

Getting Into The Promised Land Without Falling Asleep In Leviticus

2. In the Wilderness – Part 1 Exodus

Tim Attaway

**A Teaching Commentary
of the Old Testament**

Note – This piece has been segmented out of a larger document.

© Copyright 1996, 1999, 2007 by Tim Attaway
All Rights Reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without prior written permission from the author.

Unless otherwise stated, the Bible translation used in this commentary is taken from the HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION copyright © 1978 by the New York International Bible Society.

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	6
2	ISRAELITE OPPRESSION.....	7
3	THE KILLING OF THE BABIES AND THE BIRTH OF MOSES	7
4	MOSES FLEES TO MIDIAN	8
5	THE CALL OF MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH.....	9
6	MOSES' FIRST APPEARANCE BEFORE PHARAOH	12
7	GOD REASSURES MOSES OF DELIVERANCE	13
8	THE FAMILY LINE OF MOSES AND AARON	13
9	AARON WILL SPEAK FOR MOSES.....	14
10	AARON'S STAFF BECOMES A SNAKE	14
11	THE FIRST NINE PLAGUES.....	14
12	THE TENTH PLAGUE – THE PLAGUE ON THE FIRSTBORN.....	18
13	THE PASSOVER AND THE EXODUS.....	18
14	CHRIST IN THE PASSOVER.....	19
15	CONSECRATION OF THE FIRSTBORN.....	20
16	CROSSING THE RED SEA.....	20
17	THE SONG OF MOSES.....	21
18	THE WATERS OF MARAH AND ELIM.....	21
19	MANNA AND QUAIL.....	22
20	WATER FROM THE ROCK.....	23
21	THE AMALEKITES DEFEATED.....	23
22	JETHRO VISITS MOSES.....	24
23	MOSES JOURNEYS TO MOUNT SINAI.....	25
24	THE GIVING OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.....	26
24.1	FIRST COMMANDMENT – IDOLATRY	28

24.2	SECOND COMMANDMENT – GRAVEN IMAGES	29
24.3	THIRD COMMANDMENT – THE LORD'S NAME	30
24.4	FOURTH COMMANDMENT – THE SABBATH	31
24.5	FIFTH COMMANDMENT – HONOR YOUR PARENTS	32
24.6	SIXTH COMMANDMENT – MURDER	34
24.7	SEVENTH COMMANDMENT – ADULTERY	35
24.8	EIGHTH COMMANDMENT – STEALING	36
24.9	NINTH COMMANDMENT – LYING	36
24.10	TENTH COMMANDMENT – COVETING	38
25	LAWS AND ELABORATIONS.....	38
26	THE COVENANT CONFIRMED	41
27	THE TABERNACLE.....	42
27.1	DIAGRAM OF THE TABERNACLE	43
27.2	THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS	44
27.3	CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS.....	45
27.4	FURTHER TABERNACLE INSTRUCTIONS.....	45
28	THE GOLDEN CALF	45
29	THE TENT OF MEETING.....	47
30	MOSES AND THE GLORY OF GOD - THE NEW TABLETS	47
31	THE BUILDING OF THE TABERNACLE.....	48
32	INDEX OF SCRIPTURE REFERENCES	49
33	TOPICAL INDEX.....	51

1 Introduction

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy together are called the Pentateuch. They are also referred to as "The Books of Moses," because the authorship of these books is attributed to Moses (these are the only books of the Bible that he is supposed to have written). Genesis describes events that took place long before Moses' time – from the creation of the world until the time that Jacob and his family entered the land of Egypt. Exodus through Deuteronomy tell the events that occurred in the life of Moses. Exodus through Deuteronomy have been referred to as the Wilderness Books, because the majority of them describe the wanderings in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt and before the actual conquest of the Promised Land.

In Genesis 15:13-14, we read

Then the Lord said to him (referring to Abraham), "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions."

At the end of Genesis, Jacob and his twelve sons and their families had settled in Egypt. They had met with a great deal of favor there and were treated well, being showered with gifts and being allowed to settle in the best part of the land. The meter had begun running on that four hundred years.

We have no archive on the events of that period of time. We do know that during the time in Egypt, the children of Israel lived as a peculiar people, separate from the Egyptians. They did not intermarry. There were racial barriers that kept them from simply being absorbed into Egyptian society, as we see in Genesis 43:32 ("They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians.") That was by design. God did not want them absorbed into Egyptian society. He used this four hundred years to give birth to a nation. The seventy descendants of Israel that went into Egypt emerged as the nation of Israel, with a cultural and theological identity that stays with them to this day.

We also know that as they grew strong and numerous, they grew to be a perceived threat to the Egyptians. The favor that they received in the beginning turned to disfavor and the freedom turned to slavery. Just as God had told Abraham, they were turned into a nation of slaves. We do not know how long the period of slavery lasted. They were there four hundred years. They ended up slaves. Were they slaves the last fifty years? The last three hundred and fifty? We really do not know. Even this time of slavery had a purpose, however.

When the Hebrews entered Egypt, they had it very good. The land was good. They had plenty to eat. They were treated with great favor. If that sort of treatment had continued, there would have been very little motivation to leave. If things were still good in Egypt, then why go to Canaan? The problem is that Canaan was the land that was promised to them. This is where God would fulfill his plan. The Israelites had to be jump-started to get them to move and so God turned their cushioned life in Egypt into one of bitterness and slavery so that they would want to get on with the plan.

And that is how we find the people as Exodus opens. Exodus is the story of the coming out. If God had his way, the books of the Bible might be Genesis, Exodus, Entrance, etc, but as it turned out God was not able to lead the people into the Promised Land right after he led them

out of Egypt. Instead, the Exodus led them out of Egypt and into a period of wandering in the desert, a time when God would try the people and test them and tutor them in his ways. Everything that God taught the people during the years of wandering he would have taught them anyway, but he would rather have done it after settling them in their own land. We tie God's hands and make it hard for him to make it easy for us.

And so the Exodus does not lead directly to the Entrance. Instead, we have the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, covering approximately forty years of history, prior to the book of Joshua where the Promised Land is finally taken. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are the Wilderness Books. They tell of God being faithful to lead his people out of bondage and towards the Promised Land, and of the lessons that the people had to learn before they could enter into the promise. That is why these books are important to us. We are people whom God is leading out of bondage. He wants nothing more than to lead us into his Promised Land. We all have lessons to learn before we can enter into the promise. Perhaps our wandering in the wilderness can be shortened if we understand the wanderings of our spiritual forefathers. As we study these books, it should be our goal to understand the nature of the God who orchestrated these events. We should strive to become Joshuas and Calebs, who are willing to follow God wherever he wants to go and who have faith that he can lead us against any perceived odds. Our time in his word should be like Moses' time in the Tent of Meeting. It should leave us aglow with his presence and anxious for the next encounter.

2 Israelite Oppression

Exodus 1:1-14

The first fourteen verses of Exodus describe very briefly what was stated in the introduction. The children of Jacob went to Egypt with favor. In time, there was a change in leadership in Egypt. A new Pharaoh came into power who had no special place in his heart for Joseph or his family (Joseph was long dead by now). Furthermore, the Israelites were getting to be fairly substantial in numbers by this time. They were perceived to be a nation living within the nation (which was true). In case of war, Egypt could not count upon their allegiance. Thus they were perceived to be a threat to Egypt rather than a welcome guest. The result is that they were enslaved.

The Israelites were forced into labor of various kinds, including building. Egyptians were big builders and Israelite slave labor was used to build Egyptian cities, specifically Pithom and Rameses. In spite of the hard labor, the children of Israel thrived. The harder the Egyptians tried to oppress them, the stronger in numbers they grew and the more they thrived.

3 The Killing of the Babies and the Birth of Moses

Exodus 1:15-2:10

Pharaoh was concerned about the ever-increasing number of Hebrews in their midst. He figured that the best way to curtail the growth in their numbers would be to nip it in the bud, so to speak. He issued an order to the Hebrew midwives that if a Hebrew male child were born, he should be thrown into the Nile. Female Hebrew babies would be allowed to live, but the males should be killed.

For a while, the midwives simply refused to go along with the order and God rewarded them for it. They were risking themselves for the sake of doing what was right. They told the Pharaoh that the Hebrew women were having their babies before the midwives arrived and thus they had

no opportunity to carry out his order. So Pharaoh issued the same order to everyone – not just the midwives. If they saw male Hebrew babies, they were to be thrown into the Nile.

We do not know how many babies may have actually lost their lives as a result of this order. We do see a foreshadowing of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, when Herod ordered the slaughter of the male babies in Bethlehem. In both situations, God was about to give a deliverer to his people. Here in Exodus, that would be Moses.

Moses' mother gave birth to a male baby. She feared the Pharaoh's order and hid her son for three months. Eventually she devised a plan for how she might spare the child's life. She made an ark – a small boat (it worked for Noah). She put the baby in the boat. She waited until Pharaoh's daughter went out to bathe in the river. Then she strategically floated the boat towards Pharaoh's daughter. She placed her daughter Miriam close-by to watch what happened.

She was taking a real chance. Pharaoh's daughter could have simply followed Pharaoh's order and dunked the child in the Nile. Moses' mother was hoping and praying that she would have pity on the child instead. And that is what happened. God had orchestrated this event and he would be responsible for the outcome. Moses' mother had to play along and it did require a great deal of faith on her part.

Pharaoh's daughter did spot the boat and had it brought over to her. She quickly recognized what was going on – that one of the Hebrews was trying to save the life of her child. She made the decision to take the child and to raise him as her own. Miriam quickly jumped out and offered to find a Hebrew woman to nurse the child – and thus Moses ended up back in the arms of his own mother, who was paid to take care of her own son. It was different, however. She would not be raising a son that would grow up into Egyptian slavery. She would be raising a son that would grow up into Egyptian royalty. And the time that she had with him she could use to instill in him a knowledge of the things of God and a sense of who he really was.

4 Moses Flees to Midian

Exodus 2:11-25

In the second part of chapter 2, we get the real sense that Moses knew who he was and what his roots were. He may have grown up in the house of the Pharaoh, but the time that he had spent with his real mother had left an identity with him. In verse 11, we see that Moses "went out to where his own people were," referring to the Hebrews. In the same verse, "He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people." Moses knew that these Hebrew slaves were his own people. He felt for them. At some point, he became concerned about the treatment that they were receiving.

The day came when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and he decided to give the Egyptian a taste of his own medicine. He killed the Egyptian. He hid the body and hoped to hide the crime as well. The next day he saw two Hebrews fighting and tried to intervene. They asked him if he was going to kill them like he did the Egyptian. Well, the cat was out of the bag. Moses' big secret was not secret any longer. Everyone knew that he had killed the Egyptian. Pharaoh found out and tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Egypt and went to live in the land of the Midianites (Midian was son of Abraham by Keturah).

There was a man among the Midianites who had seven daughters. The daughters were out tending sheep one day and trying to water the sheep when some men came along and tried to harass them. Moses saw what was going on, drove away the men, and helped the women water the sheep. Well, one thing led to another and Moses ended up married to one of them, named

Zipporah. She bore him a son named Gershom. Moses settled down in Midian and became a shepherd.

In the meantime, the children of Israel were back in Egypt groaning under the burden of their slavery. God heard their cries. He had a plan.

5 The Call of Moses and the Burning Bush

Exodus 3-4

Moses was out tending sheep in the desert one day at Mount Horeb. He saw a bush that was burning but which was not being consumed by the flame. This was a curious sight, so he went over to get a better look. Little did he know exactly what he would find. God spoke to him from the bush. He told Moses that he should remove his shoes because he was standing on holy ground. In 3:6-10 we read:

Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.

When Moses realized who was speaking to him, his natural reaction was to hide his face. This is not uncommon. A divine encounter is a humbling experience that leaves anyone feeling unworthy.

God told Moses what he was about to do for the Israelites and he told Moses the role that he would play. We see in the next several paragraphs that Moses' reaction was not "Oh yippie! Just what I wanted to do!" If you look at the series of objections that Moses raises, it looks very much like the list of reasons that we might produce so as not to do the things that God wants us to do.

- (3:11) But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"
- (3:13) Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"
- (4:1) Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The Lord did not appear to you?'"
- (4:10) Moses said to the Lord, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue."
- (4:13) But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

This is Moses, the great man of faith who wrote the first five books of the Bible. He whimpers like every one of us. God chooses one of us to go and minister in his name. We come back with the classic five: "Why me?" "Suppose they do not believe in you?" "Suppose they do not believe in me?" "Here are all my shortcomings that prevent me from doing this." "Can't you just

get someone else do to this?" The positive side is that God was able to use Moses in spite of all of this. He can use us as well. And God had an answer for each of Moses' objections.

- (3:11) But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

God explained to Moses that God was the one doing the delivering, not Moses. Moses just needed to go along and be faithful to do as instructed. He was not going alone. God was with him.

- (3:13) Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

At the heart of this question is a polytheistic belief structure. The Israelites were living in a polytheistic world. If Moses came to them and told them that the God of their fathers was ready to deliver them, they might come back and ask, "Now which god is that?" He wanted to know what God's name was.

God responded with more than just a name. He responded by revealing his very nature. (3:14) "God said to Moses, 'I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you.'" The name that God chose for himself was "I AM." This is an expression in Hebrew that carries a meaning of "I am now, I always have been, I always will be." It is a word meaning self-existent. It is the Hebrew word that we transliterate as YHWH and pronounce Yahweh or Jehovah. God was revealing his eternal and self-existent nature to Moses and told him to communicate that to the Hebrew people. He also told Moses to tell the people that he had felt their misery and was here to deliver them. He would go before them and strike the Egyptians so that they would let the people go.

The message to the people is that the God who created the universe –the God who always has been and always will be – cares about their condition and is ready to deliver them. The God who made promises to their fathers Abraham and Isaac and Jacob is now ready to deliver those promises to them.

- (4:1) Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The Lord did not appear to you?'"

Moses' attention shifted from God to self. "Maybe they believe you, but what if they don't believe me!" Moses doubted his own credibility with the people. Why would they believe that God had chosen him? Who appointed him as prophet?

God reassured him. He gave him signs to show the people to prove that God was with him. He told Moses to throw his staff on the ground. He did and it became a snake. When Moses reached out and grabbed it it turned back into a staff. He told Moses to put his hand in his cloak and draw it back out and when he did it was leprous. He put it back in and drew it back out and this time it was normal again. He also had him draw water out of the river and then pour it on the ground. As it was poured it turned to blood. These are not your normal parlor tricks.

God told Moses to show these signs to the people so that they would believe that God was with him. That should bolster his confidence and move him beyond his self-doubt. God does show himself in the things that we are willing to do in his name, but we have to be willing to toss our staff on the ground before God will turn it into a snake.

- (4:10) Moses said to the Lord, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue."

"God, the way I see it, you are going to need a fancy talker to pull this off and I'm just not the man." Isn't it good that God has us to think things through for him?

God's answers are getting a bit shorter at this point. He told Moses that he would give him the words he needed when he needed them. Moses is about out of arguments, so he gets to the point that he has been trying to make all along.

- (4:13) But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

God had chosen Moses for the job but was willing to compromise with him. He sent Aaron, Moses' brother, to be his companion and helper in this journey. Aaron was a more powerful speaker and he would use Aaron in this capacity. In fact, Aaron was already on the way to find Moses.

There are a couple of interesting observations here. First of all, Moses may have grown up in Pharaoh's household, but he knew that Aaron was his brother. This is another indication that Moses' royal upbringing had not obscured his identity. His family must have remained a strong influence in his life.

Second, who knows what might have been different if Moses had simply said, "Yes, Lord, send me." It is interesting that Moses was the chosen leader but that the priesthood went to the descendants of Aaron rather than Moses. After the time that the people settled in the Promised Land, you hear nothing about the line of Moses, even though we know he had sons. It is the line of Aaron that becomes important. Did God intend for this special role to be fulfilled in the descendants of Moses and was it transferred to Aaron because of Moses' unwillingness to give God an unbridled "Send me"? We do not know. But we do miss out on blessings and promises because of our unwillingness to receive them. This might have been one of them.

Moses was out of arguments. He took his "miracle rod" and his family and headed back to Egypt. In 4:21-23 we read,

The Lord said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the Lord says: 'Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.'""

God warned Moses that Pharaoh would be hardened to the idea of letting the people go. In fact, God said that he would harden Pharaoh's heart. Now why would that be? Why would God make things difficult? And if God is the one that hardened Pharaoh's heart, then is Pharaoh an innocent player in this whole thing?

God does not violate the free will that he has given men. To be hard about this thing was Pharaoh's choice. Pharaoh already tended in that direction. God may have reinforced the decision that Pharaoh had already made and hardened him further. There was a reason. If Pharaoh had been easy about all of this, then it may have looked like the people were being delivered from slavery by chance or by some strong leader. God wanted the circumstances of this event to be such that there was no question that it was God doing the delivering. Pharaoh's hardness of heart was the stage for God's miracles. They would be dramatic and drastic, down to the taking of the firstborn, as the passage above has warned.

On the way back to Egypt, a rather unusual thing happened. We read about it in 4:24-26.

At a lodging place on the way, the Lord met Moses and was about to kill him. But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me," she said. So the Lord let him alone. (At that time she said "bridegroom of blood," referring to circumcision.)

Moses himself would have been circumcised as a baby. It is apparent that he had neglected that in his own household. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant. It was time to get right with the covenant. God was forcing Moses to get right before this thing could proceed. More than likely God had spoken to Moses a number of times about this before, and Moses had grappled with the feelings of "I really ought to do that" with regard to circumcising his son. But he never did it. It was brought to a crisis point where Moses had to resolve it before he could take another step. His wife, who obviously found the practice to be barbaric, took care of it for him.

Having resolved this they headed back to Egypt. They met Aaron along the way. The two of them shared experiences and headed out together. They went back to Egypt. They gathered the elders of the Israelites and showed them the signs and told them that the Lord was ready to deliver them. The people were quite excited and worshipped the Lord because of his concern for their misery.

6 Moses' First Appearance Before Pharaoh

Exodus 5:1-21

Moses appeared before Pharaoh and asked him to let the people go into the desert for three days so they could hold a festival and offer sacrifices to God. This request seems a bit strange since Moses' goal was to get the people released from slavery altogether. Why did Moses simply ask for a weekend pass? I'm not sure but several possibilities exist.

It is possible that Moses felt that there was no chance Pharaoh would simply free the people but maybe he would let them go for three days. Maybe Moses was trying to get the people into the desert and out from under the hand of the Egyptians. Perhaps his plan was to get them that far with Pharaoh's permission and then simply never return. If this was the plan, then Moses was not being honest with Pharaoh (but this was fairly early in Moses' faith walk and he was not perfect).

Perhaps God's plan was to test Pharaoh with this simple request – to let them have three days off. If he passed then he would be tested with a bigger request – to release them from slavery altogether. Maybe God was giving Pharaoh the opportunity to do the right thing. If that was the plan, Pharaoh failed the first test.

Whatever the reason for this request, Pharaoh failed to oblige Moses. He knew nothing of this God and felt he owed him no favors. Furthermore, he accused the Israelites of being lazy. Why else would they want these three days off from their labor? Thus Pharaoh decided to shake them back into action.

The Israelites were used as slaves on building projects. Many of them had the responsibility to make bricks. Bricks were made out of straw and mud packed and baked together. One can still travel to the Middle East and see some ruins of some ancient buildings that were made of this kind of brick and see the straw in the mud. We gather from the text in Exodus 5 that the Egyptians had been supplying the slaves with the straw and they took it and turned it into bricks. Pharaoh figured that these people did not have enough to keep them busy so he cut off the

supply of straw. He said that the slaves had to begin gathering their own straw but were required to make the same number of bricks each day. Moses had come claiming to bring deliverance for the people but all he had done is make things worse. Their labor now was harder than it ever had been before. They were not able to meet their quotas of bricks under this new arrangement and their foremen were beaten because of it. They appealed to Pharaoh for fairness, but he reiterated that they were lazy and needed more work to do or else they would not have asked for the time off. The people vented their anger at Moses and Aaron.

Moses was in a real predicament. Prior to this, he was off minding his own business in the home of his father-in-law. Becoming a deliverer for his people was the last thing on his mind. When God called him he tried every way he could to get out of it. He was not comfortable with his ability to speak, and yet he was being called upon to be a negotiator and a leader. Leadership is something that has to be demonstrated and respect as a leader must be earned from those who are to follow. But the first time Moses tried to do anything on the people's behalf, he got them in deeper trouble than they had before he came. Every wave of self-doubt must have come crashing in on him at this point. He seemed to be hurting the people he was trying to help and they resented him for it. He must have wanted to give it all up and run back home to resume his life as a shepherd. But he hung in there.

And there is a point to all of this. Deliverance does not come for free. Sometimes before we can be released from our bondages, we have to face the period of being required to make bricks without straw. Sometimes when God calls us to a task, it may require passing through rough water before the sailing gets smooth. Trusting God is the only thing that will get us through it because every natural instinct would tell us to turn and retreat to our life of tending sheep. And there is nothing inherently wrong with tending sheep unless God is calling you to another task.

7 God Reassures Moses of Deliverance

Exodus 5:22-6:12

Moses took his frustration to God. God reassured Moses of his plan. He told him that he would move Pharaoh to the point where he would not only agree to let the people leave but he would want them out of the land. He reaffirmed to Moses his intention to deliver the people and take them to the Promised Land. Moses told the people what God had told him but the people did not trust Moses and the whole situation. God told Moses to confront Pharaoh. Moses told God once again that he was not a good speaker. He had been unable to reason with the children of Israel – how would he reason with Pharaoh?

8 The Family Line of Moses and Aaron

Exodus 6:13-27

This section of chapter 6 gives the names of some of the descendants of Reuben and Simeon and Levi. It focuses in on the ancestry of Moses and Aaron. They were brothers. Their father was a Levite named Amram, who married his aunt (his father's sister), named Jochebed. Aaron had sons named Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Eleazar had a son named Phinehas.

9 Aaron Will Speak for Moses

Exodus 6:28-7:5

God now addresses Moses' concern that he is an incapable speaker and unable to negotiate with Pharaoh. He gives him two things. First of all, he reassures Moses that he does not need to worry about what he will say – that God will provide the words when they are to be spoken. Secondly he gave him Aaron to go along as spokesperson.

God told Moses this time that they are to ask Pharaoh to let the people leave the country. God told Moses once again that Pharaoh's heart will be hard to the request and that God will use that hardness as an opportunity to show his power among the Egyptians. God wants everyone to know how the Israelites were delivered and who did the delivering. He wants to intervene for them in a supernatural way. He wants the Israelites to know that they are a special people to him and that he has gone to extraordinary lengths to provide them with their freedom and to lead them into their promise.

10 Aaron's Staff Becomes a Snake

Exodus 7:6-13

God told Moses and Aaron that when they went to Pharaoh to ask for release that Pharaoh would ask them to show some sort of miracle to prove their credentials. He told them to throw down the staff and it would become a snake. So they went to Pharaoh and sure enough he asked for a sign. Aaron threw down his staff and it turned into a snake.

At this point, Pharaoh summoned his sorcerers and they were able to throw down their staffs, which turned into snakes as well. Now this seems strange. We are confident of God's ability to do anything he wants, so for him to turn a stick into a snake is not incredible. How did these other guys pull off the same thing? There are two possibilities. First of all, they were sorcerers by trade so they probably knew a few tricks. This may have been mere sleight of hand. The other possibility (probability in my mind) is that they had demonic help. Their gods helped them to do supernatural things as well. This fits well with the context of what is about to transpire over the next several chapters. It is also interesting that Aaron's snake swallowed up the other snakes. This is symbolic of the fact that Aaron's God was more powerful than the gods of the sorcerers.

Through it all, Pharaoh was not moved. He did not let the people go. His stubbornness was about to bring ten plagues upon the land of Egypt.

11 The First Nine Plagues

Exodus 7:14-10:29

There were ten plagues brought upon Egypt, climaxing with the killing of the firstborn. The first nine follow a basic pattern. The flow of them is as follows:

- The Plague of Blood
 - Moses informed Pharaoh that God was about to bring a plague upon Egypt because of Pharaoh's unwillingness to let the people go.
 - He told Pharaoh that he would stretch out his rod over the Nile and that it would turn to blood. The fish would die. The river would be a stench to the people. They would not be able to drink its water. Even water in buckets and jars would turn to blood.

- He stretched out his rod over the Nile and everything happened that he said would happen.
 - Pharaoh's sorcerers were able to duplicate the miracle.
 - Pharaoh was unimpressed and did not move. He let the people of Egypt suffer the consequences. Seven days passed.
- The Plague of Frogs
 - Moses informed Pharaoh that God was about to bring a plague upon Egypt because of Pharaoh's unwillingness to let the people go.
 - He told Pharaoh that God was about to overrun the land with frogs and that they would be everywhere.
 - God brought it to pass. There were frogs everywhere.
 - Pharaoh's sorcerers were able to duplicate the miracle.
 - Pharaoh asked Moses to pray to his God to take the frogs away. He said that if Moses would do that, he would let the people go offer their sacrifices. Moses set an appointed time when the frogs would go away so that Pharaoh would know for sure that God stopped the plague.
 - At the appointed time the plague stopped. Since the irritant had stopped, Pharaoh went back on his word and did not let the people go.
- The Plague of Gnats
 - God told Moses and Aaron to strike the ground and the dust would become gnats and fill the land. Note that Pharaoh was given no warning this time.
 - God brought it to pass. There were gnats everywhere.
 - Pharaoh's sorcerers were unable to duplicate this miracle. They told Pharaoh that this one was from God.
 - Pharaoh was unmoved and did not let the people go.
- The Plague of Flies
 - Moses informed Pharaoh that God was about to bring a plague upon Egypt because of Pharaoh's unwillingness to let the people go.
 - He told Pharaoh that God was about to fill the land with flies and that they would be everywhere.
 - The land of Goshen would be spared from this plague.
 - God brought it to pass. There were flies everywhere.
 - Pharaoh asked Moses to pray to his God to take the flies away. He told Moses to have the people offer their sacrifices in Egypt. Moses said that they could not do that in Egypt because their form of sacrifice was detestable to the Egyptians. Pharaoh said they could go into the desert but not very far.
 - Moses set an appointed time when the flies would go away so that Pharaoh would know for sure that God stopped the plague.
 - At the appointed time the plague stopped. Since the irritant had stopped, Pharaoh went back on his word and did not let the people go.
- The Plague on Livestock
 - Moses informed Pharaoh that God was about to bring a plague upon Egypt because of Pharaoh's unwillingness to let the people go.
 - He told Pharaoh that God was about to kill the livestock in the land.
 - The land of Goshen would be spared from this plague.
 - God brought it to pass. All of the Egyptian livestock died in a day.
 - Pharaoh investigated and found that the livestock of the Israelites in the land of Goshen were fine.
 - Pharaoh did not repent.

- The Plague of Boils
 - God had Moses take soot from a furnace and throw it up into the air. As it came down, it brought boils all over the people all over the land of Egypt.
 - Pharaoh did not repent and let his people suffer the consequences.

- The Plague of Hail
 - Moses informed Pharaoh that God was about to bring a plague upon Egypt because of Pharaoh's unwillingness to let the people go.
 - He told Pharaoh that God was about to bring the worst hailstorm on the land that they had ever seen. He warned him that any man or beast that was outside when it happened would be killed.
 - By this time, some of Pharaoh's officials were beginning to take note of Moses' warnings and they made sure their people and their animals were inside the next day. Some did not.
 - God brought it to pass. There was a terrible hailstorm the next day. Those who were outside were killed.
 - The land of Goshen was spared from the storm.
 - Pharaoh asked Moses to pray to his God to stop the hail and said that he would let the people go offer their sacrifices.
 - Moses set an appointed time when the hail would stop so that Pharaoh would know for sure that God stopped the plague.
 - At the appointed time the plague stopped. Since the irritant had stopped, Pharaoh went back on his word and did not let the people go.

- The Plague of Locusts
 - Moses informed Pharaoh that God was about to bring a plague upon Egypt because of Pharaoh's unwillingness to let the people go.
 - He told Pharaoh that God was about to bring locusts on the land. They would be everywhere. Whatever crops were not destroyed by the hail would be eaten by the locusts.
 - Pharaoh's officials pleaded with him to let the Israelites go and offer their sacrifices.
 - Pharaoh told Moses that he would let the men only go. The women and children had to stay behind. This was short of what God wanted for the people.
 - God brought the plague to pass. There were locusts everywhere. They ate all the crops.
 - Pharaoh asked Moses to pray to his God to stop the plague and said that he would let the people go offer their sacrifices.
 - Moses prayed and a wind came and swept all the locusts out of Egypt so that not a single one was left.
 - Since the irritant had stopped, Pharaoh went back on his word and did not let the people go.

- The Plague of Darkness
 - God brought a plague of total darkness on the land for three days. There was no light anywhere except in the land of Goshen, where the light was normal.
 - Pharaoh summoned Moses and said that he would let the men and women and children go to offer their sacrifices, but all of their belongings must stay behind. Again this was less than what God wanted. Moses said that the people must take their possessions because they needed their livestock to make sacrifices. Pharaoh would not let them leave under those terms.
 - Pharaoh told Moses that if he ever saw him again he would kill him. Pharaoh did not repent.

Some observations may be drawn from this series of events.

- There seems to have been three cycles of three plagues each: Nile to blood, frogs, and gnats being the first cycle, flies, livestock, and boils being the second cycle, and hail, locusts, and darkness being the third. The first three were irritants. The second three brought disease and death. The third three were natural disasters. In each cycle, the first two plagues were preceded by a warning from Moses to Pharaoh and the third came without warning. Each of the plagues of the first cycle came when Aaron waved his staff. Each of the plagues in the second cycle involved no staff. Each of the plagues in the third cycle came when Moses waved his staff or his hands.
- God may have used the events of one plague to set up the events of the next – utilizing natural events to carry out his supernatural purposes (after all, if he is the author of nature then he can use it to suit his purposes). If the waters of the Nile became a stench, then the frogs would have come out of it. When the frogs died, it would have attracted gnats and flies. Gnats and flies could have brought disease that could have killed livestock and brought sores on the bodies of the people.
- The plagues struck the gods of the Egyptian religious system. Each of the plagues was directed at some Egyptian false god:
 - The Nile was believed to be a benevolent god that flooded its banks annually and irrigated the land. The people drank from its water. They looked to it for life. Turning the water to blood meant that the Nile was no longer "a friend" to the people.
 - The Egyptian goddess of birth, Heqet, had the head of a frog. When the plague hit, frogs became detestable to the people.
 - "Set" was the god of the desert – the dust. God made the dust turn to gnats and become loathsome to the people.
 - The god Uatchit seems to have been represented by the fly. Again, God made the flies detestable to the people.
 - The Egyptians had a goddess Hathor that had a cow head. Their god Apis was a bull, the symbol of fertility. Killing the livestock showed how powerless these gods were.
 - Sekhmet was the goddess with power over disease. Sunu was the pestilence god. Isis was the goddess of healing. Sending boils over the people showed that these gods were not really in control of anything.
 - "Nut" was the sky goddess. Osiris was the god of crops and fertility. They were shown to be powerless when the hail came.
 - Osiris was again defeated by the locusts, which ate the crops.
 - Re was the sun god. He had no power over the three days of darkness.
 - Pharaoh himself was believed to be a god. Thus his son, the next Pharaoh, was also a god. The tenth plague, which we have not discussed yet, took the life of Pharaoh's son and showed that even he was powerless before God.

Just as Aaron's snake (a work of God) was able to swallow up the sorcerers' snakes (a work of a god), God was able to swallow up all of the Egyptian false gods and show them to be powerless.
- In many of these plagues, God spared the people in Goshen – his chosen people – from the effects of the plague. These were his special people and he wanted everyone to know that.
- God was not looking to compromise with Pharaoh. He wanted the people – all of them – to be able to leave with all of their possessions.

The worst plague was yet to come.

12 The Tenth Plague – The Plague on the Firstborn

Exodus 11

Moses warned Pharaoh that one last plague was about to come upon the land. The firstborn in every Egyptian household – from that of Pharaoh to that of the lowest slave – would be killed. Israelite households would be spared so that Pharaoh would know that God is in charge and favors the Hebrew people. In true fashion, Pharaoh hardened his heart and did not heed the warning. Moses told Pharaoh that once it had happened, Pharaoh will not only agree to let them leave, but he will beg them to leave.

Moses knew that it was about time for them to go. He told the people to go and ask for jewelry and clothing from the Egyptian people. By this time, the Egyptians knew what Pharaoh would not recognize and treated the people favorably. When they left Egypt, the children of Israel would take Egyptian wealth with them. Perhaps these were their wages for the years of slavery they had endured.

God was setting up an event that would become a cornerstone of faith to Jew and Christian alike – the Passover.

13 The Passover and the Exodus

Exodus 12

God gave the people of Israel very specific instructions about the Passover. First of all, he reset their calendar. For the Jews, the month of the Passover would become the first month of the year. Everything else in their lives would be measured relative to this day.

On the tenth day of the month (remember that Hebrew days run sundown to sundown), each family was to select a lamb which was to be the sacrificial lamb for the Passover. It was to be a male, one year old, and without defect. It was set aside at that time to be the sacrifice but it was not killed until several days later. It was to be cared for until the fourteenth day of the month. At that time, it would be slaughtered. The blood of the lamb was to be placed on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where the lambs would be eaten. The lamb was to be roasted and eaten with bitter herbs (symbolizing the bitterness of the years of slavery and also symbolizing the bitterness of sin) and unleavened bread (leaven is symbolic of sin). The people were to eat the meal in haste, fully dressed and ready to travel (they needed to be ready to leave Egypt in haste – we need to be ready to leave our sin in haste). God was going to pass through the land of Egypt that night and strike dead every firstborn – of man and animals – but would pass over the houses where the blood had been applied and do them no harm. (The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. [Romans 6:23]).

God told the people that this would be a day that they would commemorate in the future and that they would observe a remembrance annually. He instituted the Feast of Unleavened Bread. From this day forward, the people would observe this feast from the 14th through the 21st day of the first month. On the first day of the feast, they would rid the house of any trace of leaven. For the days of the feast, they could not eat bread made with leavening.

Moses gave God's instructions to the people. On the appointed day they slaughtered their lambs and put the blood on the doorframes. That night, the firstborn in Egypt were killed, just as God had promised.

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron that night. He told them to get out of Egypt. Take the men, the women, the children, the livestock – everything and get out. He also asked Moses to

bless him before he departed. He was broken and no longer wanted to live under the curse of Moses' God.

Moses and Aaron summoned the people and told them to leave. The Egyptian people urged them to depart or else they feared that everyone would die. As Moses had earlier instructed the people, they asked the Egyptians for jewelry and clothing before they left and the Egyptians gave freely – anything to get these people to leave. The Israelites left hastily and took their unleavened dough with them because they did not have time to bake the bread.

Chapter 12 says that the number of men that departed was around 600,000, and this does not include the women and children. One would assume that this probably equates to over 2,000,000 people. It also indicates that they had been in Egypt around 430 years.

God gave further instructions about future observances of the Passover. Foreigners were not to partake of it. Only circumcised people identified with the nation of Israel, which could include circumcised slaves, were to partake. The feast was to be eaten inside the house. None of the lamb's bones were to be broken.

14 Christ in the Passover

The events of the Passover laid the foundation for the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Some facts relative to Passover and the cross:

- The whole idea behind the Passover is that people would be spared death because of the shedding of blood of the sacrificial lamb. It was not enough to simply shed the blood. It had to be spread over the doorposts in an act of faith – faith that the blood would actually save. Jesus is the Lamb of God. His blood was shed so that we might live. It is not enough that his blood was shed. We must take it upon ourselves with faith that he can save us.
- The Passover lamb was a male without blemish. So was Jesus.
- The lamb was killed on Passover. Jesus was killed on Passover.
- The lamb was selected for slaughter on the 10th day of the month (Passover was on the 14th). Jesus was killed on Passover day, which ran Thursday sundown to Friday sundown. If that was the 14th day of the month, then the 10th day of the month was Sunday sundown to Monday sundown. Saturday sundown to Sunday sundown was Palm Sunday. Mark 11:12-18 tells us

The next day [which would have been Sunday sundown to Monday sundown] ... on reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. ... The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

On the 10th day of the month, the chief priests and the teachers of the law selected Jesus to be the sacrificial lamb for the Passover.

- A crucifixion normally took several days. It was an excruciating death. Because the arms were nailed in an outstretched fashion and the body weight hung from there, the victim could not breathe unless he pressed up on his nailed feet to relieve the strain on the upper part of his body. Thus to simply breathe, the victim had to inflict terrible pain on the wounds in his feet. If there was a reason to cut the crucifixion short, the normal procedure was to break the legs of the victim. Once his legs were broken, he could not press upwards and he would

suffocate to death. Because the Sabbath was coming, the soldiers were going to break Jesus' legs in order to kill him but were surprised to find that he was already dead – in just six hours (John 19:33). The point of all of this? None of Jesus' bones were broken. God specified that the Passover lamb would have none of his bones broken (Exodus 12:46).

- The people were to eat the meal in haste, fully dressed and ready to travel (they needed to be ready to leave Egypt in haste – we need to be ready to leave our sin in haste). God was going to pass through the land of Egypt that night and strike dead every firstborn – of man and animals – but would pass over the houses where the blood had been applied and do them no harm. (The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. [Romans 6:23]).

15 Consecration of the Firstborn

Exodus 13:1-16

In this section, God reiterated the instructions for observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We will discuss the Christian significance of this when we get to Leviticus 23. To the Israelites at the time, it was to remind them of the haste with which they left Egypt (the bread did not have time to rise so they took the unleavened dough with them) and it was symbolic of ridding their lives of sin (yeast being the symbol for sin).

God also gave instructions for the consecration of the firstborn. When they were delivered from Egypt, the firstborn of the Egyptians were killed – man and animals – but the firstborn of the Israelites were spared. God declared that all future firstborn men and animals among the Israelites were to be consecrated to him in remembrance of the miracle done in Egypt. Firstborn among the livestock were to be sacrificed, although a provision was made to redeem a firstborn donkey. Now what does that word "redeem" mean? It gets tossed about a fair bit in Christian circles, but here we have the first concrete example of what it actually means. "Redeem" here means that the life of the animal could be spared, but at the cost of sacrificing a lamb. One animal gave its life so that another could live. Firstborn sons were also to be redeemed. A lamb would give its life so that the firstborn son could live. That is the picture of redemption for the Christian. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23). Because of our rebellion, we all deserve to die. We have been given the gift of life, but at the expense of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. He (God's firstborn) gave his life so that we could live.

16 Crossing the Red Sea

Exodus 13:17-14:31

When the Israelites left Egypt, the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire started. During the days, God manifested in a pillar of cloud and stayed ahead of the people, leading them on their journey. At night, he manifested in a pillar of fire, again leading them. Chapter 13 tells us that they were faithful to honor Joseph's request and took his bones with them on their journey so that he might be buried in the Promised Land.

There was a road that would have taken them fairly directly to the Promised Land, but God knew that if they took that road they would be attacked by the Philistines and the people would probably lose heart and turn back to Egypt. (Besides, God had a plan that would make a much better movie.)

He led them to a place where they were basically trapped by the Red Sea. In the meantime, Pharaoh had second thoughts about the impact to his economy if the slave labor force was

allowed to depart. He gathered 600 chariots and pursued them. The Israelites looked up and realized that they were surrounded by the Egyptian army on one side and the Red Sea on the other. They whined. They blamed Moses for leading them out to the desert to die. These people who had just witnessed the power of God in the plagues and who had witnessed the awe of the Passover first-hand now somehow or other did not believe that God could rescue them from the mess in which they found themselves.

God sent an angel to stand between the army and the Israelites. Then he instructed Moses to hold out his hands over the Red Sea. Moses did so and the waters parted. A wind came and dried out the ground. The nation of Israel simply walked to the other side of the sea on dry ground. Once they were safely on the other side, the angel got out of the way of the Egyptian army and they were dumb enough to follow. The angel began to harass them as they crossed, doing such things as knocking the wheels off of their chariots. The soldiers realized fairly quickly that they were in trouble. Then Moses put down his hands. The walls of water came crashing down. The soldiers were dead. The children of Israel would have no more problems with the Egyptians for several hundred years.

17 The Song of Moses

Exodus 15:1-21

The people were exuberant. Moses led the people in a song of praise celebrating what had just happened. The song includes (15:15-17)

The chiefs of Edom will be terrified,
the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling,
the people of Canaan will melt away;
terror and dread will fall upon them.
By the power of your arm
they will be as still as a stone—
until your people pass by, O Lord,
until the people you bought pass by.
You will bring them in and plant them
on the mountain of your inheritance —
the place, O Lord, you made for your dwelling,
the sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established.

Unfortunately, when they arrived in Canaan a short time later, they forgot about this and did not trust God to do the very thing they just described in song.

This section also talks about the women singing a different song, led by the prophetess Miriam. Miriam is the sister of Aaron and Moses, who watched Moses in the ark in the river when he was a baby. This is the first mention of her as an adult. She emerges along with her brothers as a leader of the people.

18 The Waters of Marah and Elim

Exodus 15:22-27

Moses led the people on their journey from that place. They traveled three days in the desert without finding water. Finally they came to a place called Marah, which had water, but the water was bitter and not suitable for drinking. So the people whined. Poor Moses. He cried out to

God. God showed Moses a piece of wood and told him to throw it in the water. He did so and the water became drinkable.

God warned the people that they would be tested during the time in the desert and that they needed to be faithful. If they were, they would be spared the same sorts of things that they saw done to the Egyptians.

After that they traveled to a place called Elim, which had an oasis with good water. They camped there.

19 Manna and Quail

Exodus 16

Soon the people started whining because they had no food to eat. They began to want to go back to Egypt because they had enough to eat there. God never intended for them to starve in the desert but he did intend for them to rely on him completely for sustenance.

That evening, quail came and covered the camp and the people were able to eat as much of it as they wanted. The next morning the manna started. Manna was a bread-like substance. 16:31 says that it was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. No one knows exactly what it was. It was manna and it no longer exists.

The people were told to go out every morning and gather just as much manna as they would need for a day. They were told not to gather more than a day's supply, except on Friday. On Friday, they were to gather as much as they would need on Friday and Saturday so that they would not have to do the gathering on the Sabbath. They were to cease from work on that day (note that this prohibition against working on the Sabbath was given prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments).

Sure enough, some people tried to gather more than they needed for a given normal weekday. And sure enough, they woke up the next day to find it rotted and full of maggots. And sure enough, some people tried to go out and gather on the Sabbath and sure enough there was none there to be gathered. Funny how God's word is true no matter how hard we try to circumvent it.

So what's the lesson here? We are to turn to God daily for our needs. That is why Jesus taught us to pray "Give us today our daily bread." If God sent us a check every January 1 for all the money we would need for a given year, it would be spent by the end of January. By our very nature, we tend to lack prudence. Worse than that, we would cease to look to God and to give him thanks from about January 2nd or 3rd to somewhere near the end of December. God wants us daily and the best way he can make that happen is to be our daily provider.

The giving of the manna also was a symbol of the giving of Christ that was yet to come. Jesus himself explained it in John 6:32-35.

Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

"Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

Although both quail and manna were given when the Israelites initially grumbled, the quail seems to have been a one-time thing. We see the giving of quail again in Numbers. Apparently only the manna continued on a daily basis. Exodus 16 says that they ate the manna for the entire 40 years in the desert.

God told them to gather a container of the manna so that they could later place it in the ark of the covenant. In this way, they could forever remember the provisions that God made for them during this time in the desert.

20 Water from the Rock

Exodus 17:1-7

The people moved on to where the Lord led them and found themselves camping in a place where there was no water. So they whined. They were calling Moses names and accusing him of leading them into the desert to die. Moses went to God and said, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." (17:4)

God showed Moses a rock and told him to stand before the people and strike the rock with his staff. Water would come forth from the rock. Moses did and it did. The people had water to drink.

Did the people have a legitimate concern? Sure they did. God created us in such a fashion that we have to have water in order to survive. Without water they truly would die in the desert. But that is not the point. God was fully aware of this. He was also aware that he was leading them to a place where there was no visible supply of water. He was also aware that they needed to learn to trust him to supply their needs. God knew where he would get the water. He wanted them to trust him that he would supply their needs.

When they discovered that there was no water, they should have prayed for water and trusted God to supply it. That would have pleased him. God wants opportunities to answer our prayers. If he always supplied the things we need before we realized that we needed them then we would take the supplies for granted and never give thought to the one who supplies them. It is a characteristic of man to want to believe that he is in control of his condition and his environment. Giving up that control to someone else – even God, is contrary to our nature. (That is what the fall of man was all about.) It is a characteristic of God to lead us to a place of need so that he can demonstrate to us his love and mercy in fulfilling our needs. And why does it happen so often? Because each time we come up to a place where there is no water, we whine.

21 The Amalekites Defeated

Exodus 17:8-16

A group of people known as the Amalekites attacked the Israelites. Moses called Joshua (the one who eventually led the people into the Promised Land) to form an army to defend the Israelite camp. The next day they engaged in battle.

An unusual thing happened. Whenever Moses held up his hands, the Israelites began winning the battle. Whenever he put them down, they began losing. Eventually Aaron and another man named Hur helped Moses prop up his hands (he could not hold them there forever by himself) until sunset. Thus Joshua and his army defeated the Amalekites.

God told Moses to write down on a scroll a promise that God would totally defeat the Amalekites and blot out their memory. We see this fulfilled in 1 Samuel 15. Notice that you do not hear much about them today.

So what was going on here? Moses' outstretched hands were a physical appeal to heaven – to God – for assistance. As long as Moses was petitioning God for help, his team won. When he ceased to look to God for help, his team lost. There is an old hymn that says

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace

If we fix our attention squarely on God when we are facing struggles, then the struggles do not necessarily go away (they still had to fight the battle), but we receive strength and resources to secure a victory in our trials. Jesus said (Matthew 6:33), "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you."

22 Jethro Visits Moses

Exodus 18

In chapter 18 of Exodus, God uses Moses' father-in-law to bless him by showing him how to bring a bit of sanity to his daily routine.

Moses had sent his wife, Zipporah, and his two sons to visit Jethro, Zipporah's father. She brought news of all that God had done. Jethro decided to come visit with Moses. They had a happy reunion and a time of visiting, and the next day Moses went back to his normal routine. Moses was the only judge for this nation of people. People would bring their disputes before Moses. He would seek God's advice and bring counsel back to the people. He spent very long days in this process and people had to wait a long time to get their turn – remember there were probably over 2,000,000 people.

Jethro had enough common sense and insight to recognize that Moses would burn himself out doing all of this. God had selected him to lead the people and not to settle every little picky disagreement that came up between them. Jethro advised Moses to select persons of outstanding character from among the people and appoint them as leaders over the people. There was a hierarchy put in place, with some overseeing groups of fifty, some groups of hundreds, some groups of thousands. Moses could spend his time teaching and counseling these leaders and equipping them to handle the daily routine matters. When difficult cases arose, those could be brought to Moses who could then seek God's face in the matter. Moses acted on Jethro's advice and did as he suggested.

The same thing happened in the sixth chapter of the book of Acts. The apostles discovered that they were consumed with the daily routine chores of administering the young church and were not in a position to give the kind of spiritual leadership that they needed to give. They responded by appointing men (whom we assume to be the first deacons or elders) to help administer the church so that the apostles could get on with doing apostolic things.

In a typical church today, the pastor cannot directly minister to every individual's every need that arises. If he tried to do so, he would have no time to pray, to seek God's face for direction for the church, to prepare sermons, to study, and to give the proper level of attention to the really important needs that do arise. Furthermore, if he has a family, then he would not have time to

be the husband and father that 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 require him to be. This is what creates the need for small groups – kinship groups or cell groups or Sunday School classes or whatever. The function of most churches that is intended to minister to the specific needs of individuals is the small group. When more serious needs arise, the small group leader will call the need to the attention of the pastor. This does not mean that individuals in the church do not have access to the pastor, but the church could not function properly if everyone looked to him to resolve every need.

23 Moses Journeys to Mount Sinai

Exodus 19

God led the people to Mt. Sinai, which is the place where he had chosen to give them the law and the Ten Commandments. Why this particular place was chosen we do not know. After this time, it has no real significance in the events of the Bible. It was chosen for this time. Once they were there, Moses had several conversations with God. In each one, he was used as a messenger to relay information to the people.

The first message that God sent to the people via Moses gave them a new promise. In Exodus 19:3-6 we read

This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Note the elements of this promise:

- I rescued you from Egypt. (God took the first step and has already shown favor on them.)
- IF you are obedient (The rest is conditional based on the people's obedience.)
- THEN you will be favored above other peoples (God's favor will continue.)
- SO THAT you will be priests for me to the rest of the world and a holy nation. (All of this had a purpose. God was not simply favoring the Jews at the expense of the rest of the world. He was charging the Jews with the task of becoming priests to the rest of the world.)

There are lots of Jews who have picked up on the "THEN" clause and many who have picked up on the "IF" and the "THEN", but the "SO THAT" clause has escaped the entire nation by and large. True, the Jews were to be the chosen people, but it was conditional based on their obedience and it was to result in outreach. They were supposed to teach the rest of the world about God and woo the rest of the world to his favor. They were never to erect "chosen people" walls around themselves. The trouble is that they never really got their arms around the obedience part of this promise. God waited patiently for them but ultimately chose one from among them – his only begotten son – to fulfill the task that had been given corporately to the nation.

Moses delivered this promise to the people and they said that they would do what the Lord required. Next God prepared Moses and the people for the giving of the Ten Commandments and the rest of the law. He had the people prepare themselves – consecrate themselves, wash, abstain from sexual relations, etc. In three days, they would gather around the mountain and Moses would be invited to come up the mountain. The people were warned not to touch the mountain or they would die. God would appear to Moses in a thick cloud. The people would hear his voice but Moses would be the only one who would converse with him face-to-face.

God visibly demonstrated to the people that Moses was his chosen leader. God ministers to his people through leaders that he has chosen. God does give signs to clearly delineate whom he has chosen to be a leader.

The day came. God told Moses that Aaron could come up the mountain with him. The people surrounded the mountain and Moses went up for the main event.

24 The Giving of the Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1-17

The words spoken by God to Moses are:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands who love and keep my commandments. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

We call this set of instructions "The Ten Commandments." Note that God never said in this text that he was giving us ten separate pieces of instruction. I am really not sure where we got the idea that there were ten commandments exactly. Perhaps there were, but the fact is that people do not agree on how the ten commandments are delineated. We all agree that the first part of the commandments focus on the relationship of man to God and the last part of man to fellow man.

The traditional Jewish division of the commandments is as follows:

1. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
2. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands who love and keep my commandments.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your

animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

5. Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

The Jews view the statement "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." as a commandment unto itself. To simply believe in who God is and what he has done is their first commandment. They view "have no other gods before me" and "do not make graven images" as the same commandment and in fact they are certainly interrelated.

Around AD 430, Augustine suggested a different division of the commandments.

1. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands who love and keep my commandments.
2. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
3. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
4. Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.
5. You shall not murder.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Augustine's scheme results in three commandments telling how man should relate to God and seven telling how man should relate to fellow man. Three is the number of the trinity and he felt that there should be three "man to God" commandments. This leaves seven, which is the number of completeness or perfection in the Bible. Augustine's scheme is still used by Catholic and Lutheran churches today.

The other scheme, used by most Protestant groups, is as follows.

1. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.

2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands who love and keep my commandments.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What is important here is not the sequence but the words themselves and the instructions that we were given. So why did people bother to split them up and come up with numbering schemes? Because it makes it easier to teach and to discuss the commandments. As we consider them, we will go with the Protestant numbering system.

24.1 First Commandment – Idolatry

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."

The first part of this is a preamble to everything that follows. God said, "Here is who I am and what I have done for you. Here is what gives me the right to tell you what I am about to tell you."

"You shall have no other gods before me." I used to think that "before" meant that we are to put God first. He came before anything else. And that is true. But this commandment means more than that. "Before me" also means "in my presence." "You shall have no other gods before me" means "You shall have no other gods anywhere in my presence." And that pretty well narrows things down. God is omnipresent. He is everywhere. Thus there is no place where you can have other gods.

What are other gods? I have heard lots of Sunday School lessons which interpret this commandment as if it was given to 1950s' "Leave It to Beaver" America, i.e. money is another god; sex is another god; going to too many movies is another god, etc. Perhaps there is some validity to all of that.

The reality is that there are still parts of the world where people worship everything from cows to carved pieces of wood. In the 1990s America, we have a massive influx of people from other countries, particularly eastern, who have come and have brought their cultures and their gods with them. As a result, it is not that unusual to meet people in your own community or workplace who worship gods carved from wood.

The fact is that this commandment was given to a people who lived in a very polytheistic world. They had just been led out of a land where people worshipped the Nile and the sun and this god and that god. They were being led into a land inhabited by people that sacrificed children to fertility gods so that their crops would grow. God would not share his people with gods. He demanded that they have nothing to do with false deities. His goal was to wean them from idols and disciple them in truth, and then use them to wean the rest of the world from idols and to disciple the rest of the world in truth (remember – they were to be a nation of priests).

And what about those of us who are monotheistic? Does this commandment have any application to us or can we just proceed with the other nine? Well, yes it does. Satan has many ways to get our attention off of God and to get us to rely on other things. (This gets back to the Sunday School interpretation of the commandment.)

This commandment is not talking about overindulging in the fleshly pleasures of life (sex, going to too many movies, etc). It is not that those things are OK – Scripture deals with those issues as well, but not here. Having other gods means that you put trust in something other than God to sustain you or that you submit yourself in obedience and obeisance to something or someone that does not deserve that response from you. If you look to your employer as the one who provides for your needs, then you have another god before God. If your 401K is more important to you than your giving to the church, then you have another god before God. If you turn control of your life over to a David Koresh and cease to seek God with your own mind, then you have another god before God.

Don't do it.

24.2 Second Commandment – Graven Images

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands who love and keep my commandments."

Again, these words were delivered to people who worshipped gods that they themselves had carved from wood. Again, this practice has not ceased. People then did and people now do worship things that they have made with their own hands. They are supposed to worship the one that made them. God does not approve.

Does this commandment prohibit religious art? I do not think so. It is natural and good to want to express devotion to God through the talents that he has given us. Some people can best worship God through music. When they make music other people can be inspired and uplifted. Other people may best worship through sculpture or painting. When they express themselves in this way, other people may be inspired or uplifted. Are they making graven images? Yes, but not graven images that are to be worshipped. If someone were to take a marble statue of Jesus and begin to pay homage to the statue and to believe that the statue had special powers, then there would be a problem. And in fact, I believe that some of this does take place.

One of the things that you quickly realize when you go to Israel is that the Church of Jesus Christ throughout the last 2000 years has been a big offender of the second commandment. If you visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where the crucifixion and burial and resurrection are thought to have taken place (actually one of two possible sights for these events), you will find it filled with golden statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. You will find it full of people burning candles in front of these statues. You will find it full of people trying to achieve some spiritual high by being

in this place. Visit the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives and you will find the same thing. Go to Antonio's Fortress (the beginning of the Via Dolorosa, where Jesus was flogged and given his cross) and you will see the same thing. You will find a shrine at the traditional birthplace of the Virgin Mary. You will find a shrine at the burial place of the Virgin Mary (right next door to the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem). You will find a shrine in Nazareth at the place where the angel told Mary she would have a son. You will find a shrine at the place where Jesus fed the 5000. There are hordes of people paying homage to the places and the artifacts associated with the life of Jesus rather than honoring and worshipping Jesus himself.

When we begin to worship images of God or places that Jesus walked or things that he touched in lieu of relating to him personally, then we have violated his commandment. He said not to do this because it kills the relationship with him, which is the very thing that gives us life.

God is jealous of our affection. The God who created us in his own image has told us not to create gods in our own image.

The last part of this commandment contains verbiage that seems a bit harsh. "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands who love and keep my commandments." Does God really punish children for things that their fathers and grandfathers did?

The fact is that the most common way that God punishes people is to let them experience the consequences of their own choices. Choosing idolatry (or any other form of rebellion) results in a broken relationship with God. It isolates us from his spirit and his protection. Being cut off from him is punishment. Unfortunately children are apt to make many of the same choices that their parents have modeled for them. A child raised in a Christian home is more apt to be a Christian as an adult than one who was not. Likewise, a child raised in a Hindu home is more apt to be a Hindu as an adult than one who was not. Even though the choice to be a Hindu was influenced by the sins of the parents, the responsibility for the choice belongs to the child. And the punishment reaped by the parent will be reaped by the child as well if the child follows the behavior modeled for him by his parent.

Sins of the fathers may be visited on the children in other ways as well. Children of abusive parents often grow up to be abusive adults. These patterns of behavior may continue for generations. Even when the pattern is broken the effects can still linger. Someone may have been abused as a child but grow up to be a non-abusive adult. Even so, that adult who is non-abusive will bear psychological scars that may haunt his or her thoughts and behaviors for life. And even though that adult may refrain from abusing his or her children, the psychological scars may be passed down to the next generation of children in some form or fashion. Those scars may take several generations to go away.

The point of all this is that God was not promising to get even with sinful parents by taking it out on their children. God was warning parents that their poor choices impact the lives of their children. And it is still true.

24.3 Third Commandment – The Lord's Name

"You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."

When I was a kid, I was taught that this commandment meant that you could not say the seven-letter swear word that starts with "god". This commandment does have the effect of banning such speech, but the commandment is much bigger than that one issue.

At the heart of this commandment is a mandate to have an intense reverence for God. If you do, that reverence will be apparent in the way that you speak of him. If you do not, that will be apparent in your speech as well. The real heart of the commandment is not the speech, but the reverence.

To the Hebrew, the name given to a person was an expression of who the person was. For example, "Jacob" in Hebrew means "heel snatcher." That is who Jacob was. He started life by grabbing at the heel of Esau and spent the first part of his life trying to get ahead by snatching things that he wanted. He was a manipulator. God later changed his name to Israel, which means "one who contends with God" (as a partner with God). This was significant because Jacob – the heel snatcher – had an encounter with God and his character was changed. Thus his new character warranted a new name. The name and the character are intertwined.

Taking the name of God lightly means taking the character of God lightly. It was true then and it is true now. This happens in more ways than simply the way we speak.

Rock stars that wear crosses and sing about the glory of drugs, sex, and violence are misusing God's name.

A preacher who uses his pulpit for personal or political ends is misusing God's name.

If you put a "God" bumper sticker on your car and then drive like hell, you are misusing God's name.

If you identify yourself as a Christian and live like the devil then you are misusing God's name.

And God does not like it.

24.4 Fourth Commandment – The Sabbath

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

What? And all these years I thought this said "Remember Sunday and teach Sunday School in the morning and go to church committee meetings in the afternoon and go to the Sunday evening service and then go home exhausted." Isn't that what "holy" means?

This commandment addresses two aspects of our nature. God created us for fellowship with him. He also created us in such a way that we need rest. In creation, he modeled for us a behavior that he wants us to follow, and that is setting aside one day out of seven to rest. We need to take it easy on a regular basis. If we do not, we will suffer mentally (you can only concentrate on things for so long without rest – without it you become ineffective and eventually experience burn out) and physically (the body will begin to malfunction and experience disease and deterioration without proper rest). You also suffer spiritually.

A person who is expended physically and mentally is handicapped spiritually. Jesus fed people and healed them before he taught them. He took care of physical distractions before he tried to penetrate their souls. If we let ourselves be consumed in labor then we lose the ability to fellowship properly with God. We will fail to prioritize our time and the result is that we fail to spend time with him. It is too easy to let the God part of your life be pushed to the end of the "to do" list and never get done.

God wants a day we call his. He wants us to take time regularly to get holy. This means a day of introspection where we confess our sins and clean up our act. It means a day to praise and worship him. It means a day to be taught by and about him.

Orthodox Jews take this to the extreme. Many buildings in Israel (e.g. most hotels) have a "Sabbath Lift." This is an elevator that spends every Sabbath (Friday night to Saturday night) going from ground level to the first floor, stopping, opening the door, waiting a period of time, closing and going to the second floor, opening the door, waiting a period of time, closing and going to the third floor, etc, until it reaches the top. Then it reverses and works its way back down to the ground floor. Then it starts over. The point is that you can get to any floor without pushing an elevator button. Somebody decided that pushing an elevator button is work and Orthodox Jews will not do it on the Sabbath. They do not turn on the lights on the Sabbath because that is work. They need to make sure they have thermostats set to regulate air conditioning and heating prior to sundown on Friday because doing that is work. The list goes on. They take this very seriously. I do not make fun of them. I respect them for it because they believe it is wrong and are willing to do "weird" things in their lives based on their convictions. For me, these are not issues because Jesus straightened out such misconceptions.

Jesus caught much heat because he was willing to defy the Pharisaical understanding of Sabbath observance. He healed on the Sabbath, which the Pharisees considered to be work. He gathered grain to eat on the Sabbath, which the Pharisees considered to be work. Matthew 12, Mark 2-3, Luke 6, Luke 13, John 5, and John 9 all tell stories where Jesus confronted the Pharisees by violating their concept of Sabbath observance. When, in Mark 2:24, they asked him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?", he replied (in Mark 2:27), "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

Sabbath is not to be a day of "don't's". It is to be a day of "do's". It is not a day to sit around worrying that you might make God mad by doing something you might accidentally enjoy. It is a day to recreate and to relate. You need to do both. Your life will suffer in every aspect if you do not.

24.5 Fifth Commandment – Honor Your Parents

"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."

The first part of the body of commandments focuses on man's relationship with God. The second part focuses on man's relationship with man. The fifth commandment is transitional.

To a child, mom and dad are very real representations of God. Not only have they been charged by God with the child's welfare and physical and spiritual upbringing (thus they are God's agents in raising the child), but the child's concept of God typically is very much like his perception of his parents. Thus this commandment cuts both directions.

Implicit in this commandment is the mandate to parents to be honorable. Explicit is the mandate to children to honor their parents. The New Testament explicitly deals with both sides of the equation in several places, such as Ephesians 6:1-4:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" – which is the first commandment with a promise – "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

I think there is a reason that the commandment gives more emphasis to the "child" side of the equation. As a parent, it is vitally important to be honorable. I would never diminish the importance of that. But as a child, we are mandated to honor our parents whether or not they are honorable people. The commandment does not say "If your parents are honorable, then honor them." It says "Honor them." If your parents did dishonorable things to you, you have two choices. You can let it destroy you and embitter you and incapacitate you from relating to other people and to God, or you can make peace with it and forgive them and, as hard as it may be, honor them. Unfortunately those are your only two choices.

Honoring dishonorable parents does not necessarily mean that you agree with the things they have done. It does not grant them control of your life. It may not even grant them free access to your life and your family. It does free you from their control over your emotions.

For people who have good relationships with their parents, this is much easier. Nobody ever said everything in life is fair.

Most of the commandments say "don't do this" or "don't do this or else the following will happen." This commandment is framed in the positive – "do this and I promise you ..." God promised that keeping this commandment would have the result "that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you." This promise may be taken in an individual or in a corporate sense.

An individual who honors his or her parents will experience a longer life. It will certainly be a life with better quality. Failure to keep this will result in bitterness that will rob both quality and quantity of years. There is a broader sense to the promise as well.

If the nation as a whole were people who honored parents, they would live long in the land that God was giving them. If they became a society that did not honor parents, then their days in the land would be cut short. Jesus took the people of his time to task for this issue. In Mark 7:9-13,

And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

Jesus made it fairly clear that care of elderly parents is the responsibility of the children if they are able. That may catch a number of people off guard today. That does not mean that people should not plan for retirement and that they should intentionally plan to live off of their children when they become older. The reality is however, that people often need financial assistance in the later stages of life and they almost always need other types of assistance. Honoring your father and mother means being there for them in times of need. It is not wrong to put a parent in

a nursing home but it is wrong to abandon them in a nursing home. They need physical care, but they also need love and attention and companionship and family. They need to be honored.

And if you cannot give it to them, then who do you think will be able to give it to you when you need it? That's not the reason to give it, though – you do it because God said to do it.

24.6 Sixth Commandment – Murder

"You shall not murder."

Continuing in the vein of "man relating to man" commandments, we come to the rather obvious "Don't murder." King James strung this out in a flowery and somewhat ambiguous "Thou shalt not kill," but in Hebrew it is two words, very much to the point, "Don't murder."

Most English-speaking people would identify John 11:35 ("Jesus wept") as the shortest verse in the Bible. It has only 2 words. In fact, Exodus 20:13, 20:14, and 20:15 are all two-word verses in the Hebrew text. They were short and to the point. They were important enough to be included and self-evident enough to require little explanation.

I used to be somewhat confused about "Thou shalt not kill." If I were drafted into the military, given a gun, and put in a battlefield where someone else was shooting at me, am I allowed to shoot back? If a crazed man broke into my home and threatened my wife and children with a weapon, am I allowed to defend them? If I was driving down the road and my car hit some oil in the road and slid into another car and killed someone, have I just broken the "Big Number Six"?

The answer to all of these is "no." That is why I said that the King James is somewhat ambiguous. The mandate is against intentional taking of life – murder. The same God who gave this commandment to the Israelites later led the Israelites in war and gave them victory over their enemies (yes, they did kill people in the process). This commandment does not refer to that. It does not refer to killing in self-defense. It does not refer to accidentally taking another life.

In fact, Jesus taught us that this commandment can be broken without even physically taking a life. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21-22) Jesus said,

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment." But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

Jesus was not talking about fleeting anger; everyone feels that from time to time and it cannot be helped. Jesus was talking about harbored anger – hatred. This is anger that is chosen and treasured. If you harbor ill feelings, then in your spirit you are committing a form of murder. You are "killing in your mind." Even if you tell yourself that you wish the other person no harm, by holding onto your hatred you are harming that person. Murder is the ultimate and most severe symptom of hatred, but hatred is the real sin.

So when someone angers you, it is your responsibility to deal with it. You have to realize that other people do not make you mad. Other people do things. It is up to you as to whether or not you get mad about the things that they do. Often one person will "make another person mad" without ever realizing it, which is a good indication that the "mad-ee" owns the problem at least as much if not more than the "mad-or". Admittedly sometimes people do things fully aware that they will make someone else mad and expressly with the purpose of making that other person mad. But the long and the short of it is that if you are the one that is mad then you are the one

who has to deal with it. You can sit on it and stew it and bake it and turn it into rage and then hatred or you can confront it and get rid of it.

God said to get rid of it.

24.7 Seventh Commandment – Adultery

"You shall not commit adultery."

This is another of those two-words-in-Hebrew very-much-to-the-point commands. The reason is very much to the point.

God treasures the family. Adultery destroys the family. God hates adultery.

The Bible has a great deal to say about sexual sin. It is particularly bad because it violates a person's own body as well as the body of another person. It brings a whole batch of consequences. Not only is there a unique set of diseases which may be acquired by sexual activity, but extramarital sex destroys trust which may never be fully restored, destroys people's feelings about themselves, can cause depression and other diseases of the soul, can cause unwanted pregnancies which leads to a host of unwelcome decisions which should never have to be made. It often leads to divorce, which tears spouse from spouse and parent from children. No matter how hard certain people try to make it OK, it never has been and never will be socially acceptable.

Just as was true with the commandment about murder, Jesus expanded on the adultery commandment in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:27-28 says,

You have heard that it was said, "Do not commit adultery." But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Again, this does not mean a fleeting "Wow!". It is talking about a harbored "Hubba dubba!" God created men in such a way that women are attractive to them. God created women in such a way that men are attractive to them. It is not wrong for a man to be struck by a woman's beauty or charm. It is wrong to turn it into fantasy or desire.

With anger or with sexual attraction or with any number of other destructive thoughts, you have an extremely short time during which you need to take control. If you do not take control of the thoughts they will take control of you. In 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, Paul says,

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

The last part of that verse is the key. You are going to have thoughts you do not want to have. You are going to get intensely angry from time to time – hopefully not often. You are going to have times when you look at someone and have the "Wow!" thoughts. Those are the times when you need to actively resist. And the "actively" part can be important. You may need to denounce the thoughts verbally (i.e. orally). It may be a good time to break into a favorite praise and worship chorus. You need to inject something else into your mind with more power than the thought that is to be expelled. It is an active process rather than something that passively happens.

24.8 Eighth Commandment – Stealing

"You shall not steal."

This is another of those two-words-in-Hebrew very-much-to-the-point commandments. God did not provide very much elaboration on "Don't Murder," "Don't Commit Adultery," and "Don't Steal" because they are fairly obvious. One would have to be fairly close to criminally insane to not realize that murder is wrong. The same is true of adultery and stealing. That did not stop people from doing it, but God did not need to give a great deal of explanation about why it was bad. It is fairly self-obvious. That might not have been true about keeping the Sabbath or worshipping graven images or even coveting, but murder, adultery, and stealing were "no brainers."

But even though they are self-evident, they were important enough to be included in the Big Ten. Remember that this is the section dealing with man's relationship to his fellow man. Society does not function if people do not respect each other's property. A man has a right to the things he has earned with his own hands. No other man has a right to take them away from him dishonestly.

If you cared about someone and gave that person a special gift and then found out it had been stolen, you would be hurt or disappointed. God must feel the same way. He cares for us and gives us gifts. He does not want other people taking away the things that he gives to us and he does not want us taking away the things that he gives to others.

God said don't do it.

24.9 Ninth Commandment – Lying

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

God wants people of integrity. If you belong to God, then your word should be able to be trusted.

"Bearing false witness against your neighbor" is couched somewhat in legal terminology. This commandment certainly applies in a court setting. If you are giving witness in a court setting then what you say must be true. God requires it.

The implications are much broader than just that. Anything that you say about another person should be true. To bear false witness against another person robs that person of his reputation and his integrity. Anyone who has ever been on the receiving end of a false witness needs little explanation of its impact. It stinks.

Perhaps you have noticed that Jesus used the Sermon on the Mount to expound on the meaning of several of the Ten Commandments. He touched on Number Nine at that time as well. In Matthew 5:34-37, Jesus said

But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

What Jesus was saying is that we must be people of integrity. When we say 'yes,' people should know that we mean it and need no further explanation. When we say 'no,' likewise nobody should doubt what we are saying. We should never have to call on some "higher power" (i.e.

swear on heaven or whatever) to validate us. If we have a history of being trustworthy then nobody would ever ask us to swear on any other authority before they would be satisfied with our answers. If I were in court and they asked me to swear in and take an oath of truth with my hand on a Bible, I would not really have a problem with that because the request would be coming from a group of people who absolutely do not know me. If the people with whom I work every day or the people with whom I live or play ask me to do the same, I would be uncomfortable about the kind of reputation that I must be creating for myself and the sort of witness that I must have for God (how can I be a good witness if I am a false witness?).

The Bible has a great deal to say about bearing false witness. It goes by several names – gossip, slander, whisperings, etc. A random sampling of passages on the subject indicates that God does not think highly of the activity.

(Psalm 15:1-3) Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellow man.

(Proverbs 11:13) A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.

(Proverbs 16:28) A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.

(Proverbs 26:20) Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.

(2 Corinthians 12:20) For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder.

(Ephesians 4:30-31) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

(James 3:3-11) When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?

The fact is that words are powerful. God spoke the universe into existence. Your words can speak blessings or they can speak grief into the life of your neighbor. Perhaps it is appropriate to end this with the words of Jesus in Matthew 12:36-37.

But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.

24.10 Tenth Commandment – Coveting

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Most of the commandments up until now have dealt with actions that you take – murder, stealing, etc. This commandment zeros in on the condition of the heart. This is a bit less tangible. You could take someone to court and prove that he murdered or stole or whatever. It would be hard to bring someone to court and make a case that he coveted your donkey.

But Jesus made the point (over and over) that the intent of the law and the commandments was a matter of the heart more than a matter of what we do. "Don't murder" really implies "don't hate". "Don't commit adultery" really implies "don't dwell on lustful thoughts". Keeping the Sabbath does not mean following a set of rules; it means keeping the Sabbath in your heart. God cares about what is in our hearts.

A person who does not covet his neighbor's possessions is not apt to steal. A person who does not covet his neighbor's wife is not apt to commit adultery. A person who looks to God with gratitude as the supplier of every good and perfect gift is not apt to covet in the first place.

This commandment closes the loop in a way. The Ten Commandments talk about man's relationship with God and then talk about man's relationship with his fellow man. The fifth – honor your father and mother – was a transition from the man/God relationship to the man/man relationship. The tenth commandment is a transition back from the man/man relationship to the man/God relationship. Why? Because, as I said, a person who looks to God with gratitude as the supplier of every good and perfect gift is not apt to covet in the first place.

God is telling his people to be satisfied with the things that he has supplied them. He wants them to be grateful for the things he has supplied them. If they perceive that they need something else, they should ask him. He likes to supply. (That does not mean that he will give us everything we want, but he will give us everything we need as well as many things we want.)

James 1:12-17 says

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Coveting is self-imposed temptation. It is selling God short. God said don't do it.

25 Laws and Elaborations

Exodus 20:18-23:33

People typically associate Mt. Sinai to the giving of the Ten Commandments. In fact, God had a great deal more to say to Moses at that time and it is recorded in the section immediately following the giving of the Ten Commandments. Why then do the Big Ten seem to receive so much more attention?

Everything that God had to say was divine wisdom. It all carried the same authority. It is all important. But the Ten Commandments seem to be the "keynote address." Everything else is almost a commentary or expository on the Ten. If the people could get the Ten Commandments, most of this other teaching would follow naturally.

The term "The Law" is normally used to denote all of the commandments given by God to the people of Israel outside of the Ten Commandments. The Law is just that – a series of regulations telling the people how they should relate to God and how they should relate to one another. Much of it is "social" law, regulating the way the people should carry on commerce with one another, deal with convicted criminals, etc. Other portions of it are religious in nature, describing how religious festivals are to be observed, how idolaters are to be punished, etc.

The Law given here plus the rest of the law scattered through the remainder of the Pentateuch was the foundation of Israelite society. All of it was important to them. Some of it has special bearing on the events in the remainder of the Bible. An attempt to fully explore all that was given would result in volumes and volumes of books (the scribes and the Pharisees never got enough of doing just that). Here we will focus on the portions of the law that provide significant foundation to other events in the Bible and we will summarize the rest.

- Exodus 20:22-26 deals with idolatry and with the proper way to offer sacrifices to God.
- (Exodus 21:2-6) "If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. If he comes alone, he is to go free alone, but if he has a wife when he comes, she is to go with him. If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and only the man shall go free. But if the servant declares, 'I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,' then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the door post and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life."

It was permissible for Hebrews to own other Hebrews as servants. The servant was bought with a price. There came a day, a "crisis point," when the servant could make the decision to leave. There came a time when the servant had to make the choice to set out on his own or to stay with the master. Perhaps this is stretching things a bit, but I think the same thing applies to Christians. Some people hold to a theology that says "Once saved, always saved." I believe that once a person is saved, God would never turn his back on that person. I also believe that a person who has been saved can walk away from God and give up his salvation. God bought us with a price. Many people that I know who have been saved for very long have reached a "crisis point" where they either had to get serious about their faith or walk away from it. God offers us the same choice offered to Hebrew servants. There comes a time when you need to decide that God is a worthy master and that serving God is something you really want to do and you are willing to let the Holy Spirit rearrange your life in order to let him have control. It is at that time that you are symbolically piercing your ear on the doorpost. You become God's servant for life.

- Exodus 21:7-11 continues with regulations on treatment of servants.
- (Exodus 21:12-13) "Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death. However, if he does not do it intentionally, but God lets it happen, he is to flee to a place I will designate."

When the people entered the Promised Land, God set up several "cities of refuge." These were places where people could go if they had accidentally killed someone. They would be safe there; no revenge could be rendered to them while they were there.

- Exodus 21:14-22 deals with punishment for murder, kidnapping, dishonoring of parents, retribution for personal injury.
- (Exodus 21:23-25) "But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise."

In our society, where we have really ceased to take very seriously punishment for crime or personal responsibility, this passage may seem harsh. It needs to be understood in the context of its setting. It was written at a time when a man could kill another man as retribution for inflicting some flesh wound. This law was meant to limit punishment to something fitting the offense. If all someone did to me was to inflict a flesh wound, then that is all I am allowed to do back to him. Jesus talked about this in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:38-39 says,

You have heard that it was said, "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth." But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

- Exodus 21:26-31 continues to talk about personal injury.
- (Exodus 21:32) "If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver to the master of the slave, and the bull must be stoned."

This verse establishes the price of a slave. Zechariah 11:12-13 picks up on the theme:

I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay, but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter" – the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord to the potter.

Thirty pieces of silver was the price of a slave. In Zechariah, it was the price at which the people valued the good shepherd. In the gospels, it was the price paid by the Jewish leaders to Judas for Jesus.

- Exodus 21:33-23:9 talks more about restoration for personal injury, accidentally causing injury or death to another man's animals, punishment and restitution for stealing or causing another man property loss, dealing with a man who seduces a virgin, sorcery, bestiality, idolatry, treatment of aliens and widows and orphans, money lending, blasphemy, sacrifices and offerings, telling the truth, equality in the legal system.
- (Exodus 23:10-11) "For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove."

The people were told not only to observe a Sabbath day once each week, but one out of every seven years the land was to be given a Sabbath year as well. One out of seven years they were not to plant. The land was to be allowed to rest. The people however, being the sort of greedy humans that they were, never once observed the Sabbath year. God finally took the matter into his own hands and threw the people out of the land until the land had a

chance to catch up on its Sabbaths. In 586 BC, the Babylonians captured the kingdom of Judah and took most of the people into exile. 2 Chronicles 36:21-22 describes it:

He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah.

- Exodus 23:12-19 continue the discussion of Sabbath observance and the observance of the feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost.
- Exodus 23:20-33 promises God's leadership in entering the Promised Land. He promises to go before them and to give them success in driving out the current occupants. This is a matter he takes very seriously. God commanded the Israelites to wipe out the current residents of the land because it was the only way to drive out their religious influence. Sure enough, when the people entered the land years later, they did not completely drive out the current occupants and they did begin worshipping idols. How did this happen?

Remember that when the people entered the land, they had been wandering in the desert eating manna for forty years. Prior to that, their ancestors had been making bricks and building cities in Egypt. Now they were settling in Canaan and farming. They knew nothing about how to farm. So what is the logical thing to do? Well, you just happen to have a Philistine neighbor down the road. So you bake a cherry pie and take it down to his house and say "Phil, I am having a bit of trouble getting my crops to come in. What is your secret to a whopping wheat harvest?" Phil says, "No problem. You plow the soil like this and plant the seed like that and sacrifice a chicken to the goddess of fertility and water three times a day. It can't fail." So you go home and plow the soil like this and plant the seed like that and sacrifice a chicken to the goddess of fertility and water three times a day and get a good wheat harvest. And it worked this year, so you will do it again the next year. And you will tell all of your friends how to farm. Soon, everyone down at the Sons of Jacob Pool Hall and Social Emporium is excited about wheat farming and wondering what other gods might bring them good fortune. It does not take a great deal of imagination to see where this leads.

The nature of God is such that he wants to reconcile people to himself, which would have included the current residents of Canaan. He gives people chances. He is in the business of salvation. Somehow he had reached out to these people. We do not know the circumstances, because the Bible is a history of the Jews and not the Canaanites. God had revealed himself to these people in his own way. The people had rejected God repeatedly. God is also a God of judgment. Because of their hardness they would be a stumbling block to those he was now calling into a special relationship with himself. Thus the people had to be wiped out. This seems like a harsh act but it was the price that would be paid for the monotheistic devotion of the Israelites.

26 The Covenant Confirmed

Exodus 24

Moses wrote down the words that God had given him. He read the words to the people. They built an altar and made a sacrifice. The people agreed to do all that God had commanded.

God told Moses to come up the mountain and that he would give him tablets of stone with the laws and the commandments. A thick cloud surrounded the mountain and Moses went up. He stayed on the mountain for forty days receiving instruction from God.

27 The Tabernacle

Exodus 25-27

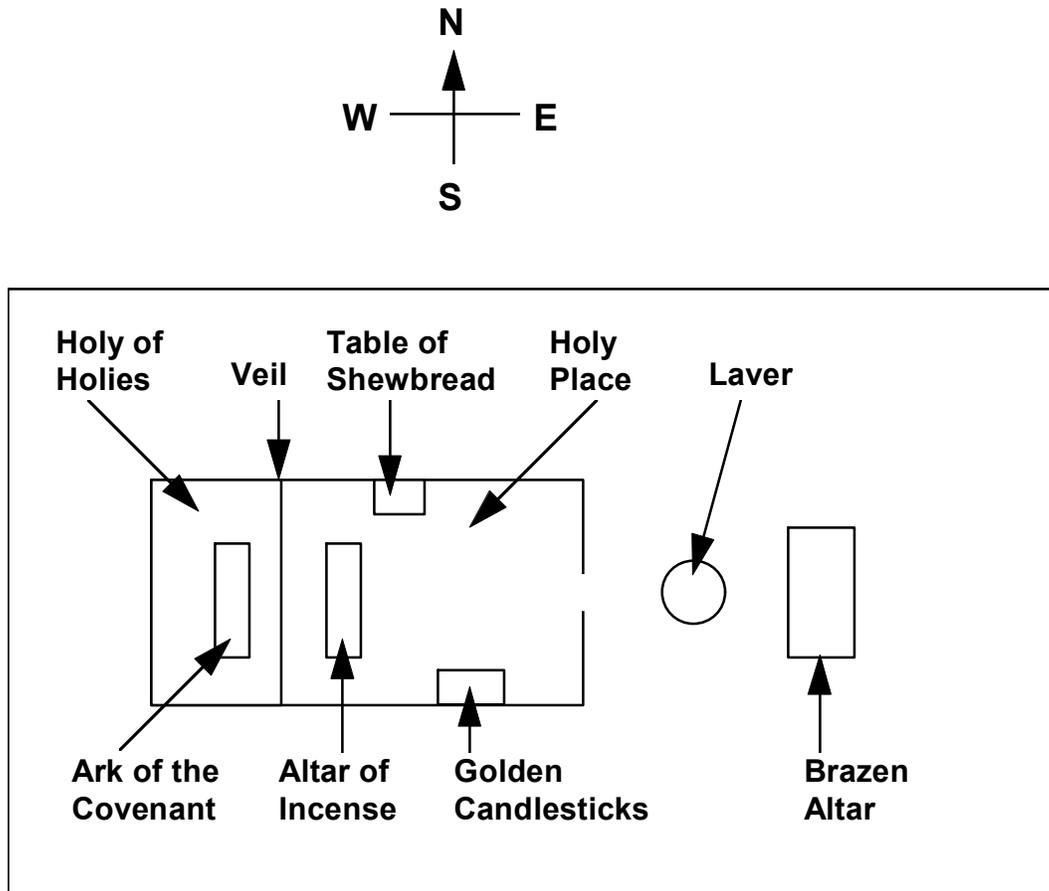
Chapters 25 through 27 of Exodus give the instructions for the building and the furnishing of the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was a tent. It was the precursor to the Temple in Jerusalem. When the nation of Israel was wandering in the wilderness, this is the place where God dwelt in their midst.

John 1:14 is a familiar verse, talking about the incarnation of Christ, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." The word "dwelt" in Greek means "pitched his tent." It is a reference to the Tabernacle – "And the Word became flesh, and Tabernacled among us." God dwelling among his people in the Tabernacle was a precursor to Jesus dwelling among his people in the flesh.

When the people of Israel left Egypt, God told them to ask their Egyptian neighbors for precious metals and jewels, which they did. They left Egypt with a great deal of wealth in their possession. At the beginning of Chapter 25, the people are asked to make donations of these metals and gems towards the furnishings of the Tabernacle. Although the Tabernacle was just a tent, it was furnished with finely made instruments.

All of the furnishings in the Tabernacle had meaning. They were symbolic of God's presence and of how man should approach God. Among the furnishings was the Ark of the Covenant, which was the very place where God hovered in the midst of the people.

27.1 Diagram of the Tabernacle



- As men became aware of their sins, they were to present burnt offerings, sin offerings, etc. One day each year (Day of Atonement) the high priest would corporately make an offering for all sins not individually dealt with.
- The Tabernacle was enclosed. The only way to approach God was through the gate of the court of the Tabernacle. The first thing one would encounter after entering the gate was the burnt offering altar. The only way to approach God was in sacrifice. The sacrifices were acted-out prayers, begging forgiveness or giving thanks or whatever.
- Furnishings
 - The Burnt Offering Altar was the first furnishing inside the court of the Tabernacle. It has several names – the brazen altar, the altar of brass, etc. It is called this to distinguish it from the golden altar inside the Tabernacle (the incense altar). It was exactly opposite the entrance to the court and between the entrance and the Tabernacle. Whatever is brought to God (entreaty, thanksgiving, etc.) must be brought by the altar. There were horns on the corners of the altar signifying hands. This is where the blood was applied. The first step of the sinner towards God was by way of blood. The horns lifted the blood towards God.

- The Laver was between the Brazen Altar and the Tabernacle. It was kept filled with water. When a priest would go into the Tabernacle to take coals from the Brazen Altar to the Incense Altar, he would stop at the Laver for ceremonial cleansing. It symbolized cleansing of the heart.
- The Incense Altar was also called the Altar Before the Lord. It was immediately before the Holy of Holies – the chamber of the Lord. Each morning the high priest would place incense on the Incense Altar. It symbolized communion with God.
- The Table of Shewbread was on the right-hand side if you stood east facing the Incense Altar. On it were 12 loaves. The constant presence of the 12 loaves signified that the 12 tribes of Israel were constantly before the Lord.
- The Golden Candlestick had a central shaft with 3 branches on each side. It was on the left side of the Holy Place. The lamps were lighted every evening and illuminated the Table of Shewbread and the Incense Altar. It symbolized light. The 12 tribes could always be seen.
- The Veil separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The Veil later became a symbol of the portal of heaven.
- The Ark of the Covenant had on top of it the mercy seat. At each side were cherubim. The Ark represented the throne of God, the place from which he ruled. This was the place where he received their gifts, their repentance. God met men at the mercy seat. Note that the throne could not be approached without first passing through the place of blood and atonement and of cleansing. Exodus 25 tells us that the Ark was to contain the Tablets of the Ten Commandments. Hebrews 9:4 tells us "This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's rod that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant."

27.2 The Priestly Garments

Exodus 28

Exodus Chapter 28 gives instructions for the garments that the priests would wear. Aaron and his sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar were set aside as priests. They were to wear special robes when they ministered. These were made of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen. They included a breastplate with 12 precious stones representing the 12 tribes of Israel and the breastplate was engraved with the names of the twelve tribes.

The priestly furnishings also included some obscure articles called the Urim and the Thummim. These seem to have been lots that the priests could cast in order to receive "yes" or "no" answers from God to questions.

The priestly robe had bells on the bottom. Verse 28:35 says, "Aaron must wear it when he ministers. The sound of the bells will be heard when he enters the Holy Place before the Lord and when he comes out, so that he will not die." In fact, later in the nation's life, whenever a priest went into the Holy of Holies, they would tie a rope around his leg. If the bells stopped ringing, they would assume that the priest had died and would use the rope to pull him out. Nobody else could go in after the body without dying also, so this was a practical way to get him out.

There was also a special undergarment that the priest had to wear, covering his pelvic area. Verse 28:43 says that if the priest tried to enter the Tent of Meeting or the Holy Place to minister and was not wearing this undergarment, he would die.

God was very specific about how people were to approach him. He enforced the consequences if they did not take him at his word.

27.3 Consecration of the Priests

Exodus 29

Chapter 29 gives special instructions for the consecration of Aaron and his descendants as priests. This is to be their special role in the nation of Israel. There is an elaborate ceremony described. Aaron and his sons are washed with water and then put on the priestly garments. Their heads are anointed with oil. Blood sacrifices are offered and specific instructions are given on how the blood is to be administered, how the fat and the meat are to be cooked and eaten or burned, etc. God gives a promise in Exodus 29:42-46:

For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the Lord. There I will meet you and speak to you; there also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory. So I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.

27.4 Further Tabernacle Instructions

Exodus 30-31

Chapter 30 gives further instructions on furnishing the Tabernacle. It includes the Altar of Incense and the Laver, which we have already described. It gives instructions on an offering that each adult is to pay. It gives instructions for the making of the anointing oil and the incense to be used in the Tabernacle.

Chapter 31 names two craftsmen, Bezalel and Oholiab, whom God has selected to lead some of the work on the building. It also reiterates instructions on observance of the Sabbath.

At the end of Chapter 31, God gives Moses the tablets, which contain the instructions just given to Moses. There were two tablets. Remember that everything since Chapter 25 has been instructions that God gave to Moses while on Mt. Sinai during the 40 days he was there. The tabernacle has not been built yet and Aaron and his sons have not been consecrated yet. Only the instructions have been given. Moses has been away from the people on the mountain for almost 6 weeks. He is about to have a bitter disappointment when he comes back down.

28 The Golden Calf

Exodus 32:1-33:6

Exodus 32:1 says:

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

The right thing for Aaron to do at this point is to say, "Shame on you! Remember the Ten Commandments that we have just been given? We are to have no other gods and we are not to make graven images." He should have rebuked them for their idolatrous desires. Instead he said, "OK. Bring me gold jewelry." The people brought him gold and he melted it down and made a golden calf. And in Exodus 32:4, when the people saw the golden calf they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

Now Moses was still on the mountain when this happened. God told him that there was bad stuff going on in the camp and told him to go back down. He told Moses that the people had made an idol and that he was very angry with them and wanted to destroy them all. He told Moses that he was going to wipe out all of the people and make a nation out of Moses. Essentially he was offering to redirect the promise of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob through the line of Moses.

Moses did not want to have his people obliterated. He pleaded with God not to do so. He said that God would look bad to the Egyptians if he did that, that they would think God had led the people out of Egypt specifically to kill them. Moses appealed to God's own reputation to preserve the people. God relented and did not do it.

By this time, Moses had the two stone tablets. These were stones that God had cut and had engraved on both sides with the words that he had given Moses. Moses took the tablets and headed down the mountain. On the way he met Joshua, who had been stationed on the mountain waiting for Moses. Joshua warned Moses that he heard sounds of war in the camp. Moses said that it was not the sound of war, but of revelry.

When Moses got to the camp, he saw the golden calf. Like God, he was very angry. He took the stone tablets and smashed them. The people were not worthy of having them any more. He said to Aaron, "What have you done?" Moses may or may not have known that Aaron was the one who made the calf, but Aaron was the one who had been left in charge and thus Moses held him accountable for the fact that it was there. Aaron whimpered back to Moses, "You know how bad they are; they made me do it."

Moses burned the calf. Then he ground up the gold and mixed it with water and made the people drink it. He summoned the men who were on the Lord's side. The Levites responded. He told them to take swords and kill. The text is not specific about who was to be killed, but we assume it was those responsible for the golden calf and the idol worship. It says that about 3000 total were killed. Moses told the Levites that because they had responded as being on the Lord's side, they would be set apart for special service (the Levites became the tribe of priests).

Moses pleaded again with God to spare the people. He said that if God was going to kill the nation that he should "blot me out of the book you have written." (verse 32:32) God said that he would deal with the individuals who had sinned and leave Moses' name in the book where it belonged. God sent a plague on the people as punishment for their sin. We do not know the nature of the plague and we do not know how many people were affected.

God said that he would send an angel to lead the people to the Promised Land but that he would not go with them because he would probably get too mad at them and wipe them out. The people went into great mourning and asked God not to leave them. The people knew that they needed God.

29 The Tent of Meeting

Exodus 33:7-11

Moses set up a tent outside of the camp called the Tent of Meeting. This was not the same as the Tabernacle, which had not been built yet. When the Tabernacle was built, that became the Tent of Meeting. This was a place where Moses would go to meet God. The text says that they would talk face-to-face, like friends. This does not mean that God appeared in bodily form to Moses. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud came down to the entrance of the tent and they (Moses and God) carried on conversations there as if Moses were talking to another man. This became a regular place where Moses would go to talk to God.

30 Moses and the Glory of God - The New Tablets

Exodus 33:12-34:33

At this point, God's statement that he would take his presence from the people was still up in the air. Moses pleaded with God not to take his presence away. God said that he would stay with the people. Moses asked God to teach him more and to show him more of himself. In fact, Moses asked to see God physically. In Exodus 33:19-20, God said:

"I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But," he said, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

God told Moses to chisel out two more stone tablets, like the first two that were broken. He told Moses to meet him at the top of Mt. Sinai the next day. Moses did so. In Exodus 34:5-7 we read:

Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers in the third and fourth generation."

This is a very significant passage. As we have said before, names in the Old Testament were very important. A person's character is reflected in his name. God told Moses that he would proclaim his name in Moses' presence. The name that God proclaimed was "Lord ... compassionate ... gracious ... slow to anger ... abounding in love ... faithfulness ... forgiving ... does not leave the guilty unpunished ..." If you want to know what God's character is, you will find it in the name just given.

Moses' response was worship. God then promised that if the people would remain faithful he would stay with them. He would give them the land. He warned them again that they needed to drive out the people living there and smash their idols or else the people would end up in idol worship. He reiterated instructions concerning offerings, observances of feasts, Sabbath, etc. Moses was there another forty days. He got new stone tablets. This time the people did not fall into idol worship.

When Moses came down from the mountain with the new tablets, his face was glowing. The people were afraid. He reassured them that everything was OK. He covered his face with a veil. Whenever he would go into the tent of meeting, he would take off the veil when he talked to

God. When he would come out, his face would be radiant again. He would tell the people what God had said and they would be able to see his face aglow. Then he would put the veil back on until the next time in the tent. 2 Corinthians 3:13 tells us that Moses wore the veil so that the people would not see the radiance fading. When he came out from God's presence, it was fresh. Apparently, as time went on, it would fade. He only wanted people to see his face when it was fresh with the glow of God's presence. 2 Corinthians tells us that unlike Moses, when we receive Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit and his radiance never leaves us. We, too, should want the world to see us aglow with God's radiance, but we should never have to worry about it fading because God does not withdraw his presence from us. If we lose the glow, it is because we have walked away from him.

31 The Building of the Tabernacle

Exodus 35-40

Exodus 35-40 contains the details of the actual building of the Tabernacle. Remember, up to this point, God had given instructions about how to build it but it had not been built. The Tabernacle and all of its furnishings were prepared. The priestly garments were made. In chapter 40, Moses inspected the work. Everything was set in its place. They began burning the incense and lighting the candlesticks. Aaron and his sons were consecrated. Exodus 40:34-38 says:

Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out, but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out – until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and the fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels.

32 Index of Scripture References

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

1 Samuel 15-----	23
2 Chronicles 36:21-22-----	40
2 Corinthians 10:4-5-----	35
2 Corinthians 12:20-----	36
2 Corinthians 3:13-----	47
Ephesians 4:30-31-----	37
Ephesians 6:1-4-----	32
Exodus 1:1-14-----	7
Exodus 1:15-2:10-----	7
Exodus 11-----	17
Exodus 12-----	18
Exodus 12:46-----	19
Exodus 13:1-16-----	19
Exodus 13:17-14:31-----	20
Exodus 15:1-21-----	21
Exodus 15:22-27-----	21
Exodus 16-----	21
Exodus 17:1-7-----	22
Exodus 17:8-16-----	23
Exodus 18-----	24
Exodus 19-----	24
Exodus 2:11-25-----	8
Exodus 20:1-17-----	25
Exodus 20:18-23:33-----	38
Exodus 20:22-26-----	38
Exodus 21:12-13-----	39
Exodus 21:14-22-----	39
Exodus 21:23-25-----	39
Exodus 21:2-6-----	38
Exodus 21:26-31-----	39
Exodus 21:32-----	39
Exodus 21:33-23:9-----	40
Exodus 21:7-11-----	39
Exodus 23:10-11-----	40
Exodus 23:12-19-----	40
Exodus 23:20-33-----	40
Exodus 24-----	41
Exodus 25-27-----	41
Exodus 28-----	43
Exodus 29-----	44
Exodus 30-31-----	44
Exodus 32:1-33:6-----	44
Exodus 33:12-34:33-----	46
Exodus 33:7-11-----	46
Exodus 3-4-----	9
Exodus 35-40-----	47

Exodus 5:1-21	12
Exodus 5:22-6:12	13
Exodus 6:13-27	13
Exodus 6:28-7:5	13
Exodus 7:14-10:29	14
Exodus 7:6-13	14
Genesis 15:13-14	6
Genesis 43:32	6
Hebrews 9:4	43
James 1:12-17	38
James 3:3-11	37
John 1:14	41
John 11:35	33
John 19:33	19
John 5	32
John 6:32-35	22
John 9	32
Leviticus 23	19
Luke 13	32
Luke 6	32
Mark 11:12-18	19
Mark 2:24	32
Mark 2:27	32
Mark 2-3	32
Mark 7:9-13	33
Matthew 12	32
Matthew 12:36-37	37
Matthew 5:21-22	34
Matthew 5:27-28	34
Matthew 5:34-37	36
Matthew 6:33	23
Proverbs 11:13	36
Proverbs 16:28	36
Proverbs 26:20	36
Psalms 15:1-3	36
Romans 6:23	18, 19, 20
Zechariah 11:12-13	39

33 Topical Index

Aaron	11
Adultery	34
Altar	
Brazen	42
Burnt Offering	42
Incense	43
Amalekites	23
Ark of the Covenant	22, 41, 43
Augustine	26
Babies, Killing	7
Bricks Without Straw	12
Burning Bush	9
Candlestick	43
Cities of Refuge	39
Coveting	37
Daily Bread	22
False Witness	36
Garments, Priestly	43
God's Name	30
gods	
Egyptian	17
Golden Calf	45
Golden Candlestick	43
Graven Images	29
Honoring Parents	32
Idolatry	28
Jehovah	10
Jethro	24
Joshua	23, 45
Killing	33
Laver	43
Law	38
Lord's Name	30
Lying	36
Manna	22
Midian	8
Moses	
Birth	8
Call of God	9
Flight From Egypt	8
Holding Up Hands In Battle	23
Mount Sinai	24
Murder	33
Name, Misusing God's	30
Other gods	28
Parents, Honoring	32
Passover	18
Christ In the Passover	19

Plagues	
Blood.....	14
Boils.....	15
Darkness	16
Death of Firstborn	17
Flies	15
Frogs.....	14
Gnats.....	15
Hail	15
Livestock.....	15
Locusts.....	16
Ten Upon Egypt.....	14
Priestly Garments.....	43
Red Sea.....	20
Sabbath	31
Sabbath Year.....	40
Stealing.....	35
Tabernacle	41, 47
Table of Shewbread.....	43
Ten Commandments	24, 25
Tent of Meeting.....	46
Thummim	43
Urim	43
Veil.....	43
Yahweh.....	10
YHWH.....	10