24:20; 24:21-22; and 24:23-24, making the total seven. It is difficult to follow Balaam's prophecies after the third one. The text seems to be confused. What is clear is that Balaam refused to curse the Israelites; and for that, Balak refused to pay him, which would have been the ultimate insult (24:11). We should not get the idea that Balaam was a righteous prophet, for later, he offered some advice to the Midianites for corrupting the Israelites. He was killed for his involvement (31:8 and 16).

IDOLATRY IN MOAB (25:1-18)

Incident in Peor (25:1-5)

Israel had moved into Shittim, the place from which the final move was to be made across the Jordan. The Moabite women lured some of the Israelite men into idolatrous rites, a blend of sexual and religious practices. Peor (Beth-peor) was the center of the worship of Baal (Master), the Canaanite god of storm and fertility. The name for this god in Moab was Chemosh. The protest was against intermarriage with foreign peoples based on the fear that it would corrupt Israel's faith. It had nothing to do with race. The Lord told Moses to instruct his judges to hang the guilty chiefs in the sun so that the Lord's anger would turn away from Israel. According to the ancient conception of corporate guilt, the execution of the chiefs was expiation for the people.

Phinehas' Zeal (25:6-18)

There seems to be "a lost beginning." In that "beginning," Balaam, according to Numbers 31:16, was responsible for advising the Midianite women to bring Israel down by marrying its young men and corrupting their faith. Balaam paid later with his life (31:8). The confusion here between Moabite and Midianite women has to do with an overlap between these two peoples. The judgment of God came in the form of a plague, which killed 24,000 Israelites. Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, killed an Israelite man (Zimri) and his Midianite wife (Cozbi), which stopped the plague. Phinehas was then rewarded for his act with a perpetual priesthood (25:13).

INEVITABLE VICTORY

In spite of rebellion from the Israelites, the people were destined for victory. No one, not even a prophet, could stop that. Two powerful kings, Sihon and Og, stood between the Israelites and the Promised Land, but both of them would taste the bitterness of defeat. Balak, King of Moab, had a plan to prevent his own downfall; and it involved the hiring of the prophet, Balaam, to curse the Israelites. Balaam sold his services to the highest bidder, and was ready to do the King's cursing; but his own donkey caught a glimpse of God's angelic messenger before he did, and so he was warned not to curse the Israelites. In four successive prophecies, he could only say, according to Numbers 23:8, "How can I curse whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced?" Balak placed him into four different geographical locations, hoping that the varied perspectives would somehow inspire him to curse them; but every time, Balaam refused to curse the Israelites because God would not allow it. Finally, in Numbers 24:17b-18 he made an important messianic prophecy:

"...a star shall come out of Jacob,
and a scepter shall rise out of
Israel;
it shall crush the borderlands of
Moab,

and the territory of all the
Shethites.
Edom will become a possession,
Seir a possession of
its enemies,
while Israel does valiantly.”

Moab and Edom were ultimately defeated, but this messianic prophecy points way beyond those initial victories to the more comprehensive victories of David (2 Samuel 8:2, 13-15). The star and scepter became symbols of David’s reign, but more than David’s victory is intended here. Jesus, in Revelation 22:16, is described as “the bright morning star.” This messianic prophecy is really about him, for he reigns over the only kind of Kingdom in which victory is really inevitable. David may have stretched the Promised Land to its limits, but Solomon split it in two through injustice and oppression. Having been divided in two, Israel and Judah finally fell to Assyrian and Babylonian military forces. Only Jesus’ Kingdom cannot fall.

Jesus’ Kingdom does not need a prophet’s blessing, nor can human curses touch it. As he faced the cross, Peter tried to defend it by drawing his sword; but Jesus said to him in Matthew 26:52-53: “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?”

What did the above mean to the Israelites long ago and for Christians living today? Those who commit themselves to God’s agenda will experience the sweet taste of victory. It is inevitable. Balaam could not curse the Israelites because he recognized that they were on God’s side, and all his curses would be ineffective. This does not mean that Balaam was an honorable prophet. It is believed that Balaam found another way of undermining the Israelites, and that was to encourage the Moabite women to seduce the Israelite men, inviting them to sacrifice to their gods (Numbers 25:1-3). While it does not specifically say that Balaam had anything to do with this, he was later condemned and killed by the Midianites for an incident at Peor (Numbers 31:8 and 16), and this is precisely what happened at Peor. While this sin of Balaam’s did not bring about Israel’s defeat at the time, similar kinds of decadence did bring about Israel’s fall. It is not within the Kingdom of Israel that victory is inevitable, but in the Kingdom of God.

Actually, this victory has already taken place, but much of the world is not yet aware of it. Chuck Colson compares what has happened in Christ with the turning point in World War II:¹

¹Charles Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict* (William Morrow/Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), p. 84.

Probably the most significant event in Europe during World War II was D-Day, June 6, 1944, when the Allied armies stormed the beaches of Normandy. That attack guaranteed the eventual destruction of the Axis powers in Europe. Though the war continued with seeming uncertainties along the way, the outcome was in fact determined. But it wasn't until May 8, 1945—VE Day—that the results of the forces set in motion eleven months earlier were realized.

The Exodus was D-Day for the Jews and Easter Sunday was D-Day for Christians. Taking the Promised Land was supposed to be Victory Day for the Jews, but complete victory has always eluded them. The final victory still lies out there in the future, and the same is true for Christians. All that can be said at this time is that victory is inevitable. Human blessings cannot bring it about quicker, nor can human cursing delay it. When Jesus was about to leave his disciples, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

As they watched Jesus' ascension into Heaven, two men stood by them in white robes, and, according to Acts 1:11, said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." Victory is assured, so be about God's work in the world.

NUMBERS

The Census

*Take a census of the whole congregation
of the Israelites,
from twenty years old and upward,
by their ancestral houses,
everyone in Israel able to go to war.*

Numbers 26:2

23. Occupation of Transjordan II
Numbers 26:1–36:13

23. OCCUPATION OF TRANSJORDAN II (26:1–36:13)

THE SECOND CENSUS (26:1-65) (Only Joshua and Caleb Survive)

The Census

20 Years and Above (26:2)	Division of the Land (26:54)	Division by Lot (26:55)	The Levites 26:62
The Tribes	First Census	Second Census	Differences
Reuben	46,500	43,730	-2,770
Simeon	59,300	22,200	-37,100
Gad	45,650	40,500	-5,150
Judah	74,600	76,500	+1,900
Issachar	54,400	64,300	+9,900
Zebulun	57,400	60,500	+3,100
Manasseh	32,200	52,700	+20,500
Ephraim	40,500	32,500	-8,000
Benjamin	35,400	45,600	+10,200
Dan	62,700	64,400	+1,700
Asher	41,500	53,400	+11,900
Naphtali	53,400	45,400	-8,000
Levi	22,000	23,000	+1,000
(Gershon, Kohath, Merari)			

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Property Rights (27:1-11)	Vows of Women (30:1-16)	Inheritance of Women (36:1-13)

The Daughters of Zelophehad

Mahlah	Noah	Hoglah	Milcah	Tirzah

The issue is to keep women from transferring property to other tribes.
The women mentioned in Chapter 27 belong to the tribe of Manasseh.

THE SELECTION OF JOSHUA (27:12-23) AND THE OFFERINGS (28:1–29:40)

Daily Offerings (28:3-8)	New Moon/Month (28:11-15)	Pentecost/Weeks (28:26-31)	Day of Atonement (29:7-11)
The Sabbath (28:9-10)	Passover (28:16-25)	The New Year (29:1-6)	Booths (29:12-38)

23. OCCUPATION OF TRANSJORDAN II

Numbers 26:1—36:13

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Second Census 26:1-65	Women's Rights 27:1-11 30:1-16 36:1-13	Joshua and the Offerings 27:12-23 28:1—29:40	Holy War and the Borders 31:1-54 32:1—34:29	The Special Cities 35:1-34

THE SECOND CENSUS. (26:1-65)

The reason for a second census had to do with their preparation to take possession of the land. The practical effect of it had to do with military service (26:2) and dividing up the land among themselves (26:54), which was to be accomplished by “lot” (26:55). The tribes were to be allotted territory according to their size.

Only the men capable of military service were listed. They were now at the end of their wilderness journey, poised on the Plains of Moab, just across from Jericho, ready to do battle. Moses was still their leader, but Eleazar had replaced Aaron as High Priest.

The Census (26:2) (20 years and above)

1. Reuben	46,500	43,730	- 2,770
2. Simeon	59,300	22,200	-37,100
3. Gad	45,650	40,500	-5,150
4. Judah	74,600	76,500	+1,900
5. Issachar	54,400	64,300	+9,900
6. Zebulun	57,400	60,500	+3,100
7. Manasseh	32,200	52,700	+20,500
8. Ephraim	40,500	32,500	-8,000
9. Benjamin	35,400	45,600	+10,200
10. Dan	62,700	64,400	+1,700
11. Asher	41,500	53,400	+11,900
12. Naphtali	<u>53,400</u>	<u>45,400</u>	-8,000
	603,550	601,730	(Deut. 26:51)

There was a slight loss from the 603,550, which was recorded in the first census (1:46 and 2:32). Of all the tribes, Simeon suffered the greatest losses during the wilderness journey.

The Levites

They were counted from one month upward and numbered 23,000 (26:62). The number in 3:39 was 22,000. No reason is given for the difference. As in Chapter 3, they were again divided into three groups: the Gershonites, Kohathites, and Merarites, none of which were given any share in the land.

The Sharing of the Land

The land was to be divided according to the size of the tribes and by lot (26:55).

Survivors from the first Census

Only Caleb and Joshua were present in the first census. Others might have been present, but because they were under 20 at the time, they were not included in the count.

THE INHERITANCE OF PROPERTY BY WOMEN (27:1-11)

The daughters of Zelophehad (tribe of Manasseh), who were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah, requested before Moses and Eleazar the priest that their father's inheritance be given to them. Their father had died, but they reminded Moses that he did not take part in Korah's rebellion. He died on account of his own sin. Their father had no sons, and so they were requesting what would normally have been passed on to sons. Moses took the matter to God, who ruled in their favor.

Behind their request lies the Israelite conviction that a person's property was a gift from God, which should be kept in the family. The daughter, in order to keep the inheritance of land, had to marry within the same tribe. (See 36:1-9). If a man had no sons or daughters, the property would be passed on as follows: to the man's brothers, to the man's father's brothers, or to the nearest kin. It is interesting that nothing is said about the man's wife. She seems to inherit nothing.

THE SELECTION OF JOSHUA (27:12-23)

Abarim was a hilly region or mountain range in which Mount Nebo was located. Moses passed on some of his authority to Joshua, but the account makes clear that Joshua was not equal to Moses. Moses had spoken directly with God, whereas, Joshua was to receive his divine direction through the priestly manipulation of the Urim (the sacred lot). Priestly authority was therefore to be final.

PUBLIC OFFERINGS (28:1—29:40)

Details are given here for the public offerings. The heavenly bodies were believed to exist in order to mark the proper occasions for worship. This was unlike Israel's neighbors who regarded them as objects for superstitious reverence. Regulations for sacrifices were given for the following times.

Daily Offerings (28:3-8)

A lamb, one year old, was to be given in the morning and evening, with a cereal offering mixed with oil and a drink offering.

Sabbath (28:9-10)

These offerings were similar to the daily offerings, but were doubled in number.

New Moon/Month (28:11-15)

Since the year was based on the lunar calendar, a festival was held at each new moon or at the beginning of each new month. Two young bulls, one ram, seven male one-year-old lambs, cereal offerings mixed with oil, and drink offerings with wine in them were made.

Passover and Unleavened Bread (28:16-25)

Passover began on the 14th day of Nisan (the 1st month). The Feast of Unleavened Bread began on the 15th day and lasted for seven days. The offerings were similar to those made for a new month.

Pentecost/Weeks (28:26-31)

This was called Firstfruits or the Harvest Festival, and was held seven weeks after Passover in the month of Sivan. The offerings were similar to those offered above.

New Year (29:1-6)

This was referred to as the Feast of Trumpets and began on the 1st day of the month of Tishri (7th month). The offerings were similar to the above offerings, only there seems to be but one bull offered.

Day of Atonement (29:7-11)

Atonement began on the 10th day of Tishri (7th month), and was basically a day of confession, contrition and celebration.

Booths (29:12-38)

This day began on the 15th day of Tishri (7th month). The offerings were the same except for the bulls. Thirteen bulls were offered on the 1st day and one less bull was offered on each succeeding day. The significance of this is unknown.

VOWS OF WOMEN (30:1-16)

This is the only place where vows of women were set down. The passage reflects a society in which women had little place. Vows made by men were absolutely binding, but vows made by unmarried women were subject to approval by their fathers and vows made by married women were subject to approval by their husbands. Only the divorced or widowed could make vows for themselves. Similarly, regulations about vows appear in Leviticus 27 and Deuteronomy 23:21-23, but they do not concern women.

HOLY WAR AGAINST MIDIAN (31:1-54)

Previously the Midianites were considered friends. Moses was related to a Midianite and married one; but in the Transjordan, they were considered enemies. There was some overlap between Midianites and Moabites. The overlap had to do with the words: Midianite, Ishmaelite, Medanite, and Moabite.

One thousand men were recruited from each tribe and an army of twelve thousand followed Phinehas, the son of Eleazar. Eleazar, Aaron's son, had to be careful not to come in contact with the dead because he was the High Priest. Every male Midianite was slain, including the five Kings: Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba. Balaam was viewed as guilty of apostasy at Peor and slain. Moses became very angry because they allowed the women to live (31:15), and so he commanded them to kill everyone; men, women, and children. Only the young women were to be spared and used by the soldiers for themselves. They were not only spared for the sake of the soldiers, but because they had not participated in the seduction of the Israelite young men at Peor. Holy war was seen as a way of making a sacrifice to the Lord, in which case, the "guilty" enemy became the sacrifice. The intent was to destroy the Midianites, and that was why the women and children had to be killed. They did not want a new tribe to emerge. In spite of this effort, all the Midianites were not killed, for they appear again in the history of Israel. What is remarkable is that twelve thousand Israelites defeated a people who had 32,000 virgins, and not an Israelite was lost in the battle (31:49). This has caused some scholars to suggest that *thousand* refers to a military *unit* and not a number.

The booty taken in the war was split between the warriors and the congregation evenly, that is, 50-50. The booty listed here includes 675,000 sheep, 72,000 cattle, 61,000 asses, and 32,000 women who had not known a man. The warriors paid 1/500th to the priests, and the congregation paid 1/50th to the Levites. In 31:48-54 the soldiers made a special offering in gratitude for their safe return. They gave 400 pounds of gold ornaments, armlets, bracelets, rings, earrings, and necklaces to Moses and Eleazar.

HOLY WAR (31:1-54) AND THE BORDERS (32:1—34:29)					
Commander: Phinehas	Warriors: 1,000 from every Tribe	The Enemy: Tribe of Midian	Objective: Kill off the Tribe		
The Booty					
675,000 Sheep	72,000 Cattle	61,000 Asses	32,000 Virgins		
Payments					
Warriors: 1/500 to Priests	Congregation: 1/50 to Levites	400 Pounds of Gold to Moses and Eleazar	32,000 Virgins		
Settlement in the Transjordan: Good for Cattle					
The Tribe of Reuben	The Tribe of Gad	The Half Tribe of Manasseh			
The Promise: Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh were to help in conquering the rest of the Promised Land.					
The Border (33:50—34:29)					
South: The Brook of Egypt	North: Hamath	West: The Great Sea	East: The Jordan River		
THE SPECIAL LEVITICAL CITIES (35:1-34)					
Ordinary Cities	Cities of Refuge	West Bank Cities	East Bank Cities		
42	6	Kedesh Shechem Hebron	Golan Ramoth Bezer		
Requirements for Living in a Levitical City:					
----- Cities were provided for the Tribe of Levi, which did not inherit any Land in Canaan					
Requirements for Living in a City of Refuge					
Unintentional Manslaughter	Awaiting a Proper Trial	Return Home after the Death of the High Priest			

SETTLEMENT OF THE TRANSJORDAN TRIBES (32:1-42)

Because the area of Jazer and Gilead were good for cattle, Reuben and Gad wanted to settle there, as did half the tribe of Manasseh. Moses opposed the request at first, but finally agreed if they would help the other tribes in the Battle for Canaan. (See 32:29-30). They agreed and took the Kingdoms of Sihon (Amorites) and Og (Bashan), and settled their families in the Transjordan (the East Bank).

THE JOURNEY FROM EGYPT TO MOAB (33:1-49)

Here we find a list of 40 stages or stopping off places from Egypt to Moab. Many of the places cannot be located, but the trip can be divided into three parts. (1) Goshen (Rameses) to Sinai, (2) Sinai to Kadesh-barnea, and (3) Kadesh-barnea to the plains of Moab.

Ideal Boundaries for Israel (33:50—34:29)

The boundaries given do not agree with other descriptions. The southern boundary was to be the Brook of Egypt (Wadi el 'Arish), the northern boundary, Hamath (Lebo-hamath at the head of the Orontes), the western boundary the Great Sea, and the eastern boundary the Jordan River. The Sea of Chinnereth was an early name for the Sea of Galilee. The ideal boundaries were not actually reached until King David's time. King David might be considered the one who finally conquered the last opposing forces.

All of the non-Israelite peoples were to be killed and their sanctuaries and cult objects destroyed. Failure to do this would result in catastrophe for the Israelites.

Division of the land was to take place proportionately and by lot. Since two and one half tribes had already possessed the land on the Eastern side of the Jordan, only nine and one half tribes would divide up the land on the Western side. Eleazar and Joshua, along with one leader from each tribe, were to divide up the land. The names mean something. Names of the leaders contribute an interesting insight into Israel's way of naming people.

Judah	Caleb	
Simeon	Shemuel	"Name of God"
Benjamin	Elidad	"God has loved"
Dan	Bukki	
Manasseh	Hanniel	"Favor of God"
Ephraim	Kemuel	
Zebulun	Elizaphan	"My God protects"
Issachar	Paltiel	"God is my deliverance"
Asher	Ahihud	
Naphtali	Pedahel	"God has redeemed"

THE SPECIAL CITIES (35:1-34)

The Levitical Cities (35:1-8)

Special cities were allotted because the Levites were not entitled to any tribal inheritance. There were 48 cities in all, 6 of which were cities of refuge. The cities also had pasture lands surrounding them. In summing up, the Levites were taken care of in several ways: (1) tithes (Numbers 18:21-24); (2) spoils of war (Numbers 31:30); (3) special rights at the Jubilee (Leviticus 25:32-34); and (4) cities scattered among the other tribes.

The Cities of Refuge (35:9-34)

These cities were for persons who had committed manslaughter, that is, for persons who killed someone unintentionally. It was a way of restraining tribal law or blood revenge. Tribal law compelled a family member of the murdered one to get even by killing the murderer or one of his or her relatives. These cities did not protect premeditated murderers. Such persons were to be put to death, but there had to be more than one witness. The whole concept came about as a desire to give people the right to trial or proof of guilt. Even the person guilty of unintentionally killing had to stay in a city of refuge until the death of the high priest, after which he could return home. To be caught outside of that city meant that you opened yourself up to the law of revenge. Murder, whether intentional or unintentional was taken seriously, for it polluted the land (35:33).

THE INHERITANCE OF MARRIED WOMEN (36:1-13)

This section is a supplement to 27:1-11 and continues the discussion concerning the five daughters of Zelophehad. Women's rights were to be subordinated to the Israelite theology of land as being the inheritance of Yahweh. The purpose was to keep property in the family to which it originally belonged. A woman was allowed to inherit property, but she had to marry within her tribe or lose her inheritance. This law was not designed to prevent tribal intermarriage.

THE STRUGGLE FOR LAND

We value private property. Everyone has a right to buy land, and few restrictions are placed on that right. There may be restrictions on what can be done with the land, and everyone must pay taxes; but anyone, who has the money, can purchase land.

The Israelites were not to purchase. They were to seize it, and then cast lots for it. All this is described in Numbers 33:53-54:

You shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess. You shall apportion the land by lot according to your clans; to a large one you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small one you shall give a small inheritance; the inheritance shall belong to the person on whom the lot falls; according to your ancestral tribes you shall inherit.

Land is divided up according to the size of the families, and so there is an attempt to provide each family according to its need. This would not last long if it is then passed down within the family in the form of inheritance. The discussion over the inheritance of the five daughters of Zelophehad, mentioned in Numbers 27:1-11 and 36:1-13, has to do with the need to keep the inheritance of land within the tribe, and it is not a rejection of inter-tribal marriage.

One word of caution was made in Numbers 33:55, which in our time is extremely difficult to understand, and that was to drive out the inhabitants of the land. The Lord warns: “But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides; they shall trouble you in the land where you are settling.” The struggle over the land continues even in the present.

Is possession of the land to be equated with ownership? The Biblical answer is clearly, “No!” In fact, no one owns the land. It belongs to God, and he gives it to whom he pleases; and even then, it is only a trust. It can even be taken away from God’s people, and the story of the Old Testament is that it was. That is what happened first in Israel in 721 B.C.E. and then in Judah in 586 B.C.E. The land was taken away. It also happened in 70 C.E. when Roman soldiers took Jerusalem, taking the last holdouts at Masada in 73 C.E.

Does modern Israel have a right to the land today? Do the Native American tribes have a right to the United States? Do the aborigines have a right to Australia? Prior possession can never be equated with the right of ownership, nor do squatters have such rights. Possession is not nine-tenths of the law, nor should it be.

How is rightful possession of land to be determined? We are not talking about “legal” or “lawful” possession, nor are we talking about how a State or Government might determine who can buy and sell land. The issue is whether people have any *right* to occupy land at all. While they cast lots to divide up the Promised Land, which they were taking by force, this was not a principle to be used forever. Inheritance and sale of land followed; but even then, land could not be transferred outside of the tribe. That would confuse things too much. In the end, no one owns the land. It is only used, and so everyone has the obligation of being a good steward. Only God owns the land, for he alone created it.

Our concern is not legal, but moral. Those have a right to occupy the land only so long as they establish justice on the basis of God’s righteousness and maintain peace, which extends way beyond the absence of conflict. Peace is not to be maintained for the sake of honor or through military power; rather, peace is to be maintained by the establishment of justice based on God’s kind of righteousness. When justice suffers, peace disintegrates, and the right to the land evaporates.

The difficult part is to discern when justice is so lacking that a nation not only has a right, but an obligation to intervene to re-establish it. The problems in Canaan were idolatry,

child sacrifice, and cultic prostitution, all of which God abhorred. The result was to invite his people, set apart to be holy, to seize the land and establish justice according to Divine Law. The heart of that Law lies in the Ten Commandments, which spells out the kind of righteousness God expects of his people. People who are not aiming at this kind of righteousness cannot establish the kind of justice God requires of those who would become good stewards of the land.

The sense of divine justice is present in all of us. This was the promise of Jeremiah for the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:33-34:

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

In his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus inaugurated this New Covenant, establishing the New Israel, which is far more inclusive than was the Old.

By hammering out the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* on December 10, 1948, the United Nations created a document that gives additional guidance, for it helps us to understand what a just society might look like, but it lacks criteria for acting where justice has begun to disintegrate. At what point should God's people intervene? In addition to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* we now need a *Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities*. There are times when nations ought to take the land away from those who have lost sight of “divine justice” and “human rights;” but it is difficult to know when such action ought to be taken. Lacking a leader like Moses, or Jesus, we must work out the criteria ourselves; but we do have the advantage of their insights into what God requires of a people who would possess and take care of his land.

DEUTERONOMY

The Second Law

*For I am going to die in this land
without crossing over the Jordan,
but you are going to cross over
to take possession of that good land.
So be careful not to forget the covenant
that the LORD your God made with you,
and not to make for yourselves an idol
in the form of anything that the LORD your God
has forbidden you.*

Deuteronomy 4:22-23

24. Moses Looks Back
Deuteronomy 1:1—4:49

24. MOSES LOOKS BACK (1:1—4:49)

INTRODUCTION (1:1-5)

When?: In the Fortieth Year (11:3)

Where? Valley opposite Beth-Peor (Moab)

A HISTORICAL REVIEW (1:6—3:29)

The Command to Leave Horeb (1:6-8)

Conquests of the Amorites (2:24—3:11)

Moses Appointment of Judges (1:9-18)

Sihon (2:24-37) | Og (3:1-11)

An Attempt to Enter Canaan (1:19-46)

Setlements in the Transjordan (3:12-22)

The Years in the Desert (2:1-23)

Moses' Survey of the Land (3:23-29)

THE ADMONITION TO OBEY THE LAW (4:1-40)

The Call
to
Obedience
(4:1-8)

The Revelation
at
Horeb
(4:9-24)

Consequences
of
Apostasy
(4:25-31)

Yahweh's
Unique
Revelation
(40:32-40)

THE CITIES OF REFUGE (4:41-49)

Cities West of the Jordan:

Tribes the Cities were for:

Bezer
Ramoth
Golan

Reuben
Gad
one-Half of Manasseh

SUMMARY

God
is
Jealous of Other gods
(4:24)

God
is
Merciful
(4:31)

God
is
the “Only” God
(4:35 and 39)

God
acts
in History
(4:44-49)

24. MOSES LOOKS BACK

Deuteronomy 1:1—4:49

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Attempt to Enter Canaan 1:1-46	The Years in the Desert 2:1-23	The Conquests of the Amorites 2:24—3:11	Transjordan Settlements 3:12-29	Admonition to obey the Law 4:1-49

INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY

The Name

The name simply comes out of the first clause in Hebrew, “elleh haddebarim” which means, “These are the words....” The Greek and Latin Translations of this book used words, which meant “repetition” or “copy of the law.” Deuteronomy has come to be synonymous with “the second law,” much of it being repetitious of the Law given in Exodus and Leviticus.

The Authorship

This book seems to be written by a single author, whom we call “D,” and although it makes use of other sources, they are not as many and varied as we find in the other books of the Pentateuch. Moses could not have written about his own death, and so we must conclude that there are least some editors involved in the writing of Deuteronomy. Were they priests, or were they public officials? Some scholars suggest the latter.

The Date

Workmen, who were repairing the Temple in 621 B.C.E., discovered the Book of Deuteronomy. The Book of Deuteronomy is a second account of the giving of the Law and can be dated in its present form somewhere around 650 B.C.E. The focus on centralizing worship prompted Josiah to initiate sweeping religious reforms in 621 B.C.E. (2 Kings 22-23), and this led to the revision of history found in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. It was a rediscovery and reinterpretation of the Mosaic teachings in the light of later historical teachings, and was addressed to Judah to help it avoid the fate Israel suffered when it fell to Assyria in 721 B.C.E.

The Distinctive Teaching

The actual events contained in Deuteronomy pick up where Numbers leaves off. Only a few days are covered, but there is a great deal of reflecting on the past. Moses is about to die, and so he prepares the people for entering the Promised Land. It has been suggested that Deuteronomy consists mainly of three final sermons or messages given by Moses. It is difficult to find a consensus on where these sermons begin and end.

The centralization of worship is the distinctive teaching of Deuteronomy, and it was called for in order to help people deal with the pressure of paganism in the local shrines scattered throughout the nation. If worship was centralized, then it could be controlled; and the hope was that paganism would then die out, saving the nation.

The Outline

- A. Moses Looks Back. (1:1—4:49)
- B. Basic Commandments. (5:1—11:32)
- C. Detailed Laws. (12:1—26:19)
- D. Renewal of the Covenant. (27:1—30:20)
- E. The Death of Moses. (31:1—34:12)

1:1—4:49	5:1—26:19	27:1—30:20	31:1—34:12
Moses Looks Back	Review of the Laws	Renewal of the Covenant	Moses' Death

INTRODUCTION (1:1-5)

The time and the place of this speech of Moses were carefully noted. The time was the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year, and the place was in the wilderness beyond the Jordan in the Land of Moab. Specifically, it was in the Valley opposite Beth-peor at the edge of Arabah, a few miles northeast of the Dead Sea.

A HISTORICAL REVIEW (1:6—3:29)

The Command to Leave Horeb (1:6-8)

The Promised Land ideally extended to the Euphrates, the northern limits of David's conquests (2 Samuel 8:30). The command to leave Horeb was the beginning, and the conquests of David marked the end.

Moses' Appointment of Judges (1:9-18)

Moses recalled how he found relief from the burden of leadership by delegating responsibility. This wise advice came from his father-in-law, Jethro, whom he does not mention here. (See Exodus 18:13-26)

An Attempt to Enter Canaan (1:19-46)

The spies were sent up from the South. Most of them discouraged any attempt to take Canaan. The Lord got angry and Moses led a force, which failed. Because Caleb and Joshua favored the invasion, they alone would be allowed to enter the Promised Land. Moses would not be allowed to go in with them. The reason given here is different from that given in 32:48-52, where Moses was denied entrance because he broke faith with Yahweh. Here, he is not personally guilty of anything, but vicariously bears the divine wrath for Israel's sin. Vicarious punishment is the new element introduced in this account of the aborted attempt to enter Canaan.

The Years in the Desert (2:1-23)

The Israelites were not to bother the Edomites¹ (descendents of Esau), the Moabites (descendants of Lot), and the Ammonites (descendants of Lot). Yahweh awarded their lands to them, and they were not to be taken from them.

Conquests of the Amorites (2:24—3:11)

Sihon (2:24-37)

This Amorite King, along with Og, controlled the Transjordan from the Arnon River north towards Damascus. They refused safe passage to Israel. Sihon's capital was Heshbon, but the battle was fought at Jahaz. The Israelites won and destroyed every city and all of the men, women, and children. They took the cattle as part of the spoils of war.

Og (3:1-11)

Og was the King of Bashan. The battle against him was fought at Edrei. No survivors were left. Sixty cities were destroyed, and all of the men, women, and children were killed. The cattle were taken as booty. The king's bedstead, which was approximately fourteen by six feet, was probably his coffin (3:11). At the time when all this was written down, the bedstead could still be seen in Rabbah, which was the ancient capital of Ammon. Today it is called Amman, the capital of modern Jordan.

¹ Edom is also referred to as Seir, which is the mountain range in Edom.

Settlements in the Transjordan (3:12-22)

The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and one-half of the tribe of Manasseh settled in the former territories of Sihon and Og. The land was suited to cattle, and these tribes had large herds. The men had to promise to help the other nine and one-half tribes take the lands on the west side of the Jordan; and in fact, they were to cross over the Jordan ahead of the other tribes (3:18). To refuse would have resulted in serious consequences, for everyone was needed to participate in the conquest. The Israelites could not afford to lose some of their military strength along the way. The unity of the tribes was crucial.

Moses' Survey of the Land (3:23-29)

It was the people's provocation, which caused Moses to get angry, but Moses' anger prevented him from entering the Promised Land. He could only look at it from Mount Pisgah. Three names have been given for the place where he stood and surveyed the Promised Land. They are (1) Abarim, (2) Nebo, and (3) Pisgah. Abarim might have been the name of the range in which Nebo was one peak. Pisgah was either an alternate peak or a spur of Nebo. (See Deuteronomy 34:1)

ADMONITION TO OBEY THE LAW (4:1-40)

Call to Obedience (4:1-8)

In addition to the call to obedience, there was a warning against disobedience. A reminder was given of how God sent a plague on those Israelites who engaged in licentious rites with Moabite women at Peor. (Numbers 25:1-9) This same God was near to them, and gave statutes and ordinances to those who were righteous. They should be obeyed.

The Revelation at Horeb (4:9-24)

Only Yahweh's voice was heard. Since there was no form to be seen, they were not to make any images (4:12). They were not to worship any astral bodies (4:19). The Covenant took the shape of the Ten Commandments given by God, who inspired Moses to teach them to the people.

Consequences of Apostasy (4:25-31)

The Lord is merciful, but He will not forget the Covenant. There are severe consequences for those who depart from it.

Yahweh's Unique Revelation (4:32-40)

Moses told the people that no one else has ever experienced the presence and activity of God as they have; and if they will follow him, they will live long in the land, which God has given to them.

CITIES OF REFUGE IN THE TRANSJORDAN (4:41-43)

These cities were set up for persons who have committed manslaughter unintentionally. Such persons could stay in these cities while they waited for justice to take its course.

1. Bezer - For the tribe of Reuben.
2. Ramoth - For the tribe of Gad.
3. Golan - For the tribe of Manasseh.

RESTATEMENT OF THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING (4:44-49)

This paragraph is a summary of the historical and geographical setting, but it is also an introduction to the Law, which follows in Moses' second speech.

If we were to summarize the nature of God from his involvement with these people, we would have to conclude that God is jealous (4:24), merciful (4:31), and one (4:35 & 39).

THE GOD OF HISTORY

The living God is encountered not in the skies or in the beyond, but in the midst of human history. God reveals himself and acts within history. In Deuteronomy 4:32-34, Moses asks the people he has just delivered to remember what has just happened:

For ask now about former ages, long before your own, ever since the day that God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of heaven to the other: has anything so great as this ever happened or has its like ever been heard of? Has any people ever heard the voice of a god speaking out of a fire, as you have heard, and lived? Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by terrifying displays of power, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

The path through history is neither clear nor smooth; and God is as quick to punish great leaders, as he is, rebellious followers. Moses could look at the Promised Land, but he could not enter it. What greater punishment could God give a person than to gain a glimpse of heaven, but not be allowed to enter through its gates?

The first thing that must be said about the God of history, according to Deuteronomy 4:24, is that He “is a devouring fire, a jealous God.” He allows no one to make a graven image of him, not even a mental image; and by doing evil, one provokes him to anger (Deuteronomy 4:25). No idols are tolerated, for they always require immoral behavior. That alone is moral which the Lord requires, and his will is the only moral standard that exists.

If the God of history is jealous and judgmental, he is also merciful towards those who seek him and he never forgets the covenant he made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Even when a small remnant of his people are scattered among those who chase after other gods, he hears, according to Deuteronomy 4:29-31, those who seek him.

“From there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul. In your distress, when all these things have happened to you in time to come, you will return to the LORD your God and heed him. Because the LORD your God is a merciful God, he will neither abandon you nor destroy you; he will not forget the covenant with your ancestors that he swore to them.”

The God of history, however, does not commit himself only to one people, but to every people who will respond to him. To those who respond, he reveals himself. “To you,” says Moses in Deuteronomy 4:35, “it was shown so that you would acknowledge that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him.” By his actions in history, he drove out mightier nations than you, to give you their land for an inheritance. There is no other God to worship or to follow, neither in heaven above nor on the earth below. All of this has enormous ethical consequences, as Moses says in Deuteronomy 4:40: “Keep his statutes and his commandments, which I am commanding you today for your own well-being and that of your descendants after you, so that you may long remain in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time.”

Since God has revealed himself in history, he does not want us to create our own images of him. False mental images of him are even more dangerous than those made of stone, wood, silver, or gold. Juan Segundo describes why, when he writes: “Our falsified and inauthentic ways of dealing with our fellow men are allied to our falsifications of the idea of God. Our unjust society and our perverted idea of God are in close and terrible alliance.”¹ They are dangerous because our actions in history always follow our images of God. He does not want us shaping false images. William Temple warns that, “If your conception of God is radically false, then the more devout you are the worse it will be for you. You are opening your soul to be molded by something base. You had much better be an atheist.”²

God, of course, does not want us to be atheists, for even atheists act in history; and if they are not taking their cue from God, then they too can move down a disastrous path. If we learn the lessons of history, then we also encounter the God of history, for he shapes history by penetrating it and calling people to do his will. “When nations do not take God’s way,” asks E. Stanley Jones, “does their toil end in smoke?” His answer is, “Inevitably.”³ Jones’ quotes Charles A. Beard’s lessons from history, two of which are: “Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad with power,” and “The mills of God

¹Juan Luis Segundo, *Our Idea of God*, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1978), pp. 7-8.

²William Temple, *Eerdman’s Handbook to Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), p. 150.

³E. Stanley Jones, *The Way* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), p. 196.

grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small.”¹ Beard discovered God within history, as anyone can, who will look for him, for he is the God of history. There is a moral law written into things, and this moral law always has the last word. If we fit into it, we live, but if we do not, we perish. That moral universe is not our creation, but it can be our discovery. History is the scene of the interrelations of the will of God and the free choices of men and women. The God of history has our best interests at heart, and that is why he calls us to obey him.

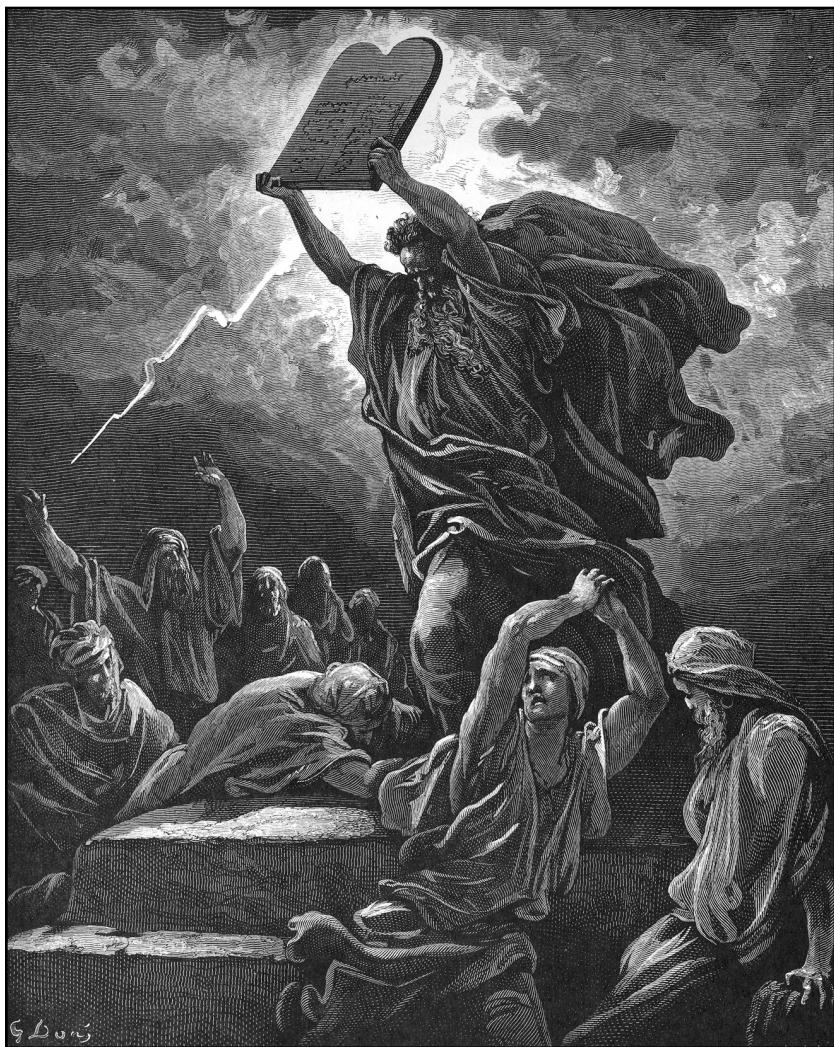
How odd That God Should choose The Jews.
And odder yet That he should bet And place his hope In church and Pope.
And odder still That he should will To take a chance On protestants.

Martin Linwood Whitmer

¹Ibid., p. 37.

DEUTERONOMY

The Second Law



Moses breaks the Tablets by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

25. The Basic Commandments
Deuteronomy 5:1—11:32

25. THE BASIC COMMANDMENTS (5:1—11:32)

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (5:1-33)

Roman Catholic Divisions	Protestant Divisions
1. No other god 2. No wrongful use of the name 3. Observe the Sabbath 4. Honor parents 5. No murder 6. No adultery 7. No stealing 8. No false witness 9. No coveting a man's wife 10. No coveting a man's property	1. No other gods 2. No idols 3. No wrongful use of the name 4. Observe the Sabbath 5. Honor parents 6. No murder 7. No adultery 8. No stealing 9. No false witness 10. No coveting

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT (6:1-25)

Fulfilling the Commandment	Remembering the Commands
First Commandment (6:4-9) <i>Shema: "Hear"</i> <i>With Heart, Soul, and Might</i>	Phylacteries on the Head (6:4-9; 11:13-21) (Exodus 13:1-10; 13:11-16)
Second Commandment (Leviticus 19:18) <i>As You love Yourself</i>	Mezuzah/Mezuzot on the Doorpost (6:9 and 11:20)

MOSES CALL TO FAITH AND OBEDIENCE (7:1—11:32)

Life in Canaan (7:1-26)	Self-Righteousness (9:1—10:11)
The Nations to be Conquered Hittites Girgashites Amorites Canaanites Perizzites Hivites Jebusites	<i>Deities to be Resisted</i> Pillars Male Deities Asherim Goddess Asherah
The Temptation of Pride (8:1-20)	At Sinai: Idolatry of Golden Calf At Taberah: Complaints At Massah: Complaints about Water At Kibroth-Hattaavah: Complaints about food At Kadesh-barnea: Failure to Attack <i>God provided, but Israel rebelled</i>
Canaan was not offered because of Israel's Righteousness, but Canaan was lost because of Israel's Idolatry.	What the Lord Requires (10:12—11:32)
	Reverence Obedience Love Service
	Circumcision of the Heart Phylacteries & Mezzuzah Blessings from Mt. Gerizim Curses from Mt. Ebal

25. THE BASIC COMMANDMENTS

Deuteronomy 5:1—11:32

ASSIGNMENTS					
The Ten Commandments 5:1-33	The Great Commandment 6:1-25	Life in Canaan 7:1-26	The Temptation of Pride 8:1-20	The Temptation of Self-Righteousness 9:1—10:11	What the Lord Requires 10:12—11:32

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (5:1-33)

The two things, which we need to note in this passage are as follows: (1) God seems to have spoken directly to the people rather than through Moses, and (2) Moses is now speaking to their descendants. In regard to the first, the people became frightened and asked Moses to mediate God's will in the commandments to them. It was too frightening a thing to hear God directly. In regard to the second, none of these people were present when the Ten Commandments were originally given. These are the descendants of the original people who died in the wilderness. The only exception to this might be those who were under 20 when the Ten Commandments were given, which would mean that they were present either as youth or small children.

The Ten Commandments are nearly identical with the Ten Commandments given in Exodus 20:2-17.

1. You shall have no other Gods (5:7)—This commandment assumes that people may worship other gods, but for Israel only Yahweh can be worshiped.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol (5:8-10)—There has always been some disagreement as to whether this commandment prohibits the use of statues and pictures in worship. There is agreement that objects are not to be worshiped, and that no image of God can be made, for God is Spirit. Those who disobey this commandment put their children in jeopardy for three or four generations. This may sound severe, but it's not God's doing. The parents have misguided their children and that may affect them through a couple of generations. On the other hand, those parents who teach their children to obey the commandments will be expressing steadfast love to their children through a thousand generations. John Wesley indicated that the Ten Commandments are “a complete scheme of

Christian practice.” The positive influence is much more powerful than the negative.

3. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God (5:11)—God’s name is not to be used for evil purposes, as it was in the case of magic or divination.
4. Observe the Sabbath Day and keep it holy (5:12-15)—They had been slaves, but now they are free. The Sabbath Day of rest is an important symbol of their freedom.
5. Honor your father and mother (5:16)—This commandment contains the promise of long life. This created an extended family in which children were expected to take care of their aging parents.
6. You shall not murder (5:17)—Life was sacred and not to be taken for evil purposes. This commandment did not include war and capital punishment, but when such life was taken, it had to take place according to due process and involved rulers and judges. Individuals had no right to take the law into their own hands.
7. Neither shall you commit adultery (5:18)—Sexual intercourse prior to and outside of marriage is covered by this commandment, which protects the sanctity of the marriage bond.
8. Neither shall you steal (5:19)—Neither persons nor property could be stolen. A person’s possessions are a divine gift.
9. Neither shall you bear false witness (5:20)—Witnesses were required to convict a person of crimes such as murder, so they were required to tell the truth. No one could be convicted on the basis of one witness.
10. Neither shall you covet (5:21)—The verb used for *covet* can also mean “take.” This commandment differs from the others in that it deals primarily with the heart and not only one’s outward conduct. Only God knows when it is broken, but then Jesus reinterprets all the commandments in such a way that they become impossible for any of us to obey. (See Matthew 5.)

Two tablets made up these Ten Commandments. We are not told which tablets contained which commandments. While it may seem logical to divide them into two sets of five commandments, there is a more logical way of dividing them. The first four have to do with the divine relationship, and the last six have to do with human relationships. The commandments are not limited to moral relationships. They have to do with faith, worship, and moral conduct.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT (SHEMA) (6:1-25)

The first word of the Great Commandment is “Hear” which is “Shema” in Hebrew. *Shema* means, “hear.” This whole chapter is an oral interpretation by Moses of the first commandment to the people. This also forms the first part of the Great Commandment of Jesus in Mark 12:29-30 and Matthew 22:37-40. Mark adds, “mind” and Matthew leaves out “might” or “strength.” Jesus tied this commandment in with a second commandment to love one’s neighbor and drew the latter out of Leviticus 19:18. Israel is to have only one loyalty. Heart (mind and will) and soul (self, vital being) express the idea of loving God with the full measure of one’s devotion. The core of the Shema is 6:4-9.

Because of verse 8, Orthodox Jews wore the Shema in Phylacteries on their foreheads and attached the mezuzot (small wooden or metal containers) to the doorframes of their houses. Verse 6 also told them that the words were to be in their hearts. This Great Commandment was to be taught to their children, for the Lord would not tolerate idolatry. John Wesley later defined entire sanctification as a heart filled with love for God and the neighbor. These two commandments are for our lasting good.

Jesus used Deuteronomy 6:13 and 16 in his temptation against Satan. (See Matthew 4:7 and 10 and Luke 4:8 and 12) For an understanding of the testing at Massah, see Exodus 17:6-7. The word *Massah*, means “test.” The Israelites were not to put God to the test, but were to trust in his power and protection. They could only do that if they were constantly reminded of where they had come from. The story had to be written down and constantly retold.

MOSES' CALL TO FAITH AND OBEDIENCE (7:1—11:32)

Life in Canaan (7:1-26)

Moses told Israel that it had not been chosen because of its greatness or goodness, but because of God’s steadfast love. The people would soon be living among the Canaanites (pagans) and be tempted by their gods and idols made of silver and gold. The pillars were identified with male deities, and the Asherim were small wooden statues representing the Canaanite goddess Asherah. Israel was to be faithful. If the nation were faithful, God would destroy its enemies—even if they were stronger and mightier—as He destroyed the Egyptians and led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. Seven nations stronger than the Israelites were to be destroyed: the Hittites, Gergashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (7:1). God seems to be calling for a Holy War against their enemies. This is difficult to understand from the revelation we have received of God through Jesus Christ; nevertheless, the main point is the danger of accepting a religion that does not express itself in morality.

The Temptation of Pride (8:1-20)

Israel was not punished in the wilderness, but tested. As the people were about to enter Canaan, Moses warned them that their success in Canaan would tempt them to forget the

lesson of the wilderness—that they were completely dependent upon God and His mercy. It was an appeal to remember that it was God who cared for them daily in the wilderness. Jesus, in being tempted by Satan, referred back to the need for dependence upon God (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; and Luke 4:4). Bread sustains, but does not give life. God gives life, and he calls them to life by calling them to carefully obey his commandments, which were life-giving and liberating.

The suffering they experienced in the wilderness was interpreted as discipline, like that of a father correcting his son. (See Hosea 11 and Hebrews 12:3-11) The purpose was to humble Israel, to test its quality of faith. The reason it was being given Canaan was due more to Canaan's idolatry than Israel's deserving it. This does not completely explain why Canaan was to lose its land. What about the idolatry of Edom, Moab, and Ammon? Deuteronomy 2:1-23 seems to indicate that they were given their lands in perpetuity. The reason given has to do with their genealogical connection with Israel as sons of Esau and Lot, but they were as idolatrous as the people of Canaan.

The Temptation of Self-Righteousness (9:1—10:11)

The Promised Land was not given as a reward for Israel's righteousness, for Israel proved to be a rebellious people. Victory would be given (negatively) because of Canaan's corrupted pagan religions and (positively) because the Lord is faithful to his own promise. The cardinal sin was not to believe in the Lord's promise.

The historical record showed that Israel had been rebellious ever since the Exodus. Moses reviewed the golden calf incident, Taberah (Numbers 11:1-3), Massah (Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:2-13), Kibroth-hattaavah (Numbers 11:31-34), and the failure to attack from Kadesh-barnea (Deuteronomy 1:19-40 and Numbers 13-14). He summed it up by saying that Israel had been rebellious against the Lord from the time Moses first began to lead the Nation (9:24); nevertheless, Moses interceded on behalf of the people and the Lord sent Moses to lead them to the Promised Land.

What the Lord Requires (10:12—11:32)

The Lord requires (1) reverence, (2) obedience, (3) love, and (4) service. Those who obey will be blessed. Those who disobey will be cursed. The blessings were to be spoken from Mount Gerizim and the curses from Mount Ebal. Mount Ebal was later used by Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali to pronounce curses upon anyone who broke the commandments (27:13). Under Joshua, an altar was built on both mountains and the people engaged in a special covenant ceremony with half of them in front of Ebal and the other half in front of Gerizim. The ark, containing the Ten Commandments, then passed through as a symbol of their acceptance of the covenant (Joshua 8:30,33). The promise of God's blessing was that both nature and history would be on the side of those who had reverence for and obeyed him.

LOVE GOD AND DO AS YOU PLEASE

“Do as you please,” says an old pagan saying, “in despite of God.” Augustine disagreed, and wrote: “Love God and do as you please.”¹ That is sound advice, “But,” warns Henri de Luback, “do not be too quick to presume that you know what loving really is.”² Make sure you know what it means to love God. The Shema, which follows in Deuteronomy 6:4-7, tries to define such love:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.

When Jesus was asked in Mark 12:28 by a scribe to name the most important commandment, he quoted Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which is an interpretation of the Ten Commandments and part of the first commandment. If you get this one right, you get the other nine right. That is why Augustine can suggest loving God and doing as we please. What we please will be to do the will of God, and God’s will is summarized in the Ten Commandments.

But how do we know, when we love God, so that what we please coincides with his will? The first commandment seems easy enough to understand, as do the other nine commandments, at least in principle; but everything changes the minute we try to apply them to the details of our lives.

Moses commands that these words be written in our hearts, and that we begin teaching them to our children. Jeremiah promises that the time will come when God shall write his commandments on our hearts so that it will no longer be necessary for us to teach one another to know the Lord, for everyone will know him, from the least to the greatest (Jeremiah 31:33-34). That New Covenant was supposed to come in Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was to write the commandments on our hearts. Why then can we not all love God and do as we please? Why do we need constant reminders of what it means to love God?

The answer is really simple, human *arrogance* and *selfishness*. They blind us to the will of God and replace it with our own will; and that makes “doing as we please” a dangerous principle to follow, unless of course, we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. That is not easy to do, and few of us do it.

The acid test of our devotion to God lies in our giving. What young man, when he has found the girl he loves, does not give her some expensive symbol of his love? The same principle holds for God, who “...so loved the world that he gave his only Son....” (John 3:16) In our churches today there are many who profess to love God, but who give little

¹*The Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. XI (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 223.

²Juan Luis Segundo, *Our Idea of God* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 7.

or nothing for the extension of His Kingdom. One may give without loving, but one cannot love without giving. The principle of loving God and doing as we please holds, but it does not hold for those who have not overcome *arrogance* and *selfishness*, the deadliest of the sins.

The second test of love for God has to do with worship. The Shema became the call to worship within Judaism. In describing the character of a Methodist, John Wesley wrote:¹

The Methodist never stops praying. It is second nature for him to pray and not to be discouraged. This does NOT mean that the Methodist is always praying in a church building! (Though it goes without saying that the Methodist misses no opportunity for public worship.) The Methodist is often on his knees in humility before God, but he does not spend all his time in contemplation.

Why all this time in prayer and worship? The answer is simple, to reach an understanding of the will of God, who is the supreme object of our love. To know his will requires association with others who are seeking it. Associating with those who are not seeking it will not bring us closer to it. This does not mean that we cease associating with those who do not love God as we do, but that we do not give up associating ourselves with those who love God as we do. This is the point of Hebrews 10:24-25, which says: “And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Those who are trying to love God seek others trying to do the same thing, but love is not kept in the Sanctuary of the church any more than it is kept in the sanctuary of our heart. Jesus tied the commandment to love God with the commandment to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.” This he pulled out of Leviticus 19:18. He presented nothing new in the new Covenant. He just pulled things together and gave them a fresh interpretation. Love for God had to include love for the neighbor, including sinners and enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). It is out of this kind of a context that one must understand M. Scott Peck’s definition of love, “as the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth.”²

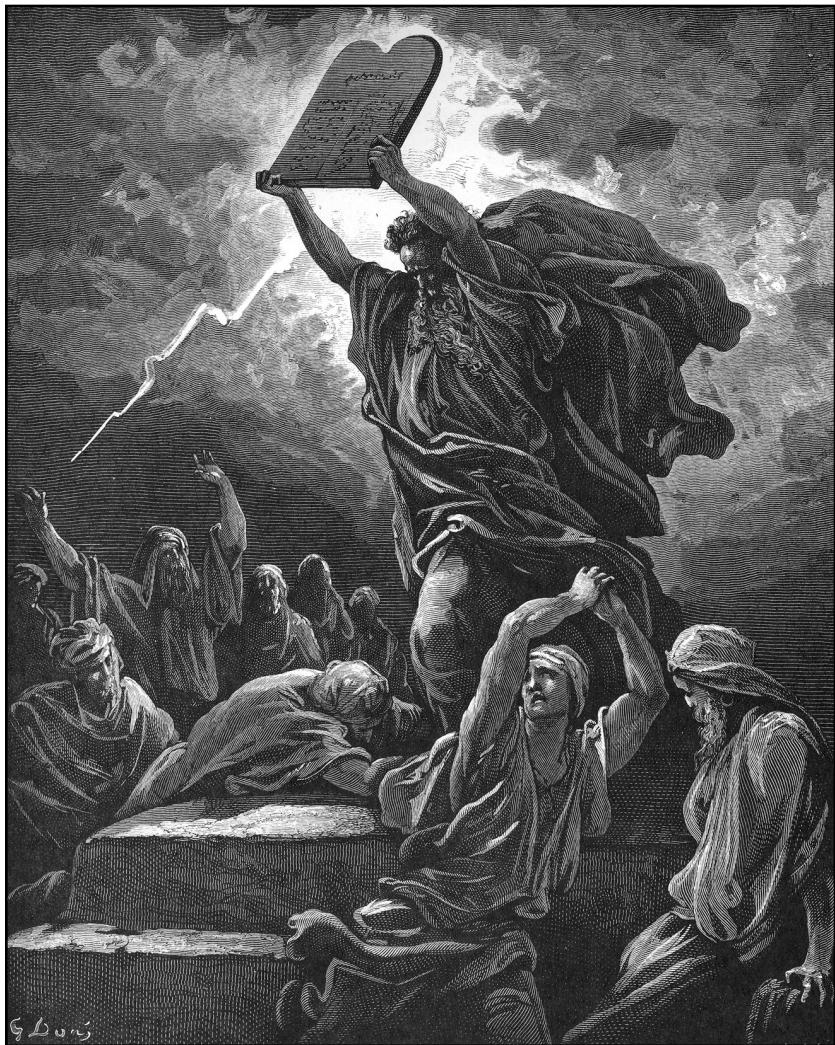
To mature spiritually is to move towards the time when we can love God and do as we please, because what we please will be to do the will of God; but until we know what the will of God is, we will need to be in relationship with others trying to express their love and seeking that same will. The closer we get to one another, the closer we get to God, and God will turn our love out to extend to our neighbor, primarily to the neighbor who stands in need of spiritual nurture and growth.

¹John Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* (Good News, Five Douglas Avenue, Suite 450, Elgin, Illinois 60120), p. 8.

²M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1978), p. 81.

DEUTERONOMY

The Second Law



Moses breaks the Tablets by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

26. Detailed Laws I

Deuteronomy 12:1 – 20:20

26. DETAILED LAWS I (12:1—20:20)

THE CENTRALIZATION OF WORSHIP (12:1-32)

“The place which the Lord will choose” (12:5-6, 11, 13-14, 17-18, and 26)

Shiloh?

Shechem (Up to 722 B.C.E.)

Jerusalem (After 622 B.C.E.)

NO IDOLATRY (13:1-18)

NO PAGAN MOURNING (14:1-2)

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN ANIMALS (14:3-21)

Reasons for Unclean Animals

Carriers of Disease	Repulsive in Appearance	Objects of Totemic Taboos	Used in Pagan Worship
<i>Clean Animals</i>	<i>Unclean Birds</i>	<i>Seafood</i>	
Ox Sheep Goat Hart Gazelle Roebuck Wild Goat Ibex Antelope Mountain Sheep	Eagle Vulture Osprey Buzzard Kite Raven Ostrich Nighthawk Seagull and Hawk Little, Great, and Desert Owl Water Hen Pilican Comorant Stork Heron Hoopoe Bat	Those that have fins and scales are okay	<i>Other Unclean</i> All Winged Insects Animals that die by themselves A Kid boiled in its mother's milk

TITHING (14:22-29) (The Tithe is to be used for the Levites and the Poor)

The Tithe is taken annually to the Central Sanctuary

The Tithe is used at home every third year

THE YEAR OF RELEASE (15:1-18)

The Release of Debtors (15:1-11) (Every Seven Years)

The Release of Slaves (15:12-18) (Could remain Slaves)

THE FIRST-BORN CATTLE AND SHEEP (15:19-23)

They had to be without blemish if they were to become offerings to God

THE THREE MAIN FEASTS (16:1-17)

Passover (16:1-8)

Pentecost (16:9-12)

Tabernacles (16:13-15)

26. DETAILED LAWS I

Deuteronomy 12:1—20:20

ASSIGNMENTS				
Worship and Idolatry 12:1—13:18	The Clean and The Unclean 14:1-29	Sabbatical Year and Three Feasts 15:1—16:17	Justice and Religion 16:18—18:22	Justice and Holy War 19:1—20:20

THE CENTRALIZATION OF WORSHIP (12:1-32)

Worship, including animal sacrifice, was to be done at a central place so that Israel would not be influenced by pagan religion. The actual place was not named. During the period of the tribal confederacy such pilgrimages were made to Shiloh (Joshua 18:1; 1 Samuel 1:3-28). The recitation of the law between Mounts Gerizim and Ebal indicates that Shechem was also a central place for worship before the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C.E. but, the main place for gathering finally became Jerusalem under David's leadership (2 Samuel 6).

This emphasis on centralizing worship became the basis for Josiah's great reform in 622 B.C.E. (2 Kings 22-23), but it was also established under Hezekiah a hundred years earlier (2 Kings 18:4; 2 Chronicles 29-31). It is doubtful that Jerusalem was the original place; that probably belongs to Shechem (Deuteronomy 11:26-32). Since it was impossible to require that all meat be slaughtered in Jerusalem, permission was granted for the slaughtering of meat elsewhere. It had to be slaughtered as if it were game being killed in a hunt (Gazelle or Hart). The only restriction was that the blood, according to the Law, be properly drained from the carcass (Deuteronomy 12:23-25).

They were not to use Canaanite objects of worship (12:2), they were not to worship according to their own desires (12:8), and they were not even to use Canaanite methods of worship, the most abhorrent of which was child sacrifice (12:31). All symbols and vestiges of Canaanite worship were to be destroyed. Consecrated things and animals were to be taken to the place, which the Lord would choose (12:5-6, 11, 13-14, 17-18, and 26). Worship was to be centralized so that it would not be diluted by local Canaanite influences.

WARNING AGAINST IDOLATRY (13:1-18)

Prophets, relatives, or friends who called anyone to turn away from the Lord (Yahweh) were to be stoned to death. Although dreams and visions were considered a revelation from God, this did not mean that anyone who claimed such an experience was to be considered a true prophet. Ultimate allegiance was to be given only to the Lord. That allegiance was more important than one's own family. The Lord was not to be forsaken for individual or social influences; and if a whole city followed after other gods, Israel was to destroy the inhabitants as a burnt offering to the Lord. Not to do so was to bear the same guilt as the idolaters. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 5:13, quotes from Deuteronomy 13:5 when he calls upon the Corinthian Church to excommunicate a member who has slipped into immorality. Although this is similar, it is not quite the same. Paul did not call for the death penalty, which is precisely what Deuteronomy does.

MOURNING (14:1-2)

As children of God, the Israelites were not to follow the pagan mourning customs, which were shaving the head and cutting the flesh.

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN ANIMALS (14:3-21)

A similar list of clean and unclean animals can be found in Leviticus 11. The main difference between the two lists is the permission in Leviticus to eat certain insects and swarming creatures.

Four reasons why certain animals were rejected as unclean might be as follows: (1) some were carriers of diseases; (2) some were repulsive in their appearance or habits; (3) some were objects of totemic taboos; and (4) some were used in pagan worship.

Permitted Animals

(Those that part the hoof and chew the cud.)

1. Ox
2. Sheep
3. Goat
4. Deer (Hart)
5. Gazelle
6. Roebuck
7. Wild Goat
8. Ibex
9. Antelope
10. Mountain Sheep

Unclean Animals

1. Camel
2. Hare
3. Rock Badger
4. Swine (14:8) - One could not eat or touch this animal.

Seafood

(Those that have fins and scales are okay.)

Unclean Birds

1. Eagle
2. Vulture
3. Osprey
4. Buzzard
5. Kite
6. Raven
7. Ostrich
9. Nighthawk
10. Seagull
11. Hawk
12. Little, Great and Desert Owl
13. Water Hen
14. Carrion Vulture
15. Cormorant (Pelican)
16. Stork
17. Heron
18. Hoopoe
19. Bat

Clean Birds

(Not Listed)

Insects

(All winged insects are unclean.)

Animals That Die by Themselves (14:21)

These were not to be eaten by the Israelites, although they could be sold to foreigners. The problem with such animals was that the blood might not be properly drained from their flesh and the meat might be spoiled or diseased.

A Kid Boiled in its Mother's Milk (14:21)

Boiling a kid in its mother's milk was a Canaanite cult practice, which the Israelites were to avoid. Exodus 23:19 rejected it as well. The modern Jewish practice of separating meat from milk foods has evolved from this commandment; and today, even the dishes in which these products are prepared must be separated.

TITHING (14:22-29)

All wealth is a gift from God, and God expects a tithe. One-tenth was to be given once a year to the Levites at the central sanctuary who had no share in the inheritance. Those who lived too far away could change their tithe into money and purchase the equivalent produce at the sanctuary. Every third year the tithe was to be kept in their own town to feed the Levites and the poor who lived there (14:28-29).

THE YEAR OF RELEASE (15:1-18)

The Release of Debtors (15:1-11)

All debts were to be cancelled every seven years. This sabbatical year was to be established for the sake of the poor. It had to do with the whole debt and not just that year's payment. This is different from what we find in Leviticus, which says that the land was to lie fallow in the sabbatical year and that cancellation of debts was to occur every fiftieth year (Leviticus 25:2 and 10). The cancellation of debts was a way of controlling poverty, or at least of minimizing it. There was a recognition that poverty should not exist, but could not be completely eliminated (15:11).

The Release of Slaves (15:12-18)

There was a link between debtors and slaves. Those who could not pay their debts became slaves, but they were also to be set free. Freed slaves were not to go away empty-handed. They were to be given liberally from the flock, the threshing floor, and the wine press. If one desired to remain a slave, an awl was to be thrust through his or her ear into the door. This marked that person as a slave forever (15:17).

THE FIRST-BORN CATTLE AND SHEEP (15:19-23)

The old law on the sacrifice of firstlings was adapted to the requirement of the central sanctuary. The first-born was to be without blemish. If there was a blemish in the first-born, it was not to be sacrificed, although it could be eaten, provided the blood was properly drained from it.

THE THREE MAIN FEASTS (16:1-17)

These three feasts, each seven days long, were to be observed at the central sanctuary, which ultimately became Jerusalem (16:16). One was not to go there empty-handed, but with an offering in proportion to how one had been blessed by God (16:16-17).

THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE (16:18—17:20)		
The Judge (16:18—17:13)	The King (17:14-20)	
<i>On Religion</i> No blemishes No Asherah or Pillar Penalty of Death	<i>On Crime</i> Homicide Property Rights Assault	<i>Kings could not have... (17:16-20)</i> Too many Horses, Wives, Gold They wanted to be like other Nations God was to choose the King (not a foreigner)
PROPER RELIGION (18:1-22)		
The Priests (18:1-8)	Pagan Practices (18:9-14)	
All Levites Supported by Tithes	Divination Soothsayer Sorcer Sorcerer	Charmer Medium Wizard Necromancer
Test of a Prophet Loyalty to God (13:1-3) Prophecy Fulfilled (18:22)		
THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE (19:1-21)		
Cities of Refuge (19:1-21)	Homicide (19:4-13)	Boundaries (19:14)
2 or 3 Witnesses (19:15-21)		
HOLY WAR (20:1-9)		
Exemptions (20:1-9)	Terms of Peace (20:10-18)	The Fruit Trees (20:19-20)
I've built a new house I've planted a new vineyard I'm getting married I'm afraid	Slavery outside of Canaan Death inside of Canaan	The Fruit Trees are not to be Destroyed

Passover/Unleavened Bread (16:1-8) (March/April)

Passover was the first of the three feasts, which were to be observed at the central sanctuary. The earlier law (Numbers 28:16-25) did not specify that the sacrifices had to be offered at the central sanctuary, but that is made very clear in Deuteronomy (16:5). Only unleavened bread could be eaten, for this symbolized the haste with which they had to leave Egypt. Each of these feasts celebrated an event in their agricultural cycle and an event out of their salvation history. *Abib*, the name of the month, means “young head of grain” and was the time when they left Egypt under the leadership of Moses; and so this is the beginning of their religious year.

Pentecost/Feast of Weeks (16:9-12) (May/June)

Fifty days after Passover, they were to celebrate *Pentecost*, which means “fifty.” They were to do it at the central sanctuary (16:11). They were to celebrate both the wheat (or corn) harvest and the giving of the Law through Moses at Sinai.

Tabernacles/Booths (16:13-15) (Sept/Oct)

In this final feast, which closed out the agricultural year, they celebrated a thanksgiving for the fall harvest of grapes and olives. In their salvation history, they remembered how they had to live in temporary shelters in the wilderness. This too was to be observed at the central sanctuary (16:15).

THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE (16:18—17:20)

The Judge (16:18—17:13)

Judges and officers were to be appointed to administer justice. They were not to take bribes or pervert justice.

On Religion

Sacrifices were to be without blemish. An Asherah or pillar could not be set up beside the altar of the Lord. These would have been symbols or wooden images of pagan deities, and idolatry was not to be allowed. The penalty for violation was death, but two or three witnesses were needed. One was insufficient (17:6), and witnesses were to initiate the death penalty.

On Crime

Judges were to rule on homicide, property rights, and assault; but if these proved too difficult, they could always appeal to a tribunal (supreme court), which was made up both of Levitical priests and a lay judge. All this anticipates judges in the future. The same goes for the role of Kings, which follows.

The King (17:14-20)

God did not command them to establish a monarchy; He only permitted it. Israel chose this path because of its desire to be like the other nations (1 Samuel 8:4-22).

Selection of a King (17:14-15)

The people were only to appoint or accept a King chosen by God, and he was to be a native born Israelite. No foreigner was ever to become a King over them.

Rules for the King's Conduct (17:16-20)

Kings were not to multiply horses (military aggression), marry too many wives (political pacts), or collect too much silver and gold (tax revenue). These things would lead to the absolute power of the monarchy, which in turn would interfere with the idea of the theocracy. These temptations would lead Israel away from its unique congregational faith and towards monarchic autonomy and absolutism. This was not God's will. Kings were to study the law and insure justice throughout the land, and they themselves could not live above the law.

PROPER RELIGION (18:1-22)

The Share of the Priests (18:1-8)

In Deuteronomy any of the Levites may serve as priests, but in Numbers 3:1-10 only Aaron and his sons can be full priests. The other Levites could only be assistants. While the Levites could have no share of the land, they had to be supported by tithes from the other tribes. They did not all have to live in the central location; but upon going there, they could function in their role as priests or assistants and deserved support.

Warning against Pagan Practices (18:9-14)

The most detestable pagan practices were child sacrifice and ordeal by fire (18:10). The latter refers to an ordeal of passing through fire as a test of devotion to Molech, the God of Ammon. This pagan rite is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament, and is to be rejected, along with the work of:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Divination: supernatural insight | 5. Charmer: casts spells |
| 2. Soothsayer: predicts the future | 6. Medium: communicates with dead |
| 3. Augur: Interprets birds | 7. Wizard: magical powers |
| 4. Sorcerer: like a wizard | 8. Necromancer: oracles from the dead |

The Promise of a Prophet (18:15-22)

The Israelites do not need pagan divination, for the Lord will give them a prophet. The test of the true prophet is loyalty to God (13:1-3) and the fulfillment of prophecy. While

the prophecies of false prophets might also be fulfilled, it would be by coincidence rather than by divine insight. Prophets are to be messengers of God, and they lead people away from superstition and magic.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE (19:1-21)

The purpose of what follows has to do with limiting the ancient tribal law of blood revenge.

Cities of Refuge (19:1-3)

Like the cities of refuge in the Transjordan (4:41), three more cities are to be set up in Canaan (19:7), and three more in the enlarged territory of Israel later (19:8).

Homicide (19:4-13)

Unintentional homicide needs a cooling off period, which the cities of refuge provide, but they do not provide the same refuge for those who commit intentional homicide.

Acquiring Property by Fraud (19:14)

This verse preserves an ancient law prohibiting the removal of a landmark or property boundary-stone.

False Witnesses (19:15-21)

Two or three witnesses are required in connection with any offense. If any witness bears a false testimony, that person's punishment will be the same as that intended for the victim. This was called the "lex talionis" (law of equal retaliation). It has already been discussed in Exodus 21:23-25 and Leviticus 24:20, but here it is applied to punishment against false witnesses. It may sound harsh to our ears, but it was intended to maintain a proper balance. It restrained punishment, which might have otherwise expressed revenge. Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:38-42, applies strictly to personal conduct, and would not relate to this context.

HOLY WAR (20:1-20)

Muster to Military Service (20:1-9)

The size of the Israelite army is not important if God fights with them. The conscription officers are to announce exemptions for (1) those who have built a new house, (2) those who have planted a new vineyard, (3) those who have betrothed a wife, and (4) those who are simply afraid. Commanders are chosen only after the weeding out process.

As a symbol of God's presence with them, the priest was to address the army. Sometimes he even went with it into battle. This was holy war; and as such, did not depend upon

every man. As long as they followed God's instructions, they would win. The priest was there to make sure that happened.

Terms of Peace (20:10-18)

A besieged city outside of Canaan is to be offered an opportunity to surrender. If it is accepted, the populace is to be enslaved. If it is rejected, the males are to be killed, and women, children, and livestock are to be taken. No terms of peace are to be offered to the Canaanite cities. The entire populace, livestock, and possessions are to be destroyed in the cities inhabited by Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, or Jebusites, lest pagan religious practices infect Israel (20:16-18).

Preservation of Fruit Trees (20:19-20)

The short-range military advantage of securing wood to build siegeworks does not mean that just any tree may be used. The fruit trees are to be saved, not only because they provide food, but also because they prevent soil erosion. Other trees may be used however for making weapons, but not the fruit trees. They are too important to sacrifice. Israel was not to engage in "scorched earth" military practices.

THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

Every religion needs a central source of authority where its faith can be hammered out, and its moral values clarified. Without this its adherents are wide open to false teachings and immoral behavior. This is the message of Deuteronomy 12:5-9:

But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes as his habitation to put his name there. You shall go there, bringing there your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, your votive gifts, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks. And you shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your households together, rejoicing in all the undertakings in which the LORD your God has blessed you. You shall not act as we are acting here today, all of us according to our own desires, for you have not yet come into the rest and the possession that the LORD your God is giving you.

What is the problem, and why must there be a central place where faith and morality are defined? The problem is that false teachings lead to immoral behavior, an example of which is given in Deuteronomy 12:29-31:

When the LORD your God has cut off before you the nations whom you are about to enter to dispossess them, when you have dispossessed them and live in their land, take care that you are not snared into imitating them, after they have been destroyed before you: do not inquire concerning their gods, saying, "How did these nations worship their gods? I also want to do the same." You must not do the same for the LORD your God, because every abhorrent thing that the LORD hates

they have done for their gods. They would even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.

Control over what we believe and how we live is not however the task of one person, whether religious or political, nor is there to be a sharp distinction between the religious and the political. Moses, the political leader received and delivered the Ten Commandments; and Aaron, the religious leader, succumbed to the temptation to worship idols (Exodus 32:1-24). It was Moses who interceded in prayer for Aaron and everyone else who sinned (Exodus 32:30-32).

Having a King to rule over everyone else was never God's idea; but knowing that they would indeed establish a monarchy, he warned them in Deuteronomy 17:16-17:

Even so, he must not acquire many horses for himself, or return to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, since the LORD has said to you, "You must never return that way again." And he must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; also silver and gold he must not acquire in great quantity for himself.

What is the problem with too many horses, too many wives, and too much silver and gold? The horses refer to becoming too concerned about security and spending too much money on building up military power. The wives refer to complicated and confusing political alliances. Wives were taken to establish such alliances, and many of them brought their own corrupting religion with them. The excessive silver and gold had to do with the oppression of heavy taxation to support the palace and everything connected to it.

The one responsibility that the King was to take with the utmost of seriousness was that which had to do with religion and morality. Deuteronomy 17:18-20 describes that responsibility:

When he has taken the throne of his kingdom, he shall have a copy of this law written for him in the presence of the levitical priests. It shall remain with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, diligently observing all the words of this law and these statutes, neither exalting himself above other members of the community nor turning aside from the commandment, either to the right or to the left, so that he and his descendants may reign long over his kingdom in Israel.

The emphasis on a central place of worship also includes a central place of authority, where the Law is understood, accepted, and enforced by both the political and the religious leaders. This implies neither a dictatorship nor a democracy, but rather, leaders who are in tune with the Will of God.

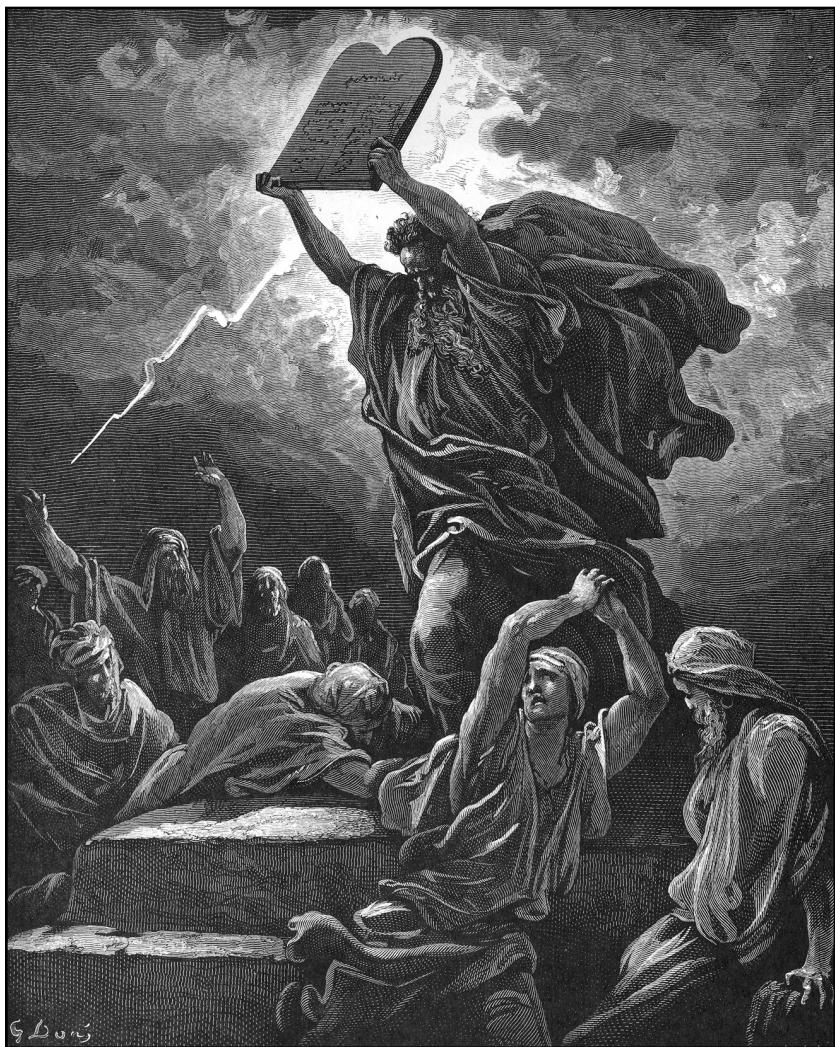
God revealed the Letter of the Law through Moses, and refined it even more through Jesus of Nazareth, who clarified the Spirit of the Law in Matthew 5-7. Does this mean

that we need an authoritative religious leader to interpret the divine Will to the president, our political leader? No! The political leader should be Biblically literate enough to interpret the Law and obey it himself, or herself. This Law is not only the source of morality, but of faith in God as well; hence, there is to be no sharp distinction between religion and politics, but integration.

How is this possible in a pluralistic society? It is not, and therein lays our ultimate downfall. In a pluralistic society God gets squeezed out, and that inevitably means collapse. What we need is a leader, religious or political, who can inspire and motivate us. Forcing us to obey the Law will not save us any more than forcing baptism on us insures our entrance into the Kingdom of God. The role of the leader is to make clear the Will of God and to inspire us to obey it. Moses passed that task on to Joshua, who called the people to obedience (Joshua 24:14-15). This is what was passed on to the Kings of Israel in Jerusalem, and it is the task of the President of the United States in Washington. The role is ignored to our own peril.

DEUTERONOMY

The Second Law



Moses breaks the Tablets by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

27. Detailed Laws II

Deuteronomy 21:1 – 26:19

27. DETAILED LAWS II (21:1—26:19)

MISCELLANEOUS LAWS (21:1—23:14)	HUMANITARIAN AND RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS (23:15—25:19)												
<p>1. Expiation for Unsolved Murder (21:1-9) 2. Female Prisoners of War (21:10-14) 3. Right of the First-Born (21:15-17) 4. Rebellious Sons (21:18-21) 5. Burial of Executed Criminals (21:22-23) 6. Care for Lost Property (22:1-4) 7. Distinction of the Sexes (22:5) 8. Protection of Mother Birds (22:6-7) 9. Parapets (Railings) on Roofs (22:8) 10. Prohibition of Mixtures (22:9-11) 11. Tassels on Garments (22:12) 12. Sexual Laws (22:13-30)</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Virginity (22:13-21)</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Adultery (22:22-27)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Prove:</u></td> <td>Another Man's Wife (22:2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bloodstained Cloth</td> <td>City Virgin (22:23-24)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>False Accusation:</u></td> <td>Country Virgin (22:25-27)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Whipped 100 Shekel Fine</td> <td>Unbetrothed Virgin (22:28-29)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>Guilty:</u> Death</td> <td>Mother/Stepmother (22:30)</td> </tr> </table> <p>13. Exclusions from the Lord's People (23:1-8) Sexual (23:1-2) Ethnic (23:3-8) 14. Military Camp Laws (23:9-14))</p>	Virginity (22:13-21)	Adultery (22:22-27)	<u>Prove:</u>	Another Man's Wife (22:2)	Bloodstained Cloth	City Virgin (22:23-24)	<u>False Accusation:</u>	Country Virgin (22:25-27)	Whipped 100 Shekel Fine	Unbetrothed Virgin (22:28-29)	<u>Guilty:</u> Death	Mother/Stepmother (22:30)	<p>1. Shelter for Fugitive Slaves (23:15-16) 2. Cult Prostitution (23:17-18) 3. Interest (23:19-20) (Not to Israelites or the Poor) 4. Vows (23:21-23) (Optional, but then Obligatory) 5. Eating from a Neighbor's Crops (23:24-25) 6. Divorce and Remarriage (24:1-4) 7. Exemption from Military Service (24:5) 8. Pledges on Loans (24:6) (Cannot take the Millstone) 9. Forced Enslavement (24:7) 10. Leprosy (24:8-9) 11. Pledges on Loans (24:10-13) (Must return one's cloak) 12. Payment of Hired Laborers (24:14-15) (Pay every day) 13. Individual Guilt (24:16) 14. Justice for the Weak (24:17-18) 15. Gleanings for the Poor (24:19-22) 16. Regulations for Judicial Beatings (25:1-3) 17. The Unmuzzled Ox (25:4) 18. Levirate Marriage (25:5-10) 19. Protection of an Assailant's Gentitals (25:11-12) 20. Honest Weights and Measures (25:13-16) 21. Extermination of Amalek (25:17-19)</p>
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CONCLUDING CEREMONIES (26:1-19)

First Fruits (26:1-11)	Tithe (26:12-15)	Exhortation (26:16-19)
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27. DETAILED LAWS II

Deuteronomy 21:1—26:19

ASSIGNMENTS				
Crime and Criminals	War and Its Victims	Marriage and the Family	Civil and Social Concerns	Religion and Its Practices

To make things simpler in this section, Deuteronomy 21:1 to 26:19 will be organized according to the five categories mentioned above. See the chart at the end of this chapter.

MISCELLANEOUS LAWS (21:1—23:14)

A number of laws follow which are of a mixed form and subject matter.

Expiation for an Unsolved Murder (21:1-9)

When a murder has been committed, and the murderer could not be identified, then the nearest town was held accountable. Its elders, responsible for making the roads safe, had to conduct a ceremony of expiation by killing a heifer over running water. The washing of hands over the heifer, whose blood was in turn washed away in the stream, symbolized the removal of the guilt of innocent blood. This regulation illustrates communal solidarity in guilt and the expiation or removal of that guilt.

Female Prisoners of War (21:10-14)

A captive woman could be taken as a wife only after she was allowed to mourn for one full month for her parents. Shaving her head was a sign of purification from heathenism or of mourning. If later her captor was displeased with her, she had to be released. She could not be enslaved or sold. This law can be related to those on Holy War and demonstrates some respect for women.

Right of the First-Born (21:15-17)

The first-born had a double portion coming, which could not be taken from him because of a favorite wife or child. The trouble in Jacob's family stemmed from this kind of

favoritism, but it also demonstrates that the rule was occasionally set aside with divine approval.

Rebellious Sons (21:18-21)

The death penalty—by stoning—was punishment for violating the fifth commandment. The elders of the city were authorized to pass judgment and carry out the execution. This law was designed to protect the family, the basic social unit in Israel, for a child's disobedience was not only against its parents, but also against God. Both parents, however, had to bring the charge against their son.

Burial of Executed Criminals (21:22-23)

Hanging a criminal's body on a tree after execution was considered the ultimate humiliation, but even so, the body had to be buried on the same night. To do otherwise was to bring disgrace on the Israelites as a people.

Care for Lost Property (22:1-4)

Duty towards a fellow-Israelite required not merely the avoidance of injury to him, but also positive aid when his livestock or other property was lost or endangered. The term *brother* extends beyond the immediate family or even friend to include any "fellow-Israelite."

Distinction of the Sexes (22:5)

Distinction between the sexes is based on God's creation and should not be violated. This rule was intended as a protection against perversion and immorality. Two perversions would be transvestism and homosexuality.

Protection of Mother Birds (22:6-7)

Reverence should be exercised for God's creatures. This law grows out of the same attitude towards animal reproduction (Leviticus 22:27-28).

Parapets (Railings) on Roofs (22:8)

The parapet or railing was a safety measure for the common flat-roofed houses in ancient Israel. Its purpose was to keep people from falling off the roof.

Prohibition of Mixtures (22:9-11)

Mixing seeds, crops, animals and cloth was believed to be a violation of the differences, which God created in nature, a violation of natural purity (Leviticus 19:19).

Tassels on Garments (22:12)

The border of tassels was to remind “forgetful” Israel of God and His commands. (See Numbers 15:37-41)

Sexual Laws (22:13-30)

Virginity (22:13-21)

Virginity could be proven by bloodstained cloth from the wedding night. Men expected their wives to be virgins. If one made false accusations, he was to be whipped and fined 100 shekels of silver, a very high fine. If she was guilty, the penalty was death.

Adultery (22:22-27)

Adultery was the violation of the seventh commandment. The penalty was death by stoning.

1. Another man’s wife. (22:22) The most obvious form of adultery was to have sexual intercourse with another man’s wife. Both the man and the woman were to be stoned.
2. A betrothed virgin. (22:23-24) A betrothed virgin was considered as a man’s wife. If she lived in the city, she was expected to cry out. If she did not, then she received the death penalty along with the man who initiated sex with her.
3. A betrothed virgin in the country. (22:25-27) If the incident occurred in the country, she was not expected to cry out, for there would be little chance of being heard. In such cases, only the man was to be punished by death.
4. Unbetrothed virgin. (22:28-29) If a man has sex with an unbetrothed virgin, then he was to pay her father fifty shekels of silver and marry the girl. The fifty shekels was not so much a fine as it was a marriage present.
5. Mother/Stepmother. (22:30) Sex was prohibited with one’s mother or stepmother.

Exclusions from the Lord's People (23:1-8)

Sexual Bars (23:1-2)

Only those unblemished could be presented to the Lord. This excluded eunuchs, whether emasculated accidentally or deliberately. It also excluded children born of an incestuous union.

It was considered a privilege, not a right, to enter the assembly of God's people. Why were the emasculated and children born of incestuous unions to be excluded? The first was a protest against heathen cultic practices, and the second against adulterous and incestuous relationships in marriage.

Ethnic Bars (23:3-8)

Anyone descended from the Ammonites or Moabites, down to the tenth generation, was prohibited; but a descendant from an Edomite of the third generation could become a member. Since ten was a symbol of completeness, Ammonites and Moabites were excluded forever. The masculine form indicates that only men were meant, and female proselytes, such as Ruth, could marry male Israelites.

The reasons given were historical, because Ammon and Moab did not help Israel through the wilderness. Instead they hired Balaam to curse Israel. None of the accounts, however, show that Ammon was involved in the hiring of Balaam. This was Moab's doing. The animosity against Ammon and Moab could also be due to the fact that Ammon and Moab were born of incestuous unions between Lot and his daughters. (See Genesis 19:30-38.)

Since Edom (Esau) was Israel's (Jacob's) brother, and Egypt, at least during Joseph's time, treated Israel well, Edomites and Egyptians of the third generation were acceptable. It was believed that by the third generation most traces of paganism would be eliminated and they would be acculturated.

Military Camp Laws (23:9-14)

The camp not only has to be kept sanitary, but holy. Ceremonial cleanliness was demanded because God walks in the midst of the camp. This law was a supplement to the laws on Holy War. See Leviticus 15:16-17.

HUMANITARIAN AND RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS (23:15—25:19)

This is the largest section of miscellaneous laws in the book of Deuteronomy.

Shelter for Fugitive Slaves (23:15-16)

A runaway slave was to be given asylum. Contrast this with the Code of Hammurabi, where death was the penalty for sheltering fugitive slaves.

Cult Prostitution (23:17-18)

There was to be no male or female cult prostitution, which was a way of symbolizing the fertility of the gods. A “dog” was a male cult prostitute.

Interest (23:19-20)

Interest could be charged on loans to non-Israelites, but not to Israelites. Loans to fellow Israelites were usually occasioned by financial desperation, which, therefore, became a means of oppressing a fellow Israelite. This was not to be allowed.

Vows (23:21-23)

Promises made to make contributions to the temple in return for divine favor were optional; but once made, they were obligatory.

Eating from a Neighbor's Crops (23:24-25)

A passerby could eat from a vineyard or field, but could not take any fruit or grain from the vineyard or field.

Divorce and Remarriage (24:1-4)

This is as close as the Old Testament comes to a law on divorce. A woman had to be given a bill of divorce when she was divorced. A man who divorced her could not take her back again after she was married to someone else. The cause of divorce had nothing to do with adultery, since this would have been dealt with by the death penalty. This was probably modified later, for we discover the Rabbinic School of Shammai allowing for divorce only when the wife has committed adultery; whereas, the School of Hillel permitted it for reasons other than adultery. Both of these Rabbinic Schools attempted to make divorce possible. When the issue was brought before Jesus, he appealed to the higher law of creation (Matthew 19:3-9).

Exemption from Military Service (24:5)

The law exempted a betrothed man from military service (20:7). Here, this exemption was extended to include a newly married man for one year.

Pledges on Loans (24:6)

A borrower was expected to provide a pledge, i.e. security for repayment of a loan. The lender was forbidden to take in pledge an object, which the debtor needed in order to make a living. The family millstones were used to grind grain into flour. Since the family needed bread to live, a millstone could not be used as security. Not even one of them could be used in such a manner.

Forced Enslavement (24:7)

Kidnapping a fellow Israelite in order to retain or sell him as a slave was forbidden. (See Exodus 21:16.)

Leprosy (24:8-9)

This was an exhortation to obey the laws about leprosy in Leviticus 13-14. The reference to Miriam's leprosy can be found in Numbers 12:10-15.

Pledges on Loans (24:10-13)

This law is similar to the one above (24:6). It adds that one did not have the right to choose one's own pledge or security. If one took another's cloak as a pledge, it had to be returned at night so that the person had something in which to sleep.

Payment of Hired Laborers (24:14-15)

Israelites or sojourners (resident aliens) were to be paid at the end of each day (Leviticus 19:13). This took on importance because much hiring was for seasonal agricultural work on a day-to-day basis. (See Matthew 20:1-16 for an example of this in one of Jesus' parables.)

Individual Guilt (24:16)

Although the Israelites believed in corporate guilt, they did not accept punishment on the father for the son's guilt. One was to be put to death only for one's own sin.

Justice for the Weak (24:17-18)

Justice was to extend to the weak and poor. Israel was to remember its oppression in Egypt.

Gleanings for the Poor (24:19-22)

When a field of grain, an orchard of olive trees, or vineyard was harvested, some of the produce was to be left for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. (See an example of this in Ruth 2:2-7.) The slavery-in-Egypt example was given as the basis for Israel's humanitarianism. Israel is to remember what it was like and to treat people accordingly.

Regulations for Judicial Beatings (25:1-3)

Beatings for crimes were only to be administered after a trial and in full view of the judge. The number of blows could not exceed forty. In later times it was limited to thirty-nine. (See 2 Corinthians 11:24). The remark that the offender was to lie down suggests that the blows may have been applied to the soles of the feet.

The Unmuzzled Ox (25:4)

The ox used for threshing could not be prevented from eating grain.

Levirate Marriage (25:5-10)

When a married man died without a son, his brother was to marry the widow so that his brother's name could be carried on. The first-born was to take on the name of the deceased. Additional children would be considered the *living* brother's. A man who refused to do this was to be publicly rebuked by the widow, who was to remove his sandal and spit in his face. The aim of such a marriage was not simply to provide for the widow; rather, it was to secure the survival of the deceased's line. This was the only form of immortality known to early Israel. It also kept the family estate from being sold off to pay debts.

Protection of an Assailant's Genitals (25:11-12)

A man's reproductive organs were considered so important that they had to be protected at all costs. A woman could not even protect her husband from an assailant by going for the assailant's genitals. If she did, her punishment was the loss of her hand.

Honest Weights and Measures (25:13-16)

Israelites were not to have small and large weights and measures. This meant that they could not have one with which to buy and one with which to defraud a customer. They were to be honest in all of their commercial dealings.

Extermination of Amalek (25:17-19)

The Amalekites attacked Israel in the wilderness shortly after the Exodus (Exodus 17:8-16). In the times of the Judges they raided Palestine alongside the Midianites (Judges 6:3, 33; 7:12) and Saul and David fought against them on several occasions (1 Samuel 15; 27:8-9; 30; and 2 Samuel 8:12). Following David's reign they were no longer a serious threat, but that does not mean they had been completely destroyed. The final remnant of Amalekites, were destroyed during Hezekiah's reign (1 Chronicles 4:42-43). The command to blot out the remembrance of Amalek is best understood as an expression of the Holy War obligation.

CONCLUDING CEREMONIES (26:1-19)

The law proper in Deuteronomy is brought to a close by descriptions of how to conduct the annual first-fruits offerings and triennial tithes. The heart of each ceremony was a declaration to be made by the worshiper, each with its special character. The first was a collective statement of Israel's faith and the second was an affirmation of individual compliance with the tithe law.

First-Fruits Ceremony (26:1-11)

This may be one form of the tithing obligation, or it may be an earlier form of practices that developed into tithes. An open question is whether the ceremony was at one of the fixed public festivals. The Feast of Weeks seems to have inaugurated a period extending to the Feast of Booths during which first-fruits could be offered; but on the other hand, the presentation of a basket of fruit before the priest could easily be repeated at Jerusalem as often as landowners appeared there during the summer. The fact that crops ripen at differing times in Palestine suggests flexibility in the timing of the first-fruits ceremony.

Tithe Ceremony (26:12-15)

Every three years the worshiper was to give an oath asserting his compliance with the law of tithing. The oath was to include a statement that he has not defiled his offering by ritual uncleanness. The oath was a sign before the Lord, given in Jerusalem, possibly on the Feast of Booths, that the tithe laws were properly observed. This formal report was given at the central sanctuary, but the tithes themselves were given back home.

Concluding Exhortation (26:16-19)

The statutes and ordinance of chapters 12-26 are rounded out with exhortations placed in the mouth of Moses. Israel's holiness was to be demonstrated in the observance of this law. If Israel were obedient, its position would be high above all the nations of the earth.

THE THREE KINDS OF LAW

According to Thomas Aquinas, there are *Eternal, Natural, Divine*, and *Human Laws*.¹ I would like to reduce them to three—Natural, Moral, and Social, thinking of them all as having a divine foundation.

Natural Law includes the Law of Gravity. We do not break it, but it can break us. One example should suffice. When they built the famous Quebec cantilever bridge, a young engineer discovered a mistake in the figures estimating the strains and stresses. No one took him seriously, so when the long arms of the bridge stretching out from both shores reached the point where the human mistake was made the whole bridge collapsed into the river. When human construction falls short of reality, reality always wins out. This is the reality of Natural Law.

E. Stanley Jones names ten laws, the first of which I would call my second. In addition to there being a Natural Law, there is also a Moral Law. “The universe,” wrote Jones, “is a universe of moral consequence.”² This is true both in corporate and individual terms. Deuteronomy 21:1-9 offers an example of an unsolved murder, and calls the closest

¹Paul Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963), pp. 308-309.

²E. Stanley Jones, *The Way* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), p. 81.

community responsible for not making the area safe in which it happened. The elders and judges of the city are responsible for making a sacrifice to expiate their guilt. Of course it is difficult to punish the elders and judges for a crime that they did not personally commit.

Deuteronomy 24:16 makes clear the concept of individual responsibility: "...only for their own crimes may persons be put to death." Individuals are to be punished. If they seem to get away with wrongdoing in this world, it will catch up with them in the next. The Apostle Paul describes the divine foundation lying underneath the Moral Law in Galatians 6:7: "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow." Paul got this idea from Jesus, who ended his main body of teachings on the Moral Law with the warning in Matthew 7:26-27: "And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!"

Just as Natural Law will bring down a bridge, so will Moral Law bring down a life. Whether we are talking about individuals or societies, there is no escaping the consequences of Moral Law. The Israelites were not given their Promised Land because of their righteousness, but they were warned that immorality would lose it for them.¹

In addition to Natural and Moral Law, I would like to suggest Social Law. The line between Moral and Social Law is not as distinct as it is between Natural and Moral Law. Perhaps the phrase, "birds of a feather, flock together" helps to illustrate how the Social Law operates. My Social Law comes closest to what Aquinas meant by Human Law. It consists of those written and unwritten rules or principles that guide our behavior in the practical affairs of life. We write them down so that everyone will understand what they are, but even if they have not been written down, we know when they have been violated. A Biblical example of one of these can be found in Deuteronomy 22:5, which says, "A woman shall not wear a man's apparel, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does such things is abhorrent to the LORD your God." This is neither a violation of Natural Law nor Moral Law, but Social Law. Like the other Laws, it has a spiritual foundation. God has made a distinction between male and female, and we are to maintain that distinction.

Violating the Social Law may not destroy a bridge, nor does it necessarily have to destroy a life. Those who violate the Law can always flock together. Violation of Social Law can however contribute to the destruction of society, and it will do that whenever we try to build a society by ignoring those Laws that govern Social relationships. "When nations do not take God's way," asks E. Stanley Jones, "does their toil end in smoke?" His answer is, "Inevitably."²

The detailed Laws of Deuteronomy are expressions of Moral and Social Law to govern behavior in the Promised Land. The detailed Laws of Matthew 5 to 7 are expressions of

¹See Deuteronomy 9:4 and 8:19-20.

²Jones, *The Way*, p. 196.

Moral and Social Law to govern behavior for citizens of the Kingdom of God. While the Bible does not seem to address the problem of Natural Law, there is a divine foundation lying underneath all three kinds of Law. The Laws of the Kingdom are written both in Scripture and in us at the same time. We do not break these Laws, but we may break ourselves by violating them. That's why it's important to understand them.

DETAILED LAWS II			
CRIME AND CRIMINALS			
An Unsolved Murder (21:1-9)	Burial of Executed Criminals (21:22-23)	Forced Enslavement (24:7)	
Individual Guilt (24:16)	Judicial Beatings (25:1-3)	An Assailants Genitals (25:11-12)	
WAR AND ITS VICTIMS			
Famale Prisoners (21:10-14)	Military Camp Laws (23:9-14)	A Military Exemption (24:5)	Extermination of Amalek (25:17-19)
MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY			
Right of the First Born (21:15-17)	Rebellious Sons (21:18-21)	Sexual Laws (22:13-30)	
Divorce and Remarriage (24:1-4)	A Newly Married Exemption (24:5)	Levirate Marriage (25:5-10)	
CIVIL AND SOCIAL CONCERNS			
Lost Property (22:1-4)	Mother Birds (22:6-7)	Railings (22:8)	Mixtures (22:9-11)
Slaves (23:15-16)	Prostitution (23:17-18)	Interest (23:19-20)	Gleaning (23:24-25)
Loans (24:6)	Loans (24:10-13)	Laborers (24:14-15)	The Weak (24:17-18)
Gleaning (24:19-22)		Unmuzzled Ox (25:4)	Weights/Measures (25:13-16)
RELIGION AND ITS PRACTICES			
Tassels/Garments (22:12)	Sexual Bars (23:1-2)	Ethnic Bars (23:3-8)	Vows (23:21-23)
Leprosy (24:8-9)	First Fruits (26:1-11)	Tithe Ceremony (26:12-15)	Covenant People (26:16-19)

DEUTERONOMY

The Second Law



Moses Death on Mount Nebo

28. Covenant Renewal
Deuteronomy 27:1—34:12

28. COVENANT RENEWAL

(27:1—34:12)

THE SHECHEM CEREMONY (27:1—28:68)

The Blessings on Mount Gerizim

Simeon
Levi
Judah

Issachar
Joseph
Benjamin

The Curses on Mount Ebal

Reuben
Gad
Asher

Zebulun
Dan
Naphtali

THE COVENANT IN MOAB (29:1—30:20)

MOSES' FINAL PREPARATIONS (31:48—32:47)

Moses
chooses Joshua
(31:1-8)

The Sabbatical
Feast of Booths
(31:9-13)

The Commissioning
of Joshua
(31:14-15 & 23)

The Song
of Moses
(31:16—32:47)

MOSES' BLESSING AND DEATH (32:48—34:12)

The Order to Ascend Mount Nebo

Abarim is the Range and Nebo or Pisgah the Summit
The Modern Name for Mount Nebo is Jebel Osha

The Blessings of Moses (33:1-29)

Reuben
Judah
Levi

Benjamin
Joseph
Zebulun

Issachar
Gad
Dan

Naphtali
Asher
(Simeon missing)

The Death of Moses (34:1-12)

Moses died on Mount Nebo/Pisgah at the age of 120

The View

East: The Jordan

North: Galilee

West: Mediterranean

South: The Negeb

28. COVENANT RENEWAL

Deuteronomy 27:1—34:12

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Shechem Ceremony 27:1—28:68	The Covenant in Moab 29:1—30:20	Moses' Final Preparation 31:1—32:47	Moses' Blessing and Death 32:48—34:12

THE SHECHEM CEREMONY (27:1—28:68)

The renewal of the Covenant that was to take place on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (27:11-13), near the city of Shechem, was also to take place every seventh year at the Feast of Booths (31:10-13). The ceremony was to be performed just as they entered the Promised Land. They were to write the law on stones covered with plaster on the sides of the mountains. Six tribes were to gather on Gerizim and six tribes on Ebal. All of those on Mount Gerizim, with the exception of Reuben and Zebulun, come from the lineage of Leah and Rachel. The Blessings were given from Mount Gerizim. The line-up was to be as follows:

MOUNT GERIZIM	MOUNT EBAL
Simeon	Reuben
Levi	Gad
Judah	Asher
Issachar	Zebulun
Joseph	Dan
Benjamin	Naphtali

The Levites were listed as a tribe and Joseph was listed instead of his sons Ephraim and Manasseh. The Levites were to read the twelve curses and the people were to add their assent. The curses condemn religious, social, and criminal offenses; and the blessings offer victory, peace, fruitfulness, and prosperity for obedience. Disobedience would bring on disease, famine, defeat, subservience, and ultimately exile, loss of homeland and all the joys of life. The disaster for disobedience was interpreted as a return to Egyptian bondage, only worse. That disaster finally came in the shape of the Exile into Babylonia (See 28:41 and 68).

THE COVENANT IN MOAB (29:1—30:20)

Moses exhorted Israel a second time to renew the Covenant and warned of disastrous consequences for disobedience. The Covenant in Moab was a renewal of the Covenant at Sinai. It was based on a recital of the Lord's mighty acts. The cities of Admah and Zeboiim mentioned in 29:23 were two cities destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah. Disobedience always ends in the same way. It all finally comes down to a choice that must be made, to choose the way of God or the way of idolatry. To choose God is to choose life (30:19-20), which is much more than the extension of days. It has to do with loving, obeying, and cleaving to the Lord instead of pursuing the ways of idolatry.

MOSES' FINAL PREPARATIONS (31:1—32:47)

Joshua becomes Moses' Successor (31:1-8)

Having reached 120 years of age, Moses summoned Joshua to take over. He is to take the Israelites into Canaan and divide the land among them.

The Sabbatical Feast of Booths (31:9-13)

The Deuteronomic Law was to be read every seven years at the central sanctuary during the Feast of Booths. A ceremony of Covenant Renewal was to take place on this occasion, and the Levitical priesthood was responsible for carrying it out, Men, women, and children were to assemble together to hear the Law so that they might learn to fear or have reverence for God.

The Commissioning of Joshua (31:14-15 and 23)

The Lord commissioned Joshua. In Numbers 27:12-23 it was Moses who commissioned Joshua.

Introduction to Moses' Song (31:16-30)

God seemed to know that the people would not keep the Covenant; therefore, He told Moses to write a song to remind the Israelites of what was coming into their lives and future history. The elders of the tribes assembled to hear the Song of Moses.

The Song of Moses (32:1-47)

Moses and Joshua recited the song in the hearing of all the people. *Rock* is a term for God, who found Israel in the desert and made her the “apple of his eye” (32:10). *Demons* refer to the gods of Canaan, which, as idols, are no gods at all (32:17). *Jeshurun* (the Beloved One) is a reference to Israel (32:15), who, like a well-fed animal, rebelled against its Master by worshiping these idols. If they are so good, then let them help in time of difficulty (32:38b). Idols cannot he;[because there is only one God. This song was a warning to the people about how serious God takes disobedience.

MOSES' BLESSING AND DEATH (32:48—34:12)

The Order to Ascend Mount Nebo (Abarim) (32:48-52)

Moses could view the Promised Land, but he could not enter it because of his sin. Both he and Aaron broke faith in the incident of the striking of the rock at Meribah-kadesh (Numbers 20:11-12; 27:12-14). This reason stands in tension with other explanations given by Moses in 1:37; 3:26; and 4:21. Mount Nebo is located in a mountain range called *Abarim*, a word, which means “across” or “beyond.” Nebo was at the summit and presented a commanding view of the Promised Land. A local Muslim tradition identifies Mount Nebo with modern Jebel Osha.

The Blessings of Moses (33:1-29)

These blessings can be compared to the deathbed blessings of Jacob in Genesis 49; but it is not likely that Moses gave the blessings in their present form, which describes the tribes after they had settled in Canaan. These blessings come to us from the early period of the monarchy, though they may reflect earlier tribal circumstances. Simeon is not mentioned, perhaps because the tribe had already disappeared. (See Genesis 49:5-7)

Reuben (33:6)

The tribe's numbers were reduced through the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 16).

Judah (33:7)

Judah was in trouble because of an adversary, perhaps the Philistines.

Levi (33:8)

The Levitical priesthood originated at Kadesh, i.e. Massah and Meribah. (See Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:2-13) The Urim and Thummim (Exodus 28:30) were the main tools of the priesthood, but they seem to disappear in the early monarchy. As the prophets emerged, the Urim and Thummim became unnecessary. Once prophecy died out, their use was revived (Ezra 2:63 and Nehemiah 7:65), but only temporarily.

Benjamin (33:12)

God was present with this tribe.

Joseph (33:13)

Joseph and his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, prospered with the bounties of nature and invincible military strength (Genesis 49:25-26).

Zebulun (33:18a)

This tribe would enjoy success in commerce and great affluence owing to the resources of the Mediterranean and the Sea of Galilee (Genesis 49:13).

Issachar (33:18b)

Issachar's affluence came from agriculture and for some of the same reasons as Zebulun's.

Gad (33:20)

Gad occupied the best tableland in the Transjordan, but aided the other tribes in the conquest of Canaan.

Dan (33:22)

Dan was vigorous as a lion's whelp and had already migrated from its former position north of Judah to the base of Mount Hermon.

Naphtali (33:23)

This tribe was to possess the Sea of Galilee.

Asher (33:24)

Located below Phoenicia, this tribe was to be strong and prosperous. Asher's territory was famous for its olives.

Only eleven of the tribes are mentioned. Why was Simeon left out? Did this tribe die out? Tradition has it that it was absorbed into Judah. Why was the tribe of Joseph not divided into Ephraim and Manasseh, as done elsewhere to make up the twelve tribes of Israel? No explanation is given.

Jeshurun (33:26) is a name of endearment used in poetry to refer to the nation of Israel with reference to its moral character. Had the nation continued in the spirit of promise, keeping its moral character intact, its history and influence in the world would have been very different.

The Death of Moses (120) (34:1-12)

The place of his death was (1) Mount Nebo (in the Transjordan, east of Jericho) or (2) Mount Pisgah (a peak in the same range, slightly to the west). Perhaps Pisgah is only another name for Nebo, but we cannot be certain. The word denotes any jagged ridge, and would accurately describe the mountain's highest peak, Jebel Osha, as seen from

below (32:49). The view from Jebel Osha today is the same as that described here in the final verses of Deuteronomy.

Moses was only allowed to look at the Promised Land. To the North he saw Galilee (the area of Dan and Naphtali); to the West he saw the Mediterranean; to the South he saw the Negeb (The Southern Wilderness of Judah), and the Jordan Valley as far south as Zoar. Moses lived 120 years and was buried by God; and although the location of a valley opposite Beth-peor in Moab is given, no one knows where the place of his burial is located (34:5-6). There was a thirty-day period of mourning before Joshua took over. Moses was the greatest of Israel's prophets, and that is why he later reappears on a mountain, talking to the Lord (Mark 9:2-4).

CHOOSING LIFE

Choosing life means entering a Covenant with God based on His Law. According to Deuteronomy 30:11-16, this is not too difficult to do:

Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe. See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess.

All the Laws of God, Natural, Moral, and Social, must be obeyed in order to insure happiness in the Promised Land. Obeying these Laws does not earn the right to enter the Promised Land, but disobeying them insures the loss of the Promised Land. Everything finally comes down to the choice we make between God and idolatry. Moses talks about this in Deuteronomy 30:19-20: "...I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him...." Moses encouraged Joshua to lead the people into the Promised Land, and to make a covenant with the Lord; but he also knew that many of them would make the wrong choice, and so in Deuteronomy 28:62-63 he describes their fate:

Although once you were as numerous as the stars in heaven, you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the LORD your God. And just as the LORD took delight in making you prosperous and numerous, so the LORD will take delight in bringing you to ruin and destruction; you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to possess.

How is this disaster to be avoided? The strategy, according to Moses' instructions in Deuteronomy 31:10-12, is simple:

Every seventh year, in the scheduled year of remission, during the festival of booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people—men, women, and children, as well as the aliens residing in your towns—so that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God and to observe diligently all the words of this law....

What do we find in all of this that can help us avoid the disaster that their descendants would not be able to avoid, for they eventually lost the land and ended up in exile (28:41)? While we cannot guarantee that our descendants will not do the same thing; we can and should avoid the disaster ourselves, even if only for one generation. Why? Because we can only live in our own generation, and our descendants will have to live in their own. Another reason might be that the Promised Land is not ultimately a geographical place, but a people choosing to follow God wherever he leads. The final Promised Land, according to the New Testament, is the New Jerusalem and that lies beyond history (Revelation 21:1-4).

The difficulty lies in discerning where he is leading us in this world. "Living," says Robert R. Wicks, "is like rowing a boat, moving forward while looking backward to gain the perspective of our course. So long as we cannot know the future, we must depend upon a purpose that began before we came and goes on after we are through."¹ To grab hold of that purpose is to discern God's leading, which helps us to choose life rather than death. That requires a life-long study of History and Scripture and an annual renewal of our Covenant with God. If one includes the Apocryphal Books, it takes just about six years to make any reasonable study of Scripture. In my opinion, a renewal of the Covenant should take place annually. In fact, I would go so far as to say that those who do not make it should be placed on an inactive list and finally dropped from membership in the Church. This is important to make us aware of the fact that we must continually make decisions for life, or we will quickly make decisions leading to death.

"There is no neutral ground in the universe:" wrote C.S. Lewis, "every square inch, every split second is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan."² Not to decide for God's vision of life is to decide against it, and those decisions are being made every moment of every day.

¹Robert R. Wicks, *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. XI (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 22

²Quoted in M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p 83. Peck quotes C.S. Lewis in his discussion of the choices we must make between God and Satan, good and evil.

APPENDIX

1. THE NAMES OF GOD

- 1. EL SHADDAI:** “God Almighty” or “God, the One of the Mountains”
- 2. ADONAI:** “Lord”
- 3. YAHWEH:** A Personal Name related to the verb, “To Be”
“Hallelujah” means “Praise Yahweh”

YAHWEH

“To Be” or “To Exist” or “To Be Actively Present”

1. “I am who I am”
2. “I will be what I will be”
3. “I cause to be”
4. “I am here, really present, ready to help”

The name does not refer to God’s “being” but to his “action” and “presence” in history.

2. COMPARING THE CREATION ACCOUNTS

Genesis Account	Atrahasis Early Babylonian Story	Babylonian Creation Story
God alone exists	The Gods and the world	Two Oceans exist: Tiamat & Apsu already exist Other gods, & their children also exist
At first all was waste and hilarious be-	Minor gods are working	Tiamat is angry at the noise to irrigate the land bavior of her children.
God creates... (1) light, (2) the heavens, (3) dry land with greenery, (4) the sun, moon, stars, become visible, (5) Animals are made for the waters and the heavens, (6) Animals are made to live on the dry land	The hard work makes the Gods angry and they rebel.	Apsu decides to destroy his noisy offspring, but is himself killed by Ea, god of water and wisdom. Tiamat, under pressure from a group of rebel gods, decides to avenge Apsu's death.
		Tiamat breeds a horde of monsters and sends them under the leadership of Kingu, to wreak vengeance on the gods, who retaliate and are repulsed.
		Marduk the son of Ea offers to act as a champion of the gods if they will make him their king.
		Marduk kills Tiamat, slits her body in two like a fish. Of one half he makes the earth and of the other half he makes the sky.
		All gods, including the rebels, accept the authority of Marduk. Kingu is arrested and killed.
God makes man of the same stuff as animals, but with a different nature, being in God's image.	Man is made of the flesh and blood of the rebel leader mixed with clay.	Man is made from the blood of Kingu.
(7) God rests.	Man takes over the hard work of the gods.	Man is set to work on the earth to provide food and drink for the gods.
	The gods relax.	The gods relax and Marduk is given Babylon as his city.

3. COMPARING THE FLOOD ACCOUNTS

THE FLOOD ACCOUNTS

The major cultures of the ancient Near East all have their own flood stories. In all three, human behavior prompts God to resort to judgment. In the Genesis account human beings become sinful, but in the others, they become too noisy.

Genesis Account (Hebrew)	Atrahasis (Babylonian)	Gilgamesh Epic (Assyrian)
Adam and Eve rebel against God and are expelled from the garden.	There is no record of any human rebellion against the gods.	
Human beings begin to increase and build cities. This behavior disturbs God. To punish their sin, God decides to send a flood to destroy his creation, but he warns Noah to build a large ark, or floating box, and take his family and representatives of the animal kingdom on board for preservation.	Human beings begin to increase. The noise they make disturbs the gods who send plagues, famines and droughts hoping that they will take the hint and make less noise. A conference of the gods is called and the decision is made to destroy humanity entirely. Enki, the creator, tells his favorite, Atrahasis, of the plot to destroy all human beings by a flood. Atrahasis escapes with his family in a great boat.	Human beings increase to the extent that their noise disturbs the gods. Enlil the god of power and Ishtar the goddess of fertility encourage the other gods to destroy all of humanity. Ea, the god of water and wisdom warns his favorite man Utnapishtim to build a boat when the flood comes. The man and his family enter the boat. The gods are terrified by the flood and flee to the highest heaven.
When the flood ends, Noah's boat rests on a high mountain. After forty days, Noah sends out a raven, but it finds no place to rest so it returns to the ark. After seven days, Noah sends out a dove and this action is repeated twice before the dove ceases to return.	When the flood ends, Atrahasis offers a sacrifice and the gods gather round the smoke eager for their food.	After seven days the storm subsides and the boat runs aground on a mountain. After another seven days Utnapishtim sends out a dove and later a swallow. Both return. Then a raven is sent out, who does not return.
Noah then leaves the ark and offers a burnt sacrifice to God who promises not to destroy the world again by flood and gives the rainbow as a sign of his promise.	Most of them promise never to cause such destruction again. The god whose sleep was disturbed is not entirely appeased.	Utnapishtim opens the boat and on the mountain top he makes a sacrifice over which the gods gather like flies. The gods promise never to destroy again and Utnapishtim and his wife are made immortal.

4. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Exodus 19:1-3; 20:1-17; 32:1-35

Eight of the Ten Commandments are written in negative terms. Rewrite them positively to express what the Israelites should do, rather than what they should not do. Note the two commandments that are already written in positive terms.

FIRST TABLET

"Your Relationship to God"

1. You shall not have any other gods before me.
2. You shall not make a graven image.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

SECOND TABLET

"Your Relationship to Others"

5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

5. THE TWO TABLETS OF THE LAW

THE FIRST TABLET - Exodus 20:3-11

Deuteronomy 6:4: “The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.”

Mark 12:29b: “The Lord our God, the Lord is one”

Deuteronomy 5:5: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

Mark 12:30: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”

1. Worship no god but me. (The Only God)
2. Do not make for yourselves images. (The Invisible God)
3. Do not use my name for evil purposes. (God’s Sacred Name)
4. Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy. (God’s Special Day)

THE SECOND TABLET—Exodus 20:12-17

Leviticus 19:18: “...you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Mark 12:31: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

5. Respect your father and your mother. (The Sacredness of Parents)
6. Do not commit murder. (The Sacredness of Life)
7. Do not commit adultery. (The Sacredness of Marriage)
8. Do not steal. (The Sacredness of Property)
9. Do not accuse anyone falsely. (The Sacredness of Truth)
10. Do not covet. (The Sacred Desire)

The Golden Rule: “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.” **Matthew 6:12**

6. THE FESTIVALS OF JUDAISM

1. ROSH HASHANAH/NEW YEAR

The Jewish religious year includes a number of festivals and days of fasting. The first of these is New Year's Day (Rosh Hashanah, "head of the year") and it occurs in September or October. This festival speaks both of God's creation of the world and of the judgement of the world. The Hebrew prayer-book states, "This is the day that the world was called into existence. This day He causeth all creatures to stand in judgement." A ram's horn (shophar) is blown in the synagogue to remind people to return to God, and the next ten days are set aside for self-examination and repentance. It is customary to eat apple dipped in honey and to wish others "a good and sweet year."

2. YOM KIPPUR/THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is considered the holiest day in the Jewish religious year. It comes as the conclusion to the period of penitence that began on New Year's Day. The day is characterized by prayer, fasting and the public confession of sin. Traditionally this was the day when the high priest made sacrifice for the sins of the people of Israel and entered the "holy of holies" in the temple (earlier, in the tabernacle). Today there is no temple and no sacrifice is offered, but atonement is sought through repentance. The devout worshipper fasts for twenty-four hours, spends all day in the synagogue and wears a white robe as a symbol of purity and of the grave. At the conclusion of this day he will consider himself to have been spiritually reborn.

3. SUKKOT/TABERNACLES

Five days after the Day of Atonement comes the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) which lasts for a week. This is one of the three harvest festivals in the Jewish year (the others are Passover and Pentecost), and as such it has served as the model for Christian harvest celebrations. During the festival Jewish people remember how God provided all their needs when they wandered for forty years in the wilderness. They build temporary shelters or "tabernacles" of branches in their gardens or next to their synagogues. They eat their meals in them and may even sleep in them—though this may depend on the climate, as they are left open to the sky.

4. SIMCHAT TORAH/CELEBRATING THE LAW

After the Feast of Tabernacles comes the "Rejoicing of the Law" (Simchat Torah). During the course of a year the whole of the Law, the first five books of the Bible, is read in the synagogue. On this festival day the reading is completed with the last portion of Deuteronomy and begun again with the first verses of Genesis. The service is characterized by great joy and the scrolls of the Law are carried in procession around the synagogue with singing and dancing.

5. HANUKKAH/FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

At about the time that Christians celebrate Christmas, Jews celebrate Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights. This commemorates the victory of Judas Maccabeus over the Syrians, and the rededication of the temple in Jerusalem in 164 BC. The festival lasts eight days and many Jewish families light an eight-branched candlestick or menorah. (It actually has nine candles; the additional one, called “the servant,” is used to light the others.) One candle is lit on each day of the festival until on the eighth day all are alight.

6. PURIM

In February or March comes Purim, the festival which recalls the story of Esther. Purim means “lots” and refers to the lots cast by Haman to choose the day on which to destroy all the Jews in the Persian Empire. In the synagogue the book of Esther is read and, whenever the name of Haman occurs, the boys present make a noise with rattles or stamp their feet. In the home Purim is a time for parties, often in fancy dress, and for eating special pastries called Hamantaschen.

7. PESACH/PASSOVER

Best-known of all Jewish festivals is Passover (Pesach). It coincides more or less with Christian Easter and recalls the deliverance of the people of Israel from their slavery in Egypt. A special meal or seder (meaning “order”) is held in the home. Traditional dishes are eaten, songs are sung and the story of deliverance from Egypt is recounted. The youngest child asks the question, “Why is this night different from other nights?” and that is the father’s cue to relate the events of the biblical book of Exodus, as they are set out in the special order of service or Haggadah. (Haggadah means “showing forth” or “telling the story.”) Traditionally a place at the table is left vacant and a glass of wine is set aside for the prophet Elijah who is expected to come as the herald of the Messianic Age.

On the eve of Passover a thorough search is made in each Jewish home to ensure that no leaven (yeast) has been left anywhere. In the place of ordinary bread, flat, unleavened bread (matzah) is eaten. The matzah serves as a reminder of the “bread of affliction” which the Jewish slaves ate in Egypt, and hence the festival is also known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

8. SHAVUOT/PENTECOST

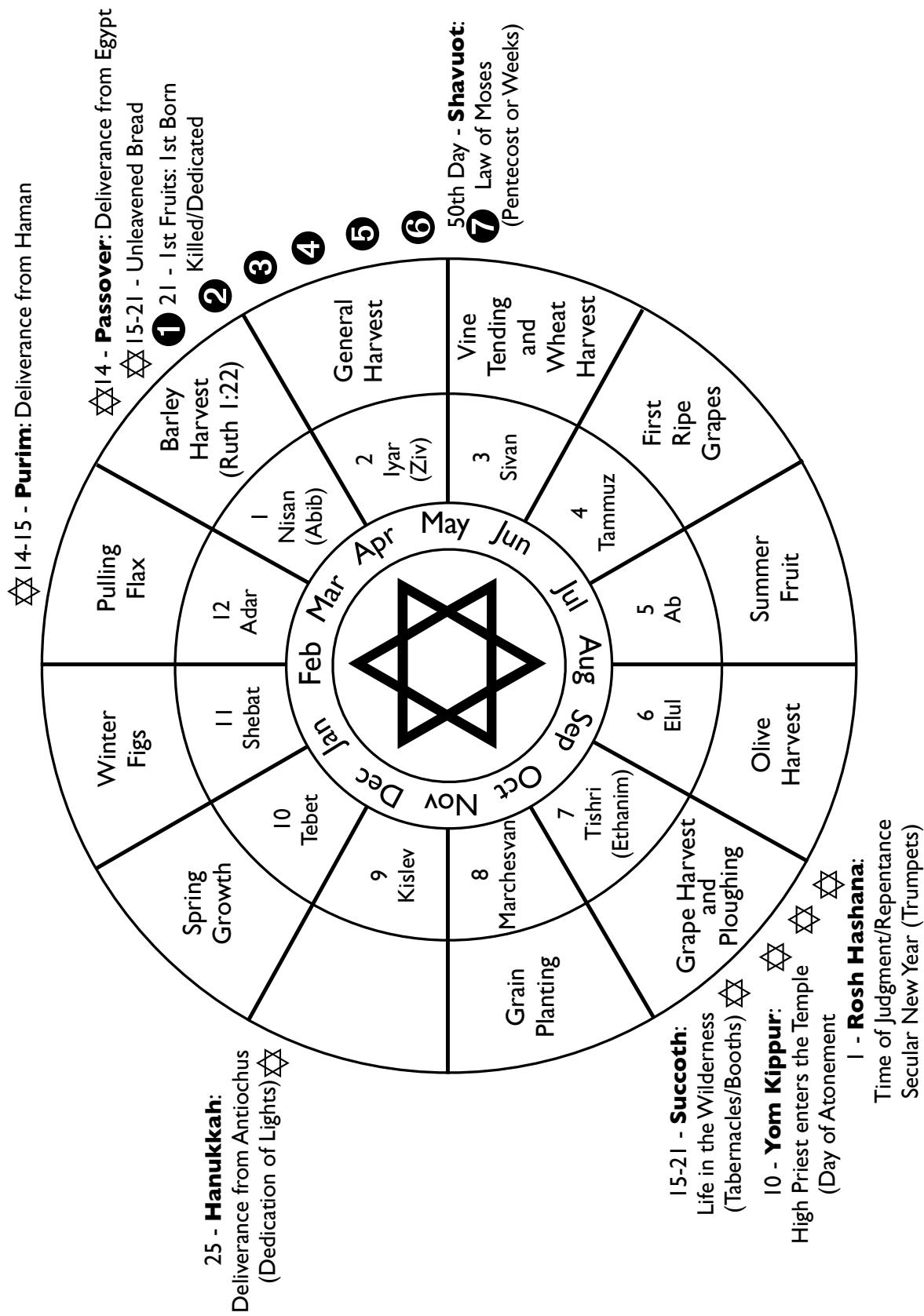
A period of seven weeks of mourning follows Passover. This is associated with the failure of the Jewish revolt against Rome in the second century AD and the loss of many Jewish scholars at about the same time through plague. The Festival of Pentecost (from the Greek word meaning “fiftieth”) or Weeks (Shavuot) is celebrated fifty days after the second day of Passover and commemorates the giving of the Law by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In the synagogue service the Ten Commandments are read and some Jews sit up all night meditating on God’s Law. Pentecost is also the “Feast of the First Fruits.” The synagogue is decorated with flowers and plants, and dairy foods are eaten.

9. THE NINTH OF AV/A DAY OF MOURNING

On Tishah B'Av (the ninth day of the Jewish month Av—roughly July/August), the Jewish people remember the destruction of the temple in AD 70 by the Romans. Some also link the same date with the destruction of the first temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. It is a day of mourning and fasting, and all ornaments are removed from the synagogue.

David Harley, “Chosen People: Judaism,” *The World’s Religions* (Eerdman’s: Grand Rapids), 1982, pp. 274-277.

7. THE JEWISH CALENDAR



8. THE SEVEN COVENANTS OF THE BIBLE

1. THE COVENANT THROUGH NOAH (Genesis 9:8-17)

The first Covenant was made with Noah and his descendants. It consists of the unconditional promise made by God never to destroy earthly life with a natural catastrophe. The symbol of this first Covenant is the rainbow.

2. THE COVENANT THROUGH ABRAHAM (Genesis 15:9-21 and 17:1-27)

The second Covenant was made with Abraham and his descendants. God promised in this Covenant to bless Abraham for his faith, shape his descendants into a nation, and give them a land of milk and honey. The Covenant is conditional, that is, it is dependent upon Abraham's faith and the faith of future descendants. The symbol of this second Covenant is circumcision.

3. THE COVENANT THROUGH MOSES (Exodus 19-24)

The third Covenant was made with Moses and the children of Israel (Jacob) at Mount Sinai. God would deliver his people from slavery and take them into the Promised Land if they would consecrate themselves totally to him. The symbol of this third Covenant is the 10 Commandments, which signify both the theological and ethical foundation of God's people.

4. THE COVENANT THROUGH PHINEHAS (Numbers 25:10-13)

The fourth Covenant was made with the zealous priest named Phinehas. It was an unconditional promise made by God to provide his people with a perpetual priesthood. While no specific symbol emerges to designate this Covenant, it has been called the Covenant of Peace. Perhaps a symbol of peace would be appropriate, or some symbol of the priesthood.

5. THE COVENANT THROUGH DAVID (2 Samuel 7:5-16)

The fifth Covenant was made with David. It was an unconditional promise to establish and maintain the Davidic dynasty on the throne of Israel. This means that God would forever provide his people with a godly king like David. The symbol of this Covenant is the Star of David.

6. THE COVENANT THROUGH JEREMIAH (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

The sixth Covenant was made through Jeremiah just as God was expelling his rebellious people from the Promised Land because of their unfaithfulness. It was an unconditional promise to forgive his people and establish a new relationship

with them by writing his law on their hearts. This Covenant was to be based on pure grace.

7. THE NEW COVENANT THROUGH JESUS (Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; and Luke 22:7-23)

The seventh Covenant was made through Jesus on the night before his death on the cross. God made an unconditional promise to forgive sin and offer eternal life to all who would accept his grace, which he revealed through the death of Jesus on the Cross. This is the Covenant of pure grace. Bread, Wine, and the Cross are the symbols of this Covenant.

AFTERWORD

Most of us have read through Genesis and Exodus, but many of us have gotten bogged down in Leviticus, Numbers, or Deuteronomy. I have found that the best way to make it all the way through Deuteronomy is to meet together with a small group open to discussing the material.

There are some very important passages in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In Leviticus 19:2 we are encouraged to seek holiness and in Leviticus 19:18 we are told to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. In Deuteronomy 5 we come across another account of the Ten Commandments and in Deuteronomy 6 we come across the Shema, which informs us to worship but one God and to love him with all our heart, our soul, and our might. (Deuteronomy 6:3-5). When Jesus was asked to name the Greatest of all the Commandments, he went right to Deuteronomy and Leviticus. What about Numbers? Is there anything important in Numbers? I suppose John 3:16 is the most well known and loved passage in the Bible. In John 3:14-15, we are told, “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” That;s a direct reference to Numbers 21:8. This gives us a little insight into the meaning and power of Jesus’ death on the cross.

You’re not wasting your time reading these five books. They make up the foundation and the context for the rest of the Bible. Martin Luther once said that the Bible is the manger that holds the Christ. I agree. You will find plenty of straw in the Bible, but you will also find plenty of diamonds. We need constant reminding of the fact that we will encounter both straw and diamonds. God instructed Moses to tell the people to make fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generation and to put a blue cord on the fringe of each corner. Why? So that they would remember all the commandments and not follow the lust of their own hearts and eyes. Then God sums it up in Numbers 15:40-41: “So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and you shall be holy to your God. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; I am the LORD your God.”

My purpose in putting this Bible Study Guide together was to help the reader along the way. I’ve tried not to make things too complicated or too lengthy. In preparing my comments, I read both liberal and conservative commentaries, and only then, did I attempt to write down my own comments. I’m sure I have made a few mistakes along the way, and I would appreciate being made aware of them. May God bless you as you take up the task of studying these five books.

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