

1 Exodus: The Liberation of the Hebrews

1. **Written by whom?**

The book has several references to Moses as the author of several of the sections. Other books in the Old Testament associate Moses with the writings in this book. Also, the NT writers support Moses as the writer. Most likely, the writings were collected and assembled during the time of King David by his court historians, though they may have been preserved by prophet guilds in the form of oral traditions.

2. **Written when and where?**

The book itself doesn't give a lot of information that can be directly linked to Egyptian history. Most conservative scholars use the dates of 1580-1321 BC, during the Eighteenth Dynasty. There is no indication where it was written, but it seems possible that the stories were written/collected during the 40 years of wandering or later. Some references/stories would have been added after Moses' death. We do know that Moses didn't begin leading the Israelites until after his eightieth birthday.

3. **Written to whom?**

To the Hebrew people.

4. **What form?**

Historical narrative, which is the re-writing of past events in order to teach.

5. **What's it about?**

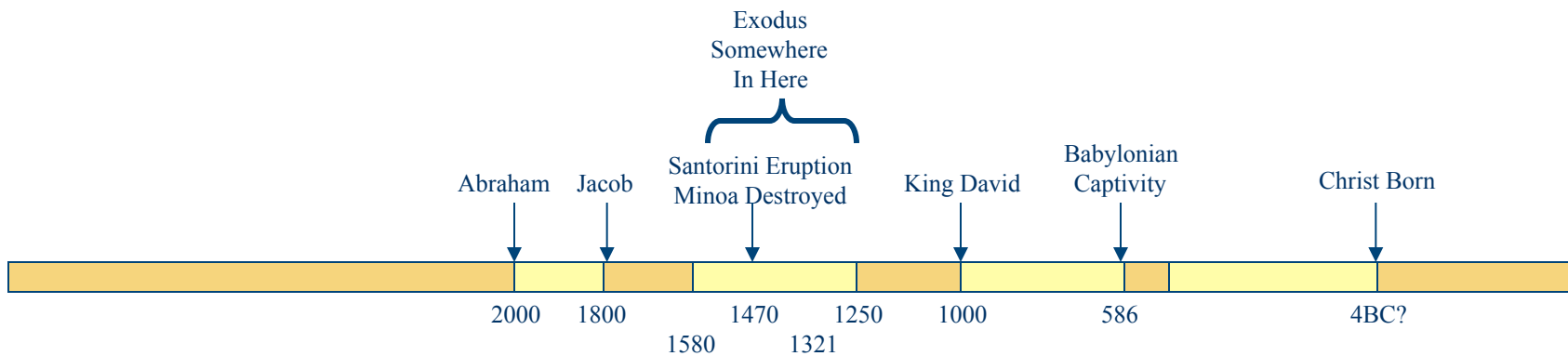
How God reveals his name, his attributes, his redemption, his law and how he is to be worshipped.

6. **Written for what purpose?**

To help the Israelites learn and remember their history. Also, to teach God's plan for redemption, how he wanted his people to live, and the importance of worship.

2 Exodus Timeline

Biblical Events



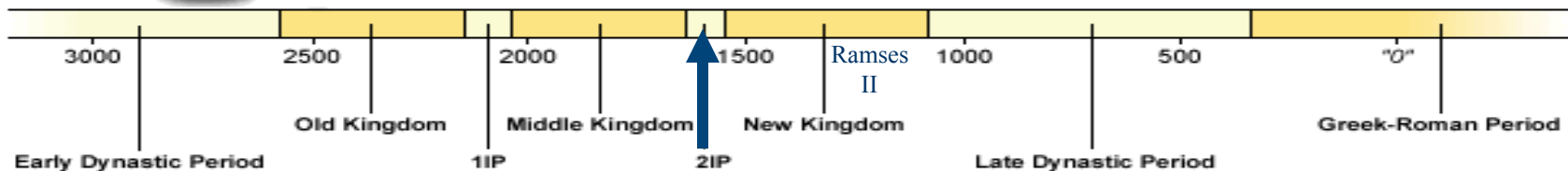
Egyptian Events



2nd Intermediate Period (1640 - 1540)

The Age of the Hyksos.

Towards the end of the Middle Kingdom, the later kings of the 13th Dynasty gradually lost control over the central government, allowing local rulers to once again seize power over part of the country. Among them was a group of people of Asian origin, known as Hyksos, who would impose their reign on almost the entire country. When the local Theban princes stopped recognising the Hyksos as Egypt's legitimate rulers, the struggle for freedom would begin.



3 Exodus Chapter 1 – Scripture Questions

1. How many people went to Egypt with Jacob? Where was Joseph? (vs. 5)
2. What happened to the Israelites after Joseph and his brothers died? (vs. 7)
3. Who came to power in Egypt? Of what was he afraid? (vs. 8-10)
4. What were the Israelites forced to do? What was the result? (vs. 11, 12)
5. What did the king want the midwives to do? (vs. 16)
6. How did the midwives respond? (vs. 19)
7. What happened to the Israelites after this? (vs. 20)
8. What was the next order from the Pharaoh to the Egyptians? (vs. 22)

4 Exodus Chapter 1 – What Did It Mean to Them?

The book of Exodus begins with the word 'and', meaning that it was considered a continuation of Genesis as well as an important part of the five books of the Torah. The opening genealogy is a reminder of the ancient promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would be 'as numerous as sand on a beach'.

If this story was indeed written by Moses during the period of wandering after their liberation from Exodus, clearly it was important to Moses to be sure the people knew both their physical status as the Hebrew nation and their spiritual status as the people of God. We can see in this first chapter how God blessed them with fertility even as they struggled with bondage.

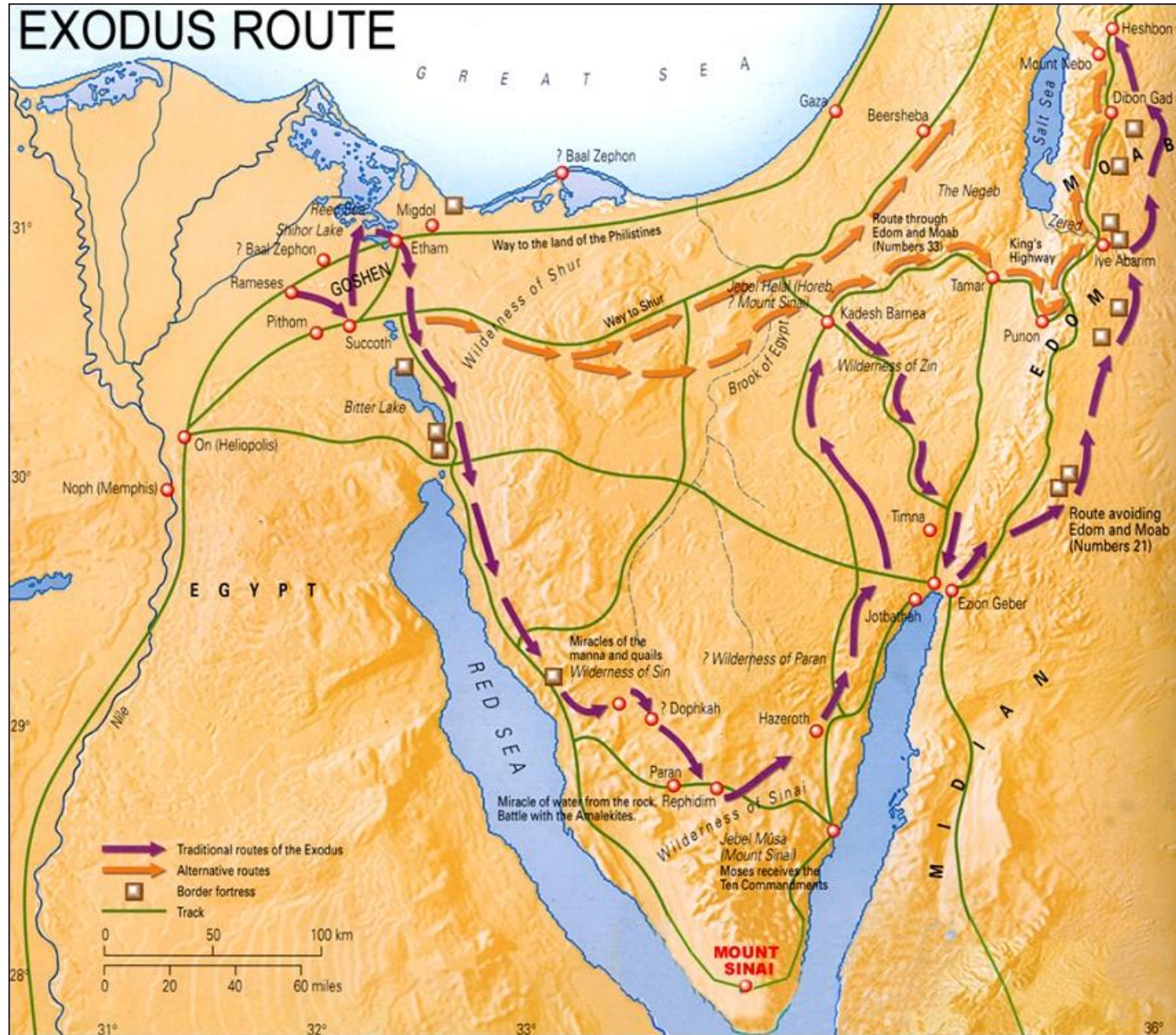
The Hebrew people began as guests in Egypt during the time of Joseph's leadership. Then they became guest workers. Finally they became slaves: not that they were owned, but that their labor was demanded by the Egyptian leaders. Moses has to remind the people several times during their travels of the pain, sorrow and trouble that occurred under their oppression.

It seems clear that the Egyptians grew to fear the vitality of the Hebrews, leading to bitter oppression and forced labor. Pharaoh even demanded that the midwives kill all the male babies born to Hebrew women! Moses is showing his people that even before the dramatic exit from the country of Egypt, God was saving his people.

5 Exodus Chapter 1 – Application Questions

1. It looks like God uses bad—even cruel—government to make his plans happen. Is it okay to try to change governments, then? What if God wants them to be harsh so he can make something happen with His people?
2. The Pharaoh ordered the deaths of all male Hebrew babies. How evil does a government have to get before God's people should actively rebel?
3. The midwives lied to Pharaoh about what they were doing. Is it okay to lie to people in authority if they seem to be doing bad things?
4. God made great things happen in spite of the fact that his people were suffering greatly. Does God allow suffering to happen to us, or does He cause the suffering?

6 Exodus Map



7 Exodus 2 – Scripture Questions

1. Moses parents were of which tribe? (vs. 1)
2. How long did they hide him before placing him in the river? (vs. 2)
3. Who found him? Who was nearby? Who nursed him? (vs. 6-9)
4. What did Moses do to the Egyptian? (vs. 12)
5. Why did he run? To which land did he flee? (vs.15)
6. What did Moses do for Reuel's (Jethro's) daughters? (vs. 17)
7. Moses married whom? What was his child's name? (vs. 21-22)
8. How did it go for the Hebrews in his absence? (vs. 23)

Approximate Date B. C.	
1525	Born/ found
1485	Kills Egyptian
1485-1445	Years in Midian
1445	Leads Exodus from Egypt
1445-1405	40 years in wilderness
1405	Dies in Moab

8 Exodus 2 – What did it mean to them?

God's unseen hand was guiding the life of Moses from the very beginning. This is seen even in simple things: Moses' parents were identified as members of the tribe that was to become the priests to the nation. The text seems to suggest that Moses was the firstborn son to Jochabed, so where do Miriam and (later) Aaron come from? One suggestion is that Miriam and Aaron were children by another marriage.

Egypt had a wide reputation for wise people and their teachings on wisdom. So Moses would have shared in the very finest training. Here again the providence of God which had delivered Moses also opened doors of opportunity and preparation for his eventual ministry. This pattern of God's providence within history is important not only to the Hebrews who heard/read this account, but for us. God is still present, and he still acts in the lives of his people.

Moses' fear after killing the Egyptian oppressor is very human. While we can argue about whether or not the murder was in the will of God, the account gives the narrator the ability to establish three points: 1) Moses identified with the Hebrews even though he had been raised as an Egyptian, 2) he had a strong sense of justice, and 3) to give an explanation of why he left Egypt and moved to Midian.

Moses' time in Midian was a time of preparation. No doubt he learned things about being a leader, as well as the physical details such as geographical terrain and other items necessary for semi-nomadic peoples. The Midianites were distant relatives of the Hebrews, by way of Midian, the son of Abraham by Keturah. Reuel (or Jethro) is described as a priest, so it is certainly plausible that Moses grew to understand Yahweh more deeply during his time in Midian.

Whether it was through Abraham, Moses, or David, one of the central religious roots for Israel was the covenant. The first covenant through Abraham was the one known by the Hebrew people, and remembered by them. There are four verbs in this passage that showed God remembered them, too: God *heard*, God *remembered*, God *saw*, God *knew*. God is always faithful, though his people may struggle to remember that faithfulness.

9

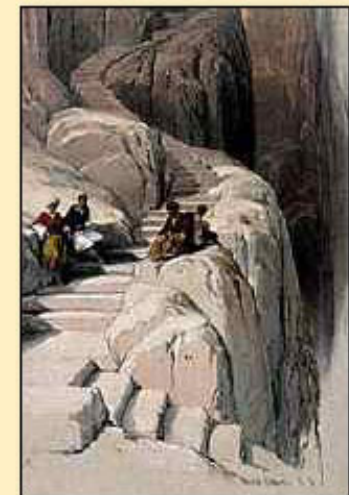
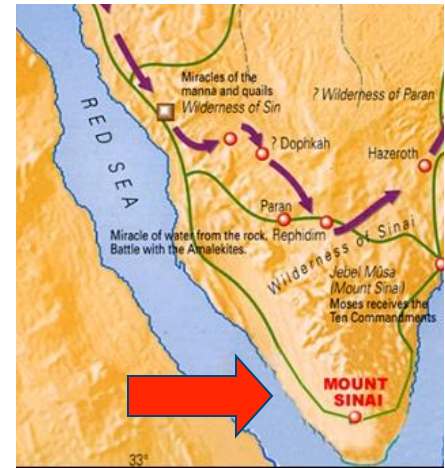
Exodus 2 – Application Questions

1. Moses knew what he had done to the Egyptian foreman was wrong. Can sin be hidden?
2. What the Egyptian foreman did was wrong, but legal. How should we respond to unjust treatment, either to ourselves or others?
3. When we are waiting for suffering to end, there seems no end to it. Generations of Hebrews died in slavery. How can we trust God to deliver us here and now, when he seems willing to let his people suffer?
4. When Moses realized his danger, he ran out of town. We assume that even then, he was being drawn to the Hebrew people. Are we listening to what God would have us do, or are we “running the other way”? How do we separate what we WANT to do from what God is CALLING us to do?



11 Exodus Chapter 3 – Scripture Questions

1. Moses was tending sheep for his father-in law _____ when he went to _____ the mountain of God. (vs.1)
2. A bush was on fire and the _____ of the Lord appeared. (vs. 2)
3. Why did Moses need to take off his sandals? (vs. 5)
4. How does God identify himself to Moses? (vs. 7)
5. God is going to rescue the Hebrews - from what? (vs. 7) to what? (vs. 8)
6. Where was God going to send Moses? (vs. 10)
7. What is God's name? (vs. 14)
8. Moses is to go to the _____ of Israel and tell them of God's plan to free Israel from Egypt. (vs. 16-17)
9. God knows that _____ will not release the Hebrews unless a mighty hand compels him. (vs. 19)
10. God tells Moses that he will strike the Egyptians with _____ until Pharaoh releases the Hebrews. (vs. 20)
11. On the way out of Egypt, what were the Israeli women to do? (vs. 22)



"It takes about 3 hours to climb the 7,498-foot peak following the Path of Moses, a stairway of nearly 4,000 steps."

12 Exodus Chapter 3 – What did it mean to them?

The burning bush event is a mystery, something that defies simple explanation. People of this time had no trouble accepting a belief in literal, semi-divine beings. While we may ask if this was an actual being or a way of speaking about God's presence, Moses' experience was a genuine experience. It may have been a vision, which Moses described as well as he was able to those he led. Whether it was a physical reality or an inner vision, the deepest truth is that the Lord confronted Moses at the burning bush.

When Moses is having his calling experience, the Lord says "I have come down". This is an important marker for the character of God: he does not simply sit in the heavens, oblivious to the troubles of his creation. The phrase also stresses that God is a personal God inside history, that creation is more than chance or a result of human activity. Yahweh declares that he would come down and bring his people out, and now he speaks of sending Moses. The Lord does redeem his people, but he does so THROUGH people.

Understandably, Moses records both his calling experience and his commissioning by Yahweh. The Hebrews needed to know that he was not simply an Egyptian/Hebrew who decided to create his own nation group, but that Yahweh himself was taking his covenant people into the future. To these people, a name was a summation of your character. Sharing a name showed a full commitment by a person to another. The Lord shared this name with Moses, and it became the symbol to the Hebrews of the depth of Yahweh's commitment to them. This covenant was also unique among ancient peoples: this god was not identified with a shrine, but was permanently associated with persons. The Lord had been present with the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob); he was present with Moses and those Moses would lead; he would be present with the nation to come.

The Name
of God:

"I Will Be"
or
"I Am Who
I Am"

יהוה

YHWH

Probably
pronounced:

Yah-weh

We don't know
exactly because
ancient Hebrew
didn't use vowels
and Jews never
spoke God's name
because they
thought it too holy

Using Other
Vowels (e,o,a),
it becomes:

Yehovah
or Jehovah

13 Exodus Chapter 3 – Application Questions

1. Moses already had a job (as a shepherd) when God called him to bring the people out of Egypt. Have you been called to do something new when you thought your life was settled?
2. Moses saw (and heard) God physically. I wish God would show himself as clearly to me. How can I know when something is God and not just wishful thinking?
3. God was using Moses—as a tool to free His people—and he didn't take no for an answer. Have you ever been a tool for God?
4. God asked Moses to do a hard thing, but He promised Moses that he would be with him every step of the way. How can I tell if God is with me?
5. Moses was supposed to go first to the elders (leaders) of the Hebrews and tell them about his mission, THEN he was supposed to go to the king of Egypt and ask for their release. Should we have to stick to the chain of command?

14 Exodus Chapter 4 – Scripture Questions

1. How did Moses try to talk God out of sending him? (vs. 1)
2. What miracles did God show Moses how to perform? (vs. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9)
3. What excuse did Moses use next (to get out of God's task for him)? (vs. 10)
4. What reassurance did God give Moses? (vs. 12)
5. Moses tried one final time to get out of God's task – what did he say? (vs. 13)
6. What was God's final reaction to Moses' last attempt to shirk? (vs. 14-17)
7. Who did Moses take back to Egypt with him and what else did he take? (vs. 20)
8. Moses had not circumcised his own son – in spite of God's rules. What did Moses' wife do? (vs. 25)
9. Who did Moses and Aaron meet when they got back to Egypt? (vs. 29)
10. How did the Elders of Israel react to Moses and Aaron? (vs. 30-31)

15 Exodus Chapter 4 – What did it mean to them?

Moses, understandably, is concerned that nobody will believe his story. Remember that what we are reading is his account of events after they had occurred, written to remind the readers several things: that Moses had not sought leadership, that God provided for his people in unexpected ways, that there was a plan for their liberation even when they didn't know about that plan.

The main purpose of the first section of this chapter is to show the way the Lord pushed back against Moses' objections to his call. Moses was probably right that there would be rejection from the Hebrews. After all, he had been reared and trained in Pharaoh's court, he was a fugitive, he was a foreigner in Midian, was married to a Midianite woman and had a son by her. What Hebrew in his right mind would believe him? God called him anyway!

It is thought that the signs Moses was given to prove himself were reminiscent of those available to Egyptian magicians. There were differences, of course: Moses was to begin with his staff in his hand, and the purpose was not to show the power of Moses but the power of Yahweh. The presence of the Lord was not only with Moses, but those the Lord calls are confirmed and equipped for their ministry.

The idea of migration as a symbol of faith commitment is a familiar one in the Bible. The Hebrews would certainly recognize it from the stories of Abraham and Jacob. The life of faith is always one of journey. Moses writes of his journey back to Egypt to show his readers of his commitment to their liberation, and his faith that the Lord would fulfill his promises to them in spite of opposition from Pharaoh.

The episode with Moses and Zipporah is odd to us, to say the least. The narrative seems to be one of the very oldest in the Bible. The best guess is that Moses fell ill on the trip, as sickness was commonly said to represent an attempt by a god to kill, or punish, a person. Circumcision was originally associated with rites of initiation before marriage, which is why she calls him a bridegroom of blood—though probably Moses had been circumcised as a Hebrew son. 'Touched Moses' feet' is probably a euphemistic way of stating that his wife touched Moses' penis with the son's foreskin, symbolically involving him in the ritual benefits of circumcision.

The anecdote given here of how Aaron met Moses, and their appearance and stirring of the Hebrew people, is a reminder to Moses' readers of the way that Yahweh called them both as leaders. It also reveals the way God leads and uses different personalities and skills to fulfill his divine will.

16 Exodus Chapter 4 – Application Questions

1. God gave Moses the ability to do miracles – why doesn't He do that anymore – or does he?
2. Moses sometimes comes across as a whiner. Have you ever felt put upon by God? When?
3. Moses felt all tongue-tied, so Aaron stepped in to do the speaking. How does God compensate for our short-comings today?
4. Aaron helped his younger brother Moses by filling in on some of Moses' weaknesses. Do you have someone like Aaron that steps up when you can't?

17 Exodus Chapter 5 – Scripture Questions

1. What did Moses and Aaron tell the Pharaoh that God said? (vs. 1)
2. How did Pharaoh answer? (vs. 2)
3. What reason did Moses and Aaron give Pharaoh for letting them go? (vs. 3)
4. What did Pharaoh tell them to do? (vs. 4)
5. What orders did Pharaoh give the slave masters and foremen? (vs. 6-9)
6. What did the Hebrews do in response to these orders? (vs. 12)
7. To whom did the foremen appeal? (vs. 15)
8. Pharaoh accused the Hebrews of being _____. (vs. 17)
9. The foremen accused Moses and Aaron of making them a _____ to Pharaoh, and of putting a _____ in their hand to _____ them. (vs. 21)
10. Moses reacted to this anger by asking God why he had brought _____ upon His people. (vs. 22)

18 Exodus Chapter 5 – What did it mean to them?

In the last chapter, the leaders/elders of Israel were overcome with joy that Yahweh had remembered them in their sorrow. In chapter 5, their enthusiasm turns sour when they encounter opposition from the Pharaoh. Rather than the instant blessing and peace they wanted, they received conflict.

In the first encounter between Moses, Aaron and the Pharaoh, we hear Moses say, “Let my people go.” We can only imagine the shock and annoyance from the Pharaoh. He didn’t know Yahweh, and he certainly wasn’t going to let his slave population traipse off into the desert! Moses writes of this incident to remind his readers/hearers of the true conflict: that between Yahweh, the true God, and the gods of the Egyptians. Certainly the people suffered during this conflict, but they needed to be reminded where the power lay.

When pharaohs took power, it was common for them to immediately begin public works so that they could be seen as competent and effective. They would also build monuments to themselves, and Ramses II (who is suggested as the pharaoh during this time) is well known as one who added his own likeness over existing monuments. His extensive building projects makes it entirely plausible that slave labor was critical to the Egyptian economy.

The story of the Bible is pointed toward this: that humanity return to a whole relationship with God, their creator. Beginning with Adam, through his son Seth and their descendents Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Lord kept his people alive (though not comfortable) until they were numerous enough to begin to create a nation. The struggles that they went through bound them tightly to Yahweh as their salvation. Conflict between the gods of Egypt and Yahweh taught the Hebrews that they could trust God’s power. Accepting the leadership of Moses brought them to depend on Yahweh for their very survival.

This section serves not only to remind the readers of God’s providence, but as evidence of the journey of faith all people experience. Moses feels what we all feel: hope and fear, dreams and despair, glory and futility, joy and sorrow, faith and doubt.

19 Exodus Chapter 5 – Application Questions

1. Moses and Aaron's actions made matters worse for the Hebrews. God didn't save them right away. If God is all-powerful, why does he wait to get us out of trouble?
2. The slave masters and foremen were just doing what they were told. Were they partly responsible for the misery and suffering of the Hebrews? If work I am ordered to do causes trouble or misery for someone else, should I stop?
3. The Hebrew elders seem to have expected pretty quick salvation. How long should we wait for results from our leaders?
4. Pharaoh accused the Hebrew slaves of being lazy. Sometimes I really DO feel lazy (or tired) and just don't want to work. What should I do?

20 Exodus Chapter 6 – Scripture Questions

1. Pharaoh would let the Hebrews go because of God's mighty _____. (vs. 1-2)
2. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob knew God by the name _____ - the Hebrew phrase for this name is El Shaddai. (vs. 3)
3. What land had God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? (vs. 4)
4. What was God promising to the Hebrews now? (vs. 6)
5. How was God going to keep his promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? (vs. 8)
6. How did the Israelites react to God's promise when Moses told them? (vs. 9)
7. What did God tell Moses to say to Pharaoh? (vs. 11)
8. What was Moses' reaction to God's command? (vs. 12)
9. Glance over verses 14 – 27. Whose ancestry is being described? (vs. 26, 27)
10. When the Lord told Moses to go back and speak to the Pharaoh again, how did Moses respond? (vs. 30)

21 Exodus Chapter 6 – Application Questions

1. God makes promises and keeps them – on His time scale. Are any of God's promises still unfulfilled?
2. God promised the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham. Does it still belong to them today? Should it?
3. It was important that the Jewish people knew that Moses and Aaron came from their family lines. How does your family of origin affect your ability to serve God?
4. Moses didn't think much of his ability to speak. What skills do you wish you had that would make you more effective for God?

22 Exodus Chapter 6 – What did it mean to them?

God promised to bless Abraham and, through his descendants, the whole world (Genesis 12:2–3). This promise, called the Abrahamic Covenant, pointed to the coming Messiah (John 8:56).

God promised Israel to be their God and make them His people (Leviticus 26:12–13).

God promised that if we search for Him we will find Him (Deuteronomy 4:29).

God promised protection for His children (Psalm 121).

God promised that His love will never fail (1 Chronicles 16:34).

God promised Israel that their sin could be forgiven, their prosperity restored, and their nation healed (2 Chronicles 7:14).

God, under the terms of the Mosaic Covenant, promised prosperity to Israel for obedience and destruction for disobedience (Deuteronomy 30:15–18).

God promised blessing for all who will delight themselves in His Word (Psalm 1:1–3).

God promised salvation to all who believe in His Son (Romans 1:16–17).

God promised that all things will work out for good for His children (Romans 8:28).

God promised comfort in our trials (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

God promised new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

God promised every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

God promised to finish the work He started in us (Philippians 1:6).

God promised peace when we pray (Philippians 4:6–7).

God promised to supply our needs (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19).

Jesus promised rest (Matthew 11:28–30).

Jesus promised abundant life to those who follow Him (John 10:10).

Jesus promised eternal life to those who trust Him (John 4:14).

Jesus promised His disciples power from on high (Acts 1:8).

Jesus promised that He will return for us (John 14:2–3). From then on, we will be with Him always.

23 Exodus Chapter 7 – Scripture Questions

1. The Lord told Moses, “I have made you like _____ to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your _____.” (vs. 1)
2. Who hardened Pharaoh’s heart? (vs. 3)
3. God said he would bring out the Israelites with mighty acts of _____ (vs. 4)
4. How old was Moses at this time? _____ How old was Aaron? _____ (vs. 7)
5. What happened to Aaron’s staff in response to Pharaoh’s demand for a miracle? (vs. 8)
6. Who copied this miracle? (vs. 11)
7. What happened to the the sorcerer’s snakes? (vs. 12)
8. What was to be the first miracle/judgment of God upon the Egyptians? (vs. 17)
9. Who held the staff over the waters? (vs. 19)
10. Who duplicated this miracle? (vs. 22)
11. What was the response of Pharaoh and the Egyptians? (vs. 23, 24)

24 Exodus Chapter 7 – What did it mean to them?

There are several words used in the original language which all get translated the same way in English: “harden”. Because of this, we miss some of the nuances in the stories. The first time, in verse three, means hard, severe, or fierce, and seems to mean that the Lord deliberately made the Pharaoh reject Moses’ demand. In chapter 10 the Lord tells Moses that he gave the Pharaoh a severe heart towards the Israelites in order to have the opportunity to use his power to show the people who he was.

In other places, the words translated as ‘harden’ mean to grow firm, to strengthen, or to make rigid, and they imply that Pharaoh made these choices himself. It can also mean ‘heavy’ or unresponsive in motivation. Also, ‘heart’ was not the center of emotions for the Old Testament writers. Rather, it was the center of deliberate decisions.

We need to remember that to people of these times, there was no idea about secondary causes. Instead, they believed that the Lord was responsible for everything that happened. So the writer is combining two ideas: 1) Pharaoh had a stubborn attitude, which brought about the signs which testified to the Lordship of Yahweh, and 2) all action, whether good or bad, was due to the will (or permission) of God.

The outcome of the plague experience, then, would be that the Egyptians would **know** that the one responsible for their misfortunes was Yahweh, the Lord of the Hebrew people. This would lead to the expulsion of the Hebrews, to get rid of them and their Lord.

25 Exodus Chapter 7 – Application Questions

1. God went through Moses and Aaron to get messages to Pharaoh. Why doesn't he just deal directly with people who are problems?
2. At this point Moses seems to have given up questioning God. I guess that's because he was right there on the spot when Aaron's snake ate the other snakes. I haven't ever seen anything like that, and I can understand Pharaoh wanting proof. Is it wrong to want, and ask for, proof that God exists?
3. It wasn't the Egyptian people's fault that Pharaoh didn't believe in Yahweh. Why were they punished by having their water ruined? Does God still punish people when leaders are bad? That doesn't seem fair.
4. If a government does bad things to people in other places, do we have a responsibility to make them stop? How far should we go to make them stop? What if our leaders say that God told them to do what they are doing?

26 Exodus Chapter 8 – Scripture Questions

1. Moses tells Pharaoh to let the Jews go. If he doesn't what will happen? (vs. 2)
2. What did God tell Moses to tell Aaron to do next? (vs. 5)
3. What was the response of Pharaoh's magicians? (vs. 7)
4. What did Pharaoh do in response to the plague of frogs? (vs. 8)
5. What did Pharaoh do after the frogs all died? (vs. 15)
6. What plague came next? (vs. 17)
7. How did Pharaoh's magicians respond? (vs. 18-19)
8. Moses told Pharaoh to let the Jewish people go so they could do what? (vs. 20)
9. Moses warned that flies would cover the land except in _____ where the Jews lived (vs. 22)
10. Pharaoh told the Jews to go sacrifice where? (vs. 25) Then changed his mind and let them go where? (vs. 28)
11. Moses says he'll lift the plague, but warns Pharaoh not to act _____ (vs. 29)

27 Exodus Chapter 8 – What did it mean to them

All through the plague stories, the writer is lifting up the Lord of Israel by way of the literary form used and the ways of thinking common to those people. Divine truth can come in many ways, including symbolic language. The concern of the writer is not historical detail but theological teaching. So it is entirely possible that the plagues were literally inflicted by God, and also possible that a natural occurrence (fouled water in the Nile, leading to frogs multiplying in the silt, followed by insect swarms, which in turn brought about epidemics on cattle and men) was enhanced by the power of God as an attack on the gods of the Egyptians. At any rate, we can see that the first few plagues brought only a stalemate. We can see, however, the way it begins to move from total lack of response to capitulation.

It seems likely that the insects from the third and fourth plagues were mosquitoes and stinging flies. These are both known to carry disease as well as being tormenting to people and animals alike. A marvelous aspect of these plagues is that the people of God were exempted! The land where they had been limited to live, Goshen, became a sanctuary. This protection, and the failure of the magicians to duplicate the plagues, led to an advance in Pharaoh's response. He is not yet convinced, but desperation is growing.

In the Near East, including Egypt, gods were thought to have no power except on their own home ground. Not here! The innocent were being delivered and the guilty afflicted because Yahweh, the God of the Hebrew people, was in the middle of them. His miraculous signs were designed to show his power over the gods of the Egyptians, to bring about faith in him and force the release of his people.

There is another point that is easier to miss: God's measure of grace extended to Pharaoh and his people. Moses announces in advance when the fourth and fifth plague is due to strike, providing time to repent. We see here God's character, who does not wish that any would be lost. However, he will (with sorrow) allow people to reject him. In every story we see in the Old Testament, there is always a note of grace—even to those who are not technically God's people.

28 Exodus Chapter 8 – Application Questions

1. All these disasters hit the Egyptians at God's command. When natural disasters strike our country (like hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, etc.) we are quick to say, "God didn't send this" or "God doesn't work that way anymore". Why do we want this to be true?
2. The Hebrew people escaped many of the plagues because God wanted them exempted. When people escape disasters today, are they being protected by God? When people **don't** escape disasters, are they being punished for something?
3. If God is really trying to punish people by sending disasters – should we help them out by sending relief? Wouldn't we be working against God?
4. Pharaoh's magicians finally gave up trying to copy Moses' power. They realized that God's power was real and theirs wasn't. They even told Pharaoh that the plague of gnats was "the finger of God". Why didn't Pharaoh listen to them? Why won't people listen today?

29 The Egyptian Gods of the first five Plagues of the Exodus



Hapi
god of the Nile
Plague: Nile to
Blood



Heqt
Frog god
Plague: Frogs



Kheper
god of insects
Plagues: Gnats, Flies



Apis & Hathor gods of
cattle
Plague: Death of Cattle



**Imhotep &
Thoth** gods of
Healing:
Plague: Boils

30 The Ten Plagues of the Exodus were an assault on the gods of Egypt

Every third plague, Moses confronts Pharaoh on the bank of the Nile (the life blood of Egypt)

1 Blood	2 Frogs	3 Gnats	4 Flies	5 Livestock Dies	6 Boils	7 Hail	8 Locust	9 Darkness
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	----------------------------	-------------------	------------------	--------------------	----------------------

Hapi
god of
the Nile

Heqt
Frog
god

Kheper
god of
insects

**Apis &
Hathor**
gods of
cattle

**Imhotep
& Thoth**
gods of
Healing

Nut
sky
goddess

Seth
god of
the
harvest

Ra
sun god

10
Firstborn

Pharaoh

Son of Ra, guarded by
Osiris (the judge) and
Horus (god of light)

31 Exodus Chapter 9 – Scripture Questions

1. Pharaoh is warned that if he does not let the Jews go, the _____ of the Lord will bring a terrible plague on the livestock *that are in the field* (vs. 2,3)
2. No animal belonging to the Israelites would _____ from the plague (vs.4)
3. Pharaoh's investigators looked into the fallout of the plague. What did they find? (vs. 7)
4. Who or what did the plague of boils affect? (vs. 10)
5. Why didn't Pharaoh listen to Moses and Aaron? (vs. 12)
6. Moses tells Pharaoh that God has gone easy on him. He says God could have done what? (vs. 15)
7. Why was Pharaoh in charge over Egypt at this point? (vs. 16)
8. The hail that fell was the worst that ever hit Egypt. What was the effect of the hail? (vs. 25)
9. Where did the hail NOT fall? (vs. 26)
10. What is Pharaoh's reaction to the plague of hail? (vs. 27-28)
11. When the hail stops, how does Pharaoh react? (vs. 35)

32 Exodus Chapter 9 – What did it mean to them?

The destruction of the economy of Egypt and the assault on the power of their gods intensifies. While cattle plagues were common in Egypt, the scale of this one not only destroyed the property of the citizens, it also attacked the faith in Hathor, god of cattle. More important, it pointed out how helpless Pharaoh was to intervene. Moses clearly emphasizes the difference between the gods of Egypt and Yahweh.

The next action taken by Moses and Aaron at God's command is very close to something called prophetic symbolic action. This type of action is found in many accounts of the prophets, such as Jeremiah's wearing a yoke to symbolize the bondage to Babylon, or Isaiah dressing as a captive in order to show how Egypt would be taken captive by Assyria. Like these other prophets, Moses and Aaron obey God's command to throw ashes into the air while Pharaoh watches. This seemingly simple demonstration had an immediate physical effect. Pharaoh, however refused to let go of his own status as god to his people. This would have been understood by the people of the time as direct action by God, evidence of his total sovereignty.

At the end of the hailstorm, Pharaoh seems to acknowledge that he is in the wrong. While this is a significant advance from his former rigidity, it does not actually involve repentance. Moses and his readers (and us!) could take warning from Pharaoh: intellectual acknowledgment of sin does not necessarily bring about genuine life changes. This has always been an issue with people. It is tempting to put on a public show of regret and sorrow, and yet continue to live in a sinful state.

33 Exodus Chapter 9 – Application Questions

1. Why is it so hard for us to believe in mystical things (even when the evidence is right in front of us)? Why do we try to explain away the supernatural?
2. These cattle were people's livelihood. How does God respond if you get laid off or if your business goes under?
3. How does God use events (good and bad) in our lives to help us or change us for the better?
4. God used Moses as a tool in his creation of the Hebrew people into a nation. While we believe that God has a right to do this, do we have a right to say 'no', or to turn away from a work that God has set us to doing? Why or why not?

34 Exodus Chapter 10 – Scripture Questions

1. God gave three reasons why he had hardened Pharaoh's heart. What were they? (vs. 1-2)
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
2. What will happen on the next day if Pharaoh doesn't release the Hebrews? (vs. 4)
3. What is the response of Pharaoh's advisers and officials? (vs. 7)
4. Who does Pharaoh want to let go into the desert to worship God? (vs. 10-11)
5. What brought the plague of locusts to Egypt? (vs. 13)
6. What did the locusts do to Egypt? (vs. 15)
7. What removed the locusts from Egypt? (vs. 19)
8. The plague of darkness was so deep that it could be _____ (vs. 21)
9. How long did the darkness last? Who was exempted? (vs. 22-23)
10. Pharaoh offered to let the Hebrews go, except for what? (vs. 24)
11. Pharaoh didn't let them go and made a threat to Moses. What was the threat? (vs. 28)

35 Exodus Chapter 10 – What did it mean to them?

God is not heartless about the condition of the Egyptian people. He allows opportunities for Pharaoh and his servants to repent and obey. When they refuse, the consequences fall on everyone. In this plague narrative, we can see that there are three ways that the story advances: 1) Pharaoh's servants are convinced that Yahweh is the one with the power, 2) Pharaoh offers conditional release (still trying to hold onto control), and 3) Pharaoh seems to understand that he needs forgiveness. Imagine this story being told around the campfires of the Israelites as they wandered the desert! Moses seems to be not only telling the story of what happened, but also teaching his hearers that true obedience to God requires full surrender.

Darkness was a uniquely appropriate plague. Egyptian theology put the sun god Ra in first place, and Pharaoh himself was supposed to be the physical embodiment of that god. Because of this, darkness was an ax at the very root of Egyptian theology.

It is possible that this darkness was caused by an intense sandstorm. Sandstorms during spring were common to Egypt. The wind normally blows from the north, from the Mediterranean Sea, but occasionally it came from the desert to the south. These winds could bring intense sandstorms. The fact that people stayed inside for three days suggests such a storm. The way Goshen was exempted also suggests a localized storm.

God may also have used the eruption of the Santorini volcano (Thera) in about 1450 BC to create the Plague of Darkness. One of the biggest eruptions in history, it was 100 times as powerful as Mount St. Helen's eruption (1980) and spewed over 100 cubic kilometers of fiery ash and rock into the atmosphere, which would have caused severe darkness. It was erupting for months before it blew its top completely and sent a tsunami almost 500 feet high around the Mediterranean.

However it was accomplished, whether a complete creation or using natural phenomenon, the clear import is that Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, had control over nature.

36 Exodus Chapter 10 – Application Questions

1. Why does God keep punishing the Egyptian people, when it was the Pharaoh who sinned? Is it possible for humans to make judgments about the actions of God? If so, what is the outcome, and how does this judgment affect our relationship with God?
2. God seems determined to discredit the Egyptian gods. Does God try to discredit other religions today?
3. Do all religions have some truth to them? What does Christianity have that other religions don't?
4. Pharaoh kept trying to bargain with Moses (and God). How do we try to bargain with God today?

37 The Ten Plagues of the Exodus were an assault on the gods of Egypt



Nut
sky goddess
Plague: Hail



Ra
sun god
Plague: Darkness



Horus – Protector
of Pharaoh



Seth
god of the harvest:
Plague: Locust



Osiris – Protector
of Pharaoh



Pharaoh – Son of Ra
Plague: The First Born

38 Exodus Chapter 11 – Scripture Questions

The first three verses of chapter 11 are a kind of flashback, reminding Moses' readers of what the Lord had said to Moses earlier and of how the Egyptians had come to regard the Hebrews.

1. How many more plagues will God bring upon Egypt, and what would be the result? (vs. 1)
2. What are the Israelites to ask of their neighbors? (vs. 2)
3. What was the opinion of the Egyptian people and officials toward Moses and the Israelites? (vs. 3)

The next verses, 4-8, occur immediately after Pharaoh has told Moses, on pain of death, to never come before him again.

4. What does Moses tell Pharaoh is going to happen at about midnight? (vs. 4, 5)
5. How will the people of Egypt respond to this terrible plague? (vs. 6)
6. Who will escape this tragedy? (vs. 7)
7. Who will come to Moses after the event, and what will they say? (vs. 8)
8. What mood was Moses in, in the face of Pharaoh's opposition? (vs. 8)

The last two verses of the chapter remind Moses' readers of God's foreknowledge concerning the response of Pharaoh.

9. How was God's prophecy fulfilled? (vs. 9, 10)

Exodus Chapter 11 – Summary

This last plague is wholly on the action of God, separate from mediation by either Moses or Aaron. The writer seems to be suggesting that the situation had reached the point that only the Lord himself could bring it to a conclusion. This power of God reaches its final peak in the salvation we receive through Christ: only the Lord himself can, in the end, deliver people from sin and death.

When Moses delivers God's ultimatum beginning "About midnight", there seems to be a direct relationship between this plague and the belief in Egyptian mythology that each night the sun fought and overcame the snake, Apophis, who symbolized the hostile darkness. As a god, Pharaoh was the incarnation of the sun, and the darkness was enemy of Pharaoh. This final plague struck the decisive blow at Egyptian theology.

The death of the firstborn was significant. Of course it would have been a traumatic disaster for the people as a whole, but additionally the firstborn symbolically stood for all the offspring of a family. We can see foreshadowing of this event in Exodus 4:22-23. Moses is told to tell the Pharaoh "Israel is my first-born son, and I commanded you to release him, so he could worship me. But you refused, and now I will kill your first-born son." (CEV)

Using the Egyptian view on kingship, the death of Pharaoh's first-born was uniquely important. Not only did Pharaoh fail to protect the land and his people, he could not protect his own firstborn from death. We can see in this another shadow of salvation to come: our God DOES have power, and the death of his only son brought salvation to the entire world. As Moses tells this story, and records it for the education and faith-building of God's people, the design of salvation becomes clear. God alone has the power to save, and to try to reject his sovereignty leads only to death and destruction.

40 Exodus Chapter 11 – Application Questions

1. God chose the Hebrews over the Egyptians. Weren't the Egyptians his creation as well? Does God choose some people over others today? How about Americans – where do you think we rank in the list of people God chooses?
2. God is about to kill the first born of all the Egyptians. These babies were totally innocent – why should they be punished for Pharaoh's sin? Do you think children in countries devastated by famine are being punished for the sins of their leaders?
3. Is God cruel sometimes? If so, is this okay with you?
4. Do you think the God of the Old Testament the same as the God of the New Testament? Why or why not?

41 Exodus Chapter 12 – Scripture Questions

The first 11 verses of this chapter are instructions given to the Hebrew people, combined with later, more explicit instructions given to the people about dates and ways to celebrate Passover.

1. On which day was each household to set aside a lamb, and what kind of animals were used? (vs. 3-5)
2. Where was the blood to be placed, and how were they to dress for the meal? (vs. 7)

The next two verses are explicitly about the night of the deaths of the first-born.

3. Who would die on that night? (vs. 12)
4. What would be the sign that would cause death to pass over the houses? (vs. 13)

Verses 14 – 20 seem to be from a later period, when the specific rules about Passover were given.

5. Why were the people supposed to remember and celebrate this day? (vs. 14)

Verses 21 – 28 are the instructions given to the people immediately before the last plague.

6. What protected the Hebrew people from the angel of death? (vs. 23)
7. How did the people of Israel respond to these instructions? (vs. 27b, 28)

Verses 29 – 42 is the record of what happened the night the plague struck.

8. What happened at midnight? (vs. 29)
9. How did Pharaoh and the rest of the Egyptians react to the deaths? (vs. 31-33)
10. When did the Lord's people leave Egypt? (vs. 40)

Verses 43 – 51 is a retelling of the instructions for celebrating Passover, and a reminder of the Lord's salvation of his people.

42 Exodus Chapter 12 – What did it mean to them?

This section of the narrative appears to be a mixture of commands from God, repetition of instructions for the Lord's people, and actual history of what happened in Egypt on that last night. It bears repeating that the writer was not so much interested in a straight-line historical document as he was reminding his listeners/readers of who they were and what they owed to Yahweh.

One question that comes up frequently in the Old Testament involves numbers. Here, our text says that there were 600,000 men. This is pretty eye-opening since historical records say that Ramses' largest army fielded had 20,000 warriors. An alternative involves looking at the Hebrew word for 'thousand'. This word can also be translated 'clan' or 'family', and was used in at least two places as a term for 'military unit'. A reasonable use of this term means that there were approximately 2,500 fighting men and a total population of between 12 and 25 thousand people who left Egypt.

We must be cautious in applying modern understandings of numbers, literary structures, and cultural relationships to these ancient times and people. When there is a conflict, it is always appropriate to look at the primary themes. In this case, Moses' obedience to Yahweh resulted in the liberation of the Hebrew people, who (though they were unaware of it at the time) were soon to be forged into a new nation. God's promise to Abraham was entering a new phase of fulfillment.

Passover became the primary religious observance with the Jewish community. It both celebrated the exodus and, each time it was practiced, reminded them of their dependence on the Lord. Originally the blood of the sacrificial lamb was smeared upon the doorposts. Later in time it was spread across the altar in the Temple, and the carcass was returned to the family for home cooking. It was understood that life was in blood, and the sacrifice of blood was central to the offering. We can easily see how this was transferred to explain the death of Christ as an agent of salvation. (See table on next page.)

43 Exodus Chapter 12 – Passover/Lord’s Supper similarities

Perfect male lamb	1 Peter 1:19 describes Jesus as a Lamb without blemish
The body of the lamb was consumed	Jesus said the bread was his body
The blood on the door was a sign that those within were safe	Jesus’ sacrificial blood is our salvation
It was to help them remember their salvation from Egypt	It is to help us remember our salvation from sin
It was a symbol of the great coming Sacrifice (Christ)	It is a symbol of the great Sacrifice made for all (Christ)
It marked a coming change	It marks our changed hearts
Those who ate became a part of the benefits of the sacrifice of the lamb	Those who share recognize their participation in the benefits of Jesus’ sacrifice

44 Exodus Chapter 12 – Application Questions

1. God had specific rules about who could participate in the Passover. Some churches have specific rules about who can participate in Communion. Is that okay? Why shouldn't we restrict Communion to people that really understand what it's all about?
2. Pharaoh was broken hearted about the loss of his son. He let the Israelites go. Was his punishment great enough to pay for his sin? Did the payment—the loss of his son—make him okay with God? Is it possible to suffer enough to pay for our sins? Why or why not?
3. God really wanted the Israelites to keep the Passover ritual alive—that's why he was so specific, and why he insisted that they teach it to their children. We have a lot of rituals, too. Is it okay to change them around? How do we know it won't make God mad?
4. Evidently the Israelites didn't try to free themselves from slavery—they waited over 400 years for God to do it. Should we just put up with difficulties and wait for God to fix them? Why or why not?

45 Exodus Chapter 13 – Scripture Questions

Verses 1 – 16 is assumed to be spoken to the Israelites very soon after they came out of Egypt. The Lord is determined that his people not forget, nor misunderstand, the importance of commemorating their salvation.

1. Who is to be dedicated to the Lord? Why? (vs. 2)
2. Where had the Lord promised to bring his people? (vs. 5)
3. What explanation was given to children about the Feast of Unleavened Bread? (vs. 8)
4. What explanation was given to explain about the dedication of the first-born? (vs. 14)

Verses 17 – 22 details the story of what happened right after the people left Egypt.

5. Why did God lead the people in a round-about way from Egypt? (vs. 17)
6. As the Israelites marched toward the Red Sea, for what did they prepare? (vs. 18)
7. Whose bones did the people carry with them? Why? (vs. 19)
8. Since the Israelites were in uncharted territory, how did the Lord lead them? (vs. 21, 22)

46 Exodus Chapter 13 – What did it mean to them?

Consecration is an act by which a person or a thing is separated from ordinary use and dedicated permanently to the sacred by prayers, rites, and ceremonies. While virtually all cultures and religions have some form of purification rite, consecration is especially associated with Christianity and Judaism. Consecration in the strict sense is different from blessing or dedication in that consecration causes a transformation in the essence of the object and that it is permanent and can be neither revoked nor repeated. For instance, our Catholic brethren believe that during communion the bread and drink are literally changed into the flesh and blood of Christ. In most Protestant denominations, baptism creates a literal change in the person: we are now inhabited by the Holy Spirit, never alone again in our own minds or bodies.

This chapter begins with a command from the Lord, that the first-born son and first-born herd animal be dedicated, or consecrated, to him. Because God is Creator and Savior, all of the people (and herds) belonged to him and shared his holiness. In the ancient times of Moses, there was a practice among the peoples of offering the first of the flock or herd, as well as the grain or the fruit, to the Lord. The principle was that the PART stood symbolically for the WHOLE. So this offering (of the first-born) meant that the giver recognized that all children and all animals, everything living, belongs to the Lord. There is no part of creation that does not belong to him, and he demands that we recognize this truth.

This dedication was not a one-way street. While the Lord commanded that his people recognize his right to sovereignty over them, he makes clear that he is with them. God did not abandon Israel on the outskirts of Egypt. Indeed, he is in the midst of them and leads them with cloud and fire. As much as the people dedicated themselves and their descendents to Yahweh, the Lord dedicated himself to being their Eternal God and Savior.

47 Exodus Chapter 13 – Application Questions

1. In Moses' record of Feasts to be celebrated, including the dates and processes, he was following God's commands. The purpose mattered: the feasts were to remind people of their salvation and the author of their salvation. What does our church celebrate, other than weekly communion? What is the purpose of these celebrations?
2. To dedicate, or to consecrate, is to 'set apart' something. What do we 'set apart' in our lives, either in our church or in our every day lives?
3. Abraham, and through him the people of Israel, were promised a land 'flowing with milk and honey'. Do we have any similar promise made to us as children of God?
4. The whole idea of sacrificing animals is off-putting to us nowadays. As Christ-followers we are called to model ourselves after him, and he certainly sacrificed himself for us. What do you think it means for us to sacrifice something? Does it mean to give something up forever, or is a temporary sacrifice just as good?

48 Exodus Chapter 14 – Scripture Questions

1. What did God say that Pharaoh would think when the Israelites stopped to camp by the sea? (vs. 3)
2. What kind of military forces did Pharaoh take with him to bring back the Israelites? (vs. 6-9)
3. What did the Israelites say to Moses when they saw the Egyptian forces coming after them ? (vs. 11)
4. How were the Israelites to protect themselves from the pursuing Egyptians? (vs.14)
5. What did the Lord want Moses to do instead of calling on him to save the Israelites? (vs. 15, 16)
6. Who and what stood between the Israelites and Egyptians? (vs. 19-20)
7. How was the sea parted? How long did it take? (vs. 21)
8. Who did the Egyptians see in the fiery cloud? (vs. 24)
9. What happened when the Egyptians pursued them across the dry sea bed? (vs. 25-28)
10. What was the response of the Israelites to the great power of God that saved them from the Egyptians? (vs. 31)

49 Exodus Chapter 14 – What did it mean to them?

It seems odd that God would want the people to go a roundabout way to the promised land. It turns out, though, that if they had followed the coastal path, there were several Egyptian military encampments. This would have made it even harder to escape from Pharaoh after he changed his mind about their release. Taking the southeastward path, they came to what many Bible translations call the 'Red Sea', though the Hebrew text calls it the 'sea of reeds'. It is likely that Moses led the people to another body of water which formed a barrier between Egypt and the wilderness. Wherever they roamed, the Lord was with them: literally, at this time, in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. His committed presence was a promise of his continued promise to their nation.

Moses' response to the fear of the Israelites at the sight of the Egyptians is found in three phrases: fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord. We need to remember that the Israelites were still new at the business of being Yahweh's people. They had seen miracles, yes; they had gone out of Egypt, yes; but there was little to no experience in acting cohesively as a people. They didn't have practice in faithfully believing and behaving. So Moses had to remind them (pretty constantly) that the Lord was dependable. Yahweh would save them, but they had to be obedient and trust him. Remember, too, that Moses himself struggled with self-doubt and questions! The Lord seems to be telling Moses, "I have given you what you need to lead these people. In my name and with my power, lead them!"

The sea was always a place of fear and awe to the Israelites. They seldom worked in ships. Even when they had a navy of sorts under Solomon, the ships were sailed by Phoenicians. The sea was a symbol of chaos, sometimes even evil in the literature of the Ancient Near East. So one way we can look at this event is as more evidence of God's power over nature. Certainly the Israelites would have seen it this way as they walked through the uncovered sea bed. Later, watching the Egyptian bodies wash up on the coast, this knowledge would have been reinforced by evidence of God's sovereignty. Both the authority of God, and of Moses himself, were underscored and solidified in the eyes of the new nation.

50

Exodus Chapter 14 – Application Questions

1. The Jews seem to complain a lot – and they’ve barely escaped from Egypt. After all they’ve seen with the plagues, you’d think they would trust God a little bit. What’s their problem? How would we be different?
2. Tell of a time when you had your back against the “sea” and were about to be overcome. Were you saved? If so, how did God ‘part the sea’ for you?
3. God lead his people with Pillars of Cloud and Fire. What do you look to for God’s leading?
4. Why doesn’t God do miracles like this all the time? Wouldn’t people believe in God more easily that way?

51 Exodus Chapter 15/16 – Scripture Questions

1. Who leads the songs of praise after the rescue from the Egyptian army? (15:1, 20)

Chapter 15:22 – 25 tells the story of God’s provision for thirst in the wilderness.

2. Where did the Israelites find water? What did the name mean? (15:23)
3. Who did the Israelites think was responsible to provide water? (15:24)
4. What else does the Lord give his people besides good water? (15:25)

Chapter 16:4 – 8, 13 – 24 tells the story of God’s provision for hunger in the wilderness.

5. How did the Lord respond to the next complaints of his people? (16:4, 5)
6. To whom does Moses and Aaron direct the attention of the people? (16:6-8)
7. How does Moses answer the question, “What is it?” (16:15, 16)
8. What was different about the food gathering on the sixth day of the week? (16:22-24)

Chapter 16:31 – 36 gives the Lord’s plan for helping them remember his provision.

9. Why did the Lord want Moses to store some of the manna? (16:32)
10. How long did the Israelites eat manna? (16:35, 36)

Exodus Chapter 15/16 – What did it mean to them?

It is not clear whether the opening praise songs were composed at the time of salvation or later in Israel's history. These songs were almost certainly used at some time as a hymn in Israel's worship, quite likely during Passover. Through this consistent use over time, the hymn reminded the people that their Lord was a redeemer God.

The central theme of the wilderness story is the preservation of Israel through Yahweh's lordship. He meets some of their most basic needs: hunger, thirst, the need for hope. As Moses (and Aaron) lead them through these first difficult months, their words always point toward Yahweh as the one who fulfills the needs of the people. Moses is, no doubt, feeling the pressure of being the 'point man' in this experience. He, also, is in the wilderness needing God's guidance and support. It is easy to see both his experience and that of the Israelites in our own lives: during times of hardship and stress we must look to God for our guidance and support, though it may come through pastors and other believers.

It is noteworthy that after the experience of relieved thirst at Marah, the people were next led to Elim. Here was not only a source of fresh water, but also a large grove of trees. Elim could very well have been a pointed lesson to them of God's leadership and provision. Moses was, no doubt, relieved to have the people safely settled (even if only temporarily) in this place.

And it was only temporary. The next test on the way to Sinai was that of hunger, met by the miracle of quail and manna. Moses and his people were learning something important about Yahweh. If they followed him, he would provide. In a way, these physical needs were allowed in order to train the Israelites. These physical needs were a symbol of spiritual needs which were most likely only dimly seen by the people. Jesus would say many centuries later, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." (Matthew 5:6, RSV) We ourselves pray, "Give us this day our daily bread", and careful thought shows us that the intent is to teach us dependence on the Lord—just as he taught the Israelites. God often uses everyday experiences and situations to bring us into a closer relationship with him.

Exodus Chapter 15/16 – Application Questions

1. The first 21 verses of chapter 15 are songs of praise. How are thanks, gratitude and joy related? Is it possible to be grateful without being joyful?
2. Moses was God’s designated leader, but he was constantly redirecting the people to God as their Savior and Provider. The people expected Moses to make things right for them. What expectations do we have of our leaders in this congregation?
3. What does it mean to have a day of rest? Does “play” count?

54 Exodus Chapter 17 – Scripture Questions

1. What did they quarrel with Moses about at Rephidim? (vs. 2)
2. With whom did Moses say they were really quarrelling? (vs. 2)
3. What was Moses afraid they would do to him? (vs.4)
4. What did the Lord tell Moses to do to produce water? (vs. 6)
5. What was the real question the people wanted answered? (vs. 7)
6. Who attacked Israel at Rephidim? (vs. 8)
7. Who lead the Israelites against the Amalekites? (vs. 10)
8. Who helped Moses hold up his hands during the battle? (vs. 12)
9. What did the Lord tell Moses to do with the story? (vs. 14)
10. How did Moses memorialize the battle? (vs. 15)



55 Exodus Chapter 17 – What did it mean to them?

Watching Moses deal with the people of Yahweh may very well bring to mind episodes of modern day pastors working with contentious congregations. Human beings seem locked to the ‘what are you doing for me now’ attitude rather than remembering past blessings.

Using the original language, it seems that the Israelites had begun to camp and move in groups. It is likely that they had begun to send out scouts to find suitable locations for the mass of people to occupy. In today’s story, the chosen area had no water supply. Once again the people begin to complain and grumble against Moses, who rightly tells them that their true complaint is against God himself. The writer is strongly emphasizing the rebellious attitude of the people in the wilderness, which tells us that even in the beginning there was rebellion. And yet: God, through Moses, gives the people water. This theme of life-giving water is ultimately brought to fullness in Jesus, who is called the Water of Life.

It is humorous, and telling of Moses’ humanity and exasperation, that he named the place “Proof (Massah) and Contention (Meribah)”. It may have been because the Lord continued to save his people that Moses didn’t just walk out of the desert and leave them! We have in Moses a man who is being trained and supported just as the people themselves. His awareness of his place as leader was growing stronger.

The Amalekites had been around a very long time. Amalek himself is said to have been a grandson of Esau, hence very distant cousins to the Israelites. The tribe was nomadic and ranged over the Sinai peninsula. Looking through the Old Testament, these people are mentioned 22 times, always as opponents of God’s people.

In keeping with ancient ways of thinking, the writer no doubt interpreted Moses’ actions as being directly responsible for the release of divine power. God’s mysterious force was funneled through his servant’s obedient behavior. We should take notice of the fact that Moses was not able to complete the work on his own: the support of Aaron and Hur are necessary. And now we are introduced to Joshua, the man who would eventually take over the leadership of the Israelites.

For the first time Moses is told to write down the story. It commits the Amalekites to status of permanent enemy.

56 Exodus Chapter 17 – Application Questions

1. Why do people complain so much? Why can't we be satisfied?
2. Why do we have to ask God for help? Doesn't he already know what we need?
3. Why does God even allow enemies to exist?
4. Who helps hold your arms up when "the battle is raging"?

57 Exodus Chapter 18 – Scripture Questions

1. Who came to visit Moses? (vs. 1)
2. Who had been staying with Jethro? (vs. 3)
3. How did Moses greet Jethro when he met him? (vs. 7)
4. How did Jethro respond to Moses' news? (vs. 9-12)
5. What did Jethro observe Moses doing the next day? (vs. 13-14)
6. How did Moses explain the way he judged the people? (vs. 15-16)
7. What did Jethro say were Moses' primary responsibilities? (vs. 19-20)
8. Jethro made some suggestions for delegating the judging responsibilities. What were the characteristics of the judges that would assist Moses? (vs. 21).
9. Which cases were these judges to handle? (vs. 22)
10. What two things would results from these changes? (vs. 23)

Exodus Chapter 18 – What did it mean to them?

The first six verses of this chapter give us some intriguing insights into Moses' family. First, Moses had evidently married into a devout family: Jethro is called a priest of Midian, one who would have been responsible for the spiritual leadership of his tribe. Next, after the second son was born Moses evidently sent his wife and two sons back to Midian to live with Jethro. We can speculate about the reasons for this return: perhaps Moses was so busy with rousing and organizing the Israelites in Egypt that he had no time for them, or perhaps he was justly concerned about their safety (given all the threats that he had received from Pharaoh). Last, it seems that there was some sort of communication between Moses and Jethro, because Jethro knew just where to go when he came to visit! We have a tendency to think of the Israelites as wandering alone and isolated in the wilderness, but that is very unlikely. They would have had contact with other nomadic tribes and caravans, certainly, for trade purposes.

It is also instructive to see the excellent relationship between Moses and his father-in-law. Jethro was supportive, encouraging, embracing Moses and his role as leader of the new nation. He even offered sacrifices to Yahweh, and provided a celebratory meal for the tribal leaders and Aaron. We can see evidence here of God's provision to Moses. Moses was raised in the courts of the Egyptian Pharaoh, where he learned how NOT to lead people in the way of obedience to God. He then spent 40 years in Jethro's vicinity, where he learned the RIGHT way to lead people. We know that Moses respected and valued Jethro because of the way he immediately accepted Jethro's plan for organizing a fledgling judiciary for the nation. We also see in this that God does not limit himself to the Israelite people for his purposes.

The idea of bureaucracy inspires various feelings, many negative, but it is true that a large group of people need to be organized in some fashion if they are to accomplish anything. As Moses led the people of God through this nomadic phase of their existence, it had become obvious that though he was a great man, he could not do everything—especially not at the level of resolving issues between individual people. When Jethro offered a better way, Moses' intrinsic humility led him to accept it as a word from God. He was very cautious about the people selected as his helpers. He chose people who were strong and capable, people who were dedicated to and reverent towards God, people who were dependable and faithful, and people who were completely honest—they could not be bribed. In the beginning of their formation into a nation, almost every decision would require discernment about God's will. They were, quite literally, making things up as they went along. That is why the character of the judges was so important. They had to be sensitive to God's leading, able to understand and interpret the instructions that had been given. Moses was their great example.

59

Exodus Chapter 18 – Application Questions

1. Moses got along with his father-in-law and took advice from him. From whom do you comfortably take advice?
2. Moses' primary responsibilities were (according to his father-in-law) to teach the people and represent them before God. What should the primary responsibilities of church leaders be today?
3. Why is it so hard to let go of doing things ourselves?
4. Delegation caused bureaucracy for Moses, but it worked. Does this mean that God is in favor of bureaucracy?

Exodus Chapter 19 – Common English Version

¹⁻² The Israelites left Rephidim and arrived at the desert. Then two months after leaving Egypt, they arrived at the desert near Mount Sinai, where they set up camp at the foot of the mountain. This was two months after they had left Egypt.

³ Moses went up the mountain to meet with the Lord God, who told him to say to the people:

⁴ “You saw what I did in Egypt, and you know how I brought you here to me, just as a mighty eagle carries its young. ⁵ Now if you will faithfully obey me, you will be my very own people. The whole world is mine, ⁶ but you will be my holy nation and serve me as priests. Moses, that is what you must tell the Israelites.”

⁷ After Moses went back, he reported to the leaders what the Lord had said, ⁸ and they all promised, “We will do everything the Lord has commanded.” So Moses told the Lord about this.

⁹ The Lord said to Moses, “I will come to you in a thick cloud and let the people hear me speak to you. Then they will always trust you.” Again Moses reported to the Lord what the people had said.

¹⁰ Once more the Lord spoke to Moses: “Go back and tell the people that today and tomorrow they must get themselves ready to meet me. They must wash their clothes ¹¹ and be ready by the day after tomorrow, when I will come down to Mount Sinai, where all of them can see me. ¹² Warn the people that they are forbidden to touch any part of the mountain. Anyone who does will be put to death, ¹³ either with stones or arrows, and no one must touch the body of the person being put to death in this way. Even an animal that touches this mountain must be put to death. You may go up the mountain only after a signal is given on the trumpet.”

¹⁴ After Moses went down the mountain, he gave orders for the people to wash their clothes and make themselves acceptable to worship God. ¹⁵ He told them to be ready in three days and not to have sex in the meantime.

61 Exodus Chapter 19 – Common English Version

¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightening. A thick cloud covered the mountain, a loud trumpet blast was heard, and everyone in camp trembled with fear. ¹⁷ Moses led them out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

¹⁸ Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord had come down in a flaming fire. Smoke poured out of the mountain just like a furnace, and the whole mountain shook. ¹⁹ The trumpet blew louder and louder. Moses spoke, and God answered him with thunder.

²⁰ The Lord came down to the top of Mount Sinai and told Moses to meet him there. ²¹ Then he said, “Moses, go and warn the people not to cross the boundary that you set at the foot of the mountain. They must not cross it to come and look at me, because if they do, many of them will die. ²² Only the priests may come near me, and they must obey strict rules before I let them. If they don’t they will be punished.”

²³ Moses replied, “The people cannot come up the mountain. You warned us to stay away because it is holy.”

²⁴ Then the Lord told Moses, “Go down and bring Aaron back here with you. But the priests and people must not try to push their way through, or I will rush at them like a flood!”

²⁵ After Moses had gone back down, he told the people what the Lord had said.

62 Exodus Chapter 19 – Scripture Questions

1. After two months of travel, where did the Israelites arrive? (vs. 2)
2. What did the Lord want Moses to do? (vs. 3)
3. In this new covenant/contract between God and the Israelites, what two things did he want them to do in order to be his people? (vs. 5, 6)
4. After Moses reported back to the people, what did the people promise? (vs. 7)
5. When the Lord described how he would appear, what did he say was the purpose? (vs. 9)
6. How were the people to prepare to receive the Lord's coming? (vs. 10-15)
You have _____ to get ready
Wash your _____
If anyone (even an animal) touches the mountain, they will _____
From Moses: Between now and then, don't have _____
7. What sound told the people it was time to come to the foot of the mountain? (vs. 16)
8. The Lord warned the people again (through Moses) not to cross the boundary to the mountain, except for which people? What did these people need to do to be acceptable? (vs. 22)
9. Who did the Lord tell Moses to bring with him? (vs. 24)

63 Exodus Chapter 19 – What did it mean to them?

In some ways, everything that has come before this chapter is prelude, because this moment—the time when God takes the people for his own, and they accept his Lordship—is the basis for everything that comes after. Here at Mount Sinai the covenant is sealed and the relationship between Yahweh and the Hebrews is made permanent.

It is very likely that the narrative in chapter 19 was often used in worship in the later life of Israel, both in the Northern and Southern kingdoms. The historical acts of God and their core relationship with the faith of the people were often recreated and repeated in worship. It is also very likely that the origins of the law and covenant would have been central to the annual religious festivals. This narrative, then, may be one that was edited and inserted here as a way to make clear the importance of God's connection to the people.

The discussion about being a priesthood, a holy nation can mean that Israel was to become a people who were uniquely dedicated to the Lord. This idea is echoed in the New Testament, where Peter talks about the priesthood of all believers—everyone in the covenant community is a priest before God. “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

Many areas of the Old Testament describe God's presence through dramatic nature experiences. Some of the Psalms are especially graphic. So it would have been natural to these ancient people to equate the powerful, mysterious forces of storm, fire, and earthquake with the divine presence of God, much more than we do nowadays. It speaks to God's understanding of these people that he used their own patterns of thought as a way to reinforce the reality of his presence. Understanding this, we can more easily understand why God used dramatic visual effects and the taboo about stepping on 'holy ground'. These were familiar and easily grasped by the people. The idea of consecration involves separation or withdrawal, but does not make it impossible to approach God: it does, however, stress that there must be a serious effort to approach divinity in a pure, thoughtful way. During this time, abstaining from sex was apparently a part of at least one purification ritual. Of note here is that Moses added this to the Lord's command.

The trumpet was used at times in later Israel in connection with worship. After it was blown there would be silence which signified the presence of the Lord.

64 Exodus Chapter 19 – Application Questions

1. God had been leading the people for two months, showering them with miracles, before he formalized the relationship. Did something happen for (or to) you which finalized your relationship with God?
2. How much did the Israelites really understand about God? Is it important to know a lot about God before committing to him?
3. God chose to talk only with Moses and Aaron. Does God have specific people he has chosen to talk with today? How would we know?
4. Is this the same God of love we hear about in the New Testament? He told Moses that anyone who touched the mountain was to be killed. Does God deal with different cultures in different ways? How?

65 Major Covenants (Agreements, Contracts) in the Old Testament

Made with	Type	Participants	Description
Noah	Royal Grant	Noah and his descendants	God promised never to destroy all earthly life with some natural catastrophe
Abraham (first)	Royal land Grant	Abram and his descendants	An unconditional divine promise to give the land to Abraham and his family
Abraham (second)	King to subject	Abraham as head of his household	A conditional divine promise to be Abraham's God and the God of his descendants. The condition was that the subjects must be totally committed to the Lord
Israel at Sinai	King to subject	Israel, as Abraham's descendants, and as those saved by the Lord	A conditional divine promise to be Israel's God – Protector and Guarantor of her blessed destiny. The condition was that Israel must live by his rule and serve his purposes in history
Phinehas (a priest)	Royal Grant	The zealous priest Phinehas	An unconditional divine promise to maintain his family in a "lasting priesthood". This implied that Israel would be forever provided with a faithful priesthood.
David	Royal Grant	Faithful King David	An unconditional divine promise to maintain the dynasty, to provide Israel forever with a godly king like David, to bring them into rest in the promised land.
Israel (before being expelled from the promised land)	Royal Grant	Rebellious Israel – they had broken their side of the earlier covenant	An unconditional divine promise to unfaithful Israel to forgive her sins and establish his relationship with her on a new basis by writing his law "on their hearts" – a covenant of pure grace.

66 Exodus Chapter 20 – Scripture Questions

1. Who is God, that the people should obey him? (vs. 2)
2. What sort of relationship does God expect the people to commit to with him? (vs. 3-6)
3. If the Israelites used God's name wrongly, what would happen? (vs. 7)
4. How strongly did God feel about observing the Sabbath? (vs. 6-11)
5. What is the promise given along with the command to respect the father and mother? (vs. 12)
6. How should other people be treated? (vs. 13-17)
 - a) Do not _____
 - b) Do not commit _____
 - c) Do not _____
 - d) Do not bear _____
 - e) Do not _____ anything that belongs to another person
7. How did the people feel about what they saw and heard? What did Moses say to try and reassure them? (vs. 19-21)
8. What two things did the Lord want Moses to emphasize to the people? (vs. 22-26)



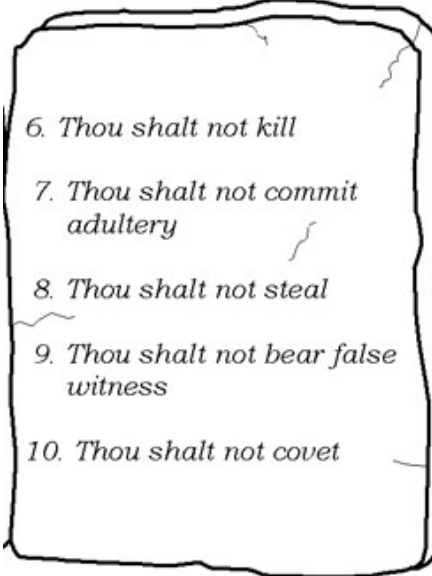
1. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*

2. *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image*

3. *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain*

4. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*

5. *Honour thy father and thy mother*



6. *Thou shalt not kill*

7. *Thou shalt not commit adultery*

8. *Thou shalt not steal*

9. *Thou shalt not bear false witness*

10. *Thou shalt not covet*

67 Exodus Chapter 20 – What did it mean to them?

The 19th chapter was all about the way the Lord called the Hebrews into a covenant life with him. They were challenged to respond to the revelation of the Lord and his power in a way that created a unique relationship. It was necessary to have a mediator—Moses—but under his leadership it was possible to experience the presence of God. Once a person responds in faith to the invitation to be in covenant life, and has followed the instructions of the Lord, then the Lord breaks into that person's life.

The covenant that Moses mediated for the Hebrews was the force that held them together as a people. The earliest way they were organized was a religious federation based on common allegiance to the Lord, centered around a central sanctuary.

The most important part of the covenant created at Sinai was what we call today the Ten Commandments. In the original language, it was “ten words”, so it is sometimes called the Decalogue. These words have the principles intended to govern the relationship between the Lord and Israel. Obeying these words was not the way to gain God's grace: that grace had already been given to them in his many acts of salvation. Rather, obeying these words was the way that the Hebrew people fulfilled their gratitude towards God for his gift of grace.

When we read these Words, we need to be careful to remember that what was said in ancient Hebrew does not necessarily translate perfectly into English. For instance, the word ‘jealous’ in English implies pettiness, but in the original language meant zeal, or ardor: you could say that God is zealous about his people. The word ‘vain’ in English implies a person who thinks very highly of themselves. However, the original meaning was emptiness, nothingness, being ineffective or lacking in purpose; emptiness of speech and so false, and worthlessness of behavior. It is entirely possible that the Word about ‘taking the Lord's name in vain’ meant not using the Lord's name in magic, or in a way that denied the Lord's revelation as central to his relationship with his people.

A helpful way to look at these Ten Words is to look at different translations. This helps us see both the nuances and the reality of the way people of different faiths have understood our response to the salvation of God.

68 Translations of the Ten Words

Young's Literal Translation	Common English Version	Amplified Bible	Revised Standard Version
Thou hast no other Gods before Me	Do not worship any god except me.	You shall have no other gods before or besides Me.	You shall have no other God before me.
Thou dost not make to thyself a graven image...thou dost not bow thyself to them, nor serve them	Do not make idols that look like anything in the sky or on earth or in the ocean under the earth	You shall not make yourself any graven image (to worship it)...you shall not bow down yourself to them or serve them	You shall not make for yourself a graven image...you shall not bow down to them or serve them.
Thou doest not take up the name of Jehovah thy God for a vain thing	Do not misuse my name.	You shall not use or repeat the name of the Lord your God in vain (lightly or frivolously, in false affirmations or profanely)	You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
Remember the Sabbath-day to sanctify it	Remember that the Sabbath Day belongs to me.	Earnestly remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy (dedicated to God)	Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy
Honor thy father and thy mother	Respect your father and your mother	Regard (treat with honor, due obedience, and courtesy) your father and mother	Honor your father and your mother
Thou dost not murder	Do not murder	You shall not commit murder (unjustified, deliberate homicide)	You shall not kill
Thou dost not commit adultery	Be faithful in marriage	You shall not commit adultery	You shall not commit adultery
Thou dost not steal	Do not steal	You shall not steal (secretly, openly, fraudulently, or through carelessness)	You shall not steal
Thou dost not answer against thy neighbor a false testimony	Do not tell lies about others	You shall not testify falsely (lie, withhold, or manipulate the truth)	You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
Thou does not desire...anything which is thy neighbors	Do not desire to possess anything that belongs to another person	You shall not covet (selfishly desire and attempt to acquire)...anything that belongs to your neighbor	You shall not covet...anything that is your neighbors

69 Exodus Chapter 20 – Application Questions

1. Why is it necessary for God to make a covenant with the Hebrew people? Does a relationship with God have to be “formal”? Can’t we just be friends with God?
2. If God is the only God, why does he care if people worship imaginary beings?
3. God expects us to behave in certain ways – why can’t He just love us the way we are? Is God too demanding?
4. Do I still have to honor my Mother and Father even if they’re bad parents? What if they don’t deserve honor?

70 Exodus Chapter 24 – Scripture Questions

1. Who was permitted to come up the mountain? Who had to stay off of the mountain? Who could go near to God? (vs. 1-2)
2. Describe the altar that Moses built at the foot of the mountain. (vs. 4)
3. What was the name of the book that Moses had been writing? (vs. 7)
4. What was accomplished with the blood that Moses used in the sacrifices? (vs. 8)
5. Who went with Moses and Aaron up the mountain? (vs. 9)
6. In what form had God written the laws and commandments? (vs. 12)
7. Who went with Moses to the mountain of God? (vs. 13)
8. What did Moses tell the Elders to do while he was gone? (vs. 14)
9. How long did Moses stay on the top of the mountain with God? (vs. 18)



Animal Sacrifices in the time of Moses

71 Exodus Chapter 24 – What did it mean to them?

The previous chapters (21, 22, 23) cover many of the ways that God wanted his people to live. It was very wide ranging, including relationships between servants and masters, personal injuries between people (both accidental and deliberate), kidnapping, killing (both accidental and deliberate), how to treat animals, protection of property, social and sexual standards, laws of justice and mercy, Sabbath laws, establishing festivals, establishment of national boundaries. It even covers obedience to an angel/messenger that would be sent to prepare the way before them.

Because it contains the legal stipulations at the center of the way God's covenant was to be carried out by his people, chapters 21-23 is usually referred to as the Book of the Covenant. It seems at least possible that it was written after the giving of the Ten Commandments (Ten Words), and Moses probably inserted it here as a logical extension of the giving of the Law to the people and their acceptance of that Law. The Ten Words gave the principles of the relationship between God and his people: the Book of the Covenant makes those principles explicit.

Chapter 24 brings back Moses in his role of primary leader/go-between. It has the ratification of the Sinai covenant, which involves two main things: the meal, shared between the elders of Israel before the Lord and the sealing of the covenant through sprinkling the people with blood.

There is a reason that our fellowship dinners are so cherished! People have forever used a meal as a way to create bonds between people, and the people of this time would have considered a fellowship meal the appropriate way to seal a covenant.

Reading the words and affirming obedience was probably an ancient practice, used throughout the Israelite historical worship. It was a way of reaffirming loyalty to the covenant. Throwing blood upon the people symbolically identified them with the sacrificial offering, and through this brought them into union with God. The result of this symbolic act was to seal the affirmation of loyalty between God and his people.

It seems a little jarring to us that the Lord didn't give Moses the written commands (on the stone tablets) until AFTER the ceremony. However, this is very close to what the ancient people would have expected for the covenant. Commitment in writing served both to confirm and to preserve the oral announcements as binding.

72

Exodus Chapter 24 – Application Questions

1. Moses was the only person God allowed to come near him. Why do you think this was the case? How do we come near to God today?
2. What relationship do the laws given to the Hebrews have to us today?
3. Moses was up on the mountain with God for a long time, becoming the leader that God needed for his people. Why do people need leaders? Why can't we just decide for ourselves how to live?
4. Do our spiritual leaders have authority from God to lead us? If they do, what do we owe to these leaders?

73 Exodus Chapter 25-30 – Scripture Questions

25:1-9 God begins to give instructions on the construction of the Tent of Meeting and the various ways it was to be made sacred.

1. Who was to bring gifts to the Lord? (25:2)
2. Why did the Lord want his people to build a sanctuary? (25:8)

28:1-3 God now gives the instructions and process for installing Aaron and his sons as priests.

3. Who was Moses told to bring out from among the people to serve as priests? (28:1)
4. Why were the special clothes to be made for the priests? (28:3)

29:43-46 After the priests are installed, God explains his affect on the place of worship.

5. How would God's presence affect the Tent of Meeting? (29:43)
6. What would the Israelites know because of God's presence among them? (29:46)

30:11-13, 22-25, 33-36 Moses is shown how the people will be personally invested in worship.

7. How was Moses supposed to fund all of the infrastructure of the Tent of Meeting? (30:13)
8. What was the purpose of the special oil and incense? (30:25, 36)

74 Exodus Chapter 25 - 30 – What did it mean to them?

These chapters are filled with detailed descriptions of how the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, was to be funded, designed, decorated, and set apart. And it wasn't just the tent, the people who served in it were also to be set apart and decorated in very specific ways. There was a singular purpose here. That purpose was so that all the people would be absolutely certain that God was holy, his place was holy, and his people were holy.

In chapter 25:9, there is a command to make all things exactly conforming to a pattern. There was a common ancient view that the earthly dwelling of a god, or God, was supposed to reflect God's heavenly dwelling. In this sense, the Tabernacle was a place where heaven intruded into earth. God was physically present in this place. This Tent became the central focus of the people, the heart of their commitment to Yahweh.

The following chapters are almost mind-numbing in the tiny details about construction: the ark (a chest to hold the tablets), a special table to hold holy bread, special utensils for incense and drink offerings, the lamp stands (menorahs). Then there were the dimensions of the Tabernacle itself, the tent to cover it, the wooden framework. It is astonishing that the whole building was designed to be broken down for transport! The whole complex was to emphasize the continual presence of the Lord. He was with them wherever they went. Everything that was given and constructed/created was meant to be symbolic of the commitment of God to and with his people.

Consecration—that is, committed to service of God—involved ceremonial washing, robing, anointing, and the offering of three sacrifices on behalf of the priests. These seem very arcane to us, but we also have ceremonies for installation of ministers and servants of the church. People need rituals as a way of emphasizing the importance of the work to be done. Here, the first step in ordination involved symbolic washing away of uncleanness. This would be brought to completion in the baptism of believers in Christ.

Anointing, or placing oil on objects and people, is a symbol of being brought into a relationship with God. It was a way of identifying these objects and people as uniquely set apart to service. For ancient people anointing was viewed in a much more literal fashion, and anointed objects (and people) were thought to have been given mysterious power associated with gods. That's why it was forbidden to make anointing oil for personal use.

75

Exodus Chapter 25-30 – Application Questions

1. Moses was given very specific instructions about the Tent of Meeting. Evidently God wanted his Tabernacle to be well made and beautiful. Should we be concerned about how good our church buildings look? How much is too much?
2. Moses seems to be taking a back seat to Aaron and his family. Why do you think God did this? What are the dangers of concentrated power in one person? What are the advantages?
3. The Israelites KNEW when they were in the presence of God. They built (under his direction) a special place for him to show himself. Where does God show himself now? How can you tell? How do you know you aren't just imagining things?
4. The light from the oil lamps reminded the people of God's presence. What do you use to remind you of God's presence?

76 Exodus Chapter 32 – Scripture Questions

1. After Moses had been up on the mountain for a long time, what did the people say to Aaron? (vs. 1)
2. What did Aaron do with the gold given by the people? (vs. 4)
3. When Aaron saw what was happening, how did he respond? How did the people act after the sacrifices? (vs. 5, 6)
4. Who told Moses that the people were acting like fools? (vs. 7)
5. How did the Lord want to change his commitment to the Israelites? (vs. 10)
6. What did Moses say to the Lord to try and change his mind? Did it work? (vs. 11-14)
7. What did Joshua think was happening in the camp? (vs. 17)
8. Moses was very angry at what he saw in the camp. What did he do? (vs. 19-20)
9. Who did Moses blame for the actions of the people? What was his answer? (vs. 21-25)
10. Who answered Moses' call to punish the idol-worshippers? What did Moses tell them to do? (vs. 26-28)
11. God forgave the people (after Moses begged him), but he punished them anyway. What was the punishment? (vs. 35)

77 Exodus Chapter 32 – What did it mean to them?

Chapter 32 is interesting. It, and the two chapters after, are probably from a different time period. The story is very similar to a narrative about King Jeroboam I. These three chapters tell about rebellion, apostasy (falling away from the truth), and restoration of the Lord's purposes and renewal of covenant.

Calf worship was common in the ancient world. The bull was associated with vigor and strength. Israel probably used this common symbol of vitality to represent the Lord. They were probably not reverting to the Egyptian gods: living animals, not idols, were worshipped in Egypt. Bulls were often associated with Canaanite Baalism, and it may be that Israel had come into contact with the bull image there.

All throughout the story of Israel, Moses is shown as the covenant mediator. He initiates the meeting with the Lord, is the go-between for the covenant stipulations, leads as the covenant is begun, receives and hands on the priestly legislation, and intercedes on behalf of the people. When he breaks the tablets, he is showing the people that God was so angry that he was annulling the covenant between the Lord and his chosen people.

Moses' reaction (grinding the calf to powder, mixing it in water, and making the people drink it) seems odd to us but closely resembles an ancient ordeal, or test. The purpose was to prove innocence or guilt: those who didn't react physically were considered innocent, those who reacted badly were proved guilty. It is possible that the last verses reflect this understanding.

The way Aaron is described in these verses makes him seem weak, especially compared to Moses. It is possible that this section was intended as a strong attack on King Jeroboam I, who apparently bore a strong resemblance to Aaron's action. Aaron's actions are in direct contrast to that of the Levites who showed loyalty and dedication to God.

In the face of the Lord's threat to wipe out the covenant with Israel and start over with Moses, Moses asks that if the people are rejected that he wants his name wiped out as well. The Lord's response clearly shows the principle of individual responsibility. Not even Moses could bear the guilt of Israel. The covenant community would have to wait for the new Moses—Jesus Christ—to do what this Moses could not.

78

Exodus Chapter 32 – Application Questions

1. Moses wasn't gone long before the people broke their promise to God. However, Moses places the primary blame on Aaron. How much responsibility do our leaders have for our sins and failures?
2. How does it make you feel to know that (a) God was angry, (b) he wanted to cancel the covenant, and (c) he changed his mind? Doesn't this seem more human than divine?
3. Moses' response to the sins of the people was to get a group of people together and execute 3,000 people. Does that seem a little drastic to you? What could he have done instead?

79 Exodus Chapter 33 – Scripture Questions

1. Where did the Lord want Moses to lead the people next? (vs. 1)
2. Who was going to force out the people who currently lived in the promised land? (vs. 2)
3. Why did the Lord say he wasn't going to travel with the people on this next journey? (vs. 3)
4. What did the Lord tell Moses to instruct the people to do to show their mourning for sin? (vs. 6)
5. What was the purpose of the meeting tent that Moses set up? Where was it? (vs. 7)
6. How did the Lord speak to Moses? (vs. 11)
7. Who stayed behind after Moses returned to camp? (vs. 11b)
8. After the Lord confirmed his friendship with Moses, what did Moses need to know? (vs. 13)
9. How did Moses think that the Lord's presence would affect what other people thought of them? (vs. 16)
10. Why did the Lord go along with Moses' requests? (vs. 18)

Exodus Chapter 33 – What did it mean to them?

The main theme of this chapter is the Lord's presence. There was a very real danger that the people's behavior at Mt. Sinai would make them lose his presence, and that presence could only be made secure by renewal and recommitment.

Removing the jewelry and ornaments seems a bit odd as a sign of mourning and repentance. It is possible that these were religious medallions of one kind or another. Certainly, it had to be done in order to make the Lord willing to be with them. The people were learning that if they wanted God to be present with them, they must separate themselves from all other gods and idols. Not that these false gods had power over Yahweh, but that if people were unwilling to let go of the false, they would be unable to commit to the true.

The Tent of Meeting was a simple tent, in strong contrast to the tabernacle. It seems at least possible that it was outside the regular camp so that the people would know, without question, that Moses was going to speak with God. There is a lot to be said for strong visuals. Watching him walk through camp, knowing he was going to speak with Yahweh, would give the people a reminder that they were not alone in the wilderness. Their God was with them.

Because the Lord knew Moses by name, and because Moses had favor (acceptance) with Yahweh, the Lord agreed to do 'the very thing you have spoken', which was to go along with the people so that their distinctiveness would be both guaranteed and witnessed. Moses pushed, though, and asked that the Lord would show him his glory. To see the face (the full nature, the burning presence) of God is to see the whole of the person. In a wide variety of ways the Lord does reveal himself: his goodness, the revelation of his personal name, his grace and mercy. For Moses to push past this meant that he wanted to know everything about God, that there be no more hiddenness.

In mercy, the Lord finds a solution for Moses' desire. The passage uses poetic or figurative words to suggest that people can never see God face to face, never understand the Creator completely; God is always the God of more. Whatever we can experience or know about God, there is always more to be experienced and known. For this reason the Lord's glory is hidden, and for this reason our search for the Creator is unending.

81 Exodus Chapter 33 – Application Questions

1. What do you think about the fact that the Lord was planning to kick out the people who currently lived in the promised land? They had lived there a long time. Didn't they have any rights to their homes?
2. Moses went 'outside the camp' to meet with God in order to get answers to questions. What are the benefits to going away from your familiar locations to seek God? What are some drawbacks?
3. Moses and the Lord had a VERY close relationship, enough that Moses seemed able to change the Lord's mind fairly often. Can we change God's mind about things that happen to/around us?
4. Why do you think Joshua got left behind at the Tent of Meeting, when Moses went back to the camp after talking to God? Have you ever been left behind on some kind of duty?

82 Exodus Chapter 34, 36 – Scripture Questions

34:1-9 God recreates the commandments on stone tablets

1. What did the Lord tell Moses to do? (34:1)
2. Where was the Lord when he wrote the Words again? (34:5)
3. How did the Lord describe himself? (34:6, 7)
4. What did Moses ask of the Lord? (34:9)

34:29-35 Moses' time with the Lord changes him

5. When Moses returned with the (new) commandments, how had his face changed? (34:29)
6. How did the rest of the people feel about this change? (34:30)
7. What did Moses do to keep the change hidden? (34:33)
8. When was the veil replaced? (34:35)

36:1-7 Moses organizes the workers to begin creation of the Tabernacle

9. How did the workers whom Moses brought together feel about the upcoming project? (36:2)
10. Where did the workers get the goods that they needed for the planned construction? (36:3)
11. How much was given for the work? (36:7)

83 Exodus Chapter 34, 36 – What did it mean to them?

Looking at the two 'giving of the commandments' accounts in chapter 20, 24, and 34, we can't help but notice that there are differences. This is something that happens as we read different accounts of events in the Old Testament. Sometimes people go to great lengths, wrestling with the texts, trying to explain and reconcile the narratives. In this account, the content of the covenant in 34 is certainly different to the previous account. Has the Lord changed the covenant after the falling away of the people? Unlikely. Does this second content describe different ideas? One strong possibility is that we have two different accounts of the same event. It seems likely that they came about in different geographical and time periods. They were left together by the editors because each makes significant points about the Old Testament religion and teachings. It is very possible that this account from chapter 34 is the version that circulated in Southern Israel, and the other account is one that was taught in Northern Israel.

The main purpose of the writer in the second selection is to suggest that Moses lived in such communion with God that he came to reflect the glory of God. The wording about the skin of his face shining because he had been with God reflects the relationship between the glory of God and the burning fiery presence. The word translated "shone" is not the normal word used for "shine", and it is only used in a couple of places in the Bible. It literally means "send out horns" which is one reason some ancient artwork shows Moses with horns. Looking at the context here, though, you could also use the word "rays": so Moses had rays of light coming from his face after spending time with God.

Exodus Chapter 34, 36 – Application Questions

1. It seems at least possible that the stories we have of Moses receiving the Commandments are from two different accounts. What are some advantages of hearing the same story from different viewpoints? What are some disadvantages? How do we hang on to the important points when the telling is different?
2. Moses was not the same after spending time with God. How does your time with God change you? How does your time with God's people change you?
3. The Israelites, both those who gave and those who built, seemed excited about the construction of the Tabernacle. Do you think that this kind of excitement is an indication that God is blessing, or commanding, a ministry? What does it mean if everyone thinks an activity or ministry is necessary, but nobody is excited about it?

85 Exodus Chapter 39, 40, Leviticus 1, 6, 7 – Scripture Questions

39:32-43 The Tabernacle work is completed

1. Whose design was used for the Tabernacle? (39:32)
2. Who approved the work that was done? (39:42)
3. What did Moses give to the finished work? (39:43)

40:1-3, 16-21, 34-38 The Tabernacle rituals are implemented

4. What did the Lord want put inside the chest behind the inside curtain? (40:3)
5. How were the Lord's instructions followed? (40:21)
6. When everything was accomplished according to the Lord's commands, what happened? (40:34)
7. How did the people know when it was time to move on to a new location? (40:36, 37)

Leviticus 1:1, 6:8, 7:37, 38 Sacrifices and ritual relationship with the Lord are instituted

8. When the Lord spoke to Moses from the sacred tent, what did he want the Israelites to learn? (1:1, 2)
9. What instructions did Moses pass on to Aaron and his sons? (6:8)
10. Where were the people when the Lord gave the rules for sacrifices to Moses? (7:37, 38)

86 Exodus 39, 40, Leviticus 1, 6, 7 – What did it mean to them?

It is very easy to have your eyes glaze over when reading these last few chapters! So many details, so many commands that don't pertain to us, so much blood. And there is a tremendous amount of repetition. From our vantage point it is more helpful to pull back and look at the overall narrative.

There are instructions, and there is fulfillment. The writer is suggesting that the earlier work of Moses (both in the wilderness and in Egypt) and the construction of the tabernacle are following a divine plan. So this pattern— instruction, then fulfillment—is the shape of Israel's sacred life according to the Lord.

We can only imagine how Moses must have felt at the conclusion of the Tabernacle construction and the issuance of regulations concerning sacrifices. In the space of maybe two years he had returned from Egypt to Mount Sinai, secured the freedom of his people, witnessed their mighty deliverance at the sea and in the wilderness, been the go-between for the covenant and rules, and now he had overseen the construction of a portable sanctuary that guaranteed the Lord's continuing presence.

When Moses was first called by God, he asked for a sign of validation. The only thing he got was a vague promise that “when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.” Now the sign had been fulfilled, and a real nation had begun to form around this sanctuary. There were more journeys ahead of Moses, and certainly more trials, but Moses must still have felt a great sense of triumph.

Above everything else, the Israelites now had a sense of the reality of God's presence in their midst, symbolized in smoke and fire. The Lord God who met Israel at Sinai would not be left behind on the mountain. He would accompany Israel wherever she went. God always abides with his covenant people, never abandoning them in the wilderness.

87 Exodus 39, 40, Leviticus 1, 6, 7 – Application Questions

1. More and more, Moses seems to be relegated to being simply the mouthpiece of the Lord. Have you ever been in a ministry setting where your role changed? How did you cope with the change?
2. These descriptions of what the Lord wanted, where he wanted it seem very persnickety. Do you think the Lord is still very concerned that things be done in exactly the right way?
3. The mechanics of animal sacrifice seem very brutal to us, but the IDEA of sacrifice is very familiar. Animal sacrifices were also very public, whereas our sacrifices are (mostly) private. Do you think it would be helpful to have public 'sacrifices', where everyone knew what was being given? Why or why not?

88 Scripture Questions

Leviticus 10:1-7 The Lord's commands must be taken seriously

1. What happened when Aaron's sons offered unauthorized fire before the Lord? (10:1, 2)
2. When Moses told Aaron, "God meant what he said!" how did Aaron react? (10:3)
3. What did Moses command to be done with the bodies? (10:4-7)

Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33 Moses leads the people near to the promised land

4. As the people drew near to Canaan, what did the Lord tell them to do? (13:1-3)
5. What did Moses tell the scouts to look for? (13:18-20)
6. What did the men bring back with them? (13:23)
7. How did the report of the scouts talk about the land of Canaan? (13:27, 28)
8. What did Caleb think of their chances of invasion? (13:30)
9. How did the scouts who were afraid talk about the land and the people in it? (13:31-33)

89 What did it mean to them?

The book of Numbers starts in the wilderness around Mt. Sinai in the second year after the Israelites had gone out of Egypt. One month had passed since the tabernacle was constructed. It ends approximately 38 years later near Jericho, close by the Jordan River. The book itself isn't exactly chronological—it actually follows the geographical path more than the time path. And there aren't too many statements through the book that refer to times of events.

The first section is not (in the modern sense) very interesting, since it is mainly concerned with names of tribes and numbering of tribes as well as legal ideas. The middle section is much more interesting. It speaks of Moses and his father-in-law, the complaints of the people around food, the complaints of Aaron and Miriam about Moses' authority. Chapter 13 of Numbers has a familiar story: that of the investigation by the scouts/spies into the land of Canaan.

We owe most of our knowledge about the first five books of the Bible to the priests and their dedication to preserving their history. So many of the events in this section (called the Pentateuch) revolve around Moses, many people have merely assumed that he wrote them. While he is referred to in almost every single chapter of Leviticus and Numbers, there are many times when it is clear that someone else is writing ABOUT Moses. The priests kept track of different writings over many centuries, working together writings that had many things in common but also showed differences.

One of the main themes in the Pentateuch is the constant presence of God; another is of his supreme holiness. This presence and holiness was understood to extend to the tabernacle and accessories. The tabernacle must not be approached recklessly. The ark of the covenant must not be touched. This place, and these items, must be held in the same reverence as God himself.

The narrative about the spies going into the land of Canaan are a perfect example of the difficulty the Israelites had in trusting God's presence and provision. In spite of the desirability of the land (flowing with milk and honey!), the poorly equipped Israelites were overwhelmed at the fortifications and sheer size of the Canaanites. The fact that they used the term "Nephilim" is telling. It can be translated as "fallen ones". These beings were legendary giants who brought terror to smaller people. In spite of Caleb's enthusiasm, the people's fear made it impossible for them to trust in God's presence and provision.

90 Application Questions

1. Why do you think the Lord's punishments for breaking his commands was so harsh? Are we too easy on people today when they sin?
2. As Moses and the people come close to Canaan (for the first time) there is conflict between those who thought they could accomplish the invasion, and those who were afraid. The fearful people won. We are facing change in our congregation: how can we tell the difference between caution and fear?
3. Moses is clearly using younger men in the scouting party. He may have been trying to transition leadership from himself to these people. What do you think is a good way to transition leadership from one person to another?

91 Scripture Questions

Numbers 14 : After the scouts go to the land of Canaan

1. Where did the Israelites say they wanted to go after hearing the scout's report of Canaan? (14:4)
2. What did the whole assembly (except for Joshua and Caleb) want to do with Moses and Aaron? (14:10)
3. How did the Lord respond to the fear of the Israelites? (14:12)
4. How does Moses describe the Lord? (14:17, 18)
5. After forgiving the people, how many people does the Lord say will see the promised land? (14:30)
6. How many years would the people be sentenced to wandering? (14:34)
7. What happened to the spies who spread the bad report? (14:36, 37)
8. What did the Israelites say the next morning? (14:40)
9. How did Moses warn the people about their change of heart? (14:42, 43)
10. What happened when the people defied Moses' warning? (14:44, 45)

92 What did it mean to them?

The response of the people to the majority/minority reports from the exploration of the land of Canaan was, perhaps, understandable. They were afraid of loss, afraid of more hardship, just...afraid. This fear overcame their memories of the mighty acts God had performed on their behalf. It is a bit easier for us: we can simply flip back over the last few pages of our Bible and read about the miracles. This is a warning for us, too. We need to constantly remind ourselves of what God has done for us, and what he has promised to do for us. Only then will we be able to stand firm in faith. It is also a reminder of the importance of worshipping together, encouraging one another by our presence. Fear can wipe out memories very quickly.

It is a bit intimidating to see that the Lord was willing to disinherit his recently chosen people, replacing them with another nation. This willingness shows that God has been making a selection from all mankind. It seems to be possible, at least at this point, for people to reject this selection. In effect, God is telling the people that he is willing to accept their rejection of him. Ironically, those people who said, "I wish that I had died in the wilderness" were to be granted their wish.

When the people changed their course, it was of course too late. They were more interested in avoiding punishment than being obedient, or in receiving the promise. This story shows the mistake that people make when they think that they can arrange their actions to suit their own timetables, presuming on God's timeless promise. They turned away from God, assuming that the Lord was obligated to fulfill his promises. The outcome shows how catastrophic it is to treat God with presumption and reckless insistence on having one's own agenda.

The ill-fated attempt to approach the land (and escape punishment!) meets with disaster. The reason for this failure is easily found: neither Moses nor God's ark left the camp to go with the army. The Ark of the Covenant represented the assurance of God's presence. This was a stern lesson to God's people. It is not enough to claim God: one must also be obedient to God.

"To Hormah" is a phrase that means "unto destruction".

93 Application Questions

1. The Israelites were afraid of making an irrevocable mistake. How do we prevent fear from ruling our decision making?
2. Some mistakes have long-term consequences. How do we continue to live faithfully in spite of long-term consequences?
3. Sometimes mistakes do not allow for do-overs. Why doesn't God give us more chances at redemption?

94 Scripture Questions

Numbers 16: Rebellion among the Israelites

1. What was the complaint of Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On against Moses and Aaron? (16:3)
2. How did Moses respond to the complaint, and who did he say would choose the priest for the people? (16:4-5)
3. After scolding Korah for wanting more prestige than simply serving as a Levite, what was the complaint of Dathan and Abiram? (15:13, 14)
4. Who else did Korah incite against Moses and Aaron? What did the Lord want to do? (16:19-21)
5. Moses and Aaron convinced the Lord that not all the people had sinned. What warning did Moses then give to everyone about being physically close to the tents of Korah, Dathan & Abiram? (16:26)
6. What happened to the leaders of the rebellion? (16:31-34)
7. Who were the next casualties of the rebellion? (16:35)
8. What was done with the censers used by the rebellious Levites? (16:39-40)
9. What was the next complaint of the people of the Israel? (16:41)
10. After the Lord decided to go ahead and wipe out the people, what did Moses and Aaron do to save them from his wrath? (16:47-49)

95 What did it mean to them?

This chapter details the struggle for authority that began to rise up among the Israelites. There were revolts about the civil authority of Moses, the religious authority of Aaron, and his priestly line.

Korah was a relative of Moses and Aaron. Korah's father, Izhar, was a brother of Amram, the father of Moses and Aaron. Korah said that all of the family was holy, not just Moses and Aaron. In the book of Numbers there are repeated references to the struggle between the Aaronic priesthood and the Levitical system. Notably, Moses does not settle the question himself, but makes it clear the decision belongs to the Lord.

Another part of the rebellion continued the grousing about the memory of Egypt contrasted with the daily misery of living in the desert. Moses was accused of trying to make himself a prince. Dathan and Abiram accuse Moses of 'putting out the eyes' of others. This was a way of saying that they believed Moses blinded people so they couldn't see the truth. There is an ancient Jewish tradition that says this was a revolt of the tribe of Reuben, who was unhappy with Moses' leadership.

The punishment for Korah and his followers, to be swallowed up by the earth, seems unfair: why did everyone in their families have to pay the price instead of just the leaders? Part of the answer is in the words of Moses, that 'they go down alive in Sheol'. Sheol was the abode of the dead, which was thought to be either beneath or within the earth. The meaning of the word itself is unknown. Some think that it meant a pit or hole. Interestingly, there is no reason to think that the place was for the evil dead only, but for all the dead.

Many commentators believe that this chapter, as well as others in Numbers, were later additions to show the struggle between different communities in Israel over who would have authority in the nation. Reading further chapters, it is easy to see that while Moses was acknowledged as the primary civil authority, religious authority was an area of conflict for many generations. The writers/editors emphasize that the Lord was responsible for setting up the structure of the nation, and that the structure was not to be questioned by the people.

96 Application Questions

1. Some of the Israelites objected to Moses and Aaron's leadership. The way they went about it caused lots of problems. What is the proper way to object to and about our spiritual leaders?
2. How do we identify leaders that might be pointing us in the wrong direction spiritually?
3. How do we identify if we actually need a change of leadership?

97 Scripture Questions

Numbers 20:1-12 Because he is angry with the Israelites, Moses disobeys God

1. What shortage was the source of the next opposition and quarrel with Moses? (20:2-5)
2. To whom did Moses and Aaron go for help with this crisis? (20:6)
3. How did the Lord tell Moses and Aaron to deal with the lack of water? (20:7, 8)
4. What did Moses actually do to the rock? (20:11)
5. How did God respond to Moses' lack of obedience? (20:12)

Numbers 27:12-23 At God's command, Moses commissions Joshua to be his successor

6. What did the Lord want Moses to see on the mountain in the Abarim range? What would happen after he saw it? (27:12, 13)
7. Why didn't Moses and Aaron get to enter the promised land? (27:14)
8. What did Moses want the Lord to do when he heard about his upcoming death? (27:16, 17)
9. Who did the Lord appoint to succeed Moses? (27:18)
10. What did the Lord say to give to Joshua, so that the people would follow him? (27:20)

98 What did it mean to them?

The first verse of this chapter seems to be a condensed version of the time of wandering. While Miriam could have died almost any time during this 40 years, it is generally thought that she died after about 38 years. It seems clear, at least, that she died without entering or seeing the Land of Promise because she was the leader in a rebellion against Moses.

It isn't surprising that water was scarce for such a large group. Again, there is a quarrel with the leaders. This place was named Meribah, a word that means 'contention'. No doubt the people felt it was time to move into the promised land, but Moses would not. We see in this story Moses' humanity: he was bitter and angry with their attitude and behavior. The rod that the Lord told him to take was the one used to strike the Nile and divide the sea. When Moses uses this rod to bring water out of the rock, he strikes it twice instead of following God's command to speak to it. The writer of the story seems to be saying that Moses failed to exalt the power of God—at least he did not call attention to God's holiness. However Moses was feeling, his actions made it seem that HE was bringing the water, not God.

Moses seems to have been resigned to the fact that his sin would prevent him from actually entering the promised land with the people (who were, now, a completely new generation). The story of Balaam and Balak taught that the Lord was, and must be, holy and sanctified in the eyes of everyone. God was gracious to Moses to allow him to see the land from a distance. While it may seem harsh to us, we need to consider that Moses was very likely ready to pass on the responsibility of leading the Israelites.

Joshua the son of Nun was one of the 12 spies who, 40 years earlier, had gone into the land of Canaan and believed in God's promise to give it to the Israelites. Since that time he had become Moses' right hand, helping him to care for the people. He is described as a man who had the spirit of the Lord. He had this spirit BEFORE Moses laid hands on him. This laying on of hands was not an ordination but an act of affirmation by Moses, who was giving Joshua some of his authority. In the eyes of the Hebrews, Moses was a unique lawgiver and leader. No future leader would have the same authority as he. This affirmation was done in front of Eleazar (high priest) and the congregation (lay people). It was important that the people be involved in the leadership of Joshua, who would be charged with taking the people into the Land of Promise.

99 Application Questions

1. Sometimes it is easy to take credit for things for which we have no right. How do we fight this tendency? Sometimes we blame others or God for things which are not their fault. How do we fight this tendency?
2. It can be difficult dealing with the loss of a family member, especially when the relationship is complicated (as was the case with Moses and his sister Miriam). How do we get through this kind of complicated grief?
3. How do we gracefully pass the torch to the next generation? What if there is no one to accept the passed responsibility?

100 Scripture Questions

Deuteronomy 34: The death of Moses

1. Where did the Lord take Moses after they left the lowlands of Moab? (34:1)
2. What did the Lord show Moses, there on Mount Nebo? (34:2, 3)
3. What was the promise of the Lord to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? (34:4)
4. Who buried Moses? Where is his grave? (34:6)
5. How did the people mourn Moses? (34:8)
6. Who became the new leader of the Israelites? (34:9)
7. What made Moses unique as a leader of the Israelites? (34:10, 11)
8. How is the power of Moses described by the writer? (34:12)

101 What did it mean to them?

The book of Deuteronomy holds a special place for the Hebrews. It was a seventh century BC edition of Mosaic teaching and preaching that was concerned about Israel's election (being chosen by God), its history, and its law. The overall theme is about the covenant relationship between God and his people and the renewal of their commitment to him. For the priests and Levites who were most likely responsible for its composition, it was not so much a complete story as it was a summary of beliefs, practices and sermons that they gave to the common people. Most likely the sermons given in Moses' name were not from him directly, but given in the tradition of his teachings. On the other hand, the poems and songs in this book seem to be taken directly from collections of his writings that were handed down through the centuries.

The book itself is very important to the New Testament. Jesus himself quotes from it frequently, and the great commandment to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" (Deut 6:5) is his answer to the question of what was the greatest commandment. Deuteronomy also has a theme which is a unifying thread through the whole Bible: the redemptive activity of God. That truth is easily found in this book and traced to the New Testament. Deuteronomy also assumes that Yahweh is Creator of the world and the Lord of both nature and history. Everything, wealth and possessions, belong in the first place to God. He created them or granted humankind the ability to make them. His people depend on him for everything. God requires us to use his things for his purpose.

Moses' death is handled in a respectful way by the writer. Moses' obedience to the Lord and place of honor among the people is reflected in the way he is described. He is called "the man of God", a title that isn't given to many in Scripture. Moses had shared the confidence of God, had performed the Lord's miraculous acts, and had intervened between God and the people. He had "seen God" and lived, and in that living had performed the tasks of God.

The writer speaks of Joshua as a way of showing that the leadership of the nation of Israel was not dependent on any one person, but was in fact organized and dependent on the Lord. As unique and great as Moses was, in the end he was a servant who followed the person of the Creator of the Universe.

102 Application Questions

1. Why do you think the Lord buried Moses anonymously? What problems can people develop when a church leader is TOO important?
2. How do we gracefully pass the torch to the next generation? What if there is no one to accept the passed responsibility?
3. How much do you know about the history of our church? Do you think it is important to know this kind of information? Why or why not?