

# Exodus

By Ross Callaghan

<http://rosscallaghan.yolasite.com>

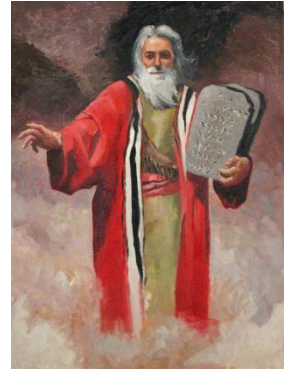
## Exodus

Exodus is the second book in the Bible and in the Pentateuch - the “five volumes” that make up the Hebrew *Torah*. Exodus is a very important book for Jews and Christians as it describes how God enabled the children of Israel to be set free from slavery in Egypt. This event resulted in the birth of the nation of Israel and is seen as a picture of God bringing freedom to all of His people: within Israel and within the Church.

The English word “Exodus” comes from the Septuagint, a pre-Christian translation of the Old Testament into Greek. “Exodus” means *a way out* or *a departure*, referring to Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. The Hebrew title for Exodus is Shemoth (meaning *these are the names*). This comes from the book’s opening words which list the names of the sons of Jacob (Israel) who joined Joseph in Egypt.

## Author

Moses is the traditional author of Exodus and of the other books in the Pentateuch. On several occasions the Lord commanded Moses to write down His words *on a scroll*. e.g. Exodus 17:14; 34:27,28. Jewish tradition says that Moses wrote Exodus at Mt Sinai, shortly after the events described in the book.



## Date

Some scholars think Moses lived somewhere in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC and that Egypt’s Pharaoh at the time was Ramses II (c. 1290–1224 BC). This would date the Exodus at around 1290 BC and the conquest of Canaan at around 1250BC.

Other scholars think Moses lived in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BC, and that the Pharaoh at the time was Amenhotep II (c. 1450–1424 BC). This view dates the Exodus at around 1440 BC and the conquest of Canaan at around 1400 BC.

## Background

The final chapters of Genesis describe how the children of Israel had settled in Egypt due to a famine in their homeland of Canaan. They were rescued by the intervention of one of Jacob’s twelve sons, Joseph, whose brothers had previously sold into slavery, but who had risen to become the Pharaoh’s right hand man. The Israelites lived in Egypt for 430 years (12:40) and *a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing came to power in Egypt* (1:8). This king enslaved the Israelites, cruelly using them as a labour force to build the city of Rameses, at that time the capital of Lower Egypt.

The Israelites multiplied rapidly over the 430 years and this was considered a threat by the Egyptian rulers. Persecution of the Israelites intensified and they were in great danger of being completely wiped out as a family nation. God raised up Moses as the person who would deliver His people from bondage to Egypt and who would lead them back to their homeland: their “Promised Land”.

Exodus tells the story of how Moses was raised up and how he led the Children of Israel out of Egypt towards the Promised Land. It shows how God gave the Law to His people (including the 10 commandments); provided for His people as they travelled through the wilderness; dealt with their grumbling and rebellion, and revealed Himself to them in the Tabernacle. Exodus is followed by Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, which describe further aspects of the journey. The final chapters of Deuteronomy describe how Moses led the Children of Israel right up to the Jordan River on the border of Canaan, and how he died without actually entering the Promised Land.

## Main themes

Exodus shows how God’s promise to Abraham was fulfilled when the Lord rescued the Children of Israel from bondage in Egypt. *“Then the LORD said to Abram, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and ill-treated for four hundred years. But I*

*will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterwards they will come out with great possessions. . . . In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here”* Genesis 15: 12-16.

Exodus also describes:

- The birth of Moses, and how God chose and equipped him for the task of leading His people out of Egypt.
- The revelation of God’s name not just as “El” (God), but as “Yahweh” – the eternally existent One (I AM). *This is My name for ever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.*
- How God miraculously intervened to set His people free from slavery to the greatest nation on earth at the time.
- The establishment of the nation of Israel in fulfilment of God’s covenant with Abraham;
- The origin of the Passover, one of Israel’s three annual festivals.
- The giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai and God’s requirement that His people would be faithful to Him and obedient to this Law.
- The pattern for the Tabernacle and for how God wanted His people to worship Him
- God’s incredible faithfulness towards His people – even when they were unfaithful towards Him.

Ultimately, the book of Exodus is all about redemption. It shows how God *remembered His promise* to Abraham (2:24; 6:5); *came down and delivered* the Israelites (3:8); *saved them from an evil oppressor* (14:30; 15:2); and *brought them out of bondage* in Egypt (3:10-12). Just like the redemption that Jesus won for us at the Cross!

## Content

### Chapters 1-6. The revelation of God’s purposes.

This historical section records the birth and calling of Moses; the afflictions of the Israelites under the Egyptians and God’s promise of deliverance.

#### 1:1-22. Oppression of the Israelites.

Exodus begins by listing the names of the 70 descendants of Jacob (Israel) who went to Egypt after the famine in Canaan. *Joseph was already in Egypt. Over time the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became extremely numerous*, to the point that the king became concerned about their population growth. He *put slave masters over them and worked them ruthlessly*, forcing them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses. He even told midwives to kill their boy children at birth but the midwives refused. Finally the Pharaoh gave the order: *“Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.”*

#### 2:1-6:27. Moses raised up to deliver the Israelites from bondage.

When Moses was born his mother *hid him for three months* then, when she could not hide him any longer, placed him in a basket among the reeds beside the Nile. Pharaoh’s daughter came to bathe in the river and saw Moses and *felt sorry for him*. She took him home and *he became her son*. She named him “Moses” saying, *‘I drew him up out of the water’*. (Moses means *drawn out*). In a wonderful way, Moses’ real mother became the baby’s nurse and was able to bring him up.

Moses grew up in Pharaoh’s household as a prince. When he was an adult he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and intervened by killing the Egyptian. The next day he again intervened on behalf of two Hebrews who were fighting. Realising that his heritage put him in danger Moses fled from Pharaoh and lived in Midian, a desert country south of Judah. In that *alien land* Moses married Zipporah and had a son called Gershom. Gershom means *alien land*.

Meanwhile back in Egypt *the Israelites groaned in their slavery* and cried out to the Lord. *God heard their groaning* and remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 35:11,12).

God revealed Himself to Moses through a burning bush on Mount Horeb. He told Moses: *“I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt”*. Moses didn’t feel up to this great task but God said *“I will be with you”* and encouraged Moses in a number of ways:



- God gave Moses a sign – that he would come back and worship on the same mountain. (Fulfilled later when Moses was leading the Israelites through Sinai).
- God revealed His name to Moses: “I AM WHO I AM. (Hebrew אֶהְיֶה Eheyeh – the eternally existent One). Moses was to tell the people that this is God’s name forever, the name by which He is to be remembered *from generation to generation*.

God told Moses to gather the elders of the Israelites and ask permission for a three-day journey into the desert *to offer sacrifices to the Lord*. God said that Pharaoh would not let them go unless a *mighty hand compels him* and that he would only let them go after God had dealt to the Egyptians with many wonders. Moses asked “*What if they do not believe me, or listen to me?*” God told Moses to throw his staff on the ground and it became a snake. When Moses grabbed the snake by the tail it turned back into a staff. He then placed his hand inside his coat and it became leprous, then took it out, and the leprosy went away. Moses certainly knew that God was with him, but he was still fearful! He said he wasn’t a good speaker, but God countered by saying *I will help you to speak and will teach you what to say*. He would even provide Aaron, Moses’ brother, to speak for Moses *as if he were his mouth*.

Finally Moses said “*O Lord, please send someone else to do it!*” All these excuses made God angry!

Moses decided to accept the task and obey the Lord and began to return to Egypt. On the way the Lord met him and *was about to kill him*. (This is probably the Hebrew way of saying that Moses was struck down by a serious illness). Moses had neglected to circumcise one of his sons (Genesis 17:14) but he recovered once the son was circumcised. Moses met Aaron at Mt. Sinai and was accepted by the Israelites,

God told Moses to tell Pharaoh *to let my people go* and that he was to *perform before Pharaoh all the wonders He had given him power to do*. If Pharaoh refused and hardened his heart he would lose his own son. Pharaoh mocked the Lord and would not let the Israelites go and then stopped providing them with straw to make bricks but maintained their required output. The Israelites suffered even more and complained to Moses, and Moses complained to God.

God appeared again to Moses and reassured him that He would free them from being slaves to the Egyptians. *I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord.*

The rest of Exodus (and the rest of history) affirms that God honoured this promise! He is a totally trustworthy, covenant-keeping God.

The last part of Chapter 6 lists the names of the heads of the families that Moses and Aaron led out of Egypt.

## Chapters 7-19. The deliverance from Egypt.

This historical section describes the plagues poured on the Egyptians; the deliverance from Egypt; the establishment of the Passover; the crossing of the Red Sea and the giving of the Law.

### 7:1-11:10. Plagues on the Egyptians.

God told Moses to *tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go*. If he didn’t do this God would *harden Pharaoh’s heart* and would pour miraculous signs and wonders on Egypt so they would know He was the Lord. These signs and wonders have become known as the “10 plagues on Egypt”.

- Pharaoh knew exactly what God required at each stage and always had the opportunity to obey the Lord and let the Israelites go. He even had a miraculous demonstration of God’s power when Aaron’s rod *became a snake*. He called his magicians and they *did the same things by their secret hearts*. *Pharaoh’s heart became hard and he would not listen* to Moses and Aaron, *just as the Lord said*.

### Doing what God wants you to do.

God has tasks that He wants all of us to do. Like Moses, we may feel inadequate to do these tasks and we often make all sorts of excuses and objections to try to get out of doing what God wants. But if God wants us to do something for Him He will always provide the resources needed to do the task! (As He did for Moses). We need to stop making excuses or objections and obey the Lord in what He is calling us to do. When we do this we will find that God will always provide for us and will meet all of our needs. Philippians 4:13, 19.

- The plagues occurred in three cycles, becoming increasingly destructive. The first three plagues (river turning to blood, frogs, lice) afflicted both the Egyptians and the Israelites. The next six plagues (flies, disease of livestock, boils, hail and fire, locusts and darkness) only afflicted the Egyptians.
- The Egyptian magicians were able to replicate the first two plagues, but when the third struck the magicians couldn't replicate it and admitted that *this was the finger of God*.
- After the fourth plague (flies), fifth (disease on livestock), sixth (boils) and seventh (hail and fire) Pharaoh offered Moses a compromise. Some of the Israelites could go and worship the Lord, or they had to leave their livestock behind. Moses rejected each of these compromises and continued to warn Pharaoh that if he didn't let all of the Israelites go he would suffer further calamities.
- The events in the first nine plagues all occurred naturally in the area. What makes them so miraculous is their timing, their occurrence in response to Moses' directions, and their targeted effects on the Egyptians and not the Israelites. The plagues are a great example of how God can use natural phenomena to bring about His purposes. He is Lord over all, and nothing is too hard for Him!
- The final plague was the death of the firstborn sons throughout Egypt, including Pharaoh's son. It was only after this awful event that Pharaoh relented and agreed to let the Israelites go.



- **7:14-24. The first plague: water to blood.** When Moses struck the Nile with his staff its water turned to blood; its fish died; the river stank and no-one could drink the Nile's water. The blood spread to all water throughout Egypt which had a drastic effect on the people, and on Egypt's economy. Pharaoh was told *By this you will know that I am the Lord*.
- **8:1-15. The second plague: frogs.** Seven days later there was a plague of frogs from the Nile which *covered the land*. Frogs were thought to be sacred and were not to be killed. Even when their dead bodies were piled in heaps and the land reeked of them, *Pharaoh hardened his heart*.

- **8:16-19. The third plague: gnats.** Next gnats came upon men and animals and covered the ground. When the magicians couldn't replicate this they acknowledged *This is the finger of God.*
- **8:20-32. The fourth plague: flies.** The next plague was of flies that ruined the land but did not affect the Israelites. Pharaoh told Moses and Aaron they could go and sacrifice to the Lord, but they were not to go very far. Pharaoh asked Moses to pray that the flies would be lifted and he did so, but, immediately *Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.*
- **9:1-7. The fifth plague: death of livestock.** All of the Egyptian livestock died but Pharaoh still hardened his heart and would not let the Israelites go. Once again, the Israelites were spared from this plague.
- **9:8-12. The sixth plague: boils.** When Moses threw some soot into the air festering boils broke out on the Egyptians. The magicians *could not stand before Moses because of the boils*, but Pharaoh's heart remained hard.

Before God sent the last three plagues, Moses gave Pharaoh a clear message from God. The next plagues would be more severe than the others, and would convince Pharaoh and all the *people that there is none like Me in all the earth.* Pharaoh was even told that he was in this situation so that God could show His power and that *My name might be proclaimed in all the earth.* God warned Pharaoh to gather whatever cattle and crops were left from the previous plagues and shelter them from the coming ones. Some of Pharaoh's servants heeded the warning while others did not



- **9:13-35. The seventh plague: hail followed by fire.** The *worst storm* ever destroyed everything in Egypt, but the Israelites in Goshen were spared. Pharaoh recognised that he had sinned and that *the Lord is in the right.* Again Pharaoh asked Moses to pray that the plague would stop, and it did so, but Pharaoh wouldn't let the Israelites go.
- **10:1-20. The eighth plague: locusts.** Before the next plague, God told Moses that the Israelites would be able to tell their children of the *miraculous signs* they had seen God do in Egypt and that through this they would know *I am the Lord.* The *locusts devoured everything left by the hail* and Pharaoh again repented and asked God to take the plague away. A *very strong west wind* blew all the locusts away but Pharaoh again changed his mind and would not let the Israelites go.
- **10:21-29. The ninth plague: darkness.** Darkness fell on the Egyptians for three days – *darkness that can be felt.* Afterwards Pharaoh still wouldn't let the Israelites go and told Moses he didn't want to see him ever again.
- **11:12-30. The tenth plague. Death of Egypt's first born males.** Before the final plague the Israelites gathered gold and silver ready to take with them to the Promised land. God told Moses that after this plague Pharaoh would finally let them go, and Moses was very angry (presumably because God could have set them free without all the previous plagues). The plague was that *every firstborn son in Egypt will die*, but not the sons of the Israelites. *Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.* Unlike the other plagues, which the Israelites survived because they were God's people, this plague required an act of faith. Each Israelite family was to kill an unblemished male lamb and smear its blood on the top and sides of their doorways. The lamb was then to be roasted and eaten that night. Any family that did not follow God's instructions would suffer the plague. God would pass over the households that had the shed blood on their doorposts: *When I see the blood I will pass over you.* The *destroyer* would come to Egyptian homes where there was no blood over the door and the firstborn male would die, whether human or animal. *At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn of Egypt* and there was *loud wailing* throughout the land. The Lord passed over the Israelites and their lives were spared because the lamb's blood had been shed on their behalf.



## 12:31-15:21. Deliverance from Egypt.

Losing of the firstborn children was the final straw for Pharaoh and he agreed to let the Israelites go, even asking Moses to bless him! 600,000 men plus women, children and livestock departed from Egypt and they left in haste after they had *plundered the Egyptians*. They ate unleavened bread because they didn't have time to add the yeast to the dough before they departed. (This became the main remembrance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread or Passover).

*Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the Lord's divisions left Egypt.*

### Institution of the Feast of Passover

God said that the Israelites were to remember the Passover in an annual festival – *a lasting ordinance*. The feast of Passover has been a vital part of Jewish life ever since.

Passover, or *Pesach* begins on the 15th of the Hebrew month of Nisan with the Passover Seder. The Seder commemorates different aspects of how the Lord passed over the Israelites and set them free from bondage to the Egyptians. Its focus is on the despair of slavery and the joy of freedom.

The Feast of Passover lasts for seven days and is also called *the Feast of Unleavened Bread*. When Pharaoh freed the Israelites they left in such a hurry that they could not wait for the dough to rise in their bread so they had to eat matzo ("poor person's bread" made without leaven or yeast). Exodus 12:33-39. In commemoration of this unleavened bread is eaten during Passover.

Together with Shavuot ("Pentecost") and Sukkot ("Tabernacles"), Passover is one of the three pilgrimage festivals during which the entire population of the kingdom of Judah made a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover>

God's requirements for how Jews are to celebrate the Passover are given in Exodus 12:43-49.

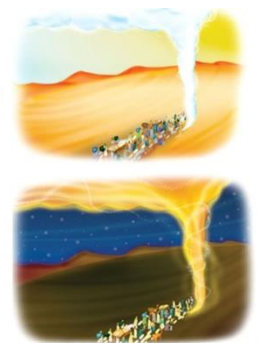
Passover is also important for Christians because it reminds us that *Christ our Passover lamb* shed His blood for our salvation. Hebrews 9 and 10 show that the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross did what the Jewish sacrificial system could not do: make atonement for sin *once for all*. The shedding of Jesus' blood was a sacrifice that was fully acceptable to God so that *by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever all those who are being made holy*. In Christ the Jewish sacrificial system was fulfilled and Jesus now lives as our great High Priest forever making intercession for us. That's why Jesus is called *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*. John 1:29. *God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God*. 2 Corinthians 5:23.

In direct contrast to the loss of Egypt's first-born children the Lord required the Israelites to consecrate their first-born male children and animals to Him. This was to be a lasting reminder of what the Lord had done in bringing them out of Egypt.

The path that the Israelites took on their journey to Canaan was not the direct one through Philistia. The Lord knew that if they *faced war* with the Philistines they may want to *return to Egypt*. Instead they took the desert road to the Red Sea. *By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so they could travel by day or night.*

The Israelites camped on the banks of the Red Sea and discovered that Pharaoh had changed his mind and his armies were chasing them. The Israelites were terrified and started complaining to Moses saying it would have been *better to serve the Egyptians than die in the desert*. This was the beginning of much grumbling and complaining on the journey! Moses assured the people. *"Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Lord will fight for you- you only need to be still".*

In one of the greatest miracles of all time the Lord *drove the sea back* when Moses *stretched out his hand* and the Israelites were able to *pass through the sea on dry land with a wall of water on their right and on their left*. When the Egyptians tried to follow them the *waters closed in* and no one in the Egyptian army survived. *That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians*. What a mighty God! *When the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in Him and in Moses His servant.*



Moses and the Israelites then sang a song to the Lord acknowledging His great power. *The Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation.... Who among the gods is like You, O Lord? Who is like You – majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? The Lord will reign for ever and ever.* Moses' sister Miriam also sang as the people rejoiced: *Sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and rider He has hurled into the sea.*

God had brought His people out of Egypt; now it was time to get Egypt out of them! He did this by putting them through many trials in the wilderness. It was through these trials that the people would learn to trust Him. Just like us!

### **15:22-17:15. Travelling through the wilderness.**

As soon as the Israelites left Egypt and entered the wilderness they started grumbling against Moses and Aaron! Moses reminded them that when they were grumbling like this they were actually *grumbling against the Lord*.

- At Marah they grumbled because the **water** was bitter. The Lord told Moses to throw a piece of wood into the water and it *became sweet*.
- In the Desert of Sin they grumbled because they didn't have enough **food**. The Lord provided *bread from heaven* for them in the form of manna and quails. They were to *gather enough for each day except for the Sabbath*, and this would be a test to see if they followed the Lord's instructions. If they tried to store up extra food it would go bad. God said that obedience in this would be how they would *know that I am the Lord your God*.
- At Rephidim they grumbled because there was no **water** to drink. The Lord told Moses to strike a rock and *water would come out for the people to drink*.
- At Rephidim they were attacked by **enemies**: the Amalekites. The Israelites prevailed as long as Moses held up his hands. The Lord said to create a banner so this would be remembered. Moses built an altar called "The Lord is my banner".(Jehovah nissi).

God's provision for the Israelites as they travelled through the wilderness is one of the most remarkable acts in history. He provided for around 6 million people plus animals over a period of forty years as they travelled in extremely hot, dry, and dangerous conditions. The people grumbled all the way, but God still provided for them because He was loved them and was working His purposes out in their lives.

Few Christians these days experience anything like what the Israelites went through in the wilderness, but, like them, we are pretty good at grumbling about our lives. No matter what we are going through, we will always be better off if we stop grumbling and start trusting the Lord. He loves us and knows what is best for us. He is able to provide for us and we can be confident that He is working His purposes out in our lives. God got the Israelites through the wildernesses and we can be confident He will get us through ours too!

### **18:1-27. Delegation of duties.**

Near Mt. Sinai, Moses' father-in-law Jethro, brought his wife Zipporah and his two sons Gershom (meaning *alien*) and Eliezer (meaning *God is my helper*) to him. When Moses recounted how God had done amazing things in Egypt Jethro embraced the Lord saying *Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods*. When Moses sat down to deal with peoples' disputes Jethro advised him to delegate this to others. *The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone*. (A relevant message for many Christian workers!). Moses should be *the peoples' representative before God* and should delegate dealing with disputes to *capable men from among the people*. Wisely, Moses heeded his father-in-law's advice, which helped to make his load in leading the Israelites much lighter.

### **Chapters 19-31. God's requirements under the Law.**

This legislative section gives God's requirements for the Law (including the 10 commandments); the three annual festivals; the Sabbath, and the construction and furnishing of the Tabernacle.

#### **19:1-31:18. The giving of the Law.**

When the Israelites arrived at Mt. Sinai, God called Moses up the mountain and renewed His covenant with Israel: *Now if you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all the nations you will be My treasured possession. Although the whole earth is Mine, you will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*

The people responded *We will do everything the Lord has said* and the Lord told Moses to have them consecrate themselves before Him. When they did this God revealed Himself in a dramatic way, possibly through a volcanic eruption or earthquake. The people certainly knew that the Lord was God!

**God's chosen people**

Compare the words of God's covenant with His chosen people Israel (Exodus 19:5,6) with how God describes Christians: *You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness and into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* 1 Peter 2:9,10.

The description is almost identical! That is because the Church has been grafted in to Israel (Romans 11) and now "God's chosen people" includes the Israelites and all those who have been saved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

All of the laws were given to Moses during the weeks he spent with God on the mountain. God had brought the Israelites *out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery*, which gave Him the right to expect obedience to Him. The laws God gave the Israelites were *not burdensome* but were designed to help protect them from going astray and to enable them to live as God's people. *God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.*



The Law (or Torah, meaning "instruction") revealed at Sinai consists of three parts:

- The Ten Commandments (Chapter 20)** are concerned with relationship to God and other people, and form the basis of all other laws in Israel. The first five deal with honouring the Lord, and the second five with showing respect for one's neighbour. The last commandment is broader than the others and deals with thoughts and intentions rather than with specific actions, so includes activities not included in the first nine.

GOD	MAN
1: Do not worship any other gods	5: Honour your father & mother
2: Do not make any idols	6: Do not murder
3: Do not misuse the name of God	7: Do not commit adultery
4: Keep the Sabbath holy	8: Do not steal
	9: Do not lie
	10: Do not covet

No other nation in history has been given anything like the Ten Commandments, so they are quite unique. The commandments are all based on God's nature and so give guidelines relevant for all people to live by, for all time.

Over time the Ten Commandments have become slightly different in Jewish, Catholic and Protestant traditions:

	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>Protestant</b>
<b>I</b>	I am the Lord your G-d who has taken you out of the land of Egypt.	I, the Lord, am your God. You shall not have other gods besides me.	You shall have no other gods but me.
<b>II</b>	You shall have no other gods but me.	You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.	You shall not make unto you any graven images.
<b>III</b>	You shall not take the name of the Lord your G-d in vain.	Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.	You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
<b>IV</b>	You shall remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy.	Honor your father and your mother.	You shall remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy.
<b>V</b>	Honor your mother and father.	You shall not kill.	Honor your mother and father.
<b>VI</b>	You shall not murder.	You shall not commit adultery.	You shall not murder.
<b>VII</b>	You shall not commit adultery.	You shall not steal.	You shall not commit adultery.
<b>VIII</b>	You shall not steal.	You shall not bear false witness.	You shall not steal.
<b>IX</b>	You shall not bear false witness.	You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.	You shall not bear false witness.
<b>X</b>	You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.	You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.	You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.



## 2. The judgments (Chapters 21–23).

The next set of laws are requirements for how the people are to behave as a social group. Other nations had similar social codes. The judgments relate to:

- master-slave relationships.
- injuries caused to others which may be punishable by death.
- compensation for injury to persons or damage to property.
- social responsibilities relating to abhorrent practices, idolatry, aliens, widows and orphans, money-lending, blasphemy, offerings, false reports, perversion of justice, relating to enemies, justice for the poor and bribery.
- Sabbath observance.
- Celebration of the three annual festivals: Unleavened bread (Passover); Harvest (Shavuot) and Ingathering (Tabernacles).

Many of the judgments would only apply once the Israelites settled in the Promised Land so this section closes with a warning against being rebellious and adopting pagan ways. *If you do all I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you.* The Israelites were to drive out the nations in the Promised Land and *not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices.* If they fully worshiped the Lord His blessing would be on their food and water, and *I will take away sickness from among you, and none will be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span.*

Unfortunately the Israelites did not heed these words and later on began to worship the foreign gods of the Canaanite nations. This *became a snare* to them for the next few hundred years. God promised to drive out their enemies, protect His people and make them prosper, conditional upon His being their only God and on their obedience to Him. How tragic that the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles describe how the Israelites repeatedly disobeyed the Lord and suffered the consequences of this disobedience!

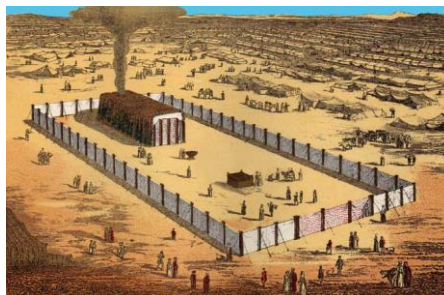
Exodus 24 records how God reconfirmed His covenant with the Israelites. The covenant was sealed with the blood of a sacrifice and the leaders of the people promised that *Everything the Lord has said we will do!* In response, God appeared to the leaders and gave them a glimpse of His glory.

## 3. The Ordinances (Chapters 24–31)

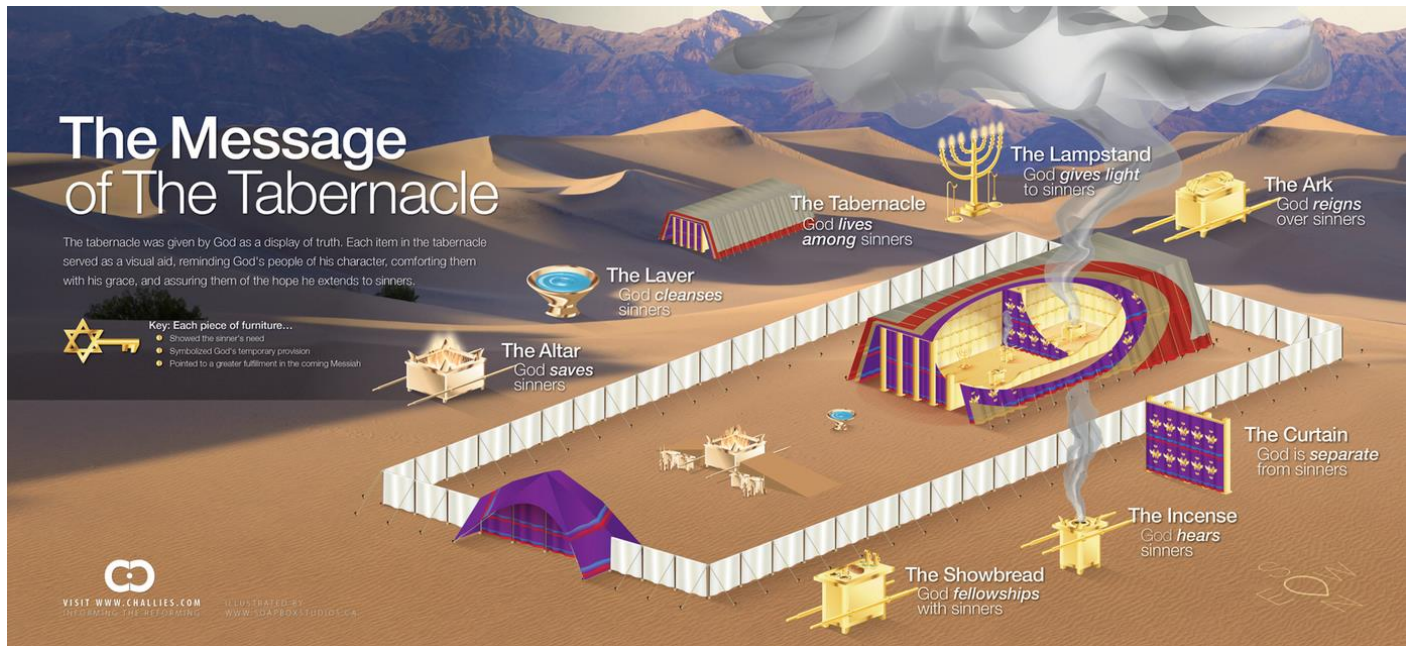
Moses then went back up Mt Sinai and received the stone tablets on which the commandments were written, as well as further instructions about the tabernacle, the priesthood, and various religious ceremonies. The tabernacle (Tent of Meeting) was to be a *sanctuary* for God where He would dwell among the Israelites as they travelled through the wilderness.

The religious commandments (or ordinances) relate to

- the Ark of the Covenant in which the commandments were placed.
- a table for the Bread of the Presence.
- a lampstand.
- the structure of the Tabernacle itself.
- the altar for burnt offerings.
- the courtyard outside the Tabernacle.
- oil for the lampstand.
- garments to be worn by the Priests, including the ephod, breast piece, robe, tunic, undergarments.
- procedures for consecration of the Priests.
- procedures for using the altar of incense.
- taking of a census and payment of atonement money for use in running the Tabernacle.
- procedures for cleansing, anointing and use of incense.
- craftsmen (Bezalel and Oholiab) used to make the Tabernacle and its furnishings.
- observation of the Sabbath (between sundown Friday night to Saturday nights).



Many Christians interpret parts of the Tabernacle as representations of aspects of the life and ministry of Jesus. Here is one such interpretation:



### Christians and the Jewish Law.

The Law was given so that the Israelites could have a relationship with God. They could relate to their righteous God by completely obeying all of God's commandments and thus being righteous. Because this proved to be impossible the Law included a way by which any sins they committed could be forgiven. Sacrifices were to be made and the blood of an animal shed to make atonement for sin. The animal died so that its owner didn't have to. (The wages of sin is always death. Romans 6:23). The sacrifices had to be repeated regularly because the people sinned regularly, so an annual sacrifice was made by the High priest on behalf of all of the people.

This whole system didn't work! The people couldn't keep the commandments, and the sacrifices were not able to bring about lasting forgiveness for sin. What was needed was a "once for all, for all time sacrifice". God provided this when Jesus, His Son, came as *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*. (John 1:29). When Jesus' blood was shed at the Cross, atonement was made once for all so that anyone could be righteous in God's sight (in Christ) and thus have a relationship with Him. *God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.* 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Through His life, death and resurrection Jesus has fulfilled all the requirements of the Law and Christians (who are 'in Christ') are no longer under that law but are now under grace. Romans 8:3,4. In fulfilling the Law Jesus gave us a 'new commandment' that encompasses the whole Jewish Law (and perhaps makes even greater demands on us?) – the requirement to love others. *A new commandment I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.* John 13:34.

Because Jesus has fulfilled the Jewish law it no longer has any relevance for Christians (including the ten commandments)! We are to be led by the Holy Spirit, do what God wants us to do and live in love. See Romans Chapters 1-11, Mark 12:29-31; John 13:34,35; John 14:15-27; Matthew 5:17-20, 22:37-39; Ephesians 2:14-18, Colossians 2:6-23; Hebrews 10:1-18; James 2:8-13; 1 John 3 etc. Acts 15 describes how the Church Council examined this issue and decreed that Christian believers had no obligation to follow the law.

Jesus death on the Cross also put an end to the Old Testament sacrificial system which was part of the law. The sacrifices were imperfect and have now been replaced by Jesus' one perfect sacrifice. See 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Colossians 1:15-23; 1 Peter 1:13-25; Hebrews 1:10-18; 7:23-10:18. These verses show that the new covenant makes the old obsolete.

### Development of the Jewish Law.

The Jewish Law (*Halakha*) developed over time as the Law that God gave to the Moses was interpreted and applied to everyday life.

The *Halakha* is the collective body of Jewish religious laws: It is made up of:

- **The Written Law** is found in the first five books of the Bible (the **Torah**). It is based on the original 631 *mitzvot* (commandments), including the “10 commandments”.
- **The Oral Law** is made up of laws, statutes and legal interpretations that were believed to have been given orally by God to Moses, and then passed on in an unbroken chain from generation to generation through the Rabbis. (It is sometimes called Rabbinical Law). The Oral Law was written down after the destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70 CE and is regarded as just as authoritative and inspired as the Written Law. It is a code of conduct that covers all areas of life including rituals, worship, relationships, religious observances, diet, marital relations, agricultural practices, and civil disputes.
- The Oral Law is contained in **the Mishnah**, compiled between 200–220 AD, and **the Gemara**, an open series of commentaries and debates on the Mishnah and how it relates to everyday life.
- Together the Mishnah and the Gemara make up **the Talmud**, the main text of Judaism.

### Chapters 32-34. The rebellion of the people.

This historical section records the rebellion of the Israelites in building and worshipping a golden calf, and Moses' reaction to this rebellion.

While Moses was on Mt Sinai receiving the Law, the Israelites grew impatient and desired *gods who will go before us*. They pressured Aaron into making a molten calf, a representation of a pagan god, and *indulged in revelry* before it. This was just after they had promised total obedience to the Lord! (24:3,7). The Lord told Moses of the people's idolatry and said He was so angry He would *destroy them*, and start again with Moses' offspring. Moses pleaded for Israel and asked the Lord to *relent* and *not bring disaster on Your people*, reminding the Lord of His promise to make Abraham's offspring a nation *as numerous as the stars in the sky*.

The Lord relented and Moses went down from the mountain with the stone tablets in his hands. When he saw the peoples' idolatry, he threw the tablets to the ground and broke them in pieces, before destroying the golden calf. Moses asked those who were *for the Lord* to come to him and the Levites responded and brought judgment on the people. Moses told the people they had *committed a great sin* and went to the Lord seeking atonement on their behalf. He asked God to forgive their sin or take His judgment out on Moses himself. The Lord replied that He would punish the people in His own time and a plague spread through the camp *because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made*. Sin always has its consequences!



The Lord then told Moses to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land - *a land flowing with milk and honey*, but He would not be with them as they were a *stiff-necked people*. Moses set up a *tent of meeting* outside the camp and there *the Lord would speak to Moses, face to face, as a man speaks with his friend*. Moses asked the Lord to teach him His ways and the Lord said *My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest*. God was pleased with what Moses asked, and then boldly Moses asked *Now show me your glory*. (The *shekinah* glory is the light of the presence of God. Whenever God spoke to His people He did so out of this great light). God said He would allow Moses to experience His goodness, and that he would see His glory in action, but Moses could never see God's face, *for no-one can see Me and live*.

God told Moses to remake the stone tablets and when they were finished God again came in glory. *Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him, and proclaimed His name, the Lord (YHWH). And He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."*



Moses then boldly asked God to go with them, even though they were a *stiff-necked people*, and the Lord made a covenant to do so if they would:

- always obey Him
- drive out the Canaanite nations when they reached the Promised Land; destroy all their altars, and not worship their gods
- not make any kind of treaty with the foreign nations
- not make idols
- celebrate the three annual feasts, and keep the Sabbath.

The Israelites did not keep their side of this covenant when they entered into Canaan. They repeatedly disobeyed the Lord and this resulted in ongoing trouble between them and the nations, and between them and the Lord. It's always best to obey the Lord!

Moses was on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights to receive this covenant, and when he came down from the mountain *his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord*. (This is where halos came from in future paintings of Godly people).



After this Moses always put a veil over his face when he spoke with the Lord.

### Chapters 35-40. Construction of the Tabernacle.

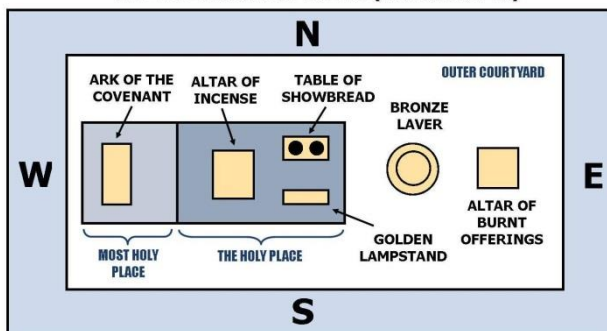
This historical section records how the Ark of the Covenant and the main components of the Tabernacle were created and set up. When the work was finished *the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle*.

Now that the Israelites had come back into a right relationship with the Lord construction of the tabernacle could begin. Moses asked for contributions and *those who were willing came and brought an offering to the Lord for the work on the Tent of meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments*. The contributions were very generous and Moses had to restrain the people from bringing any more. Bezazel and Oholiab were specially set aside to supervise countless *skilled craftsmen* in the building programme because the *Spirit of the Lord gave them skill, ability and knowledge* and they could *teach others*. Items built were:

- The tabernacle including frames, crossbars, and an entrance.
- The Ark of the Covenant, containing the commandments.
- The Table of Showbread and its plates, dishes, bowls and pitchers.
- The golden lampstand and its lamps.
- The altar of incense.
- The altar of burnt offering.
- The bronze laver (washbasin).
- The courtyard surrounding the tabernacle.
- Garments for the Priests.



THE TABERNACLE OF MOSES (EXODUS 35-40)



The Ark of the Covenant



The Table of Showbread



The Golden Lampstand



The Altar of Incense



The Altar of Burnt Offerings



The Bronze Laver

Finally, *all the work on the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, was completed*. Moses carefully inspected all of the work and saw that the Israelites had done everything *just as the Lord commanded*.

The tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month, nearly a year after the first Passover. Everything in it was anointed with oil and consecrated to the Lord, and then Aaron and his sons were anointed as priests.

The cloud came down and *covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*. From then on the Israelites only moved on *whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle*. *The cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels.* (This is a lovely picture for Christians of what it is like to be led every day by the Holy Spirit. See Romans 8:1-17).



And so the book of Exodus finishes. The Israelites have been redeemed from their bondage in Egypt; have received the means by which they could have a right relationship with God (the Law); have rejected the Lord but repented and have come back into good relationship with Him, and now have a way by which God could lead them through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

The book of Leviticus gives more detail regarding the Law that God gave to Moses, while the book of Numbers describes the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness. The book of Deuteronomy tells how God renewed the covenant He had made with His people, and reviews the ways that God dealt with His people as they approached the Promised Land of Canaan.

## Discussion questions

1. Identify the important historical events that are described in the book of Exodus. How was God involved in each of these events? How were Moses and the Israelites involved in each of these events? What can you learn from the book of Exodus about how God involves Himself in the life of His people?
2. Moses was one of the greatest leaders of all time. Identify the skills and qualities that Moses demonstrated which made him such a great leader.
3. The book of Exodus tells a great story of redemption as God brought His people out of bondage in Egypt and into a whole new closeness of relationship with Himself. How is this redemption reflected in the redemption that Jesus Christ has won for us at the Cross?
4. The story of how God redeemed the Israelites from bondage in Egypt is a central part of Jewish history. As such, it is often recounted in other parts of the Bible, and is remembered each year in the Feast of Passover. Identify the other parts of the Bible where the Exodus story is told, and the lessons that are taught in each part. Why is it so important to remember the lessons of history? Do we do enough to ensure young people know and learn the history of the Jewish people, and of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who came from the Jewish people?
5. What is the Jewish law; why was it given, and how has it changed over the years? What does “Jesus has fulfilled the Law” mean? Describe the New Testament teaching regarding the Jewish law and explain whether the Law is still binding on Christians today?
6. How did God provide for, and lead His people in the book of Exodus? How does He provide for and lead us today?
7. What was the significance of the tabernacle and each of its components for the Israelites? How has this been fulfilled for Christians through the life, death and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ?
8. What have you learned from your study of Exodus? How will you apply this in your life in the future?