

The Second Book of Moses Called EXODUS

INTRODUCTION

1. Title. Like each of the other four books of the Pentateuch, Exodus is designated by the Jews according to the first phrase of the Hebrew text, *We'eleh shemoth*, "And these are the names." The name Exodus is a compound of two Greek words meaning "the way out" or "the going out" (of the Israelites from Egypt), and was adopted by English translators from the Vulgate, which in turn took it from the LXX. This term refers, of course, to the central theme of the book. The words, "The Second Book of Moses," do not appear in the Hebrew text but were added at a later time.

2. Authorship. The question of the authorship of the book of Exodus is closely related to that of all the books of the Pentateuch, and Genesis in particular, of which it is the continuation. The book of Exodus plays an important role in the problem of identifying the author of the Pentateuch, since certain of its statements designate Moses as the author of specific parts of it. Moses, for instance, was to record the battle against the Amalekites "in a book" (ch. 17:14). This, together with Num. 33:2, points to the fact that Moses kept a diary. It is evident from Ex. 24:4 that he wrote down the ordinances contained in chs. 20:21 to 23:33, the "book of the covenant" (ch. 24:7). According to ch. 34:27 he is the author of the revelation recorded in vs. 11–26. The evidence preserved in the book of Exodus itself thus points specifically to Moses as the author of historical and other reports found in it. Except for Moses, no individual is mentioned in the Pentateuch as having written any part of it.

The use of many Egyptian words and the accurate description of the Egyptian life and customs appearing in the first part of the book strongly suggest that the author had been educated in Egypt and was intimately acquainted with the country and its culture. No other known Hebrew after the time of Joseph was qualified to write the story of the Exodus. Moses alone seems to have been "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). The strongest proof of Mosaic authorship, however, is found in the New Testament. In Mark 12:26 Christ quotes from Ex. 3:6, and refers to His source as "the book of Moses" (see GC 434). These three considerations—the direct witness of the book itself, the indirect evidence that the author was educated in Egypt, and the testimony of Christ—all guarantee the accuracy of the Jewish tradition that Moses wrote the book of Exodus.

3. Historical setting. Moses' first book, Genesis, presents a brief outline of the history of God's chosen ones from the creation of the world to the close of the patriarchal age, a period of many centuries. In its first two chapters, however, Exodus, the continuation of Genesis, covers only about 80 years, and in the remainder of the book but a year or so.

Though the absence of archeological evidence prevents our dogmatizing on various points of the history of the Israelites in Egypt, there seems to be sufficient evidence to justify the conclusion that Joseph and Jacob entered Egypt during the time of the Hyksos. These Semitic rulers were friendly toward their racial relatives, the Hebrews, and under them Joseph rose to honor and fame. As foreign invaders and rulers, however, the Hyksos would be hated by native Egyptians even though they might rule with a light hand and work in the interests of their subjects.

When the Hyksos had ruled over Egypt for some 150 years (c. 1730-1580 B.C.), Sekenenre, a local Egyptian prince of Upper Egypt and vassal of the Hyksos, revolted. The record of this rebellion appears in a legendary story of later date, and does not reveal the success or failure of his attempt to restore the independence of Egypt. His mummy shows terrible head wounds, mute witness to a violent death, incurred, perhaps, on the battlefield as he fought the Hyksos.

The real struggle for freedom began with Kamose, the son and successor of Sekenenre. He succeeded in expelling the Hyksos from Upper and Middle Egypt and limiting their power to the eastern Delta region. Yet, Kamose did not live to see the ultimate expulsion of the Hyksos. This was accomplished by his younger brother Ahmose, who defeated the hated enemies and forced the surrender of their capital city, Avaris. With the fall of Avaris the Hyksos lost their last stronghold in Egypt. They then withdrew to Sharuhén in southern Palestine, which in turn was conquered by Ahmose after a three years' campaign. The loss of Sharuhén, and the resulting retreat of the Hyksos to the north, marked the end of their power and their disappearance from history.

Having successfully defeated the Hyksos, the rulers of Thebes became undisputed monarchs of all Egypt. As kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty they not only liberated Egypt but subjugated Nubia and Palestine as well, and built a strong and wealthy empire. It was only natural for those rulers, who "knew not Joseph" (Ex. 1:8), to view with suspicion these strangers, the Israelites, who occupied the land of Goshen in the eastern Delta. Native Egyptians could not be expected to trust them, for they had settled there under the Hyksos, were racially related to them, and had been favored by them.

The chronology of the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty has not yet been fixed definitely. The following dates, though based on the best available evidence, are only approximately correct. Ahmose was followed by Amenhotep I (1546-1525 B.C.), who campaigned in the south and west. His son Thutmose I (1525-1508 B.C.), who pressed his Syrian campaign to the river Euphrates, was the first king to record the use of Asiatic slaves in the construction of his temples. It is possible that he refers to the Hebrews. He was followed by his weak son, Thutmose II (1508-1504 B.C.), after whose death Hatshepsut, a daughter of Thutmose I, ruled Egypt peacefully for 22 years (1504-1482 B.C.). It is probable that she became the foster mother of Moses, since the first 40 years of his life came during the reigns of Thutmose I, Thutmose II, and Hatshepsut. According to the Biblical chronology adopted for this commentary, Moses fled from Egypt a few years before the beginning of the sole reign of Thutmose III.

At the beginning of Hatshepsut's reign a revolution of the priests had forced her to accept the coregency of her nephew, Thutmose III. Her sudden disappearance, later, may have been due either to violence or to natural causes. If, as seems plausible, Hatshepsut was the princess who adopted Moses, this revolt of the priests may have come as a result of Moses' refusal to become a member of the priestly caste (see PP 245). As soon as Thutmose III became sole ruler (1482-1450 B.C.) he set out for Palestine on a military campaign, and defeated a coalition of Syrian and Palestinian princes at Megiddo. His Asiatic empire was held together by a show of strength, through annual campaigns. Like his grandfather, he states that Asiatic slaves were employed in his temple-building program. He was probably the Pharaoh from whom Moses fled. After Thutmose III, his son Amenhotep II came to the throne (1450-1425 B.C.). He began a reign of calculated frightfulness over his foreign possessions, and fits remarkably well into the role of the

Pharaoh of the Exodus. For some reason, unmentioned in non-Biblical records, it was not the crown prince but another son of Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV (1425-1412 B.C.), who followed him on the throne. The disappearance of the crown prince may have been due to the slaying of all first-born sons in the tenth plague of Egypt.

Such is the historical background of the dramatic events described so vividly in the book of Exodus. No contemporary, non-Biblical records of the Exodus exist, for the Egyptians never recorded events unfavorable to them.

4. Theme. The chief purpose of Moses in writing Exodus was to describe God's marvelous intervention on behalf of His chosen people, in delivering them from slavery, and His gracious condescension in entering into covenant relation with them. To show that neither their repeated unfaithfulness nor the opposition of the greatest nation of earth could thwart God's plan for them, is the theme that runs through the book like a golden thread. The stories of the Exodus speak to the imagination of the young and strengthen the faith of those who are older. They call for confidence in God's leadership today, and bid us to follow humbly wherever He may lead.

5. Outline.

- I. The Exodus From Egypt. 1:1 to 15:21.
 - A. The sojourning in Egypt. 1:1–22.
 1. Names of Jacob's sons. 1:1–6.
 2. Growth and oppression of the children of Israel in Egypt. 1:7–22.
 - B. Moses' preparation for leadership. 2:1 to 4:31.
 1. Birth, preservation, and youth of Moses. 2:1–10.
 2. Murder, flight, and sojourn in Midian. 2:11–22.
 3. Pharaoh's death an opportune time for the Exodus. 2:23–25.
 4. The call to Moses. 3:1 to 4:17.
 5. Moses' return to Egypt. 4:18–31.
 - C. The ten plagues and the Exodus. 5:1 to 13:16.
 1. Moses and Aaron's first appearance before Pharaoh. 5:1–18.
 2. Renewal of God's promise to deliver Israel. 5:19 to 6:12.
 3. Genealogies of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi. 6:13–26.
 4. Moses and Aaron's second appearance before Pharaoh. 6:27 to 7:13.
 5. The first plague: water changed to blood. 7:14–25.
 6. The second plague: frogs. 8:1–15.
 7. The third plague: lice. 8:16–19.
 8. The fourth plague: flies. 8:20–32.
 9. The fifth plague: disease on cattle. 9:1–7.
 10. The sixth plague: boils. 9:8–12.
 11. The seventh plague: hail. 9:13–35.
 12. The eighth plague: locusts. 10:1–20.
 13. The ninth plague: darkness. 10:21–29.
 14. The pronouncement of the tenth plague and the institution of the Passover. 11:1 to 12:28.
 15. The tenth plague: all the first-born slain. 12:29, 30.
 16. The Exodus. 12:31–42.
 17. Instructions regarding the Passover and the first-born. 12:43 to 13:16.
- D. From Egypt to Sinai. 13:17 to 19:2.

1. Passing through the Red Sea. 13:1.7 to 14:31.
2. The song of Moses. 15:1–21.
3. Marah and Elim. 15:22–27.
4. Quails and manna in the Wilderness of Sin. 16:1–36.
5. Massah and Meribah. 17:1–7.
6. The victory over Amalek at Rephidim. 17:8–16.
7. The visit of Jethro. 18:1–27.
8. Arrival at Sinai. 19:1, 2.
- II. Israel at Sinai. 19:3 to 40:38.
 - A. The giving of the Decalogue. 19:3 to 20:21.
 1. The divine manifestation. 19:3–25.
 2. The Decalogue. 20:1–17.
 3. Israel's terror. 20:18–21.
 - B. The book of the covenant. 20:22 to 23:33.
 1. Laws concerning the altar. 20:22–26.
 2. Rights of the Hebrew slave. 21:1–11.
 3. Laws regarding life and property. 21:12 to 22:17.
 4. Laws regarding miscellaneous sins. 22:18–20.
 5. Laws regarding help to the needy. 22:21–27.
 6. Miscellaneous laws. 22:28 to 23:33.
 - C. Ratification of the covenant. 24:1–18.
 - D. Directives concerning the tabernacle and its furniture. 25:1 to 31:17.
 1. The offering for the tabernacle. 25:1–9.
 2. The ark. 25:10–22.
 3. The table of shewbread. 25:23–30.
 4. The candlestick. 25:31–40.
 5. The curtains and boards. 26:1–37.
 6. The altar of burnt offering. 27:1–8.
 7. The court. 27:9–19.
 8. Oil for the lamps. 27:20, 21.
 9. The sacred garments. 28:1–43.
 10. Regulations concerning the installation of priests. 29:1–37.
 11. The daily morning and evening sacrifices. 29:38–46.
 12. The altar of incense. 30:1–10.
 13. Laws concerning the ransom of souls. 30:11–16.
 14. The laver. 30:17–21.
 15. The oil of anointing. 30:22–33.
 16. The holy incense. 30:34–38.
 17. Call of Bezaleel and Aholiab. 31:1–11.
 18. Exhortation to keep the Sabbath. 31:12–17.
 - E. Moses given the two tables of stone. 31:18.
 - F. Apostasy, and renewal of the covenant. 32:1 to 34:35.
 1. The golden calf. 32:1 to 33:11.
 2. The plea of Moses and its success. 33:12–23.
 3. The new stone tablets. 34:1–35.
 - G. The building of the tabernacle and its furniture. 35:1 to 40:38.

1. New exhortation to keep the Sabbath. 35:1–3.
2. Gifts for the tabernacle. 35:4–29.
3. Bezaleel and Aholiab appointed. 35:30 to 36:7.
4. The curtains and coverings. 36:8–38.
5. The ark. 37:1–9.
6. The table of shewbread. 37:10–16.
7. The candlestick. 37:17–24.
8. The altar of incense. 37:25–28.
9. The oil of anointing and the incense. 37:29.
10. The altar of burnt offering. 38:1–7.
11. The laver. 38:8.
12. The court. 38:9–20.
13. The sum of the people's offerings. 38:21–31.
14. The holy garments. 39:1–31.
15. Moses inspects the work and erects the tabernacle. 39:32 to 40:38.

CHAPTER 1

1 *The children of Israel, after Joseph's death, do multiply. 8 The more they are oppressed by a new king, the more they multiply. 15 The godliness of the midwives, in saving the men children alive. 22 Pharaoh commandeth the male children be cast into the river.*

1. Now. From the Hebrew particle *we*, which is more commonly translated “and.” This is the first instance of its use at the beginning of a book. All but four of the historical books of the OT open thus.

The children of Israel. On the names of Jacob's sons, see on Gen. 29:32 to 30:24; 35:18; 46:8–26; 49:3–27.

5. Seventy souls. The record of the few who migrated with Jacob to Egypt is given here by way of emphasizing the remarkable numerical increase of the children of Israel during their years of sojourn. This growth was the fulfillment of promises made to Abraham (Gen. 15:14) and to Jacob (Gen. 46:3). On the number 70, in which Jacob himself is included, see on Gen. 46:27.

7. The children of Israel were fruitful. The family of Jacob increased miraculously, both during the lifetime of the 12 patriarchs and after their death. The blessings pronounced upon mankind at creation (Gen. 1:28) and the promise later made to Abraham (Gen. 22:17) were now realized in appreciable measure.

The land was filled. This refers particularly to the land of Goshen, where the Hebrews lived (Gen. 47:11). The climate of Egypt, the fertility of the soil, the natural virility of the Hebrew race, and the blessing of God together resulted in an extraordinary growth in population.

8. A new king. Not merely another individual but a new dynasty. Since this commentary adopts the mid-15th-century dating of the Exodus, it can be assumed that Joseph lived during the Hyksos rule in Egypt (see on Gen. 39:1; also pp. 191 ff., 492). Accordingly, the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty, who freed Egypt from Hyksos rule, were the Pharaohs of the oppression.

The Hyksos were Asiatic people like the Hebrews, and though Egyptianized they would be friendly toward Joseph and his family. But the expulsion of the Hyksos led to a new spirit of nationalism, and all foreigners were viewed with suspicion, especially those favored by the Hyksos. The contribution made by Joseph to the welfare of the people

would be forgotten, primarily because he was an Asiatic and the minister of an alien king. The generation that had experienced the seven years of famine had died, and the descendants of Jacob's sons were confronted with an entirely new situation, a native Egyptian population and a dynasty that hated the Israelites.

9. He said. "He" would be an early Eighteenth Dynasty king, either Ahmose, the great liberator of Egypt, or his son Amenhotep I (1546-1525 B.C.), in case he was not the same individual as the king living at the time of Moses' birth. However, if he was the king in whose palace Moses was brought up, then Thutmose I (1525-1508 B.C.), the father of Hatshepsut, is meant.

Unto his people. The king was undoubtedly conferring with his ministers and counselors. In the few documents that shed some light on the war of liberation, the statement is twice made that the kings Sekenenre and Kamose called their counselors together before taking action. Although Kamose had already made up his mind, and did not follow their counsel, he did discuss the matter with his ministers.

More and mightier. Pharaoh was probably exaggerating, since Egypt had been a great nation for centuries. It was the sort of exaggeration in which unprincipled persons indulge by way of justifying an extreme and unreasonable course of action.

10. Let us deal wisely. Pharaoh suggested a clever political expedient to avoid the danger of revolution and the possibility that the Israelites might make common cause with his enemies, the Hyksos, and then leave Egypt. It probably was not so much the conquest of his kingdom which he feared as an alliance with his enemies. Among the Hebrews were many skilled workmen, and Pharaoh therefore proposed to retain them as slaves that he might employ them on his various construction projects. It may be that he adopted this policy toward the Hebrews either during or soon after the revolt against the Hyksos, their racial relatives.

11. Taskmasters. Literally, "superintendents of [forced and unpaid] labor." Pharaoh hoped that oppressive treatment would break the physical strength of the Israelites and retard their remarkable increase in numbers. He expected, furthermore, to crush their spirit of independence and self-respect. Finally, he would be able to carry out his vast construction projects without laying a burden on his own people.

Treasure cities. Since the land of Goshen was situated in the eastern Delta, Pharaoh set the Israelites to work on temples and other government buildings in the eastern border region. In ancient times national wealth was often stored in temples, presumably under the guardianship of the gods.

Pithom. This name has been explained as a Hebrew rendering of the Egyptian *Per-Atum*, "House of [the sun-god] Atum." Some scholars have identified it with the present *Tell el-Maskhuta* in the *Wadi Tumilat*, about 12 mi. west of Lake Timsah in the eastern Delta region, where Naville uncovered great storehouses for grain, in 1883. Finding that this city had been built by Ramses II, to whom the name of the second city seems to refer, Naville believed him to be the Pharaoh of the oppression. In this view Naville has had many followers. Others have identified *Tell el-Maskhuta* with the Biblical Succoth (ch. 12:37), whence the Israelites departed from Egypt, inasmuch as inscriptions reveal that the Egyptian name of the place had been *Tjeku*. Until more definite evidence comes to light, however, the location of Pithom remains uncertain.

And Raamses. This city was identified by Flinders Petrie with *Tell el-Retabeh* in the *Wadi Tumilat*, 8 mi. to the west of *Tell el-Maskhuta*. Other scholars, however, would identify “Raamses” with *Tanis*, the Biblical Zoan (Num. 13:22), formerly called Avaris, the capital of the Hyksos. Long after their expulsion from Egypt, Ramses II enlarged and beautified it, and named it after himself.

Ramses II, however, cannot have been the Pharaoh of the oppression. Biblical chronology of the period from the Exodus to the monarchy of Israel requires at least a 15th-century date for the Exodus (see 1 Kings 6:1), which therefore took place two centuries earlier than the reign of Ramses II. The name of the store city here called “Raamses” is to be understood as the modernization of an older name. Another illustration of this practice occurs in Gen. 47:11, where the land of Goshen is called “the land of Rameses.” No one will advocate that the entry of Jacob into Egypt took place under the reign of Ramses II; therefore, the old name of the region called “Rameses” in Gen. 47:11 appears to have been dropped in favor of a more modern one (see on Gen. 47:11). The ancient city of Laish, also, is called Dan in Gen. 14:14 (see on that text), although it received this name many centuries after both Abraham and Moses were dead. The most reasonable explanation for these and other texts in which modern city names are applied in the narrative to earlier times is to assume that later copyists exchanged older, obsolete names for more modern ones, in an attempt to clarify the narratives for later generations.

12. *The more they multiplied.* Pharaoh’s first plan did not accomplish its purpose. The Hebrews increased in numbers proportionate to the degree of oppression, and the Egyptians were naturally dismayed at such unprecedented growth. It became apparent that persecution and trials could not thwart the purpose of God, and measures intended to destroy His people proved to be a source of greater strength.

They were grieved. The dismay of the Egyptians was due to the failure of their scheme. The presence of an enemy within their borders that could not be subdued was embarrassing and irritating.

14. *Made their lives bitter.* Undaunted, the Egyptians put forth yet greater effort to enslave Israel. Verses 13 and 14 do not record a new oppression, but the continuation and intensification of the program of hard labor already in force.

In mortar, and in brick. While stone was the material chiefly employed by the Egyptians for their great temples and other public buildings, brick was used to a large extent for palaces and lesser buildings, for city walls, for forts, for temple enclosures, and for storage houses such as those mentioned in v. 11.

All manner of service. The Hebrews had originally been employed to tend the royal flocks and herds (Gen. 47:6), but later took up agricultural pursuits as well (Deut. 11:10). There is no country where painstaking care and labor are so constantly required throughout the year as in Egypt. The annual flooding of the Nile necessitates extreme watchfulness, to save cattle and to prevent the inundation of houses and villages and the washing away of the river embankments. Cultivation is continuous throughout the year, and success depends on a system of irrigation that requires constant labor and unremitting attention. If the “service in the field” included also the digging of canals (Josephus *Antiquities* ii. 9.1), the lives of the Hebrews would indeed have been made bitter. To work under the hot Egyptian sun, with no shade and scarcely a breath of wind, from

sunrise to sunset, and with the feet in water (Deut. 11:10), is a most grueling experience. When Mehemet Ali built his Alexandrian canal, about the middle of the 19th century, he lost 20,000 laborers out of 150,000. The percentage of loss may have been about the same in ancient times. But so far as Pharaoh was concerned, the more the Hebrews perished, the better it suited his evil purpose.

15. Spake to the Hebrew midwives. Pharaoh's second attempt to control the increase of the Hebrews made no pretense at concealing his real objective. From cruel oppression he went to open murder. It has been questioned whether the midwives were actually Hebrews, since in that case the king could not be sure of their cooperation. The phrase translated "Hebrew midwives" may also be rendered, "midwives of the Hebrew women," meaning midwives who attended the Hebrew women at childbirth. But their names are definitely Semitic and not Egyptian, Shiphrah meaning "beauty" and Puah, "splendor" or "brightness." This confirms the KJV rendering (see on v. 17).

16. The stools. Literally, "two stones." Various unconvincing explanations of this term have been given, none of which need be repeated here inasmuch as its real meaning has been discovered by the Egyptologist Spiegelberg. In Egypt, birthstools consisting of either two stones or stones laid in the shape of a horseshoe were used. The common Egyptian expression, "to sit on the bricks" for "giving birth," as found in various ancient inscriptions, reveals the meaning of the king's words, "Watch them when they are on the two stones." The use of this Egyptian expression confirms the Mosaic authorship of Exodus.

If it be a son. It was a common practice throughout the ancient world to expose unwanted children by leaving them to die, or more commonly, to be devoured by birds or wild animals. The command of the king also reflects the pagan custom of killing all enemy males and forcing the women and girls to become household slaves of the conquerors. In many ancient wars of conquest the entire male population was thus put to the sword. Pharaoh apparently intended to make use of living males for the specific building projects he had in mind, but to let the Hebrews die out as a people with that generation. He planned thus to rid himself of a potential enemy within his borders, and at the same time provide a supply of female slaves for Egyptian households.

17. The midwives feared God. Clearly, the midwives were Hebrews, for they "feared God" and knew that He had forbidden murder. Though they may not have been acquainted with the words of the sixth commandment of the Decalogue, "Thou shalt not kill," they were familiar with the regulation, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). Fearing God more than they feared the tyrant king (see Acts 4:19; 5:29), these courageous women dared ignore the royal command. The fear of men makes a man the victim of circumstances, but the fear of God brings rest in the midst of tumult and peace in the face of mortal danger. This must have been the experience of the two chief Hebrew midwives, upon whose shoulders lay a grave responsibility.

19. The Hebrew women. The Hebrew women were no doubt required to labor in the fields along with the men. Since they were accustomed to toil in the open air, it is not unlikely that childbirth was comparatively easy for them. Arabic women, related racially to the Hebrews, lead strenuous lives and require but little assistance in childbirth. This fact explains the plausibility of the excuse offered Pharaoh by the Hebrew midwives. There is no evidence that their story was questioned in any way.

They are lively. Literally, “They are vigorous.” The result was that the midwives were seldom called. There was little demand for their services, since any female relative or acquaintance could usually provide all the assistance necessary. This may explain why only two midwives were needed by the Hebrews, in spite of their large numbers.

21. Made them houses. God rewarded the midwives for their faithfulness by giving them families and preserving their posterity. That this is the meaning of the expression is clear from parallel texts in which it is used in this sense (see Ruth 4:11; 2 Sam. 7:11, 27). By ignoring the ruthless command of the king they had helped to build up the families of Israel, and their own families were therefore built up by God. They had risked their own lives to save their people.

22. Pharaoh charged all his people. The failure of all his plans to weaken the Hebrew people drove the king to acts of open violence. This new decree placed a responsibility on every Egyptian to make the desire of the king his own. The task of exterminating the Hebrews was now shifted from the taskmasters and the midwives to the common people.

Every son. It has been argued that the great number of Israelites at the Exodus precludes any such murderous command ever having been issued. However, it is probable that many Egyptians, who may not have been hostile toward the Israelites, ignored it, or that it remained in force but a short time. Pharaoh may have rescinded the edict upon realizing more fully the advantages to be derived from free slave labor, or as his building plans grew in extent. Since there were so many able-bodied men leaving Egypt 80 years later, this cruel requirement cannot have continued in force for long.

The objection is sometimes raised that it is most unlikely any monarch would have ordered such wholesale and cold-blooded destruction of innocent children. It is to be observed, however, that in ancient times human life, particularly that of anyone of another race or nation, was lightly regarded. It was a common thing to massacre prisoners taken in war, to annihilate entire populations, and to sacrifice unwanted children to the gods.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-22PP 241-242; SR 104-106

6-10SR 104

7-10PP 241

11-14SR 105

12-14PP 242

13, 14 SR 147

16 SR 105

22 PP 242; SR 106

CHAPTER 2

1 *Moses is born, 3 and in an ark cast into the flags. 5 He is found, and brought up by Pharaoh's daughter. 11 He slayeth an Egyptian. 13 He reproveth an Hebrew. 15 He fleeth into Midian. 21 He marrieth Zipporah. 22 Gershom is born. 23 God respecteth the Israelites' cry.*

1. There went a man. Inasmuch as Aaron was older than Moses by three years (ch. 7:7), and seems to have been born before the royal decree went into effect, this Hebrew expression should be rendered “a man had gone.” The decree must therefore have been issued about the time Moses was to be born. The marriage of Moses' parents probably

took place more than a decade before this fateful decree was given, since Miriam was old enough by the time of his birth to play the role described in vs. 4, 7, and 8.

A daughter of Levi. Although in Hebrew usage “daughter” may actually mean “granddaughter,” Jochebed was apparently Levi’s actual daughter (see on Ex. 6:20). Her husband was Amram, a son of Kohath (Ex. 6:18) and grandson of Levi (v. 16). Since Kohath was born before Jacob moved to Egypt (Gen. 46:11), it is probable that Kohath’s sister, Jochebed, who married her brother’s son, Amram, was born much later (see Num. 26:59). The chronology of the sojourn in Egypt (see on Ex. 12:40) renders such a conclusion necessary inasmuch as Moses was born 135 years after Jacob’s entry into Egypt. Jochebed, the mother of Moses, must therefore be considered a child of her father’s old age.

2. A son. Moses was Jochebed’s third child, for Aaron was three years older than he (ch. 7:7), and Miriam was still older (ch. 2:4).

A goodly child. Even as a babe Moses gave evidence of the keen intellect, emotional stability, and also the physical perfection that marked his later years. All of this is implied in the Hebrew word translated “goodly.” Jochebed saw in these qualities a token of divine approval, which she took as a sign that God had marked out some special task for him. According to Acts 7:20 he was, literally, “attractive [“beautiful,” RSV] to God.” This is rendered in the KJV as “exceeding fair.” Jochebed would of course have loved and protected Moses even if he had not been so “goodly” a child, for mothers often devote their deepest love to weak and sickly children. However, Jochebed’s efforts to preserve the life of Moses are praised in Heb. 11:23 as an act of faith, and this implies awareness on her part that God had destined him for an important role and would therefore intervene to preserve his life. This, however, does not necessarily confirm a statement by the Jewish historian Josephus (*Antiquities* ii. 9. 3) that it had been revealed to Amram before the birth of the child that he was appointed to be the savior of Israel.

3. An ark. After the baby had been hidden for three months, for some reason unknown to us it seemed practically impossible to conceal him longer. Believing that God would intervene for the preservation of his life, his mother devised a plan whereby she might comply with the letter of the king’s command and yet not take the child’s life. She would do all she could, and trust God for the rest.

The two words translated “ark” and “bulrushes” are both Egyptian, and together with many others found in the Pentateuch show that the writer was intimately acquainted with the Egyptian language. The word *tebah*, “ark,” was derived from the Egyptian *tebet*, and is used in the Bible only here and in Gen. 6 and 7, for Noah’s ark. Meaning literally a “box,” it might describe any boxlike container.

The word *gome*, “bulrushes,” is from the Egyptian *qama*. It designates the papyrus plant, famous in antiquity as the chief material from which ancient writing paper was made. The papyrus plant is a sturdy rush with a triangular stem from 10 to 15 ft. in height. Though common in ancient Egypt, it is no longer found there. The papyrus was also employed for building purposes and in the construction of lighter river boats. Such vessels are pictured on many ancient Egyptian monuments, and may have provided Jochebed a model for making Moses’ ark.

Slime. The same word as that used in Gen. 11:3 for asphalt or bitumen, which was imported into Egypt from the region of the Dead Sea. By the Egyptians it was used largely in embalming the dead.

In the flags. *Suph*, from the Egyptian *tjufti*, meaning “reed,” is the third word in this verse borrowed from that language. Water plants of all kinds abound in the backwaters of the Nile and in the marshy tracts connected with it. Jochebed’s objective in placing the ark in a thicket of reeds was probably to prevent it from floating away. Some commentators have suggested that Jochebed knew the place to which the Egyptian princess was accustomed to come and placed it there with the hope that her pity might be aroused at the sight of the beautiful and helpless babe (see PP 243).

4. *His sister.* That is Miriam (see Ex. 15:20, 21; Num. 12:1; PP 243). She seems to have been Moses’ only sister (Num. 26:59).

5. *The daughter of Pharaoh.* In Jewish tradition she is called Thermouthis, Merris, or Bithia. The diversity of the names and their absence from Egyptian records renders the tradition worthless.

A reasonable deduction from Biblical chronology based on 1 Kings 6:1 and other supporting statements (see GC 399) is that the Exodus took place about the middle of the 15th century B.C. This date leads to the conclusion that Moses grew up under Thutmose I (1525-1508 B.C.), Thutmose II (1508-1504 B.C.), and Queen Hatshepsut (1504-1482 B.C.). Hatshepsut was a remarkable woman. She had been the only legitimate child of Thutmose I and was married to her half brother Thutmose II in order that he might legitimately succeed his father upon the throne. But the legitimate marriage of Thutmose II, like that of his father, again failed to provide a male heir. When Thutmose II died, after a reign of only four years, the priests of Amen, in a sudden coup, crowned an illegitimate son of Thutmose II, who was at that time a mere boy and served in the temple as a minor priest. Inasmuch as Thutmose III, as he was later known, was too young to reign, his aunt Hatshepsut acted as regent for 22 years. Her reign was a peaceful one. She built great temples and erected huge obelisks. Expeditions were sent to Punt, probably the coast of Somaliland in East Africa, for trading purposes, and to Sinai and Nubia to mine copper, turquoise, and gold. Supported by a powerful prime minister, Senenmut, Hatshepsut occupied the throne for 22 years; then she and Senenmut disappear from the record. Succeeding her, Thutmose III erased her name from all monuments in an attempt to eradicate the memory of her from the history of Egypt. This fact lends weight to the supposition that he removed her from the throne, and that she and Senenmut died violent deaths.

When Moses was born Hatshepsut was merely the daughter of Thutmose I. Moses’ birth occurred many years before her marriage to her half brother Thutmose II, and more than 20 years before she began her personal reign, after the death of her husband.

To wash herself. Angels led the princess to where Moses lay (PP 243). That a princess should bathe in the open river is certainly not in accord with the customs of the modern Mohammedan East, where it is now done only by women of the lower class. But it was in harmony with the customs of ancient Egypt. A bathing scene from an ancient Egyptian tomb pictures an Egyptian woman of rank attended by four female servants. It is also in agreement with the views held in ancient Egypt about the sanctity of the Nile, and that its water imparted fruitfulness and guaranteed a long life. It was for this reason that the Nile was worshiped as a god.

6. *One of the Hebrews’ children.* Upon opening the little ark the princess recognized in the crying babe a child of the Hebrews. Compassion for the helpless child and sympathy for his unknown Hebrew mother prompted her to save him by adopting him as

her own. In the comment on ch. 1:22 it was observed that the cruel edict of the king probably did not long remain in force. The event here described may have been instrumental in bringing about a change. Distressed by the sad lot of the Hebrew children, the daughter of Pharaoh may have implored her father to revoke his murderous edict. If this be true, Moses had already become the passive means by which the lives of countless Hebrew children were saved.

7. A nurse. All had doubtless been arranged by the mother. Miriam was stationed near the place where Moses was floating, to watch her little brother's fate, and had probably been instructed what to say in the event some Egyptian should find the baby. Now she carried out her instructions with admirable judgment and tact. She appeared on the scene at the right moment and offered her proposal at the proper time, neither too soon nor too late. In doing so, she said neither too much nor too little.

8. The maid went. The faith and resourcefulness of a loving mother and the tact and skill of a prudent sister were crowned with success. Not only was Moses' life saved but he was, as well, returned to his own cradle and to the bosom of his own mother. In this way provision was made that he might receive from her those first impressions which are so indelibly fixed upon the mind of a child.

9. Thy wages. Since the babe, a Hebrew child, was placed in a Hebrew home, provision must be made to clarify the supposed relationship of Jochebed to him as his nurse. To signify clearly that he had become the property of Pharaoh's daughter, to silence inquiries as to his origin and the reasons for his being kept alive, and to seal the lips of informers who might wish to see him killed, as other Hebrew boys were, the princess indicated the wages she would pay for the care given him.

The woman took the child. It is significant that Jochebed is not here called Moses' "mother" but simply "the woman." It would seem that neither by word nor by deed did she betray her real feelings nor reveal her actual relationship to the child. What self-control that impassioned hour must have required, no tongue can tell. She took the child as a stranger might have taken it, yet in her heart there was passionate joy and gladness. Had she relaxed her vigilance but for an instant, excitement might have disclosed her purpose. Everything depended on her remaining calm under the most difficult circumstances—but love can endure all things. The great question underlying all service is not so much one of the intellect as of the heart, buoyed up by God's sustaining power.

10. The child grew. Jochebed had saved her son's life by transferring her rights as mother to Pharaoh's daughter. Now she received him back, on loan as it were, and merely as a nurse hired for his years of infancy. She gave him up that she might keep him, lost him that she might find him again, stooped that she might conquer. The time the child was with its mother, not stated in the Bible but given as 2 or 3 years by most commentators, was actually about 12 years (PP 244). During these years of childhood the foundations of character and later religious experience were laid. Instruction neglected now could not be made up later. Moses' afterlife shows clearly that his parents used well the years allotted them for bringing him up in the way in which he should go.

She brought him. Many commentators have expressed the view that Moses' mother took her son to the palace of her own volition as soon as he was weaned, at the age of perhaps two or three years. As noted above, this actually occurred at about the age of 12. The idea that she surrendered him voluntarily is based on the absence of any indication that she was forced to give him up. Unless she took him to the palace at a time previously

agreed upon, to do so on her own initiative would seem to show a strange lack of motherly affection. Would Jochebed have given up a son she loved so dearly without being required to do so? She must have kept him as long as she could. Her surrender of Moses at the age of 12 would imply that her term of service as “nurse” was to expire with the close of what was generally considered the period of childhood (see PP 244).

Moses. *Mosheh* is comparable to the Egyptian *mes* or *mesu*, meaning “child,” “son,” “the one born of.” During the Eighteenth Dynasty, under which Moses was born and brought up, it was customary to select for members of the royal family, names designating them as offspring of the gods. Names such as *Ahmo*, “The one born of [the moon-god] *Ah*”; *Kamose*, “The one born of the [deified soul, the] *Ka*”; *Thutmose*, “The one born of [the god] *Thoth*”; and the common name *Ramose* (later Ramses), “The one born of [the sun-god] *Ra*”; were in everyday life often abbreviated to “Mose.” Students of Egyptology would say that Pharaoh’s daughter gave the child she adopted a name similar to Thutmose or Ahmo, of which that part referring to a heathen deity was dropped by Moses when he “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter” (Heb. 11:24). Again, she may have omitted the title of any god and instead given him only the abbreviated name “Mose,” since she neither knew his earthly parentage nor could claim that, as a Hebrew, he was the son of an Egyptian god. However, it is probable that the name she gave the child was Egyptian, though the form in which we know it today is Hebrew.

Drew him out. The name *Mosheh* means, literally, “one drawn out.” It is the participial form of, and has the same consonants as, the verb *mashah*, “to draw out.” Since the Egyptian name *Mose* and the Hebrew verb *mashah* were similar in sound and related in meaning, the Hebrews may have transliterated *Mose* as *Mosheh*. Thus it would conform to the statement of the Egyptian princess, “Because I drew him out of the water.” This statement implies that she accepted him as a gift to her from the river god, the Nile. In the Egyptian pantheon the Nile was deified as *Hapi*, though the stream itself was known as *Itru*, later simply as *Iru*. This the Hebrews transliterated as *Yeor*, and with one exception (Dan. 12:5–7) Bible writers use it exclusively (49 times) in referring to the Nile and its tributaries (see Gen. 41:1; Isa. 7:18; Eze. 29:3; Nahum 3:8; etc.). Originally, Moses’ name in Egyptian may thus have been *Hapmo* or *Irumose*, meaning, “The one born of [Heb., “drawn out of”] the Nile.” In refusing “to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter” (Heb. 11:24), he would naturally drop the reference to an Egyptian deity.

Translators of the LXX rendered his name *Mouses*. In explanation of this name, Josephus (*Antiquities* ii. 9. 6) explains *Mo* as an Egyptian name for the Nile, and *uses* as Egyptian for anyone “drawn” or “saved” out of it. According to this explanation, then, Moses would mean, “The one saved out of the Nile,” a most appropriate name for one destined to save his people from the land of the Nile. It is not clear, however, whether Josephus’ explanation is based on fact or on wishful thinking.

11. When Moses was grown. The Sacred Record passes over almost 30 years of Moses’ life in silence. The next recorded event is of an incident that took place when he

was 40 years old (Acts 7:23). The years of his youth were spent under royal tutors, who imparted to him “all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22). Some of his education he received from the priests, and some from army commanders. Such was the training ordinarily given a royal prince. Since Moses was “mighty in words and in deeds” (Acts 7:22), it would not be amiss to assume that he led important military expeditions to foreign countries (see PP 245). However, he did not become an Egyptian at heart. His outward appearance, his dress, his speech, and his behavior may have been completely Egyptian, but he remained a Hebrew in character, religion, and loyalty. This is clear from the events narrated in Ex. 2:11–13 (see Heb. 11:24).

He went out. Moses had come to the point in his life when he realized that he must either become an Egyptian, without reservation, or side with his despised people. It seems that prior to this occasion he had made the decision “to suffer affliction with the people of God” (Heb. 11:25) and considered himself the chosen instrument for this task (Acts 7:23–25). He thought himself ready at last to leave the court with its “pleasures of sin,” to abandon the prospect of succession to the throne, and to step forth boldly to champion the cause of his oppressed people (see PP 246, 247). From Acts 7:23 it is clear that Moses went to the land of Goshen for the purpose of studying the situation and laying plans. That in his mind he had relinquished all claim to the throne of Egypt is evidence that his motives were not selfish. He was impelled, rather, by sincere love for his people and hatred for their oppressors, a fact emphasized by the term “brethren,” used twice in Ex. 2:11.

He spied an Egyptian. This was probably one of the taskmasters mentioned in ch. 1:11 or one of the overseers employed by them. Such persons are represented on Egyptian monuments as armed with long wooden sticks, which they used freely on the backs of idlers. Their authority was no doubt frequently abused, and chastisement was no doubt inflicted for the slightest fault or for no fault at all. Authority often degenerates into tyranny and cruel oppression, and as an instance of such abuse of power this incident excited the anger of Moses (Acts 7:24).

12. Slew the Egyptian. Observing that there were no others to witness the deed, he killed the Egyptian. That the overseer continued beating the Hebrew workman as Moses approached shows that higher officials generally approved of such abuse of authority on the part of their subordinates. Moses’ action cannot be condoned, though it was no doubt prompted by righteous indignation. Although an able military leader and a favorite with the armies of Egypt (PP 245), he was lacking in certain qualities of leadership essential for service in the cause of God (PP 247).

13. The second day. This was the following day (Acts 7:26). Moses hoped the Hebrews would accept his leadership and support him in a general uprising against the Egyptians (PP 246). Though it had been revealed to the elders of Israel that Moses was to be their deliverer (PP 245), “they understood not” (Acts 7:25). The fact that he spent more than one day among his own people suggests that this was more than a casual visit. His return to the vicinity of the incident suggests that he considered the time ripe for revolt.

Wherefore smitest thou? The strife Moses witnessed upon his second visit among his people was one in which blows were exchanged, and he felt it his duty to persuade the two men to refrain from further combat. By interposing here Moses certainly did what was right.

14. Who made thee a prince? It was not his interference now but his wrong act of the day before that exposed Moses to rebuke. There was no assumption of judicial authority in the mere inquiry, "Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?" unless it be coupled with the deed of the preceding day. The violence of one day had rendered ineffective the kind persuasion of the next. The influence for good that the education and position of Moses might have enabled him to exercise upon his nation was lost by the very act to which he had been urged by his sympathy for them.

Moses feared. Having renounced his allegiance to Egypt by his deed the day before, to be rejected now by his own people left Moses in a dangerous predicament. He was alone and without friends.

15. Pharaoh heard. If our identification of Pharaoh's daughter with Hatshepsut is correct, this event must have taken place during the last years of her regency, when her nephew's authority had increased and shortly before he deposed her and formally ascended the throne as Thutmose III. Moses' deed was correctly interpreted at court as marking open defiance of Egypt, and it was surmised that he purposed to seat himself upon the throne (PP 247). The fate of the nation was clearly at stake, and Moses was forthwith condemned to die. For nearly 40 years Hatshepsut had sponsored Moses at court, perhaps in spite of misgivings on the part of other members of the royal family, and by arranging for him to ascend the throne no doubt planned to solidify her own control over the nation. Her sudden disappearance from history about this time may have been due to her known support of Moses.

Moses fled. Moses' flight was certainly not an easy one. The eastern border of Egypt was guarded from the Mediterranean Sea to the Gulf of Suez by a system of manned towers, each in sight of the next. An Egyptian story parallel to the flight of Moses, that of Sinuhe, shows how difficult an escape into Asia really was. Sinuhe, a courtier of King Amenemhet I, for some reason unknown to us, felt at the king's death that his own life was in danger, and accordingly fled to Syria, where he spent many years as an exile. He gives a vivid description of the dangers connected with crossing the frontier. Crouching for some time in a bush, lest the watchmen see him, he crossed at night. Pressing on into the desert, he would have perished of thirst except for certain Asiatics who found him and gave him water and boiled milk to drink. We have no record of the hardships Moses suffered during his flight, but it is not amiss to assume that it was a trying experience for one who had thus far known only the luxuries of court life and was unacquainted with hardship.

The land of Midian. This is a somewhat vague expression, since the Midianites were nomads. Their principal settlements appear to have been on the eastern side of the Gulf of 'Aqaba, where most of their ancient inscriptions have been found. But from time to time they migrated northward to the borders of Moab (Gen. 36:35; Num. 22:4, 7) and westward into the Sinai Peninsula, which appears to have been "the land of Midian" to which Moses fled (see Ex. 3:1; PP 247).

16. The priest of Midian. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham by Keturah (Gen. 25:1, 2), and may have remained worshipers of the true God for some time. Reuel, at least, with whom Moses made his abode (Ex. 2:18, 21), was a priest of the true God (ch. 18:12, 23; see PP 247).

Seven daughters. This is not the first instance in the Bible story in which women are found pasturing the flocks of their father. Rachel kept her father Laban's sheep and

watered them (Gen. 29:9). Such a practice agrees well with the simplicity of primitive times and peoples, nor would it be regarded as strange in Arabia even at the present day.

18. Reuel their father. Reuel means “friend of God” and implies monotheism. The KJV transliterates his name as Raguel in Num. 10:29, though the Hebrew spelling does not differ from that given here. Reuel was also known as Jethro (Ex. 3:1; etc.). Various other Bible characters were known by two names, such as Solomon, whose second name was Jedidiah (2 Sam. 12:24, 25).

19. An Egyptian delivered us. Apparently Moses had not revealed his nationality, and since he wore an Egyptian costume and shaved his head like an Egyptian, Reuel’s daughters naturally took the friendly stranger for an Egyptian. Reuel’s astonishment at their early return and their matter-of-fact explanation that an Egyptian had defended them from the shepherds show clearly that they were used to this rough treatment and that their father was in no position to protect them. As a priest he seems not to have had much influence with the shepherds of the region. This may have been because Reuel was still a worshiper of the true God, though most of his fellow tribesmen had left the religion of their ancestor, Abraham, to worship idols.

21. Moses was content. Moses had fled from Egypt without any definite plan except to save his life, and was now confronted with the practical problem of earning a living. Reuel’s hospitable welcome, a result of Moses’ friendly act of assistance at the well, led to an arrangement whereby Moses entered into his service.

Zipporah. In course of time Zipporah, one of the seven daughters of Reuel, became Moses’ wife. This name, meaning “bird,” is still borne by many women of the Arabian Desert.

22. Gershom. Meaning “banishment,” from *garash*, “to drive” or “to thrust away.”

Moses explained the name by referring to the fact that he was “a stranger [*ger*] in a strange land.” Though he had saved his life, he was living in exile, and gave expression to his feeling of loneliness and humiliation in naming his first son.

Once again many years are passed over in silence. A former prince of the most powerful royal house of the time was passing his days as a shepherd. He had exchanged his palace for a tent, the luxuries of Egypt for the desert life of Sinai, his host of attendants and his army for a flock of sheep and goats. What a change! Yet 40 years spent in the wide spaces of the desert made of him the sort of man God could use in the deliverance of His people from Egypt. During these years Moses learned lessons essential to him as the leader of a rebellious nation. The qualities Moses developed during his long years of desert life, alone with God and nature, were priceless, and well worth the long solitude and humiliation required to gain them. His later history shows that those years had not been lost, but that he had been a diligent student under the tutorship of God and had graduated from his course with honors.

23. In process of time. This expression covers a period of about 40 years (Acts 7:30).

The king of Egypt died. Thutmose III, from whom Moses had fled, died about 1450 B.C., after a sole reign of 32 years, which in turn had been preceded by a coregency with Hatshepsut lasting possibly for 22 years.

The children of Israel sighed. The death of Thutmose III brought no respite from oppression, but seems to have made it even more severe. Ancient Egyptian documents reveal that Thutmose III was succeeded on the throne by his son Amenhotep II, who proved to be a cruel king and a ruthless conqueror. Early in his reign he returned from an

Asiatic campaign with seven Canaanite princes as captives. Sailing up the Nile to his capital, Thebes, he suspended these princes from his ship with their heads down. When he reached Thebes, he hanged six of them on the wall of the city, and carried the seventh to the Nubian capital, Napata, where he received the same treatment. Amenhotep II secured the obedience of his subjects at home and in conquered lands by an administration of calculated frightfulness. His character, as revealed by secular records, agrees well with that of the stubborn Pharaoh who intensified the oppression of the Israelites when Moses interceded in their behalf at the time of the pouring out of the plagues.

25. God had respect. True to His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God remembered His oppressed people. Because they were the object of His special regard, God entered upon a miraculous course in order to accomplish His merciful purpose with regard to them. Human expressions used to describe the attitude and acts of God may at times seem unworthy of an eternal, omniscient, and omnipotent being. It should be remembered, however, that finite words give, at best, an imperfect picture of the will and ways of the Infinite One.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-25PP 242-251; SR 106-110

2 PP 242

2-6PP 243

6-8SR 107

7, 9 PP 243

8, 9 AH 238

10 PP 244

11, 12 PP 246

11-15FE 342; SR 109

14-16, 21PP 247

23 1T 264

23-25PP 251; SR 147

CHAPTER 3

1 *Moses keepeth Jethro's flock.* 2 *God appeareth to him in a burning bush.* 9 *He sendeth him to deliver Israel.* 14 *The name of God.* 15 *His message to Israel.*

1. Jethro. Another name for Reuel (see on ch. 2:18).

On his priesthood, see ch. 2:16; on the location of Midian, see ch. 2:15.

The backside of the desert. Mt. Horeb must be sought in the central part of the Sinai Peninsula (see on p. 509), and according to this verse Jethro's home was separated from it by a desert. His home must therefore have been to the east or southeast of Horeb, and not to the northeast, as some have thought. Only thus is it possible to explain the following two facts: (1) When Moses returned from Midian to Egypt he went by way of Horeb, where Aaron, coming from Egypt, met him (ch. 4:27). (2) No Midianites were encountered by the Israelites on their journey through the desert, although the homeward road of Hobab, the Midianite, separated from theirs when they departed from Sinai (Num. 10:30). The word translated "backside" sometimes means "west," as in the RSV of Judges 18:12; Eze. 41:15; Zech. 14:8; Isa. 9:12. This was due to the fact that the Hebrews customarily faced the east when giving directions, and west was therefore "behind" them as east was "before." This is clear from the LXX of Isa. 9:12. It is further evidence that

Horeb lay to the west of Jethro's home. The word translated "backside" is rendered "west side" in the RSV.

The mountain of God. Exodus was written after the manifestation of God to Israel at Horeb, which gave it the name "Mount of God." Horeb and Sinai are two names for the same mountain (see Ex. 19:11; Deut. 4:10). Since the 5th century A.D., Horeb has been identified with one of the mountain peaks in the south central part of Sinai called *Jebel Musa*, "the Mount of Moses." It is c. 7,500 ft. high and rises some 1,500 ft. above the surrounding valleys. It has been observed, however, that this mountain is invisible from the largest plain of the neighborhood, the *er-Raha*, which has been considered the "desert of Sinai" (ch. 19:2). This plain offers space for a great number of people, and with some smaller valleys tributary to it has a number of water springs. However, *Ras es-Safsaf* (c. 6,600 ft.), another peak of the same mountain, overlooks the plain *er-Raha*. For this reason many scholars who accept the traditional identification of the plain *er-Raha* with the desert of Sinai, believe that Mt. Sinai is to be identified with *Ras es-Safsaf* rather than with *Jebel Musa*.

Others have identified the mountain of the law with the *Jebel Serbal*, which lies some 15 mi. to the northwest of *Jebel Musa*, the most impressive mountain of the whole Sinai Peninsula. *Jebel Serbal*, with a height of only c. 6,750 ft., is far from being one of the highest mountains of the area, but it rises steeply out of the *Wadi Feiran*, which has an average elevation of only 2,000 ft. It is the great difference in altitude that accounts for the impressiveness of *Jebel Serbal*. This is one of the reasons why some scholars see in it the Horeb, and in the *Wadi Feiran* the "desert of Sinai" of Exodus. The second reason is that the tradition connecting *Jebel Serbal* with Mt. Sinai seems to be earlier than the one identifying *Jebel Musa* with Mt. Sinai. Since no definite evidence exists to support either identification, it cannot now be determined whether Horeb is *Jebel Musa*, on whose slopes is the famous monastery of St. Catherine, where Tischendorf found the Codex Sinaiticus, or the neighboring *Ras es-Safsaf*, or even *Jebel Serbal*.

2. The angel of the Lord. The context (vs. 4–6, 14) makes it clear that this "angel of the Lord" was the Lord Himself, the second person of the Godhead (see PP 252, 311, 366). Already in Abraham's time the Lord had revealed Himself under this form and name (see Gen. 22:11).

A flame of fire. The Hebrew text reads literally "out of the midst of *the* bush," not that there was only one bush near Mt. Horeb, but rather that it was the only bush to which particular significance attached. The burning bush was an appropriate visible representation of the message God there imparted to Moses. In contrast to the more noble and lofty trees (Judges 9:15), the thorn bush may be compared to the people of Israel in their humiliation, despised by the world. The fire, burning but not consuming the bush, may be thought of as representing the refining affliction of slavery. But the bush was not

consumed; and in the chastening flame the Lord does not give His people over unto death (Ps. 118:18).

5. Draw not nigh. As Moses approached the bush he did not expect to receive a vision, nor was he yet conscious of the presence of God. Therefore, when he drew near to examine “this great sight” (v. 3), he was admonished to remain at a safe distance from the bush.

Put off thy shoes. Since shoes such as we know today were worn neither by the Egyptians nor by the inhabitants of the eastern desert, it is more correct to translate the Hebrew word *na‘al* by “sandal.” The practice of putting them off before entering a temple, a palace, or even private houses has ever been a universal custom in the Near East. Since shoes or sandals carry dust and other impurities, the reverential Oriental mind considered it sacrilegious to enter a clean or holy place with shoes on. The same command given Moses at this time was later repeated to Joshua (Joshua 5:15).

Holy ground. The place where Moses stood was holy, not because it was an old sanctuary or sacred spot previously unknown as such to him, as some commentators have thought, but because of the presence of God.

6. The God of thy father. The transition from the “angel of the Lord” (v. 2) to the “Lord,” Jehovah (v. 4), and then to “God” (vs. 4, 6) precludes the idea of Jehovah’s being merely a national God, as higher critics have alleged. It shows that the three expressions are more or less synonymous. After acquainting Moses with the fact of His presence, God introduced Himself as the God of his fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In this way God reminded him of the promises made to the patriarchs, which He was about to fulfill to their seed, the children of Israel. In the expression “thy father” the three patriarchs are classed together as one, because of the personal relations enjoyed by each of them with God, and the promises each received directly from God.

Moses hid his face. The glory of the holy God no sinful man can bear; hence it was only natural for Moses to hide his face. Elijah later did likewise at the same place (1 Kings 19:13), and even the holy angels before God’s throne in heaven do so (Isa. 6:2).

8. Bring them up. Literally “up,” for that part of Palestine which they were to occupy lies at a much higher level than Egypt. Biblical writers were careful to indicate such differences in elevation by such expressions as “going up” or “going down” (see Gen. 12:10; 13:1; 37:25; 39:1; 42:2; 46:3, 4; 50:25).

A good land. The land to which the Israelites were to be taken “up” is called a “good land” on account of its great fertility (see Deut. 8:7–9), and “large” in contrast with the land of Goshen. Even though the fertility of Palestine did not equal that of Egypt, it was still great. The rich soil east of the Jordan produces enormous crops of grain in the spring and provides pasturage throughout the year. The western region is less productive, but when carefully cultivated bears excellent crops of olives, figs, and barley. From a modern point of view Canaan seems a small country, being not much larger than the State of Vermont in the United States and somewhat smaller than Belgium in Europe. But to the Israelites of the time of Moses it seemed spacious, being considerably larger than the entire Delta region of Egypt, of which they had occupied but a small part. The land promised in the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen. 15:18–21) and actually possessed by David and Solomon (1 Kings 4:21) included not only Palestine but a considerable area of Syria as well (see *The Great Empires During the Sojourn in Egypt*).

A land flowing with milk and honey. Used here for the first time but common in later books (Num. 13:27; Deut. 26:15; 31:20; Jer. 11:5; 32:22; Eze. 20:6; etc.), this was a proverbial expression for a land of plenty, and should not be pressed for a precisely literal meaning. It was intended as a figurative description of the great fertility and natural loveliness of the land of Canaan. Milk and honey are the simplest and choicest productions of a land abounding in grass and flowers, and were found in Palestine in great abundance.

The place of the Canaanites. For an explanation of the origin and history of the different nations mentioned, see on Gen. 10:15–17. The enumeration of the nations of Palestine here made is incomplete, only five of the ten whose land was promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:19–21) being expressly mentioned. One, however, that of the Hivites, is added. It is possible that they had succeeded the Kenizzites or the Kadmonites of Abraham's time.

11. Who am I? A great change had come over Moses. Forty years earlier he had volunteered as a deliverer. He had gone to his brethren and slain one of their oppressors, expecting that they would understand "that God by his hand would deliver them" (Acts 7:25). However, at that time he was not qualified for the position of leadership to which he aspired, nor were the children of Israel ready for deliverance. The 40 years in Midian had taught him humility and filled him with utter distrust of self. The adopted prince of Egypt's royal house had become a shepherd, following a pursuit despised by the Egyptians (Gen. 46:34), and felt so uncertain of himself as to fear Pharaoh. What influence could he, a despised shepherd from the eastern desert, expect to have with the mighty king of the most powerful nation on earth? Furthermore, what influence would he have with his own people? They had rejected him when he was a mighty man; would they accept his leadership as a returned fugitive? Thoughts like these may have flashed through Moses' mind when the call to return to Egypt and deliver his people came to him. His reluctance to accept the call, his distrust of himself and of his people, can be easily understood.

12. I will be with thee. God did not refute Moses' arguments, but assured him of divine companionship and assistance. No human skill, no earthly power or ingenuity alone, can accomplish what is possible in cooperation with God. No greater promise can come to a leader of God's people than that given to Moses at the time he was called.

A token. God gave Moses a sign that he was not being sent on a fruitless errand, but it was a sign the fulfillment of which would come later, like that given to Hezekiah by Isaiah (2 Kings 19:29). Before the sign could be fulfilled, however, Moses must obey and carry out the task he was commissioned to undertake.

13. What is his name? On the verge of accepting the divine call, Moses inquired what he was to say in case the people asked him for his divine credentials. The supposition that the people might ask this question is not to be attributed to ignorance of the name of their God. The name by which God had revealed Himself to their fathers could not have vanished entirely from memory, and the mere mention of God's name could not have been of much help to Moses. However, the nature and power of the One who sent Moses would be expressed in that name, and since names meant so much to the Semite mind, it was important for Moses to reveal to his people the true nature of their God, who was now ready to deliver them from bondage.

14. *I am that I am.* God therefore revealed to Moses, or rather explained to him, the name by which He had made Himself known to Abraham at the making of the covenant (Gen. 15:7). In Hebrew as in English, this name is a form of the verb “to be,” and implies that its possessor is the eternal, self-existing One (see John 8:58; DA 469). Its all-embracing universality precluded any comparison of the God of the Israelites to the deities of Egypt and other nations. It was designed to provide Moses and his people with strong consolation in their affliction and powerful support for their confidence in the realization of His purpose to deliver them.

I am hath sent me. “I am” is an abbreviated form of “I am that I am,” and is intended to express the same idea.

15. *This is my name.* From the Hebrew word translated as “I am” comes the derived form *Yahweh*. *Yahweh* is rather consistently rendered “LORD,” by the KJV, with the whole word in capital and small capital letters as it appears here. The ASV of 1901 transliterates *Yahweh* as “Jehovah.” To the Jews this has ever been the sacred name by which the true God is distinguished from all false gods. See pp. 172, 173.

16. *Gather the elders.* God proceeds to give Moses further instructions with reference to the execution of his mission. On his arrival in Egypt he was first of all to inform the elders, as the representatives of the nation, namely, the heads of the families, households, and tribes, of God’s plan to deliver them. The “elders” were not necessarily men of great age, but those who were recognized as leaders by the people (see chs. 6:14, 15; 12:21).

I have surely visited you. A repetition of the words used by Joseph on his deathbed (Gen. 50:24). They may be taken to mean, “I have done as Joseph prophesied, and you can be sure that everything he promised will come to pass.”

17. See on v. 8.

18. *They shall hearken.* Moses thought that they would despise him, turn a deaf ear to his words, and reject his leadership. But God told him that his reception this time would differ greatly from the one he had received 40 years before. The hearts of men are in God’s hands, and God Himself had directed the affairs of His people in such a way that they would be ready to recognize Moses as God’s chosen instrument for their deliverance.

Now let us go. The request for Pharaoh’s permission to leave the country is phrased so as to express Israel’s precise relation to him. He had no right to detain them, but his consent was needed for their departure as was that of a former king for their settlement in the land of Goshen (Gen. 45:16–20). He had no valid reason for refusing their request to go three days’ journey into the wilderness, for their return at the close of that period was implied in the request. Was this deception? By no means. God knew the heart of Pharaoh and instructed Moses to ask no more at first than he must either grant, or, by refusing, display the hardness of his heart. Had Pharaoh consented, God would probably then have made known to him His design in its entirety and demanded the permanent release of His people. When Pharaoh refused the first, and reasonable, request (Ex. 5:2), Moses was to demonstrate the power of the God of the Hebrews by miracles and judgments. Accordingly, Moses persisted in demanding permission for the people to go and serve their God (chs. 7:16; 8:1; 9:1, 13; 10:3). It was not until the king offered to permit them to sacrifice in Egypt that Moses added to his request the significant phrase, “as he shall command us” (ch. 8:27), which implied that they might not return. Of course, that was what Pharaoh feared.

19. Not by a mighty hand. Pharaoh would not be willing to let the people go even when God's mighty hand was laid upon him (see chs. 8:15, 19, 32; 9:12, 35; 10:20, 27). God foresaw his resistance and planned accordingly. The marginal reading of the KJV, "but by a strong hand," is based on the LXX and followed by the RSV, but is not favored by the Hebrew text.

20. After that. This statement is not at variance with v. 19. The meaning of vs. 19 and 20 is that Pharaoh would not be willing to let Israel depart even after being smitten by the strong hand of God, but that he would be compelled to do so against his will. Even after the ninth plague Pharaoh still refused to let them go (ch. 10:27), and when he finally gave permission upon the death of his first-born, and in fact drove them out (ch. 12:31-33), he soon changed his mind and pursued them (ch. 14:5-9). The strong hand of God had not broken the king's will, but was nevertheless instrumental in delivering Israel.

22. Every woman shall borrow. Obviously the Hebrews did not intend to return what they sought to secure from the Egyptians. Hence they have been accused of practicing fraud, and God has been blamed, not only for condoning their act of deception, but for planning and directing it as well. But the verb translated "borrow" should be translated "ask," as in the RSV. The Israelites were to ask gifts of their Egyptian neighbors as a contribution to the necessary expenses of the long journey. They had toiled for many decades as slaves, to the profit of the Egyptians, whose taxes had been lighter in proportion to the value of the free labor rendered by the Hebrews. The latter were certainly entitled to what would in reality be but a small reward for the long years of labor rendered. The Israelites asked without intending to restore, and the Egyptians granted their request without the expectation of receiving back, because God favorably disposed their hearts toward the Israelites (v. 21). The Egyptians had spoiled the Hebrews, and now the Hebrews carried off the spoil of Egypt as partial compensation (PP 281).

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1-22PP 251-253

1 CT 406, 417; Ed 62; FE 342, 360; GW 333; MH 474; PP 247, 251; 4T 343, 442, 611

1, 2 DA 23

1-3PP 251

2 SR 110

2-5MH 212

4, 5 MH 508

4-6PP 251

5 CS 83; Ed 243; FE 192; GW 179; PK 49; PP 350; TM 60; 5T 711

5, 6 MH 436; 8T 284

7, 8 PP 252

7-10SR 111, 147

10 FE 287; MH 475

10, 11 4T 611

10-13PP 252

12 CH 313; DA 641; 7T 221; 8T 144

14 DA 24; 1T 292; 5T 704, 725; 6T 20; 9T 260

14-22PP 253

CHAPTER 4

1 *Moses' rod is turned into a serpent.* 6 *His hand is leprous.* 10 *He is loth to be sent.* 14 *Aaron is appointed to assist him.* 18 *Moses departeth from Jethro.* 21 *God's message to Pharaoh.* 24 *Zipporah circumciseth her son.* 27 *Aaron is sent to meet Moses.* 31 *The people believeth them.*

1. They will not believe. Moses' previous question, following upon God's promise of guidance and protection (ch. 3:13), had implied willingness to go and a desire for further information. Now it appears that Moses was still very much opposed to the idea of accepting the commission. Attempts have been made to defend him by explaining that he meant, "What if the people will not believe me?" etc. But his statement is emphatic and can neither be translated nor explained in this way. It is conceivable that since Jacob's entry into Egypt, more than two centuries earlier, no divine revelation had been imparted to Israel, and doubt as to the validity of Moses' claim to having received a divine commission might therefore easily arise.

13. It became a serpent. Since Moses' faith was not yet strong enough to rely on the future sign promised him (ch. 3:12), God provided immediate signs by which he might validate his mission. These three signs were intended to convince the Israelites of the fact that God had appeared to Moses, but served at the same time to strengthen Moses' faith and dissipate his fear of failure. This was to be evidence that God had called Moses to be the leader of Israel and endowed him with the power to discharge this responsibility.

4. By the tail. A snake charmer will usually pick up his serpents by the neck, so they cannot bite him. Moses was instructed to demonstrate his trust in God by taking up the serpent by its tail.

6. His hand was leprous. Leprosy was regarded as absolutely incurable. Its instantaneous appearance and removal were contrary to all experience and would be accepted as evidence of supernatural power. This sign may also have served as a warning that he who resisted or disobeyed Moses would suffer grievous results. While the object of the first miracle was to prove that Moses was the man whom the Lord had called to be leader of His people, the second was to make it clear that as the messenger of God he was granted the power necessary for executing the task.

8. The voice of the first sign. God personified these signs as having a "voice," for they were to bear witness for Him in the person of His chosen instrument. According to Scripture everything has a "voice," if we will but listen with our hearts—the day, the night, the heavens, the beasts, the fowls of the air, the fishes, and even the very stones. They cry aloud and lift up their voices, proclaiming the will of their Maker, whether man will hear or whether he will not (see Ps. 19:1–3; Job 12:7, 8; Hab. 2:11; Luke 19:40).

9. The water. Egyptians worshiped the Nile as the source of national prosperity. Power to turn the life-giving water of the Nile into blood would imply power over the gods of Egypt and power to desolate the land of Egypt. From this sign Israel was to learn trust in God, while Pharaoh and the Egyptians were afterward by the same sign to be led to fear Him (ch. 7:15–19). Thus Moses was not only entrusted with the word of God but also endowed with His power. He was the first prophet and worker of miracles to be sent by God to His people, and thus became a type of Christ (Deut. 18:15; John 1:45; Acts 3:22).

10. I am not eloquent. That he who had been "mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22) should claim difficulty in speaking seems unwarranted, in view of God's promise to prosper his mission. His long absence from Egypt and the fact that he had not spoken its

language during the sojourn in Midian without doubt made him feel unqualified to go before Pharaoh, but he should have been ready to trust in God. It has been suggested that Moses feared to speak in Hebrew because he had been living among the Midianites. This cannot have been the reason, however, since Midianite inscriptions differ but little from ancient Hebrew. The Jewish tradition that Moses had difficulty in pronouncing certain Hebrew letters, has no substantiation either.

12. *I will be with thy mouth.* God patiently reasoned with Moses as with a friend. He who had made man's mouth was certainly able to impart the ability to speak fluently.

13. *Send, I pray thee.* When all the excuses Moses could offer were proved invalid, his hidden motives in making them became obvious. What had at first appeared to be doubt of his own ability was now revealed as distrust of God (see v. 19). For practical purposes he refused to go. His curt, almost rude, answer to the divine commission is even more emphatic in Hebrew than in English.

14. *The anger of the Lord.* The expression used is strong but probably means no more than that God was displeased. He did not punish Moses otherwise than by dividing between the two men the responsibility Moses was to have had alone.

Aaron the Levite. It is not clear why God here spoke of Aaron as "the Levite." Some have suggested that there were others by the same name among the Israelites and that this designation was necessary to distinguish him. But it is not clear why the words "thy brother" would not have been sufficient in this case. Others have thought the designation anticipates the future consecration of his tribe to God's special service.

He cometh forth. It has been suggested that Aaron planned to visit Moses in Midian to inform him of the death of the king from whom he had fled (see ch. 2:15, 23). Under any circumstances, Aaron did not start on his journey until God instructed him to go (ch. 4:27).

16. *Thy spokesman.* God promised to be with both men—with Moses that he might express accurately what God revealed to him, and with Aaron that he might speak clearly and persuasively. Moses' position was the more honorable, though Aaron's may have seemed so to the people.

Instead of God. In ch. 7:1 God promised Moses that his brother should be his prophet or spokesman. Divine inspiration was to rest upon Moses. Aaron was to accept Moses' words as the words of God and do all that Moses bade him.

17. *Take this rod.* Moses was bidden to take, not any rod, but the particular one that had already been transformed into a serpent. The plural, "signs," points to the plagues that were to fall upon Egypt, since only one of the three signs thus far given him was to be performed with the rod.

18. *Let me go.* Moses did not mention to Jethro the real object of his journey, for fear that Jethro would refuse permission for his wife and children to accompany him, and possibly also that a report of his return to Egypt might reach the court before he was ready to appear there, thus making his mission more difficult.

19. *Go, return.* As Moses made preparations to return to Egypt, the Lord appeared to him a second time with reassurance that he need not fear for his personal safety, since Pharaoh and all those who had sought his life were now dead.

20. *His sons.* Moses had two sons (ch. 18:3, 4), Gershom, whose birth is mentioned in ch. 2:22, and Eliezer, who was probably but an infant. The latter seems to have been

born since Moses' return to Jethro's home, inasmuch as ch. 2:22 speaks of but one son born to him prior to the divine manifestation at Mt. Horeb.

Set them upon an ass. The ancient Egyptians themselves never rode on animals, though they often depicted foreigners, particularly children and noblemen, as riding donkeys. This word picture suggests that Moses had given up his former Egyptian customs and adopted the Semitic way of life.

The rod of God. Moses' rod (ch. 4:2) had become the "rod of God" as a result of the miracles recorded in vs. 3 and 4.

21. All those wonders. Once more God appeared to Moses, either before he left Midian or on the way to Egypt. Upon this occasion God imparted to Moses information concerning what he must expect in Egypt. The expression "all those wonders" does not refer alone to the three signs mentioned in vs. 2–9, but to all the miracles he was to perform in the presence of Pharaoh.

Harden his heart. In Christ's parable of the sower and the seed there was no difference between the seed scattered in one kind of soil and that sown in the others, or yet in the manner in which it was sown. Everything depended upon the reception given the seed by each type of soil. In like manner, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was in no way an act of God, but rather a deliberate choice on his own part (see PP 268). By repeated warnings and displays of divine power God sent light designed to point out to Pharaoh the error of his ways, to soften and subdue his heart, and to lead him to cooperate with His will (see DA 322). But each successive manifestation of divine power left him more determined to do as he pleased. Refusing to be corrected, he despised and rejected the light, until he became insensitive to it, and the light was finally withdrawn. It was thus his own resistance to the light that hardened his heart. Even the heathen recognized the fact that it was Pharaoh and the Egyptians themselves who hardened their hearts, and not God (1 Sam. 6:6).

Commentators have differed widely in their understanding of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, here attributed to God. There are altogether ten such statements. Eight of them (Ex. 4:21; 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17) use the word *chazaq*, which means that the Lord would make Pharaoh's heart "firm" so that it would not move, and that his feelings toward Israel would not change. In ch. 7:3 another Hebrew word, *qashah*, is used, which implies that the Lord would make Pharaoh's heart "hard" or "unfeeling." In ch. 10:1 a third word, *kabed*, is used, meaning that God had made Pharaoh's heart "heavy," or insensible to divine influence. That the different words are used more or less interchangeably becomes evident from a study of the context.

There are also ten statements to the effect that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Four of them (chs. 7:13, 22; 8:19; 9:35) use the word *chazaq*, "to make firm," five (chs. 7:14; 8:15, 32; 9:7, 34) the word *kabed*, "to make heavy," and one (ch. 13:15) the word *qashah*, "to make hard." The hardening of Pharaoh's heart was evident first of all in the fact that he paid no attention to the demand of the Lord to let Israel go. His refusal was not restricted to the plagues the Egyptian magicians were able to imitate, but included those which the magicians themselves acknowledged to be "the finger of God" (ch. 8:19). It continued also after the fourth and fifth plagues, which fell upon the Egyptians but not upon the Israelites, a fact of which the king was informed (ch. 9:7). The hardening of his

heart was demonstrated even more clearly when he broke his promise to let Israel go on condition that Moses and Aaron would remove the plague, and when he was forced to confess that he had sinned (ch. 9:27). Thus when Moses was told, before reaching Egypt, that the Lord would harden Pharaoh's heart (ch. 4:21), God referred to the continued refusal of the king to obey Him and release the Israelites.

God takes no pleasure in the suffering and death of the wicked, but rather desires that all men repent and be saved (Eze. 33:11; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9), and causes His sun to shine upon the evil and the good (Matt. 5:45). But as the sun affects different materials in different ways, according to their own nature—it melts wax and hardens clay, for instance—so the influence of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of men produces different effects according to the condition of the heart. The repentant sinner allows God's Spirit to lead him to conversion and salvation, but the impenitent hardens his heart more and more. The very same manifestation of the mercy of God leads in the case of the one to salvation and life, and in that of the other to judgment and death—to each according to his own choice.

22. *Israel is my son.* In declaring Israel to be God's first-born son Moses was to use language familiar to the Egyptian king. Each Pharaoh considered himself the son of the sun-god Amen-Ra.

23. *I will slay thy son.* For fulfillment of this prediction see ch. 12:29. Moses did not utter this threat till all other means of persuasion had been exhausted, in what he knew to be his last interview with the king (chs. 10:29; 11:4, 5; PP 273). In doing so he apparently carried out one of the many special directives received after his return to Egypt (chs. 6:11; 7:9, 15, 19; etc).

24. *In the inn.* The translation "inn" is misleading. There were no inns or even caravansaries on the way between Midian and Egypt. The Hebrew word used here has rather the meaning of "a place where the night is spent" (cf. Joshua 4:3, 8; Isa. 10:29). The RSV reads, "at a lodging place on the way." The incident probably took place at a well or watering place where the family had stopped for the night.

Sought to kill him. Some have thought that Moses had an experience similar to Jacob's at Peniel (Gen. 32:24–32). Others have suggested that a sudden, severe illness befell him, which he and Zipporah recognized as a punishment of God for failure to carry out one of His commandments. Actually, an angel appeared to Moses in a threatening manner, as if he intended to kill him (PP 255).

25. *Zipporah took a sharp stone.* Egyptian surgeons commonly used stone knives. According to Joshua 5:2 these were also the usual instruments for performing the rite of circumcision.

Cut off the foreskin. Moses returned to Egypt with his two sons (see Ex. 4:20). Evidently Gershom, the elder, had been circumcised in accordance with God's instructions to Abraham (Gen. 17:10–14). In the case of Eliezer, the younger son, this rite had been neglected (PP 256). Not believing in the necessity of circumcision, Zipporah had resisted her husband's intention to circumcise Eliezer at the appointed time. The appearance of the angel made it clear that her opposition did not excuse Moses from administering the rite. Now that her husband's life was in danger she found it necessary to carry out the operation herself.

A bloody husband. These words are clearly an expression of reproach. They show that Zipporah performed the rite grudgingly, not from a desire to obey God, but of

necessity, to save her husband's life. Her meaning seems to be that Moses was a poor sort of husband, on whose behalf it was necessary to shed the blood of her sons in compliance with a national custom she regarded as barbarous.

26. *So he let him go.* God accepted Zipporah's tardy act and restored Moses.

Because of the circumcision. When the angel released Moses, Zipporah repeated her reproachful words, adding in explanation, literally, "because of the circumcisions." She may have had in mind the one performed in Midian on Gershom as well as that on Eliezer.

27. *Go into the wilderness.* This instruction to Aaron must have been given some time before Moses left Midian, for they met at Horeb, in the heart of the Sinai Peninsula (see on ch. 3:1), soon after Moses' departure from his father-in-law. It is equally certain that the directions given Aaron were more complete than the brief record of Exodus indicates. Inasmuch as the wilderness extended from the border of Egypt through the Sinai Peninsula and into Arabia, God must have told him precisely the way he was to take in order to meet his brother.

29. *All the elders.* As to the elders, see on ch. 3:16. Though Moses and Aaron had no authority to call the tribal and family heads together, these men responded to their invitation.

30. *Aaron spake.* Aaron entered at once upon the duties of his office as "spokesman" (v. 16), declaring to the elders the fact that God had called his brother to accomplish their deliverance. Aaron also, and not Moses as we should have expected (v. 17), performed the signs (see PP 263). God apparently either ordered or approved this delegation of power. On later occasions we find Aaron more than once required by God to work the miracles (chs. 7:19; 8:5, 16).

31. *The people believed.* This was another evidence of divine favor. It stands in marked contrast with the usually incredulous attitude of the Israelites, who so often "believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation" (Ps. 78:22). Their longing for deliverance and these manifestations of miraculous power won a favorable response from the elders.

They bowed their heads. The faith of the people, and the worship in which it was expressed, proved that the promise of God to the fathers still lived in their hearts. Though their faith did not stand the subsequent test, yet, as the first expression of their feelings, it bore witness to the fact that Israel was willing to follow the call of God.

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1-31PP 253-257

1, 3, 4 PP 253

6-8PP 254

10 4T 314

10-14PP 254

14 PP 320

15-17PP 254

16 3T 293

18 PP 255

19 SR 111

21 PP 268

22, 23 DA 51; PP 273

24 PP 255
25, 26 PP 256
27-31PP 257

CHAPTER 5

1 *Pharaoh chideth Moses and Aaron for their message. 5 He increaseth the Israelites' task. 15 He checketh their complaints. 20 They cry out upon Moses and Aaron. 22 Moses complaineth to God.*

1. *Went in, and told Pharaoh.* After Moses and Aaron had been accepted by the elders of Israel to be their God-appointed leaders, the two men proceeded to Pharaoh and secured a hearing before the king. Ancient records make it clear that it was not easy for a commoner to obtain an audience with the king. Moses' former experience at court now stood him in good stead, for he knew how to approach the king.

A feast. The request put before Pharaoh was a reasonable one. The Israelites could not offer their sacrificial animals in the presence of the Egyptians without provoking an outburst of religious animosity, since among the animals to be slaughtered were some that the Egyptians considered sacred, and therefore not to be killed under any circumstances. To avoid this danger, the feast of the Israelites must be held beyond the boundaries of Egypt, in the wilderness.

2. *Who is the Lord?* Pharaoh was either ignorant of the name of the God of the Israelites or pretended to be. However that may have been, he felt himself superior to any foreign God. Had not his father and his grandfather oppressed the Israelites without interference by their God? Why should he trouble himself to take notice of a God so obviously disinterested in the affairs of His own people, and apparently unable to help them?

3. *Lest he fall upon us.* The refusal of Pharaoh did not frighten Moses and Aaron away, for their trust was in the power of One who would, in time, accomplish His gracious purpose. However, the knowledge that they were allied with divine power did not make them overbearing. They remained polite and considerate, and put forth their best efforts to persuade the king to change his mind. They pointed out how necessary it was for the people to comply with the requirements of their God and to celebrate the commanded feast. Instead of threatening the king with punishment should he persist in refusing to let Israel go, they protested to Pharaoh that punishment would come upon the Israelites should they fail to obey so explicit a command of their God.

4. *Get you unto your burdens.* Pharaoh would hear nothing of the idea, and made no direct reply to their petition. Suspecting that Moses and Aaron were secretly plotting a revolt from his service, he ordered them back to their tasks as slaves. This shows clearly that Moses' identity was not recognized. The king did not know that Moses had formerly lived at court, or that his recent place of abode was not Egypt, but the land of Midian.

5. *The people of the land.* It was as if the king had said, "The common herd are already good for nothing, and you would have them stop working altogether?" Moses and Aaron had instituted a reform in Sabbath observance, and this fact had come to the attention of the king (PP 258). The people were idle and in need of more work to absorb their energies. Thus he reasoned.

6. *The taskmasters of the people.* The word here translated "taskmasters" is not the same as that of ch. 1:11, and probably designates another class of officers. The "taskmasters" of the former passage were the work superintendents, probably few in

number and high in rank, whereas the “taskmasters” here were Egyptians of a lower rank and more numerous. The “officers,” literally, “scribes,” were undoubtedly Hebrews, as is evident from the expression “officers of the children of Israel” used in ch. 5:14 and from the rough treatment they received. They were probably employed as foremen, and had to give an account of the work done.

7. *Straw to make brick.* Having no intention of being intimidated by the God of the Hebrews, and proud in the security of his own power, Pharaoh was determined to enforce his will. Suspecting that their wish to go into the desert was nothing but an excuse invented by idlers and prompted by a thirst for freedom that might endanger the kingdom, he devised a plan for making the oppression more cruel than it already was.

In ancient Egypt bricks were made just as they are today, sometimes with and sometimes without straw. More commonly, the bricks contained some type of plant binder along with the clay, usually straw, called *teben* in Biblical Hebrew and *tibn* in Egyptian Arabic today. The process of brickmaking in ancient Egypt is represented by several models found in Egyptian tombs, and also in a wall painting in the tomb of the vizier Rekhmire, who lived under Thutmose III in the middle of the 15th century B.C. It shows men drawing water from a pool, mixing mud with a hoe, carrying the mixture in jars to the brickmakers, and the brickmakers forming the bricks in wooden molds. A foreman with a stick in his hand watches over the group of workmen. The men carrying bricks are described as “captives which his majesty brought for the works of the temple of Amon.” Some of the captives depicted are Semites and resemble the Hebrews.

Moses does not present the Hebrews as making “bricks without straw,” as is sometimes erroneously stated. Rather, Pharaoh’s decree specifically required them to use straw, but to provide it themselves. Had the Hebrews proceeded to make brick without straw they would have been violating the decree, and this the taskmasters would hardly have permitted. Such bricks would have been decidedly inferior in quality, since chopped straw increases the strength of mud bricks several times. This is due partly to the presence of the straw stalks themselves and partly to the chemical action of decaying vegetable matter upon the brick mixture. When the mixture is allowed to stand for a few days, the bricks are both stronger and easier to make. Some have erroneously interpreted the presence of strawless bricks in the walls of certain ancient Egyptian buildings as evidence confirming the narrative of ch. 5:7, 8. Such reports, however, are based on a misunderstanding of the Bible record and ignorance of the art of brickmaking as practiced in the valley of the Nile (see *The Biblical Archaeologist*, vol. 13, no. 2 [May, 1950], pp. 22–28).

8. *The tale of the bricks.* The word here translated “tale” means, rather, “the daily required number,” and indicates that the Hebrews were required to produce a fixed number of bricks every day. Though they were now to procure their own straw, by gleanings from the fields, the required number of bricks was to remain the same as before.

14. *The officers.* The Egyptian overseers are regularly depicted with sticks in their hands. One picture from a temple wall of Thebes of the time of Thutmose III shows a taskmaster with a raised stick in his hand, saying to the workmen, “The stick is in my hand; be not lazy.” When the new directive of the king was enforced, it soon became impossible for the Israelites to produce the required number of bricks. Consequently, the

Hebrew officers whose business it was to give a daily account of the work done were punished by their Egyptian overlords.

15. *Cried unto Pharaoh.* The Hebrew foremen apparently had access to the king. When these men were unjustly beaten for their inability to force their people to produce the required “tale” of bricks, they complained to the king, thinking the Egyptian overseers personally to blame.

17. *Ye are idle.* Pharaoh seems to have been pleased with his happy thought of interpreting as idleness the desire of the Israelites to worship their God. He apparently considered it clever to accuse overworked people of being lazy and of employing religion as an excuse for it.

21. *Abhorred.* Unkind were the words that the Hebrew foremen spoke to the messengers of God. Words prompted by anger are usually irrational. This may account for their mixed metaphor, alluding to the effect their evil “savour” would have on the “eyes,” instead of in the nose, of Pharaoh. They went even further, figuratively accusing Moses and Aaron of placing a sword in the hands of the Egyptians to slay them. They surmised that Moses and Aaron had led the king and his counselors to suspect them of laziness. To be sure, the foremen had no doubt suffered a severe beating (v. 14), probably administered as a bastinado, the customary form of corporal punishment in Egypt. This beating of the bare soles of the feet is extremely painful, and death not infrequently results from its repeated employment.

22. *Moses returned unto the Lord.* The two brothers made no reply to the words of the officers. Perhaps their hearts were too full for speech, and they probably did not know what to say anyway. They turned instead to God, their sole source of consolation and guidance.

Lord, wherefore. Moses’ words did not reflect a spirit of displeasure or insubordination, but of perplexity and inquiry. The question and complaint proceeded from a faith that could not understand the dealings of God. At the same time he appealed for help in this hour of need and for the removal of what seemed contrary to God’s nature and His will.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-23PP 257-259; SR 112-115

1, 2 PP 333

1-5PP 257

2 DA 51; Ev 560; GC 269; PP 280; SR 117

10-17, 21PP 258

22, 23 PP 259

CHAPTER 6

1 *God reneweth his promise by his name JEHOVAH.* 14 *The genealogy of Reuben,* 15 *of Simeon,* 16 *of Levi, of whom came Moses and Aaron.*

1. *Now shalt thou see.* Moses did not receive a direct answer to his complaint. Instead, God again promised the deliverance of Israel by a strong hand. Since Moses was not now prepared to understand God’s dealings, no useful purpose would be served by giving him an explanation. As it were, God was saying to Moses, “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter” (John 13:7). In view of the fact that even after their miraculous deliverance from Egypt and their glorious march through the desert, in which the Hebrews beheld so many proofs of the power and mercy of God, and

yet repeatedly rebelled against Him, they would hardly have been willing to leave Egypt unless the oppression under which they lived was greatly increased. It is certain that they would never have been willing to leave had they known all that lay ahead of them. This may explain, in part at least, why God does not reveal all that He might of the future. Had the disciples known in advance what lay ahead for their Master and for themselves they might never have obeyed His call, "Follow me." Had those who accepted the Advent message prior to 1844 known of the great disappointment, and of the trying years that lay ahead, there would probably never have been an Advent Movement.

3. God Almighty. Under this name, *'El-Shaddai*, the Sacred Record gives various accounts of the revelation of God, as to Abraham (Gen. 17:1) and to Jacob (Gen. 35:11). The full name is not used by God in any recorded appearance to Isaac, though Isaac himself used it in his farewell blessing to Jacob (Gen. 28:3).

By my name Jehovah was I not known. The meaning of this statement is not entirely clear. According to Gen. 15:7 God had revealed Himself to Abraham as Jehovah, even before declaring His name *'El-Shaddai*, God Almighty. Later He revealed Himself to Jacob as Jehovah (Gen. 28:13). That Abraham knew this name is also obvious from the name Jehovah-jireh, which he gave the place where he went to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:14). That Moses regarded this name as known from the beginning of history is evident from Gen. 2:4 and Gen. 4:1, 26. The apparent meaning of this statement cannot therefore be its true meaning, for no inspired writer would contradict himself in such a way.

The Hebrews always thought of a name as indicating either the personal characteristics of the one named, or the thoughts and emotions of the one giving the name, or attendant circumstances at the time the name was given. God was now about to reveal Himself more fully than in the past, delivering His people with a "strong hand" (Ex. 6:1), actually taking them to Himself for a people (v. 7), establishing His covenant with them, and giving them the land of Canaan (v. 4). This being true, it seems that in v. 3 God must refer to the new meaning that the experience of deliverance would bring to the name rather than to the name itself (see vs. 1-7).

A similar problem occurs in Rev. 19:11-16. In v. 12 it is stated that "no man knew [Gr., "knows," as in the RSV]" Christ's name as He appears riding upon the "white horse," leading forth the armies of heaven. Yet in v. 11 He is "called Faithful and True," and in v. 13 "his name is called The Word of God." These were names by which Christ was already known in character, at least to some extent, by His people. In v. 16, however, John speaks of Christ as "King of kings, and Lord of lords," yet specifically describes this title as a new "name written, that no man knew, but he himself" (v. 12). From 1 Tim. 6:15 it is clear that this title was applied to Christ as far back as apostolic times. Obviously, John's statement that "no man knew" the name refers, not to the title itself, but rather to the new role in which Christ appears as champion of His beleaguered people to "rule all nations with a rod of iron" (Rev. 12:5; cf. 19:15).

4. My covenant. See on Gen. 15:9; Gen. 17:7, 8; see also chs. 26:3; 28:13.

5. Heard the groaning. God had already assured Moses that the cry of His oppressed people had come before Him (ch. 3:9; cf. ch. 2:24), but the assurance was repeated because of Moses' complaint. He, as well as his people, was to be sure that God had not forgotten them, but would sustain them in their affliction and would soon deliver them.

6. Great judgments. That deliverance could not be accomplished by peaceful means, but would require a show of force on the part of God, is now intimated. Hints of

judgments to come had been made previously (chs. 3:20; 4:23). True, they had not been called such, although God had promised Abraham that He would judge that nation whom they should serve (Gen. 15:14). The plagues about to be visited upon Pharaoh and his people were not merely “wonders” or “signs” in the ordinary sense, but also punishments inflicted on a proud and cruel nation by a divine Judge.

7. *I will.* God continued to make promises, heaping them as it were one upon another. He would make Israel His peculiar people, He would make Himself known to them as the great Deliverer, He would bring them into the Promised Land, and He would give it to them as a possession. All these promises were fulfilled in due time. The Israelites were formally taken to be God’s people at Sinai (ch. 19:5, 6), where God at the same time became especially, but not exclusively, their God (ch. 20:1, 2).

9. *They hearkened not.* The Israelites, expecting a speedy deliverance, but the more oppressed because of Moses’ unwelcome interference, were too dispirited to be cheered even by the gracious promises and assurances Moses was commissioned to give them. They refused longer to place trust in one they thought had deceived them, one who was obviously but a dreamer, a visionary, if not worse. “Anguish of spirit” crushed their souls and “cruel bondage” wearied their bodies day by day, with the result that they lacked both the time and the will to listen.

The Samaritan version has an addition to v. 9, which, though probably not written by Moses, nevertheless casts some light on the reasoning of the disappointed Israelites. In agreement with a statement by the Israelites at a later time (ch. 14:12), it reads: “And they said to him, Let us alone, and let us serve the Egyptians; for it is better for us to serve the Egyptians than die in a wilderness.”

11. *Go out of his land.* In the new commission Moses now received there is no longer mention of a three days’ journey, as at first (chs. 3:18; 5:3). A clear-cut statement is made that the children of Israel are to leave the country permanently. Moses was instructed to appear again before Pharaoh and to demand without equivocation that the Israelites be released from slavery.

12. *How then shall Pharaoh hear me?* The bitter complaints of the Israelites made Moses despondent, with the result that he again declined the commission. He had done God’s will and had appeared before the people as well as before the king, but he felt keen disappointment, since the people as well as the king had refused to listen to him. Immediately, all his original self-distrust and reluctance to shoulder the heavy burden of leadership returned.

Uncircumcised lips. This is a typical Hebrew phrase meaning the same as “slow of speech” in ch. 4:10. Similarly, “uncircumcised” ears (Jer. 6:10) are ears that do not hear, and an “uncircumcised” heart (Jer. 9:26) is a heart that does not understand.

13. *Gave them a charge.* God’s answer to Moses’ new protest is not recorded. It seems that He made no formal reply to Moses’ arguments, but gave, rather, an authoritative charge that provided no room for refusal. Moses was now sent to the Israelites and to the king, not with a request or a proposal, but with an imperative command.

14. *These be the heads.* At this point Moses interrupts his narrative to insert a section on genealogy, in which he takes the family history of Israel from the point at which he left it in ch. 1:5. The social organization of Israel was based upon the tribe, and a record of the divisions and subdivisions of the various families was therefore important. In view

of the fact that the narrative had reached a turning point, this seemed a fitting place to insert the information. By “fathers’ houses” is meant “families” (see 1 Chron. 4:38; 1 Chron. 5:13; 1 Chron. 7:40; etc.). The “heads” are the acknowledged chiefs and founders of the various Israelite families.

Of Reuben. For the names of these four sons of Reuben, see on Gen. 46:9.

15. Of Simeon. For the names of Simeon’s sons, see on Gen. 46:10.

16. Of Levi. For Levi’s three sons, see on Gen. 46:11.

According to their generations. This phrase is used because Moses does not stop with the sons of Levi but proceeds on to the grandsons, great-grandsons, and other descendants in order to establish the exact relationship of Moses and Aaron to Jacob and the other tribes.

The years of the life of Levi. As an elder brother of Joseph, Levi must have passed the age of 40 years at the time of the descent into Egypt, since Joseph was about 39 at that time (see on Gen. 27:1). All three of his sons had been born before that time (Gen. 46:8–11). Since he died at the age of 137 he must have spent more than 90 years of his life in Egypt and survived by many years his brother Joseph, who died at the age of 110 (Gen. 50:26). Moses probably records the length of Levi’s life because Levi was his own ancestor.

17. The sons of Gershon. Gershon’s sons are mentioned first, since he was the eldest son of Levi. Libni means “the white one,” and may refer to a particularly light complexion; Shimi may mean “the one hearing.”

18. The sons of Kohath. Amram means “ingathering”; Izhar, “fresh oil”; Hebron, “companion”; and Uzziel, “God is my strength.”

The years of the life of Kohath. Kohath, who was born before the descent of Jacob into Egypt (Gen. 46:11), seems to have spent the greater part of his long life of 133 years in Egypt, and may have lived on into the period of oppression.

19. The sons of Merari. Mahali means “the pleasant one,” but the meaning of Mushi’s name is obscure. The Mahlites and Mushites were among the most important of the Levitical families at the time of the Exodus (Num. 3:33; 26:58).

20. Amram. That this Amram is the “man of the house of Levi” mentioned in ch. 2:1 cannot be doubted. He was a grandson of Levi. God had promised Abraham that the fourth generation of those who would go to the land of oppression should return to the Promised Land (Gen. 15:16). The four generations would thus be those of Levi, Kohath, Amram, and Moses.

Jochebed. Meaning “Jehovah is glorious.” Jochebed is the earliest known human name related to the divine name Jehovah, which appears here in its abbreviated form, “Jo.”

His father’s sister. Jochebed, who is spoken of merely in general terms as a daughter of Levi in Ex. 2:1, which could mean any female descendant of Levi, is here called the aunt (*dodah*, translated “father’s sister”) of Amram, and therefore a sister of Kohath. This is in harmony with the accepted rendering of Num. 26:59. If that text, though uncertain, is complete, it indicates that Jochebed was a literal daughter of Levi. Though such a marriage was prohibited by the Mosaic law (Lev. 18:12), it was apparently permitted in earlier times.

She bare. Amram’s sons are listed according to age. Being three years older than Moses (Ex. 7:7), Aaron was named first. Their sister Miriam was still older (see ch. 2:4),

but is not mentioned here, since the names of women appear in ancient genealogical lists only in exceptional cases. The insertion of her name in this text in the LXX, Vulgate, and one Hebrew manuscript seems to be the work of a later scribe.

21. The sons of Izhar. Of the three sons of Izhar, Amram's brother, only Korah is mentioned again in the Bible (see Num. 16:1; 1 Chron. 6:37). His name means "the bald one." The meaning of Nepheg is unknown; Zichri means "my memory."

22. The sons of Uzziel. The sons of Uzziel, Amram's youngest brother, are mentioned again later in the narrative. Mishael, the meaning of whose name is uncertain, and Elzaphan, meaning "God is hidden," were later employed by Moses to carry the bodies of Nadab and Abihu out of the camp (Lev. 10:4). Elzaphan, called Elizaphan, is mentioned as head of the Kohathites in Num. 3:30. Zithri's name means "my hiding place." The names of these men, born during the severe oppression in Egypt, reflect the sentiments of their parents at the times of their birth. Elzaphan may have been born in a particularly dark hour when the future of Israel looked most forbidding and it seemed that God had hidden Himself. Zithri, like Moses, may have been born in secret and hidden for some time.

23. Aaron took him Elisheba. The name of Aaron's wife meant "my God has sworn." Her father, Amminadab, mentioned here for the first time, was a descendant of Judah through Pharez and Hezron and was an ancestor of Jesus (see 1 Chron. 2:3–10; Matt. 1:4). Amminadab means "my people is willing."

Naashon. A transliteration of *Nachshon*, from the root *nachash*, "serpent." A *nachshon* was an "enchanter," that is, one who made use of serpents as a means of divination. Naashon was at this time "captain of the children of Judah" (Num. 2:3).

She bare him. On the fate of Aaron's two eldest sons, who became the first priests under the Levitic law of Sinai, see Lev. 10:1, 2. Nadab means "he is willing," and Abihu, "my father is he."

Eleazar. Eleazar, meaning "God has helped," became high priest upon the death of Aaron (Num. 20:23–28), and the high priestly office was perpetuated through his descendants (1 Chron. 6:4–15). His death is related in Joshua 24:33.

Ithamar. The meaning of the name of Aaron's youngest son is uncertain. Like Aaron's other sons, Ithamar became a priest, and was charged with the duty of recording the freewill offerings of the people toward the building of the tabernacle (ch. 28:1; 38:21).

24. The sons of Korah. Not all the sons of Korah were destroyed with their father in the uprising in the desert (Num. 26:11). The three sons mentioned here became heads of "families of the Korhites," whose descendants were famous as temple singers in David's time (1 Chron. 6:22, 23, 31; Ps. 42:1; 44:1; etc.). Assir means "prisoner"; Elkanah, "God has founded"; and Abiasaph, "my father has gathered."

25. Putiel. The father-in-law of Eleazar, not mentioned elsewhere. The first part of the name is Egyptian, the second Hebrew, and the name means either "God has given" or "dedicated to God."

Phinehas. Phinehas is an Egyptian name meaning "negro," and may have indicated that Phinehas had an unusually dark complexion (cf. Libni, "the white one," in Ex. 6:17). The presence of Egyptian names for persons of Hebrew birth in the book of Genesis is another evidence that it is a historical account, written by one familiar with Egypt. It is not surprising to find Egyptian names among the Israelites, after they had lived so long in

Egypt. Such names would be similar to anglicized names of non-English immigrants to America. Under the circumstances it is surprising to find so many Israelites bearing Hebrew names, a fact due to reluctance to accept the customs, ways, and language of their oppressors.

26. *That Aaron and Moses.* The genealogy concluded, its author appends a note to the effect that the Aaron and Moses here mentioned (v. 20) are the very Aaron and Moses who were commanded to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt.

27. *These are they.* The expression, “these are that Aaron and Moses” (v. 26) is repeated in v. 27 with a significant reversal in the order of the names. In the genealogy itself Aaron stands first, as the elder of the two, but here, in anticipation of the historical narrative that follows, Moses takes precedence over his elder brother, as the divinely appointed savior of Israel.

28. *Came to pass.* Verses 28–30 are a repetition of the thought of vs. 10–12. Having inserted a genealogical section, Moses takes up the narrative where he left it in v. 12, and in doing so repeats the last section of the narrative in order to connect it with the story that follows.

29. *I am the Lord.* This is the only important variation in the repetition of vs. 10–12. It is possible that every revelation made to Moses was authenticated by these initial words “I am the Lord,” which have the force of that initial phrase so often found in the utterances of the later prophets, “Thus saith the Lord.”

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2-4PP 259

9 PP 260

11, 12 PP 263

CHAPTER 7

1 *Moses is encouraged to go to Pharaoh. 7 His age. 8 His rod is turned into a serpent. 11 The sorcerers do the like. 13 Pharaoh's heart is hardened. 14 God's message to Pharaoh. 19 The river is turned into blood.*

1. *A god to Pharaoh.* Moses' last objection (ch. 6:12, repeated in v. 30) was removed by God. Moses was reluctant to appear a second time before Pharaoh, who was so much his worldly superior, but God reminded him that as a representative of the God of heaven and earth he was superior to Pharaoh. Pharaoh's power was but human; his was divine. He was to be to Pharaoh as “a god,” with authority and power to command obedience.

Thy prophet. As a prophet is a spokesman for God, so Aaron was to speak for Moses, to interpret his commands to Pharaoh and to the Israelites (see ch. 4:16).

3. *I will harden.* See on ch. 4:21.

Multiply my signs. God's purpose to reveal His power both to Israel and to the Egyptians through a long series of miracles is here distinctly stated for the first time. Previously, three signs had been given (ch. 4:3–9) and one of the plagues had been mentioned (ch. 4:23). Now, signs and wonders were to be multiplied, far exceeding anything Moses himself could have expected (chs. 3:20; 6:6).

4. *Lay my hand upon Egypt.* God foresaw the obstinacy of Pharaoh, who had the privilege of setting his will against God's, if he chose to do so. Thus there would be a great display of divine power, such as would attract the attention of all Egypt and of the surrounding nations as well. As a result, the power and majesty of the true God would be

respected, and the nations would fear to interfere with His people (see Ex. 15:14–16; Deut. 2:25; 11:25; etc.).

Mine armies. Literally, “My hosts,” as in the RSV. As they left Egypt the Israelites “were unarmed, and unaccustomed to war” (PP 282; see also on ch. 13:18). Their organization for the journey was only partially completed when they left Goshen, and was not perfected until they reached Mt. Sinai.

5. The Egyptians shall know. Pharaoh had pretended not to know the God of the Hebrews (ch. 5:2), but Moses is assured that the Egyptians would become well acquainted with Him. They would have to recognize that He is the only true God and that other so-called gods are but wood and stone.

6. Moses and Aaron did. The obedience of Moses and Aaron to God was consistent and unquestioning from this time forward, until Aaron led out in the worship of the golden calf (ch. 32:21–24) and Moses smote the rock when commanded to speak to it (Num. 20:8–11).

7. Fourscore years old. Moses’ age is confirmed by the statement that he was 120 at the time of his death (Deut. 31:2; 34:7), which occurred 40 years after the Exodus (Deut. 29:5). Aaron’s age at death is given as 123 years (Num. 33:38, 39).

9. Shew a miracle. It was obvious that should Pharaoh grant them another audience he would require a display of their credentials, to verify their claim to being messengers of the most high God. As long as such a requirement was not made there was no need to perform miracles before him. For this reason they had worked no miracle at their former interview. Now, however, the time had come when their credentials would be demanded, and an express command was given them to exhibit the first sign (see ch. 4:3, 4).

Take thy rod. This was Moses’ shepherd staff, called also the “rod of God” (ch. 4:20). According to ch. 7:15–18, Moses was directed to go before Pharaoh to request that Israel be permitted to leave Egypt, and to announce that he would smite the waters of the Nile with the staff in his hand. From vs. 19 and 20 it is apparent that this miracle was performed by Aaron, who took Moses’ staff and stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt. The staff that Aaron held over the Nile can therefore have been none other than the staff of Moses, which had been turned into a serpent. There was but the one staff, with which both Moses and Aaron performed miracles (PP 263).

10. It became a serpent. The Hebrew word here used for “serpent,” *tannin*, is not the same as that used previously, *nachash* (ch. 4:3), but it is improbable that a different species is meant. The two words are no doubt used synonymously.

11. The wise men. The “wise men” were educated in science and the art of writing. The “sorcerers” were charmers, who professed to be able to produce magic spells. The word translated “magicians” is the Egyptian equivalent of the Hebrew word translated “sorcerers.” Magic was the object of much attention and study in Egypt, as extant texts on magic show. It consisted to a large extent in charms that were thought to have power over and beasts, especially over reptiles. That these men must have experienced actual results in their practice of magic is obvious from the fact that they were held in such high esteem through the centuries. It must therefore be assumed that they performed at least some of their wonders by the power of evil spirits, though many were no doubt only trickery (see PP 264).

They also. The rods of the magicians did not actually become serpents, as did the rod of Aaron. Neither the magicians nor Satan himself could create life. Through the power

of evil magic, their rods were made to appear to be serpents (see PP 264). As in ch. 8:18, they went through the motions, but did not achieve the same results.

12. *Swallowed up their rods.* Aaron's serpent turned upon its rivals and devoured them, thus exhibiting marked superiority to them. Thus was the supremacy of the God of the Hebrews manifested in the very first miraculous sign performed in Pharaoh's presence.

13. *He hardened Pharaoh's heart.* Literally, "Pharaoh's heart was hard." The KJV here seems to attribute the result to a direct act of God. In v. 22 the identical Hebrew expression is translated, "Pharaoh's heart was hardened," as it is in the RSV rendition of v. 13. The miracle made no impression on his obdurate heart. So far as he could see, Moses and Aaron had done little more than his own magicians could do (see also on ch. 4:21).

As the Lord had said. God had forewarned Moses of the outcome of this interview with Pharaoh, lest Moses be disappointed by the king's attitude. Whereas Moses knew in advance exactly what developments to expect, Pharaoh knew nothing except what Moses told him. This situation gave Moses a distinct advantage over Pharaoh.

14. See on ch. 4:21.

15. *Get thee unto Pharaoh.* God here imparts to Moses final instructions on announcing to Pharaoh the first of a series of divine judgments on the land of Egypt. Thebes was the capital of the country under Pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty, but it is hardly conceivable that Moses performed these miracles there, hundreds of miles south of the Delta, where the land of Goshen was situated. Psalms 78:43 refers to the plagues as being wrought "in the field of Zoan." Since the Biblical Zoan is the ancient Tanis, in the eastern Delta country, a city built seven years later than Hebron in Palestine (Num. 13:22), it must be that the king was in temporary residence at or near Tanis during the time of the plagues. It is known that there were royal palaces in various parts of the country.

He goeth out. This remark and that of ch. 8:20 imply that the king went to the river every morning. Inasmuch as the food and prosperity of Egypt were dependent upon the Nile (see on Gen. 41:34), one of the duties of the king was to worship at its banks each morning (see DA 265).

The rod. See on v. 9.

17. *Thou shalt know.* At a previous visit Pharaoh had declared, "I know not the Lord" (ch. 5:2). Moses now warns the rash monarch that he will soon be given an opportunity to learn something of the power of God (see ch. 9:14). The Nile god, the source of fertility and blessing, was to become an agent of death.

The plagues visited upon the Egyptians were designed not only to bring Pharaoh and his people to a recognition of the true God but also to destroy confidence in the power and protection of their false gods (ch. 12:12). Each of the ten plagues was painfully literal, and yet at the same time was directed against some phase of false religion. In the merciful providence of God, physical suffering occasioned by each plague was to lead the king and his counselors to reconsider their ways, that they might learn the folly of serving idols and the wisdom of cooperating with the God of heaven. In ancient Egypt the interests of king and priest were closely related, the king himself always being initiated into the priestly caste. Pharaoh and the priests rightly surmised that the stability of both church and state was at stake. The people and the counselors of the king, from more

practical considerations, were ready to submit long in advance of the king and the priests (ch. 10:7). It was only following the tenth plague, as a result of which the next generation of royalty and of the priesthood died, that the latter were, for the moment, ready to submit (PP 272, 283). In the plagues that fell upon Egypt we behold a preview of the more terrible and extensive judgments of God soon to fall upon the earth (GC 269, 627).

Turned to blood. These words do not imply that the Nile waters would merely take on the color of blood, as some commentators have interpreted this passage, but rather that they would to all intents and purposes, actually become blood. It is beside the point to ask whether the water would have passed the various modern tests, microscopic and others, by which blood is analyzed. The water appeared to be blood, and was taken to be blood. It was not merely water discolored by red soil from Abyssinia. Some have suggested as a possible cause a high concentration of “cryptogamic plants and infusoria,” something similar to the “red tide” of microscopic organisms that kills millions of fish and brings a stench and an irritating gas to shores, bays, and inlets. It can be questioned whether water thus altered could fill all the specifications of this Biblical plague. Certainly the timing could not be controlled by man.

19. Upon the waters of Egypt. The change in the water extended to “the streams,” or different arms of the Nile, “the rivers,” or Nile canals, “the ponds,” or large standing lakes formed by the Nile, and all “the pools,” or artificial reservoirs where water was stored for use after the annual inundation. These four terms show an accurate knowledge of Egypt. Though Aaron was to stretch his arm over the Nile at but one place, the change would affect all Egypt.

In vessels of wood. It is not stated whether water in jars or other containers was drawn before or after the miracle.

22. The magicians of Egypt did so. Just as during Moses’ previous visit, the magicians were again consulted. Once more they counterfeited a genuine miracle by seeming to transform a certain quantity of water into blood. The question as to where the water the magicians used came from is answered in v. 24, which implies that newly dug wells furnished satisfactory drinking water. That the magicians actually turned the water into blood is not necessarily implied in the vague expression “did so.” They needed only to convince Pharaoh that they were able to do what Moses and Aaron had done. No critical examination was given their pretended miracle, which, in spite of being a trick, consequently passed as genuine. Had these men possessed the power they claimed to have they should have been able to turn the bloody water of the Nile back into normal water. That the king was satisfied with an imitation miracle shows stupidity, in his case probably the result of his hardened heart. He believed what he wanted to believe.

23. Pharaoh turned. Convinced that Moses and Aaron were merely magicians possessing powers slightly superior to those of his own magicians, Pharaoh dismissed God’s messengers and returned to his palace. The sufferings of his country, deprived of its life-giving supply of water, made little impression upon his hardened soul.

24. The Egyptians digged. Suffering greatly, the Egyptians dug wells to satisfy their needs during the emergency. Owing to the nitrous quality of the soil of Egypt, well water has a bitter and brackish taste. It sufficed, however, for drinking and cooking purposes for the duration of the plague (v. 25). The water supply of the Hebrews may not have been affected, inasmuch as only the Egyptians are mentioned as digging for water. Such a

distinction is not stated here, but seems to be implied. In later plagues, Moses specifically notes such a distinction (see chs. 8:22; 9:4; etc.).

25. Seven days. This time note has been regarded as fixing the interval between the first plague and the second, but it is more natural to regard it as marking the duration of the first plague (see PP 265). The intervals of time between one plague and the next are not given. It is evident that the plagues continued over a period of several months. The nature of the various plagues, and the time intervals noted by Moses, indicate a period of time lasting, possibly, from the late summer to early spring.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-25PP 263-265, 334
2-4PP 263
5 PK 369
10 SR 116; 1T 264
10-12PP 263
12 1T 292; 5T 696
13 1T 265
14 5T 274
15-17PP 265
16 6T 9
19, 20 SR 116
20-25PP 265

1

CHAPTER 8

1 *Frogs are sent.* 8 *Pharaoh sueth to Moses,* 12 *and Moses by prayer removeth them away.* 16 *The dust is turned into lice, which the magicians could not do.* 20 *The swarms of flies.* 25 *Pharaoh inclineth to let the people go,* 32 *but yet is hardened.*

1. Go unto Pharaoh. After an indeterminate interval Moses was ordered to announce the second plague. Like the first plague, this one was announced in advance, lest it should be taken as a natural and coincidental occurrence.

2. Frogs. Frogs were sacred animals to the Egyptians. One of their deities, Heqa, was a frog-headed goddess thought to possess creative power. Though the chief purpose of this plague was to punish the oppressors of Israel, it was also designed to cast contempt upon their many heathen gods. The great multiplication of frogs made the goddess Heqa appear not only ridiculous but even vicious. Here she was, tormenting the very people who professed to be her most ardent devotees. Their religious superstitions obliged the Egyptians to respect the creatures they now loathed and hated and would otherwise have destroyed.

3. The river shall bring forth. It is difficult for us to realize the severity of this plague. For the whole country to be filled with these disgusting creatures, to be unable to walk in the streets without treading on them, to find them not only occupying one's doorstep but in possession of one's house, in one's bedchamber and upon one's bed, to listen without respite to their dismal croak, to see nothing but their loathsome forms on

¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment.* Commentary Reference Series (Ex 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

every side, to be in perpetual contact with them and feel the repulsiveness of their cold and clammy skin, would be perhaps enough to try one's sanity.

8. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron. Though able to imitate the new plague, the Egyptian magicians were unable to remove it. This is not expressly stated, but is evident from the fact that Pharaoh was obliged to send for Moses and Aaron to intercede with the Lord, whom he had pretended not to know. Thus the obdurate king, who had stubbornly endured the first plague till God chose to remove it, was forced to acknowledge the impotence of his own gods and to call upon the God of the Hebrews for help.

9. Glory over me. This is an expression of courtesy which means "have the honor of my submission," or as in the RSV, "be pleased to command me." By calling upon Pharaoh to appoint the time for the removal of the frogs Moses gave him another opportunity to witness the undeniable power of God.

12. Moses cried unto the Lord. Up to this point Moses had acted only in response to direct instructions from God. Now, however, he had ventured to fix a definite time for the removal of the plague, seemingly without any such specific command. Appropriately, he resorted to earnest prayer that his proposal might meet with divine approval. For the first time Moses appears in the role of one who knew the unlimited power of prayer, to which he resorted often and successfully during the following difficult years of leadership (see Ex. 32:31, 32; Num. 12:13).

15. When Pharaoh saw. As soon as respite was given, Pharaoh's rebellious spirit again gained the upper hand. Believing the recent danger past and no doubt speculating lightheartedly that further visitations need not be expected, he broke his word. He was set on despising "the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God" was intended to lead him "to repentance." By the "hardness" of his "impenitent heart" he was treasuring up unto himself "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:4, 5).

As the Lord had said. See on ch. 3:19; cf. chs. 4:21; 7:4.

16. Lice. Kinnam, probably derived from the Egyptian *chenemeś*, "gnats" or "mosquitoes." The rendering "lice" follows the opinion of the Jewish historian Josephus and Talmudic writers, but has no linguistic basis. The Egyptian gnats were so small as to be barely visible to the eye but had a sting which, according to Philo and Origen, caused a most painful irritation of the skin.

18. They could not. Many commentators suggest that the magicians gave up the unequal contest by their own choice, realizing that they were unable to compete with Moses and Aaron. The text hardly warrants such an explanation, since the statement is made that they attempted to do what the messengers of the Hebrews' God had done, but without producing any gnats. God permitted them to carry forward their work of opposition to a certain point, and then called a halt by preventing further apparently successful imitation of His own miraculous power.

19. This is the finger. The magicians recognized their own impotence more than do many modern commentators, who think that the magicians could have imitated the third plague just as easily as they did the previous two, had they wished to do so. In attributing this plague to the power of One whose works they could not match, the magicians unintentionally joined forces with Moses and Aaron. How often Christ's opponents among the Pharisees and even the demon-possessed testified to His supernatural power

(John 11:47, 48; Luke 8:28). How often truth is unwittingly drawn from those whose natural inclinations lead them to oppose it!

Pharaoh's heart was hardened. The magicians recognized the futility of further attempts to oppose God, but Pharaoh held out. Pride prevented him from acknowledging defeat. His heart was adamant (see on Ex. 4:21).

20. Stand before Pharaoh. The first nine plagues fall logically into three groups of three plagues each, of which the first two were preceded by a warning and the third was not. In other respects no particular order is apparent, except that each succeeding plague surpassed, in general, the severity or offensiveness of the preceding one.

21. Flies. From *'arob*, a word of uncertain meaning. It may be related to the Assyrian *urubatu*, "mixed, noxious insects." The translators of the LXX, who themselves lived in Egypt, took it to be the dog fly. This large and venomous insect is described by ancient and modern writers as a severe scourge, for when enraged it often fastens itself to the human body, particularly to the edges of the eyelids. This accounts, in part, for the fact that eye diseases are found so commonly in Egypt (see also on v. 24).

22. I will sever. A new feature is introduced, which distinguishes the later from earlier plagues, with one possible exception (see on ch. 7:24). This constituted an additional evidence of the miraculous character of the visitations, well calculated to impress thoughtful and honest minds that God was not a local or even a national deity but one whose power extended to all peoples. Egyptians who studied the course of events during those fateful weeks or months must have recognized the supreme authority of Israel's God over Egypt as well as over the Hebrews themselves.

23. A division. Literally, "redemption." God would establish a sign by which everyone might see that the Hebrews were already "redeemed" from bondage though still nominally in slavery.

24. The land was corrupted. This plague must have been severe in the extreme to "corrupt," or literally, "to destroy" the land. It is not clear how this could have been true, even of dog flies, however numerous they may have been. We simply accept the statement of Holy Writ.

25. Go ye. The fourth plague impressed Pharaoh more than those that had preceded it. Nevertheless, he was not yet prepared to accede to the demand of Moses, but offered, instead, a compromise. Granting the Israelites respite from their toil, he was now willing for them to celebrate their proposed feast—within the borders of Egypt.

26. It is not meet. "It would not be right to do so," as in the RSV. Many animals were held sacred by the Egyptians, some universally and some only locally. By celebrating a great festival anywhere in Egypt the Israelites would inevitably offend the religious sensibilities of their neighbors. This fact was so obvious that even Pharaoh did not attempt to refute Moses' arguments. He himself would have looked upon sacrificial rites performed by the Israelites as an outrageous insult to his gods.

28. Not go very far away. The reasons presented by Moses for going into the desert commended themselves to the heathen king, from his own religious viewpoint. As a result he promised to let the people go into the wilderness and sacrifice if they would be content not to go far away, and provided of course that Moses and Aaron release him and his people from the plague. Pharaoh here revealed for the first time that his real reason for refusing to let Israel go was the fear of losing them altogether. With this in mind he proposed to compromise that they should just enter the wilderness on his eastern border,

remain near the frontier, and thus be within easy reach of his army. Moses seems to have made no objection to this suggestion, since he had requested permission to leave for three days only, and this would not have taken the Hebrews very far beyond the Egyptian frontier.

29. To morrow. Pharaoh had fixed the following day for the lifting of the second plague (v. 10). Similarly, Moses now announced the time for the removal of the fourth. However, he added a solemn warning to the king against further deceitful dealing. His boldness is certainly surprising, but Pharaoh apparently accepted his proposal without objection.

31. There remained not one. The hand of God was shown in the removal, no less than in the infliction of, the plagues. The complete disappearance of the flies was as supernatural as their sudden coming had been.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-32PP 265-267

3-8PP 265

5-14SR 116

9, 10 PP 265

13-15PP 266

15 5T 119

17, 18 PP 266

18, 19 SR 116

19 DA 262; PP 266; SR 116; 1T 292

24 SR 116

24-30PP 266

31, 32 PP 267

CHAPTER 9

1 *The murrain of beasts.* 8 *The plague of boils and blains.* 13 *His message about the hail.* 22 *The plague of hail.* 27 *Pharaoh sueth to Moses, 35 but yet is hardened.*

3. Upon thy cattle. Hitherto the plagues had been directed against the Egyptians themselves rather than against their property. Property may have suffered somewhat under the preceding plague (see ch. 8:24), but otherwise the various afflictions had been the cause of little more than annoyance and pain. Now property was to be affected. Whether Pharaoh would be more impressed by calamities that impoverished his subjects than by those that merely caused them personal suffering remained to be seen. With this in view, the hand of God was first laid upon their cattle, or rather, upon all their domesticated animals.

The horses. Horses, which had been unknown prior to the Hyksos invasion and which consequently do not appear in the list of animals presented to Abraham (Gen. 12:16), first became common under the Eighteenth Dynasty. They seem to have been used chiefly in warfare.

Camels. The camel was not widely used throughout the ancient Near East before the 13th century B.C.; hence it is mentioned but infrequently in the earlier Biblical records. However, representations of camels found in Egypt, Syria-Palestine, and Mesopotamia from the third and second millenniums B.C. show that sporadic domestication of this animal had taken place long before the 13th century B.C. (see on Gen. 12:16; 24:11).

Murrain. The usual Hebrew term for “plague,” and so rendered in the RSV. Inasmuch as the particular disease here mentioned affected animals only, the word might be rendered “animal plague.” Epidemic cattle diseases are not uncommon in Egypt and have at times carried off vast numbers of animals. The miraculous character of this visitation, however, was indicated by its previous announcement, by its appearance on the day appointed, by its severity, and by the fact that the animals of the Hebrews remained unaffected.

5. To morrow. A definite time was fixed for the coming of the plague, as in the case of the previous one (ch. 8:23), in order that Pharaoh might recognize in it a judgment of God. Also, there would be time for those who believed Moses to bring their animals in from the fields (see ch. 9:3).

6. All the cattle of Egypt. That is, all that were in the field (v. 3). At the time of the next plague many of the Egyptians still possessed animals (v. 19). The fact that many Egyptians brought their cattle in indicates how deeply they had been impressed by the power of God and the catastrophes that followed each other in quick succession.

Died not one. On the distinction between Israelites and Egyptians see ch. 8:22.

7. Pharaoh sent. For the first time Pharaoh manifests curiosity regarding the plagues. But in spite of finding the facts to correspond with Moses’ announcement, he was not seriously impressed. In one sense he seems to have been less moved by this plague than by the others. Apparently, he had suffered no great personal loss, and the financial loss to his subjects was of little concern to him. He may have attributed the escape of the animals of the Israelites to the healthier air of Goshen, or to a higher knowledge of their owners in regard to animal care, since they were professional shepherds. An obdurate heart always finds reasons for things it chooses to believe.

8. Take. The sixth plague, like the third, came unannounced, although the miracle was to be performed in the presence of the king. Perhaps this occurred as he was on his way to the river for the daily rites he performed there (see chs. 7:15; 8:20).

Ashes of the furnace. Scholars are divided as to the meaning of the Hebrew word translated “ashes.” Some think it should be rendered “soot.” The furnace was a smelter. This plague in particular seems to be a fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham four centuries earlier (PP 267).

9. A boil. Perhaps an “abscess,” or a “boil breaking forth in blisters.” The exact nature of this disease is not clear. Some have thought that the so-called Nile boils are meant, from which the people of Egypt suffer much toward the end of the annual inundation and which cause an almost unbearable itching. Since this malady is common in Egypt, it would hardly have been considered supernatural unless it came in unprecedented severity. Some have thought the plague to have been smallpox or a skin disease similar to leprosy.

11. The magicians could not stand. It seems that the magicians had, up to this time, always been present when the miracles were wrought, though they had for some time failed to produce counterfeit miracles. On this occasion the plague fell on them with such severity that they could not attend the king, but fled to their homes for protection and treatment.

12. The Lord hardened. See on ch. 4:21.

13. Stand before Pharaoh. The sixth plague was without effect upon the hard heart of Pharaoh, who was untouched either by the sufferings of his people or by his own

affliction. Moses was therefore ordered to appear before him once more to warn him of further and even more dreadful visitations.

Say unto him. Moses was to repeat the same message in the very same words as before, indicating that God changes not (see chs. 8:1, 20; 9:1; etc.). The long message that follows, previously without parallel, contains warnings calculated to make an impression even upon the most hardened sinner.

14. All my plagues upon thine heart. This emphatic announcement contrasted the immediate future with the recent past, and informed the king that God was to bring upon him even more severe judgments than in the past. He might now expect plagues of greater intensity and in more rapid succession, directed primarily at his obdurate and stubborn spirit. The loss of his first-born, the prospective crown prince, would subdue his calloused heart and he would even beg the Israelites to go, entreating their leaders, his worst enemies, to give him their blessings (ch. 12:32).

15. I will stretch out my hand. In Hebrew the verbs of this verse are in the perfect tense and not in the future, as the KJV renders them and thus creates at least an apparent contradiction (see further under v. 16).

16. To shew. God proceeds to explain His reason for not having already destroyed Pharaoh, whose obstinacy had long since called for such punishment. The reason here presented is twofold: (1) that Pharaoh might experience and so come to recognize the might of the true God and repeatedly be compelled to give glory to Jehovah; (2) that the name of God might be declared throughout all the earth. This was completely fulfilled, and Pharaoh was forced to admit not only the superior might of God but His righteousness as well (see v. 27). The mighty events preceding and accompanying the Exodus became world famous. In keeping with their custom not to record adverse events, the Egyptians left no trace of the Exodus experience on their monuments. But they could not prevent the spread of the story of these mighty events to other nations (see Ex. 15:14; Joshua 2:10; etc.). And today, though more than three millenniums have passed since these “marvellous things” happened “in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan” (Ps. 78:12), the story is still read in more than a thousand languages, in every country of the world, proclaimed by countless thousands of preachers, and still believed by millions of Jews and Christians. Could any prophecy be more literally fulfilled than this one spoken to the king of Egypt?

The future tense used by the KJV in rendering Ex. 9:15, 16 (see on v. 15) has led to a misunderstanding of the character of God and the nature of His dealings with men. It is made to appear that God has predestined Pharaoh to pursue his policy of resisting God, in order that God might benefit by his hardness of heart. It is inferred, furthermore, that God either brought him into existence or set him upon the throne of Egypt for this very purpose and doomed him to act in defiance of the divine will. Such an inference is at variance with many plain statements of Scripture which affirm that God does not predetermine the fate of any individual nor does He compel the human will (see Joshua 24:15; Isa. 55:1; John 1:12; John 3:16; John 7:37; Rev. 22:17; etc.). The thought of the original Hebrew of vs. 15 and 16 is more appropriately expressed thus: “By now I could have put forth my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth; but for this purpose have I let you live, to show you my power, so that my name may be declared throughout all the earth” (RSV; see Ed 174-178, 238, 304).

17. *As yet exaltest thou thyself?* It is implied that even at this late hour Pharaoh might have avoided the major disasters that later befell him and his people. Pharaoh was yet to have the opportunity of deciding for himself whether or not he would cooperate with God. In the Hebrew, this verse is not a question, but a simple statement of fact, though the sense is not thereby changed: “You are still exalting yourself,” etc.

18. *To morrow about this time.* That the time was fixed for the beginning of the plague would testify to the king that Jehovah was Lord of heaven and earth, and that the forces of nature, all objects of Egyptian idolatry, were the creatures of His power and subservient to His will. Far from being able to help them, these elements, regarded by the Egyptians as their gods, were under the control of the God of their enemies, and He would now use them as instruments for the punishment of those who worshiped them. How greatly God abhors idolatry!

A very grievous hail. Rain and, more particularly, hail are comparatively rare in Egypt. The region of Cairo has but 2 in. of rainfall annually, and south of Cairo rain is a rare occurrence. Sometimes not a drop of rain falls for years. It is understandable, therefore, that a hailstorm such as that described in vs. 23 and 24 was so extraordinary an experience as to be considered an act of divine punishment (see v. 27).

Since the foundation. This is from another typically Egyptian expression rendered by Moses into Hebrew, which, with numerous others, shows that the author was well acquainted with the Egyptian language. In v. 24 the same thought is expressed by the words “since it became a nation.” Many Egyptian inscriptions refer to the ancient past when their first king united several tribes into one nation.

19. *Gather thy cattle.* Even in the midst of judgment God still showed mercy, warning the Egyptians of their impending doom and advising them to safeguard both themselves and their property. Had Pharaoh and his servants accepted the warning so mercifully given, the lives of both men and beasts would have been spared. On the contrary, the warning was not taken to heart, and great loss of life occurred (v. 25).

20. *He that feared.* For the first time an intimation is made that there were Egyptians who had learned to fear the Lord. Apparently the effect of the plagues had gradually convinced many of them that the God of the Hebrews was indeed a powerful God. They probably did not yet know Him as the only true God, but only as One whom it was advantageous to respect and propitiate. At the Exodus a “mixed multitude,” apparently not Hebrews themselves (cf. Num. 11:4), left Egypt with the departing slaves (Ex. 12:38). As a result of the plagues many Egyptians must have come to the conclusion that it would be to their advantage to join the despised Hebrews and benefit by at least nominal allegiance to their God. Here, at the time of the seventh plague, is the first indication of dissension among the Egyptians, who seem thus far to have been united in their opposition to the Israelites. Some of the “servants [officials] of Pharaoh” profited by the warning given by Moses (ch. 9:19) and housed their cattle and herdsmen in anticipation of the coming storm.

21. *He that regarded not.* A hailstorm of sufficient proportions as to endanger the lives of men and beasts was beyond all Egyptian experience and seemed an utter impossibility. Moses and Aaron must therefore have appeared to the great mass of Egyptians as Lot did to his sons-in-law—“as one that mocked” (Gen. 19:14).

22. *Toward heaven.* The action of stretching the hand toward heaven was appropriate, for the plague was to come from heaven. Aaron’s hand had been stretched

out upon the waters in a similar way for the first and second plagues (chs. 7:19, 20; 8:6), and upon the “dust of the earth” for the third (ch. 8:17).

23. Moses. Beginning with the seventh plague Moses steps forward as the sole agent of God. When calling the representatives of the Israelites, Pharaoh still sent for both Moses and Aaron (v. 27; ch. 10:8) as the two with whom he had been dealing from the time the plagues began. But Moses had now become God’s spokesman in the presence of the king and executor of the divine judgments. By now he must have lost his timidity and fearfulness and become the dauntless champion for the cause of God that he remained till the close of his life.

Thunder and hail, and the fire. Although hail only had been predicted, lightning and thunder commonly accompany hailstorms in warm climates. The peculiar electrical display described here as fire running “along upon the ground” seems to have been something corresponding to “fireballs.”

25. The hail. Severe as the lightning may have been, the hail wrought greater destruction. According to the warning given (v. 19), herdsmen and cattle left in the open were killed.

Smote every herb. Not in the absolute sense, since according to ch. 10:5 some vegetation escaped. It indicates, rather, every kind of crop and fruit tree. From ch. 9:31 it is apparent that only two crops were totally destroyed, the barley and the flax, while others suffered damage in lesser degree.

26. Only in the land of Goshen. See chs. 8:22; 9:4; 10:23.

27. I have sinned. The plague of hail made a stronger impression upon the king than any of the previous judgments. It was the first plague to inflict death upon men, and was the most striking and terrible manifestation of divine power he had yet experienced (v. 24). Pharaoh was therefore more humble than before, and though he had twice called Moses and requested the removal of plagues (ch. 8:8, 28), this was the first time the proud king had admitted the error of his ways. Remarkable as such a confession was, it did not, however, represent sincere repentance, as the limitation “this time” indicates. It was, rather, the effect of terror occasioned more by the fearful lightning and destructive hail than by genuine sorrow for sin.

28. Stay no longer. Again the king gave his word to let the Hebrews depart, if the plague would but cease.

29. Out of the city. Possibly Memphis or Tanis, more likely the latter city (see on ch. 7:15), where the king resided, and to which Moses and Aaron went when sent by God to interview the king or when called by him.

Spread abroad my hands. This is one of several texts in which the custom of spreading one’s hands in prayer is mentioned. Not only Moses prayed in this fashion, but also Job (Job 11:13), Solomon (2 Chron. 6:13), and Ezra (Ezra 9:5).

The earth is the Lord’s. Although the word translated “earth” could also be rendered “land,” and thus applied to Egypt, the former is probably correct, because it was ever God’s purpose to teach men to recognize Him, not as a local god, but as the Ruler of heaven and earth.

30. I know that ye will not yet fear. Moses, knowing that the king’s attitude would remain as adamant as ever, once relief from the plague should come, was bold enough to express his conviction of that fact in the presence of the king. True fear of God is shown by obedience to His commandments, but Pharaoh’s fear was of the kind the devils feel,

for they “also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19). Devout fear leads to obedience, but the fear in Pharaoh’s heart led him to false promises and greater sin. Genuine “fear of the Lord” is not the cringing fear felt by Pharaoh, but a spirit of reverent awe resulting from awareness of God’s sublime majesty and power.

31. Flax. Information concerning the crops that suffered indicates the approximate time of year in which the plague occurred. The Egyptians cultivated flax because they preferred linen garments. The priests wore nothing but linen.

“Was bolled.” Better, “was in blossom.” This would point to the end of January or the beginning of February.

Barley. The barley crop was in ear about the same time, commonly being cut in March. Barley was raised largely for the production of beer, a common beverage among the ancient Egyptians. It was also used for horse feed, and was made into bread by the poorer classes.

32. Wheat. In Egypt the wheat harvest began about a month later than the barley harvest, and continued until the early part of April.

Rie. Rye was not grown in Egypt, and it is generally agreed that the Hebrew word here translated “rie” was in reality spelt, an inferior kind of wheat now ordinarily raised in Egypt as an aftercrop. As the monuments show, it was grown more commonly in ancient times than it is today. Being sown simultaneously with wheat, it would also ripen about the same time, in late March.

The remark that the flax and barley had been destroyed, but that the wheat and spelt had escaped major harm, shows that the plague of hail must have occurred at either the end of January or the beginning of February. That would be two or three months before the Exodus. On the duration of the plagues, see on chs. 7:25 and 9:31.

34. He sinned yet more. In perverse impenitence the king “hardened his heart,” as Moses had predicted. Apparently his officials stood by him in this decision, though the following plague convinced them of the futility of further resistance (ch. 10:7). Whether they supported Pharaoh out of servility or because they were not yet convinced of the power of God is not certain.

Like some of the preceding plagues, the seventh again demonstrated the worthlessness of repentance born of fear. God might thus secure the submission of all men, but the conquest would be worthless, because men’s hearts would not be won. God is met, not in the tempest and fire of fear, but in the still small voice speaking within man’s breast. Many sinners have passed through the gates of fear, where they hear His voice, confess His power, and acknowledge their own unworthiness, but it is not until the silence of the soul has made that voice distinct that men will be transformed in character.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-35PP 267-270

3 PP 267

3-11SR 117

6-8, 10PP 267

11 1T 292

11, 12, 14 PP 267

16 PK 368; PP 267

18-21PP 269

23-25SR 117

CHAPTER 10

1 *God threateneth to send locusts.* 7 *Pharaoh, moved by his servants, inclineth to let the Israelites go.* 12 *The plague of the locusts.* 16 *Pharaoh sueth to Moses.* 21 *The plague of darkness.* 24 *Pharaoh sueth unto Moses, 27 but yet is hardened.*

1. *I have hardened his heart.* Literally, “I, even I, have made heavy his heart” (see on ch. 4:21). The word “I” appears twice in the original, once as an independent personal pronoun and again attached to the verb, for emphasis.

2. *That thou mayest tell.* A new objective of the plagues is now revealed. They were designed not only to impress Pharaoh and his servants with the greatness of God and to secure his cooperation, but to convince the children of Israel for all future generations that the Lord is the only true God. Psalms 78, 105, and 106 illustrate how the story of deliverance was handed down from generation to generation. It was God’s plan that His mercies and wondrous works be kept in perpetual remembrance. His proneness to forget God’s benefits being one of the sad facets of his sinful character, man requires constant exhortation to remember them. This is often true of his daily needs, but applies also to providential circumstances, such as those connected with conversion or recovery from severe illness.

3. *How long?* Pharaoh’s confession (ch. 9:27) had been a humiliating act, but this was nullified by a proud reassertion of his rebellious heart (ch. 9:34, 35). What God desired was not a mere profession of humility, but action in keeping with it. Pharaoh’s repentance would not prove genuine until it led him to release the Israelites.

4. *The locusts.* As further punishment upon the obstinate king God announced a plague of locusts more dreadful than any Egypt had known heretofore. Locusts, God’s “great army,” as they are called in Joel 2:25, have to the present day brought periodic calamity to countries of the Near East, generally every 10 or 15 years. Effective control is now possible through scientific methods, such as the use of flame, chemically treated trenches into which the locusts fall in droves, destruction of the eggs, and the use of arsenic, but such means did not become available until comparatively recent times. Formerly, the coming of the locusts was considered the most terrible of all judgments that could befall a country. Joel gives a vivid description of such a plague, saying, “A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness” (Joel 2:3). They destroy every trace of vegetation, including crops, vegetables, shrubs, and thistles. They even damage the bark of trees, the smaller branches being completely peeled and made white (see Joel 1:7–12). They arrive in great swarms, their noise in flight resembling that of rain or the crackle of fire in dry grass, and their numbers darken the sky (Joel 2:2, 3).

5. *Cover the face of the earth.* This is literally true. Sometimes they cover the ground so thickly that over vast areas the soil cannot be seen at all.

Eat the residue. Since locusts leave no trace of verdure (see on v. 4) whatever, they would obviously devour all that survived the devastating hailstorm, especially the wheat and the spelt (see ch. 9:32). Prospects for the next harvest appeared dim indeed. No product of any kind could now be expected for the current year, and famine must inevitably result.

6. *Fill thy houses.* Constructed with various openings for light and ventilation, ancient houses afforded insects ready means of entrance. In a plague, swarms of locusts would fly into the houses and creep over the walls by the tens of thousands. Observers who have experienced such a plague claim that it is even difficult to keep the locusts out of one's mouth when eating.

Neither thy fathers. Like other Near Eastern countries, Egypt occasionally suffers from devastating plagues of locusts. This visitation, however, was to exceed any such plagues in the past.

He turned himself. Moses did not wait to learn the effect of his announcement upon the king, knowing that Pharaoh would not fear the Lord.

7. *Pharaoh's servants said.* Thus far the courtiers seem not to have ventured their own opinion, at least in opposition to Pharaoh. Except for the magicians, who had pointed to the lice of the third plague as "the finger of God" (ch. 8:19), the entire court had remained passive while the king made the successive fateful decisions affecting the nation. They are even said to have "hardened" their hearts like the king (ch. 9:34). But now they speak forth their fears. Having already lost most of their cattle and nearly all crops for the current season, they became genuinely alarmed, fearing that further calamities would ruin them permanently. It is significant that they interfered before the plague actually began, for this revealed that they had come to believe in the reliability of Moses' predictions and in the power of his God. Some had already come to this point when the hailstorm was announced (ch. 9:20), but that feeling had now become more general.

8. *Go, serve the Lord.* Realizing that he lacked the support of his advisers, Pharaoh permitted them to call Moses and Aaron back for further questioning. The command "Go" was almost immediately qualified by a question implying that not all the people were included in it. It seems that the king was vainly looking for a minimum concession he might make to placate Moses and avert further calamities. He sought therefore to give Moses' request the appearance of being unreasonable.

9. *With our young and with our old.* There was no ambiguity in Moses' answer; the whole nation was to participate in the proposed feast. Their flocks and herds were to accompany them, not only to provide sacrifices for the celebration and food for the people, but also to be cared for during the days of absence.

10. *He said.* Inferring from Moses' statement that the Israelites had no intention of returning, Pharaoh again became angry, saying, as translated more clearly, "The Lord be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Look, you have some evil purpose in mind" (RSV). This answer reflects contempt not only for Moses and Aaron but also for the Lord, who had already proved by the mighty manifestations of His power that He could do with Pharaoh as He wished. After this expression of ill will the king told the messengers of God that he saw through their evil intentions. He pretended to have more concern for the Hebrew women and children than Moses and Aaron had, but was determined to hold the former as a guarantee that the men would return (PP 271).

11. *Go now.* Even this apparent concession was not seriously meant. This is evident from the expression "go now," in which the irony is unmistakable, and still more so from the fact that with these words he broke off all negotiations with Moses and Aaron and drove them from his presence. This insult, which he had not previously offered them,

shows that his rage increased as he saw more and more clearly that he must eventually yield.

13. An east wind. Locusts generally come with a wind, since they cannot fly far without it. An east wind would in this case have brought them from northern Arabia, a region where they often breed in large numbers. This would be somewhat exceptional, since the locusts that occasionally plague Egypt usually come from Libya or Ethiopia, to the south or southwest. The fact that the wind blew for an entire day and night before the locusts arrived suggests that they came from a considerable distance.

14. Over all the land. Ordinarily swarms of locusts are confined to certain parts of the country, but upon this occasion the plague affected a greater area than ever before. This in itself was miraculous.

Neither after them. This statement is not at variance with Joel 2:2, where centuries later another unique plague of locusts is mentioned, for the former relates to Egypt and the latter to the land of Israel.

15. The land was darkened. It is not quite clear whether the darkness here spoken of was caused by the locusts in flight or after they had settled down. Locusts usually come in such thick clouds that they obscure the light of the sun and often turn noonday into twilight. It is also true that their brownish bodies and wings darken the ground once they settle to earth. The latter explanation is more probable (see Joel 2:2).

All the fruit. Although injury to fruit by the hail is not expressly mentioned in the account of that plague, it is implied (see Ex. 9:25). Locusts generally devour green crops, plants, and leaves first and then set to work upon such harder materials as reeds, twigs, and the bark of trees. In Egypt the principal fruits would be figs, pomegranates, mulberries, grapes, and dates.

Not any green thing. Modern observers state that the settling of a swarm of locusts for but half an hour is sufficient to transform a fertile region into a temporary desert. After the locusts have passed, nothing remains but the roots, stems, and thick branches. The appearance of a region so devastated is similar to what it would be if fire had swept through it (see Joel 2:3).

16. Then Pharaoh called. The king had made similar appeals before, but never in such haste as at this time. Evidently this plague terrified him more than any of the previous seven.

18. Intreated the Lord. Moses knew that neither a word of reproach nor a demand would change the hardened heart of the monarch. Nevertheless he interceded, but not on the basis of any promise of the king, which he now knew from experience would soon be violated. The patience and magnanimity of Moses are truly remarkable. He granted the royal request the instant it was made, without either asking a favor or uttering the slightest reproach.

19. A mighty strong west wind. Literally, "a sea wind," indicating that it came from the Mediterranean. Since it carried the locusts into the Red Sea, it must have come from the northwest. Inasmuch as the Mediterranean Sea lay to the west of Palestine, the Hebrew people commonly used "the sea" as a synonym for "west."

The Red sea. Literally, "Sea of Reeds." It is not certain why it should have had this name, since there are no reeds there today, nor is there any indication that there were in ancient times. However, the evidence of numerous Bible texts (see Ex. 15:4; 23:31; Num. 21:4; etc.) makes it rather certain that the Sea of Reeds was actually the Red Sea, and not

one of the Bitter Lakes in the region of the Suez Canal, as some commentators have maintained.

20. *Hardened Pharaoh's heart.* See on ch. 4:21.

21. *Stretch out thine hand.* The ninth plague, like the third and the sixth, was inflicted without prior warning. After the plague of boils, God had announced that He was about to send all His plagues upon the "heart" of the king (ch. 9:14). A succession of judgments was therefore to be expected. Apparently, this plague quickly followed the eighth.

Darkness. Some commentators have assumed that an eclipse of the sun caused the intense darkness. This interpretation, however, cannot be correct, inasmuch as an eclipse could never produce darkness lasting for three days (v. 22). The majority of interpreters have felt that the miracle was wrought through the *chamsin*, a desert sandstorm that occasionally blows over Egypt and covers the land with a weird darkness. This is due to dense clouds of fine sand that the wind carries with it and that intercept the light of the sun, producing darkness deeper than that of the worst fogs. The present writer once experienced such a sandstorm at the edge of the Indian Desert on a clear day, and can testify that for half an hour darkness prevailed equal to that of a moonless night. Saturated with fine particles of sand, the wind was most annoying and depressing, and men and beasts looked for cover. The fine sand penetrated every room and even the closets of the houses. A sandstorm may blow for two or three days, but it seldom has so extreme an effect for very long at a time. Even if God used swirling sand to produce the darkness, it was nonetheless miraculous, because though the entire country was enveloped in impenetrable darkness for three days, the children of Israel, living in that same country, had light (v. 23). But the Egyptians were accustomed to severe sandstorms blowing in from the desert. Furthermore, with each of the other plagues Moses describes the agency by which it was accomplished, and it would be logical here to expect him to refer to it as a sandstorm if that is what he meant.

Like the previous plagues, this one dealt a heavy blow to the Egyptian gods. The sun-god Ra had been the chief god of Egypt for centuries, and every king called himself the "son of Ra." In the time of Moses this god was identified with Amen and bore the name Amen-Ra. The greatest temples the world has ever seen were built in his honor, and one of them, the great temple at Karnak in Upper Egypt, is still magnificent, even in a state of ruin. Another god was the sun disc Aten, which a few decades after the Exodus became, briefly, the supreme god of the Egyptian religious system. By the ninth plague the utter impotence of these gods was clearly demonstrated to their worshipers.

23. *Light in their dwellings.* No explanation is given as to how this was accomplished. Those who account for the darkness as the result of a sandstorm explain that it did not extend as far as the land of Goshen. But in that case Egyptians living among the Israelites, if there were any, would have shared the benefits of their neighbors, which seems not to have been the case. The record indicates that the darkness was general, but that the children of Israel were miraculously supplied with light.

24. *Pharaoh called unto Moses.* The intense darkness was more than the king could long endure. On the third day of its duration he sent messengers to locate Moses. Ushered into the presence of the king, Moses was informed that the Hebrews, including their families, were to be permitted to depart for the proposed religious celebration in the desert, but that they should leave their flocks and herds behind. This would ensure their

return from the wilderness, since without the cattle they would be unable to live many days in the desert.

26. *Not an hoof.* Moses refused Pharaoh's proposed compromise in unmistakable words. He had already declared, on a former occasion, that they would go with their families and all their beasts (v. 9), and this stipulation he would by no means retract now.

We know not. Moses offered an explanation for his refusal. The proposed feast was new and its ritual was not yet known. Exact directions could not be expected until they had reached the location God should designate. The cattle must be taken with them because the feast would certainly require the offering of sacrifices.

27. *The Lord hardened.* See on ch. 4:21.

28. *Get thee from me.* This reply indicates furious anger. The king realized that Moses would deprive him of the free labor Egypt had so long enjoyed. Greatly enraged, he lost all self-control and rudely bade Moses not to return, under penalty of death.

29. *Thou hast spoken well.* Moses' reply was polite and dignified. The representative of a nation of slaves stood before their cruel master, in complete control of the situation. His words imply that Moses welcomed the royal decision, since further interviews would be useless.

I will see thy face again no more. These words simply express acquiescence to the king's command. Moses would not voluntarily appear before Pharaoh again.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-29PP 270-272

1-6PP 270

7-20PP 271

13, 21 SR 117

21-29PP 272

28 PP 273

CHAPTER 11

1 *God's message to the Israelites to borrow jewels of their neighbours. 4 Moses threateneth Pharaoh with the death of the firstborn.*

1. *One plague more.* Although God had previously indicated to Moses that several judgments would be required to move Pharaoh to issue permission for their departure (see chs. 3:19; 9:14), He never revealed the precise number of plagues that would be required. For the first time the veil of uncertainty is now lifted as to the time when deliverance might be expected.

Thrust you out. The Hebrew verb is most emphatic. Pharaoh would eventually drive them out, making no reservations of any kind.

2. *Every man.* At first only the women were to "borrow" (see on ch. 3:22). Now that the time had come the men were included. It may seem strange that men as well as women were advised to ask jewelry from their neighbors. However, Egyptian monuments picture men wearing as much jewelry—necklaces, bracelets, rings, etc.—as the women.

3. *The man Moses was very great.* Some have thought it strange that Moses, if he were indeed the author of the Pentateuch, should make such a comment. There is, however, nothing in the statement inferring vanity on the part of Moses. He is simply explaining why the Egyptians gave so freely of their means. It was natural that, as the agent of God, the people should have associated Moses with the "very great" signs they had witnessed. First of all, he had confounded the magicians (ch. 8:18, 19), then he had

so impressed the courtiers that a number of them took advantage of one of his warnings and saved their livestock (ch. 9:20). Finally, almost the entire court became convinced that it lay in his power to destroy the country (ch. 10:7). Moses had dealt with the king as with an equal, and the fact that the people revered him as a god automatically enhanced Moses' reputation with them. Had Moses not appeared to them as a most extraordinary person whom it would be dangerous to molest, some violence would probably have been done him long since. As it was, the entire nation seemed happy that the people who had occasioned them so much misfortune were to leave, and therefore they gave gladly of their means.

4. *And Moses said.* Once more Moses appeared in the presence of Pharaoh. According to ch. 10:28 Pharaoh had threatened him with death should he dare to do so. It is certain that Moses would not have returned except upon an explicit divine command.

About midnight. This midnight could not be the one following the day on which Moses made the announcement to the king, for it was not till after this conversation with Pharaoh that Moses received directions as to the Passover. These directions must have been communicated to the people several days prior to the feast of the Passover and their departure from Egypt (ch. 12:3, 6). The night was no doubt purposely left indefinite in order that Pharaoh might have time to ponder the fate that awaited him and his people.

Will I go out. It is noteworthy that the Lord Himself visited Egypt with the tenth plague, whereas each of the others had been inflicted by Moses and Aaron as agents of God, through a natural medium.

5. *All the firstborn.* This stroke was to fall upon the first-born of both man and beast. God did not desire to obliterate the Egyptians and their cattle, but simply to convince them that opposition to His purpose for Israel could no longer be tolerated.

6. *A great cry.* The intensity of Oriental emotions and the freedom with which they are expressed are well known. Ancient Egyptian funeral scenes picture wailing women with disheveled hair and arms upraised, expressing their sorrow by gestures as well as vocally. Herodotus relates that the Egyptians stripped themselves and beat their breasts at funerals (ii. 85), a custom that also prevailed among the Semites. With bitter mourning in every house, the cry of Egypt might now well be one such as had never been heard before and would not be heard again.

7. *Move his tongue.* The word translated "move" means "to cut into," "to sharpen," "to bring to a point," and alludes to the fact that a dog points its tongue when it growls. Israel would not suffer the slightest injury (see Joshua 10:21), whereas many Egyptians would die.

8. *In a great anger.* Literally, in the "heat of anger." Thus far Moses had displayed more than human patience in his dealings with the king. This was a reflection of the long-suffering and patience of God, whose ambassador he was and in whose name and by whose authority he had acted. Now, however, the wrath of the departing servant of God was evidence to the hardhearted king that his day of grace was at an end and that the wrath of God was about to burst upon him.

9. *The Lord said unto Moses.* Most commentators take these words as a repetition of previously made divine statements, and seek to translate them, "as the Lord had said unto Moses." But they may also be taken as a renewed pledge of God to Moses that He would fulfill the prediction made prior to his call (ch. 4:23).

10. Did all these wonders. Before proceeding to relate the last and greatest of all the plagues, Moses pauses momentarily to glance back at the series of miracles, meditating as it were on their failure to move the stubborn will of Pharaoh. On the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, see on ch. 4:21.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3 PP 272
4-8PP 273
5 SR 118
10 5T 274

CHAPTER 12

1 *The beginning of the year is changed.* 3 *The passover is instituted.* 11 *The rite of the passover.* 15 *Unleavened bread.* 29 *The firstborn are slain.* 31 *The Israelites are driven out of the land.* 37 *They come to Succoth.* 43 *The ordinance of the passover.*

1. The Lord spake. Regulations pertaining to the first of the so-called Mosaic institutions are recorded in this chapter. It should be noticed that neither Moses nor Aaron introduced legislation of his own, either here or later. The whole religious and civil system announced to Israel by Moses before the Exodus, and after, was revealed to him. He was not the originator of the laws in the Pentateuch that bear his name, but merely the appointed instrument through which God's will was made known to His people.

In the land of Egypt. Since the greater part of the Mosaic legislation was given at Mt. Sinai, Moses emphasizes that this ordinance, the Passover, was instituted prior to the Exodus.

2. This month. Sometimes, as here, designated as "the first month of the year" (Ex. 40:2, 17; Lev. 23:5; etc.), also called *Abib* (Ex. 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Deut. 16:1). *Abib*, generally falling in our month of April, means "ear-month," owing to the fact that grain was then in the ear. After the captivity, Babylonian calendar names were adopted and *Abib* became *Nisan* (see Neh. 2:1; Esther 3:7). The new ordinance implies that the Israelite year had hitherto begun at a different time, probably with the month later called *Tishri*, which corresponds to our September or October. Henceforth two reckonings were employed, one for sacred, the other for civil, purposes, the first month of each year being the seventh month of the other, though the numbers always ran from Nisan as the first. *Abib*, "the month of ears," became now the first month of the ecclesiastical year, and *Tishri* became its seventh, likewise honored by important feasts later instituted at Sinai.

The civil year, beginning with the month of *Tishri*, was never abandoned by the Israelites and is still in use among the Jews today. Its existence can be traced through the entire OT period. It was perpetuated by the Jews in the belief that God created the world in the fall of the year.

3. In the tenth day. Though the lamb designated for the Passover feast was not to be slain and eaten before the 14th day of the month (v. 6), preparations for the feast were to be started 4 days in advance.

A lamb. The Hebrew word is applicable to both sheep and goats, without limit as to age. However, by enactment the age was fixed (see v. 5) at one year, and a man was free to select either a lamb or a goat (v. 5). It is interesting that the Hebrews in general

preferred a lamb to a kid, and with one recorded exception (2 Chron. 35:7), seem never to have used anything else for the Passover ritual.

4. If the household. At a later time Jewish tradition fixed at ten the number of persons for whom one lamb was to be apportioned, and ruled also that all members of the family, men, women and children, must participate in the activities of the feast. The lamb, according to Jewish sources, was usually slain between the 9th hour (c. 3 P.M.) and the 11th hour (c. 5 P.M.).

Every man according to his eating. When provision was made for those who were to participate, consideration was to be given to the amount each one would be likely to eat. Children and the aged were not to be counted in the same way as men in the vigor of life. Consequently, more than two families might unite for this purpose.

5. Without blemish. Freedom from blemish and injury not only befitted the sacredness of the purpose to which the animals were to be devoted, but was a symbol of the moral integrity of the One represented by the sacrifice. A devout spirit would teach a man that the “blind,” the “lame,” and the “sick” would not be acceptable to God (Mal. 1:8). The law afterward expressly prohibited the use of imperfect animals for obligatory sacrifices, though they might be presented as freewill offerings (Lev. 22:20–25). Freedom from blemish was especially important in a victim intended to typify Christ.

A male. This requirement was made because the lamb stood in the place of the first-born male of the family.

Of the first year. The animals to be selected were probably older than 7 days (see Ex. 22:30; Lev. 22:27), but should not in any case exceed the age of 12 months.

6. The whole assembly. The head of each family was to offer the sacrifice for himself and for his family. Thus, no one outside the family intervened between it and God. This provision was in recognition of the fact that Israel was a nation of priests, as are Christians today (Rev. 1:6; 1 Peter 2:5, 9). The institution of the Levitical priesthood came at a later time (Ex. 32:26–29; Deut. 10:8).

In the evening. The Hebrew words of this phrase read, literally, “between the two evenings.” This provision has been explained in two ways. Some have said that the first “evening” begins with sunset and that the second begins with the end of twilight. The medieval Jewish scholar Eben Ezra considered that twilight lasted for approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes. The command of Deut. 16:6, “Thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun,” seems to support this view. Others have regarded the first “evening” as beginning when the sun begins visibly to decline from the zenith, at about three o’clock in the afternoon, and the second evening as beginning at sunset. In support of this view various texts have been quoted, such as Lev. 23:5; Num. 9:3, which refer to the Passover as being on the 14th of the month. If the slaughtering, they say, took place after sunset, it would then fall on the 15th of Nisan, not the 14th. The prevailing custom in the time of Christ agreed with this explanation; hence, Passover lambs were slain in the late afternoon, approximately the time when the true “Lamb of God” died for guilty man on the cross (1 Cor. 5:7; Matt. 27:45–50).

Since time must necessarily be allowed for the preparation of the paschal meal, which was to be over before midnight, and since the word “evening” in Hebrew, as well as in other languages, is not limited to the time after sunset, the custom of slaying the animal in the afternoon may already have been in use long before the ecclesiastical authorities of

the rabbinical age gave it their official approval. According to Josephus it was the custom in his day to offer the lamb at about three o'clock in the afternoon (*Antiquities* xiv. 4. 3).

7. Take of the blood. The blood represents the life (Lev. 17:11), and as the very essence of the sacrifice it was ever regarded as the special symbol of atonement, which the sacrifices typified. Since the paschal "lamb" was to redeem the "house," which in Hebrew also means "family," the sign of the atonement was to be conspicuously displayed.

Strike it. This was to be done by dipping a bunch of hyssop in the blood and thus sprinkling it upon the door frame (see Ex. 12:22). That this sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb was a symbol of the sacrifice and atonement made by the death of Jesus Christ is clearly implied in the NT (see 1 Peter 1:2; Rom. 5:8, 9; Heb. 9:13, 14; 13:12). It is to be noted that no blood was sprinkled on the threshold, perhaps in harmony with the thought that a man should not tread "under foot the Son of God," nor count "the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing" (Heb. 10:29). That the sprinkling with blood was to be regarded as an act of purification is evident from the fact that a hyssop branch was used for the purpose (Ex. 12:22). Sprinkling with hyssop is prescribed only in connection with purification (Lev. 14:49–52; Num. 19:18, 19; Ps. 51:7; PP 275).

In Egypt the Israelites had no common altar, and for this reason the houses in which they assembled for the Passover were consecrated, and the individuals found in them were preserved when the destroyer passed by. Thus the sprinkling of blood on the doorposts and the lintel became a sign of deliverance. God promised to spare every house so marked through faith in this promise. After settlement in the land of Canaan the paschal lamb was to be slain and the Passover celebrated by all the people at one place, which God would choose, rather than in the various towns and villages (Deut. 16:5, 6). All males over 12 years of age were required to come to Jerusalem for this purpose. In Egypt, obviously, the Passover was celebrated under unusual circumstances. Whether the ritual of sprinkling blood at the door was perpetuated, perhaps in modified form, is not known.

8. Roast with fire. The meat of sacrificial meals was commonly boiled (1 Sam. 2:14, 15), but for the paschal lamb specific directions were given not to eat it raw or boil it, but to roast it (see Ex. 12:9). The reasons may have been that roasting was easier than boiling and that it would have been difficult to boil the "lamb" without cutting it into pieces, a procedure that seems also to have been prohibited (see Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12; John 19:36).

Unleavened bread. The roasted lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread, for leaven produces fermentation, a natural symbol of impurity and moral corruption. For this reason leaven was also excluded from cereal sacrifices as defiling (Lev. 2:11). That Paul understood leaven in this sense is seen from his interpretation of the Passover as a type of Christ (1 Cor. 5:7, 8).

With bitter herbs. That "bitter herbs" is the correct translation of a Hebrew word meaning literally "bitter [thing]s" cannot reasonably be doubted. Though it is not known what kind of "herbs" were used in Egypt, Palestinian Jews later used two varieties of lettuce, a kind of thistle, endive, and cress. Lettuce and endive are native to Egypt and Palestine. The latter may be found from the beginning of the winter months to the end of March, and lettuce in April and May. This probably accounts for the fact that the Jews

considered these plants necessary ingredients of the Passover meal. Whatever bitter herbs were used, it is obvious that they were designed to remind the participants of their bondage and bitter suffering in the land of Egypt.

9. Eat not of it raw. This injunction was necessary in view of the fact that pagan peoples often ate raw flesh at their sacrificial meals. As to the prohibition against boiling the paschal lamb, see on v. 8.

His head with his legs. Ancient Jewish expositors correctly understood this to mean that the lamb was to be roasted whole, including both head and thighs (v. 46).

The purtenance. The viscera were to be roasted along with the rest of the lamb, the former first being cleansed. The preparation of the lamb typified the fact that the body of Jesus was not to be broken (see John 19:33, 36).

10. Let nothing of it remain. All the flesh was to be consumed at one meal lest putrefaction set in. Since Christ's body was not to see corruption (Acts 2:27, 31; 13:35–37), the symbolic lamb should not either. If the paschal lamb should prove too much for the number of participants, the remainder was to be destroyed, in order to prevent profanation of the sacred symbols of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

11. Your loins girded. Ancient representations show Semites wearing long, loose garments, still the style in many Eastern countries. For work, or travel with a load to carry, the fore part of the garment is folded up and tucked into the girdle.

Your shoes. Specifically mentioned, it not being customary to wear shoes inside the house or at meals. Some Jews have regarded these directions as of perpetual obligation. The general view, however, has been that these instructions applied to the first occasion only, when alone they served a useful purpose.

Eat it in haste. Not knowing the moment they were to set out on their journey, and having to burn the bones of the lamb before their departure, they were to complete the meal in the shortest possible time.

The Lord's passover. With these words the significance of the meal is emphasized. The people were to realize that this was not an ordinary meal, nor was it merely a sacrificial repast such as they had known. For one thing, the lives of their first-born depended upon compliance with the regulations. It was, furthermore, the symbol of their deliverance, first, from bondage in Egypt, and second, in a wider sense they did not as yet understand, from the bondage of sin.

12. All the gods. The execution of judgment on all the gods of Egypt can best be understood when it is remembered that many animals were deified and worshiped. Some domestic animals had already suffered as a result of previous plagues, but now every first-born beast was to be slain. This plague would affect not only the sacred bull *Apis*, a first-born animal, but also many sacred cows, rams, crocodiles, snakes, cats, etc. Though many of these creatures were of no commercial or utilitarian value, their sudden and simultaneous death would be certain to impress the Egyptians with their own impotence (see on chs. 7:17; 8:2; see also PP 333).

13. I will pass over you. In passing through the land of Egypt to smite all the first-born of man and beast, the Lord would "pass over," *pasach*, the Israelites. This word was transliterated into Greek as *pascha*, from which comes our English word paschal.

14. A memorial. The directions thus far given had reference, primarily, to the first celebration of the Passover, the night preceding the Exodus. Now it is announced that the

observance should be commemorated annually. In the future certain other features were to be added, such as the removal from the house of all leaven, the eating of unleavened bread for seven days after the Passover, the gathering for worship on the first and last days of the feast, and the observance of these days as days of sabbatic rest.

For ever. From *'olam*, a literal rendering of which would be “perpetually.” Inasmuch as Israel’s deliverance was of perpetual significance, their commemoration of the event was to be perpetual, so long as Israel should continue to be God’s chosen people. As a type, it was to remain in force until the coming of the antitype, Jesus Christ, who was to bring deliverance from sin. The duration of “for ever,” *'olam*, is conditional upon the nature of that to which it is applied. It may refer to that which is without either beginning or end, as, for example, God Himself, or to time which has a beginning but no end, like the eternal life of the redeemed, or it may signify a shorter period of time which has both a beginning and an end. Here, it has the latter meaning. Instituted at the time of the Exodus, the Passover remained in force until the crucifixion.

15. Seven days. The first of these seven days was the 15th of the first month (Lev. 23:6; Num. 28:17), or from the evening following the 14th day to the evening following the 21st day of the first month (Ex. 12:18).

Cut off. There are 36 instances in which an individual who had neglected some particular religious duty, is threatened with being “cut off” from the chosen people. What actually happened in such a case is not known, for no specific instance of such an occurrence is on record, nor were instructions given as to how the threat was to be carried out. Some have thought it meant a violent death, a premature death, or perhaps eternal death. In all probability it simply meant separation from the rights and privileges belonging to an Israelite. After being “cut off” the man was considered a stranger, with no share whatever in the blessings of the covenant.

Though perhaps unknown to others, a man’s misdeed would be known to God, and future compliance with the provisions of ceremonial and moral law would not of itself atone for past sins of omission or commission. The person was disfellowshipped, but whether the act was to be performed by man or by God is not clear. This “cutting off” is probably what Paul makes reference to in Rom. 9:3 (see on Gen. 17:14).

16. An holy convocation. On the 15th of Abib, or Nisan, the first of the seven days of unleavened bread following the night of the paschal meal, the people were to assemble for worship. This is the first instance in the Scriptures in which mention is made of an assembly called for such a purpose. “Holy convocation” is an exact and appropriate translation of the Hebrew term here used, and signifies an assembly called by the express command of God for the promotion of holiness.

In the seventh day. The 21st of Abib, the last of the seven days of unleavened bread, was likewise distinguished from those that intervened, as a day for “holy convocation” (see also Lev. 23:4–8). Only one other Israelite festival, the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:39–42), was of so long duration.

No manner of work. In all countries feast days were occasions when people abstained from those ordinary pursuits of life which would interfere with performance of the religious rites or duties of the day. Only among the Hebrews, however, was absolute cessation from all regular work strictly enjoined. The seventh day of the feast was a day of rest from all labor and was therefore called a “sabbath” (see Lev. 23:15), for “sabbath” means “rest.”

May be done. No “servile work” (Lev. 23:7) was permitted. But God did not intend that His people should suffer by being deprived of food, for those days were to be periods of joy and gladness of heart. Permission was therefore given to perform such duties as are necessary to the normal maintenance of life and health.

17. Your armies. More accurately, “your hosts” (RSV). Israel left Egypt unarmed and unprepared for war (PP 282). For the various expressions used and regulations mentioned in vs. 17–20, see on vs. 14–16.

19. A stranger. The non-Israelite, who lived either temporarily or permanently among the Hebrew people, but without accepting their religious beliefs and practices. The regulation prohibiting the use of leavened bread was equally binding upon these “strangers.”

Born in the land. An Israelite. “The land” must refer to Canaan, which was regarded as the true home of Israel from the time it was assigned by God to the posterity of Abraham (Gen. 15:18). The term “born in the land” was applied to natural-born Israelites, although all those living in the time of Moses were in reality born in Egypt. They were descendants of Isaac and Jacob, who were born in the land of Canaan and had received it from God as a permanent home.

21. The elders. See on ch. 3:16.

Draw out. This probably refers to the custom of shepherds and shearers of drawing a sheep from the flock by catching its leg with a shepherd’s crook. As to the lamb, see on v. 3.

22. Hyssop. The Biblical hyssop, most authorities agree, is the gray-green marjoram, *Origanum maru*, now known in Palestine as *za’tar*. This little plant with a pungent, fragrant smell, a taste something like peppermint, and masses of tiny white flowers, grows commonly on rocks and terrace walls. It has thick, hairy leaves and branches well adapted to holding liquids. It is used today as a spice or condiment and has some repute as a medicine. The Samaritans still use a bunch of *za’tar* at their Passover ceremonies to smear the blood of the paschal lamb upon the door frames of their houses.

In addition to its use in the Passover ritual, hyssop was employed on the day of the cleansing of a leper or a house (Lev. 14:6, 49), or one defiled by the dead, in connection with the offering of the red heifer (Num. 19:6, 17). Moreover, Moses used hyssop when he “sprinkled both the book, and all the people” at the ratification of the covenant (Heb. 9:19). Hyssop thus became symbolic of cleansing (Ps. 51:7). See also on v. 7.

None of you shall go out. In this night of judgment there would be no safety anywhere except behind the bloodstained door. As for the Hebrew there was no assurance of safety beyond the protection of the blood of the lamb, so for the Christian there is no other salvation than the blood of Jesus Christ, the true “Lamb of God” (John 1:36; Acts 4:12).

23. For vs. 23 and 24 see on vs. 12–14.

26. What mean ye? Moses assumed that the paschal ceremonies would arouse curiosity, and that each generation in succession would wish to know their origin and meaning. The ceremony is called a “service,” or task, inasmuch as it was performed in fulfillment of a divine command.

27. Worshipped. Upon hearing these instructions the people, in the person of their elders (see v. 21,) “bowed,” literally, “made obeisance.” Thus they expressed their faith and manifested gratitude for the deliverance they were soon to experience.

28. *So did they.* The long series of miracles wrought by Moses and Aaron had so impressed the people that they obeyed immediately and unquestioningly. Inasmuch as the command was issued prior to the 10th of Abib (v. 3,) and the paschal lamb was not to be slain before the 14th, several days of preparation are covered by v. 28.

29. *At midnight.* Literally, in “the half of the night.” The day, though known to the Israelites, had not been announced to the king, and this uncertainty must have added to his anxiety. When Moses had left the obstinate king every courtier was no doubt frightened at the prospect of losing his first-born. However, when several days passed by without the fulfillment of the threat, many people, perhaps even the king himself, may have thought that nothing was likely to happen. There must ever have been present, though, the fear that Moses’ word might come true.

The firstborn of Pharaoh. If Amenhotep II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus (see Introduction), it was his eldest son, the brother of his successor, Thutmose IV, who was slain during that night of horror. No non-Biblical records of this event are extant; in fact, the ancient Egyptians customarily passed over in silence any humiliating experience. Nevertheless, Thutmose IV left inferential evidence of the unexpected death of his brother and his own elevation to the status of crown prince. The stele of the Sphinx at Giza records that he had the sand removed from that ancient monument in gratitude for the divine appointment he unexpectedly received in its shadow. In the inscription he tells of hunting near the Sphinx on a certain day. While he was taking his siesta in its shade, this “great god” (the Sphinx) appeared to him in a vision and spoke to him as a father addresses a son, revealing that he was to be the future king of Egypt. The fact that this incident is recorded on a stone monument shows that Thutmose IV had not originally been designated crown prince, nor had he expected to become king. It reveals also that he attributed his accession to the throne to divine interposition. Although his elder brother, the original crown prince, is not mentioned, there is no doubt among those acquainted with Egyptian inscriptions that something unusual happened to this unmentioned eldest son of Amenhotep II.

We cannot expect a satisfactory answer from Egyptian records as to what happened to the young man. But on the assumption that Amenhotep II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus, the death of his eldest son under the tenth plague would result in the elevation of the younger son, later Thutmose IV, to heir apparent to the throne. To avoid attributing his elevation to a disaster the God of the Hebrews brought on the country, Thutmose IV could have invented and published the story of a supposed heavenly vision. Irregular regal succession was customarily explained as such a divine interference on the part of the great Egyptian gods. When Hatshepsut followed her father on the throne, the announcement was made that the god Amen had begotten her and commanded her to be the ruler of Egypt. When Thutmose III, without legal right to the throne, was pronounced king during a temple revolt, a specific decree of the god Amen was published by way of authority for his irregular succession.

The firstborn of the captive. This phrase is parallel to that of ch. 11:5, “The firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill.” In both cases the general meaning is that all classes of people suffered, from highest to lowest. However, it is also true that captives were in some cases employed as mill workers (see Judges 16:21).

All the firstborn of cattle. The word here translated “cattle” includes also “beasts” in general, as in Lev. 11:2, where the same Hebrew word has more accurately been rendered “beasts.” The plague was not limited to domestic animals. See also on ch. 11:5.

30. Pharaoh rose up. The visit of the angel of death to the host of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:35) seems not to have been suspected until the survivors arose the next morning. In Egypt, however, every household was apparently aroused from sleep at midnight, when the first-born suddenly fell ill and died.

A great cry. See on Ex. 11:6, of which this was the fulfillment. The general cry that arose throughout the length and breadth of Egypt at that midnight hour was accompanied by urgent insistence that the Israelites should depart at once (v. 33). By now the Egyptians were no doubt fearful that they would all die should the Israelites remain.

31. He called for Moses and Aaron. The “cry” of the people had no doubt been heard in the palace, and the king was aware of the popular demand that the Israelites be sent out of the land. The entire country now suffered to the limit of endurance because of the stubbornness of its monarch. Realizing that he must act at once in order to avert more severe judgments, Pharaoh sent his chief officers (see ch. 11:8) while it was still night to summon the hated leaders of the Hebrews, whom he had refused to see again (ch. 10:28).

32. Bless me also. Pharaoh’s surrender was now complete. Not only did he command them to leave the country at once and take their possessions with them, but he placed a request before the two brothers that they could scarcely have expected. Their words had brought a curse upon him; it might be that their words could also bring blessing. There is no record of how his request was received, but that it should have been made at all is a striking indication of how far his pride was humbled.

33. The Egyptians were urgent. The popular demand, first blended with the cry of lament (v. 30), quickly became general and insistent. The Hebrews were not only to leave, but to leave immediately. The cry, “We be all dead men,” reveals the fear that judgment might not stop with the death of the first-born, but that the entire population might be slain and the land taken over by the Hebrews.

34. Took their dough. This reflects the urgency of the Egyptians. The Israelites were probably about to bake bread for their journey. Though warned by Moses several days earlier, the people seem not to have expected so hurried a departure, and their preparations were not as yet complete. Though they had been told that for seven days after partaking of the paschal lamb they should eat unleavened bread (v. 15), many had either not taken this injunction to heart or had planned to bake leavened bread for the days that would follow the seven days of unleavened bread. However, the pressure of necessity obliged them to be content with unleavened bread, or as it is called in Deut. 16:3, “the bread of affliction.”

35. They borrowed. Literally, “asked.” On the translation of the Hebrew word *sha’al*, rendered in the KJV as “borrowed,” see on ch. 3:22. The word *sha’al* means “to ask” or “to require,” but not “to borrow.”

36. They lent. As the word “borrowed” is a mistranslation, so is the word “lent.” The Hebrew word in question is a passive form of the same verb *sha’al*, which means in its active form “to ask.” The passive form conveys the meaning not only of being asked but also of granting a request. The thought of the text is this: “The Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked” (RSV).

They spoiled the Egyptians. See on ch. 3:22.

37. From Rameses. That “Rameses” here is the same city as the “Rameses” of ch. 1:11 can hardly be doubted, since the Hebrew words differ only in their vocalization, which was inserted in the Hebrew Bible about the 7th century of the Christian Era. Rameses was the city for the building of which Israelite slave labor had largely been used. As stated in the comment on ch. 1:11, the name given here is probably a later name for the city of Tanis (Avaris). Two hundred years after the Exodus, Tanis received the name Rameses, bestowed by its great renovator, Ramses II. The ruins of this city are known today under the Arabic name *San el-Hagar*. It lies in the northeastern Delta, about 27 mi. northwest of the city of El Qantara on the Suez Canal.

To Succoth. Earlier commentators incorrectly identified this, the first halting place of the Israelites after their departure from Rameses, with Pithom. Scholars are now generally agreed that the Hebrew name here given is a transliteration of the Egyptian *Tjeku*, mentioned in Egyptian documents as a border station. This place has been identified with *Tell el-Maskhuta* in the eastern part of the *Wadi Tumilat*, about 32 mi. southeast of Tanis or Rameses (see above).

Six hundred thousand. Commentators point to certain difficulties in the number here given. Seeing that only males above 20 years of age were included (Num. 1:3–43), the total population might be computed at several million. The problem is, how could so many people, with their untold thousands of animals, pass through the narrow valleys of the Sinai Peninsula without stretching out for hundreds of miles, to say nothing of finding even one camping place large enough to accommodate them?

Some cite Biblical evidence that Israel was relatively small and weak—too few to occupy the land if it were opened to them in one year (Ex. 23:29, 30; Num. 13:28–33; Deut. 1:26–30; 7:7, 17–22).

Others explain that numbers in the Hebrew original may have been confusing. For example, are the numerals for 100 and 1,000 together to be understood as 100 *times* 1,000 or as 100 *plus* 1,000? (See Vol. III, p. 123.)

Some suggest that we may not understand accurately the Hebrew word translated “thousand,” *’lph*, or *’eleph*. The word *’eleph* can also mean “family,” as used in Judges 6:15. In other places it seems to mean “family” or “clan” (1 Sam. 10:19; 23:23; Micah 5:2). Furthermore, *’aluph*, a word having the same consonants as *’eleph*, but different vowels, means “friend” or “tribal chief.” Some say therefore that the phrase traditionally rendered “six hundred thousand” actually means “six hundred families”; that it is more probable that the 12 families who entered Egypt with Jacob should increase to 600 families in 215 years than that the 69 males (see on Gen. 46:26, 27), should increase to 600,000 men in four generations (Gen. 15:16).

Some have explained that 600,000 men could have resulted from natural increase if every son, like Jacob, had had 12 sons. Against this theoretical solution is the fact that not one of Jacob’s descendants whose sons are recorded had that many sons.

Another meaning of *’eleph* is given as “military unit” (Num. 31:5, 14, etc.). Therefore some say that the Israelite forces consisted of 600 army units, each from a clan or tribal division.

Ellen G. White's reference to "more than two million souls" and "millions" who came out of Egypt and died in the wilderness (PP 334, 410) harmonizes with the rendering of the words for 600,000 as translated in the English versions here and in other texts such as ch. 38:25, 26.

38. *A mixed multitude.* Various attempts have been made to identify the "mixed multitude." Some have thought them to be native Egyptians who, impressed by the power of the God of the Hebrews, sought a share in the blessings of those who served Him, and who desired at the same time to escape the tyranny of the king. Others have taken them to be remnants of the Hyksos or other Semites who had been detained by the Pharaohs, and who seized this opportunity to leave Egypt. Some, at least, were the descendants of Hebrews who had intermarried with the Egyptians (1 SP 243). Although we do not know the identity of these non-Israelites who joined the triumphant Hebrews in this hour of opportunity, they appear again later in the narrative. They were always first to regret their departure from Egypt and to lust after its delicacies (Num. 11:4, 5).

39. *They baked.* The Israelites paused briefly at Succoth to make final preparations for the long desert journey. The length of their stay here is not mentioned, but was long enough for them to bake the bread they would need for the days immediately ahead.

40. *Four hundred and thirty years.* The discussion on Gen. 15:13 points out that Paul's statement in Gal. 3:17 and other evidence make it clear that this 430 years includes the period from Abraham's call to leave Haran to Jacob's actual descent into Egypt 215 years later, and that the interval between Jacob's entry into Egypt and the Exodus was another 215 years. Since in the time of Moses, Palestine was considered a part of the Egyptian empire, it is not strange to find an author of that period including Canaan in the term "Egypt." Not being familiar with the political situation in Moses' time, but feeling that the 430 years included the patriarchal sojourn in Canaan, the translators of the LXX specifically included within this period the time of their sojourn "in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan." The prophecy that the fourth generation of those who had entered Egypt would leave it (Gen. 15:16), and its recorded fulfillment (Ex. 6:16–20), make impossible any other explanation of the 430-year period.

42. *This is that night.* That is, the night of the eating of the Passover meal, concerning which directions had already been given (see vs. 6-11, 14). Its mingled horror and rejoicing could never be erased from the memory of a people who owed their birth as a nation to that memorable night.

43. *This is the ordinance.* Certain additional regulations concerning the Passover were given at Succoth. These were rendered necessary because of the many non-Israelites who had joined the Hebrews, and deal mainly with these "strangers." Provision was made whereby they might participate in the paschal feast and share its blessings.

No stranger. That is, one of an alien race who wished to retain his status as a foreigner and to remain uncircumcised. Since the Passover was significant as the festival commemorating Israel's birth as a nation, it would naturally be inappropriate for a foreigner to participate in it.

44. *When thou hast circumcised him.* It was not through natural descent but by virtue of a divine call that Israel had become the people of the Lord. Being destined, in that capacity, to be a blessing to all nations, Israel was not to assume an exclusive attitude toward foreigners. They were to welcome those who desired to join them in the worship and service of God. Being incorporated politically and economically, these "strangers"

were also to be accepted religiously through the rite of circumcision. Thus they became one with God's people and were permitted to participate in the Passover ritual (see v. 48).

45. *A foreigner and an hired servant.* Temporary residents and servants working for wages were not to eat of the Passover, for their relationship to Israel might be dissolved at any time.

46. *Neither shall ye break a bone thereof.* This precept shows clearly that the Passover lamb was a type of Christ, and that it was understood as such in the early Christian church is clear from John 19:33, 36. Although the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world was crucified as a common criminal, none of His bones were broken, in spite of the fact that it was the usual custom to do so. This was done to His two companions. Just as the crucified Antitype was treated differently from other crucified men, so was the Passover lamb prepared differently. The bones of other lambs eaten during the year might be broken to extract the marrow.

48. *When a stranger.* This injunction dealing with proselytes is similar to the one given in v. 44.

51. *It came to pass.* This verse belongs to the narrative of the next chapter, to which it forms the introduction.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-51PP 274-282

5 CD 20; CH 68; DA 50; GC 473; PK 489; PP 274, 352; SL 23; 5T 541

7 PP 274; 5T 505

8 PP 274, 278

11 DA 77, 653

11-14PP 274

12 6T 195

13 AH 325; TM 157; 4T 21; 5T 505

15 DA 77

15, 19, 22 PP 278

22, 23 MH 403; 5T 505

22-246T 195

26, 27 DA 77

27 PP 274, 279

29 4T 20

29-311T 265; 5T 119

29-33PP 280

29-36SR 119

30, 31 4T 21

31 DA 77

31, 32 PK 369

37-39PP 281

38 PP 315; SR 120

40, 41 PP 282

41 DA 32

46 PP 277

49 PP 507

51 PP 282

CHAPTER 13

1 *The firstborn are sanctified to God.* 3 *The memorial of the passover is commanded.* 11 *The firstlings of beasts are set apart.* 17 *The Israelites go out of Egypt, and carry Joseph's bones with them.* 20 *They come to Etham.* 21 *God guideth them by a pillar of a cloud, and a pillar of fire.*

2. All the firstborn. This command was given on the very day of the Exodus (see ch. 12:51). The Hebrew word here used limits the command to first-born males, who alone had been in danger from the tenth plague. The additional explanation, "whatsoever openeth the womb," shows that only those first-born sons were meant who were at the same time their mothers' first-born children. Their consecration was closely connected with the Passover. Inasmuch as the Lord had delivered the first-born of Israel, they became His special property and were to be dedicated to Him.

3. Remember this day. This injunction came with great force at the close of the first day's journey (see ch. 12:37), when the Hebrews had so signally experienced the good hand of their God. The Egyptians not only permitted them to depart, but also helped speed them on their way. Well might the Israelites feel that they had been released from "the house of bondage."

No leavened bread. See ch. 12:15–20.

4. Came ye out. Literally, "you are going out." The RSV rendering, "you are to go forth," though grammatically possible, contradicts the fact that the Israelites had already started on their journey (see ch. 12:37, 51).

In the month Abib. The name of the month is here given for the first time. On its meaning and place in the ecclesiastical calendar of the Hebrews see on ch. 12:2.

5. The land of the Canaanites. See on ch. 3:8.

Which he sware. See Gen. 15:18; 24:7; cf. Ex. 6:8.

This service. See Ex. 12:25.

6. Various expressions and regulations already given in ch. 12, especially in vs. 15, 16, 19, 26, 27, are repeated here in vs. 6–8.

9. For a memorial. Some scholars think that this instruction was not carried out literally until the time of the kings, or possibly even the Maccabees. Clear non-Biblical evidence that the Jews wore portions of the law fastened to their left arms and foreheads comes from about the time of Christ. The Jews called them tephillin, which has been explained to mean "prayers," whereas the Greek designation was *phylakterion* (Matt. 23:5), from which the English word *phylactery* is derived. These consisted of little pouches made from the skin of ceremonially clean animals, sewed to leather bands by which they were strapped to the forehead between and immediately above the eyes and to the left arms of males who had reached the age of 13. The four compartments of the head phylactery each contained a strip of parchment bearing one of the four following passages faultlessly written: Ex. 13:2–10; 13:11–16; Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21—30 verses altogether. The arm phylactery had but one pocket, yet contained the same four passages written on one skin. It was tied to the inside of the left arm a little above the elbow, so that the Scripture passages might be near the heart. This was done, presumably in compliance with the command, "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart" (Deut. 6:6). Phylacteries were customarily worn by pious Jews during the daily morning prayer, but by some reputedly devout men all day long. With a pretense of

piety they often made their phylacteries more conspicuous by broadening the bands, a practice severely criticized by Christ in Matt. 23:5. Even now conservative Jews wear phylacteries.

It is known that Egyptians often wore amulets on their bodies in the form of miniature papyrus scrolls, on which magic words were written. The Israelites in later centuries may have adopted this superstitious practice from the Egyptians. But God did not intend that the Jews should make a literal application of the command here given by binding certain portions of the law to their arms and foreheads (DA 612). He spoke exclusively of the acceptance of right principles in the mind and heart, the intellect and emotions, and of the application of these principles to the life.

10. This ordinance. That is, the ordinance of unleavened bread (see vs. 3, 5, 7; cf. ch. 12:14, 24).

11. See on ch. 3:8.

12. Set apart. This expression is particularly appropriate in the case of firstborn animals, which would have to be separated from the rest of the flock or herd and put aside for the Lord, so as not to be lost among the other lambs, kids, and calves. Since they were not to be sacrificed immediately (Lev. 22:27), it was necessary to keep them separate until disposed of as God commanded.

13. Every firstling of an ass. The injunction of Num. 18:15 to redeem every unclean beast indicates that the ass stands in this regulation as a representative of unclean beasts in general.

All the firstborn of man. The first-born sons of Israel were also to be dedicated to the Lord. This was not to be done in the manner of the heathen, by slaying and burning infants upon an altar, but by presenting them to the Lord as living sacrifices, devoting all their powers of body and mind to His service. Later, God separated the tribe of Levi to His service as a substitute for the first-born of the other tribes (see Ex. 32:26–28; Num. 3:12, 13). At the same time, every first-born Israelite was to be “redeemed,” or bought back from the Lord, by the payment of five shekels of silver, as prescribed in Num. 3:47; 18:16. In various countries, both ancient and modern, it has been the custom to dedicate the first-born son to religious pursuits.

14. See on ch. 12:26.

15. Hardly let us go. Literally, “when Pharaoh hardened himself [his heart] against sending us away.” The same word previously used for the hardening of the king’s heart appears here also (see on ch. 4:21).

16. See on v. 9.

17. Through the way. Literally, “toward the way” (see on v. 18). At Succoth, Israel’s first place of encampment, their organization, for which some provision had already been made (PP 281), was probably completed. The shortest and most direct route from Egypt to Canaan would have been by the coast road to Gaza, which was about 160 mi. from Succoth. Before they were ready to take possession of the land of Canaan they must first be welded together as a nation and learn to trust God, whom they scarcely knew as yet. A race of slaves, they were unarmed and unaccustomed to war (PP 282). A spiritual, intellectual, and political transformation must take place before they were prepared to cooperate with God in the conquest of Canaan.

They return to Egypt. How very real the danger was that at the slightest defeat or discouragement the Israelites would turn back and submit themselves again to servitude,

is shown by their attitude on later occasions (see Num. 14:4). Had they known what lay ahead they would never have been willing to leave Egypt. In all probability they expected to be in Canaan within a few weeks.

18. God led the people about. That is, instead of permitting the Israelites to proceed by the most direct route God led them by a more circuitous one. God had earlier informed Moses that the people of Israel were to assemble at Mt. Horeb after their departure from Egypt (ch. 3:12). He therefore knew in advance the route they were to follow, the very route, no doubt, he had recently traveled from Midian to Egypt. Accordingly, the people turned southward from Succoth (PP 282), and reached the edge of the wilderness at Etham (v. 20). It was only after they had gone beyond Etham and entered the wilderness itself that the pillar of cloud appeared to guide them (v. 21).

Through the way of. More accurately, “toward,” or “in the way to” (see Eze. 8:5; 21:2; etc., where the same Hebrew word, *derek*, is translated “toward”). Here, as in Ex. 13:17, Moses does not refer to their ultimate destination but rather to the route they followed immediately upon leaving Egypt. They were not to go “toward” Philistia, but rather “toward” or “in the direction of” the Red Sea. The Hebrew is reflected more accurately thus: “by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea” (RSV). The wilderness to which Moses made reference lay between Egypt and the Red Sea.

The wilderness of the Red sea. That is, the wilderness lying between Egypt and the Red Sea (see above), not the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula. This is clear because of the following facts: (1) The Hebrew grammatical construction, as noted above, indicates the Red Sea as the objective of this stage of the journey. (2) The parallel construction of v. 17, which reads literally, “toward the land of the Philistines,” requires that v. 18 mean “toward the Red Sea.” (3) Moses immediately designates the “wilderness” as the one which they entered upon leaving Etham (v. 20). (4) This is the wilderness indicated by Ellen G. White (PP 282, 283).

God’s purpose in selecting the Red Sea route was twofold: (1) The Israelites were unarmed and untrained in the art of war, and thus unprepared to encounter the warlike Philistines (see on v. 17). This reason the Israelites could understand, and it is therefore the one God gave them at this time (v. 17). (2) As God had already instructed Moses (ch. 3:12), He purposed to meet with the people at Mt. Horeb. There they were to complete their formal organization as a nation, there He would enter into covenant relationship with them as a nation, there He would impart to them His holy law, and there the sanctuary services were to be instituted. The children of Israel were not ready to understand or appreciate the need of these things, and for this reason God does not mention them at this time.

The comparative isolation of the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula was admirably adapted to the accomplishment of the purpose for which God led His people to the vicinity of Mt. Horeb. This rugged and barren peninsula is surrounded on two sides by arms of the Red Sea and on the third by the great desert of Paran. Not only would the people receive instruction He wished to impart to them, but the privations of their long and wearisome journey through the mountainous desert would provide situations in which they would have an opportunity to learn to trust Him. This was the very training they needed in preparation for the difficult task of the conquest of Canaan.

Harnessed. The word here translated “harnessed” has been interpreted in various ways. Some commentators have thought that it meant to be “armed,” “girded,” or

“organized into five divisions.” Others have explained it as meaning “arrayed,” “arranged,” or marching “five abreast.” Texts such as Joshua 1:14; 4:12; Judges 7:11 have led many translators to accept the meaning “armed” (RSV, “equipped for battle”). Such a translation raises the question as to where the cast-out slaves procured the weapons, and when they received training in their use. This interpretation cannot be correct, for “they were unarmed, and unaccustomed to war” (PP 282). Whatever the correct meaning of the word translated “harnessed” in the KJV, it obviously conveys the idea that the Israelites left Egypt, not as a mob of fleeing fugitives, but as a well-organized body under a wise and determined leader (see PP 281).

19. *The bones of Joseph.* Although here and in the narrative of the burial of Joseph’s remains at Shechem (Joshua 24:32) no mention is made of the other sons of Jacob, Stephen’s statement before the Sanhedrin seems to imply that all the fathers “were carried over into Sychem” (Acts 7:15, 16). That the children of Israel preserved Joseph’s remains and fulfilled his request for burial in Canaan (see Gen. 50:24–26) shows that they had apparently never lost sight of the promise of deliverance.

20. *Encamped in Etham.* According to this text and Num. 33:6 the second Israelite encampment lay at the “edge of the wilderness.” Its site has not yet been identified. Perhaps, however, the Hebrew word Etham is a transliteration of the Egyptian *khetem*, “fortress.” Egyptian records inform us of the existence of a line of border fortifications from the Mediterranean Sea to the Gulf of Suez (see on Ex. 2:15), built with the avowed purpose of preventing the tribes of the eastern desert from entering Egypt and at the same time designed to control traffic between Egypt and Asia. Since these border fortresses lay at the edge of the eastern desert, it is possible that one of them is referred to here. In the case of Moses, at least, these border posts did not prevent a lone fugitive from slipping through and making good his escape into the desert (see on ch. 2:15), but it is obvious that the hosts of Israel could not have passed through without the consent of the guards. Pharaoh apparently never intended more than that the Hebrews should enter the eastern Egyptian desert and worship God there. Perhaps it was when the border guards reported that the Israelites were pressing on through the desert to the Red Sea that Pharaoh set out in pursuit of them (ch. 14:3; PP 283).

21. *A pillar of a cloud.* As an Egyptian military commander (PP 245) and as a fugitive from Pharaoh (see on ch. 2:15), Moses was already acquainted with the general route of march. Furthermore, God had instructed him that he was to lead Israel to Mt. Horeb (ch. 3:12). Nevertheless, to convince the people of God’s leadership and to guide Moses along the precise route to be followed, God personally directed their daily journey. Having stated in ch. 13:18 that God led the Israelites, Moses now explains how He did so. Ancient army commanders at times used smoke or fire signals to guide their marching forces through trackless wastelands. Israel’s pillar of cloud and fire, however, was not produced by ordinary means, but was a miraculous manifestation of the presence of Christ (1 Cor. 10:1-4, 9; PP 366) that appeared before them as they left Etham and entered the desert. There seems to have been but one “pillar” (Ex. 14:24), for even when shining in the dark it is still called “the pillar of the cloud” (v. 19) or simply “the cloud” (Num. 9:21). By day it appeared as a dark cloud, in contrast with the light of the sun, but by night as a radiant light (Num. 9:15, 16). In this cloud the Lord Himself was present with His people, and from the cloud He spoke to Moses. There the glory of the Lord, later known as the “Shekinah,” appeared (Ex. 16:10; 40:34). In a similar way the Lord had

already revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush (ch. 3:2), and later appeared upon Sinai amidst thunder and lightning (ch. 19:16, 18). The fire and the cloud symbolized divine leadership and protection.

To go by day and night. Literally, “for their journeying day and night.” It should not be inferred from this statement that God intended the Israelites to keep on traveling at night as well as in the daytime. Rather, they were on their journey both day and night until such a time as they should reach their destination. As clearly stated earlier in the verse, the pillar of cloud was to guide them by day along their way and to illuminate their camp at night. The added expression, “to go by day and night,” clarifies the fact that the cloud never left them. It includes the camping at night as well as the traveling by day. Both the KJV and the RSV imply, to the contrary, that they traveled by night, a concept not justified by the context.

22. He took not away. Literally, “gave not away,” or “did not depart,” RSV. The last distinct mention of the cloud is in Num. 16:42, although Num. 20:6 may possibly allude to it. From Neh. 9:19 and Num. 9:15–23 we conclude that the pillar of cloud and fire remained with Israel throughout their wilderness wanderings. Since there is no mention of it in the book of Joshua, it may have disappeared just before the crossing of the Jordan, at the end of the 40 years.

The fact that the pillar of cloud remained with Israel throughout their long journey, even when they were unfaithful, is assurance to the Christian that God will not soon forsake him on his way through life. The promise of Jesus to His disciples, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20), has never failed anyone willing to follow where He leads. There is no experience of life in which God withdraws Himself. He is present in the darkest nights of misery and disappointment as well as on the brightest days of gladness and success. True, we need Him in the night, when conscious of our need, but perhaps even more during the day, when we are prone to feel confident of self. The visible pillar is no longer to be seen, but God’s presence can still be felt in the experience of the individual, the church, and the nations. Blessed is the man whose eyes are not so dim but that he can discern the leading of the Lord.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 DA 51

17-19SR 120

17-22PP 282

20-22SR 121

21 COL 287; LS 93; 3T 285, 340

22 1T 406; 4T 312; 8T 248

CHAPTER 14

1 *God instructeth the Israelites in their journey. 5 Pharaoh pursueth after them. 10 The Israelites murmur. 13 Moses comforteth them. 15 God instructeth Moses. 19 The cloud removeth behind the camp. 21 The Israelites pass through the Red sea, 23 which drowneth the Egyptians.*

2. Turn and encamp. Hitherto the march of the Israelites had been in a general southeasterly direction. Another day’s journey in the same direction would have carried them well beyond the eastern border of Egypt. But God ordered a change that must have seemed to them strange and unaccountable. They were to set their course in a southwesterly direction, which would soon place the Red Sea between them and their

destination. Although the geographical location of the next camping place is here described in considerable detail, not one of the places named has yet been identified. The name Pi-hahiroth is apparently Egyptian, but its meaning and site remain uncertain.

Between Migdol and the sea. Migdol means “tower,” or “fortress.” This no doubt refers to a number of localities along the eastern border of Egypt (see Num. 33:7; Jer. 44:1; 46:14; Eze. 29:10; 30:6). These “migdols” were probably not different cities, but strongholds that formed part of the border fortification system (see on Ex. 13:20).

Over against Baal-zephon. This place is unknown, though the name Baal-zephon was applied also to a Canaanite deity. It means, literally, the “Baal,” or “lord of the north,” a god mentioned on Egyptian monuments as well as in north Canaanite inscriptions. One Phoenician text declares him to be the chief god of the Egyptian Delta city of Daphnae (Biblical Tahpanhes, modern *Tel Defenneh*). The place mentioned here may have received its name from this Canaanite god, whose shrine or sanctuary, to which peoples of the eastern desert came to worship, was in the town.

So exact a geographical description, unique in the Pentateuch, suggests, first, that Pi-hahiroth itself was not well known, and, second, that the author of Exodus was familiar with the geography of the country. No late writer could have ventured to give such local detail.

3. Pharaoh will say. This passage explains the purpose of God in leading the Israelites in so unusual a direction (see on v. 2). To human judgment this route appeared to be the most foolish that could have been taken. Canaan lay to the northeast of Egypt, yet the pillar of cloud led them in a southwesterly direction when they reached the eastern borders of Egypt. It would be only natural for Pharaoh, learning of the strange route the Israelites had taken, to think that they had lost their way and were wandering about in confusion in the eastern Egyptian desert. Escape now appeared impossible. God, however, had arranged this very situation that Egypt and the surrounding nations might learn to fear and respect His name (see v. 4).

4. Harden. See on ch. 4:21.

5. Why have we done this? Pharaoh had apparently intended his permission to be limited to a three-day journey into the eastern Egyptian desert. When it became apparent that the Israelites were pressing rapidly through the desert toward the Red Sea, Pharaoh set out in pursuit (PP 283). A short respite from suffering had given him time to recover from the horrors of the tenth plague, and he now regretted his rash act. When no further calamity followed the death of the first-born, the Egyptians may have thought the power of the Hebrew God broken, and of themselves as once more lords over their land and masters of the situation. The loss of a large body of laborers would upset the economy of the country and bring hardship upon those who remained.

7. Six hundred chosen chariots. With the Eighteenth Dynasty, chariots came to be standard Egyptian army equipment. From that time on the kings always went forth to war in chariots. Two royal chariots of the Eighteenth Dynasty have survived to the present day, and their construction is therefore well known. They were open at the rear, and consisted of a semicircular standing board made of wood, encircled by a rim that rose in a graceful curve to the height of approximately 21/2 ft. above the standing board. The chariots had two wheels and a tongue, and were drawn by two small horses. They were usually manned by two men, a warrior and a charioteer.

Captains. In Hebrew, as well as in other Semitic languages, “the third one,” here probably meaning “the third one on the chariot.” In Assyria it became the technical term for the driver of the chariot. In Hebrew, however, the word seems to have been synonymous with “distinguished warrior” (see 2 Kings 9:25; etc.). Inasmuch as two men are regularly depicted on Egyptian chariots, it would seem that the word here translated “captain” should be rendered “distinguished warrior.” The 600 chosen chariots with their crews probably belonged to the king’s bodyguard, and could be made ready for action, such as the pursuit of the Israelites, at the moment’s notice.

8. The Lord hardened. A significant fact mentioned three times (vs. 4, 8, 17) in connection with Pharaoh’s pursuit of the Israelites (see on ch. 4:21).

With an high hand. That is, in triumph over the pursuing Egyptians. The RSV renders this expression as “defiantly.” In Num. 33:3, where the same expression occurs, the RSV gives it as “triumphantly.”

9. Horsemen. Since the Egyptians had no cavalry at that time, though a single horseman is once depicted on a small monument, the word translated “horsemen” should rather be rendered “riders,” or “mounted men,” that is, those who drove the chariots. Understood thus, the text accords remarkably with the native monuments of that time, which represent the Egyptian army as consisting of two kinds of troops, chariotry and infantry.

Overtook them encamping. It is uncertain whether Pharaoh overtook the Israelites soon after they had pitched camp by the shores of the Red Sea, or whether they had already been there a day or even longer. Although Pharaoh obviously set out in pursuit of the Israelites at some time after their departure, he would be able to cover the distance of 80 mi. from Tanis (Rameses) to the northwestern shore of the Red Sea much more rapidly than the Israelites could possibly have done. It would have taken him at least two days to do so, the approximate time required by the Israelites to travel across the desert from Etham (see on v. 5). The description of events at the approach of the Egyptians seems to imply that the Israelites had barely halted to pitch camp when they discovered the Egyptians pursuing them (vs. 9, 10; PP 284).

10. They were sore afraid. To human eyes their plight appeared hopeless. Shut in on the east by the sea, on the south by a rugged mountain, on the west by mountainous deserts, and on the north by the pursuing Egyptians, they probably concluded that escape was impossible. Furthermore, they were unarmed and unprepared for battle. Finally, they had not yet learned to place their trust in the power and protection of God.

Cried out unto the Lord. Had their prayer been accompanied by faith, v. 11 would not preserve a record of murmuring against Moses. Some commentators have suggested that the more pious among the Israelites cried to God (v. 10), whereas the irreligious murmured against Moses (v. 11).

11. Die in the wilderness. Men have ever found satisfaction in blaming someone else for the difficulties they encounter. In this case it was Moses who became the target of their indignation. They argued that he, as leader, should have known better than to bring them into so perilous a situation. And the pillar of cloud—had it not led them into this trap, from which there appeared no escape? Cynically they asked whether Egypt, a land of tombs if there ever was one, could not provide graves for them.

12. We did tell thee in Egypt. The people presented Moses with an exaggerated statement of the facts. It had only been when oppression increased, following Moses’ first

interview with Pharaoh, that they complained of what Moses had done (ch. 5:21), whereas at first they gladly accepted his proposals (ch. 4:31). In leaving Egypt they had complied willingly with his directions.

It had been better. It is a common tendency to prefer death to slavery, where these are the only alternatives. It is not strange that a people fully accustomed to servitude and lacking a tradition of independence did not rise to the heroic heights that have been attained by freemen.

13. Fear ye not. Although the alarm of the Hebrews is understandable, the noble courage and confidence of Moses is surprising. A truly remarkable transformation had come over him since the time he timidly remonstrated with the Lord (chs. 4:1, 10, 13; 5:22, 23). Though he may have but vaguely understood that God would “be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host” (v. 4), he now remained calm and confident that all would be well. His own quiet confidence is reflected in his admonition to the people to wait patiently for the Lord to deliver them. There was obviously little else they could do. Moses knew not how God might accomplish His will, but his own experience in working with God in the land of Egypt made it certain He was fully able to rescue His people, however unlikely such a prospect might appear. Moses himself was distressed that his people manifested so little faith (PP 284).

The Egyptians. That is, Pharaoh’s great host. The word order in the original favors the marginal rendering, which, with but one slight change, is from the LXX. The latter reads, “For as ye have seen the Egyptians today, ye shall see them again no more for ever.” Phrased thus, the statement means that they would see their enemies only as lifeless forms on the shores of the Red Sea (v. 30).

15. Wherefore criest thou? These words of the Lord imply that Moses had appealed to God for help, perhaps laying the complaints of the people before Him. They do not imply divine reproof, but constitute an admonition to resolute action.

16. Lift thou up thy rod. The Israelites were not to remain completely inactive while the Lord brought about their deliverance. They were to move forward, and as they did so, to witness the mighty power of God. He could have divided the Red Sea without the assistance of Moses, if the lifting up of the rod may be called assistance. God again chose to work through Moses in order that the people might come to trust more fully in their appointed leader. God ever operates in accordance with the principle of utilizing consecrated human agencies to accomplish His work on earth, whenever and wherever possible.

17. I will harden. Here only is it stated that God hardened the hearts of the Egyptians, apparently in the same sense that He hardened the heart of Pharaoh (see on ch. 4:21). By following his bidding they had become partakers of his guilt (cf. Rev. 18:4). Without doubt the Egyptians eagerly anticipated the recovery of their lost treasure, and bloody revenge upon any who should resist capture (chs. 12:35; 15:9). Under the circumstances human nature would be quite sufficient to make them cold and heartless.

They shall follow them. Ordinary common sense, based on previous experience, would have made the Egyptians cautious about becoming involved in so dangerous an adventure as following the Hebrews through the sea. It was stupidity and blood-thirstiness which urged them forward into danger (see Rom. 1:21, 22). Rash action usually characterizes those who deliberately spurn the leading of God’s Spirit. Heedless of the judgments of God so recently experienced, infatuated with confidence in

themselves, they defied to the last the God of Israel (see 2 Thess. 2:9–12; Rev. 17:14; 19:19; 20:7–9).

19. *The angel of God.* The Divine Presence manifested in the pillar of cloud is called “the Lord” in v. 24 and ch. 13:21, but here “the angel of God” (see PP 366). Similarly, the One appearing to Moses in the burning bush is termed both “God” and “the angel of the Lord” (ch. 3:2–6).

20. *It came between.* The Egyptians apparently reached the vicinity of the Israelites camp at the close of a long day’s march (PP 287). Like an impenetrable wall of fog rolling in from the sea, the cloudy pillar settled between the pursued and the pursuers, forcing the latter to halt. Convinced that the Hebrews could not escape, the Egyptians postponed the attack to the next day (vs. 23, 24; 4T 24; PP 287).

It was a cloud. The expressions “to them” and “to these,” while not in the Hebrew but supplied by the KJV translators, are apparently justified by the context (see also PP 287). The night drew on apace, intensifying the impenetrable wall of darkness provided by the cloud. Meanwhile, on the side facing the Israelites the pillar presented the appearance of a brilliant torch, lighting up the whole camp and making it as easy to prepare for the march as it would have been by day. Thus, the flocks could be gathered, the beasts of burden collected and laded, and the various tribes and families arranged in marching order (see PP 281). They awaited only the signal to start.

21. *A strong east wind.* The word translated “east wind” may apply to any wind coming from a general easterly direction, from southeast to northeast, since the Hebrews used special terms for the four quarters of the compass only. Even now the ebb tide in the Gulf of Suez is strengthened by a strong northeast wind. Before the construction of the Suez Canal, it is reported, part of the gulf which lies north of the city of Suez was sometimes laid completely dry during the ebb flow of the tide, by a strong northeast wind. As a result, one could ride across the gulf or ford it on foot. However, an ebb tide strengthened by an east wind cannot account for the drying up of the sea here described, because in such a case the water is all driven southward, not in two opposite directions as the Sacred Record indicates. Such a separation of the waters could be produced only by a miracle (see PP 287). The exact spot of the crossing is unknown.

22. *The waters were a wall.* The depth of the waters on either side of the “dry ground” is not known. For this reason it is not clear whether the waters took the position of a literal, perpendicular “wall,” or whether the term “wall” is used figuratively in reference to the fact that the Israelites were protected from attack “on their right hand, and on their left.” The words of inspiration may be construed either way (see v. 21; PP 287), perhaps with preference for the former suggestion (4T 24, 25).

23. *The Egyptians pursued.* When the last Israelite left the western shore of the Red Sea, the cloud followed and permitted the Egyptians to see that the Hebrews had escaped. The Egyptians advanced immediately to the seashore, and finding the channel still dry, hastily entered and pressed forward in hot pursuit. Only when the entire Egyptian host was in the midst of the sea did the pillar of cloud become for them a pillar of fire and reveal to them their precarious location (1T 265; 4T 25).

24. *In the morning watch.* The “morning watch” of the Hebrews lasted from about 3 A.M. until sunrise, which, at this time of the year, would occur about 5:45.

The Lord looked. In Ps. 77:17–19 a description of what happened at this point is given. A sudden cloudburst was accompanied by lightning and thunder. Pressing forward

on the bed of the Red Sea, whose heaped-up waters they could now see on either side, the Egyptians must have been terrified (see also Josephus *Antiquities* ii. 16. 3).

25. Took off their chariot wheels. The word here translated “took off” may also be rendered “gave away,” meaning perhaps that the wheels sank into the sand up to the axles, to be extricated again only with difficulty and to sink in once more a few yards farther on. The RSV, following the LXX and other versions, speaks of God “clogging their chariot wheels.” The Egyptians were still able to drive their chariots, but “drave them heavily.” This would imply that although the wheels had not been lost, they were not functioning properly (see 4T 25).

The Lord fighteth. The miraculous darkness which had at first separated them from the Israelites (v. 20), the mysterious opening of a pathway through the Red Sea, the heavy thunderstorm, and finally the difficult going, brought the Egyptians to the belated realization that the God of the Hebrews was actively aiding His people and effectively obstructing their own advance. Convinced that it was no use to further persevere in a mission apparently doomed to failure, they began their retreat.

27. The sea returned. When Moses again stretched out his staff over the sea, the east wind ceased to blow and the waters returned (see v. 21). It seems that the return of the waters was as much the result of the blowing of the wind as the opening of a pathway had been (see ch. 15:10). A strong west wind, suddenly caused to blow instead of the east wind of v. 21, may have hastened the process. As the Egyptians fled they were met by surging billows that poured in from each side.

28. All the host of Pharaoh. That is, all that set out across the sea in pursuit of the Hebrews. Commentators have reasoned that there may have been sections of Pharaoh’s army which remained on the western shore and consequently were not destroyed. The expression “the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host” does not support the opinion of many commentators that only the chariotry had entered the sea, and the infantry had stayed behind. Ellen G. White seems to imply that the entire Egyptian host was annihilated (PP 287; 1T 265).

30. Israel saw the Egyptians. Josephus (*Antiquities* ii. 16. 6) says that after the crossing of the sea by the Israelites a west wind set in (see on v. 27). Such a wind, assisted by the current, would drive the bodies of the drowned Egyptians to the eastern shore. In this way, according to Josephus, Moses obtained weapons and armor for the Israelites.

31. The people feared the Lord. The guidance of Israel through the sea was designed by God to establish in the hearts of the people reverence and faith in Him. But faith in the Lord was inseparably connected with faith in Moses as His representative, and for this reason the miracle had been wrought through Moses. Still babes in the faith, the Israelites were in need of miracles and divine manifestations. Belief followed, and was founded upon, sight. Our Lord, however, pronounced a blessing upon those “that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29). A faith that continues to lean upon sight is far from perfect. This was true of Israel. If we knew nothing of the consequent history of Israel, we would conclude that henceforth they must have continued their journey with rejoicing, trusting in God with all their hearts, and never again showing distrust, no matter how great the crisis. But on the contrary, we find them continually discontented with God and Moses, murmuring against them, and despising their counsel. While we look in amazement at the perfidy of the Israelites, we should not be hasty in condemning

their dullness of heart. We are certainly by no means superior to them if we trust God no further than our natural sight can perceive His will and His ways.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-31PP 283-288
1-4PP 283
3, 4 4T 22
5-9PP 283
9 1T 265
9-124T 21
10 SR 121
11-14PP 284; SR 122
12 4T 22
13 8T 128
13, 14 4T 23
15 PP 290; TM 417; 4T 25, 26, 28; 5T 583; 6T 150; 9T 271, 273
15, 16 PP 287; SR 122; 4T 24
15-271T 265
17-22SR 123
19 4T 22, 23
20 PP 290; 4T 23
21, 23 4T 24
23, 24 PP 287
23-25SR 124
25 4T 25
25-28PP 287
26-31SR 125
27 1T 265-266
27, 28 PP 283; 4T 25; 5T 119-120

CHAPTER 15

1 *Moses' song.* 22 *The people want water.* 23 *The waters at Marah are bitter.* 25 *A tree sweeteneth them.* 27 *At Elim are twelve wells, and seventy palm trees.*

1. Then sang Moses. Moses' song at the Red Sea has ever provided the church of God a pattern for praise in all its conflicts with the powers of darkness (see PP 289). The majestic theme of this song echoes through all the songs of Israel, in praise to God for His glorious works on their behalf. Finally, the song of Moses the servant of God will be sung again, with the song of the Lamb, by heroes of faith standing upon the "sea of glass," victorious over the beast and his image (Rev. 15:3).

Moses is not expressly designated as the author of this song, but its form and content point undeniably to him as such (see PP 288). The song is composed of three climactic stanzas, each of which begins with praise to the Lord and ends with a description of the overthrow of the Egyptian host (Ex. 15:2-5, 6-10, 11-18). The theme announced in v. 1 is treated in three different ways, in each of which, however, the omnipotence of God is dominant. With clear prophetic insight, the third stanza especially, points to the glory of Israel in its future homeland, and to the sanctuary as God's dwelling place.

He hath triumphed gloriously. The words of v. 1 were repeated by a chorus of women, led by Miriam (see vs. 20, 21). It is not certain whether this was done after each

stanza, that is, after vs. 5, 10, and 18, or only at the end of the song. The words translated “triumphed gloriously” mean, literally, “highly exalted” or “gloriously glorious,” as the LXX has rendered this common Hebrew verb. It is repeated to convey the thought of exaltation in the most emphatic way possible.

2. The Lord. Here the abbreviated form of God’s name, *Yah*, appears for the first time in the OT narrative. It is occasionally used in poetic language on account of the rhythm, and also as an ending for personal and even topographical names, as for example, Abijah, Ahaziah, Hezekiah, Zedekiah, Mt. Moriah, etc. (see pp. 35, 173).

And I will prepare him an habitation. These words are the translation of a single Hebrew word. This illustrates the compactness of Hebrew poetry. The KJV rendering seems to have come originally from the Aramaic Targum of Onkelos, who paraphrased the single word of the text by the expression, “I will build him a sanctuary.” Though this may have been one of the meanings of the verb, most translators since the days of the LXX and the Vulgate, including most modern commentators, have preferred the basic meaning of the verb, “beauty.” Accordingly, they translate the expression, “I will glorify him,” or “I will praise him” (RSV).

5. As a stone. Having accorded God the glory for the miraculous deliverance of Israel and the defeat of the Egyptians, Moses describes their fate in language highly poetic yet so plain it requires no explanation. It is possible that at this point Miriam’s chorus replied, with the words recorded in v. 21.

6. Thy right hand. With this verse a new stanza begins. For the most part it expands and explains the preceding one, presenting more details and drawing a sharp contrast between the pride and arrogance of the Egyptians and their miserable fall. All this was accomplished by the “right hand” of the Lord.

8. The blast of thy nostrils. A highly poetic description of the east wind, which had in part been responsible for the dividing of the waters. Waxing bolder in his imagery, Moses represents the floods as “standing in a heap” on either side, and the depths as “congealed.”

Congealed. Literally, “contracted,” “drawn together,” or “curdled.” Here used poetically, this word should not be construed as meaning that the waters actually froze (see PP 287).

9. The enemy said. By short clauses, following one another without connecting particles, the confidence of the Egyptians as they pursued the Israelites, breathing vengeance, is graphically depicted. The broken speech imitates the exclamations of the king’s soldiers, who were at once eager and out of breath. This description is an unusual departure from the usual stately order of Hebrew poetry.

10. Thou didst blow. This statement presents another fact not mentioned in the direct narrative of the destruction of the Egyptians, though it is in complete harmony with it. As a strong east wind had separated the waters and held them back for the Israelites, now a wind from the west or northwest brought the waters back upon the Egyptians. In obedience to its Creator, wind effectively served to rescue one people and to destroy another.

Sank as lead. The first stanza ended (v. 5) by comparing the drowning Egyptians with sinking zones. The second stanza ends with a similar expression, comparing the Egyptians to lead. The waters into which they sank are called “mighty” because of the

mighty proof of the Creator's glory provided by the waves rushing majestically back to fill their usual space. Here Miriam's chorus (v. 21) probably interposed again.

11. *Who is like unto thee?* Once more Moses takes up his song of praise and victory. The third strophe assures God's people that He will finish the work of salvation, already begun, will fill their enemies with terror, and will bring them to His holy dwelling place and plant them on the mountain of His inheritance. What the Lord has done thus far is regarded as a pledge of what the future yet has in store for those who follow where He leads.

14. *The people shall hear.* The Hebrew word translated "people" is in the plural and includes the tribes, or nations, of Philistia, Edom, and Moab, and the other inhabitants of Canaan (v. 15). Moses speaks now in the role of a prophet (see Deut. 18:15), as he looks forward to the effects of their own miraculous deliverance from the armies of Egypt. The peoples of Palestine would not only hear of this event but be terrified by gloomy forebodings of what lay in store for them, and thus not have the courage to offer effective opposition to Israel.

Palestina. This is the Greek form of a Hebrew word more accurately translated "Philistia." It does not designate the whole country now known by the name of Palestine, but only a strip of territory extending along the southwestern coast of Canaan, from south of Gaza to Joppa. Some 50 mi. in extent, this strip of coastland was occupied by the Philistine confederacy, which became such a thorn in the side of Israel in later times.

15. *The dukes of Edom.* By the time Israel approached the borders of Edom, its dukes had given place to kings (Num. 20:14; cf. Gen. 36:15). Although the refusal of the Edomites to allow Israel passage through their land gives the impression that they felt powerful and unafraid, the fact that they rejected the peaceable request of Moses shows clearly a sense of insecurity and alarm which they sought to hide (see Judges 11:17).

The mighty men of Moab. The alarm of the Moabites was indicated by Balak's efforts to induce Balaam to curse the Israelites (Num. 22 to 24).

All the inhabitants of Canaan. This prophecy was strikingly fulfilled when "all the kings of the Canaanites ... heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, ... their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more" (Joshua 5:1).

16. *Till thy people pass over.* Not the passing through the Red Sea, for that had already taken place, but the crossing of the desert and the borders of Canaan.

17. *In the mountain.* "The mountain of thine inheritance" was probably not the hill country of Canaan (Deut. 3:25), as some commentators have maintained, but rather the mountain the Lord had selected for a sanctuary (Ps. 78:54) and chosen as His own dwelling place. The planting of Israel upon this mountain does not signify their entrance into the Promised land, but the planting of the people of God in the house of the Lord (Ps. 92:13), in the future sanctuary. There the Lord would enter into more perfect fellowship with His people, and there they would show themselves to be His special possession by serving Him and offering up their sacrifices.

18. *The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.* Similar declarations are found elsewhere in Scripture (see Ps. 10:16; 29:10; 146:10; Rev. 11:15; etc.). Moses thus expresses the firm conviction of the man of God that God's dominion is everlasting, not alone in the universe but in this world as well, not only under the law but also under the gospel, not only in time but throughout eternity. With this inspired exclamation the song of Moses

closes, though in the next verse he gives an explanation of why God's reign will last forever.

Like the two preceding stanzas, which ended with a statement concerning the destruction of the Egyptians (see vs. 5, 10), the third is brought to a close in a similar way. Instead of directing attention to the defeated Egyptians, however, Moses turns to their own triumphant Deliverer. The song, therefore, does not close with a gloomy picture of the destruction of God's enemies, but on a note of victory and praise. This same theme will characterize the song of Moses and the Lamb, which the redeemed will sing upon the sea of glass (Rev. 15:2-4).

20. *Miriam the prophetess.* Miriam is the first woman whom the Bible honors with this title. Others followed from time to time throughout the history of God's people (see Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Isa. 8:3; Luke 2:36). Miriam is not called a prophetess here primarily because the words she sang were inspired, but rather in recognition of her role in the Exodus, second only to the part taken by Moses and Aaron (see PP 382). She specifically claimed to possess the prophetic gift (Num. 12:2), inasmuch as God had spoken through her. The prophet Micah states that the Lord delivered Israel out of Egypt by Moses, Aaron, and Miriam (Micah 6:4). Her task may have been to communicate to the people messages by which the hope of deliverance was kept alive during the dark years of oppression. She may have taught, admonished, and reproved the people. Here, at the Red Sea, however, she appears as an inspired and talented singer and musician. She must have been more than 90 years of age at the time (see Ex. 2:4; 7:7).

The sister of Aaron. Though Miriam was, of course, Moses' sister as well, and had been instrumental in protecting him during infancy, she is here called the sister of Aaron. This perhaps indicates a subordinate position in relation to that held by Moses, but comparable to that of Aaron, who was himself subordinate to Moses (see ch. 4:16).

Took a timbrel. The instrument played by Miriam and her women accompanists was either a tambourine or a hand drum. Modern scholars specializing in the history of ancient musical instruments favor the latter translation. The same word for timbrel, *toph*, is used in modern Hebrew and Arabic to designate a hand drum. Ancient Egyptian pictures of this instrument show it made of a wooden hoop and two skins, but without jingles or sticks. It is beaten by the hand of the player. In the Bible this instrument is usually played by women (Judges 11:34; 1 Sam. 18:6; Ps. 68:25), as it was in Egypt, but sometimes also by men (1 Sam. 10:5). It often accompanied singing and dancing, probably to accentuate the beat, and was considered a joyful instrument. In the OT it is usually associated with merrymaking and praise.

All the women. The separation of men and women into distinct bands was an Egyptian custom, as likewise was the performance of dances by groups of men and women, who accompanied their steps with music. This custom seems to have been taken over by the Hebrews during their long sojourn in Egypt. In later times we find Hebrew women taking part in the victory celebrations, when they met the returning armies with music and song (see Judges 11:34; 21:21; 1 Sam. 18:6, 7; 29:5).

With dances. The use of dances in religious ceremonies, so contrary to Western ideas of decorum, has ever been acceptable to the Oriental mind and sentiment. Various examples of religious dancing are found in the OT narrative. David danced before the ark when bringing it to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:16), Jephthah's daughter met her victorious father with dancing (Judges 11:34), and the virgins of Shiloh celebrated a feast in this

way (Judges 21:21). Dancing is also mentioned with approval by the psalmist (Ps. 149:3; 150:4). The dancing of Bible times was an outward expression of holy joy, entered into in the same spirit as songs of praise or prayers of thanksgiving. It was distinctly an act of worship, and God accepted it as such (cf. John 6:37). Modern social dancing bears no resemblance whatever to the religious dancing of Bible times, for in it there was no mingling of men and women, and the only objective of the participants was the expression of love, devotion, and thanksgiving to God. Ancient dancing was an integral part of worship ritual.

21. *Miriam answered them.* Miriam, with her chorus of women, sang in response to the male chorus, probably at the termination of each stanza of the song (after vs. 5, 10, 18). The words of Miriam's refrain, "Sing ye to the Lord," etc., were also the opening words of Moses' song of victory (v. 1).

22. *The wilderness of Shur.* This is the desert region reaching from the eastern border of Egypt to the southern border of Palestine, and touching in the south the mountains of the Sinai Peninsula. It is mentioned several times in the patriarchal narratives (Gen. 16:7; 20:1; 25:18), and in the records of Saul's and David's victories over the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:7; 27:8). It was through the southern part of this desert that Israel marched, in a southeasterly direction along the shores of the Red Sea. In Num. 33:8 this region is called the "wilderness of Etham." If the interpretation given in the comment on Ex. 13:20 is correct, that Etham is an Egyptian word for a border fortress, it is easy to understand why the desert of Shur should also be called the desert of Etham.

Found no water. The Israelites, no doubt, carried a supply of drinking water in leather pouches, as Oriental peoples from ancient times have done. Knowing they were to enter the desert, the Israelites would not fail to take water with them, but a march of three days without finding more to replenish their exhausted supply would bring suffering to both man and beast. It was therefore imperative that they find wells or springs at certain intervals. Of all domestic animals used in the Near East the donkey was the most widely employed beast of burden for desert travel. The camel was found only occasionally prior to the 12th century B.C. Donkeys are able to travel for four days without water, but cattle, which the Israelites possessed in great numbers, could not possibly live without more frequent watering. For this reason a march of three days without finding water was about the limit the cattle could endure and not perish.

23. *Marah.* The first oasis south of Suez is the '*Ain Hawârah*. It lies on the ancient road to the Sinai copper mines, a few miles inland from the gulf and about 47 mi. from the town of Suez. The water is bitter. If its identification with the Biblical Marah is correct, the sweetening of its waters by Moses was not of a permanent nature. Although most commentators have accepted this identification, it should be noted that there are several bitter springs in the vicinity, one of them even more bitter than '*Ain Hawârah*.

24. *The people murmured.* They had murmured once before, on the western shore to the Red Sea (ch. 14:11, 12), and were to murmur many more times before their wanderings were over (see Ex. 16:2; Num. 14:2; 16:41; etc.). "Murmuring" would prove to be their common mode of giving vent to bitterness of soul at the difficulties regularly encountered. Since Moses was responsible for their departure from Egypt, and was their leader, their murmurings were in the first place directed against him. The men who serve their nation best are often least appreciated during their lifetime, and monuments are usually erected in their honor only after they have died.

What shall we drink? Though men will often swallow unpalatable water when their thirst is great, there is a limit beyond which nature cannot go. Even beasts refuse to drink the water of certain bitter wells in the Arabian Desert.

25. The Lord shewed him a tree. The name of this tree is not revealed. Several trees or plants belonging to different parts of the world are said to possess the quality of rendering bitter water sweet, but none of these have been found on the Sinai Peninsula. In fact, the Bedouins of the neighborhood, who consider the water of the *'Ain Hawârah* and other similar springs in the vicinity unpalatable, know of no means by which this water can be made drinkable. Hence there are but two possible explanations for this text. Moses was either directed to take a tree which had the natural quality of changing bitter water into sweet, which tree no longer grows in that area, or the transformation of the water was a direct act of God and the tree was only of symbolic significance.

An ordinance. After healing the water and satisfying the physical thirst of His people, God gave them an ordinance that was connected with the miracle by a promise (see v. 26).

There he proved them. From the time of their departure from Egypt to their entry into Canaan, God "proved" His people on many occasions—first at the Red Sea, now at Marah, later at Meribah (ch. 17:1–7), Sinai (ch. 20:20), Taberah (Num. 11:1–3), Kibroth-hattaavah (Num. 11:34), Kadesh (Num. 13:26–33), and elsewhere. These "proofs" were part of God's attempts to train them, under comparatively easy circumstances, for the experiences they would face in Canaan.

26. If thou wilt diligently hearken. Here is recorded a wonderful promise. If God's people would henceforth render strict obedience to all His commandments, then He would "heal" them as He had healed the water, and would keep them free from both physical and moral evil. Their physical well-being was therefore made dependent upon obedience. This great principle was true not only in the time of the Hebrews but through all ages. The physical well-being of the human race is still to a large extent dependent upon their regard for divine law. Those who disregard the laws that govern healthful living have but themselves to blame for the consequences. On the other hand, those who live according to divinely imparted instructions on health will experience a marked freedom from diseases. God is interested not only in man's spiritual state but also in his physical state (see 3 John 2).

These Diseases. Some of these diseases are enumerated in Deut. 28:27, and reference to them is also made in Deut. 7:15. It is known that certain diseases have always been prevalent among the Egyptians with extreme severity, especially skin and eye diseases. During their long sojourn in Egypt the Hebrews were well acquainted with the diseases of Egypt.

The Lord that healeth thee. The Egyptian physicians were famous all over the ancient Near East, but extant texts show that they did not consider the power of healing to be their own, but their gods'. In their medical handbooks, some of which are now 4,000 years old, diseases are divided into three classes: (1) those that can be treated; (2) those that can be arrested; (3) those that cannot be cured. Though medical science has advanced tremendously since the days of Moses, the above classification still stands. The surgeon can make an incision, remove an organ, and sew up the wound, but he cannot heal it. The physician can administer certain drugs, which he knows to have certain effects on certain ailments, but there his skill ends. The actual healing process is performed by a power

over which human science has no control. It is still true in the 20th century as it was in the time of Moses that God alone imparts healing. He is the Master Physician.

27. Elim. The next place of encampment has since ancient times been identified with the *Wadi Gharandel*, about 7 mi. south of *'Ain Hawârah*. This spot, with its plentiful supply of comparatively good water and its luxuriant groves of palms, tamarisks, acacias, and its tall grass, is even now one of the principal halting places between Suez and Sinai. The archeologist, Flinders Petrie, found a good supply of water in the valley both times he crossed it, first in December of 1904 and again in March of the following year, even though the winter had been very dry and rain had not fallen for several weeks (*Researches in Sinai* [1906], p. 12).

They encamped there. Since the *Wadi Gharandel* is joined by two comparatively more fertile valleys, the *Wadi Useyt* and the *Wadi Tayibeh*, it is possible that the Israelites used this opportunity for pasturing their cattle and resting them for several days before continuing on their journey. Mention is not made here of an encampment at Marah (see vs. 23–26), though it is so listed in Num. 33:8. The people probably halted at Marah no longer than necessary. Moses, who had traversed these regions before and knew every well and stream, probably assured the Israelites that they would find a fertile valley only a few miles beyond Marah.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-27PP 288-292

1 EW 70; 4T 25

1, 2 Ed 162

1-16PP 288

6-11, 18-21Ed 162

21 Ed 39; PP 289

22-24PP 291

23-25MH 248

23-26MM 120

24 3T 85, 89, 339, 342

24-26SR 126

25 PP 291

25, 26 PP 292

26 CH 59; DA 824; MH 113; ML 135; MM 119, 277; SR 127

27 PP 292

CHAPTER 16

1 *The Israelites come to Sin.* 2 *They murmur for want of bread.* 4 *God promiseth them bread from heaven.* 11 *Quails are sent,* 14 *and manna.* 16 *The ordering of manna.* 25 *It was not to be found on the sabbath.* 32 *An omer of it is preserved.*

The Exodus From Egypt

2

²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment.* Commentary Reference Series (Ex 15:18). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



Though the general route of the Exodus is known, opinions differ as to certain details, the more important of these being: (1) the exact location of the crossing of the Red Sea, (2) the exact location of the encampment in the Sinai mountains, (3) the direction of the journey around the land of Edom. These differences of opinion exist partly because the locations of various places mentioned in the Bible are not now known, and, in the case of the Red Sea, because the sea is thought to have extended farther northward in the time of the Exodus than it does at the present time, probably including the Bitter Lakes and possibly Lake Tismah. For the crossing of the Red Sea, see on Ex. 13:17-20; 14:2-23; for the location of the encampment at Mt. Sinai, see on Ex. 3:1; 17:1, 7; 19:1, 2, for the journey around Edom, see on Num. 20:22; 21:4, 10-13; 33:35-45.

1. They took their journey. From Elim, perhaps in the *Wadi Gharandel*, where the Israelites probably spent several days, or possibly even weeks, the journey was resumed. According to Num. 33:10, where a more complete itinerary is presented than in Exodus, the next halting place was the Red Sea. This seems to have been in the wide plain el-

³Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ge 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Markha, which borders on the Red Sea and lies on the regular route to the Egyptian copper mines at *Wadi Magâra*.

The wilderness of Sin. Various opinions exist in regard to the location of the Sin desert. Some commentators have suggested that the name was given to this region because of multitudes of thorny bushes, whose name in Heb., *seneh*, is similar. Others think that this name, as well as that of Sinai itself, was derived from the name of the moon-god, *Sin*, who was worshiped on the Sinai Peninsula. The desert of Sin has been variously identified with (1) the dry, barren coastal plain of *el-Qâa*, north of the present port city of *Tôr*, (2) the copper mine valley *Wadi Magâra*, (3) the plain *Debbet er-Ramleh*, north of *Jebel Musa* in the heart of the Sinai Peninsula, and (4) the oasis *Feiran*. The two last-named localities deserve less consideration than the first two since they are rather far south.

The second month. Israel had been on their way exactly one month (see ch. 12:2, 6, 11, 12; Num. 33:3). Since only seven camping places (Num. 33:5–11) and one journey of three days through a wilderness (Ex. 15:22) are mentioned, it is evident that there must have been prolonged stays at various places, or many campsites that are not mentioned, or both.

3. The flesh pots. Accustomed in Egypt to a diet of meat, bread, fish, and vegetables (Num. 11:5), which had come to them even as slaves, they now rose up against Moses and Aaron.

4. I will rain bread. The patience and kindness of God toward His chosen people in these instances of murmuring is remarkable. Recognizing that their minds were still as servile and their faith as undeveloped as when they were in Egypt, God did not show Himself offended at their murmuring but sent help each time they were in trouble. In so doing it was His purpose to train them to trust their divinely appointed leaders and to have faith in Him.

The phenomenon described here and elsewhere in the Bible (Deut. 8:3; Neh. 9:15; Ps. 78:23–25; 105:40; John 6:31) can be satisfactorily accounted for only as a miracle. The explanation of certain modern Bible expositors that the “manna” (Ex. 16:15) was the secretion of various plant lice is preposterous. Examining this so-called “manna” in 1927, F. S. Bodenheimer, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, found that various plant lice, cicadas, and scale insects feed on the tamarisk trees of the Sinai wilderness and excrete their excess carbohydrates in the form of honeydew drops. The latter evaporate into particles resembling hoar frost. This is supposed to be the “manna” that Josephus (*Antiquities* iii. 1. 6) said was still found on Sinai in his time. Acceptance of the narrative of Ex. 16 precludes the possibility that the “manna” of the tamarisk can have been the miraculous food on which the Israelites lived for 40 years. The heavenly manna was provided throughout the year, but ceased as soon as they entered the Promised Land (Joshua 5:12). The tamarisk “manna” is found on Sinai only during the months of June and July. The quantity of this plant “manna” is extremely small and could not possibly serve to feed many people, whereas God fed a whole nation with His manna for almost 40 years. Furthermore, the Biblical manna could not be preserved even to the next day, except on Sabbath (Ex. 16:19, 20), but could be baked (v. 23). In contrast, tamarisk “manna” can be kept for several days, but cannot be used for baking purposes, though it

can be cooked. These points of difference show that acceptance of the modern interpretation, which explains the manna as a natural product of Sinai, means rejection of the Biblical record. This and other modern explanations, all of which are made with the purpose of escaping anything of a miraculous nature, do not deserve further consideration.

That I may prove them. That the rain of manna was designed by God as a means of education is apparent from these words. The miraculous provision of food was to train the people to respect and obey His holy law.

5. *On the sixth day.* Here Moses indicates briefly the nature of the test implied in v. 5. Mention of “the sixth day” immediately reminds one of the sixth day of creation week (Gen. 1:31), the only previous occurrence of this expression, and thus of the fact that in six days God completed His work of creation (Gen. 2:1–3). Considered together with Gen. 2:1–3 and Ex. 20:8–11, this reference clearly points to the fact that the Hebrews knew of the weekly cycle prior to the giving of the law at Sinai (cf. Gen. 29:28). The seventh day, on which no manna fell, was “the holy sabbath unto the Lord” (Ex. 16:22–30), and on it the people were to “rest” (v. 30). In Hebrew, the word Sabbath means “rest.” In conjunction with v. 23, v. 5 indicates that only the seventh day had a name, “the holy sabbath,” whereas the other six days were designated by ordinals, as the first, second, third day, etc.

Twice as much. Twice as much manna was to fall on the sixth day, and they were to gather twice as much (PP 296). This weekly thought and activity required in preparation for the Sabbath was to be to Israel a lesson on the importance of the Sabbath day.

6. *Then ye shall know.* The first evidence the Israelites would have that God had heard and considered their complaints, would be the descent of the quails in the evening of the day on which Moses and Aaron addressed them (see vs. 12, 13).

7. *The glory of the Lord.* These words do not apply to the manifestation of divine glory that immediately followed Moses and Aaron’s address (see v. 10), but to the miraculous rain of manna in the morning, an act in which God’s great power and glory would be evident.

What are we? The murmuring of the people directed at Moses and Aaron as their leaders was in reality against the Lord. Moses and Aaron had but carried out His instructions. God would therefore manifest His glory to the people, as evidence that He had heard their murmuring. This manifestation of divine power is more fully explained in v. 8.

8. *In the evening flesh.* Much of this verse is a repetition of statements previously made. However, there is an important addition, in direct answer to the murmurings of the people. In their complaint they had mentioned the “flesh pots” and the “bread” of Egypt, for which they longed (v. 3). Flesh and bread they would now have “to the full.” God would demonstrate that He could supply in the desert what Egypt possessed, and more.

9. *Come near before the Lord.* Before the promised food should be given, Moses required the people to present themselves before the Lord, in recognition that He was the one against whom they had rebelled. Inasmuch as the conduct of Moses and Aaron had been called in question, it was necessary for God to show the people that He approved the action of His faithful servants and would honor their promise.

12. *At even.* Literally “between the two evenings” (see on ch. 12:6).

Ye shall eat flesh. It was only on rare occasions that the Lord provided flesh for the Israelites. But two are recorded, the one here in the Wilderness of Sin and another at Kibroth-hattaavah in the Wilderness of Paran (Num. 11:31–34). Israel was not in actual need of flesh food, since the “corn of heaven” (Ps. 78:24) was adequate to supply all their needs.

13. *Quails.* Some commentators have explained the word translated “quails” as meaning either flying fish or locusts, but Ps. 78:27 makes it clear that “feathered fowls” are meant. It is now generally agreed that the word “quail” is correct. This quail is a game bird about 10 in. in length, the *Coturnix communis*, and belongs to the same order as pheasants, partridges, and grouse. It resembles the American quail. Ornithologists have reported great migrations of quail from Romania, Hungary, and southern Russia, across the eastern Mediterranean to North Africa. From Sinai thousands of quail a day have been exported to the markets of Europe. Many ancient Egyptian pictures show the people hunting quail with hand nets thrown down over bushes where quail are resting.

14. *A small round thing.* When the dew evaporated before the rising sun, there remained a delicate small substance that could easily be gathered in bags. It is compared here to “hoar frost” and elsewhere (Num. 11:7) to “coriander seed.”

15. *It is manna.* The two Hebrew words *man hu’*, thus translated, were long a puzzle to scholars. The word *man* could hardly be translated as the name of the heavenly bread, which appears first in v. 31. Some therefore translated the expression, “It is a gift,” but this again is far from convincing. The most probable interpretation is that of the LXX, “What is this?” a rendering supported by the words immediately following, “for they wist not what it was.” But since the Hebrew for “what” is *mah* and not *man*, it was suggested that Aramaic usage had influenced the text; yet the Aramaic *man* does not mean “what” but “who.” F. M. Th. Böhl, however, has shown that the form *man* was an old Semitic particle meaning “what.” It appears as *manna*, in the Palestinian Amarna Letters, documents written in the 14th century B.C. We may therefore conclude that this short phrase is properly translated, “What is this?” (LXX), or “What is it?” (RSV). This exclamation reveals the surprise of the Hebrews when they discovered the unfamiliar substance.

The final solution of this problem, noted above, is one of the many evidences that the Pentateuch was not written many centuries after the Exodus, as so many modern scholars believe. Words and expressions like this, found only in documents from the middle of the second millennium B.C., would not have been used by a writer in the first millennium, for he would have been unaware of their existence at the time of the Exodus. The story of the Exodus was written by a contemporary of that great event, one who was acquainted with the phraseology of his own time, and who knew how to use it.

They wist not what it was. This explanatory phrase shows that the preceding exclamation of the Hebrews was one of astonishment and inquiry. They could not have said, “It is manna,” when they did not know what it was, and Moses had to tell them that it was bread from heaven. If they had realized at once that it was the food sent them by God, there would have been no need for Moses to tell them so.

16. *An omer for every man.* The omer was the 10th part of an ephah (v. 36), that is, 2 dry qt. (2.2 l.). It is thought that the cup often depicted on Hebrew coins of the first

Christian century represents the omer of barley from the new crop, presented at the Temple as an offering from the first fruits of the field.

18. When they did mete it. Obeying Moses' directions, the Israelites gathered the new food. Upon measuring it they found that, whatever the quantity actually gathered by anyone, it was exactly as many omers as there were persons in the family. God thus not only provided food in a miraculous manner but took care that everyone enjoyed an ample share.

19. Let no man leave of it. God had provided the Israelites with food for which they had not labored, but He did not want them to become lazy. They must gather every day in order to have anything to eat. Furthermore, they must rise early, since the manna melted "when the sun waxed hot" (v. 21). Although there were no fields to plow or harvests to bring in, the fact that they must arise early to gather their food shows that God planned every detail of this phenomenon for the people's benefit and training. Poverty and want are the reward of those who sleep late (see Prov. 6:9–11).

20. It bred worms. This result of storing up the manna was also probably supernatural. It served as a punishment to the disobedient, and effectively checked the practice of carelessly ignoring God's instructions.

21. It melted. See on v. 19.

22. Twice as much. On the sixth day another miracle occurred. It had already been revealed to Moses that the people were to gather twice as much on Friday as on other days (v. 5), and this information Moses had passed on to the people, for "they gathered twice as much." But nothing had as yet been revealed concerning its miraculous preservation, nor as to the fact that none would fall on the Sabbath. By gathering a double amount Friday morning the people had complied with instructions thus far given. But experience during the week had shown that any left over would spoil before morning (v. 20). This problem the tribal leaders now brought before Moses. Apparently, God delayed specific instructions concerning the Sabbath until this very time, since they had not been necessary earlier in the week.

23. To morrow. Moses realized that God had bestowed the manna in such a way that the Sabbath was to be sanctified thereby (v. 4). The apparent ignorance of the people concerning the Sabbath, together with Moses' instructions regarding it and the fact that some attempted to find a fresh supply of manna on Sabbath in spite of instructions that none would fall, shows that the Israelites had largely lost sight of God's holy day during their sojourn in Egypt. The rigorous requirements of the taskmasters had primarily been responsible for this laxity in Sabbath observance (PP 258).

Seethe that ye will seethe. In modern English, "Boil what you will boil" (RSV). All preparation of the food was to be completed before the Sabbath began. Later, Moses instructed the people not even to kindle a fire on the Sabbath day (ch. 35:3), and upon at least one occasion a man was stoned to death for violating this regulation (Num. 15:32–36). The principle involved was that no labor of any kind should be performed on the Sabbath which could as well be done at some other time. In the warm desert climate it was not essential to health to eat warm food on the Sabbath day. Had it been necessary to do so God would have permitted it, in harmony with the principle that the Sabbath was designed for the benefit of man (Mark 2:27, 28), and that "it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days" (Matt. 12:12). Since baking and boiling could be dispensed with, without injury to health, God prohibited them in order that the people might learn to put a

“difference between the holy and profane” (Eze. 22:26). In our day, whatever can be done on Friday in preparation for the Sabbath should be done then (6T 355), yet at the same time Sabbath meals should be both healthful and appetizing (6T 359).

24. They laid it up. Most of the people obeyed, and experienced a new miracle when that portion laid aside for the Sabbath neither “bred worms” nor “stank.” For 40 years this weekly procedure taught the people to make Friday a day of preparation for the Sabbath, and to make the Sabbath itself truly a day of rest.

25. To day is a sabbath. Or, “Today is the Lord’s sabbath.” Although the definite article “the” does not appear in the Hebrew text, the grammatical construction permits such a translation. The same Hebrew word form, “a sabbath,” appears also in the fourth commandment, where the KJV renders it, appropriately, “the sabbath” (Ex. 20:10). In both instances, however, a strict translation would require that it be rendered “a sabbath.” At the same time “the sabbath” would be entirely permissible.

There is nothing either in this text or in its context to indicate that the Sabbath was now given to the Israelites for the first time, as some have supposed. In fact, it is implied that they already knew of the Sabbath, but had grown careless in its observance (ch. 16:4). The Sabbath command was therefore renewed and its observance as a holy day reinforced (see on vs. 27, 28).

The Hebrew expression *shabbath*, “rest,” here correctly rendered “a sabbath,” is translated in vs. 23 and 26 and in ch. 20:10 as “the sabbath.” However, in v. 29 and ch. 20:8 the Hebrew text reads *hashshabbath*, which is correctly translated “the sabbath.” The expression “a sabbath”—“a rest”—describes how the seventh day is distinguished from the preceding six as regards labor. “The sabbath”—“the rest”—describes the distinctive character of the seventh-day rest; namely, a rest memorializing the rest of God on the seventh day of creation week, and thus a *holy* rest day.

26. Six days. These words are similar to those of the fourth commandment of the Decalogue. Here, mention is made not only of the Sabbath as a day of holy rest but also of the days of work preceding it. In God’s plan for man these six working days are of no less significance than is the Sabbath. They have been given to man for his own use. But the seventh day of the week is holy (v. 23). It should be spent in accordance with divinely given regulations as specified in the fourth commandment.

The sabbath. Here the Hebrew text uses the definite article (see on vs. 25, 28). “The sabbath” is a sacred institution ordained at the close of creation week. Even then it was “the” Sabbath (ch. 20:11).

27. Some of the people. As usual, there were some who either did not believe what Moses had said and wanted to see for themselves whether manna had fallen, or intentionally violated the commandment out of a stubborn desire to have their own way.

28. How long refuse ye? In speaking to Moses personally, God addresses the nation as a whole and its disobedient individuals in particular. This is evident from the use in the Hebrew of the plural form of the verb “refuse.” There had already been one act of disobedience the day the manna was first given (v. 20), but now one of a more serious nature occurred. God, addressing them as Judge, asks them to face the question of when He might expect sinful conduct such as this to end, and when they would learn that they could gain nothing by disobedience. The later history of Israel shows clearly how “long” it would take them to learn this important lesson. God’s question, “How long,” etc., implies that they had for a considerable time been doing this very thing—breaking the

Sabbath, in full knowledge of the fact that they were doing what was wrong (see on vs. 25, 27).

29. See. The patience of God toward His stubborn people is amazing, and teaches an important lesson to us who tend to be impatient. Instead of always punishing Israel for their repeated murmurings and acts of disobedience, God condescends to reason with them, explaining the purpose of His requirements. The Sabbath was a holy day of rest, with which they were not to tamper; hence, the double portion of food the day before.

Abide ye every man. The Israelites were directed to remain in camp on the Sabbath, and not to go out for manna or for any other purpose. Their time on that day was to be spent in rest at home and in meditation upon sacred themes. God had already instructed Israel to assemble for worship on days designated as “holy” (ch. 12:16), a practice that was consistently applied to other “holy” days (see Lev. 23:2–4, 7, 8, 21, 24, 27, 35–37). In postexilic times the Jews set up and enforced strict regulations concerning the leaving of cities or villages on the Sabbath. No one was permitted to travel farther than 2,000 cubits, or approximately two thirds of a mile. In the NT this distance is commonly referred to as “a sabbath day’s journey” (Acts 1:12). Endless, man-made Sabbath regulations have been strictly followed by orthodox Jews even since Bible times, with the result that the Sabbath, designed by God to be a delight (Isa. 58:13), became a burden.

30. The people rested. Finding no manna Sabbath morning, and rebuked for going out to find it, the people began to rest on the Sabbath day.

31. The house of Israel. Some of the oldest versions, such as the LXX, the Syriac, and the Arabic translation, read “children” instead of “house.” It is possible that the reading “children of Israel” is closer to the original than “house of Israel.”

Manna. No explanation of this name yet proposed has met with general acceptance. Some have suggested that it may mean “gift,” but it is more probable that the word owes its origin to the original exclamation of astonishment, *man hu’*, “What is it?” (see on v. 15).

Like coriander seed. An herb, *Coriandrum sativum*, which grows wild in the Near East. Its aromatic fruit, called “coriander seed,” is used for seasoning and medicinal purposes. The color of the seed is whitish or yellow-gray. In Num. 11:7 it is compared with the bdellium (see on Gen. 2:12).

Wafers. The Hebrew word thus translated appears only here in the Bible, and is of uncertain meaning. The LXX renders it by the word *egkris*, according to Greek literary sources, designates a cake made of flour, oil, and honey. The Israelites described the manna as tasting like cakes with honey (Ex. 16:31) and as if baked with fresh oil (Num. 11:8).

33. Take a pot. This command was given after the erection of the tabernacle (v. 34), but is related here in order to bring all subject matter bearing on the manna together in one place. The word translated “pot” is from an Egyptian word meaning a rather large jar. Here, however, it seems to have been used to designate a metal vessel, made of gold to match the ark (see Heb. 9:4).

34. The Testimony. Not the ark of the covenant, to which this name is never given, but the two tables of stone engraved by the finger of God (chs. 25:16–21; 40:20; etc.). The pot of manna was laid up inside the ark (Heb. 9:4) in front of the two tables of stone.

35. Forty years. This statement was either written by Moses shortly before his death or added by an inspired scribe, probably Joshua. In favor of Moses' authorship is the expression "until they came to a land inhabited," to which is added, "until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan." This need not refer to the crossing of the Jordan, but to the lands east of the Jordan. The author writes exactly as Moses might be expected to have written toward the close of his life. A later writer would have been more specific, and would probably have noted, as Joshua did in his book (Joshua 5:10–12), the exact time when the manna ceased.

Ephah. Equivalent to about 5 gal.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-36 PP 292-297

1, 2 PP 292

2, 3 SR 126

3 CH 111; Ed 38; MH 311; PP 292; SR 128; IT 129; 3T 171; 6T 372; 9T 159, 160

4, 5, PP 294

7 3T 86

8, 9 PP 294

10, 13-15PP 295

14-21SR 129

15 MH 200; MM 267

16-23PP 295

22-26PK 181; SR 130

23 6T 355

24-26PP 296

28 DA 283; PP 297

31 PP 295

33 EW 32

35 CH 111; DA 385; PK 181; PP 297; 3T 340

CHAPTER 17

1 *The people murmur for water at Rephidim. 5 God sendeth him for water to the rock in Horeb. 8 Amalek is overcome by the holding up of Moses' hands. 15 Moses buildeth the altar Jehovah-nissi.*

1. Pitched in Rephidim. Between the Wilderness of Sin, where the fall of the manna began, and Rephidim, lay two camp sites, Dophkah and Alush (Num. 33:12, 13). The location of these stations, as well as that of Rephidim, is unknown. Most Biblical scholars have sought Rephidim in the *Wadi Feiran*, which leads up to the traditional Mt. Sinai.

Others have identified it with the *Wadi Refâyid*, primarily because of the similarity of its name to Rephidim. *Wadi Refâyid* lies but a few hours' march from Mt. Sinai. This fact favors its identification with Rephidim, since in several texts Mt. Horeb is used almost synonymously with Mt. Sinai (see Ex. 17:6; 33:6; Ps. 106:19; etc.).

No water. Traveling in the late spring the people expected to find water in the valleys. This probably accounts for the fact that water was not taken in sufficient quantity. The dry river bed of the valley of Rephidim proved to be the cause of consternation more serious than any they had felt before.

2. Give us water. On several occasions the people had murmured; now they complained bitterly. Since Moses had already given them flesh and bread to eat, the people may have naturally expected him to provide them with water as well. But their complaint reflected doubt rather than faith.

Tempt the Lord. The children of Israel “tempted” God by trying His patience, and aroused His holy anger by their continued want of faith and gratitude. The entire history of their desert wandering is one of provocation. The long-suffering of God with such a people, who “tempted and provoked the most high God” (Ps. 78:56), is amazing. They repeatedly “provoked him to anger with their inventions” (Ps. 106:29), “murmured in their tents” (Ps. 106:25), “provoked him at the sea” (Ps. 106:7), and “tempted God in the desert” (Ps. 106:14).

3. To kill us. For a short time the words of Moses seem to have calmed the people, but when their thirst became unbearable they returned to Moses, hot with anger. Again accusing him of having plotted their death (see ch. 14:11), they manifested a grievous lack of faith.

4. What shall I do? Moses ever carried his difficulties to the Lord (see Ex. 15:25; 32:30; 33:8; Num. 11:2, 11; 12:13; 14:13–19; etc.). For his own part, Moses had learned implicit confidence in the One who had called him to be leader of His people, and whenever he reached the limit of human wisdom he found an ever ready Helper.

Ready to stone me. The situation must have been serious indeed, for Moses’ very life was in danger. The practice of stoning is first mentioned in ch. 8:26. Since no trace of death by stoning has been found in Egypt, this form of capital punishment seems to have originated here, so far as the Israelites were concerned, and was no doubt suggested by the abundance of available rocks. Stoning was later practiced among the Greeks, in the time of the Persian wars (Herodotus ix. 5), and by some other peoples. It was one of the easiest ways of killing a criminal without spilling his blood, and seemed especially suitable when the public was called upon to avenge a certain crime like blasphemy (Lev. 24:16) or idolatry (Deut. 13:10; 17:5–7). Here at Rephidim, however, the occasion was one of mutiny, a spontaneous uprising to get rid of a hated leader, whom they held responsible for their unbearable suffering. Thirst can, of course, prove to be torture of the worst sort.

5. Go on before the people. Taking some of the elders with him as witnesses, Moses was to leave the people in Rephidim and go up into the mountains in advance of the spot where the people were encamped. The performance of this miracle was to be witnessed only by the elders, in contrast with the second similar experience, when water was brought forth in the presence of all the people (Num. 20:8–11).

6. I will stand before thee. The Lord promised to come personally to the help of Moses. It was His gracious presence that caused water to flow out of the rock, though this was not to be till Moses should strike it with his staff, that the people might acknowledge him as God’s representative.

7. Massah, and Meribah. “Temptation,” and “murmuring.” The unbelief manifested here would by these names long continue to remind Israel of the lesson God designed to teach them upon this occasion (Deut. 6:16; Ps. 78:20; 95:8; 105:41). The location of this rock is not known, but in view of the fact that it was “in Horeb” (v. 6), it seems to have been close both to Rephidim and to the amount of the law.

8. Then came Amalek. The Amalekites were descendants of Esau's grandson, after whom they were named (Gen. 36:12). Separating themselves from their brethren at an early date, they seem to have become a leading tribe in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula. Though a race kindred to Israel, they viewed with suspicion the occupation of their pastures by the Hebrews, and were bent upon their utter destruction (PP 300). Beginning with this first encounter at Rephidim, a long and bitter feud developed between the two nations. A year later the Israelites were defeated by the Amalekites, who joined forces with the Canaanites at Kadesh-barnea (Num. 14:45). During the period of the judges the Amalekites sought to subjugate Israel, but were defeated by the band of Gideon (Judges 6:33). Saul and David also repeatedly defeated (1 Sam. 14:48; 15:7; 27:8; 30:17, 18; 2 Sam. 8:12), and the last remnants of the nation were finally destroyed by the Simeonites during the reign of King Hezekiah (1 Chron. 4:41–43).

Fought with Israel. This battle began with a treacherous attack upon those at the rear of the long Hebrew column, "even all that were feeble," when they were "faint and weary" (Deut. 25:18). This infamous attack was regarded by God as a personal insult, and though final retribution was long delayed it was never forgotten, for in due time God commissioned Saul to destroy them (1 Sam. 15:2, 3). It was because of the murmuring of the Israelites that God permitted the Amalekites to attack them at Rephidim (PP 298).

9. Joshua. The successor of Moses and later leader of Israel here appears in the narrative for the first time. Joshua, whose name means "Jehovah is salvation" or "Jehovah helps," was a prince of the tribe of Ephraim who entered the personal service of Moses either before or soon after the battle with the Amalekites (see Num. 13:8; Ex. 24:13). When chosen by Moses, his name was still Hoshea or Oshea, which means "salvation." His more meaningful name, Jehoshua or Joshua, "Jehovah is salvation" or "Jehovah helps," was given him by Moses upon a later occasion (Num. 13:8, 16). The name Jesus is from the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name Joshua (see Heb. 4:8).

Choose us out men. It was probably evening when Moses heard of the attack upon his rear ranks, and there was consequently little possibility of retrieving the loss until the following day (Ex. 17:9). But arrangements for meeting the enemy the next morning were made. This preparation consisted in the selection of men fit for battle, and probably also in strategy meetings with band leaders and last-minute instructions for battle on the morrow.

The rod of God in mine hand. While Moses sent his men into combat and did everything humanly possible to guarantee victory over the treacherous enemy, he demonstrated also his trust in God rather than in human strength (cf. Jer. 17:5). Although he knew that victory comes from the Lord, this trust did not prevent him from putting forth every effort to protect the women and children, the aged and weak. Divine power is thus ever to be combined with human effort.

10. Hur. Hur, who also held a prominent position (ch. 24:14), was a descendant of Judah through Caleb, the son of Hezron (1 Chron. 2:18–20). His grandson, Bezaleel, was architect of the tabernacle (Ex. 31:2). According to one Jewish tradition he was the husband of Miriam, and according to another, her son.

11. Israel prevailed. The lifting up of the hands has generally been regarded by ancient Jewish scholars, by the church Fathers, by the Reformers, and by many modern commentators as the sign or attitude of prayer. Throughout Bible times the custom of lifting up one's hands in prayer was observed by pious and earnest worshipers. A few

commentators have regarded the posture of Moses, with his hands lifted up, as the attitude of a commander superintending and directing the battle, but this opinion must be rejected, since Moses did not function as commander in chief. He had transferred the command to Joshua (v. 9). He himself engaged in earnest prayer to God for help and victory (PP 299). The question has been raised as to why Moses did not continue to pray even when his hands were weary. Only those who have attempted to pray continuously for long periods of time know how difficult such a procedure is. Perhaps when Moses dropped his hands because of fatigue, he rested also from the mental concentration necessary to prayer. To impress upon Israel the importance of intercessory prayer, God permitted success and failure to alternate accordingly. At the same time God wished His people to learn that their success was to be found in cooperating with His chosen leaders.

12. Aaron and Hur. Teamwork prevailed. While Israel under Joshua's command fought for its very existence down in the valley Moses' two companions supported him. This support was not only physical but probably spiritual as well. They continued with him in intercession until final victory was gained, toward the close of the day.

In this experience lies a deep spiritual lesson for every Christian and for the church as a whole. From it we learn that prayer and supplication are essential to victories over our enemies. So long as the hands are outstretched and the soul exerts itself in prayer, our spiritual adversaries will be beaten back. When prayer is forgotten and one's hold on God is loosened, spiritual foes will gain ground, with the result that eventually all connection with heaven may be severed. On the other hand the church is assured of victory over all the powers of evil so long as its leaders are men of prayer, and so long as its members cooperate with those leaders, supporting them with their prayers and exemplary lives.

14. Write. This is the first mention in the Sacred Record of writing. Until recently it was not known how this was done and what kind of script was employed. The fact that alphabetic writing existed in the time of Moses was discovered about the time of the first world war. Previously, it had been known only that alphabetic script was used by the various peoples of Palestine, particularly the Phoenicians, in the first millennium B.C., and that European alphabets had developed, through the intermediate stages of Greek and Latin, from that original Phoenician script. Higher critics scoffed at the idea that Moses could have written the Pentateuch in Hebrew during the second millennium B.C., convinced as they were that Hebrew writing was nonexistent at that time. Those who admitted that Moses might have written part of the Pentateuch, or certain experiences such as this one, thought that he must have employed either Egyptian hieroglyphic script or Babylonian cuneiform.

According to the evidence it seems probable that the first alphabetic form of writing was invented—if not in Phoenicia or southern Palestine—in the very region of Sinai where Moses received the command to write the story of Amalek's defeat in a book. In 1916 Dr. Alan Gardiner published his first attempt to decipher inscriptions found some ten years earlier by Sir Flinders Petrie which the Egyptian copper mines of the *Wadi Magâra* on Sinai. Subsequent expeditions have increased the number of inscriptions from that place, and the combined labor of a number of outstanding linguists has succeeded in deciphering this previously unknown script. These inscriptions reveal the astonishing fact that they constitute the earliest attempts at composing a Semitic script, which consisted of about 25 characters.

The inventors of this alphabet were probably Canaanites who worked for the Egyptians in mines in Sinai. They may have had no written language of their own, but had become acquainted with the hieroglyphic system of writing used for centuries in Egypt. For example, the only way the Egyptians could express in writing the idea of a house was by drawing a hieroglyph, or picture, of a house. To some Canaanite at the mines came the brilliant idea of using certain Egyptian hieroglyphs to express abstract phonetic sounds instead of concrete objects. In the Canaanite language a house was a *bayith*. The first sound of *bayith* being *b*, they assigned the phonetic value of *b* to the Egyptian hieroglyph for "house." The application of this principle made it possible for a small number of characters to express whatever they wished to say. This was an invention of far-reaching importance. Nor has it been greatly improved since then. We still use a modified form of the alphabetic script invented probably on the Sinai Peninsula before the Exodus. Our own letter *b*, for example, is a direct descendant of the first character used at Sinai for that sound.

The invention of alphabetic writing shortly before the Exodus was as much a providential gift of God as the invention of printing by movable type shortly before the Reformation. The Bible could never have become the "book of the people" if it had been necessary to write it in the complicated hieroglyphic or cuneiform systems which preceded the invention of alphabetic script. With this new script, with which Moses had probably become acquainted during his long sojourn in Sinai, it was easy to write the story of God's dealings with His people and the various legal regulations found in the Pentateuch as well. It was also easy to learn to read such writing. By no mere accident the Hebrew Scriptures constitute the oldest and most complete historical record of the human race and of God's attempts to rescue man from the kingdom of Satan.

In a book. The "book" in which Moses wrote the story of Amalek's attack and defeat probably consisted of a papyrus scroll, the most common Egyptian writing material. This ancestor of paper was made from fibers of the stem of the papyrus plant, then found in swamps of the Nile Delta. Papyrus sheets were made by first placing a layer of soaked fibers one way, and on top of it another layer the other way. The layers were then glued together, pressed and dried, and smoothed by rubbing the sheets with a pumice stone. Finally, several sheets were fastened together to form a roll of an average height of 9 or 10 in. and a length of from 10 to 30 ft. Such a scroll would be long enough to contain any of the five books of the Pentateuch.

From the remark made in Num. 33:2 it is evident that Moses kept a diary of Israel's journey through the wilderness, which formed the basis of the list of Num. 33 and of the historical narrative he has left us. Moses probably acquired the habit of keeping a diary during the first 40 years of his life at the Egyptian court, for we know from the records of Thutmose III, probably a contemporary of Moses, that all events connected with military campaigns were "recorded on [each] day by its name," and that after the completion of a campaign these field notes were transferred to "a roll of leather in the temple of Amon" (cf. PP 245). It would therefore not have seemed strange to Moses to receive instructions to record the treacherous attack and defeat of Amalek for future reference as a "memorial."

Rehearse it. These words show that Joshua had already been selected by God to succeed Moses.

I will utterly put out. The destruction of this branch of the Edomite nation was decreed, whereas the rest of the Edomites enjoyed divine protection (see Deut. 2:4, 5). The Amalekites had brutally attacked God's people, showing no compassion even for their own kindred (Deut. 25:18). This attack, wholly unprovoked, revealed their hatred and defiance of God and sealed their doom as a nation (PP 300).

15. Moses built an altar. The building of an altar implies the offering of a sacrifice. Inasmuch as the sacrifice was offered in celebration of victory, it must have been a thank offering.

Jehovah-nissi. In naming the altar, Moses followed the example of Jacob, who had called one of his altars El-elohe-Israel (Gen. 33:20). The name of Moses' altar meant "the Lord is my banner" and was intended to glorify God for victory over the Amalekites. "The rod of God" (Ex. 17:9) had been held up by Moses during the battle as soldiers hold up their standards, and as soldiers follow the standard, Israel had followed the directions of God. Thus, the Lord became their standard. While in Egypt the Israelites had frequently seen the military standards of the Egyptian armies, which bore pictorial representations of their gods Amen, Ra, Ptah, Sutekh, and others, after whom their divisions were named. Giving the name "the Lord is my standard" to this altar, Moses used familiar language and at the same time called attention to the fact that the standard of the Lord was more powerful than the emblems of the Amalekites. The name "Jehovah-nissi" stands for holy boldness.

16. Because the Lord hath sworn. Literally, "Because the hand [of Amalek] was against the throne of the Lord." The Hebrew text of this passage is obscure. The rendering of the RSV, "A hand upon the banner of the Lord!" is based upon the change of one consonant, by which the word "throne" becomes "banner." The Hebrew letters *n* and *k* are similar, and some copyist may easily have mistaken the former for the latter. Many commentators today prefer this rendering because it seems to be more in harmony with the context, particularly v. 15, where the same Hebrew word for "banner" is used.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-16PP 297-300

1-3PP 297

2-7SR 131

4-7PP 298

6 ML 12; PP 411

7 DA 126

8 2T 106

8-12SR 133

9 4T 530

10-124T 531

10-13PP 299

12 1T 527; 5T 162

13-16SR 134

14 PP 299; 2T 108; 5T 245

16 PP 300; 2T 108

CHAPTER 18

1 *Jethro bringeth to Moses his wife and two sons. 7 Moses entertaineth him. 13 Jethro's counsel is accepted. 27 Jethro departeth.*

1. Jethro, the priest of Midian. See on ch. 2:16, 18.

2. Zipporah, Moses' wife. See on ch. 2:21.

After he had sent her back. Some commentators have thought that Zipporah left her husband in anger after the circumcision of her son on the way to Egypt (ch. 4:24–26). This view is untenable, since the record does not state that she returned to her father but that Moses sent her back. This he had done for her own safety (PP 255), in view of the danger to which Zipporah and her sons would be exposed in Egypt during the struggle with Pharaoh (see also PP 383).

3. Gershom. See on ch. 2:22.

4. Eliezer. Moses' second son has not previously been mentioned by name, but was probably the one circumcised by Zipporah on the way to Egypt (ch. 4:25). Eliezer means "my God is [my] help." In contrast, the name Moses gave his first son, Gershom, means "banishment" (ch. 2:22), reflecting a spirit of despondency natural to an exile. The name of the second son revealed the father's gratitude for the divine protection enjoyed during his flight from Egypt. That Eliezer's name is mentioned and explained here for the first time is no valid reason for thinking that he had been without a name. From 1 Chron. 23:17 we learn that Eliezer had but one son, Rehabiah, whose descendants had become numerous in the time of Solomon.

5. The mount of God. The "mount of God," where Jethro found Moses and the Israelites encamped, was Horeb (ch. 3:1). It had been in its neighborhood that God appeared to Moses in the fiery bush. It was near here also that Moses had smitten the rock and given water to his thirsty people (ch. 17:6).

6. And he said. The Hebrew text may also be rendered "and someone said," or, "and it was said." This agrees better with the context, for Jethro and Moses had not yet met (see v. 7). It seems that Jethro, on arriving in the vicinity of the camp, sent a messenger to Moses, who spoke in his name and announced his arrival. The RSV reads, "And when one told Moses," etc.

7. Moses went out. Oriental courtesy required such conduct in case of an honored, or even a welcome, visitor (see Gen. 18:2; 19:1; Luke 15:20; etc.). It was evidently Moses' intention to receive Jethro with all possible honor and respect. He not only went out to meet him but bowed before him as before a superior.

8. Moses told. Jethro had probably heard something of the story of Israel's deliverance. News of the miraculous events that preceded the Exodus, as well as victory over the Egyptian army at the Red Sea, must have spread like wildfire through the countries bordering on Egypt.

10 Blessed be the Lord. Every phase of Jethro's conduct proves him a religious man and a believer in the true God. Of this his thanksgiving to the Lord, the God of the Israelites, is striking proof.

Delivered the people. A repetition of what has already been stated in the first part of the verse. Following the LXX, the RSV omits the last clause of the verse. The RSV, but not the LXX, inserts this clause in the middle of v. 11.

11. Now I know. This text is not easy to explain, and has been taken by some commentators as proof that Jethro was a polytheist. Jethro, however, was "the godly priest of Midian" (PP 301). Here, with the additional evidence recounted by Moses, Jethro simply reaffirms his faith in the true God.

For in the thing. This statement is even less clear than the preceding one. The translators of the KJV apparently understood Jethro to say that God had shown Himself superior to the gods of Egypt. A more literal translation would read, “Even in the very matter that they [the Egyptians] dealt proudly against them [the Israelites].” Such a rendition sees the superiority of the Lord revealed in the way the pride of the Egyptians was humbled by the power of God (see on v. 10).

12. Took a burnt offering. Sacrifices were instituted by God Himself as soon as sin entered the world (see on Gen. 3:21; 4:3, 4). The practice of offering sacrifices was perpetuated by all who knew and honored God (see Gen. 4:4; 8:20; 12:7, 8; 22:13; etc.). Like Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18), Jethro was recognized as a priest of the true God (Ex. 2:16; PP 301), and therefore had the right to offer sacrifices. It would seem, however, that the Midianites, generally, were idolaters (Num. 25:17, 18; 31:16). Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel would not have partaken of a sacrificial meal had it been tainted by heathen practices or performed by a man who was not a worshiper of the God of heaven.

To eat bread. Of the burnt offering itself nothing was eaten. It was completely consumed, since in its entirety it was considered as belonging to God (Lev. 1:3–17). The other sacrifices here mentioned were such that, after the blood had been poured out before God and certain portions of the flesh burnt on the altar, the “elders” might eat what remained (see 1 Sam. 2:15, 16).

13. Moses sat to judge. In ancient times a ruler, whether king, prince, or chieftain, also exercised the office of judge. Legislative, executive, and judicial powers were all vested in one individual. For several centuries preceding the monarchy the leaders of Israel were called “judges,” and their administration was referred to as “judgment.” Like these successors of Moses, the chief rulers of Carthage also bore the title of “judges.” Since the time when he was accepted as leader by the people (ch. 4:29–31), Moses, it appears, regarded himself as obligated to hear and decide all complaints that arose among his people. Thus far he had not delegated judicial authority to anyone else. This cannot have been because the idea had not occurred to him, for in Egypt a judicial system existed, with judges appointed by the king. It may be that he doubted the ability of his countrymen, who had been slaves all their lives, to serve in such a capacity.

From the morning unto the evening. We do not know whether Moses was always as busy as he was upon the day after Jethro’s arrival. Commentators have conjectured that many complaints may have arisen out of the division of the spoil of the Amalekites, or that the unusual situation in which the people suddenly found themselves, upon liberation from slavery, produced more problems than would otherwise have been the case. They had lived all their lives under the rigid authority of Egyptian taskmasters, without freedom to make decisions of their own. Suddenly they had become their own masters, and must now associate together as equals. Under such circumstances smooth and harmonious community life can exist only when all abide by commonly understood and accepted rules.

14. Why sittest thou thyself alone? Jethro’s rebuke was not concerned with Moses’ technique of judgment. He did not object, as some commentators have thought, to Moses’ sitting while the people stood, as being humiliating for them. He did protest, however, that Moses should divide his burden by delegating certain duties of leadership to others qualified to bear them.

15. To enquire of God. This undoubtedly means that the people came to Moses as to one whom they regarded as qualified to speak for God. They did not look to Moses as they had looked toward the judges they knew in Egypt, but considered him as the appointed mouthpiece of God. Apparently, this was also Moses' point of view, and since the Lord had not instructed him otherwise, he felt it his duty to decide all cases brought to him.

16. I do make them know. Some commentators have taken the reference to statutes and laws as proof that the visit of Jethro occurred after the giving of the law at Sinai. Others have pointed out that the practice described in this passage would not have been necessary after the giving of the law, and that its existence at the time of Jethro's visit fixes the visit as having occurred before the law was formally proclaimed to Israel. The latter explanation seems preferable. God had not left His people for thousands of years without moral law. Cain knew that murder was sin (Gen. 4:8–13), Shem and Japheth demonstrated acquaintance with the law by shunning indecency (Gen. 9:23), Abraham observed God's commandments (Gen. 26:5), and even the Philistine king Abimelech knew that adultery was "a great sin" (Gen. 20:9). The mentioning of "my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5) in the time of the patriarchs is therefore not anachronistic, but shows clearly man's knowledge of such divinely imparted laws before Sinai. Moses, who during the 40 years of his desert sojourn had recorded the history of God's dealings with the patriarchs, must have been well acquainted with the moral principles set forth in the book of Genesis.

18. Thou wilt surely wear away. Jethro showed wisdom in the counsel he gave his son-in-law. It is a sacred duty to have regard for one's health, and not unnecessarily overtax one's strength.

19. Be thou for the people to God-ward. Or, "You shall represent the people before God" (RSV). Replying to Moses' explanation as to why the people came to him and why he consented to deal with their various cases, Jethro pointed out that it is one thing to lay down principles and another to apply them. Moses might reserve the legislative function to himself, and in that capacity transmit to the people divine principles. But he should also select men able to apply the principles to the various situations that arose, and delegate to these persons the judicial function of government (vs. 21, 22).

Bring the causes unto God. In difficult cases Moses actually laid the cause before God and obtained directions from Him as to the decision he should render (see Num. 15:32–36; 27:5–11).

20. Ordinances and laws. Jethro's distinction between "ordinances" and "laws" is not clear. Some regard "statutes" as connected with religion and "laws" as regulations with respect to civil and social matters. Others explain the first as "specific" and the second as "general" enactments. Jethro's advice that Moses ought to "shew them the way wherein they must walk" does clearly reveal that he meant Moses should lay down broad principles to guarantee equality and justice. The RSV renders these two terms as "statutes," or the laws themselves, and "decisions," or principles to be followed in applying the laws.

21. Able men. Jethro not only counseled Moses to choose "able men" but listed the qualifications these men should have—piety, moral integrity, and fairness. His conception of the character of a true judge leaves little to be desired. If these qualities

were required today in the choice of men for responsible positions in government, the strength of a nation would be greatly increased.

Rulers. The system proposed by Jethro would guarantee fair treatment for all. Little matters could thus be decided by the family heads, the “rulers of tens.” More difficult cases would be referred to the next higher authority, or court of appeal. Matters of a more serious nature would be brought to the “rulers of thousands.”

22. At all seasons. Instead of occasional court days, on which Moses sat hearing cases and rendered decisions all day long, provision was to be made for prompt consideration of problems as they arose.

23. And God command thee so. Although Jethro was convinced of the soundness of his counsel and the importance of its being followed, he nevertheless modestly left the choice of adopting it up to Moses. Knowing that his son-in-law acted according to divine directions in all matters, he realized that the success of the plan would be assured only if God should approve of it, and that only on this condition would Moses accept it. That Moses acted in harmony with Jethro’s advice is evidence that it did receive divine sanction, and that in giving it Jethro must have been inspired by the Spirit of God.

25. Moses chose able men. Verses 24–26 give the impression that Moses carried out Jethro’s advice immediately. Deuteronomy 1:9–15 indicates that Moses did not actually arrange for the selection of these judges until after the law was given at Sinai. Moses apparently awaited divine approval of the plan. Execution of the plan is related here, pursuant to Moses’ habit of dealing with subjects topically rather than chronologically. To fail to keep this literary characteristic of Moses in mind may lead to erroneous conclusions (see on Ex. 16:33, 35). It appears from Deut. 1:13 that instead of selecting the men himself Moses directed their nomination by the people, after which he invested them with the authority of their office.

Made them heads. From the time of their appointment the “rulers” were not merely judges but “heads” over their respective companies, with authority over them on the march, in the camp, and on the battlefield (see Num. 31:14). Both civil and military functions seem to have been combined.

27. He went his way. Jethro must have considered his visit to the Israelite camp one of the high points of his life. He there received a firsthand report of the marvelous doings of the God of his ancestor Abraham, whom he also served, whereby his own faith was strengthened.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-27PP 300-301

1-14PP 300

7-12SR 134

13-269T 262

15-26PP 301

16 MH 404; TM 341

19 GW 20

19-23TM 340

19-26AA 93

19-27SR 135

21 GW 449; 6T 215

CHAPTER 19

1 *The people come to Sinai.* 3 *God's message by Moses unto the people out of the mount.* 8 *The people's answer returned again.* 10 *The people are prepared against the third day.* 12 *The mountain must not be touched.* 16 *The fearful presence of God upon the mount.*

1. In the third month. That is, Sivan, comparable to our late May or early June.

Verses 1 and 2 deal with the last stage of the journey of the Israelites to Mt. Sinai. At Mt. Sinai there occurred one of the great events of Jewish history, the incorporation of Israel as a church and a nation under the theocracy (PP 303). This form of government continued until, with the words, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15), the Jews withdrew from it (DA 738). The process of organization at Sinai included the proclamation of the Ten Commandments, the ratification of the covenant, the construction of the tabernacle, the giving of ceremonial and civil laws, and the perfection of various civil and military procedures. A unique relationship was effected between the Lord and the descendants of Abraham, one into which no other nation would ever enter. Its purpose was to prepare the way for the coming of Christ as man's Saviour.

The same day. Literally, "on this very day," perhaps the first day of Sivan, possibly the 15th. Jewish tradition placed this event on the first day of the third month of the Jewish year. If so, the journey from Rameses to Sinai probably took 45 days.

The wilderness of Sinai. This is generally regarded as being the plain *er-Raha*, a nearly flat, bush-studded plain or desert, approximately 2 mi. long and 1/2 mi. wide (see on ch. 3:1). It was a suitable place for the Hebrews to gather to receive the law God was soon to proclaim, surrounded as it was by mountains which formed a natural amphitheater. At its southeastern end rose an almost perpendicular cliff of granite, which provided a high pulpit, or altar, from which the voice of the Lord might be heard. At the foot of this cliff was a series of low mounds that may have helped determine the "bounds" (v. 12) designed to keep the people from touching the mountain.

It was in such a majestic, inspiring environment that the law was given to Israel. It has been well observed that no spot in the world can be pointed out that combines in a more remarkable manner the conditions of a commanding height and of a plain, in every part of which the sights and sounds described in Exodus would reach an assembled multitude. It was a location of solitude, where the people could be entirely alone with God, away from everything that would draw their thought and attention from things divine. For more than 11 months Israel was to remain at Sinai. Here, besides receiving the law and ratifying the covenant, they would have time for the construction of the sanctuary and for the further development of their organization. It would afford them an opportunity for quiet reflection upon their responsibility toward the Lord.

God's people need such periods of rest, as Christ advised the disciples (see Mark 6:31). We have the example of Paul, who himself "went into Arabia," possibly to this very place (see Gal. 1:17). All of us need our Sinais, where, in quietness and solitude, God can do for us what He did for Israel, revealing His will, instructing us in it, and impressing us anew with His majesty. Sinai was a place of such solemnity that the minds of the people would irresistibly be elevated to communion with the Infinite. The very sternness and grandeur of the surroundings were a fit commentary on the sanctity of the law. As a fruitless, barren desert, Sinai is also a sharp reminder that of ourselves we can bear no spiritual fruit to the glory of God and cannot work out our own salvation. Did not Christ Himself say, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5)?

2. Camped before the mount. From Rephidim the Hebrews moved in a southeasterly direction toward Mt. Sinai. It is probable that most of the people pitched their tents in the afore-mentioned plain, but some may have encamped in adjacent valleys to the northeast and west, from which Mt. Sinai itself could be seen.

3. Moses went up. Verses 3–9 introduce the first covenant between God and Israel. Moses was familiar with this region, because it was here that God had revealed Himself in the burning bush. In the same locality God was again to reveal Himself to His servant, now no longer a lonely fugitive but exalted to be the leader of God’s own people. A flood of memories must have coursed through Moses’ mind as he ascended the mount. His faith must have been greatly strengthened for the difficult task of leadership ahead, for the Lord’s promise that he and his fellow Israelites would worship God in this place was about to be fulfilled (see Ex. 3:12). We may be sure that Moses ascended the mountain with a confident though reverent step.

The house of Jacob. This reference to their ancestor was a reminder of the promises vouchsafed to him (see Gen. 28:13, 14; 35:11). The mention of his name would recall the blessings graciously bestowed upon him, and these were a pledge of the blessings the Lord now offered them. That God should take the initiative in proposing a covenant was inevitable, for man is not in a position to exact terms from Heaven. Yet the covenant is an expression not only of God’s sovereignty but of His grace and mercy as well. He it is who first seeks man—not man, God (see 1 John 4:10, 19).

4. The Egyptians. That God should call attention to past evidences of His love before revealing His law, is worthy of note. Thus He would win their confidence; thus He would strengthen their faith in Him and encourage them to do His will. He would certify the blessings of the future by blessings enjoyed in the past. What God had done for Israel in delivering them from Egypt, in leading them safely through the Red Sea, and in giving them the manna, was a guarantee of what He would yet do for them should they remain true to Him. Without this assurance the terrors of Sinai could scarcely have been endured.

Eagles’ wings. As the parent bird takes the eaglet from its nest, teaches it to fly, and protects the young with its own life, so the Lord took His people from the captivity of Egypt that He might lead them to the land of Canaan. He would bear them up with His “wings,” and protect them from danger. As the weak and helpless eaglet, while fearful of danger, had confidence in the strength and protection of its parent, so Israel, weak, helpless, and fearful of what might lie ahead, could have faith in divine power (Deut. 32:11, 12).

5. If ye will obey. Rather than command the Hebrews to keep His covenant, as was His sovereign right, God graciously invited His people to do that which would be for their own benefit. The only avenue upon which we can walk with God is that of obedience. On no other terms but obedience could God consent to be their God or to have them for His chosen people. The grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ that brings salvation to all men (Titus 2:11) does not release them from their obligation to obey the divine law (Rom. 3:31). Faith in the redeeming Christ is inseparably joined to the power of the indwelling Christ, which enables one to keep the Ten Commandments (Rom. 8:1–4). Jesus and the apostles most emphatically affirmed the principle of obedience to divine law (Matt. 5:17, 18; 19:16, 17; 1 Cor. 7:19; James 1:25; 2:10–12; 1 John 2:3, 4).

My covenant. The covenant God made with Israel at Sinai is generally called the “old covenant” (Heb. 8:13). Owing to the failure of the people to appreciate fully the purpose

of God and to enter into the true spirit of the covenant, it stood forth in contrast to the new, or gospel, covenant as follows: (1) It was more elementary (Gal. 4:1–5). (2) It was more closely related to outward rites and ceremonies (Heb. 9:1). (3) Its motives were largely penalties and rewards, for, as “children,” these were the only incentives Israel was yet prepared to understand (Gal. 4:3; PP 371). (4) Its blessings were largely temporal. (5) It trusted in human accomplishment and good works rather than in divine grace and a Saviour from sin (see on Ex. 19:8). The signal blessing of the new covenant is that through faith in Christ, power is imparted to the believer to fulfill “the righteousness of the law” (Rom. 8:1–4; cf. Acts 13:37–39).

God permitted Israel to attempt to keep the law, so they might become aware of their inability to do what they mistakenly felt able to do. They would thus be led from trust in self to trust in God, from confidence in their own endeavors to faith in divine accomplishment. Thus, the law would become the means of leading them to Christ as their only Saviour from sin (Gal. 3:23–26). Thus, the way was prepared for the new covenant relationship, the gospel of divine grace, the law kept in and through Christ (Jer. 31:31–34; Rom. 3:21–31; 8:1–4; Heb. 8:7–11). As Paul declares, this new covenant relationship does not “make void the law through faith” (Rom. 3:31). The law remains the standard of duty, the norm of holy practice. The new covenant establishes the law as the eternal code of righteousness, without which there can be no holy conduct.

A peculiar treasure. Rather, “my own possession” (RSV; see also Ps. 135:4; Isa. 43:1–4). In the sight of God no other nation was equal to Israel. Every child of God, every consecrated Christian, is a jewel in the crown of our Lord, and is so considered by Him (Mal. 3:17; see on 1 Peter 2:9).

6. Kingdom of priests. According to the divine plan and purpose the Israelites were to be both a royal and a priestly race. In an evil world they were to be kings, moral and spiritual, in that they were to prevail over the realm of sin (Rev. 20:6). As priests, they were to draw near to the Lord in prayer, in praise, and in sacrifice. As intermediaries between God and the heathen, they were to serve as instructors, preachers, and prophets, and were to be examples of holy living—Heaven’s exponents of true religion. In His coming kingdom God has a royal place for His royal children (Matt. 19:28; Luke 19:17–19; John 14:1–3; Rev. 1:6; 2:26; 3:21; cf. Zech. 6:13).

An holy nation. As a people consecrated to God’s service, they were to be unlike other nations. This was to be manifested outwardly by circumcision (Gen. 17:9–14) and inwardly by godliness (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Peter 2:9). A holy God demands a holy people (Matt. 5:48; 1 Peter 1:16).

7. The elders. It did not require many words to present the important issue or to answer the imperative question as to whether the people would accept the covenant upon the terms God required. However, before presenting these terms to the people, Moses summoned the elders, preparatory to setting the matter before the people (ch. 24:3; PP 303).

8. All that the Lord hath spoken. Convinced and assured in their hearts that the terms of the covenant would be just and good, and desirous of securing for themselves and their posterity the blessings the Lord had promised, the elders readily accepted the covenant before knowing what its exact provisions would be. It was desirable that the people should express willingness to enter into such a covenant as God proposed, and to have time to think the matter through before being called to make formal ratification of it. If

they were willing to obey God, the details of the covenant would follow. Nevertheless, while there was no doubt a noble desire on the part of the Israelites to respond to God's call for obedience, they entered into the covenant relationship with but little knowledge of themselves and with no appreciation of their inability to keep the divine precepts and thus fulfill their part of the agreement. Like so many deceived souls, they thought they had but to *try* in order to do. God permitted the attempt in order that they might discover their inability and so be led to rely upon God. Paul's own experience is a pertinent case in point (see Rom. 7).

The spontaneous cry, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," was without question a superficial demonstration of religious enthusiasm, a momentary reaction to a glorious and sublime truth. There was lacking the spirit of deep, true conversion, the "heart" to do what God demanded (Deut. 5:29). It is small wonder the people soon apostatized, and worshiped the golden calf (Ex. 32).

9. In a thick cloud. When God speaks to men He must always veil His glory, for sinful men cannot bear it (Ex. 33:20; John 1:18; 1 John 4:12). If God clothes Himself with humanity, the human form is the veil. If He appears in a burning bush, the fire itself is a shroud. Here at Sinai, since many of the people were ungodly and impenitent, it was the more necessary that He should cover Himself. The cloud out of which God spoke was the pillar of cloud that accompanied the Israelites out of Egypt and directed their march (Ex. 13:21, 22; Num. 11:25; 12:15; PP 301).

Believe thee for ever. One purpose of God in appearing visibly to Moses was to give the people irrefutable proof that Moses stood before them as God's representative.

10. Sanctify them. The Lord was about to proclaim His holy law in person, in order to remove all suspicion that Moses had anything whatever to do with its composition. Their appearance in the presence of God would require sanctification, without which none can see Him (Heb. 12:14). Sanctification is essentially a matter of the spirit, of being "pure in heart" (Matt. 5:8). The outward acts of preparation were designed to impress upon the people the need of preparing their hearts to meet God (1 Thess. 5:23; 1 John 3:3). Though to the Egyptians purification meant washing the body, including also shaving the hair from the head, and sometimes from the entire body, the Israelites seem to have purified themselves by washing only.

Holiness is to be considered seriously each time we approach God. The unholy will not be rejected by Him if they come in repentance, accepting the grace of Christ. He accepts the sinner that He may make him holy, and thus qualify him for fellowship with God (Eph. 1:4; 5:25–27; Titus 2:11–14). Since the law that was soon to be given is an expression of God's holiness, it was only fitting that the people prepare to receive it by sanctifying themselves. If the Israelites were to be the people of God, it was imperative that they appreciate the sacredness of this relationship. Therefore we can understand why God made the giving of His holy law an occasion to impress the people, deeply and dramatically, with the conviction of its sanctity and importance. This was particularly necessary since the Hebrews, oppressed by their Egyptian masters, had to a great extent lost a knowledge of the character and majesty of God.

To day and to morrow. According to Jewish tradition this would be the fourth and fifth of the month Sivan, the Decalogue being given on the sixth. The two days' preparation was to lend emphasis to the sanctity of the event.

Wash. The rich might change their clothes when occasion required, but the people, in general, the poorer classes, having no change of garments, must wash those they wore (Lev. 15:5).

11. Come down. Generally in the Bible, God is represented as dwelling in the heavens above (1 Kings 8:30, 49; John 8:23). Therefore, when He appears on the earth He is said to “come down” (Gen. 11:5–7; 18:21; Ex. 3:8).

12. Set bounds. Moses was to erect a barrier of some kind about the base of the mountain. It may have extended along the line of low mounds guarding the foot of the cliff. So long as the people refrained from crossing these “bounds” they were safe.

It has been fittingly remarked that Sinai, with all its described terrors, was not Vesuvius; the people beneath were not gathered in a doomed Herculaneum or Pompeii. The purpose of the Lord was simply to manifest the reality, extent, and proximity of His destroying power. Men were made to feel what that power could do, if they were so presumptuous or negligent as to come within its rightful exercise.

Whosoever toucheth. Because the cliff rises abruptly from the plain, some might easily come in contact with it, either carelessly or out of curiosity.

Be surely put to death. This severe punishment was specifically announced by God to impress upon the people in no uncertain terms what it meant to be in the presence of a holy God. The penalty was fully in keeping with the awful solemnity of the occasion. Further, we should not forget that it was only by sobering threats of punishment that the Israelites, prone at times to be presumptuous and to rebel against the divine will, could be taught reverence (see 2 Sam. 6:6, 7). There can be no true religious feeling without a profound sense of reverence. To inculcate such an attitude among the Israelites, it was imperative to impress the lesson in a dramatic and striking fashion.

13. Not an hand touch it. Or, “No hand shall touch him” (RSV). The one transgressing the divine command was not to be seized, for the one making the arrest would have to pass the “bounds” in order to do so. Instead, the transgressor was to be killed by stones thrown or arrows shot from within the “bounds.” The same was to be done to any beast that strayed into the restricted area, lest anyone be tempted to enter the restricted area to retrieve his stray animal. Everything was done to impress the Israelites with the awful majesty of God, and the spirit of solemnity that should fill one’s heart upon approaching the divine presence.

God is ever present (Ps. 139:1–12), but He veils His presence. Though He is with us we do not perceive Him (Job 23:8, 9). But when He does reveal His presence, all tremble before Him (Gen. 28:16, 17; Job 42:5, 6; Hab. 3:16). Weakness quakes before strength, littleness shrinks before greatness, finite man becomes insignificant in the presence of the Infinite. It is consciousness of sin that makes a man tremble before a holy God (Gen. 3:10). Corruption quails before incorruption, moral depravity before absolute purity.

They shall come up. The pronoun “they” cannot here refer to the people, for this would contradict the command of the previous verse. The people never did ascend the mount. But Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the 70 elders did (see Ex. 24:1, 2), and they are probably the ones here referred to.

14. Moses went down. Returning to the foot of Mt. Sinai, Moses, in obedience to the command of v. 10, instructed the people in regard to preparations for the giving of the law. At the same time he must have ordered the construction of the fence which was to hold the people back from the mount, and to which he alludes in v. 23 as completed.

16. Thunders. Verses 16–20 deal with the manifestations of the divine presence upon Sinai. In revealing Himself to man the Lord employs various methods. To Elijah He came as “a still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12), to the prophet Daniel and the apostle John He used visions, to the disciples He spoke directly through His Son. To Paul, God appeared in ecstatic vision, the apostle hearing “unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:1–5). Here, when God would impress all with the importance and majesty of His law as the constitution of His spiritual kingdom, He appears with terrifying grandeur (Heb. 12:18–21).

17. Brought forth the people. It is evident that the camp itself must have been back some distance from the foot of the mount, with an open space between the first tents and the barrier that Moses had erected close to the mount. Into this vacant space Moses now led the people, thus bringing them as near as they dared approach the divine presence.

19. Moses spake. So awful was the sight, the mount being covered with smoke (v. 18), and so fearful the sound of the trumpet (v. 16), that Moses could not remain silent. To relieve the tension he broke forth in words, perhaps those recorded in Heb. 12:21. There is suggested a profound meaning in the words “Moses spake, and God answered,” which offer a striking definition of the nature of divine law. All God’s commands are, so to speak, responses to our deep soul needs. They issue forth from the reciprocal action of God and the human heart. Paul in Rom. 7 illustrates this. Man, by his very creation in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), can never find satisfaction in being alive unless his life is in tune with the Creator. The Decalogue is the tuning instrument. It is not simply a code expressing the will and the sovereignty of God; it is also an instrument of spiritual instruction to help us live as God intends that we should (Ps. 19:7, 8; 119:97, 98; Matt. 19:16, 17).

20. The top of the mount. Probably not *Jebel Musa*, which was invisible from the plain where the people must have been assembled, but *Ras es-Safsaf*, the highest eminence of the Sinai mountains fronting on the plain (see on v. 1 and on ch. 3:1).

Called Moses up. The context would lead us to think that Aaron went up with Moses, for Aaron was present there (v. 24) and is probably included in the “us” of v. 23.

21. Charge the people. In the closing verses of this chapter the people and the priests are again warned not to pass the “bounds.” This repetition would suggest that there were those who had not taken the restriction seriously, but were ready to “break through” the “bounds” to peer irreverently upon the glory of God (see Num. 4:20; 1 Sam. 6:19; 2 Sam. 6:6, 7).

22. The priests also. Special mention of the “priests” would indicate that the urge to trespass was particularly strong among them. Trained as they were to exercise sacred functions, they may have considered themselves practically equal to Moses and Aaron. They may have resented their exclusion from the divine presence. Were they not the appointed intermediaries between God and man?

Sanctify themselves. It would seem from this command that the priests had not regarded the injunction of v. 10 as applying to them, and so did not comply with it. Hence the charge to do so was directed specially to them. Holiness of office does not necessarily mean holiness in the individual who holds it. Ministers of God are not given any special immunity from iniquity, as the Scriptures often demonstrate (see Lev. 10:1, 2; 1 Sam. 2:12–17; 4:17). This verse and Ex. 24:5 show that there were those set aside for priestly services before the institution of the Levitical order (see PP 350).

23. Cannot come up. Inasmuch as God's command in v. 12 had been carried out, Moses assures God that the people could not unwittingly trespass upon the precincts of the sacred mount.

24. Get thee down. God rejects Moses' plea that there was no need of warning the people further. God knew what His servant did not know, and to prevent trouble insisted upon a renewed warning.

Thou, and Aaron. Though this is the first express mention of Aaron as appointed to ascend the amount with Moses, it seems likely that he had come up previously (see vs. 3, 20, 23; cf. ch. 10:1, 3).

25. Moses went down. Subdued by the divine rebuke, Moses returned to the camp to warn both priests and people.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-25Ev 232; PP 301-304

1, 2 PP 301

1-5FE 505

2-8SR 137

3, 4 PP 303

5 PK 293

5, 6 PP 303, 371; 2T 450

6 PK 426

7 FE 506; PP 303

8 FE 506; PK 293; PP 303

9 PP 303; SR 137

10 2T 611

10, 11 MH 279; PP 304; SR 138

11 FE 506

12, 13 DA 156; PP 304; SR 138

16 MB 73; PP 339; SL 54

16, 17 PP 304

16-22SR 139

18, 19 PP 304

20 FE 237, 287, 506; PP 366; SR 148

21 PP 339

CHAPTER 20

1 *The ten commandments.* 18 *The people are afraid.* 20 *Moses comforteth them.* 22 *Idolatry is forbidden.* 24 *Of what sort the altar should be.* the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

1. God spake. The stage was now set for the proclamation of the moral law, which has remained the fundamental standard of conduct for countless millions ever since. None will deny that this was one of the momentous and decisive events of history. Nor can any deny the vital need of all men for such a code of conduct, because of their moral and spiritual imperfections and their proneness to do that which is evil. The Decalogue stands high above all other moral and spiritual laws. It is comprehensive of all human conduct. It is the only law that can effectively control the conscience. It is for all time a condensed manual of human conduct and covers the entire field of human duty. Our Lord referred to the commandments as the way whereby one might secure eternal life (Matt.

19:16–19). They are suited to every kind of human society, applicable and in force so long as the world shall last (Matt. 5:17, 18). They can never become obsolete, for they are the immutable expression of God’s will and character. It was with good reason that God delivered them to His people both orally and in writing (Ex. 31:18; Deut. 4:13).

Though given to man by divine authority, the Decalogue is not an arbitrary creation of the divine will. It is, rather, an expression of the divine nature. Man was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), made to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:15, 16), and the Ten Commandments are Heaven’s ordained standard of holiness (see Rom. 7:7–25). The key to the spiritual interpretation of the law was given by Christ in the sermon on the mount (Matt. 5 to 7).

The Decalogue is the expression not only of holiness but also of love (Matt. 22:34–40; John 15:10; Rom. 13:8–10; 1 John 2:4). Whatever in service we render to God or man, if it be without love, the law is not fulfilled. It is love that protects us from violating the Ten Commandments, for how could we worship other gods, take His name in vain, and neglect the observance of the Sabbath if we truly love Him? How can we steal that which belongs to our neighbor, testify against him, or covet his possessions if we love him? Love is the root of fidelity toward God, and of honor and respect for the rights of our fellows. It should ever be the great motive that impels us to obedience (John 14:15; 15:10; 2 Cor. 5:14; Gal. 5:6).

When a man first comes to Christ he will consciously abstain from the evil to which he has been accustomed. It was primarily for the purpose of helping sinners distinguish between good and evil that the Decalogue was given largely in negative form. Its recurring “Thou shalt not” testifies to the presence of strong tendencies in the heart that must be suppressed (see Jer. 17:9; Rom. 7:17–23; 1 Tim. 1:9, 10). But this negative form implies a large and satisfying field of moral and spiritual action open to man, and the breadth of character development possible. He is restricted only by the few prohibitions named. The Decalogue certifies to the truth of Christian freedom (James 2:12; 2 Cor. 3:17). Though the letter of the law, because of its few words, may appear to be narrow in scope, its spirit is “exceeding broad” (Ps. 119:96).

The fact that the Ten Commandments were written on two tables of stone emphasizes their application to two classes of moral obligation: duty to God and duty to man (Matt. 22:34–40). That which we owe to God is indispensable to that which we owe to man, for neglect of duties toward our neighbor will speedily follow the neglect of duty toward God. The Bible does not ignore the distinction between religion (duties directly related to God) and morality (duties arising from earthly relationships), but unites both in the deeper concept that all one does is done, as it were, to God, whose authority is supreme in both spheres (see Micah 6:8; Matt. 25:34–45; James 1:27; 1 John 4:20).

As the words of God, the Ten Commandments are to be distinguished from the “judgments” (ch. 21:1) based upon them and included with them in “the book of the covenant” as constituting the statutory law of Israel (see ch. 24:3). The two tables, which comprise the Decalogue, are, to the exclusion of the other parts of the law, variously called “the testimony” (ch. 25:16), “his covenant” (Deut. 4:13), “the words of the covenant” (Ex. 34:28), the “tables of testimony” (Ex. 31:18; 32:15), and “the tables of the covenant” (Deut. 9:9–11). These tables of stone, and these alone, were placed inside the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:21; 1 Kings 8:9). They were thus regarded as in a special sense the bond of the covenant. The placing of the tables under the mercy seat casts light

on the nature of the covenant God made with Israel. It shows that the law is the substratum, the foundation of the covenant, the obligatory document, the bond. Nevertheless, over the law is the mercy seat, sprinkled with the blood of propitiation, a heartening testimony that there is forgiveness with God for those who break the commandments. The OT consistently makes a clear distinction between the moral and ceremonial laws (2 Kings 21:8; Dan. 9:11).

2. I am the Lord. Literally, “I am *Yahweh*,” a name derived from the verb “to be,” “to become” (see on Ex. 3:14, 15; see p. 172). It means “the Existing One,” “the One who causes to be” (see p. 172). When, therefore, Jesus said to the Jews of His day, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58), they understood that He was claiming to be “the LORD” of the OT. This explains their hostility and their attempt to kill Him (John 8:59). It was Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, who was the “God” of the Israelites throughout their history (Ex. 32:34; John 1:1-3, 14; 6:46, 62; 17:5; 1 Cor. 10:4; Col. 1:13-18; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 1:17, 18; PP 366). It was He who gave them the Decalogue; it was He who declared Himself to be “Lord also of the sabbath” (Mark 2:28). The Gr. *hē zoē*, “the living One” (Rev. 1:18, RSV), is equivalent to the Heb. *Eyeh ’asher ’ehyeh*, “I am that I am,” of Ex. 3:14.

The house of bondage. God proclaimed His holy law amid thunder and lightning, whose roll seems to find an echo in the imperatives “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not.” The terrors of Sinai were designed to bring vividly before the people the awful solemnity of the last great judgment day (PP 339). The exacting precepts of the Decalogue stress the justice of their Author and the strictness of His requirements. But the law was also a reminder of His grace, for the very God who spoke the law is the One who led His people forth from Egypt and set them free from the yoke of bondage. It is He who gave the precious promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Since the Scriptures make Egypt symbolic of the state of sin (see Rev. 11:8), the deliverance of Israel from Egypt may appropriately be compared to the deliverance of all God’s people from the power of sin. The Lord liberated His people from the land of Pharaoh in order that He might give them His law (Ps. 105:42-45). Likewise, through the gospel, Christ frees us from the bondage of sin (John 8:34-36; 2 Peter 2:19) in order that we may keep His law, which in Him is translated into true obedience (John 15:10; Rom. 8:1-4). Let those who teach that the gospel of Christ frees us from the holy commands of the Decalogue reflect on this truth. Deliverance from Egypt was to provide the motive for obedience to God’s law. Note the order here: the Lord first *saves* Israel, then gives them His law to *keep*. The same order is true under the gospel. Christ first saves us from sin (see John 1:29; 1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 1:4), then lives out His law within us (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 4:25; 8:1-3; 1 Peter 2:24).

3. Thou shalt. Though the covenant was made with Israel as a whole (ch. 19:5), the use of a singular verb shows that God addressed each individual of the nation and required of him obedience to the law. Collective obedience was not sufficient. For all time the Ten Commandments direct their appeal to, and weigh upon, each man’s conscience (see Eze. 18:19, 20).

Before me. Literally, “before my face.” This Hebrew idiom often means “besides me,” “in addition to me,” or “in opposition to me.” Being the only true God, the Lord requires that He alone be worshiped. This concept of but one God was foreign to the

polytheistic belief and practice of other nations. God appeals to us to put Him before all else, to put Him first in our affections and in our lives, in harmony with our Lord's injunction in the sermon on the mount (Matt. 6:33). Mere belief alone will not do, nor even the acknowledgement that He is the one and only God. We owe wholehearted allegiance and devotion to Him as a personal Being whom it is our privilege to know, to love, and trust, and with whom we may have blessed fellowship. Dependence upon something else than God, whether it be wealth, knowledge, position, or friends, places us in peril. It is hard to fight against the allurements of the world, and so easy to trust in that which is visible and temporal (see Matt. 6:19–34; 1 John 2:15–17). In our materialistic age it is not difficult to violate the spirit of this first commandment, by putting our trust and confidence in some earthly convenience or comfort, and in so doing forget the One who created the things we enjoy (see 2 Cor. 4:18).

4. *Graven image.* As the first commandment emphasizes the fact that there is but one God, in protest against the worship of many gods, the second places emphasis upon His spiritual nature (John 4:24), in disapproval of idolatry and materialism. This commandment does not necessarily prohibit the use of sculpture and painting in religion. The artistry and representation employed in the construction of the sanctuary (Ex. 25:17–22), in Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6:23–26), and in the "brassen serpent" (Num. 21:8, 9; 2 Kings 18:4) clearly prove that the second commandment does not proscribe religious illustrative material. What is condemned is the reverence, the worship, or quasi worship, which multitudes in many lands give to religious images and pictures. The excuse that the idols themselves are not worshiped does not lessen the force of this prohibition. Idols are not only not to be worshiped, they are not even to be made. The folly of idolatry lies in the fact that idols are merely the product of human skill, and therefore inferior to man and subject to him (Hosea 8:6). But man can truly engage in worship only by directing his thoughts to One greater than himself.

Any likeness. The threefold division here and elsewhere (sky, earth, and water) covers the entire physical universe, from which the heathen drew and fashioned their deities (Deut. 4:15–19; Rom. 1:22, 23).

5. *Not bow down.* This strikes at the outward honor given images in the ancient world. They were not looked upon as emblems, but as real and actual embodiments of deity. It was believed that the gods took up their abode in these images. Those who made them were not esteemed; they might even be despised. But their idolatrous handiwork was reverentially adored and worshiped.

A jealous God. God refuses to share His glory with idols (Isa. 42:8; 48:11). He declines the worship and service of a divided heart (Ex. 34:12–15; Deut. 4:23, 24; 6:14, 15; Joshua 24:15, 19, 20). Jesus Himself said, "No man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24).

Visiting the iniquity. This seeming threat has disturbed the minds of some who see in it the manifestation of a vengeful spirit. A distinction should be made, however, between the natural results of a sinful course of action, and punishment inflicted because of it (PP 306). God does not penalize one individual for the wrong deeds of another (Eze. 18:2–24). Each man stands before God, responsible only for his own acts. At the same time God does not interfere with the laws of heredity in such a way as to protect one generation from the misdeeds of its fathers, as that would be inconsistent with His character and His principles of dealing with men. It is only through these laws of

heredity, which were of course ordained by the Creator in the beginning (see Gen. 1:21, 24, 25), that divine justice visits the “iniquity” of one generation upon the next.

No one can escape completely the consequences of dissipation, disease, profligacy, evil doing, ignorance, and bad habits handed down by preceding generations. The descendants of degraded idolaters and the offspring of evil and vicious men generally begin life under the handicap of physical and moral sin, and harvest the fruit of seed sown by their parents. Juvenile delinquency proves the truth of the second commandment. Environment also has a decided effect upon each rising generation. But since God is gracious and just, we may trust Him to deal fairly with each person, making due allowance for the disadvantages of birth, the inherited predispositions, and the influence of previous environment upon character. His justice and mercy require this (Ps. 87:6; Luke 12:47, 48; John 15:22; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 8:12). At the same time our aim is to be victorious over every inherited and cultivated tendency to evil (COL 315, 330, 331; DA 671).

God “visits,” or “appoints,” the results of iniquity, not vindictively, but to teach sinners that a wrong course of action inevitably brings unfortunate results.

Them that hate me. That is, those who, though they know God, refuse to serve Him. To set one’s affections upon false gods of any kind, to place one’s trust in anything besides the Lord, is to “hate” Him. Those who do so inevitably bring trouble and suffering not only upon themselves but also upon those who come after them. Those parents who think most of God, think most of their children. The use of the strong word “hate” is characteristically Oriental, expressing as it does the most intense disapproval. All a man need do to classify himself among those who “hate” God is to love Him less than he loves other persons or things (Luke 14:26; Rom. 9:13).

6. *Keep my commandments.* It is through obedience that true love for God is shown. Since God Himself is love, and His dealings with His creatures are motivated by love (1 John 4:7–21), God does not wish us to obey Him because we must but because we choose to do so (John 14:15, 21; 15:10; 1 John 2:5; 5:3; 2 John 6).

7. *In vain.* The word thus translated means “iniquity,” “falsehood,” “vanity,” “emptiness.” To inculcate reverence is the chief purpose of the third commandment (see Ps. 111:9; Eccl. 5:1, 2), which is an appropriate sequel to the two that precede it. Those who serve none but the true God, and serve Him in spirit and in truth, will avoid any careless, irreverent, or unnecessary use of the holy name. They will not indulge in profanity. Profanity, or any careless language for that matter, not only violates the spirit of religion but indicates a lack of breeding and gentlemanliness as well.

“Immodest words admit of no defence,
For want of decency is want of sense.”

This commandment applies not only to words we should avoid but to the care with which we should use those that are good (see Matt. 12:34–37).

The third commandment also condemns empty ceremony and formality in worship (see 2 Tim. 3:5), and exalts worship in the true spirit of holiness (John 4:24). It shows that obedience to the letter of the law is not sufficient. None ever revered the name of God more strictly than did the Jews, who to this day will not utter it. As a result, no one now knows how it should be pronounced. But in their extreme devotion to the letter of the law the Jews offered God an empty honor. This false zeal did not prevent the tragic mistake of the Jewish nation 2,000 years ago (John 1:11; Acts 13:46).

The third commandment also forbids false swearing, or perjury, which has always been considered a serious moral and social offense deserving of the most severe punishment. The careless use of God's name denotes a lack of reverence for Him. If our thinking is on a spiritually elevated plane, our words will also be elevated, and will be dictated by what is honest and sincere (Phil. 4:8).

8. Remember. This word does not make the fourth commandment more important than the other nine. All are equally so. To break one is to break all (James 2:8–11). But the Sabbath commandment reminds us that the seventh-day Sabbath, as God's appointed rest for man, goes back to the very beginning of human history and is an inseparable part of the creation week (Gen. 2:1–3; PP 336). The argument that the Sabbath was first given to man at Sinai is wholly without foundation (Mark 2:27; PP 80, 258). In a personal sense the Sabbath comes as a reminder that amid the pressing cares of life we ought not to forget God. To enter fully into the spirit of the Sabbath is to find a valuable aid in obeying the rest of the Decalogue. The special attention and devotion given on this day of rest to God and to things of eternal value provide reserve power for victory over the evils against which we are warned in the other commandments. The Sabbath has well been compared to a bridge thrown across life's troubled waters, over which we may pass to reach the opposite shore, a link between earth and heaven, a type of the eternal day when those who are true to God shall put on forever the robe of immortal holiness and joy.

We should "remember" also that mere rest from physical labor does not constitute Sabbath observance. The Sabbath was never intended as a day of idleness and inactivity. Sabbathkeeping is not so much a matter of refraining from certain forms of inactivity as it is of entering purposefully into others. We cease from the weekly round of toil only as a means to the end of devoting the day to other pursuits. The spirit of true Sabbathkeeping will lead one to improve its sacred hours by seeking to understand more perfectly the character and will of God, to appreciate more fully His love and mercy, and to cooperate more effectively with Him in ministering to the spiritual needs of his fellow men. Whatever contributes to these primary objectives is appropriate to the spirit and purpose of the Sabbath. Whatever contributes primarily to the gratification of one's personal desires or to the pursuit of one's own interests is no more a part of true Sabbathkeeping than is ordinary labor. This principle applies to thoughts and words as well as to actions.

The Sabbath points us back to a perfect world in the long ago (Gen. 1:31; 2:1–3), and reminds us of the time when the Creator will again "make all things new" (Rev. 21:5). It is a reminder also that God stands ready to restore within our hearts and lives His own image as it was in the beginning (Gen. 1:26, 27). He who enters into the true spirit of Sabbath observance will thus qualify for receiving the seal of God, which is the divine recognition that His character is reflected perfectly in the life (Eze. 20:20). It is our happy privilege once each week to forget everything that reminds us of this world of sin and to "remember" those things that draw us closer to God. The Sabbath may become to us a little sanctuary in the wilderness of this world, where we may for a time be free from its cares and enter, as it were, into the joys of heaven. If the Sabbath rest was desirable for sinless beings in Paradise (Gen. 2:1–3), how much more essential it is for erring mortals preparing to re-enter that blest abode!

9. Shalt thou labour. This is a permission rather than a command. What work is to be done should be performed on the first six days of the week, so that the Sabbath, which comes on the seventh day, may be free for the worship and service of God.

10. The seventh day. No unnecessary secular labor is to be performed on that day. It is to be spent in religious reflection, worship, and service for God. It provides, as well, an opportunity for physical rest. This feature of the Sabbath is peculiarly important to man in his sinful state, when he must earn his bread by the sweat of his face (Gen. 3:17–19).

The Sabbath of the Lord. Literally, “the Lord’s Sabbath.” In Hebrew, “Sabbath” has no definite article, “the,” but this does not take from the Sabbath command its definiteness. The point of controversy between Sundaykeepers and Sabbathkeepers is not over whether a Christian should rest—“not do any work”—one day in the week, but which day of the week that should be, the first or the seventh. The commandment answers explicitly, “*the seventh day.*” The command divides the week into two parts: (1) “six days shalt thou ... do all thy work,” (2) “*the seventh day ... thou shalt not do any work.*” And why this prohibition of work on “*the seventh day*”? Because it is a “*sabbath of the Lord.*” The word Sabbath is from the Heb. *shabbath*, which means “rest.” Thus the command prohibits work on “*the seventh day*” because it is a *rest day* of the Lord. This takes us back to the origin of the Sabbath, when God “rested on the seventh day” (Gen. 2:2). It is therefore plain that the contrast is not between “the” and “a,” but between “work” and “rest.” “Six days,” says the command, are *work* days, but “*the seventh day*” is a *rest* day. That “the seventh day” is uniquely God’s rest day is made evident in the opening words of the command: “Remember *the sabbath* [rest] day, to keep it holy.”

The angels announced to the shepherds: “For unto you is born ... a Saviour” (Luke 2:11). We do not therefore conclude that Christ was simply one of many saviors. We capture the meaning of the angel’s words when we put the emphasis on the word “Saviour.” Christ came, not as a military conqueror or an earthly king, but as a *Saviour*. Numerous other passages deal with the uniqueness of His salvation, and that we can be saved by none other. Thus with the matter of “the” and “a” in the fourth command.

Not do any work. This does not forbid acts of mercy or work essential to the preservation of life and health that cannot be performed on other days. It is always “lawful to do well on the sabbath days” (Matt. 12:1–14; Mark 2:23–28). The rest here spoken of is not to be considered merely in terms of cessation from ordinary labor, though this is, of course, included. It must be a *holy* rest, in which there is communion with God.

Nor thy cattle. God’s care for dumb animals is repeatedly stressed by OT writers (Ex. 23:5, 12; Deut. 25:4). He remembered them in the ark (Gen. 8:1). They were included in His covenant following the Flood (Gen. 9:9–11). He claims the cattle as His own (Ps. 50:10). The presence of “much cattle” provided one reason why Nineveh was spared (Jonah 4:11).

Thy stranger. That is, a foreigner who of his own free will joined himself to the Israelites. A “mixed multitude” left Egypt with Israel (Ex. 12:38) and accompanied them in their wilderness wanderings. So long as they chose to remain with the Israelites they were to conform to the requirements God set for His own people. In a sense this restricted their liberty, but they were free to depart if they did not wish to obey. In compensation, as it were, they enjoyed a measure of the blessings God bestowed upon Israel (Num. 10:29; Zech. 8:22, 23).

11. The Lord made. It is significant that Christ Himself, as Creator (John 1:1–3), rested upon the world’s first Sabbath day (DA 769) and spoke the law at Sinai (PP 366). Those who are re-created in His likeness (Eph. 4:24) will choose to follow His example

in this as in other matters (1 Peter 2:21). The Creator did not “rest” because of weariness or fatigue (Isa. 40:28). His “rest” was cessation of labor at the close of a completed task (Gen. 1:31 to 2:3). In resting He set us an example (Matt. 3:15; cf. Heb. 4:10). The Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27), to satisfy a need that was originally spiritual, but which, with the entrance of sin, became physical as well (see Gen. 3:17–19). One of the reasons the Israelites were delivered from Egypt was that they might observe the divinely appointed day of rest. Their oppression in Egypt had made such observance most difficult (see Ex. 5:5–9; Deut. 5:12–15; PK 180).

12. Honour thy father. Having covered in the first four commandments our duties toward God, we now take up the second table of the law, dealing with duties toward our fellows (Matt. 22:34–40). Inasmuch as prior to the age of moral accountability parents stand to their children as the representatives of God (PP 308), it is logical and fitting that our first man-ward duty should be toward them (Deut. 6:6, 7; Eph. 6:1–3; Col. 3:20). Another purpose of this commandment is to engender respect for all rightful authority. Such respect begins with the attitude of children toward their parents. In the mind of the child this becomes the basis for respect and obedience owed to those who are legitimately placed in authority over him throughout life, particularly in the church and in the state (Rom. 13:1–7; Heb. 13:17; 1 Peter 2:13–18). There is included in the spirit of this commandment the thought that those in authority in the home and outside of it should so conduct themselves that they are ever worthy of the respect and obedience of those under them (Eph. 6:4, 9; Col. 3:21; 4:1).

13. Not kill. Any rightful understanding of our relation to our neighbor indicates that we must respect and honor his life, for all life is sacred (Gen. 9:5, 6). Jesus magnified (Isa. 42:21) this commandment to include anger and contempt (Matt. 5:21, 22). Later the apostle John added hatred (1 John 3:14, 15). Not only does this commandment forbid violence to the body, but, what is of far greater consequence, injury to the soul. We break it when we lead others into sin by our example and action, and thus contribute to the destruction of their souls. Those who corrupt the innocent and seduce the virtuous “kill” in a far worse sense than the cutthroat and the bandit, in that they do more than to kill the body (Matt. 10:28).

14. Not commit adultery. This prohibition covers not only adultery but fornication and impurity of any and every kind in act, word, and thought (Matt. 5:27, 28). This, our third duty toward our “neighbour,” is to respect and honor the bond upon which the family is built, that of the marriage relationship, which to the Christian is as precious as life itself (see Heb. 13:4). Marriage makes the husband and wife “one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). To be untrue to this sacred union or to lead another to do so is to despise that which is sacred and to commit a crime as well. Throughout human history it has not generally been considered a grievous offense for the husband to become an adulterer. If, however, the wife did so, she has been dealt with most severely. Society speaks of the “fallen woman,” but little is said of the “fallen man.” The commandment applies with equal force to both husband and wife (Heb. 13:4; Rev. 21:8).

15. Not steal. Here the right to possess property is set forth, a right that is to be respected by others. For society to exist at all, this principle must be safeguarded, else there is no security and no protection. All would be anarchy. This commandment forbids any act by which, directly or indirectly, we dishonestly obtain the goods of another. Especially in these days when the keen edge of morality is becoming increasingly dull, it

is well to remember that adulteration, the concealment of defects, misrepresentation of quality, and the employment of false weights or measures are all the acts of a thief as much as pocket picking or shoplifting.

Employees steal when they take a “commission” unknown to their superiors, or appropriate that which has not been expressly agreed upon, or neglect to do whatever work they contracted to do, or perform it in a slovenly manner, or damage the owner’s property through carelessness or diminish it by waste.

Employers steal when they withhold from their employees the benefits they promised, or allow their wages to fall into arrears, or force them to work overtime without proper remuneration, or deprive them of any other consideration they have a reasonable right to expect. They steal who conceal goods from a customs inspector or misrepresent them in any way, or who make out false or misleading tax returns, or who cheat tradesmen by incurring debts that they can never repay, or who in view of impending bankruptcy turn over their property to a friend, with the understanding that it is later to be restored, or who have recourse to any so-called tricks of trade.

Except for those possessed by the spirit of honesty, those who love justice, equity, and fair dealing, those who make it their law of life to do for others as they would that others should do to them, all men will, in one way or another, defraud their “neighbour.” We may steal from others in more subtle ways, robbing them of their faith in God through doubt and criticism, through the shattering effect of a bad example when otherwise trusted, by confusing and perplexing them by statements they are not prepared to understand, by pernicious, slanderous gossip that may deprive them of their good name and character. Whatever withholds from another that which is rightfully his, or appropriates to one’s own use that which is another’s—this is stealing. To accept credit for the labors or ideas of another, to use that which is his without his permission, or to take advantage of another in any way—this too is stealing.

“Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls:
Who steals my purse steals trash; ’tis something, nothing;
’Twas mine, ’tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.”

16. False witness. This commandment may be transgressed in a public manner by untruthful witness borne in a court of law (ch. 23:1). Perjury has ever been considered a serious offense against society, and has been punished accordingly. In Athens a false witness was heavily fined. If convicted thrice of this crime, he lost his civil rights. In Rome a law of the Twelve Tables sentenced the transgressor to be hurled headlong from the Tarpeian Rock. In Egypt the penalty was amputation of the nose and ears.

This prohibition of the Decalogue is frequently violated by speaking evil of another, whereby his character is blackened, his motives misrepresented, and his reputation depreciated. All too many find it dull and tame to praise and speak well of their fellows. They find a vicious thrill in pointing out flaws in the conduct of others, judging their motives, and criticizing their endeavors. Since, unfortunately, many are ever ready and eager to listen to this supposed wisdom, the thrill is increased and the selfish, sinful ego of the detractor is enhanced. This commandment may also be broken by those who

remain silent when they hear an innocent man unjustly maligned. It can be broken by a shrug of the shoulder or by an arching of the eyebrows. Whoever tampers in any way with the exact truth, in order to gain personal advantage or for any other purpose, is guilty of bearing “false witness.” The suppression of truth that might result in injury to oneself or others—this too is bearing “false witness.”

17. *Not covet.* The tenth commandment is supplementary to the eight, for covetousness is the root from which theft grows. In fact, the tenth commandment strikes at the roots of the other nine. It represents a decided advance beyond the morality of any other ancient code. Most codes went no further than the deed, and a few took speech into account, but none proposed to regulate the thoughts. This prohibition is fundamental to human experience in that it penetrates to the motive behind the outward act. It teaches us that God sees the heart (1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Kings 8:39; 1 Chron. 28:9; Heb. 4:13), and is concerned less with the outward act than with the thought from which the action springs. It establishes the principle that the very thoughts of our hearts come under the jurisdiction of God’s law, that we are as responsible for them as for our actions. The wrong thought entertained promotes a wrong desire, which in time gives birth to a wrong action (Prov. 4:23; James 1:13–15). A man may refrain from adultery because of the social and civil penalties that follow such transgressions, yet in Heaven’s sight he may be as guilty as if he actually committed the deed (Matt. 5:28).

This basic commandment reveals the profound truth that we are not the helpless slaves of our natural desires and passions. Within us is a force, the will, which, under the control of Christ, can submerge every unlawful desire and passion (Phil. 2:13). It sums up the Decalogue by affirming that man is essentially a free moral agent.

18. *They removed.* More accurately, “they trembled.” The terrors of Sinai—the thunderings, the lightnings, the noise of the trumpet, the smoking mountain, the cloud and the voice speaking out of it—inspired the people with holy fear (Deut. 5:23–31).

20. *Fear not.* Moses pacified the people with the calm assurance that they need have no fear. It was God’s purpose to impress indelibly upon their minds a concept of His majesty and power, as a restraint from sinning. The Israelites were still dull in their comprehension of God, and consequently needed the discipline of fear until such a time as they were ready to be guided by the tender voice of love.

21. *Moses drew near.* As the people withdrew, probably to the doors of their tents, Moses drew near to God. In contrast to the fear of his fellow Israelites, which drove them from God, the servant of the Lord, in the boldness of faith and consecration, was attracted to the Lord. Where God was, he would be. Some, because of their sinful condition, are repelled by the divine presence; others because of their upright heart find their highest satisfaction in fellowship with their Creator (Matt. 8:34; Luke 4:42; Job 23:3; Ps. 42:1, 2). Men who have greatly transgressed, and who therefore cannot help but see God as “a revenger to execute wrath” and a “consuming fire” (Rom. 13:4; Heb. 12:29), often lose sight of the more tender attributes of God and cease to feel that He is their Father, “merciful and gracious” (Ex. 34:6; Ps. 86:15; 103:13).

22. *Thus thou shalt say.* With this verse begins the “book of the covenant” (ch. 24:7), which closes with ch. 23. It is a detailed enlargement upon the principles contained in the Decalogue, and is composed of various civil, social, and religious laws. From ch. 24:4, 7 we are led to believe that these laws, received by Moses at Sinai immediately after the delivery of the Ten Commandments, were put in writing and collected into a book,

known as “the book of the covenant,” which was considered especially holy. Following the order of the Decalogue, the first and foremost laws are those having to do with the worship of God (vs. 23–26). Next come laws respecting the rights of persons (ch. 21:1–32), beginning with the rights of slaves and ending with the compensation to be made for injuries to persons caused by cattle. The third section has to do with rights of property (ch. 21:33 to 22:15). The remaining part of the “book” gives miscellaneous laws, some concerned with divine affairs, some with human affairs generally related to the civil organization of the state. This code contains some 70 distinct laws.

Ye have seen. This is a significant reminder that the Author of these civil laws is the same one who spoke the Ten Commandments amid the thunders of Sinai.

23. *Gods of silver.* This repetition of the prohibition of the second commandment is to be accounted for by the rampant idolatry of the time. How strong this idolatrous pressure was is shown by the fact that when the people thought Moses had deserted them they forthwith made themselves a golden calf (ch. 32). But “God is a Spirit” (John 4:24). That they might not worship Him through material representations, He remained invisible as He spoke from the cloud on Mt. Sinai (Deut. 4:12).

24. *Altar of earth.* Altars were essential to the religious of antiquity. They were often made of earth, sod, or stones collected on the spot. The patriarchal altars were probably of this kind (Gen. 8:20; 12:7; 13:18; 22:9). It was now ordered that the same usage continue, for the reason that elaborate altars of “hewn stone” would encourage idolatry, since the images that might be engraved upon the altars would become objects of worship.

Offerings. That these are introduced here without explanation indicates that sacrifices were already known, as was indeed the case (Gen. 8:20; 22:9, 13). Not long before, Jethro had offered a sacrifice within the camp of Israel (Ex. 18:12). Although for many years the Jews had not sacrificed to God in Egypt (see PP 333), they evidently preserved the idea of doing so. It was for the express purpose of offering sacrifices that Moses demanded Pharaoh’s permission to go into the wilderness (chs. 8:25–27; 10:24, 25). The burnt offering symbolized personal consecration and self-surrender (Lev. 6:8–13; Ps. 51:16–19), and the peace offering renewed fellowship with God and expressed thankfulness (Lev. 7:11–34). Although we have passed the day of material offerings such as these, we are still invited by God to render unto Him “spiritual sacrifices” (1 Peter 2:5) of self-surrender (Rom. 12:1), of a “broken spirit” (Ps. 51:17, and of joy and thanksgiving (Ps. 27:6; 107:22).

Come unto thee. This is a conditional promise, to be fulfilled if the people would build proper altars and offer proper sacrifices in “all places” where God would record His name.

25. *Altar of stone.* In cases where, notwithstanding the divine preference of the previous verse, the people would erect a more permanent and honorable altar of stone, God required that the stones be left in their rough, natural state.

Lift up thy tool. Here again in His ardent desire, prompted by love, that His people should not be corrupted by idolatry, God forbids the elaborate carving of the altars with objects that might woo them to idolatry. There is suggested the further thought that if we presume to put something of our own into the sacrifice as a ground for acceptance, we render it in vain. Self-obtrusion, however well intended, is pollution. The altar is an expression of God’s will. Try to improve it, and it becomes instead an expression of the

will of the would-be improver. The altar of self is not the altar of God. Sacrifices offered upon it may satisfy the worshiper; they cannot be pleasing to God. Let us not lose the lesson found in the experience of Cain (Gen. 4:3, 4). The pillar of Simeon Stylites did not raise the value of his prayers. Our prayers would have a better chance of reaching heaven if they came from a contrite heart at the foot of the pillar (see Isa. 66:1, 2).

26. *By steps.* It is not enough that the offering be made with a pure motive; it must be offered in a pure and reverent manner. Though this injunction was specially directed against the enthusiastic and passionate indecencies associated with idolatry, it illustrates an eternal truth. God requires decency and order in His worship (1 Cor. 14:40). God looks at character, but He demands also that character be matched by conduct. Proper decorum, dress, and attitude are imperative to the worship of God (Eccl. 5:1, 2).

The detailed instructions God gave Israel concerning the manner in which they were to worship Him point to the important fact that nothing is unimportant in His sight. It is often faithfulness in what may seem “least” that determines whether “much” can be entrusted to us (Luke 16:10).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-26Ev 232; PP 305-310; SR 140-148; 9T 211

1 MB 73

1-63T 296

1-17GC vi; ML 163; 5T 445

1-19FE 237, 287, 506; PP 336, 366

2 PP 305; SR 140

3 AA 151; CS 123, 145; CT 248; FE 312; MYP 316; PK 177, 182, 210, 624; PP 305, 317; SR 140, 299; Te 38; 1T 484, 486, 506; 2T 45; 3T 340, 543; 4T 632; 5T 173, 250; 6T 10

4 PK 100; PP 305, 336; SR 140

4-6EW 211

5 PK 100; PP 305, 306; SR 140; 4T 249; 5T 300

6 PP 306; SR 140; 4T 250

7 EW 70; MB 102; ML 282; PP 306; SR 140

8 DA 283; EW 34, 65, 85; GC 605; LS 95, 101; ML 287; MM 49, 50; PP 336; SL 54; 2T 703; 4T 249; 6T 353, 359; 9T 212

48-10ML 231

8-11EW 217; GC 434; PP 111, 307, 336; SR 140, 380; TM 135; 1T 76, 532; 2T 583; 4T 247; 6T 38; 8T 197

9 MM 50; 4T 249

9, 10 EW 255; 4T 252

10 CS 66; EW 33, 69; GC 447, 576; LS 101; MM 215; PP 525; 4T 114

10, 11 GC 437

11 Ed 250; ML 140

12 AH 283, 292, 299, 302, 360; DA 146; FE 101, 104, 403; ML 278; MYP 331, 444; PP 308, 337; SR 141; 1T 217, 401, 498; 2T 80; 3T 151, 232, 294; 5T 108, 125

13 MB 89; PP 148, 308; SR 141

14 AH 55, 327, 346; MB 93, 99; PP 308; SR 141; 2T 457; 4T 138, 141, 215

15 AH 58, 392; CH 283; FE 102; MYP 446; PP 308; SR 141

16 AH 250; CH 284; MB 104; MH 193; PP 309; SR 141; 4T 312, 331

17 CS 145; PP 309, 365; SR 141

18-23SR 142

19 FE 506; TM 99; 4T 514

19-21PP 310

CHAPTER 21

1 *Laws for menservants.* 5 *For the servant whose ear is bored.* 7 *For womenservants.* 12 *For manslaughter.* 16 *For stealers of men.* 17 *For cursers of parents.* 18 *For smiters.* 22 *For a hurt by chance.* 28 *For an ox that goreth.* 33 *For him that is an occasion of harm.*

1. Judgments. That is, ordinances by which justice (judgment) was to be administered. Though many of these Mosaic laws were undoubtedly old ones that had been in force for some time, all were now to be enforced with divine approval. Some provisions may have come from judicial decisions rendered by Moses in the wilderness (ch. 18:16). All of these civil laws breathed the spirit of the moral law; they reflected and applied the principles of the Ten Commandments.

These civil ordinances were based upon and dealt with social customs of the day. In some points the ordinances simply reaffirm legal practices already in effect. Some of them are similar to laws of the Code of Hammurabi (see Additional Note at close of chapter). It may seem out of keeping with our concept of the character of God that He should at least tacitly approve of such things as servitude, concubinage, and seemingly harsh forms of punishment. However, it should be remembered that in bringing the Hebrew people forth from the land of Egypt God took them as they were, with the purpose of gradually making them over into what He wanted them to be—fit representatives of Himself.

Though the new birth imparts to a man new ideals and divine power for attaining them, it does not bring instantaneous understanding of the fullness of God's ideal for man. The understanding of, and the attaining to, that ideal are the work of a lifetime (see John 1:12; Gal. 3:13, 14; 2 Peter 3:18). God does not work a miracle to accomplish this in a moment of time, particularly when the habits in question are matters of general custom and practice. Were He to do so there could be no character development. For this reason God takes people as He finds them, and through the increasingly clearer revelation of His will leads them ever onward to loftier ideals. Thus, with some of the civil laws given at Sinai, God for the time being permitted certain customs to continue but erected a safeguard against their abuse. Final abandonment of the customs themselves came later. This principle of an increasingly clearer and more complete revelation of God's will was enunciated by Christ (Matt. 19:7–9; John 15:22; 16:13; Acts 17:30; 1 Tim. 1:13).

2. An Hebrew servant. There was to be no such thing as permanent involuntary servitude for a Hebrew slave to a Hebrew master (Lev. 25:25–55). However, because slavery was a universal, established institution, God permitted its practice, yet at the same time sought to mitigate the evils that accompanied it. In heathen countries slaves were usually regarded more as chattels than as men. This was the more reprehensible since slavery did not necessarily imply any mental or moral fault in the slave. Slaves often proved to be more intelligent and capable than their masters. The great majority of those suffering involuntary servitude were either born in it or made so by the fortunes of war. Thus, slavery was not commonly a deserved punishment but more often an undeserved misfortune. These unfortunates had no political rights and only a few social privileges, yet often they were bound to a master who was in all points their interior. Their families might at any time be broken up and divided among other owners. They were subject to

unmerciful beatings, without redress, unless perhaps in cases of serious injury. The most severe labor might be required of them, in workshops little better than prisons, in unhealthy mines, or chained to the oars of galleys for backbreaking service through endless years.

In contrast, the Lord carefully protected the rights of Hebrew slaves, and even made the lot of foreign slaves far more pleasant than was the case elsewhere. Harsh treatment was definitely prohibited (Lev. 25:43). To the master the slave was still “thy brother” (Deut. 15:12; Philemon 16). Furthermore, upon payment of the unexpired portion of the sale price the master was required to release a slave (Lev. 25:48–52). The spirit of these laws relative to slaves is the same as that stated by Paul in Col. 4:1, and expressed by him upon sending the Christian slave Onesimus back to his Christian master Philemon (Philemon 8–16).

In spirit the law of Moses is opposed to slavery. Its emphasis on the dignity of man as made in the image of God, its recognition of the descent of all mankind from one pair, contained in principle the affirmation of every human right (see Lev. 25:39–42; Lev. 26:11–13). The Israelites commonly became “slaves” to their own race through poverty (Lev. 25:35, 39), and sometimes through crime (Ex. 22:3). Children were at times sold in settlement of a debt (2 Kings 4:1–7). Later, through the fortunes of war, they were carried away as slaves to foreign lands (2 Kings 5:2, 3).

In the seventh. This does not refer to the sabbatical year (Ex. 23:11; Lev. 25:4), but to the beginning of the seventh year after the man became a slave (Deut. 15:12). When the year of jubilee arrived, a Hebrew slave was to be released, irrespective of how many years he had served Lev. 25:40). Otherwise, his servitude ended at the close of the sixth year. Not only was his master to grant him his freedom but he was obligated to furnish him with provisions from the flock, the threshing floor, and the wine press Deut. 15:12–15) in order that he might be able to begin life anew. Thus, in the first of the civil laws we find beneficent provisions whose humanitarian spirit characterizes all Mosaic legislation. No other nation of antiquity treated its slaves in this kindly fashion.

3. *By himself.* That is, single, unmarried.

4. *Given him a wife.* If on becoming a slave the man was single or a widower, and if his master gave him a female slave to wife, the master was not to lose the female slave, his property, by so doing. In this case the husband would be released from his servitude alone. Children born to a slave marriage were to be the property of the master, and were to remain as members of his household.

5. *I love my master.* Inasmuch as Hebrew slavery was mild and sympathetic in nature (Lev. 25:39, 40, 43), it was not unusual for affection to spring up between the owner and the slave. Even among pagans there were such instances. Love might even make the conditions of servitude seem preferable to freedom. The cords of affection bind more closely than any other bonds, but they do not confine or fetter.

6. *Bring him to the door.* Upon the slave’s resolution not to go free, the master was to bring him before the “judges” (literally, “unto God”), who, as representatives of God, dispensed justice and served as witnesses to legal transactions such as this. Boring the ear through to the doorpost, thus attaching him physically, as it were, to the house, made him a permanent inmate of the household, marking him as such as long as he should live. The pierced ear testified to the pierced heart. The sign of slavery became the badge of love. So it was with our Lord as the suffering “servant” (Isa. 42:1; Isa. 53:10, 11), who for the

love He bore His earthborn sons and daughters (Heb. 12:2, 3), was highly exalted (see Phil. 2:7–9; Heb. 5:8, 9).

For ever. From *'olam*, literally, “hidden time,” that is, time of indefinite duration. Its limits are either unknown or not specified, and must be determined by the nature of the person, thing, or circumstance to which it is applied. In the absolute sense, as applied to God, *'olam*, “everlasting” (Gen. 21:33), means “eternal,” for God is eternal—without beginning or end. In a more restricted sense the resurrected saints enter into *'olam*, “everlasting life” (Dan. 12:2), which, although it has a beginning, is without end, owing to the bestowal of immortality. In a still more limited sense, *'olam* can have both a definite beginning and a definite end, either of which may be uncertain at the time of speaking. For instance, Jonah was in the belly of the fish “for ever” (Jonah 2:6) because at the time he did not know when, if ever, he would get out again. In this case “for ever” turned out to be only “three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:17).

Our English words *always* and *forever* do not of themselves imply time without beginning or without end. It might, for instance, be said of a man that he always lived in the valley of his birth. The fact that eventually he died there in no way invalidates the statement that he always lived there. Similarly, at marriage, husband and wife promise to be true to each other forever, meaning so long as they both shall live. If upon the death of one the other should remarry, no one would accuse him of breaking the vow made at his first marriage. It is no more justifiable to read into the Hebrew word *'olam* more than the context implies.

As for the slave, he had already served his master for a definite, limited period of six years. Now, by his own choice, he was to begin a term of service of indefinite duration. Obviously, the agreement would terminate at least with the death of the slave, which event could of course not be predicted. This indefinite term of service is therefore appropriately described as *'olam*, which would here be more accurately rendered as “in perpetuity.”

Translators of the LXX rendered the Hebrew word *'olam* as *aiōn*, its Greek equivalent. What has been said of *'olam* is equally true of *aiōn*. The attempt to determine the length of time involved, or to assign to the person or thing described the quality of continuing endlessly, on the basis of *'olam* or *aiōn*, is entirely unjustified. In each instance, the duration of *'olam* or *aiōn* depends solely on the context in which it is used, particularly on the nature of the person or thing to which the word is applied.

7. Sell his daughter. Among ancient nations the authority of a father was generally so absolute that he could sell his own children as slaves. Herodotus tells us that the Thracians made a regular practice of selling daughters. At one time, according to Plutarch, the sale of children was common in Athens. Female slaves were usually bought to serve as concubines, or secondary wives, of their masters.

8. If she please not. If the one who purchased the female slave should refuse to make her his concubine, or secondary wife, then, literally, “he shall allow her redemption.” He was to look for someone to buy her from him and so relieve him of the marriage obligation (v. 11; cf. Lev. 25:48).

He shall have no power. Both the first purchaser and the one who “redeemed” her must be Hebrews and not foreigners. No Hebrew was ever to marry a foreigner (Deut. 7:1–3). By promising to make the girl his secondary wife and failing to do so, her first purchaser “dealt deceitfully,” that is, violated his promise.

9. Unto his son. The master might have originally secured the female slave for this purpose, or not finding her satisfactory for himself (see v. 8), he might have given her to his son. In either case she was to have the status of a daughter in the family.

10. Another wife. If, besides taking this female slave as a secondary wife for himself, the master later takes another legitimate wife, the secondary wife’s support and conjugal right were not to be denied her.

11. Go out free. The female slave was not to be treated as a mere household servant, but permitted to return to her father at once, a free woman, with the right of marrying again. Her father was not required to refund any part of the price paid for her.

12. Smiteth a man. Homicide is considered in vs. 12–14. This law is similar to the one given to Noah (Gen. 9:6). Intentional murder was in no case to be pardoned.

13. God deliver him. Literally, “if God let him fall.” This indicates only that God had permitted the dead man to fall unexpectedly into the hand of one slaying him, without the slayer’s deliberate lying “in wait” to do so.

Appoint thee a place. For a man to come unexpectedly upon his enemy and slay him was not considered murder, but manslaughter or justifiable homicide. For this there was no specific legal penalty. He was left to the simple, rude justice of established custom, the retribution of “the avenger of blood” (Num. 35:12; Deut. 19:6, 12). This law did not alter the general Eastern practice of either taking life for life or giving a financial compensation. The law of Moses placed between “the avenger of blood,” or next of kin, and his victim the opportunity for the latter to reach a place of asylum. This was to be in one of the six “cities of refuge,” where he could be safe until his case was heard before the men of his own city (Num. 35:9–28; Deut. 19:1–13; Joshua 20).

Laws should always combine mercy with justice. If too severe, laws defeat their own purpose, since their very severity makes it unlikely that they will be carried out. The moral consciousness of the people revolts against them. When forgery was a capital offense in England, for instance, juries could not be secured to convict men of this crime. Legal enactments must be in accordance with the conscience of the community, or they will cease to command respect. Good men will break them, courts will hesitate to enforce obedience to them, and wise legislators will ever seek to change them to harmonize with the best moral sentiment of the community.

14. Slay him with guile. The deliberate, intentional slayer of human life was to be taken even from the altar (otherwise a place of safety) if he took refuge there, and summarily punished (1 Kings 2:28–34).

15. Smiteth his father. That is, strikes him. This implies deliberate and persistent opposition to parental authority. In this and the next two verses other capital offenses are dealt with. *To smite* does not mean to kill, a crime dealt with in v. 12. However, the severe penalty for smiting strongly emphasizes the dignity and authority of parents. When we reflect that parents stand in the place of God to their children until the age of moral responsibility (PP 308), that parents care for and protect them in their helpless years, and that even nature places within the minds of children an instinctive reverence for their parents, this penalty does not seem strange or excessive. Society is never secure

and cannot long exist where parental authority is held in contempt. Far more is involved here than a single act of disrespect.

16. Stealeth a man. To steal, or kidnap, men to make them slaves, was an early and widespread crime (see Gen. 37:25–28). Those stolen were usually foreigners. To steal them was not considered a legal offense. If, however, the kidnaped person was a fellow countryman, punishment was severe (Deut. 24:7).

17. Curseth his father. Inasmuch as parents do stand in the place of God to their children in their earliest years (see on v. 15), the penalty for cursing them is equivalent to the penalty for blaspheming God (Lev. 24:16).

18. With a stone. The use of a stone or the fist indicates the absence of a premeditated design to kill, as would be true if a weapon had been prepared for use.

19. If he rise again. Rabbinical commentators state that the offender was put in prison until it was learned whether the wounded man would die. If he died, the assailant was tried for murder. If he recovered, a fine was imposed to cover the loss of the injured man's time.

20. Smite his servant. In ancient times a slave was considered the absolute property of his master, and might be mistreated, abused, or even killed without legal interference. In Rome a master could deal with his servant as he pleased, selling, punishing, or slaying him. The laws of Moses, however, greatly improved the condition of native slaves and granted them certain legal rights. Although the discipline of slaves at times called for smiting them, God required that it be inflicted within reason. A "maid" would ordinarily be chastised by her mistress, or by a higher servant under the authority of the mistress. Criminals in the East have often been put to death by the bastinado. Beating with rods might prove fatal to some because of a particularly sensitive nervous system. Inasmuch as the master had paid a sum of money for the slave, if the slave lived a day or two after the beating, the owner was not held for punishment.

22. Hurt a woman. An unintentional injury, due perhaps to the woman's interference in a quarrel involving men.

Yet no mischief. "Mischief" here denotes death (Gen. 42:4, 38; Gen. 44:29). The "judges" were to impose a fine to protect the offender from any excessive sum the woman's husband might demand.

23. Life for life. This seemingly excessive penalty for an injury that was largely accidental and with no intention of taking life, was probably the reflection of an old law like that of the "avenger of blood" (see on v. 13). It must be remembered that there were certain provisions in these laws that Moses tolerated, such as the "bill of divorcement," because of the "hardness" of their "hearts" (Deut. 24:1–4; Matt. 19:3–8). It is also to be kept in mind that some of these Mosaic enactments were not *absolutely* best from the divine viewpoint, but were imperfect (Ex. 20:25; Ps. 81:12). They were *relatively* the best that God's people, at that time and in their state of moral and spiritual development, would receive and obey (see on v. 1).

24. Eye for eye. This law was also quite general among ancient nations. Solon introduced this law, in part, into the code of Athens, and in Rome it was included in the Twelve Tables. Numerous laws of a similar nature were included in the ancient Code of Hammurabi, a king of Babylon who lived about the time of Abraham (see Additional Note at close of chapter).

If the literal interpretation of this law were insisted upon in our Lord's day (see Matt. 5:38–42), it must have been by the Sadducees, for they refused to read into the law a spiritual interpretation. No good would have been served by requiring, literally, "eye for eye." It would have meant great loss to the individual doing the injury, without bringing the least gain to the one injured. Persistent requirement of compensation is quite different from a passionate desire for revenge.

26. *Smite the eye.* This verse and the next set forth the law pertaining to assaults upon slaves. The "eye" and "tooth" are specially mentioned because the former is considered our most precious physical organ, and the loss of the latter as that which is of least consequence. The general law of retaliation did not take in slaves. Ordinary blows given a slave did not carry with them any more thought of compensation than those given a child. However, permanent harm to an organ or the loss of a member afforded the slave the right of complaint and compensation. Revenge in kind was impossible because it would have put the slave in the position of retaliating against his master; hence compulsory compensation was provided. The principle was upheld that any permanent physical loss gave to the slave the right of freedom, a privilege which must have acted as an effective deterrent to brutality on the part of the master.

28. *If an ox gore.* To establish as firmly as possible the principle of the sacredness of human life, Moses takes up in vs. 28–32 injuries caused by domestic animals. Echoing the declaration already made to Noah (Gen. 9:5), the ox must be killed, but the owner is "clear" (RSV). Not being killed in the manner required, the animal might not be eaten. Furthermore, the animal was under a curse. According to rabbinical expositors it was not even lawful to sell the carcass to the Gentiles. By being "stoned" to death, the ox suffered the same penalty that would have been imposed upon a human murderer.

29. *If the ox were wont.* If the owner knew the animal to be dangerous and to require watching, and yet carelessly neglected to watch it properly, he was held guilty, as being accessory to the homicide and therefore deserving of death. The sound principle is established that a man is responsible for all foreseeable consequences of his actions.

30. *Ransom of his life.* Since it was unlikely that a man would be put to death for the offense of an animal, no matter what the neglect, provision is made for paying "a sum of money" as a fine, the amount being proportionate to the value of the life taken.

32. *Push a manservant.* That is, "gore a manservant." Even then the ox was to be killed, to further strengthen the concept of the sanctity of human life. Instead of a varying "ransom," or fine, the average price of a slave, 30 shekels of silver, was in all cases to be paid to the slave's master in compensation for his loss. Thirty shekels of silver would be equivalent to approximately \$8.75 today (see on Gen. 20:16).

33. *Open a pit.* Literally, "leaves a pit open" (RSV). The remainder of the chapter deals with injuries to property, which among the Hebrews consisted largely of cattle and flocks. Pits, or cisterns, were necessary in Palestine for the storage of water. They were usually covered by a flat stone. It was the duty of the one drawing water to re-cover the cistern after taking water from it.

Dig a pit. In the unfenced fields of Palestine it was always possible that a neighbor's animal might go astray and suffer injury because of another's negligence. Unable to extricate itself, an animal falling into a pit might drown. The owner of the cistern was to make good the loss of the animal and receive the carcass.

35. Sell the live ox. The two owners concerned were to divide between them the value of both the living and the dead ox, and share equally in the loss. If, however, one of the animals was known to be vicious, the owner who suffered the loss was to receive full compensation but lose his share of the carcass. God strictly condemns carelessness and neglect. Whatever we do we are to do well (Eccl. 9:10; Jer. 48:10).

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 21

While excavating the acropolis of Susa, the Biblical Shushan, in December, 1901 and January, 1902, J. de Morgan found three large fragments of a black diorite stone. They fitted perfectly together and when joined formed a stele, or standing pillar, 7 ft. 4 1/2 in. high, whose base had a diameter of about 24 in. In its upper part the stele contained a relief showing Hammurabi, the sixth king of the First Dynasty of Babylon (1728-1686 B.C.), standing before the seated sun-god Shamash. Otherwise, the whole surface was covered with a long inscription written in Babylonian cuneiform, consisting of nearly 300 laws. This proved to be the famous Code of Hammurabi, and is now in the Louvre in Paris. A facsimile may be seen at the Oriental Institute in Chicago.

The publication of this code in the year of its discovery by the expedition's cuneiformist V. Scheil caused a tremendous sensation in the world of Biblical scholarship. This was due to the fact that it proved the fallacy of the pronouncements of many scholars of the higher critical schools, who had denied the possibility that law codes such as that of Moses could have existed before the first millennium B.C. The opinion of the scholarly world with regard to the law of Moses at the time of the discovery of the Code of Hammurabi is well reflected by Johannes Jeremias in his book *Moses und Hammurabi* (2d ed., Leipzig, 1903):

“If eighteen months ago a scientifically educated theologian had asked the question, ‘Is there a Code of Moses,’ one would have left him standing ‘in the field’ just as the unfaithful shepherd in the C[ode of] H[ammurabi] (256). The literary critical pronouncement of the Kuenen-Wellhausen school is still held: A codification before the ninth century [B.C.] is impossible” (pp. 60, 61).

Reminding his readers of a statement made by Wellhausen, that “Moses is in truth just as little the originator of the Law, as our Lord Jesus the founder of the church discipline in Lower Hessa,” Jeremias asked the question, “How would he judge today?” (p. 60). Critical scholars had emphatically denied the Mosaic authorship of the laws found in the Pentateuch, since they were convinced that the existence of such laws during the second millennium B.C. was historically impossible. Suddenly a collection of laws came to light of which no one could deny that it had been written down in the first half of the second millennium, even before the time of Moses. To the great surprise of critical scholars, this Code of Hammurabi revealed that the strange customs of the patriarchal age as described in Genesis had actually existed, and also that the civil laws of ancient Israel showed great similarity to those of ancient Babylonia.

Because of the great importance of this code a description of the history of the stele containing it, and the contents of its laws, is given here. The stele originally contained 3,624 lines, divided into 39 columns of writing. It had been set up by Hammurabi in Babylon, his capital. When that city was conquered by an Elamite king, the pillar was carried off to Susa as a trophy of war and set up in the royal palace there. The Elamites erased five columns of the inscription, but for some unknown reason failed to replace them with an inscription of their own. The pillar was finally broken to pieces in one of

the destructions of Susa, and was already buried by the time of the Persian kings, when Esther and Mordecai lived.

The code contains a preface, or prologue, in which the king claims to have been commissioned by the gods to act as a wise and righteous ruler and judge over the kingdom. In the epilogue, or concluding remarks, the king reaffirms his intention to come to the aid of the oppressed and injured, and invites each one with a judicial case to come and read on the pillar how his case stands according to the law of the king. Between prologue and epilogue are found the 282 sections of the law, all of a purely civil nature. They deal with slavery and criminal offenses, regulate rents, wages, and debts, and determine questions relating to property, marriage, shipping rights, and the duties of physicians, builders, and others.

That the Code of Hammurabi illustrates and illuminates some seemingly strange customs of the patriarchal age has been explained in the appropriate comments on several Genesis passages (see on Gen. 16:2, 6; 31:32, 39). A careful study of the provisions of the Hammurabi Code results in a most interesting picture of social life and customs in the days of Abraham and throughout the patriarchal period.

Of special interest to the student of the Bible are those laws that show similarities to the law of Moses. Herewith is a comparison of some of Hammurabi's laws (abbreviated, CH) with corresponding provisions in the law of Moses.

CH 8. "If a citizen stole an ox or a sheep or an ass or a pig or a goat, if it belonged to the god (or) belonged to the palace, he shall make thirty-fold restitution; if it belongs to a citizen, he shall make tenfold restitution; if the thief does not have sufficient to make restitution he shall be put to death."

Ex. 22:1-4. "If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. . . . For he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double."

It will be noticed that the Biblical law concerning theft is more humane than the Babylonian one, the latter even providing capital punishment in certain cases. However, the principle that a thief must make restitution for his crime is the same in both laws.

The slave trade was considered a grave offense against society by both Hammurabi and Moses:

CH 14. "If a citizen has stolen the son of a citizen, he shall be put to death."

Ex. 21:16. "And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death."

The laws dealing with voluntary servitude are similar in principle:

CH 117. "If a citizen has an obligation, and has (therefore) sold his wife, his son, or his daughter, or given them as surety, they

Deut. 15:12-14. "And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: thou shalt furnish

shall work in the house of their purchaser or the holder of the pledge for three years; in the fourth year their release will be established.”

him liberally out of they flock.”

When a Babylonian fell into slavery for debts he had to serve three years without any compensation, whereas the Hebrew slave served a longer term, but received a reward at the end of his term of service.

CH 138. “If a citizen wants to divorce his wife who did not bear him children, he shall give her money to the amount of her marriage price, and compensate her for her dowry which she brought from the house of her father; then he may divorce her.”

Deut. 24:1. “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.”

The Babylonian law permitted divorce in the case of female sterility if compensation were made, whereas the Hebrew law permitted divorce only if the husband found that he had been deceived and that his wife was not the pure or healthy woman she had claimed to be.

CH 195. “If a son strikes his father, his hand shall be cut off.”

Ex. 21:15. “And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.”

The severity of the Mosaic law is due to the fact that according to the divine order parenthood was more sacred to the Hebrews than to the Babylonians.

CH 196. “If a citizen destroys the eye of the son of a citizen, his eye shall be destroyed.”

Lev. 24:19, 20. “And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again.”

CH 197. “If he breaks the bone of a citizen, his bone shall be broken.”

CH 198. “If he destroys the eye of a subordinate or breaks the bone of a subordinate, he shall pay one mina of silver.”

CH 200. “If a citizen knocks out a tooth of a citizen, his tooth shall be knocked out.”

Deut. 19:21. “And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”

Both laws guarantee to each man life, health, and well-being. A marked difference is found in the fact that there were two classes of citizens in Babylon, those that were fully free (citizens), and another class which might be called serfs (translated here as “subordinates”), whereas the Hebrews did not make such distinctions. The concept that all men were equal seems to have originated with God’s people. The dignity of man cannot be fully realized apart from a recognition of the true God and the principles imparted to Israel.

CH 199. “If he destroys the eye of a citizen’s slave, or breaks the bone of a citizen’s slave, he shall pay half of the purchasing price.”

Ex. 21:26 “And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye’s sake.”

The difference in these laws is apparent. The Babylonian law speaks only of injuries caused to another man’s servant, and treats them as if they were inflicted against the servant’s master, but the Biblical law recognizes the human rights of a slave, who was to be set free if for any reason his master injured him. This shows clearly that the Hebrew law did not consider a slave the unconditional property of his master, a principle recognized nowhere else in the ancient Near East.

CH 206. “If a citizen has struck a citizen in a brawl, and has caused him injury, this citizen shall swear, ‘I did not strike him deliberately,’ but he shall pay the bill of the physician.”

Ex. 21:18. “And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keepeth his bed: if he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed.”

These two laws are almost identical.

CH 209. “If a citizen has struck the daughter of a citizen, and causes her (thus) to have a miscarriage, he shall pay ten shekels of silver for her fetus.”

Ex. 21:22. “If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman’s husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine.”

The punishment for this crime was more severe among the Hebrews than among the Babylonians because of the Hebrew concept of the sanctity of life. It is noteworthy, however, that the Hebrew perpetrator of the crime was not left entirely to the mercy of the husband, since any demands of the husband had to be affirmed by the judges.

CH 210. “If that woman has died, his daughter shall be put to death.”

Ex. 21:23. “And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life.”

Here, the provisions are more equal, because human life has been lost. However, the Babylonian law allowed a man to pay for his murder with the life of his daughter instead of with his own, an injustice toward the child that the Mosaic law did not permit (see Eze. 18:20).

CH 249. "If a citizen hired an ox, and god smote it and it has died, and the citizen who hired the ox shall swear by god (to be innocent), and then shall go free."

CH 250. "If an ox, when it was walking along the street, gored a citizen to death, that case is not subject to claim."

CH 251. "If the ox of a citizen is a gorer, and his city council make it known to him that it was a gorer, but he did not cut its horns, (or) tie up his ox, and the ox has gored to death the son of a citizen, he shall give one-half mina of silver."

Ex. 22:10, 11. "If a man deliver unto his neighbour an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep; and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no man seeing it: then shall an oath of the LORD be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbour's goods; and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good."

Ex. 21:28. "If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit."

Ex. 21:29. "But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death."

These are some examples in which the laws of Hammurabi show great similarity to Mosaic laws. There are certain fundamental differences, owing primarily to different concepts regarding the rights of human beings and the sanctity of life. It should also be remembered, however, that many of the laws of Hammurabi show no similarity whatever to Biblical laws. Yet, it is obvious to anyone who has studied these laws that there is some relationship between the Biblical and Babylonian codes. This fact can be explained in three ways: (1) The Mosaic laws are the basis for Hammurabi's code. (2) The laws of Hammurabi were borrowed by Moses. (3) Both collections go back to the same origin.

The first of the three theories cannot be true, since the Code of Hammurabi was written long before the time of Moses. That the Biblical laws were borrowed from the Babylonians has been claimed by critical scholars who believe that the Pentateuch came into being only after the Jews had come into being only after the Jews had come in contact with the Babylonians during the first millennium B.C. This theory is unacceptable for those who believe that Moses received his laws from God at Mt. Sinai in the middle of the second millennium B.C. The best explanation is therefore to conclude that both laws go back to a common origin.

Since it is attested that Abraham was already acquainted with the laws and commandments of God four centuries before the Exodus (Gen. 26:5), the laws given on Mt. Sinai can have been only a repetition of divine precepts that had been communicated to mankind long before that time. Like Abraham, the peoples of Mesopotamia knew these laws and passed them on from generation to generation, first orally, and later in writing. But idolatrous and polytheistic concepts gradually corrupted not only religious and moral practices but legal principles also. This is why the laws of Hammurabi differ from their Biblical counterparts, and are less humane.

For some 45 years it was thought that the Code of Hammurabi was the oldest collection of laws. In recent years, however, several much older collections of law have been found. From Nippur comes the Code of Lipit-Ishtar, published in 1948. It was written in Sumerian one or two centuries before the Code of Hammurabi, but is very similar to it and even contains a number of laws identical with the latter. In the same year, 1948, there was published another code, which had been discovered in Harmal near Baghdad, the Code of King Bilalama of Eshnunna, who ruled some 300 years before Hammurabi. This code is clearly a forerunner of the laws of Lipit-Ishtar and Hammurabi. In 1954 a law code older than any of the three was published, that of Ur-Nammu, one that contained laws far more humane than any of the others known thus far. This shows that the closer a document of this nature is related to the original source, which was divine, the more it reveals the character of the real lawgiver—God. In whatever code of laws they may be embodied, all right principles reflect the justice and mercy of the Author of right and truth.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-27PP 310
 1 FE 506; SR 148
 1, 2, 12 PP 310
 14 PP 516
 15, 16 PP 310
 17 PP 407
 20, 26, 27 PP 310
 28, 29 Te 288

CHAPTER 22

1 *Of theft.* 5 *Of damage.* 7 *Of trespasses.* 14 *Of borrowing.* 16 *Of fornication.* 18 *Of witchcraft.* 19 *Of bestiality.* 20 *Of idolatry.* 21 *Of strangers, widows, and fatherless.* 25 *Of usury.* 26 *Of pledges.* 28 *Of reverence to magistrates.* 29 *Of the firstfruits.*

1. Steal an ox. Verses 1–15 continue the laws relating to the rights of property. The first section, vs. 1–5, has to do with theft. The general principle is set forth that theft is to be punished, if possible, by a fine. In the wilderness the chief property the Israelites possessed was cattle. Since it took more boldness for a thief to carry off an ox than a sheep, the crime bore a heavier penalty.

And kill it. This was considered worse than ordinary stealing, which carried the penalty of a double restoration (see v. 4), for it indicated persistence in wrongdoing. Therefore the offender was to pay more as shown here.

2. Breaking up. Rather, “breaking in,” that is, forcible entry into a house. Because the ordinary way of “breaking in” to a house seems to have been through a breach in the wall, the literal meaning of the verb is “digging in.”

No blood. Margin, “bloodguiltiness,” meaning that the avenger of blood was not permitted to pursue the slayer (Num. 35:27). This principle, which later had the sanction of Solon, the lawgiver of Athens, the Roman law, and the law of England, rests upon the assumption that anyone forcibly entering a house at night has a murderous intent, or at least the intent to commit murder if occasion should arise.

3. Sun be risen. If this entry be attempted after daybreak, it is charitably assumed that the thief did not intend murder. Therefore the slayer of the thief is held guilty of “blood” and may be slain by the next of kin. All the requirements of justice were thought to be

served by the thief's being compelled to make restitution. Blood was not to be shed needlessly; so the law punished the theft but protected the thief's life.

Full restitution. The thief who enters a house by day shall be punished like other thieves, by being compelled to "restore double." If he has "nothing," or rather "not enough" to make the restitution demanded, he is then to be "sold" for his theft, that is, pay for it by labor. This double restitution served as a sort of retaliation, for it caused the thief to lose the very amount he had expected to gain.

5. To be eaten. Wantonly damaging what belongs to another is almost as bad as stealing. Therefore if a man caused a field "to be eaten" or browsed upon, he was to pay to the offended an equal amount from his own best produce.

6. If fire break out. It is customary in the East, as elsewhere, to burn the grass or weeds on a farm at certain seasons of the year. Through carelessness the fire might spread and either damage or destroy a neighbor's crops. Of course, restitution was to be made, but not double, for the damage was not due to a deliberate act such as permitting one's cattle to graze in another man's field.

7. Stuff. That is, "goods," or any movable article. Verses 7–13 record the law concerning deposits. Leaving property to the care of another was not unusual in ancient times, where investments were difficult and bankers were few. Those about to travel, especially merchants, did so. This required guarding the goods during the period of absence.

8. Unto the judges. Literally, "unto God." The LXX rendering clarifies the meaning thus: "But if the thief be not found, the master of the house shall come forward before God, and shall swear that surely he has not wrought wickedly in regard of any part of his neighbour's deposit."

9. All manner of trespass. More accurately, "for every breach of trust" (RSV). For any object the caretaker could not account for, he was to appear, literally, "before God" (see on ch. 21:6), together with his accuser, and clear himself if he could (see ch. 18:21, 22).

Which another challengeth. Meaning, "which the depositor declares to be his."

10. No man seeing it. The deposited animal might "die" naturally, be hurt by a wild beast or by a fall, or be "driven away" by thieves, without anyone's knowing it at the time. If the caretaker declared on oath his ignorance of the loss, no compensation was allowed the owner.

12. If it be stolen. Restitution was in this case to be paid, on the presumption that with proper care the theft could have been avoided.

13. Torn in pieces. The trustee was required to produce evidence that this was actually so if he was to be relieved of blame.

14. If a man borrow. Borrowing is appropriately classified with depositing, for in both cases the property of one man is committed to the hands of another. But because in the former case the borrower is benefited, whereas in the latter case the depositor receives the benefit, the obligation is different. The borrower must take all the risks unless the owner of the borrowed property is with the object borrowed. This must have put a strong check on borrowing.

15. Be with it. This implies that the owner was not merely present but in charge of it, or so near he could have prevented the damage. Borrowers should remember that if they fail to restore what they have borrowed: (1) They injure themselves, for reputation and

self-respect both suffer. (2) They fail in their duty to the lender, since they are under special obligation to him. (3) They wrong mankind in general, since their carelessness restrains men from lending to others what may be urgently needed. (4) They fail in their duty to God, who regards as “wicked” those who borrow but restore not (Ps. 37:21).

An hired thing. Where an amount was paid for the privilege of using an animal or article, it was hired rather than borrowed. In that case the owner was considered to have reckoned on the risk of loss or damage in fixing the amount of the hire, and so was not entitled to any compensation.

16. If a man entice. The remainder of the “book of the covenant” is made up of miscellaneous laws. It will be noticed that some are severe and others tender, again illustrating the justice and mercy of God (see Ps. 85:10; 89:14). God is as merciful toward the weak and helpless saint as He is severe toward the bold and stubborn sinner. Verses 16 and 17 are concerned with seduction. In the East a man commonly pays money, a dowry, to the parents of the maiden he intends to marry. A seducer was required to comply with this custom. The dowry price was 50 shekels of silver (Deut. 22:29), or about \$14.57.

18. Witch. More accurately, “sorceress” (KJV, margin). A sorcerer was one who claimed supernatural knowledge or power, which he used either to influence the gods or to cast magic spells. The fact that women are designated rather than men suggests that the female sex was more addicted to this crime.

20. He that sacrificeth. Inasmuch as the offering of a sacrifice was then the chief act of worship, to do so to a false god was to renounce the Lord. Under a secular government this act would not be an offense, but one left instead to the final judgment of God; under the theocracy of Israel it was treason, and thus punishable with death.

21. Neither vex a stranger. This precept against the oppression of foreigners is most significant, since it is unlikely that such a provision was ever made in the laws of other ancient countries. While elsewhere foreigners might be harassed, the Mosaic law forbade the Hebrews to treat strangers thus (Ex. 23:9; Lev. 19:33). Instead, they were to “love” strangers (Lev. 19:34). Their own experience as “strangers in the land of Egypt” was to be a constant reminder that they were to deal kindly with these foreigners (Deut. 10:19). This kindness to foreigners was also to be given in the hope that they might be made proselytes (see Acts 13:43). Although the Hebrews were to remain separate from other nations in matters of religion, they were not to isolate themselves to the extent that they would fail to show kindness to a stranger.

22. Not afflict any widow. As with the stranger it is natural to protect the widow and orphan. Like him, they are weak and defenseless, and thus special objects of divine care. The word “afflict” includes all kinds of mistreatment. Later enactments did much to ameliorate the sad lot of widows (Ex. 23:11; Lev. 19:9, 10; Deut. 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19–21; 26:12, 13). Though in general the Israelites obeyed this injunction, there were times when widows and orphans suffered severe oppression (Ps. 94:6; Isa. 1:23; 10:2; Jer. 7:5–7; 22:3; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5; Matt. 23:14). We are reminded of Jesus’ solicitude for His widowed mother (John 19:26, 27), of the care given widows in the early church (Acts 6:1; 1 Tim. 5:3–9, 16), and that James included interest in and the care of orphans and widows in “pure religion” (James 1:27). It is the first principle of Christian ethics that to neglect to do well is to do ill.

24. *I will kill you.* Neglect of the poor and the widows contributed to the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the destruction of its inhabitants (Jer. 22:3–5).

25. *Usury.* This word now generally implies an exorbitant rate of interest. In the days of Moses the word thus translated meant any amount of interest, great or small. The amount of interest a creditor might charge was not then regulated by law, and it was therefore to be expected that conscienceless creditors would deal heartlessly with men who found themselves in difficult circumstances. The Mosaic law prohibiting usury was concerned exclusively with the matter of taking advantage of a brother who was “waxen poor,” that is, in financial straits (see Lev. 25:25, 35, 39, 47; PP 533). Under such circumstances a “poor” man might pawn his property (Lev. 25:35–38), secure a loan if possible (Lev. 25:35–37), or sell himself to his creditor for a limited period of time (Lev. 25:39–41). Furthermore, if able to do so, the poor man’s “brother” was required to make the necessary loan, and that without interest (Deut. 15:7–11). He might under no circumstances take advantage of his poor “brother” by charging him any amount of interest whatever. Mosaic law scrupulously protected the rights of the poor and provided for their welfare.

In the time of Moses business was not transacted as it is today. Generally speaking, a man relied upon his own resources in the transaction of business, and there was little borrowing and lending as we know it today. For practical purposes, none but a “brother” who had “waxen poor” ever borrowed money. It would seem therefore that far from condemning ordinary business transactions involving the lending and borrowing of money, the laws of Moses are not even concerned with them. It appears that Christ approved the principle of profit, including interest on loans, in normal business transactions (Matt. 25:27; Luke 19:23).

The principle inherent in Moses’ law on “usury,” of not taking advantage of someone beset by adverse circumstances, remains valid in our day. One man should never exact more than is just from another, whether “poor” or wealthy. It is the spirit of avarice, extortion, sharp practice, and the passion for gain, even at the disadvantage of others, that is condemned (see PK 648–652). We are to be sympathetic to the needs of others, and never to turn a deaf ear to their cry or to take advantage of them when they are confronted with difficulties.

26. *Take thy neighbour’s raiment.* To lend on pledge, as do modern pawnbrokers, was not forbidden by Hebrew law. There were, however, certain articles of primary importance on which pledges could not be taken, such as a hand mill for grinding flour or either of its millstones (Deut. 24:6). In Nehemiah’s time we read of borrowing upon pledge being practiced with evil results (see Neh. 5).

By that the sun goeth down. That is, “before the sun goes down” (RSV). The reason is stated in the next verse. If the garment was to be given back immediately, and permanently, it would not have been desirable to take it in pledge at all. Perhaps the garment was deposited during the day and returned to the owner at night.

28. *The gods.* The word *’elohim* is sometimes translated “judges” (chs. 21:6; 22:8, 9), often as “gods” (ch. 20:3, 23; etc.), but more commonly as “God” (ch. 20:1, 2, 5, 7; etc.). It is not certain whether *’elohim* should be rendered “judges”—God’s representatives for administering justice—as in the KJV margin, or as “God.” The fact that the Jews held pagan gods, *’elohim*, in contempt would seem to preclude the possibility that “gods” are

meant here. The rendering, “You shall not revile God” (RSV), is therefore preferable (see Lev. 24:15, 16).

Nor curse the ruler. More accurately, “nor curse a ruler among thy people.” “Rulers” were generally heads of families (Num. 3:24, 30, 35) and tribes (Num. 7:10, 18, 24). Later the word was used of kings (1 Kings 11:34; Eze. 12:10; 45:7). It is in the divine order that we should respect the authority of those placed over us, in both church and state (Rom. 13:1–7; Heb. 13:17; 1 Peter 2:13–18).

29. The first. Literally, “the fullness.” The first-born of man and beast, and the first of all the produce of the land, whether wine, oil, grain, or fruit, were required of the people. The first-born son was to be redeemed by a money payment (Ex. 13:13; Num. 3:46–48), but the rest were to be offered in sacrifice. That there would be reluctance in obeying this law by putting off the offering is indicated in the charge, “Thou shalt not delay.”

30. Seven days. This period of time would give the dam the natural relief that came from suckling its young. There is some analogy between this provision and the law of circumcision (Gen. 17:9–12). Birth was regarded as bringing ceremonial uncleanness, and therefore it was not until after the days specified that the offering would be acceptable to God.

31. Holy men. To secure this consecration (Ex. 19:6; Lev. 11:44, 45) there were various laws designed to preserve the Israelites a spiritual people. They were not to eat the flesh of a “torn” animal because the blood, which is the “life” (Lev. 17:14), could not be properly drained from the animal, which was therefore unclean. Furthermore, the carnivorous beast that tore it was also unclean, and would by contact pass on its uncleanness to the other.

To the dogs. It is probable that this provision did not rule out the selling or giving of the rejected animal to an alien (see Deut. 14:21), but indicated another means whereby the flesh could be disposed of. Dogs were unclean and might therefore feed on anything. They were, in fact, scavengers (2 Kings 9:35, 36).

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- 4 PP 311
- 10, 11 1T 203
- 12 3T 549
- 21-24WM 217
- 22 PP 310
- 22-24Te 31, 33, 41, 53
- 23, 24 PP 310
- 25 PK 647
- 25-28PP 311
- 26, 27 MH 188
- 29 CS 72; PP 526
- 31 DA 283; MB 75; PP 311

CHAPTER 23

- 1 *Of slander and false witness.* 3, 6 *Of justice.* 4 *Of charitableness.* 10 *Of the year of rest.* 12 *Of the sabbath.* 13 *Of idolatry.* 14 *Of the three feasts.* 18 *Of the blood and the fat of the sacrifice.* 20 *An Angel is promised, with a blessing, if they obey him.*

1. A false report. This is an expansion of the ninth commandment, which forbids calumny and slander. The last half of the verse prohibits joining with others in spreading

this mischief. Though the word “witness” implies that the law is concerned primarily with conduct in court, it is not confined to that.

2. *Not follow a multitude.* Omitting the word “do” in this first clause, which is not in the original Hebrew, this prohibition covers not only evil in deed but also in word and thought. Remembering the words of Jesus, we are not to take the manner of life of the many as our example (Matt. 7:13, 14). One of the chief dangers facing professed Christians is that of pliant willingness to follow the crowd, notwithstanding the Scriptural admonition against such a tendency.

To decline. That is, to turn aside. A better translation of the last half of this verse would be: “Neither shalt thou bear witness in a case by going aside after a multitude to pervert justice.” In connection with the next verse this may be taken as referring to one of the judges, who is not to follow the other judges in deciding a case but to have his own opinion and hold to it.

3. *Countenance a poor man.* That is, to be partial to him. This seems surprising, considering the many precepts that favor the poor. However, it simply supports impartial justice, which must regard neither the rich nor the poor. To lean either way would be a perversion of justice (Lev. 19:15).

4. *Thine enemy’s ox.* This refers to a private enemy, not to a public one as in Deut. 23:3–6. It anticipates the true spirit of Christianity as laid down by Christ in His rebuke of the rabbinical distortions of the Mosaic law (Matt. 23:4).

5. *Wouldest forbear to help.* The overburdened ass of an enemy must not be left without offering to help the enemy get the animal back on its feet, so it may continue on its way. This joint merciful participation would bring the two men into friendly contact and thus invite a possible reconciliation.

6. *Not wrest the judgment.* While v. 3 warns against favoring the poor, out of compassion for them, this prohibits discriminating against the poor because of his poverty, a far more common wrong. Prejudice is to be avoided in order that strict justice may be done. A court of law is not the place for sentiment.

7. *Slay thou not.* Countenancing a false accusation against an “innocent and righteous” man might cause his death, and so draw the vengeance of Him who does “not justify the wicked.”

8. *Take no gift.* The acceptance of a bribe from one of the parties in a suit, and the shaping of justice accordingly, has ever been one of the most common and reprehensible sins of judges in the East. Bribery defeats the whole purpose for which the administration of justice exists, for its weight in the scales of justice tips them the wrong way. For this reason it has generally carried the death penalty. While the Mosaic code fixes no penalty for this evil (Deut. 16:18–20), Josephus affirms that the Jews put the offender to death (*Against Apion* ii. 28). Nevertheless, whatever the penalty was it must have been ignored (1 Sam. 8:3; Ps. 26:10; Prov. 17:23; Isa. 1:23; Micah 3:9–11).

9. *Not oppress a stranger.* This repeats the injunction of ch. 22:21, and probably applies to courts of justice. The word “heart” denotes the mind, the feelings. In other words, sympathy should be extended to the “stranger.”

11. *The seventh year.* Though other nations had their days of rest at regular or irregular intervals, entire years of rest were observed by the Israelites. This may have exposed them to the rebuke of idleness by other nations. Since agriculture was primitive, crop rotation unknown, and artificial fertilizers were not used, it is probable that no

financial loss resulted from the program. However, the desire for gain made the enforcement of the provision difficult. The “seventy years” captivity was intended to make up for the failure to observe the sabbatical years (2 Chron. 36:17–21).

The primary purpose of the law as here stated was to provide for the poor (see Lev. 25:1–7). What the land produced of itself without cultivation belonged to all as a common possession, even to the “beasts of the field.” It was no doubt intended also that this sabbatical year should be one of increased religious observance, in which the solemn reading of the law at the Feast of Tabernacles in “the year of release” (Deut. 31:10, 11) played a part. This reading was preceded by a period of religious preparation (Neh. 8). This sabbatical year must have been a solemn season, one which led to self-examination, the formation of holy habits, and brought spiritual uplift to the people. Since grain, wine, and oil were the important products of Palestine, it is apparent that the whole land was to rest.

12. *The seventh day.* To bring out further its merciful character, the fourth commandment is here repeated. Most of the foreign population of the Holy Land were engaged in hard labor (see 2 Chron. 2:17, 18), a fact that explains why the “stranger” is particularly mentioned here.

13. *The name of other gods.* As a protection against idolatry, God’s people were not even to mention the names of heathen deities. This prohibition was based on the principle that familiarity with evil often leads to participation in it. Had this injunction been carried out, the danger of idolatry would have been wholly removed. It is significant that Moses himself rarely spoke the names of heathen gods. Later Bible writers and prophets were compelled to do so either as a record of the actual history of Israel or by way of denouncing idolatry. Modern advertisers know the value of the repetition of trade names, and deliberately plan to keep the name of their product before the public in one way or another. It would be well for everyone who desires to keep himself pure and holy to remember that expression deepens impression.

14. *Three times.* Verses 14–17 record the law of sacred festivals. All the ancient heathen religions had annual festive seasons commemorating the supposed beneficence of their gods. Assembling together in large gatherings, the people inspired and cheered one another to greater devotion and heartier thanksgiving than at other times. Such festivals were frequent in Egypt and held an important place in religious life.

Abraham’s family probably celebrated occasions of this kind in Mesopotamia, and the Lord now sanctioned these three feasts as a stimulus to piety. These feasts were: (1) to be at once agricultural and historical, connected with the course of the seasons and also with great events in the life of the nation; (2) to be observed only at one place, where the tabernacle was situated; (3) to be attended by the entire male population (v. 17; see on Lev. 23:2).

15. *The feast of unleavened bread.* This early spring festival came at the beginning of the barley harvest in the month Abib (Nisan), began with the Passover and a holy convocation, lasted seven days, and closed with another holy convocation (Lev. 23:5–8). Unleavened bread was eaten during these seven days, in commemoration of the hasty exodus from Egypt (Ex. 12:33, 34, 39). Leaven was a symbol of sin and error (Matt. 16:6, 11, 12; 1 Cor. 5:6–8). Unleavened bread was representative of the freedom from sin of Him who is the bread of life (John 6:35, 48, 51). A sheaf of new barley, the first fruits of the harvest, was offered as a wave offering before the Lord (Lev. 23:9–14). “The time

appointed” was the 15th day of the first month, Nisan (Lev. 23:6). This feast, which began with the Passover, was a type of the deliverance of sinners from sin through the death of Christ. When the Saviour offered Himself on Calvary the significance of the Passover ceased, for it looked forward to Him (1 Cor. 5:7). The ordinance of the Lord’s Supper was instituted as a memorial of the same event (Luke 22:14–20).

None shall appear before me empty. Those who attended the feast were to present a freewill offering to the Lord. An Oriental never came before his superior without a gift. No less was expected of an Israelite when he approached Jehovah, the King of the theocracy.

16. *The feast of harvest.* Fifty days were to be numbered from the day of the barley sheaf was offered (Lev. 23:15–21). The 50th day was called “the feast of weeks,” because seven full weeks separated it from the Passover. In NT times it was called Pentecost, from a Greek word meaning “fiftieth.” This feast was celebrated late in our month of May or early in June, the time of the spring harvest. To express gratitude for the grain, two loaves baked with leaven were presented before God (Lev. 23:17). It was a joyful occasion (Deut. 16:9–11). Jewish tradition connected the feast with the giving of the law, which occurred about 50 days after the departure from Egypt (see Ex. 19:1–16), and accordingly one purpose of Pentecost was to commemorate the giving of the law. For the Christians of apostolic times it commemorated also the giving of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, when the infant church gathered in the first fruits of the gospel (Acts 2:1–12, 41).

The firstfruits of thy labours. Literally, “of the first fruits of your labor” (RSV). The expression is in apposition with “harvest,” not with “feast.”

The feast of ingathering. Elsewhere this is commonly called “the feast of tabernacles,” because the people were to make booths for themselves in which to dwell during the feast (Lev. 23:33–36; Deut. 16:13–15; 31:10; John 7:2). This eight-day festival commenced on the 15th of Tishri, which came late in October or in early November. The olives had been harvested and the vintage completed. A holy convocation marked its opening and close. It was a season of gladness and thanksgiving for the final gathering in of the autumn harvest, and commemorated the safe passage of the Israelites from Egypt to Palestine. Furthermore, they had observed the great Day of Atonement but a few days previously, and received the assurance that their sins would be remembered no more. They were at peace with God. Well might they now acknowledge His goodness and praise Him for His mercy. The feast of Tabernacles not only pointed back to the wilderness sojourn, but, like the feast of harvest, it anticipated the ingathering of the harvest of the earth (PP 540, 541). During the captivity this feast was apparently neglected, but in Nehemiah’s time it was again observed with much joy (Neh. 8:13–18).

In the end of the year. That is, at the end of the agricultural and civil year, after the harvest had been gathered in.

17. *Three times in the year.* Considering the fact that Palestine is a small country, less than 145 mi. long by 75 mi. wide, attendance at these feasts was not a burden. Furthermore, such festive occasions appealed to the people, for they were an important means of spreading information and offered almost the only opportunity for relatives and friends to see one another. The Israelites looked forward to these occasions with joyous anticipation. They exerted an important unifying influence and were thus a vitally important part of national life, tending as they did to weld the people together in the

knowledge and service of God. While “all thy males” were required to attend, other members of the family were free to do so if they wished (1 Sam. 1:1–23; Luke 2:41–45).

18. The blood of my sacrifice. This was the Passover lamb, inasmuch as the forbidding of “leavened bread” and of any part of the lamb remaining “until the morning” have to do with this offering only (Ex. 12:1–11; Deut. 16:1–5). The Passover lamb was the most important of all offerings in that it typified the sacrifice of Christ, the true Paschal Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). God could most appropriately call it “my sacrifice.”

19. The first of the firstfruits. This means either “the best” of the first fruits (Num. 18:12) or the “first ripe” fruits (Num. 18:13). As these first fruits of the harvest of the “land” were brought to God, so Christ presented Himself to the Father as the first fruits of the resurrection harvest (John 20:17; 1 Cor. 15:20–23).

The house of the Lord. This phrase is synonymous with the expression, “the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there” (Deut. 26:2; 12:5, 11, 14; 16:16), and refers to the sanctuary and later the Temple.

Not seethe a kid. Texts unearthed at Ras Shamra, the ancient Ugarit, a Syrian coastal city opposite the island of Cyprus, reveal the fact that boiling sacrificial kids in their mother’s milk was a ritual practice of the Canaanites. It was probably to avoid this heathen rite that God forbade His people to do so.

20. I send an Angel. In these closing verses of “the book of the covenant” (vs. 10–31) we find the promises God would fulfill should the people observe its requirements. God ever encourages us with “the recompense of the reward” (Heb. 11:26). These promises were conditional, for God can bless His people only if they obey Him. The “Angel” plainly refers to “the messenger [Angel] of the covenant” (Mal. 3:1), that is, to Christ (PP 252, 311). The word *mal’ak*, “angel,” means “messenger,” and is translated as often one way as the other. Christ was ever the Messenger of God to Israel (PP 366), and as such conveyed to them a knowledge of the character, will, and mercy of God (Gen. 22:1, 10–12; Ex. 32:34; Isa. 63:7–9; Mal. 3:1; John 8:56–58; 1 Tim. 2:5).

In the way. Not alone to guide them geographically (Ex. 23:23; 32:34), but spiritually as well, in the paths of righteousness (Ex. 33:9; Deut. 31:15).

Into the place. An allusion to Palestine, and indirectly to the home of the saved, of which that land was a type (see John 14:1–3).

21. He will not pardon. This does not mean that God will not actually pardon, for God’s love ensures that He will (Ps. 32:5; 103:10–12; Isa. 63:7–9; 1 John 1:9); but it does express with typical Eastern emphasis the sovereign justice and holiness of God (see Ex. 34:7).

My name is in him. Here the first person of the Godhead, the Father, speaks of the second person of the Godhead, His Son. This statement implies that the “Angel” bearing God’s name is coequal with God Himself (see John 1:1–3, 14; Col. 1:13–19; Heb. 1:8).

23. Amorites. All but one of the “seven nations” of Canaan proper, the Girgashites, are here mentioned (Deut. 7:1; Joshua 3:10; 24:11). To “cut them off” means to destroy them as *nations*, not as individuals, for such might yet be won as proselytes to the faith of Israel (2 Sam. 23:39; 24:18–25; 2 Chron. 8:7–9).

24. Not bow down. It must be remembered that the idolatrous worship of these heathen peoples was licentious and debasing in the extreme. The ceremonies of some heathen deities were defiled by human sacrifices and polluted by prostitution. The

iniquity of these nations was now full (see Gen. 15:16). It is not to be wondered at that they were due to feel the full measure of divine wrath (see on Gen. 15:16).

Their images. Literally, “their pillars” (see on Gen. 28:18).

25. *Take sickness away.* Healthful living in itself goes far to protect one from sickness of mind and soul as well as of body. Conversely, godliness promotes physical well-being (see DA 827).

26. *There shall nothing cast.* This could be the result of a special interposition of divine favor and providential care, as well as of healthful living. Not only would there be no premature births, but, as the last clause implies, premature death would also be unknown.

27. *Send my fear.* For the fulfillment of this promise see Num. 22:3; Joshua 2:9, 11; 9:24. The enemies of the Israelites did turn their backs in defeat (Num. 21:3, 24, 35; Joshua 8:20–24; 10:10, 11). Had Israel gone on to full obedience God would have thoroughly broken the power of the Canaanite nations.

28. *Hornets.* Some have taken this as a reference to literal hornets, others as a figurative reference to the Egyptians, who repeatedly invaded Palestine during the time of Joshua and the judges, or to the fear felt by the Canaanites (Joshua 2:9; see Additional Note to Joshua 6; see on Joshua 24:12).

29. *In one year.* While men are impatient, God is long-suffering and wonderfully forbearing (2 Peter 3:9). The Canaanite nations would not be driven out all at once, lest (1) the land should become desolate, there not being enough people to care for it; (2) the beasts of the field should multiply and so become a danger. When the northern Hebrew kingdom of Israel was depopulated by the removal of the ten tribes into captivity, there was a marked increase of lions that preyed upon the scanty remnant (2 Kings 17:24, 25). In many districts of France wolves increased following the Franco-Prussian War. Another reason why the nations were not driven out immediately was that God desired to “prove” Israel to see whether they would obey Him (Judges 2:21–23).

31. *Set thy bounds.* These boundaries were not reached until 400 years later, under David and Solomon (1 Kings 4:21, 24; 2 Chron. 9:26). Moses here confirms God’s promise to Abraham (Gen. 15:18). Inasmuch as Solomon was “a man of rest” (1 Chron. 22:9), the work of empire building must have been accomplished by David (2 Sam. 8:3–15; 10:6–19; 1 Kings 5:3; 1 Chron. 22:8).

The river. That is, the Euphrates, pre-eminently “the river” of OT times (see Gen. 15:18; Deut. 1:7).

Drive them out. Many of the Canaanites were no doubt forced northward, and may have united with the Hittite kingdom, which for many centuries formidably opposed the Egyptian and Assyrian empires.

32. *No covenant.* The “book of the covenant” closes as it begins, with a solemn charge against idolatry (ch. 20:23). The subsequent history of Israel shows how needful this repeated warning was, and how necessary God’s deep concern for them to avoid this error. Tragically, the warning was of no avail (2 Kings 17:7–18). Inasmuch as the usual treaties of peace at that time contained an acknowledgment of the gods of either nation, and words honoring these gods, covenants with heathen peoples would include recognition of their gods.

33. *Not dwell.* Proselytes to the religion of Israel were, of course, not included in this injunction, nor were enslaved heathen (see Joshua 9:27).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 CT 221; TM 63; 4T 647; 9T 230
4, 5 DA 500
6-8Te 47
6-9PP 311
10, 11 PP 531; 4T 467
11 FE 323
12 PP 311
14 2T 573
14-16PP 537
14-17PP 311
20 ML 307; 3T 356
20, 21 PP 419, 420; SR 166; 3T 340
20-22PP 311
20-23SR 142
21 DA 709
24 PP 369
24, 25, 27-33PP 543; SR 143
28 PP 437

CHAPTER 24

1 *Moses is called up into the mountain.* 3 *The people promise obedience.* 4 *Moses buildeth an altar, and twelve pillars.* 6 *He sprinkleth the blood of the covenant.* 9 *The glory of God appeareth.* 14 *Aaron and Hur have the charge of the people.* 15 *Moses goeth into the mountain, where he continueth forty days and forty nights.*

1. Nadab, and Abihu. As the two eldest sons of Aaron (ch. 6:23), Nadab and Abihu were their father's natural successors to the priesthood. However, their later sin of offering "strange fire" prevented this (Lev. 10:1, 2).

Seventy of the elders. These were usually, though not necessarily, older men. In this connection the term designates those of a certain official rank and position among their brethren, the heads of houses (Ex. 6:14, 25; 12:21). They represented the people as a whole, while Nadab and Abihu represented the future priesthood (ch. 28:1). These leaders also represented the 12 tribes of Israel. All were to ascend the mount to a certain point, but Moses alone was to go to the top. Thus the elders were to "worship ... afar off."

3. Told the people. Upon his return to camp Moses announced the legislation recorded in chs. 20:22 to 23:33. The Decalogue was uttered by God Himself, but the "judgments" were recited to the people by Moses.

4. And Moses wrote. The Spirit of truth that inspired all the prophets (see John 14:26; Heb. 1:1; 2 Peter 1:20, 21) brought to his remembrance all the injunctions God had given him. Moses then erected an altar, for without a sacrifice no covenant would be held binding.

5. He sent young men. Perhaps as the "firstborn" (see ch. 22:29) these young men served as priests until the Levitical priesthood was instituted (ch. 28:1; PP 350). These young men were also probably selected because of their skill in handling struggling animals. The "burnt offerings" symbolized personal consecration and self-surrender (Ps.

51:16–19; see also on Lev. 1:2–4). The “peace offerings” stood for renewed fellowship with God and thankfulness to Him (see on Lev. 3:1).

6. *Half of the blood.* Because blood symbolized the life of the victim (Lev. 17:14) it was an essential part of every sacrifice, and the sprinkling of it upon the altar was a focal point of the usual sacrificial ritual (Lev. 1:5; 3:8). Now, half of the blood was apportioned to the people and half to God, the blood sprinkled on the altar binding God, in symbol, and that sprinkled on the people binding them to the terms of the covenant (Heb. 9:18–22; see also on Gen. 15:9–13, 17).

7. *The book of the covenant.* In the Scripture narrative this is the first “book” mentioned as being written. The rest of the “law” was based upon it, and for its further clarification Moses later wrote Deuteronomy. After reading the book “in the audience,” literally “in the ears,” of the people, they again responded as in v. 3, adding significantly the words “and be obedient.” The excitement of the occasion caused the people sincerely, no doubt, to agree to keep God’s laws. Their spirit was willing indeed, but their flesh was weak (see Matt. 26:41). Performance ever lags far behind promise. The people evidently had but little knowledge of their own hearts; they had not learned to distrust themselves. They had, as well, little perception of the spiritual requirements of the law.

It must be remembered that the law had not in itself the power to save, but on the contrary could only condemn. It could neither justify nor sanctify. It made all men sinners and left them under condemnation (Rom. 3:9, 10). It could not restrain either inward or outward corruption, nor could it check sin. It provided commandments written on stone and “judgments” written in a book, but it had no power to write them on the fleshly tables of the heart (Rom. 8:1–4; 2 Cor. 3). The new covenant succeeds because it is fulfilled, not in our own poor human strength, but in the power of faith in the indwelling Christ (Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:6–12; 10:14–16).

8. *Moses took the blood.* It is improbable that Moses sprinkled the blood on each individual of that vast multitude; he must have done so upon the leaders as their representatives. The “elders” and other chief men of each tribe and family were perhaps included in this part of the ceremony.

Behold the blood. Among the nations of antiquity it was a common custom to seal a covenant with blood (see on Gen. 15:9–13, 17). Sometimes the blood was that of a victim, the two parties solemnly affirming that if they broke the covenant, the victim’s fate would be theirs. Sometimes, among the heathen, it was the blood of the two parties themselves, each of whom drank of the other’s blood and thereby contracted a blood relationship. This was presumed to make the breaking of the covenant of life-and-death matter. Moses chose simply to sprinkle the blood upon the altar and the people (see on v. 6), thus bringing the contracting parties together in solemn covenant union. Applied to the people, the blood also symbolized cleansing from sin and consecration to divine service. Thereafter, God claimed them as His special property; they were His (Isa. 43:1). Made free from sin, we too become servants of God (Rom. 6:22; 1 Peter 2:9, 10).

9. *Then went up Moses.* After the ratification of the covenant Moses, Aaron, his sons, and the elders complied with God’s call to “come up” (v. 1). The group ascended part way, certainly not to the summit, which Moses alone had the privilege of visiting (vs. 2, 12). The others were to worship “afar off.”

10. *And they saw.* It is clear here that God is not an impersonal force, but a real person (see also Ex. 33:17–23; 34:5–7; Num. 12:6–8; Isa. 6:1–6; Eze. 1:26–28).

The body of heaven. That is, “clear as the sky itself.” We might think that this exalted honor and privilege would have established these men in enduring faith and obedience toward God. But the tragic story records that Aaron surrendered to the people’s impulsive demand for a golden calf (see Ex. 32:1–6) and that Nadab and Abihu were slain for offering “strange fire” (Num. 3:1–4). An exalted religious experience one day is no protection for the next (Matt. 14:28–33; Luke 13:25–27; 1 Cor. 10:11, 12).

11. Upon the nobles. God did not smite these men with death, pestilence, or blindness, though their unholiness gave them no reason to think they might see God and live (see Gen. 32:30; Ex. 33:20; Judges 6:22, 23; etc.). It was the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead, whose glory they saw upon this occasion (PP 312, 366). A sacrificial meal generally followed a sacrificial offering, and of this the elders perhaps now partook, as near to the divine presence as they might approach. After this experience the entire group returned to the camp.

12. Come up to me. The remainder of the chapter narrates Moses’ 40 days of communion with God. Having given the Ten Commandments and the laws and “judgments” of the “book of the covenant,” God now proceeded to give instructions concerning the erection of the sanctuary, which was to be His dwelling place among the children of Israel (ch. 25:8). If man is left to himself to determine the tangible, material features of religious worship, he may easily err. As a safeguard, a “pattern” was shown Moses of all that was to enter into their worship (Ex. 25:9; Heb. 8:5), including exact details as to the material, size, shape, and construction of each object. These directions are recorded in Ex. 25 to 31. In order that Moses might have ample time to understand and remember the detailed instructions to be given him, he was to “be there,” that is, on “the mount,” for 40 days.

14. Tarry ye. On this occasion Moses was attended by Joshua, who had been instrumental in defeating the Amalekites (ch. 17:8–13). Knowing that he would be absent for some time, Moses felt it necessary to give certain directions to the elders concerning the conduct of affairs during his absence. They were to remain at the foot of Sinai until his return and look to Aaron and Hur, as Moses’ representatives, for counsel.

15. And Moses went up. Arrangements having been made for his absence, Moses ascended with Joshua to the upper part of the mountain, there to await further directions. The “cloud” refers to the one mentioned in ch. 19:16. Though summoned by God, Moses did not enter the divine presence until bidden to do so, six days later. Today, as then, heart preparation and contemplation upon the character and will of God must precede intimate association with Him (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:1). Moses and Joshua no doubt spent this time in meditation and prayer.

17. Devouring fire. The contrast between the covering cloud that embraced Moses (v. 18) in blessed fellowship and communion with His Maker and the “devouring fire” is significant. Those who, like Moses, walk in God’s ways may be assured of protection and security “in the secret place . . . under the shadow of the Almighty” (Ps. 91:1, 2). Those who turn from the paths of righteousness will find, not comfort and assurance, but retributive justice, for God will appear to them as “consuming fire” (Heb. 12:25, 29).

18. Into the midst of the cloud. Leaving Joshua, Moses entered the cloud and remained there “forty days and forty nights” (PP 313). During this entire time he was without food (Deut. 9:9; cf. 1 Kings 19:8; Matt. 4:2).

Moses' experience here was extraordinary. It impresses the lesson that communion with God imparts to the soul its truest strength and sweetest refreshment. Without it the spirit faints (see Luke 18:1), the world steals in upon us, our thoughts and words become "of the earth, earthy" (1 Cor. 15:47), and we neither have spiritual life in ourselves nor can impart it to others. It is in communion with God that gifts are received for men. It was so with Moses; it is so with us. The further fact that Moses was alone with God suggest the value of secret prayer (Matt. 6:6). Even in the whirl and bustle of a great city, solitude with God and silent supplication bring help for meeting the issues of the day.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1-18PP 311-313
- 1, 2 PP 312
- 1-3SR 144
- 1-8FE 506
- 3 PK 293; PP 311
- 4 PP 311, 312
- 5, 6 PP 312
- 7 PK 293; PP 312, 372; 3T 297
- 7, 8 SR 145
- 8 PP 312
- 9 PP 312; 3T 343
- 10 PP 312; 3T 297, 343
- 12 GC vi
- 12-18PP 313
- 16 3T 296
- 17 PP 304, 339

CHAPTER 25

1 *What the Israelites must offer for the making of the tabernacle.* 10 *The form of the ark.* 17 *The mercy seat, with the cherubims.* 23 *The table, with the furniture thereof.* 31 *The candlestick, with the instruments thereof.*

2. Bring me an offering. The divine will had been revealed to Israel in the Decalogue, the laws and "judgments" of the "book of the covenant" had been given to Moses, and the covenant between God and His people had been ratified. But no permanent form of worship had as yet been instituted. Thus far, only an "altar" had been introduced and certain directions given concerning it (ch. 20:24-26), but no complete system had been arranged whereby the worship of the one true God might become an effective means of bringing the people close to Him in fellowship and obedience, and of safeguarding them against the worship of the many gods of the heathen. The people were to have the privilege of participating in the construction of the place that was to be God's dwelling among them.

Giveth it willingly. Literally, "whose heart impels him." God desired only those gifts that came from the heart, not merely from the hands or purse. He would accept only those that were freely and "willingly" given (2 Cor. 9:6, 7). Only he who gives with his heart has his name inscribed in the inventory of God, for he alone gives in the spirit of the church of Macedonia (2 Cor. 8:1-5). That the people responded in this fashion is evident from Ex. 35:21-29 and 36:3-7. So fully did they respond that they had to be "restrained from bringing." Thus, the tabernacle was the result of freewill offerings. A like spirit was

witnessed in David's time when the Temple was built (1 Chron. 29:1–9), and again when the exiles returning from the Babylonian captivity with Zerubbabel rebuilt the Temple (Ezra 2:68, 69; Haggai 1:12–14).

3. Gold. Three metals were to be used in the tabernacle itself and in its articles of furniture. The “brass” was an alloy of copper and tin, and therefore bronze rather than brass. When the Hebrews left Egypt they had “borrowed” treasure from the Egyptians (see on chs. 3:22; 12:35, 36). The people gave to the Lord the best of what they had. God will not accept a “sacrifice” that is “blind,” “lame,” or “sick” (Mal. 1:8). This does not mean that God expects us to give beyond our ability, but rather, to the best of our ability (2 Cor. 8:12).

The widow's “mite” (Mark 12:41–44) is as pleasing to Him as the “alabaster box of very precious ointment” (Matt. 26:6–13), or the “price” of an estate laid at the apostles' feet (Acts 5:1, 2). This giving to God of our best applies not only to possessions but to our capabilities, time, and strength as well. The best of our powers should be His, our warmest affections, our deepest thoughts, our highest aspirations. Many kinds of gifts are required in Christ's service, and there is none so poor or lacking in ability that he cannot do his part. We must not lose the lesson taught by the failure of the man with the but one talent (Matt. 25:14, 15, 24–30). The Israelites laid up their treasures in the heaven by dedicating them to the work and service of God (Matt. 6:19–21). They were not deceived by the “profit motive” of the world, for they did not purpose to “gain” that “in exchange” for the life to come (see Matt. 16:25, 26).

5. Badgers' skins. The Hebrew word here rendered “badger” seems to be a loan word from Egyptian, a term for a kind of leather from unspecified animals; it is also held to be related to an Arabic word for “seal,” particularly the dugong, or sea cow (PP 347). This aquatic herbivorous animal, which is 10 to 12 ft. long, has a round head, breasts for suckling its young, and a divided tail. It is often found among the coral rocks of the Red Sea. It is supposed that the dugong gave rise to the legendary mermaid. The “badger” skins formed the outer covering of the tabernacle.

Shittim wood. That is, acacia wood. It is hard, durable, and close-grained, and thus most suitable for cabinet work.

8. Make me a sanctuary. Though the Hebrews knew, as we know, that the great God could not possibly “dwell” in any building made by men (1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chron. 2:6; Isa. 66:1; Jer. 23:23, 24), it did not seem appropriate that there should be worship without a temple. Furthermore, the sanctuary provided a visible center for the worship of the one true God, and was thus a bulwark against the worship of the many gods of the heathen. It brought God near to His people and made His presence among them real. This too was a protection against idolatry (Ex. 29:43, 45; (Num. 35:34). Inasmuch as at that time the Israelites were a nomadic, a wandering people, the sanctuary was to be a tent that could easily be dismantled and moved from place to place. It is significant that the Hebrew word for “sanctuary” is never applied to a heathen temple.

That I may dwell. In a spiritual sense, God has ever sought an abode with men and cannot “rest” until this has been accorded Him (Ps. 132:13–16), first in the hearts of His people individually (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19) and then in the midst of any company who meet to worship Him (Matt. 18:20). The system centering in the earthly tabernacle pointed forward to Christ, who later “dwelt,” literally “tabernacled,” among men (John 1:14).

The Hebrew word *shakan*, “dwell,” means to be a permanent resident in a community. It is closely related to the word *Shekinah*, used of the manifestation of divine glory that took up its abode above the mercy seat (PP 349). The Shekinah was the symbol of the divine presence, in which God promised to “dwell among them” (see Ex. 25:22).

9. After the pattern. This shows that though the workmanship was man’s the plan was God’s. God has ever counted upon human agencies to cooperate in the building of His house. In this work every individual may have the satisfaction of taking part.

In the mount Moses saw “a miniature representation” of the heavenly sanctuary (PP 343; Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5), the “true tabernacle” (Heb. 8:2). The one on earth is said to be a “pattern” of “heavenly things” (Heb. 9:23, 24) because it was made “according to the pattern” shown to Moses (Heb. 8:5). It was a “copy” of the “great original” in heaven (GC 414). In vision John was ushered into the heavenly sanctuary (Rev. 15:5), where he saw the ark (Rev. 11:19), the altar of incense (Rev. 8:3–5), and possibly the candlestick (Rev. 1:12; 11:4). There is, thus, “indisputable proof of the existence of a sanctuary in heaven,” where the Ruler of the universe sits enthroned (GC 415) and where Christ ministers as our great high priest (Heb. 8:1, 2).

It is futile, however, to speculate as to the dimensions, exact appearance, or precise arrangement of the heavenly sanctuary, for “no earthly structure could represent its vastness and its glory” (PP 357). Man is “in the image of God” (Gen. 1:27), yet only Christ is “the express image of his person” (Heb. 1:3). Anything finite can at best but dimly resemble that which is infinite. Moses was shown not the heavenly sanctuary itself, but a representation of it. The earthly sanctuary was patterned after that in heaven to the extent that it was a vivid representation of the various aspects of Christ’s ministry on behalf of fallen man (PP 357). We should focus our attention on what He is doing for us there, as Paul does in Hebrews (Heb. 3:1; 10:12, 19–22; etc.).

The tabernacle in heaven, like that on earth, was set up to deal with sin. Christ “entered upon His mediatorial work” after His resurrection and prior to His ascension 40 days later (DA 819). He was prepared to take up His priestly ministry by virtue of having obtained redemption for us through His blood (Heb. 9:12).

Solomon knew that even his Temple, though it excelled the wilderness tabernacle in size and beauty, could not contain God (1 Kings 8:27). Yet God owned it as His house (Isa. 56:7), as He later did Herod’s Temple (Matt. 21:31). And He who dwells “in the high and holy place” will take up His abode “with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit” (Isa. 57:15).

10. An ark. The Hebrew word thus translated may be from a root meaning “to collect,” “to gather.” If so, an “ark” was a chest into which things might be collected for safekeeping. A related Assyrian word, *arânu*, “box,” is derived from the root *aramu*, “to cover.”

A cubit. The Hebrews, like the Egyptians, made use of both a long and a short cubit. Though the length of the Hebrew cubit is a matter of conjecture, it is known that the common Egyptian cubit was 17.7 in. and the royal cubit 20.6 in. Both must have been known to the Hebrews, who built Egyptian cities. Since in Hezekiah’s time the Hebrews had a cubit of about 17.5 in. (see p. 165), approximately the common Egyptian cubit, it can be assumed that this measure was used to build the tabernacle. Accordingly, the ark

would be about 3 ft. 73/4 in. (1.11 m.) in length and 2 ft. 21/4 in. (0.67 m.) in breadth and height.

12. The four corners. Literally, “its four feet.” The rings were not attached at the upper “corners,” but to the four “feet,” or “bases” (cf. v. 22). The “staves,” or “poles,” inserted through these rings (v. 13) were to rest upon the shoulders of the men who carried the ark during the time of Israel’s wanderings. These “staves” were to remain in place (v. 15) to avoid the need for touching any part of the ark when it was set down or taken up. Since these staves were not part of the ark itself, no sacrilege would be committed in touching or handling them (see 2 Sam. 6:6, 7).

16. The testimony. That is, the two tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments (chs. 30:6; 31:18; 32:15, 16). The main purpose of the ark was to serve as a repository for the holy law of God. Because the tables of stone were a transcript of the character and will of God, and were, furthermore, inscribed by God’s own hand, they were honored as the most sacred object in the sanctuary. The latter was therefore called the “tabernacle of testimony” (Ex. 38:21; Num. 9:15; etc.). The law was also known as “the covenant” (Deut. 4:12, 13; 9:9–15), and the ark was therefore commonly called the “ark of the covenant” (Deut. 31:26; Heb. 9:4; etc.).

17. A mercy seat. The word thus translated is from a root meaning “to cover,” that is, “to pardon” sin. It represented divine mercy. Significantly, it was of “pure gold,” implying that mercy is the most precious of God’s attributes. It was placed over the law, inasmuch as mercy transcends justice (Ps. 85:10; 89:14). The ark with its justice and the mercy seat with its mercy were both needed to reveal the full character of God’s dealings with men. Mercy without justice is weak sentimentality, subversive of all moral order. On the other hand, justice without mercy is moral severity, theoretically without a flaw, but revolting to both God and man.

The ark and the mercy seat constituted the very heart of the sanctuary. Above the mercy seat was the Shekinah, the symbol of the divine presence. The tables of the law within the ark testified to the fact that God’s kingdom is founded on an immutable standard of righteousness (Ps. 97:2), which even divine grace must respect. Grace cannot be dispensed on terms which “make void the law” (Rom. 3:31). When sin is pardoned, the law’s claim against the sinner must also be satisfied. The very purpose of the gospel is to secure for the sinner the forgiveness of his sins, by faith in a means that does not “make void the law,” but “establishes” it. While the tables within the ark testified against the people, the mercy seat pointed to a way in which the claims of the law could be met and the sinner saved from death, the penalty of the law. On the basis of law alone there can be no reunion between God and man, since sin separates us from Him (Isa. 59:1, 2). The blood-sprinkled mercy seat must intervene, for it is only on the ground of Christ’s mediation on our behalf that we can draw near to God (Heb. 7:25).

18. Cherubims. More accurately, “cherubim,” the Hebrew plural for “cherub.” The derivation of the word is uncertain. The cherubim were attached to the mercy seat, one at either end (see Gen. 3:24). One wing of each angel was stretched forth on high, and the other was folded over his body (see Eze. 1:11) in token of reverence and humility. The position of the cherubim with their faces turned toward each other and directed downward toward the ark, represented the reverence with which the heavenly host regard the law of God, and their interest in the plan of redemption.

23. A table of shittim wood. Leaving the holy of holies, Moses now describes the furniture of the holy place. The first article mentioned is the table of “shewbread,” or “the bread of the Presence” (RSV). Mark calls this, the “shewbread” (Mark 2:26), literally, “the bread of the presentation,” that is, the bread presented to God. Paul uses the same Greek word in Heb. 9:2. This table was about 2 ft. 11 in. long, 1 ft. 5 1/2 in. broad, and 2 ft. 2 1/4 in. high (88.9 by 44.5 by 66.7 cm.; see on Ex. 25:10). As one entered the tabernacle, it would be at the right, or on the north (ch. 40:22).

24. A crown of gold round about. This was a border, or molding, around the top to prevent things from falling off. Josephus mentions that the “four rings” (v. 26) were inserted in the feet of the table, and through them went the “staves” for carrying it (*Antiquities* iii. 6. 6).

29. The dishes. Probably the plates on which the loaves of bread were placed. The “spoons” were the cups, or ports, in which the incense was burned, as may be seen in the bas-relief of the table on the Arch of Titus, erected in Rome to commemorate the capture of Jerusalem A.D. 70. the “covers,” literally, “flagons” or “pitchers,” and the “bowls” were used for the drink offerings, which accompanied the meat offerings (Lev. 23:13, 18, 37; etc.).

To cover. Literally, “to pour out.”

30. Set upon the table. The “shewbread,” or “bread of the Presence,” consisted of 12 loaves, or cakes, which were replaced each Sabbath. The loaves that were removed, being considered holy, were eaten by the priests in the “holy place” (Lev. 24:5–9). These 12 loaves constituted a perpetual thank offering to God from the 12 tribes, for the blessings of life they received from Him daily. In a higher sense, this bread pointed to the spiritual bread, Jesus Christ.

31. A candlestick. Preferably, a “lampstand.” As shown upon the Arch of Titus and confirmed by Josephus (*Antiquities* iii. 6. 7) the “candlestick” consisted of an upright shaft, from each side of which three branches extended upward, in pairs (v. 35), to the same level. Its dimensions are not given, but it was made of solid gold. Its branches were decorated with almond-shaped “bowls,” or cups (v. 33), with “knops,” that is knobs or capitals, resembling pomegranates, according to some Bible scholars, and with “flowers.” One by one the lamps of the “candlestick” were trimmed every evening at sunset, and again in the morning (Ex. 27:20, 21; 30:7, 8; Lev. 24:3, 4). They were never all extinguished at any time (PP 348). As the priest entered the first apartment of the tabernacle the candlestick would be on his left, to the south (Ex. 40:24).

38. The tongs. These were either pincers or snuffers, used to trim the wicks of the lamps. The “snuffdishes” were receptacles for receiving the part of the wicks removed by the “tongs.”

39. A talent of pure gold. Equivalent in weight to 75.38 lb. avoirdupois (34.19 kg.). This would be 108.16 cu. in. (1772.4 cu. cm.) and would make a cube a little more than 4 3/4 in. (1756.52 cu. cm.) on a side. In one sense the “candlestick” represented the people of God as the moral and spiritual light of the world, individually (Matt. 5:14–16; Phil. 2:15) and as a church (Rev. 1:12, 20). It represented also the power of the Holy Spirit to illumine the church (Zech. 4:2–6; Rev. 4:5). In the highest sense, however, as previously stated, it points to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (John 9:5), who is the light of the world (John 1:4; 8:12; 12:46), and imparts to the soul “every good gift and every perfect gift” which comes from the “Father of lights” (James 1:17).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 2 CS 203; PK 61; PP 343; 4T 78
8 DA 23; Ed 35; GC 411, 413, 417; PK 61; PP 313, 343; 4T 78
9 GC 413; SR 153
10, 11 GC 412; SR 153, 183
10-15PP 348
16 PP 349; SR 153, 183
16-21PP 348
17, 18, 20 SR 15
21 GC 412
22 FE 252; PP 349
23-25PP 348
25 SP 153
30 GC 412; PP 354
31 GC 412
31-37PP 348
37 GC 412
40 AA 564; CT 60; Ed 35, 258; GC 413; PP 343, 356; SR 153; 5T 549

CHAPTER 26

1 *The ten curtains of the tabernacle.* 7 *The eleven curtains of goats' hair.* 14 *The covering of rams' skins.* 15 *The boards of the tabernacle, with their sockets and bars.* 31 *The veil for the ark.* 36 *The hanging for the door.*

1. The tabernacle. From *mishkan*, a “dwelling,” a word derived from *shakan*, “to dwell.” It is related *Shekinah*, the glorious presence of God (see on Ex. 25:8 and Gen. 3:24) in the holy of holies (Ex. 25:22). The word “tabernacle” might be more accurately rendered today as “tent” or “dwelling.”

The sacred furniture of the “tabernacle” has been described, with the exception of the altar of incense. That is considered in ch. 30:1–10. Chapter 26 is concerned with directions for making the sacred “tabernacle” itself. This had two main parts:

a. A quadrangular enclosure 30 cubits long by 10 cubits wide and 10 high (43 ft. 9 in. by 14 ft. 7 in. (13.34 by 4.45 by 4.45 m.; see on ch. 25:10) open at one end. The three sides were made of acacia boards covered with gold.

b. A tent of goats' hair, probably flat on top, was stretched over the tabernacle. The word “tent” is wrongly translated as “covering” in v. 7, but appears correctly elsewhere in the chapter (vs. 11-14, 36). An outer covering of “rams' skins dyed red,” or tanned rams' skins, and “badgers' skins” (see on ch. 25:5), over the tent of goats' hair.

There were secondary parts to the structure, such as:

a. The “sockets,” or bases, which were to hold and support the upright boards that enclosed the tabernacle.

b. The “bars” to be used to hold these boards together.

c. The “vail,” or curtain, stretched on pillars from one side of the tabernacle to the other, thus separating it into two apartments. The front apartment, the “holy place,” or “first tabernacle,” was twice as long as the “most holy place” (Ex. 26:15-25, 33; see 1 Kings 6:16–20; Heb. 9:2–7), or 20 cubits long and 10 cubits wide (29 ft. 2 in. by 14 ft. 7

in., or 8.89 by 4.46 m.). The “most holy place,” or “the holiest of all” (Heb. 9:3), was 10 cubits in length and 10 in width (14 ft. 7 in., or 4.45 m. square).

d. A “hanging,” or curtain, covered the front, open end of the tabernacle where there were no boards.

Ten curtains. Fastened together as “breadths,” these formed the innermost of the four “coverings” (Ex. 26:7, 14), and thus the ceiling of the two apartments. These curtains were two cubits shorter than the outer curtains (v. 7), making the inner covering one cubit shorter on each covering than the outer covering.

Cherubims. Since the materials Aholiab used in his embroidery were identical with those here named, it is reasonable to think that these “cherubim” were embroidered in the “curtains” (chs. 35:35; 38:23). These cherubim represented the host of angels that attend the Lord and do His bidding (Ps. 103:20, 21; see on Gen. 3:24).

2. The length. Each curtain was 40 ft. 10 in. long and 5 ft. 10 in. (12.45 by 1.78 m.) wide. From the outside there was nothing particularly attractive about the tabernacle. But within—it was a thing of great beauty, with its gold, the blue, purple, and scarlet “curtains,” and the cherubim embroidered in them.

7. Curtains of goats’ hair. The Arabs still use goats’ hair in weaving their tents. It was goats’ hair that gave the sanctuary its strength and protected it in wet and stormy weather. These “curtains” were two cubits longer than the inner, linen curtains, or 43 ft. 10 in. (13.34 m.) long. Laid over the flat of the tabernacle, they would reach to the top of the silver “sockets” or bases on either side (see v. 19). There would be ample covering for the back wall of the tabernacle, and enough to protect the upper portion of the front of the tabernacle as well.

14. Rams’ skins. This “covering” was to go over the “curtains of goats’ hair” to ensure further protection from the weather. No size is mentioned, but it must have been sufficient for covering the goats’ hair curtains (v. 7).

Badgers’ skins. For the Hebrew word see on ch. 25:5.

15. Make boards. These were 14 ft. 7 in. long 2 ft. 2 in. wide (4.45 by 0.66 m.; v. 16). They were held erect by placing the two “tenons” (v. 17) of each board into two silver “sockets,” or bases. The boards were overlaid with gold (v. 29).

19. Forty sockets. These weighed talent, or 75 lb. 6 oz. (34.2 kg.), apiece (ch. 38:27). Each would form a cube a little less than 5.8 in. (14.7 cm.) on a side. The “sockets” were laid side by side upon the ground, forming a continuous foundation for the board walls. Forty more “sockets” were required to the north wall (ch. 26:21), 16 for the west wall, and 4 for the pillars between the 2 apartments, or 100 “sockets” in all (ch. 38:27). That the tabernacle was raised from the ground by this silver foundation typifies, according to some commentators, that the church is to be separate from the world. Here it has no permanent resting place, but looks forward in faith to the “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). Here we have “no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Heb. 13:14).

26. Bars. To hold the boards in place and for bracing the walls, “five bars” were to be made for each side and for the west end, four of which were to be passed through “rings” fastened to the boards. The fifth or middle “bar” in each wall was to pass through the center of the boards (see v. 28). It is probable that the four visible bars on each wall were on the outside of the tabernacle.

31. A veil. This was to be of the same material and workmanship as the “ten curtains” that formed the inner covering for the ceiling and walls of the tabernacle (v. 1), and like it, to have figures of cherubim embroidered into it in silver and gold thread (PP 345).

32. Four pillars. The “veil” (v. 31) was to hang “upon four pillars.” The “hanging for the door of the tent” was suspended from “five pillars” (vs. 36, 37). The inner veil did not extend all the way to the ceiling, but permitted the glory of God manifested above the mercy seat to be partially visible from the holy place (PP 353). The four pillars had “hooks” of gold, and rested upon “four sockets [bases] of silver,” in the same way as the boards in the walls (vs. 15, 19).

33. Taches. The “taches” were the buckles, or clasps, that held the veil up. The high priest alone went within the veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place, and that but once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16; Heb. 9:7). Before the veil, or in the holy place, the various parts of the “daily” service were conducted.

36. An hanging. This “hanging,” or screen, covered the eastern, or front, end of the tabernacle. Some Bible scholars believe it was possible to raise or lower this screen, as might be desired.

37. Five pillars. There is some difference of opinion as to whether the tabernacle had a flat or a gable roof. The weight of evidence leads to the conclusion that it was probably flat:

1. The outside curtains (v. 8) were 30 cubits long, the exact length required to provide a flat roof and to extend down either side as a covering for the gold-plated board walls. A gable roof would increase the length of covering required for the roof and correspondingly decrease the remaining length available for covering the sides. More or less of the lower portion of the gold-plated boards would thus be left exposed. But gold was otherwise reserved for the interior of the structure. The fact that the inner curtain was two cubits shorter than the outer three which covered it implies that the outer curtains were designed to protect it, and that they probably reached nearly to the ground.

2. No ridgepole is mentioned, nor is the use of one implied. Furthermore, there is nothing to indicate that the five “pillars” varied in length.

3. No mention is made of any means of covering triangular gable ends, and it would be highly improbable that the ends were left open. Incidentally, the curtain which separated the holy place from the most holy did not extend to the top of the building (PP 353), so that light from the Shekinah might be partially visible above it from the first apartment of the sanctuary.

4. The tabernacle was a temporary, portable structure designed for use during the wilderness wanderings, until the erection of a more permanent building in the Promised Land. The insignificant amount of rainfall in the arid, wilderness would not make a flat roof an inconvenience.

Thus, while there is no positive evidence, it appears probable that the roof was flat. Sketches of the tabernacle showing a gable roof are based on the artist’s mental picture of it.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-37PP 347, 348

1 GC 412; PP 347; SR 154

7, 14 GC 412; PP 347

31, 33 PP 347; SR 154

CHAPTER 27

1 *The altar of burnt offering, with the vessels thereof.* 9 *The court of the tabernacle inclosed with hangings and pillars.* 18 *The measure of the court.* 20 *The oil for the lamp.*

1. An altar. Hebrew, “the altar.” It was about 7 ft. 4 in. (2.22 m.) square by 4 ft. 5 in. (1.33 m.) high. Ancient temples were usually surrounded by open areas where sacrifices were offered and where the smoke might readily escape. As in the account of the tabernacle itself the furniture was first described, so the altar is now described before the court. It was more an altar frame than an altar (v. 8). Ancient altars were generally either square, as here (see 2 Chron. 4:1), or round.

The altar of burnt offering, with its shed blood, represents the great gospel truth of atonement for sin through the vicarious sacrifice of Christ (Isa. 53:4-7, 10; Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:5-7; Heb. 13:10-12; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Rev. 5:9). The very position of this altar, near the door of the court, indicates that the sinner’s first need is to have his sins washed away by the blood of Christ (see Heb. 9:13, 14; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 7:14), and that until this is done he must not presume to worship God or even enter into His presence (Heb. 9:22). The altar witnessed to man’s guilt and his need of atonement and reconciliation, and then assured him that these had been made (John 1:29; Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19; Col. 1:20).

2. His horns. That is, “its horns.” These projected from the four upper corners of the altar. The words “be of the same” indicate that the horns were part of the altar itself, not additions to it. To these horns the priest touched his finger, dipped in the blood of the sin offering (Ex. 29:12; Lev. 8:15; 9:9; 16:18). Offerings awaiting sacrifice were sometimes bound to them (Ps. 118:27). Criminals seeking sanctuary sometimes clung to them (1 Kings 1:50, 51; 2:28). In his graphic picture of the second advent of our crucified Lord, the prophet Habakkuk (ch. 3:4) saw “horns coming out of his hand”; “there,” in the prints of the nails in Christ’s hand, “was the hiding of his power.”

The word *qeren*, “horn,” originally designated the horn of an animal (Deut. 33:17). Inasmuch as an animal having horns generally uses them for attacking other animals, horns came to be symbolic of strength or power (1 Sam. 2:1, 10; Ps. 75:10; 112:9; etc.). In this sense David referred to God as “the horn of my salvation” (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; Luke 1:69). The word “horn” is also symbolic of the strength and power of God’s chosen people (Ps. 148:14; Eze. 29:21; etc.). Thus a “horn” became symbolic of national power, and is commonly used by the prophets in this sense (Jer. 48:25; Dan. 8:3; 7:11; Rev. 12:3; etc.).

3. His pans. The “shovels” were for removing the ashes from the altar and placing them in the “pans.” The “basons” were vessels that received the blood of the sacrifices, and from which it was poured upon the altar. The “fleshhooks” were three-pronged forks (1 Sam. 2:13), used to arrange the various pieces into which the sacrifice was cut upon the altar. The “firepans” were for carrying burning embers from the altar.

⁴Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ex 21:13). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Brass. That is, bronze, an alloy of copper and tin. Brass made of copper and zinc was unknown.

4. Grate. A heavy bronze grate was fitted into the altar halfway between the base and the top (v. 5). At the four corners of the bronze grate were fastened rings, through which bronze-plated poles were placed for carrying the altar (vs. 6, 7).

5. The compass. Probably a ledge about the top of the altar to assist the priests in placing offerings on it.

9. The court. The court was to be enclosed on the south and north sides with “hangings,” or curtains, of linen. The court was about 146 ft. (44.45 m.) in length.

12. The west side. The curtain on this side of the court was half as long, or about 73 ft. (22.23 m.). The court was thus rectangular in shape.

16. The grate of the court. One the east side, in the center, was a “hanging,” or screen, about 29 ft. 4 in. (8 m.) long. On either side of this “gate” was a “hanging” about 21 ft. 10 in. (6.65 m.) in length, and of the same material as the “vail” and the “hanging for the door of the tent” (ch. 26:33, 36).

17. All the pillars. Altogether 60 “pillars” were used to support the “hangings” which enclosed the court, or one about every 7 ft. 4 in. (3.46 m.). The “pillars” were probably of acacia wood plated with brass and were set in “sockets” or bases of brass (v. 10). The weight of these “sockets” is not given, but each must have been somewhat less than a talent (see ch. 38:29–31).

18. The height. The height of the “hangings” around the court was 5 cubits, or about 7 ft. 4 in. (3.46 m.). This was half the height of the tabernacle itself, which was thus plainly visible from outside the court (PP 347). Only the priests and Levites could move about freely in the court, which represented the first stage in man’s progress from the world to God. The atoning sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering and the cleansing of the laver (Ex. 30:18) precede communion with God.

19. The vessels. There must have been many vessels used in connection with the sanctuary service, among them being the laver (ch. 30:18). The “pins” were the pegs, or tent pins, which kept the tabernacle coverings taut and the “pillars,” or posts, in place. These minor accessories played their important part in the erection of the tabernacle. They did not rank, perhaps, with the furniture in the two apartments of the tabernacle and with the altar of burnt offering; nevertheless, without them the ministrations of the priests would have failed. They were like the indispensable “helps” that God has ever placed “in the church” (1 Cor. 12:28).

20. Pure oil olive. This was prepared from unripe fruit “beaten,” or pounded in a mortar rather than crushed in a mill. As a result, it was clear and colorless and burned brightly, with little smoke.

To burn always. The seven lamps were never all extinguished at one time, but burned continuously day and night (PP 348) except when the tabernacle was in transit from one campsite to another. The lamps were tended morning and evening (ch. 30:7, 8).

21. Tabernacle of the congregation. Literally, “the tent of meeting” (RSV). It was here that God met with Moses (ch. 25:22) and that the people gathered to meet with God (Ex. 29:42; Num. 10:3).

Before the testimony. That is, before the ark that held the “testimony,” or tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments (Ex. 31:18; 32:15, 16).

From evening to morning. Special care was to be taken that the lamps should not go out at night. Inasmuch as the charge, “It shall be a statute for ever,” does not occur often in Exodus, its use must indicate items of special importance. The “eternal light” (see Lev. 24:2) was a perpetual reminder of Him in whom there is “no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Thus it should be with the church, which is ever to be “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). Its light should never go out (see John 3:19–21). The “eternal light” in the sanctuary represented the “true light,” “the light of men” (John 1:4–9; DA 464). It pointed also to the Holy Scriptures, which are a lamp unto our feet (Ps. 119:105; Isa. 40:8). The olive oil is a type of the Holy Spirit, the source and means of spiritual illumination (Zech. 4:2–6; Acts 2:1–4).

It was God’s purpose that Israel should be a light to the nations about them (COL 286). The “advantage” the Jews had was “chiefly” that “unto them were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:1, 2)—the prophetic word that foretold the coming of the living Word, the “true Light” that illumines “every man that cometh into the world” (Zech. 4:1–4; John 1:9; DA 463).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-19PP 347

20 9T 248

CHAPTER 28

1 *Aaron and his sons are set apart for the priest’s office.* 2 *Holy garments are appointed.* 6 *The ephod.* 15 *The breastplate with twelve precious stones.* 30 *The Urim and Thummim.* 31 *The robe of the ephod, with pomegranates and bells.* 36 *The plate of the mitre.* 39 *The embroidered coat.* 40 *The garments for Aaron’s sons.*

1. *Take thou unto thee.* Literally, “cause to draw near to thee.” Heretofore Moses had been the one and only medium of communication between God and the people. To Aaron his brother and to his brother’s sons were now to be given certain tasks that had been his. As the meekest of men (Num. 12:3) Moses willingly surrendered his prerogatives, thus evincing a noble and godlike character (Lev. 8:1–30; cf. John 3:30). He realized that with the giving of the law there arose the need for a separate priesthood; the establishment of the tabernacle called for it. With the oral proclamation of God’s law came also an increased consciousness of sin (Rom. 3:20; 7:9). This called for a priesthood to mediate between sinners and the holy God (see Heb. 2:17; 5:1–3), to serve as a link between the holy and the unholy. Also, the covenant made Israel “a kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:5, 6), and this priestly calling of the nation was to be expressed officially by the house of Aaron as the people’s representatives (Num. 3:12; 8:17, 18). God’s desire in the erection of the tabernacle was that He might “dwell among” His people (Ex. 25:8), yet only those consecrated as priests to represent the people might approach the sacred presence within the sanctuary. Thus, when the high priest interceded with God on behalf of the people, he did so in their name.

Nadab and Abihu are coupled together, as are also Eleazar and Ithamar. This separation of the two pairs of brothers is probably due to the sin and early death of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1, 2). Nothing is known of Ithamar personally after the death of his older brothers (Lev 10:6, 12). Eleazar became high priest (Num. 34:17; Joshua 14:1). The priestly family founded by Ithamar included Eli (1 Sam. 1:9; cf. 1 Kings 2:27 and 1 Chron. 24:3, 6) and continued after the captivity (Ezra 8:2).

2. Holy garments. Leaving the description of the inanimate things of the tabernacle, we now come to the men who were to officiate therein. Having chosen those who were to be His priests, God proceeds to clothe them with the special garments that were to be their insignia of office.

For glory. The garments were to be “for glory,” in order to elevate the priestly office in the eyes of the people, so that they would regard the priestly ministrations with greater reverence. This priestly apparel would also serve to distinguish the priests as a class by themselves, in a certain sense above the rest of the nation. Also, the garments were to the priests themselves a constant reminder of their holy station, and of its demand for consecrated living. The garments helped to impress them that they were “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1).

For beauty. The holy garments were “for beauty,” to harmonize with the richness and splendor of the tabernacle in which the priests were to minister, and to emphasize the “beauty of holiness” (1 Chron. 16:29; Ps. 29:2; 96:9). The beauties of nature indicate that the Creator is a lover of beauty, and that He looks with favor upon beauty in the worship we give to Him. The garments of the high priests were not only different from those of the common priests, but much more attractive. Gold was worked into their very texture, precious stones made them glitter. Everything was done to make them lovely and impressive. The priests were to wear their sacred garments when they served in the sanctuary, but never at other times (see Ex. 35:19; Lev. 16:4, 23, 24; Eze. 42:14; 44:19). These garments were representative of the character of God, which He sought to have reproduced in the hearts and lives of His people (see Isa. 64:6; 61:10; Zech. 3:3, 4; Matt. 22:11; Rev. 19:8). The fact that the colors and materials of the high priest’s garments were the same as those used for the veil and entrance curtain of the tabernacle suggests the lesson that the character of the worshipers, as represented by the high priest, must harmonize with the character of the sanctuary (see Matt. 5:48; 22:11–13; Eph. 1:3, 4; 2:6; Col. 3:1, 2; James 1:27; 1 John 2:15–17).

3. Wise hearted. “An able mind” (RSV). In contrast with the modern figurative conception of the heart as the seat of the affections and emotions, the Jews thought of it as the seat of wisdom (Ex. 31:6; 35:10, 25; Job 9:4; Prov. 11:29; etc.).

To consecrate him. Aaron was to be invested in these “garments,” as a part of the ceremony of his consecration (Ex. 29:5–9; Lev. 8:7–13). The garments were also for Aaron’s “sons” as his successors in the office of high priest.

5. Take gold. Except for the gold, these materials are the same as those used for the veil that separated the most holy from the holy place (ch. 26:31), the ten interior curtains (ch. 26:1), and the “hanging” at the door of the tabernacle (ch. 26:36).

6. The ephod of gold. The ephod was considered the most sacred part of the priestly vestments, and became the emblem of the priestly office (1 Sam. 2:18, 28; 14:3; 22:18). This was to hold the “breastplate,” the two onyx stones, and the Urim and the Thummim (Ex. 28:9, 30). It was a vest, or waistcoat, in two parts, one to cover the chest and the other the back, joined together by two “shoulder pieces” (v. 7) and at the waist by a band called “the curious [“skilfully woven,” RSV] girdle of the ephod” (v. 8), which was of one piece with the ephod. It passed around the body, holding the two parts of the ephod in place. The “gold” was in the shape of very fine thread or wire, sewn into the fabric after it had been woven, as was commonly done in Egypt (see ch. 39:3). “Cunning work” (v. 6) refers to the work of ingenious and artistic craftsmen. The Israelites may have

carried small hand looms with them from Egypt. The blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, gold, and the gems of the ephod gave it a variety and a beauty which made it the most glorious of all the priestly vestments. Variety has a charm of its own, and is a characteristic of the church in which “there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:4).

9. Two onyx stones. There has been some difference of opinion as to what stones are meant by the word translated “onyx.” According to the LXX, they were “emeralds.” Josephus calls them “sardonyx,” the best variety of onyx (*Antiquities* iii. 7. 5). It is probable that “onyx,” an excellent stone for engraving, was the stone designated. In Egypt the royal signet ring would have on its face the owner’s name.

13. Ouches. That is, settings of open, or filigree, work, which were quite common in Egyptian ornaments. These were probably sewn to the ephod. The “two chains” (v. 14), or cords of twisted gold wire, were fastened to them. “Wreathen work” was twisted or braided. These stones served the double purpose of reminding the high priest that he bore upon his shoulders the solemn and sacred responsibility of being the intercessor between the 12 tribes and God, and of reminding God, as it were, that the high priest represented the tribes and officiated for them.

15. The breastplate of judgment. Considerable space is devoted to a detailed description of this part of the high priest’s official garb (vs. 15–30), indicating its intricate form and significance. The chief purpose of the ephod was to hold the breastplate, which was attached to it after it had been put on, and formed its principal ornament. The word translated “breastplate” means “ornament.” This must have been the most striking and brilliant part of the high priest’s attire. It was called “the breastplate of judgment [decision],” because it served primarily for bearing the “Urim and the Thummim” (v. 30), whereby God was consulted and whereby He signified His will to the people. The materials of the breastplate were the same as for the ephod (v. 6).

16. Doubled. Two thickness would give additional strength to the breastplate for carrying the 12 heavy gems. A “span” was half a cubit, or about 10¹/₃ in.

21. Names of the children of Israel. That is, according to the names of the children of Israel, meaning the 12 tribes. “With his name” should read “according to its name.” Each stone would have on it the name of one of the 12 tribes. These names engraved on the 12 jewels aptly illustrate the value of men and women in the sight of our heavenly Father. God regards His people as precious gems in the jewel box of His love (Mal. 3:17). He thinks of His church as a bride adorned “with her jewels” (Isa. 61:10). She is His “peculiar treasure” (Ex. 19:5).

In the Revelation the “twelve gates” and the “twelve foundations” of the wall of the New Jerusalem are precious stones, on which are “the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel” and “the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” respectively (Rev. 21:12, 14). The fact that each of the 12 tribes was represented by a gem of its own, different from the others, suggests that every individual Christian has his own distinct personality, his own beauty in Heaven’s sight. God does not expect us to be alike. He honors us for what we are and what we can do for Him. There may be differences in experience and ability, “diversities of gifts,” but there is ever manifest “the same Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:4–7). Each name on a separate jewel also suggests that God thinks of His people as distinct individuals, known, loved, and cared for by Him (Ps. 87:5, 6; Isa. 57:15; Matt. 25:40, 45; Luke 15:3–10).

The attention given in this chapter to minute details speaks encouragement to those who may feel that they are not doing any great work for God. Without the delicate beauty of detail there would be no appropriate background for the more conspicuous and seemingly more important things. Without the former the latter would not have been able to function. Let us not despise the “small things” (Zech. 4:10), the small services rendered in love. Though it be but a “cup of cold water” to “one of these little ones,” we “shall in no wise lose” our “reward” (Matt. 10:42).

22. Chains. These were to be made in the same way as the “two chains” of v. 14, that is, of gold wire twisted tightly like a rope.

23. Two rings of gold. These were for fastening the breastplate to the ephod. There were to be four rings, one in each upper corner (v. 23) and one behind each lower corner (v. 26). A cord of twisted gold wire was passed through each of the two upper rings and fastened to the “two ouches,” or filigree settings, of the shoulder stones (v. 25; cf. vs. 11–14). Through each of the two lower rings a blue lace or ribbon was passed, which was tied to two rings placed for that purpose on the front of the ephod, “above the curious girdle” (vs. 26–28). Thus secured at its four corners the breastplate could not be “loosed from the ephod” (v. 28).

29. Upon his heart. Aaron, like the high priests who succeeded him, was to wear the names of the children of Israel not only upon his shoulders (v. 12) but also “upon his heart.” Thus he presented them continually before the Lord upon his shoulders to show that he carried a solemn responsibility for them, and upon his heart to indicate his love and affection for them. Whenever he went into the tabernacle for the people, his heart was bowed before the Lord in the consciousness of their sin and need. Christ, our High Priest in the sanctuary in heaven (Heb. 3:1; 8:1, 2), has accepted responsibility for our salvation, for the “government” of the kingdom of grace is “upon his shoulder” (Isa. 9:6). He also bears us on His heart (see Gal. 2:20), for in all our “affliction” He is “afflicted,” and He is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Isa. 63:8, 9; Heb. 2:14–18; 4:14–16).

For a memorial. The high priest bore the names of Israel “continually,” that they might ever be remembered before God. He was never to forget his position and responsibility as their representative. In the same way Christ “ever liveth to make intercession” for us (Heb. 7:25), having “graven” us upon the palms of His “hands” (Isa. 49:16).

30. The Urim and the Thummim. These words mean, respectively, “light” and “perfection.” Though he does not specifically refer to the Urim and the Thummim by name, Josephus does speak of the “shining” of the stones on the breastplate of the high priest, which “shining,” he says, ceased two centuries previously, owing to the prevailing iniquity (*Antiquities* iii. 8. 9). Through these two stones God made known His will. A halo of light encircling the Urim was a token of the divine approval on matters brought before Him, and a cloud shadowing the Thummim was evidence of disapproval (PP 351). For instances of this see 1 Sam. 23:9–12; 28:6; 30:7, 8. The breastplate was to the garments of the high priest what the mercy seat was to the sanctuary itself. On both, God revealed His glory and made known His will (cf. Ex. 25:22; Ps. 80:1; Isa. 37:16).

31. The robe. This was to be worn by the high priest underneath the ephod. It was woven without a seam (ch. 39:22; PP 351; DA 746). Against the background of this blue robe the variegated colors of the breastplate and the ephod must have stood forth in

striking contrast. This robe typifies perfection of character, the “robe of righteousness” to be worn by those who have faith in Christ (Isa. 61:10; Zech. 3:4). As it was “woven” in one piece, and hence seamless, it further typifies the coat “without seam” that Jesus wore (John 19:23) and the unity God desires for His church (John 17:21–23; Eph. 4:3, 5, 11–13).

32. An hole in the top. This was for the head of the high priest. The “binding” around this hole strengthened its edge to prevent tearing or fraying.

33. Pomegranates. These were probably tassels in the form of pomegranates, attached to the “hem,” or rather border, of the robe.

34. A golden bell. The “bells” were of pure gold (ch. 39:25), and, alternating with the “pomegranates,” could be heard by the people as the high priest ministered within the sanctuary (ch. 28:35). The tinkling bells made the worshipers conscious that he was officiating on their behalf in God’s presence, and prompted them to follow him in their thoughts and prayers as he went about the different parts of the priestly ritual. The sound of the bells joined priest and people together in worship. For the high priest to attempt to conduct the sanctuary service without the robe and its bells would break this bond of fellowship and separate the people from their intercessor. His ministration would become a vain procedure, one for which there was no excuse. To impress the importance of this link between the people and their representative, the penalty for neglect was death (v. 35). The bells and pomegranates remind us that by faith we may now enter boldly “into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” for the forgiveness of sin (Heb. 4:16; 10:19). By faith we too may hear the sound from the sanctuary that directs our hearts and minds upward to where Christ sits at the right hand of God to make intercession for us (Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1–3; Heb. 8:1, 2; GC 427).

36. A plate. This was the most conspicuous and significant feature of the “mitre” (v. 37). It was placed directly in front, over the forehead, and so attracted universal attention, more so perhaps than even the breastplate. Its position made it “the culminating point of the whole priestly attire.” This position was given added force and meaning by the inscription it bore, “Holiness to the Lord.” This engraving gave to the people the highest conception of religion and pointed to its supreme objective (Lev. 11:44, 45; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15, 16). It was a constant reminder that, without this essential, all the exercises of worship would in God’s sight be mockery (see Isa. 1:11–17). As to the high priest, it instructed him that his ministration was not to become a mere form, but that its objective was the consecration of his own life and the lives of the people. This is a most important lesson for ministers of God today (Isa. 52:11; 1 Peter 5:2, 3). Those ministers who fail so to live and conduct themselves are under the most severe condemnation of Heaven (1 Sam. 2:12–36; 3:11–14; 4:11; Mal. 2:1–9). The importance of the inscription upon the miter explains why it is mentioned even before the miter itself.

37. On a blue lace. According to ch. 39:31, the “plate” was tied to the miter by this “blue lace.”

The mitre. In describing the garments of the high priest Josephus writes: “Upon his head he wears a cap, not brought to a conic form ... and its make is such that it seems to be a crown, being made of thick swathes, but the contexture is of linen; and it is doubled round many times, and sewed together” (*Antiquities* iii. 7. 3). According to this, the “mitre” was a white turban.

38. Upon Aaron's forehead. This inscription, which was "always" to be on the forehead of the high priest as he ministered, reminded him of his solemn responsibility as the representative of the people. As such, he was clothed, as it were, with the official "holiness" engraved upon the plate. He was a type and representative of Him who was made "sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21), and through whom alone real atonement can be made before the Father.

39. Embroider. The "coat" was a long, white linen gown or tunic worn over the "linen breeches" or drawers (see v. 42). Of this coat Josephus wrote: "This vestment reaches down to the feet, and sits close to the body; and has sleeves that are tied fast to the arms" (*Antiquities* iii. 7. 2).

The girdle. This was made of "fine twined linen" of variegated colors and was artistically embroidered (ch. 39:29).

Of needlework. Literally, "the work of an embroiderer." Since the girdle was worn directly over the coat and under the robe of the ephod, it was not seen. Though hidden, it was costly and beautiful. Thus was taught the lesson that things devoted to God's service, whether or not they are seen, should be of the best. Our motive in doing God's work should be to honor God, not merely to do what will be pleasing in the sight of men (Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4). True piety will make no difference between the seen and the unseen, between that which is hidden and that which is open to sight, but will strive, rather, after sincerity, honesty, and fitness in all that pertains to God (Eph. 6:5-7).

40. For Aaron's sons. Verses 40-43 describe the apparel of the common priest. The "girdles," or sashes, were probably of the same material and workmanship as those of the high priest. The "bonnets" were linen turbans.

For glory. It is significant that the simple attire of the common priest, a robe of white linen, was to be "for glory and for beauty," as well as that of the high priest (see v. 2). White is used in the Scriptures as the symbol of purity (Rev. 4:4; 7:9, 14; 19:8).

42. Linen breeches. That is, linen drawers, which reached from the waist to a little above the knee.

43. Tabernacle of the congregation. See on ch. 27:21. The priestly garments were ever to be "upon Aaron, and upon his sons," when they engaged in the sacred services of the sanctuary, lest they become guilty of profaning that which was sacred, and so be punished with death.

The Aaronic priesthood was both representative and mediatorial. The high priest in particular represented the people before God and interceded on their behalf (Zech. 3:3-5; Heb. 2:17; 5:1; 8:3). He was the vital link between a holy God and an unholy people. In both respects the Aaronic priesthood typified that of Christ. This was true of the office itself (Heb. 3:1), of His personal and official holiness (Heb. 4:15; 7:26), of His representation of the people (Heb. 6:19, 20), of His work of mediation and intercession (Heb. 9:11, 12, 24), and of His heavenly glory (Heb. 2:9).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-36PP 350-351

1 PK 304; PP 359

2 GW 173; PP 350

6-12PP 351

15-21Ev 379; SR 183

15-27PP 351

29 COL 148; GW 34
29-34PP 351
30 SR 183
34 EW 36, 55, 251; LS 116
36 PK 584; PP 351; 5T 469
40-42PP 350

CHAPTER 29

1 *The sacrifice and ceremonies of consecrating the priests.* 38 *The continual burnt offering.*
45 *God's promise to dwell among the children of Israel.*

1. This is the thing. That is, concerning the ceremony of consecration (see ch. 28:41). The “bullock” and the “two rams” were to be ready for the sacrifice that was to follow the investiture and the anointing, which explains why this preparation is mentioned first.

Without blemish. Literally, “perfect,” as otherwise it would be an offense to God (Mal. 1:6–14). The rite of consecration, throughout, emphasized the necessity of holiness. It would be well for every minister of the gospel to study most thoughtfully Ex. 28 and 29 for an adequate understanding of the nature and responsibility of his sacred office.

2. Unleavened bread. This was ceremonially purer than leavened bread, since fermentation is a type of sin and corruption (Ex. 12:15; Matt. 16:6, 12; 1 Cor. 5:6–8).

Tempered with oil. Literally, “mixed with oil.” Oil was one ingredient of the cakes, in contrast with the wafers, over which oil was poured.

4. Unto the door. This probably refers to the “laver of brass” placed between the tabernacle entrance and the altar of burnt offering, where the various ablutions required by law took place (ch. 30:18–21).

Shalt wash them. Ritual washings constituted an important part of the ceremonies of most ancient religions. This was natural; physical cleansing is an appropriate analogy to moral and spiritual cleansing. The priests were required to perform these ablutions each time they entered the tabernacle or sacrificed at the altar of burnt offering (ch. 30:20), for they must be free from the stain and defilement of sin themselves before they ministered on behalf of others (see Ps. 51:7; Isa. 52:11; John 13:10, 11). In addition, the priests were to present sacrifices for specific sins (Lev. 4:3–12). The washing dealt with sin in a more general sense, and was concerned more with a priest's official function than with his private life.

5. Take the garments. For a more complete account of this investiture of Aaron as high priest, see Lev. 8:7–9.

6. The holy crown. The golden plate with its blue lace ribbon was a kind of diadem, regarded in the East as an emblem of royalty. It marked the royal character of the high priest, who, as a type of Christ, was both priest and king (Lev. 8:9; Zech. 6:11–13; Matt. 2:2; 27:37).

7. The anointing oil. Its ingredients were probably of supreme quality (see chs. 25:6; 30:23–25). In harmony with the Mosaic law oil was used to initiate prophets, priests, and kings into their office. Oil is representative of the Holy Spirit, and of the outpouring of the Spirit upon those who are to receive it. The term “Christ” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “Messiah,” both of which mean “anointed” (see Acts 10:38). Aaron's anointing therefore signified consecration to God's service. Similarly, all parts of the tabernacle itself were to be anointed (Ex. 30:26–29).

8. Bring his sons. That is, to the door of the tabernacle (v. 4). The investiture of the high priest consisted of nine acts (Lev. 8:7–9), whereas that of the ordinary priests required but three: the putting on of the “coats,” or linen tunics, the girding with the “girdles,” and the putting on of the “caps.” No mention is made of their being anointed with oil, but only of oil being sprinkled upon their garments (Ex. 29:21; Lev. 8:30).

9. Thou shalt consecrate. Literally, “Thou shalt fill the hand of.” In Eastern lands installation into office was usually accomplished by putting into the hand of the official the insignia marking his functions. Here certain portions of the offerings were used for that purpose (v. 24).

10. Bullock. Literally, “the bull” (see v. 1). By placing their hands upon its head Aaron and his sons identified themselves with it and, in figure, transferred to it the guilt of their own sins and imperfections (Ex. 29:14; Lev. 4:1–4). The fact could not be overlooked that the law accepted as priests men with moral and spiritual infirmities (Heb. 7:28). Themselves sinful, Aaron and his sons were as yet unfit to stand before God in behalf of others. They needed to have sacrifices offered for themselves. There were three of these: a sin offering (see Ex. 29:10–15), a burnt offering (see vs. 15–19), and a peace offering (see vs. 19–22). These sacrifices, with the accompanying ceremonies, were to be repeated on seven successive days (vs. 35, 36). The altar, as defiled by the sin of those officiating at it, was likewise to be cleansed by the blood of the sin offering (vs. 36, 37).

12. Take of the blood. Because the horns of the altar symbolized the glory and power of salvation (Ps. 18:2), the blood of the bullock, representative of the life (see Lev. 17:14) of Aaron and his sons and presented in atonement for their sins, was first touched to them. The unused portion was poured out at the base of the altar. Such was the usual practice with sin offerings (Lev. 4:7), of which this was the first example.

13. All the fat. Fat was generally regarded as the best part of the offering, and therefore most acceptable to God (see on Lev. 3:3, 5). This was probably due in part to the fact that it burned with a bright flame and helped to consume the rest of the offering.

The caul. An “appendage” (RSV). This is the small omentum, a membrane which covers the upper part of the liver and attaches it to the stomach.

14. The flesh. The parts of the sacrifice here mentioned were disposed of according to the law concerning sin offerings (Lev. 4:11, 12). The curse of sin that was upon them rendered them unfit for food, and even unworthy of burial within the camp. In a similar way Christ “suffered without the gate” (Heb. 13:11–13).

15. One ram. Literally, “the ram, the one,” that is, one of the two rams mentioned in v. 1. Placing their hands on the ram points to the vicarious nature of the sacrifice. As a burnt offering (v. 18), the ram emphasized the idea of self-sacrifice.

16. Sprinkle it. Rather, cast or scatter it, that is, from a basin, in contrast to sprinkling it with the hand or with hyssop. Rabbinical tradition has it that the blood was cast at two opposite corners, the northeast and southwest, thus wetting all four sides, and scattered “round about upon the altar” as well.

17. Cut the ram in pieces. Literally, “into its pieces,” that is, into the natural bodily divisions. The “inwards” are the entrails. After being washed they were put with the other “pieces.”

18. Burn the whole ram. The general law of burnt offerings followed this practice (Lev. 1:9, 13, 17). The burnt offering typified the spirit of self-sacrifice, full consecration, and constant dependence upon the atoning blood of Christ, which is acceptable to God.

With the sin offering, the taint of sin rendered all but certain parts of the sacrifice unacceptable (v. 14). The words “a sweet savour” express in characteristic human language the thought that God was well pleased with the offering and accepted the one presenting it (Gen. 8:21; Lev. 1:9, 13, 17).

19. The other ram. Literally, “the second ram” (see vs. 1, 3, 15). This is called the “ram of consecration” in v. 22, and was probably a “peace offering” (see Lev. 3).

20. Take of his blood. The application of the ram’s blood to the persons of the priests was unique and significant, the crowning act of consecration. This implied the complete dedication of life and ability to the service of God. Symbolically, the blood put on the “right ear” sanctified that organ to hear the word of the Lord; put on the “right hand,” it sanctified the hands of the priest for his mediatorial work; put on the “right foot,” it sanctified his walk of life as an example to others. In other words, the consecrated life (blood) of the sacrifice the priest had offered was returned to him, that his life might be devoted to the service of the Lord.

21. Take of the blood. This “blood” and the “anointing” appear to be the only ritual required for the consecration of the common priests (Lev. 8:30). The blending of the blood and oil suggests the need of both justification through the atoning blood of Christ (Rom. 3:23–26) and sanctification through the grace of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16).

22. The rump. Literally, “the fat tail,” that is, of the Oriental broadtail sheep (see on Lev. 3:9). The “cual” is the membrane mentioned in v. 13.

23. One loaf of bread. For the “loaf,” the “cake,” the “wafer,” and the “basket” see vs. 2, 3. Placing these offerings in the hands of Aaron and his sons, Moses was to take their hands in his and “wave” them in a swinging motion forward, probably to show that the offering belonged to God, and backward, to indicate that it was accepted by God and returned, so to speak, with His blessing. This was the act of consecration by which the actual installation in office took place. Moses thus transferred to his brother, and his brother’s sons, the priestly functions he himself had heretofore exercised. By physically waving their hands he guided them in the performance of their first priestly act.

25. Thou shalt receive them. Moses was nevertheless to complete the priestly ritual connected with the ceremony of consecration. Chosen parts of the peace offering were burned upon the altar of burnt offering (Ex. 29:22; Lev. 3:3–5). Here Moses waved the breast of the wave offering. Afterward Aaron and his descendants were to follow the same procedure in presenting such offerings (Lev. 7:31–35).

27. Sanctify the breast. Verses 27 and 28 apply to all future offerings for consecration. From this time forward the breast and right shoulder belonged to the priests. The shoulder was to be “heaved up” in a single lifting movement, as it were, toward heaven, and the breast was to be “waved” horizontally in a repeated swinging movement (Lev. 7:30–36; Num. 18:11).

29. The holy garments. Verses 29 and 30 also applied to future services of consecration. The garments made for Aaron were to be preserved after his death and used at the consecration of each successive high priest, that he too might be “anointed” and “consecrated in them.” From the time he began his duties, each high priest was to wear these garments for seven days (Ex. 29:35; Num. 20:24–28).

31. The ram. The portion of the ram that had not been burned (see vs. 22–25) was to be eaten “in the holy place,” that is, “at the door of the tabernacle” (Lev. 8:31). In

connection with every peace offering there was a sacrificial meal, in which the priests who offered it participated (Ex. 29:27, 28; Lev. 7:11–18).

32. *The bread.* This consisted of the loaf, cake, and wafer that remained in the basket, after one of each had been taken from it and offered to the Lord (vs. 2, 3, 23).

33. *They shall eat.* Every sacrifice possessed, in greater or lesser degree, atoning quality. The sin offering was wholly so (Lev. 4:2–5), the burnt and the peace offerings only so in part (Lev. 1:3; 3:1).

A stranger. Not a foreigner, but one who is not a priest (cf. Ex. 12:19 and 20:10).

35. *Seven days.* The ritual of consecration for Aaron and his sons was to be performed on each of the seven successive days. This sevenfold consecration betokened ideal perfection (see Joshua 6:3, 4; 1 Kings 18:43, 44; 2 Kings 5:14). Since these priests are types of God’s ministers today, their consecration teaches the exalted sacredness of holy office and the need of preserving it separate from the world.

36. *Cleanse the altar.* More clearly, “thou shalt purify the altar by making an atonement for it.” This “sin offering” for the altar was the same bullock as that used for Aaron and his sons (see Ex. 29:1, 10–14; Lev. 8:15). Moses anointed the altar by sprinkling the anointing oil on it seven times (Lev. 8:11).

37. *Seven days.* The entire ceremony of consecration was to be repeated seven times, both for the priests and for the altar.

Most holy. Literally, “holy of holies,” denoting the great sacredness of the altar (see Ex. 40:10). Therefore “whatsoever toucheth” it “shall be” or must be, “holy.”

38. *Two lambs.* Verses 38–42 pertain to the daily sacrifice, which appropriately followed the consecration of the altar.

39. *At even.* Literally, “between the [two] evenings” (see on ch. 12:6). As to the purpose of these daily morning and evening sacrifices, see on Lev. 1:3. These “continual” (ch. 29:42) sacrifices were the occasions of morning and evening worship for the camp (Ps. 16:8; 55:17; 1 Thess. 5:17; PP 354).

40. *A tenth deal.* Rather, “a tenth part” or “a tenth measure,” that is an omer, or tenth of one ephah (Ex. 16:36; Num. 15:4, LXX). This would be the equivalent of about 2 qt. (2.2 l.), or about 3 lb. 12 oz. (1.7 kg.). Various cereals were used as a “meat offering” (see on Lev. 2:1). The “fourth part of an hin” would be equal to nearly 2 pt. (0.9 l.).

41. *For a sweet savour.* “A pleasing odor” (RSV). See on v. 18.

42. *The tabernacle of the congregation.* Preferably, “the tent of meeting” (RSV; see on ch. 27:21).

43. *There I will meet.* Knowing the trials of Israel in their wanderings through the wilderness, God encouraged them with the assurance of His presence. At its dedication the tabernacle was filled with the “glory” of the Lord (ch. 40:34). The presence of the Shekinah was the true consecration of the tabernacle, for all things else about it were but types and figures (see on Gen. 3:24). Thus God not only “put his name there” (Deut. 12:21), but His visible presence as well.

44. *I will sanctify.* This was accomplished miraculously when Aaron placed his first offering upon the brazen altar (Lev. 9:24).

45. *Dwell among.* See on ch. 25:8. This refers primarily to the Shekinah, in the holy of holies, but in a larger sense the same was true of God’s care, protection, and salvation graciously extended to His chosen people as the years went by.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-4, 35PP 359
38-42PP 352
43, 45 PP 314
45, 46 PK 575

CHAPTER 30

1 *The altar of incense.* 11 *The ransom of souls.* 17 *The brasen laver.* 22 *The holy anointing oil.* 34 *The composition of the perfume.*

1. An altar to burn incense. Among most ancient peoples it was customary to offer incense as a part of religious worship. In the early days of Christianity many believers in the gospel were put to death because they refused to put incense upon the altar of the gods. In the Scriptures, incense symbolizes prayer ascending from the altar of the heart up to God (Ps. 141:2; Luke 1:10; Rev. 5:8; 8:3, 4).

2. Foursquare. The altar of incense was in many ways similar to the altar of burnt offering (ch. 27:1–8), though of smaller size and costlier material. In “length” and “breadth” it was 1 ft. 5 1/2 in. (44.45 cm.), “foursquare,” and 2 ft. 11 in. (88.9 cm.) in “height.” On the “horns” the blood of certain sin offerings was touched (Lev. 4:7, 18).

Of the same. That is, of one piece with the top of the altar. Since horns are symbolic of power (see on ch. 27:2), on the altar of incense they signify the power of prayer (see Gen. 32:24–30). The result of importunate prayer is emphasized in the parable of the importunate widow (Luke 18:3–8).

3. A crown of gold. This was a border, or molding, around the top to prevent anything from falling off, and also for beauty (ch. 25:24).

4. The two corners. Preferably, two opposite sides (RSV). In other words, there were but two rings, not four as on the other articles of furniture, but one on either side just below the “crown.” These were adequate for carrying so small an altar.

5. The staves. That is, the poles used to carry the altar (ch. 25:13, 28). Acacia wood symbolized strength, and gold, purity. Thus, prayer is to issue forth from the altar of the heart, a heart that is true, honest, and resolute.

6. Before the veil. The altar of incense was placed in the holy place, adjacent to the “veil,” or curtain, which separated it from the holy of holies (ch. 40:21–27). Although in the holy place, the altar of incense was considered as belonging to the most holy (Heb. 9:3, 4). This concept grew out of the fact that as the priests in their ministry approached the sacred presence above the mercy seat, the altar of incense was the place to which they came (PP 353). Except on the Day of Atonement they could not approach closer. It was the place where they came to meet with God, whose abode was in the holy of holies. Incense offered there not only filled the holy place, but rose and passed over the “veil” into the most holy (see on ch. 26:32). The fact that the altar was “before the mercy seat” teaches us that prayer brings us into the presence of God. Although the “veil” of humanity (see 1 Cor. 13:12) prevents our physical eyes from seeing God, faith and prayer are able to go where the body cannot.

7. Sweet incense. Or, “fragrant incense” (RSV). Verses 34–38 give its composition. Every morning immediately after daybreak the lamps were trimmed and cleaned by the priest (see on ch. 27:20).

8. Perpetual incense. Incense was to be offered twice daily, at the hours of morning and evening prayer (Ex. 30:7, 8). The altar of incense represented continual intercession in the same way that the altar of burnt offering represented continual atonement (PP 353).

There is, however, no clear statement as to whether incense was burning continuously upon this altar “before the veil,” though the implication that it was is strong (PP 348). Its “continual” burning teaches us that day by day we are to come before the Lord in prayer (Ps. 16:8; 55:17; 1 Thess. 5:17, 18; PP 354). We are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17).

9. *Strange incense.* That is, any incense prepared contrary to the directions given in vs. 34–38.

10. *Once in a year.* This refers to the great Day of Atonement, the 10th day of the 7th month, when the high priest was to take the blood and put it on the horns of the altar of incense “and make an atonement for it” (Lev. 16:18, 19). This did not make of it an altar of atonement. It was involved in atonement, however, in cases where the high priest sinned (see Lev. 4:3–12), or when the whole congregation committed iniquity “through ignorance” or did “somewhat against any of the commandments of the Lord” (Lev. 4:13–21). Upon such occasions the high priest touched the blood of the sacrifice to the horns of the altar. In these two instances the altar of incense took the place of the altar of burnt offering, on which was sprinkled the blood of private sin offerings (Lev. 4:22–35). Of all articles of furniture in the tabernacle the altar of incense seems to have been next in importance to the ark and the mercy seat in sacredness. This suggests the great value God places upon prayer (see PP 353).

12. *Takest the sum.* Or, “take the census” (RSV). The population had been estimated at the time of the Exodus as “about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children” (see on ch. 12:37). Now, a more accurate census was to be taken.

A ransom. Literally, “a covering,” in the same sense that insurance “covers” a man and releases him from further obligation. The people were obligated to God; they might discharge that obligation by paying the “ransom.” Their lives were considered forfeited to God until God’s claim upon them was met. In settling the claim they acknowledged God’s goodness and mercy.

For his soul. Rather, “for himself” (RSV), that is, for his “whole spirit and soul and body” (1 Thess. 5:23). This is obviously the meaning, for the statement is concerned with a living man, not with some immaterial part of his being or with a disembodied spirit.

No plague. That is, no punishment because of carelessness or disobedience.

13. *Half a shekel.* A half shekel would weight about one fifth of an ounce (5.7 gr.), and a gerah one tenth of that amount.

The shekel of the sanctuary. Probably a standard of weight, not a different kind of shekel.

14. *Twenty years old.* At this age the Israelite was considered to have reached manhood, to be eligible for military service (2 Chron. 25:5), and ready to assume the duties of citizenship. The Levites began their service in the tabernacle at this age (1 Chron. 23:24, 27; 2 Chron. 31:17; Ezra 3:8).

15. *Not give more.* This was a head, or poll, tax, and fell equally on every male 20 years of age or over. Being a relatively small sum, the tax would work hardship on no one. It was a minimum contribution to the sanctuary; many gave much more. Poverty was no excuse for doing nothing. The plan was eminently fair, and suggests the fact that all souls are of equal value in God’s sight (Deut. 10:17; Acts 10:34; Rom. 3:22). All have sinned, and to all God extends His grace. Note the significance “all we” with which Isa. 53:6 begins, and the “us all” with which it ends.

For your souls. Preferably, “for yourselves” (RSV; see on v. 12).

16. A memorial. For the disposition of the “atonement money,” see ch. 38:25–28. Becoming a permanent part of the sanctuary, it was a continual “memorial” to remind the people of their spiritual privileges and responsibilities.

For your souls. Preferably, “for yourselves” (RSV; see on v. 12).

18. A laver. Nothing is revealed regarding its size or shape. It was of bronze, made from the mirrors the women of Israel gave as a freewill offering (ch. 38:8). In Solomon’s Temple the “molten sea” and “ten lavers” replaced the original laver (1 Kings 7:23–26, 38). It stood on its “foot,” or base, in the court of the tabernacle between the entrance to the tabernacle and the altar of burnt offering. Typically, the laver represents the washing away of our sins through faith in the shed blood of Christ (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Rev. 7:14).

19. Wash. Washing the hands and the feet symbolized the reformation of the life. Because of the priests’ ablutions, the slaying of the sacrificial victims, and the sprinkling, pouring, and dashing of blood associated with various functions of the sanctuary service, the need for water is apparent (Ex. 29:4, 17; Lev. 1–5).

20. That they die not. These words were a warning that any violation of this charge due to carelessness or indifference would be punished most severely.

23. Principal spices. Spices played a great part in the lives of ancient peoples, and were of many different kinds. “Pure myrrh” is more accurately translated as “free-flowing myrrh,” or “liquid myrrh” (RSV), a spice that was in great demand. “Calamus” was probably an aromatic reed.

24. Cassia. An aromatic wood. The recipe called for 12.7 lb. (5.7 kg.) each of myrrh and cassia and 6.4 lb. (2.9 kg.) each of cinnamon and calamus.

An hin. These spices were to be mixed in 3.9 qt. (3.67 l.) of “oil olive.”

25. An ointment. This fragrant “compound” provided a delightful symbol of the fragrant “savour” of Christ’s righteousness, which is to be reflected in our lives (Ps. 45:6–8; S. of Sol. 3:6; Isa. 61:10; 2 Cor. 2:14–16).

26. Anoint the tabernacle. The material objects of the tabernacle were first to be anointed, the tabernacle itself, the furniture of the most holy place and the holy place, and the furniture of the court. The anointing of the priests came last (Lev. 8:10–12).

30. Anoint Aaron. When the environment in which Aaron and his sons were to minister had been sanctified, the priests themselves were consecrated to serve there. Similarly, Christ has ascended “to prepare a place” for us, which we shall receive when He comes again (John 14:1–3).

32. Upon man’s flesh. That is, none of the sacred oil was to be used by anyone as a common ointment. It was to be reserved exclusively for sacred use. Nor was the same formula to be used for any other purpose, though of course the same ingredients might be used separately or in other combinations.

34. Sweet spices. Verses 34–38 give directions for making the “sweet incense” that was to be burned on the golden altar (v. 7). It was a blend of four kinds of spices, in equal proportions. “Stacte,” “galbanum,” and “frankincense” were all gums, or resins, whereas the “onycha” seems to have been derived from a certain shell mollusk.

35. Tempered together. Rather, “seasoned with salt” (RSV). The fact that coals for the altar of incense were brought from the altar of burnt offering (see Lev. 16:12, 13) points to the truth that the heart of the worshiper must be reconciled to God before God

will accept his prayers and devotion (Job 27:8, 9; Ps. 66:18; Prov. 15:29; 28:9; Isa. 1:15; Micah 3:4; John 9:31).

36. Beat some of it. A small supply of the preparation was to be beaten from time to time, as required, and placed perhaps on the golden altar “before the testimony,” that is, opposite the ark but before the inner veil. This nearness to the divine presence made it “most holy.”

37. Ye shall not make. The prohibition and penalty connected with the anointing oil (vs. 32, 33) applies also to the incense.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-10PP 348

1 SR 154

7, 8 ML 217; PP 348, 352, 353; SR 154

8 PP 367

10 PP 352; SR 155

12-16DA 155; PP 526

17-212T 611

18 PP 347

19-21CH 81

21 GW 173

CHAPTER 31

1 *Bezaleel and Aholiab are called and made meet for the work of the tabernacle.* 12 *The observation of the sabbath is again commanded.* 18 *Moses receiveth the two tables.*

2. I have called. Having given detailed directions for the construction of the tabernacle and its equipment, and the preparation of its supplies, God next appointed those who were to have the oversight of the work. Bezaleel was to be in charge, with Aholiab as his assistant. Without doubt these men were selected because of their superior talent and previous experience. To this God promised to add special wisdom and knowledge. Thus they were fitted both naturally and supernaturally for their task (see PP 214; DA 827; Matt. 13:12). Gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and skill for doing secular work are as surely given men by God as are spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:8). The church as verily needs among its members those who are Bezaleels and Aholiabs as it does those who are Isaiahs and Pauls. Only those whom God calls to some special service does he “call by name” (Ex. 3:4; Isa. 45:1–4).

3. Filled him. The Holy Spirit would impart to Bezaleel “knowledge,” or factual information, “understanding,” or common sense in the application of known facts, and “wisdom,” or discernment, sound judgment, and discretion. In addition he was to receive additional skill in “workmanship,” including both dexterity and art as a master craftsman.

4. To devise. He was to have not only the gift of creating designs but the ability to execute these designs. While specific directions were given Moses for the construction of the sanctuary and its equipment, nothing had been said concerning many details, such as the form of the cherubim, the patterns to be woven or embroidered in the various textiles, the shapes of the vessels, the capitals of the pillars, or the laver. Much would depend upon the initiative, inventiveness, taste, and craftsmanship of those in charge of the work.

6. Aholiab. It seems from ch. 38:23 that Aholiab was to superintend the design and production of the textile fabrics, including both weaving and embroidery. It is interesting

to note that Hiram, the chief artist Solomon employed to make the ornamental work of the Temple, was also a descendant of Dan (2 Chron. 2:13, 14).

In the hearts. Every artist, whether he be poet, painter, sculptor, musician, or designer, must have within him a natural talent, without which he can never attain to excellence. Such gifts should be regarded as a sacred trust from God, to be used for His glory and for the betterment of mankind—not for the advancement of self. Failing this, one’s great ability may contribute only to moral depravity. Manual labor was sanctified by God for the construction of the tabernacle. Our Lord dignified physical labor by devoting most of His years on earth to the carpenter shop in Nazareth (see Mark 6:3). Paul supported himself by working as a tentmaker (Acts 18:1–3).

10. Cloths. Or, “finely worked garments” (RSV). These were the distinguishing vestments of the high priest, which he alone was permitted to wear. They included the blue robe, the ephod, the girdle of the ephod, and the breastplate. The other “holy garments” that made up the high priest’s attire were the linen drawers, the tunic, the inner girdle, and the miter. The “garments of his sons” included their linen drawers, tunics, girdles, and caps (ch. 28).

13. My sabbaths. One of the striking features of the closing chapters of Exodus is the recurring admonition to sacred observance of the seventh-day Sabbath (see chs. 16:22–30; 20:8–11; 23:12; 34:21; 35:2, 3). This attests the great importance of the Sabbath, for no other commandment of the Decalogue is so mentioned. The reference here made to its observance is not merely a repetition of similar notices; it introduces the Sabbath as a “sign” between God and His people, and it warns that the penalty for Sabbath violation is “death.”

A sign. God had already given the Israelites circumcision as a “sign” in their flesh of His “covenant” relation with them (Gen. 17:9–14; Acts 7:8). Now the Sabbath was to be an additional “sign” of this covenant relationship, not in the flesh but in the heart (Ex. 31:12, 13, 16, 17; Jer. 31:31–33; Eze. 20:12, 20; 2 Cor. 3:3).

14. Defileth it. More exactly, “profanes it.” The Sabbath is holy (Gen. 2:1–3); therefore it is a sin to bring into its sacred hours that which is common (see on Ex. 12:16; 16:23). The Sabbath is defiled when any unnecessary work is done upon it. Acts of mercy, of necessity, or of religious observance are not forbidden on that day (Matt. 12:1–13; Mark 2:23–28).

Put to death. This severe penalty was a constant reminder that Sabbath violation severed the covenant relation between the Lord and the people. The Sabbath was the distinctive sign of loyalty to God, and its violation was therefore an offense of the gravest character, an act of treason against the divine government (see Ex. 35:2; Num. 15:32–36).

15. Sabbath of rest. Literally, “rest of restfulness” (see on chs. 16:23–26; 20:10). This expression implies complete rest from all secular concerns (Ex. 35:2; Lev. 23:3; Isa. 58:13).

17. Was refreshed. The very fact that God uses language here distinctly adapted to human experience shows how earnestly He desired to impress upon His people their obligation to Him and the need of their following His example. There can be no more convincing reason for complying with a divine command than that God Himself has set the example (John 13:13–15; 1 Peter 2:21).

18. Two tables of testimony. God had informed Moses that the ark in the holy of holies was to contain this “testimony” (ch. 25:16). Since this was the chief purpose of the

ark, and the ark was the most sacred article of furniture in the tabernacle, it is appropriate that this section dealing with the structure of the tabernacle and its officiants should close with a statement regarding that which gave the ark and the tabernacle their significance. “Two tables” should be “*the* two tables,” those which God had already promised Moses (ch. 24:12), and which were supernaturally inscribed (ch. 32:16). The writing of the Ten Commandments on stone (Deut. 4:13) points to their immutable and eternal character (Matt. 5:17–19). The two tables emphasize man’s obligation—to God (the first four commandments), and to his fellow men (the last six; Matt. 22:36–40). The two tables of stone folded together like a book (EW 32).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1-6CT 59, 351; Ed 36
- 2, 3 CT 314
- 2-6COL 349
- 3 ML 110; 7T 162
- 3-57T 132
- 12, 13 8T 117
- 12-16FE 449; 9T 212
- 12-17MM 164; 9T 17
- 12-18Ev 232; 9T 16
- 13 CW 117; Ed 250; FE 507; MM 121; TM 137; 6T 350, 361; 7T 109; 8T 198; 9T 230
- 13, 14 TM 134
- 13, 14, 17 PP 313; 7T 122
- 13, 17 PK 184
- 13-17PK 179; 7T 105; 8T 94, 210
- 15-17TM 135
- 16 MM 215
- 16, 17 6T 349; 8T 196, 198; 9T 94
- 16-18FE 507
- 17 Ev 538; GC 437; GW 149; SR 141
- 18 GC vi; PK 181; SL 49; SR 148, 153; 6T 10

CHAPTER 32

1 *The people, in the absence of Moses, cause Aaron to make a calf. 7 God is angered thereby. 11 At the intreaty of Moses he is appeased. 15 Moses cometh down with the tables. 19 He breaketh them. 20 He destroyeth the calf. 22 Aaron’s excuse for himself. 25 Moses causeth the idolaters to be slain. 30 He prayeth for the people.*

It is worthy of note that Moses’ apparent delay became the occasion of backsliding among the people of God (see Eze. 12:21–28; Hab. 2:2–4; Matt. 25:1–13). Likewise, some will fail to be ready for the Lord when He appears “the second time” (see Heb. 9:28). Many will say in that day, “My lord delayeth his coming,” and give way to wickedness (Matt. 24:45–51; Luke 12:37–48; 2 Peter 3:3–18).

The Israelites feared that their leader, on whom they had come to depend, had forsaken them. So long as they had Moses with them, to encourage them by his exhortations and to support them by his example, they managed to maintain the higher life of the Spirit, to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). When his presence was removed a reaction set in, and the “flesh” triumphed over the “spirit.” Though the cloud of thick darkness into which Moses entered when he ascended the mountain with Joshua

could be seen from the plain below, resting upon the mountain peak and illuminated from time to time with lightning from the divine presence, it seemed to many in the camp that Moses had deserted them or had been consumed by the devouring fire. The stage was set for a grievous exhibition of idolatry.

This experience presents another of those striking contrasts so characteristic of the Bible, as, for example, Christ in glory on the mount of transfiguration and His disciples in the valley below in chagrin and defeat (Matt. 17:1–18). Here, while Moses was in the mount receiving the tables of the law, and instructions regarding true worship and the high and holy office of the high priest, the people below were flagrantly disobeying the Lord. Paradoxically, they were led into idolatry by the very man called to minister to the Lord.

Unto Aaron. Had the brother of Moses been strong in faith and character, this unfortunate incident in the history of Israel might have been avoided. Aaron's weakness of character and spirit of compromise not only rendered his spiritual leadership ineffective but placed him in the position of a leader in rebellion.

Make us gods. Inasmuch as their sojourn in Egypt had accustomed the Hebrews to material forms of deity, it was difficult for them to trust in an invisible God. Though the word for "gods" in Hebrew is *'Elohim*, the plural form of the word, some Bible scholars affirm that "gods" here and in vs. 4, 8, and 31 should be translated "a god," considering that the plural is used intensively to emphasize the fact that the golden calf was a *false* god in contrast to the Lord, the true God.

Go before us. Weary of waiting so long at Sinai and eager to continue their journey to the Promised Land, the people demanded a visible god at their head to inspire them with confidence and courage (see 1 Sam. 4:3–8). How well it would have been had they used this period of waiting in meditation upon the law of God, and thus prepared their hearts to receive further revelations from Him. Had they done so they would have been able to resist this temptation. To a large extent the spirit of apostasy was generated by the "mixed multitude," who had joined the Israelites to escape the plagues of Egypt. They were a constant hindrance and a snare to Israel (Ex. 12:38; Num. 11:4). They are to be compared to the "lewd fellows" of Acts 17:5.

2. Break off. Alarmed by the heedless folly and threatening attitude of the people, and fearing for his own safety, Aaron surrendered to the demands of the multitude instead of nobly and stoutheartedly upholding the honor of God (see ch. 23:2). Hoping they would refuse to give up their cherished possessions, he ordered a collection of the "golden earrings." But he was mistaken in this hope. Having taken the first compromising step, he could not retreat.

4. These be thy gods. The "calf" would naturally suggest itself to the Israelites because they had witnessed in Egypt the worship of Apis the bull. But the golden calf was presumably a material representation of the *true* God, not of some heathen deity (see v. 5).

5. Made proclamation. Sensing popular approval, Aaron further committed himself to this apostasy by announcing a "feast." Strangely enough, it was to be "a feast to the Lord." This spirit of compromise, the endeavor to harmonize the worship of the Lord with that of idols, was not manifested by Israel in this case alone; it was also to motivate much of the idolatry that plagued them in the future (1 Kings 12:26–33; 2 Kings 17:32, 33; Zeph. 1:5).

6. Rose up early. So enthusiastic and wrought up were the people over their new-found religion that they could not rise early enough to begin its worship.

Sat down to eat. Only certain portions of sacrificial victims were commonly burned, the rest being eaten by the offerers.

Rose up to play. This was a sensual exercise. Heathen sacrificial feasts terminated in the most profligate orgies (Num. 25:1–9; 1 Cor. 10:7, 8). This episode illustrates the warfare that is constantly going on in human nature between the flesh and the Spirit (Rom. 7:23; 8:1–13). From the time the Israelites left Egypt they had been leading a spiritual life, depending upon the unseen God and reposing under His protection. At length, however, when the restraining influence of Moses' example and guidance was removed, evil prevailed. They reverted to idolatry, and in so doing, to the licentiousness that was inseparably connected with heathen worship. Sensual pleasure masqueraded as religion (2 Tim. 3:4, 5). Such religion is as pleasing to the multitudes now as it was in the days of Israel. And there are still pliant leaders to yield to the desires of the unconsecrated and encourage them in sin (PP 317).

7. Thy people. God disowned Israel; He no longer spoke of them as "my people" (Ex. 3:10; etc.; cf. Matt. 21:13; 23:28). They had broken their covenant relation with Him, and had "separated" themselves from His care and guidance (Isa. 59:2). Resentment against sin is inherent in the divine character. God loves the sinner, but hates sin. Moses, far removed from the camp, did not know what was going on below.

8. Turned aside quickly. A few weeks previously the people had entered into a solemn covenant with God and pledged themselves to obey Him (chs. 19:8; 24:3). Now that covenant was broken (PP 320). Having "no root" in themselves when temptation came, the people fell quickly into sin (see Matt. 13:20, 21). Many of them, specially those of the "mixed multitude," could not resist their old idolatrous practices (see 2 Peter 2:22). The word "stiffnecked" conveys the idea of perversity, as with a horse that stiffens its neck when the driver pulls the rein right or left, refusing to go the way it should.

10. Let me alone. God was testing Moses and preparing him for what lay ahead (see Gen. 18:23–32; 32:26–28). This was not the last occasion on which such an experience came to him (Num. 16:21, 45). Moses perceived that God's proposal was not final, and proceeded to intercede for his people.

Make of thee. The Lord confronted Moses with an opportunity to choose between his own glory, and the honor of God and the well-being of those who were under his charge (see Matt. 4:8–10). He rose nobly to the occasion and thereby proved his loyal devotion to God and to the tasks committed to him.

11. Moses besought. Moses protests that Israel is still God's people—not his (see v. 7). God has done so much for them; surely He will not now reject them, and thereby acknowledge the failure of His own plan. That God could not afford to do this, for His own name's sake, was Moses' first plea. Moses could not excuse the sin of his people, but he could intercede for their forgiveness (see Job 42:10; Jer. 14:19–21; Eze. 14:14, 20; Dan. 9:4–11).

12. Wherefore. The surrounding nations had learned of the wonderful deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt, and as a result they feared what the Lord might yet do for Israel. If, therefore, Israel were now destroyed, the heathen would rejoice and God would be dishonored. The accusations of the Egyptians would prove true, that instead of leading His people into the wilderness to sacrifice (ch. 5:1–3), He had brought them there to be

sacrificed (ch. 10:10). To avoid the exultant triumph of the heathen over Israel was Moses' second plea.

13. Remember Abraham. The third plea consisted of reminding God of His promises to Abraham (Gen. 15:5; 17:2–8), Isaac (Gen. 26:4), and Jacob (Gen. 28:14; 35:11). These promises had thus far been but partially fulfilled, and surely God would not fail to make good His word.

14. The Lord repented. The Lord was moved by the earnest, selfless prayer of His faithful servant. God could not refuse the pleadings of one who thought more of his people than he did of his own exaltation and honor. What a tribute this was to the character of Moses, what a revelation of divine love (John 3:16; Phil. 2:5–8).

The words "the Lord repented" are a feeble attempt to express the divine will in human language. Strictly speaking, God cannot change His purpose, for He knows "the end from the beginning" (1 Sam. 15:29; Isa. 46:9, 10; 55:11). However, when sinners forsake their sin and turn to Him, when His children supplicate Him for mercy and forgiveness, then He does "repent." He changes from wrath to mercy, from judgment to gracious pardon (Ps. 106:44, 45; Jer. 18:5–10; 26:3; Joel 2:12–14; Jonah 3:9, 10; 4:2).

15. In his hand. That is, in both hands (Deut. 9:15).

17. When Joshua heard. In his descent Moses met Joshua, who remained where Moses had left him six weeks previously (see ch. 24:12–18). Together they made their way down to camp. Being a soldier, Joshua thought the sound they heard from the encampment was that of war, but Moses, having been warned by the Lord that something was wrong, suspected the true nature of the noise. The latter part of the descent from Mt. Sinai denies a view of the plain below, so that any sound coming from the plain would be heard before its cause could be seen. Perhaps the mounds at the foot of the mountain provided a barrier to the sight (see on ch. 19:1).

19. He came nigh. The religious ceremonies of most ancient nations included dancing. Among the Hebrews this was sometimes solemn and dignified, like that of David (2 Sam. 6:14), sometimes festive and joyful (see on Ex. 15:20). Among the heathen, however, and especially so among the Oriental nations, such dances were of a loose and lascivious character. Egyptian dancers were professionals of a degraded type, and their dancing was sensual and indecent. In Syria, Asia Minor, and Babylon dancing was a wild orgy. It was in this type of dancing that the Israelites now indulged, a fact which accounts for the heated anger of Moses. It was idolatry at its worst. It is not strange that he cast the two tables violently upon the ground and "brake them." By this he indicated that as they had broken their covenant with God, so God broke His covenant with them (Deut. 9:17; PP 320).

20. He took the calf. Compare this with similar action by Josiah (2 Kings 23:1–27).

Strawed it. That is, "sprinkled" or "scattered" it. Since this "water" was "the brook" that descended out of the mount (Deut. 9:21), and was the only water available, when the Israelites drank it they risked swallowing particles of gold. Thus it was that the instrument of their sin became also the instrument of their punishment. Sin repays in its own coin (Ps. 7:15, 16; 9:15; Prov. 1:31, 32; 5:22). In completely destroying the golden calf, Moses taught the people the utter futility and nothingness of an idol (1 Cor. 8:4). If the calf could not save itself, it certainly could not save its worshipers (Ps. 115:3–9; Isa. 46:5–7).

21. Unto Aaron. Having destroyed the idol, Moses naturally turned to the one who had been left in charge of the people and who, therefore, should have resisted and halted this apostasy (ch. 24:14). Moses did not mean to imply that the people had done anything to Aaron; the question was asked in reproach, as a rebuke. Had Aaron taken a firm stand this iniquity might not have occurred (PP 316, 317).

22. Thou knowest. Instead of humbly accepting the responsibility for their idolatry, Aaron justified himself by placing the blame for it upon the people. In doing so he proved himself a true descendant of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:12, 13). What a contrast to the spirit of Moses (see on Ex. 32:10-14, 32).

24. There came out. To further justify his course Aaron implied that a miracle had occurred, that supernatural power had converted the gold cast “into the fire” into “this calf.” The bewitching power of sin causes otherwise sound-minded men to engage in a rationalization of their course of action. Aaron would have been destroyed for his sin had it not been for the earnest intercession of Moses in his behalf (Deut. 9:20). Because of his position as leader, in the absence of Moses, Aaron’s iniquity was the more reprehensible. To whom God grants much, of him is much expected (Luke 12:48).

25. Were naked. Or possibly, “had broken loose.” That is, the people were giving free rein to their wild passions. Moral restraint had been completely abandoned. The people were practically in a state of riot, having worked themselves up to a frenzy. They had become a wild mob. Aaron was responsible for the orgy, for he had made the calf and proclaimed the feast.

Their shame. Perhaps some of the Amalekites (see Ex. 17:8–16) were still in the vicinity to witness this riotous occasion and its licentious indecencies.

26. Then Moses stood. Failing to stop this vile demonstration, and realizing that something must be done, Moses stationed himself at “the gate of the camp” and summoned those who would do so to join him in quelling the disturbance. In the warfare between good and evil there is no such thing as neutrality. We are either on God’s side or on Satan’s. There is no middle ground (Joshua 24:14, 15; 1 Kings 18:21; Matt. 6:24). The ultimate test of being on the Lord’s side is to remain faithful when those around us are apostatizing. Weak character sides with the multitude (Matt. 7:13, 14). Determined piety reveals itself in being able to resist the contagion of numbers. It takes courage to be singular (see Dan. 3:14–18). Alone among their brethren, the “sons of Levi” rallied to “the Lord’s side.” They had not participated in the idolatrous worship.

27. Every man his sword. Wherever the Levites saw any still persisting in the licentious rites they were to “slay” them with the sword, ignoring every tie of family and friendship (Deut. 33:8, 9; Eze. 9:6). Resolute action was necessary to quell rebellion. Jesus made it plain that no earthly ties are to be allowed to stand between us and our duty to Him (Matt. 8:21, 22; 10:37). Thus it was that the place of feasting became the place of death. This summary execution of those who led out in idolatry among the people was necessary to prove to the surrounding nations the definite displeasure of God against heathen worship. As to His own people, the Lord had to convince them that iniquity such as this would not be tolerated. Had God permitted this offense to pass without severe punishment, in the future the Jews would have the more readily yielded to the temptations of idolatry. As the loving protector of Israel, God removed from them those determined to go their own rebellious way, lest they lead others to ruin. These are times when God in His mercy permits the few to perish in order to save the many. Furthermore,

if sin had persisted God could no longer have protected them and they would have fallen, defenseless, before their enemies.

29. Consecrate yourselves. Moses pronounces the favor of Heaven upon the Levites, who so heartily joined with him in the punishment of the idolaters. The Hebrew word for “consecration” carries with it the idea of being ordained to a holy office. Here it implies, also, the special “blessing” God had in store for the Levites, the honor of being chosen to serve in the sanctuary (Num. 3:5–9; 18:1–7; Deut. 10:8).

30. On the morrow. This suggests that the people had at last realized their great guilt and were terrified lest every offender be slain. Moses’ love and pity toward his people led him to intercede with the Lord again on their behalf. There is a profound lesson here that ministers of the gospel should ponder well. While, as pastors of the flock, they should love their members and draw them close to God, they must not fail to show the people their transgressions (Isa. 58:1). At the same time they must plead earnestly with God for the forgiveness of sin through the mercy of Christ.

31. This people. Moses had spoken to God of the Israelites as “thy people” (v. 11). Here, thinking of the gravity of the sin which made them unworthy to be called the people of God, he refers to them as “this people.”

32. If thou wilt forgive. So moved was Moses in his appeal to God that he did not complete the first, the conditional, part of it. This omission might have been, “Then I shall be content,” or “I shall have no more to say.” Similar omissions are found in Luke 13:9; 19:42.

Blot me. So great was Moses’ love for his erring brethren that, if he could not prevent their destruction, he did not want to see it (see Num. 11:15). He was willing not to be “written among the living” (see Isa. 4:3). He was willing to surrender his own life, if that would serve to atone for their sin. He was willing to bear their guilt, here and in the hereafter, in order to secure their forgiveness. Paul manifested similar unselfishness toward the Jews of his day (Rom. 9:1–3). Moses performed many noble acts, but this was the noblest of them all. It is not easy to estimate the measure of love in such men as Moses and Paul, for our limited powers of reason do not comprehend it any more than a little child is able to comprehend the courage of heroes. Moses is a type of the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11, 15), who was “cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression” of His people (Isa. 53:8; Dan. 9:26; John 15:13).

Out of thy book. This refers to the “book of life,” in which are recorded the names of all those who have professed to be children of God (Ps. 69:28; Dan. 12:1; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27). Those who fall away from God, who because of their unwillingness to forsake sin become hardened against the influence of the Holy Spirit (Gen. 6:3; Eph. 4:30; Heb. 10:29; 1 Thess. 5:19), will have their names blotted out of the book of life, and be destroyed.

33. Whosoever hath sinned. In general, the Bible teaches that everyone must bear his own punishment (Deut. 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6; Ps. 49:7, 8; Jer. 31:29, 30; Eze. 18:20). There is only one substitutionary atonement that the Word of God accepts, and that is the atonement of Jesus Christ, who, being without sin, could be punished for the sins of others (Isa. 53:5, 6; John 1:29; 1 Cor. 15:3; Heb. 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24). In interceding as he did for Israel, Moses typified the intercession of Christ for sinners. But he could not, as did our Lord, bear the guilt of the transgressors.

34. In the day when I visit. It has been suggested that this refers to the declaration that none of those who had left Egypt would enter Canaan (Num. 14:26–35).

35. The Lord plagued. After the slaying of the 3,000 (v. 28) a plague had broken out in the camp. Even this was an evidence of divine mercy to emphasize the danger of yielding to sin. Though God was willing to forgive His people, if pardon were too easily obtained they would be emboldened to commit transgression again. They must be made sensible to the evil effects of iniquity. Comfort was postponed that conviction might be the more deeply impressed.

In all of God's dealings with us today we should study to understand His divine purpose and to learn the lessons He designs that we should learn. It is thus that He would develop and strengthen character.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-35PP 315-327; TM 99-103; 3T 296-304, 339-341

1 PP 316; 3T 296, 339, 340; 4T 514

1-6PP 335

2 3T 296

2, 3 PP 317

3, 4 4T 514

4 PP 323; TM 99; 3T 296, 300, 340

4-6PP 317

5 3T 340

5, 6 TM 100

6 CT 367; 3T 296, 340; 8T 66

7, 8 PP 318

9, 10 3T 297

10-12PP 318

10-14TM 100

11 PK 16

11-143T 297, 340

14 PP 319; 3T 298

15 PP 319

15, 16 PP 314; 3T 298

17, 18 PP 319; 3T 298

19 EW 163; 3T 298, 301, 341

19, 20 PP 320

20-23TM 101

21-24PP 320; 3T 298

25 TM 101

26 PK 148; 1T 337; 2T 262, 607; 3T 272, 279, 518; 4T 447; 5T 541; 6T 465; 7T 10, 106

26-28PP 324; TM 102

26-293T 301

27, 28 PP 323

28 3T 303, 342

30-34PP 326

30-353T 303

31, 32 EW 163

CHAPTER 33

1 *The Lord refuseth to go as he had promised with the people.* 4 *The people murmur thereat.* 7 *The tabernacle is removed out of the camp.* 9 *The Lord talketh familiarly with Moses.* 12 *Moses desireth to see the glory of God.*

1. Depart. This reaffirms what the Lord told Moses in ch. 32:34, after Moses' plea that God would forgive the people's sin in making the golden calf. God would remain true to the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 12:7; 26:3; 28:13).

3. Unto a land. This continues the thought of v. 1, v. 2 being parenthetical. In love God tells Israel it is best that He not go with them. Should they again violate His covenant, His direct presence would mean their complete destruction. There are times when God in mercy withdraws from us. He never forces Himself upon us (Matt. 13:53–58).

4. They mourned. The Israelites began to realize what separation from the Lord meant. "An angel" seemed not to promise the assurance that God Himself could give. There was deep sorrow for their transgression. Repentance is an indispensable condition for restoration to divine favor, for there can be no salvation without it (Luke 13:5; Acts 3:19; Rev. 2:5, 16). In penitence and humiliation the people "put off" their "ornaments." The removal of ornaments implies mourning and reformation (Gen. 35:4; Eze. 26:16). The men were probably wearing armlets, bracelets, and anklets. The latter were worn by men in Egypt.

5. I will come up. In response to Israel's apparent repentance God assured them that they would not be utterly forsaken. His seeming reluctance to accept their change of heart was due to the fact that repentance had not as yet gone deep enough (see Hosea 6:4; 7:8, 14–16). By delay it was God's purpose to create in their hearts a deeper longing for fellowship with Him (see Joel 2:12, 13; Hosea 10:12; DA 200).

6. By the mount Horeb. Literally, "from the mount Horeb." Or, "from Mount Horeb onward" (RSV). This implies that the Israelites discontinued the use of ornaments, for a time at least, in token of their sincere purpose to obey God.

7. Took the tabernacle. This was a tent used temporarily, until completion of the more permanent "tent of meeting" (PP 327). Moses could not always be ascending Mt. Sinai to meet with God, for the camp needed his superintending care, especially at this time. The fact that the tent was moved "afar off from the camp" symbolized the removal of God's presence from the people, because of their iniquity.

Tabernacle of the congregation. Preferably, "the tent of meeting." Here those who desired to return to the Lord could come in true repentance, confessing their sins and seeking God's mercy.

8. When Moses went out. In fear and trembling the Israelites centered their attention upon the tent of meeting to see whether God would receive their representative and grant

⁵Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ex 27:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

them a sign of reinstatement to His favor. The very fact that the withdrawal of God's presence was so keenly felt by the people gave promise of genuine repentance.

9. *The cloudy pillar.* This sign, now familiar to the people, was evidence to them that the Lord would continue to be their guide and protector (ch. 13:21, 22).

12. *See, thou sayest.* Verses 12 and 13 are an example of the intimate way in which Moses talked with God (Num. 12:8). Friendship with God gives men boldness in approaching Him, for true friendship casts out fear (Heb. 4:15, 16; 1 John 4:18). Moses earnestly desired full information as to what the Lord intended to do with His people, and who would be appointed to lead them. Moses felt the Lord would surely reveal this if, as He had said, Moses now "found grace" in His sight. Moses reminded God that "this nation is thy people," so implying God's responsibility toward them.

14. *My presence.* The request of Moses is granted. God's own presence would go with them, and also give them "rest," that is, possession of the land of Canaan (Deut. 3:20; 12:9, 10; 25:19; Heb. 4:8).

15. *If thy presence.* Moses was not yet satisfied. God had said, literally, "I will give rest to *thee*" (singular), which seemed to confine the blessing only to Moses. With this Moses was not content; the promise must also embrace "*thy people.*"

16. *Be separated.* That is, distinct from all other nations. God's presence was with them, and they were His people (ch. 19:5, 6).

17. *I will do this thing.* God agreed to Moses' plea. Moses' "effectual fervent prayer" had availed "much" (James 5:16). He did not "faint," and his petition was granted (Luke 18:1). Importunate prayers, especially those on behalf of others, are a demonstration of faith. Such were those of Abraham for Sodom (Gen. 18:23–33), Daniel for his people (Dan. 9:4–19), and Christ for His disciples (John 17).

I know thee by name. Moses was a personal friend of God. In Oriental lands even more than in the West, personal acquaintance serves to open doors that would otherwise remain closed.

18. *Shew me thy glory.* Though God had graciously answered his prayers in behalf of Israel, Moses longed for further evidence of divine favor. He had already been in the very presence of God on repeated occasions, but a solemn realization of the task that was his made him feel the need of an even closer fellowship with God. This led to a request that no man had made hitherto, something Moses felt would be a strength to him in his appointed task. He had asked much for his people; it was not inappropriate that he should now ask for himself assurance that his labors would meet with success. He knew well that no earthly power could take the place of God's abiding presence and of the knowledge that comes from personal fellowship with Him (Jer. 9:23, 24).

Too often it is a guilty conscience that makes us shrink from the presence of the Lord of life. So it was with our first parents when they "hid themselves" (Gen. 3:8). It was because the life of Moses was in harmony with the will of his Maker that he stood in the presence of the Lord and was not afraid. The more a man knows of God, the more he longs to know. In the divine presence there is "fullness of joy," and at His "right hand" there are "pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11).

19. *I will make.* What may appear to have been presumption was not so in the case of Moses. Mutual love and respect drew both Creator and creature together.

My goodness. Literally, "my beauty" or "my excellence." The LXX has "my glory."

20. *Thou canst not see.* If at the appearance of one angel the Roman soldiers at the tomb of the risen Christ “became as dead men” (Matt. 28:4), what might be expected when sinful man is ushered into the very presence of God? Jacob marveled when he saw God “face to face” and yet lived (Gen. 32:30).

21. *There is a place.* Traditions as to the exact location of this place are without value. The event must have occurred somewhere on the upper part of the mountain.

22. *Cover thee.* The various precautions here mentioned were for the purpose of protecting Moses. Man has never seen the Lord’s face (John 1:18; 6:46; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 John 4:12). There is no lack of harmony between these texts, which state that no man has seen God’s face, and the many texts that tell us that God walked among men in the person of Jesus Christ and was seen by multitudes (see 1 John 1:1–3; 1 Tim. 3:16; etc.). In the first group of texts the Bible writers are speaking of God in His undimmed Glory; in the second, of God as “manifest in the flesh,” and thus with His glory hidden. Chapter 33 opens with man disheartened and depressed by virtue of being distant from God, and ends with man assured and strengthened by being drawn close to the divine presence.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-23PP 327-328

3-10PP 327

11 CT 408; EW 162; FE 343; SR 167, 174, 206, TM 405

11, 12 PP 327

13 DA 331; 4T 532

14 DA 331, 641; GW 417; ML 288; PK 312; PP 328; 4T 532; 7T 221

15 TM 499

15, 16 PP 328; 4T 532

16 IT 283

17 PP 328; 4T 532

18 GW 417; MH 464, 508; PP 328; TM 499; 4T 532; 5T 652; 8T 321

18, 19 COL 285; SC 10; 6T 221

19 CT 30; FE 178; MH 464, 508; PP 328; 4T 533; 5T 652; 8T 322, 335

20 PP 67

20-23PP 328

21, 22 4T 533

22 AA 363; MB 44; MH 508; 6T 47; 7T 154

22, 23 EW 162

CHAPTER 34

1 The tables are renewed. 5 The name of the Lord proclaimed. 8 Moses intreateth God to go with them. 10 God maketh a covenant with them, repeating certain duties of the first table. 28 Moses after forty days in the mount cometh down with the tables. 29 His face shineth, and he covereth it with a veil.

1. *Hew thee two tables.* Literally, “Hew for thyself.” Because Moses broke the former tables (ch. 32:19), which “were the work of God” (ch. 32:16), he is now appropriately charged to hew a second set himself. The writing, of course, was that of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 10:4). Moses had not asked for a new set of tables, but simply for the return of God’s favor and the renewal of the covenant. But God could not grant His favor without requiring obedience to His law. The two are inseparable. Men are more willing to enjoy the rewards of right living than they are to

live right. But God insists that the rewards can be bestowed only upon the obedient. He can enter into covenant relation only with those who are willing to accept His law as their rule of life. This He does for their sake rather than for His own.

The repeated writing of the law upon tables of stone proves it to be eternal and unalterable (Matt. 5:17–19; Rom. 13:8–10; Eph. 6:2; James 2:8–12; 1 John 2:3, 4; 5:2, 3). Moses was called upon to repair the loss of the two tables of the law caused by his own action. So it is with us if we break God's law; we cannot hope for a return to divine favor unless we again place ourselves in the way of full obedience. Theft brings the duty of restitution; insult, that of apology; slander, that of retraction.

2. *In the morning.* The delay gave Moses time to prepare the new tables of stone.

3. *And no man.* Not even Joshua was to accompany Moses (cf. chs. 24:13; 32:15–17). The instructions upon this occasion were more stringent than those previously given (see ch. 19:12, 13).

5. *The Lord descended.* The “cloudy pillar” which had been at the door of the tent of meeting (ch. 33:10) ascended the mountain, and when Moses reached the top of the mount it stood with him there.

6. *The Lord passed by.* As promised in ch. 33:22, 23. The name of the Lord stands for His character, here described as consisting of three fundamental qualities—mercy, justice, and truth. Greatest emphasis is placed upon mercy because God's relationship to us is based upon it (1 John 4:7–12). It was particularly important at this time when divine favor had been forfeited and would not have been restored, except for His mercy. There are six different ways in which the Lord manifests love for His people. He is “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” A more complete declaration of His regard and love for sinners would be difficult to imagine. When the Lord revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush He declared Himself to be the “I am,” or, “the self-existent One,” thus emphasizing the distinct difference between Him and all other gods.

In the present state of Israel's sorrow and subdued spirit (Ex. 33:4–6), something additional was needed to impart to them hope and assurance. Of itself the law could not be “merciful and gracious.” Its sole stress was upon rectitude. There was needed a supplementary revelation of the gracious character of God to Moses. In the revelation of the character of God to Moses, Sinai proclaims not only the divine law but also divine grace. This fact proves unfounded the popular notion that Sinai stands for justice but not mercy. Sinai's exalted proclamation of grace by no means annulled the law and thwarted divine justice; rather it clarified the relationship of each to the other. In a later crisis Moses reminded God of the balance between justice and mercy proclaimed upon this occasion (Num. 14:11–19).

Is this same unchanging character of God that gives poor, helpless sinners hope of eternal life today (Ps. 103:8–14; 145:8; Jer. 29:11; 31:3). Inasmuch as there can be no trust in one who is not true, God qualifies for our trust by being “abundant” in “truth.” Truth lies at the root of moral character; it is the precise opposite of hypocrisy (Ps. 108:4; 117:2; John 14:6; James 3:14).

7. *Clear the guilty.* God is gracious to repentant sinners, but He cannot afford to weaken His government by failing to uphold its righteousness and justice (Ps. 85:10; 89:14). God's justice is an essential part of His nature no less than His mercy; without it God could not be God. Justice is, as has been argued, a necessary consequence of His

true love, for “a God all mercy is a God unjust.” Without justice there could be no mercy. Although we read in the Bible that God delights in mercy (Micah 7:18), we never read in the Scriptures that God delights in bringing His judgments upon men. On the contrary, His judgments are said to be a “strange work” (Isa. 28:21). His loving-kindness is abundant (Isa. 55:7; Rom. 5:20). It is God’s mercy that moderates His judgments and makes Him “longsuffering” (Lam. 3:22; Rom. 2:4).

That divine love determines the attitude of God toward His children is clear from the greater space here allotted it in the description of His character and by the fact that the attributes of mercy precede the attributes of justice. Not only is God loving; “God *is* love” (1 John 4:16). The attribute of love is a veritable part of His essential nature; without it He would not be “God.” When the Lord must punish us for our sins, He does it in love, for our own good—not in anger. Like the surgeon, God may use the cutting knife of sorrow to effect the healing of the soul’s disease or injury that has resulted from sin (Heb. 12:5–11; Rev. 3:19).

9. *If now.* Greatly strengthened in faith and courage by the proclamation of the divine character, and confident of the grace of God, Moses entreats the Lord to exercise His grace, to “pardon our iniquity” and to restore the broken covenant. Perhaps Moses’ dim spiritual insight failed to discern that God had promised all of this the day before (ch. 33:17).

10. *I make a covenant.* God’s willingness to renew His covenant with Israel evinces two facts: (1) His faithfulness toward His people, because of His promises to their fathers, and (2) the conquering power of intercessory prayer. Additional pledges not mentioned previously are given, such as the performance of miracles, the enlargement of their borders, and security against invasion (v. 24). The blessings of cooperation with God are infinitely beyond finite comprehension (Eph. 3:20).

Do marvels. These were to include the drying up of the Jordan River (Joshua 3:14–17), the fall of Jericho (Joshua 6:15–21), and the slaughter of their enemies by hailstones (Joshua 10:1–11).

A terrible thing. Not to be done to Israel but to their enemies (Deut. 10:21; Ps. 106:22; 145:6).

11. *Observe thou.* This is not a specific reference to the Ten Commandments, which were enjoined anew by being rewritten upon two new tables (v. 28). This “command” includes the injunctions listed in vs. 12–26. It is to be observed that the increased benefits of God are to be balanced by the people’s acceptance of greater obligation. Every victory over sin brings with it a clearer vision of God, greater opportunities, and increased responsibilities.

13. *Destroy their altars.* This comprehends more than the corresponding command in the “book of the covenant” (ch. 23:24), which mentions “images” only. Regarding these “altars” see Num. 23:1, 29, 30; Judges 2:2; 1 Kings 16:32; 18:26.

Their groves. From *’asherim*. The “groves” seem to have been wooden cult objects in the form of truncated trees. These stumps of trees, possibly with the stubs of some branches still in place, were objects of worship. The well-known sacred tree of the Assyrians was probably an *’asherah*.

15. *Lest thou make.* The evil results of making treaties with the Canaanite nations (v. 12; ch. 23:32, 33), joining in idol feasts and marrying heathen wives (Judges 2:2, 11–13), are here vividly stated. Inasmuch as the Lord claimed His people as His bride, idolatry

was regarded as adultery (Jer. 3:1–5; Eze. 16; 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7–9; 21:2). “Molten gods” are expressly referred to because of the recent sin of the golden calf.

21. Earning time. That is, plowing time. In Old English, “to ear” meant “to plow.” Inasmuch as the times of plowing and of harvest were the seasons of greatest temptation to violate the Sabbath, the charge is repeated here.

22. The feast of weeks. At first sight it would appear that three distinct feasts are mentioned here. However, since the feast of “firstfruits of wheat harvest” is the same as the “feast of weeks” (Lev. 23:15–17; Num. 28:26), there are but two. Both were commanded in the “book of the covenant” (Ex. 23:16).

23. All your menchildren. See on ch. 23:14–17.

24. Enlarge thy borders. The first promise of land made to Abraham and his seed is recorded in Gen. 12:5–7. Later this promise was widened to include the whole area between the “river of Egypt” and the Euphrates (Gen. 15:18; 1 Kings 4:21; 2 Chron. 9:26).

Beholding the incomparable superiority of Israel to all other nations, many would voluntarily unite themselves with God’s chosen people. Thus Israel’s borders would be enlarged until, eventually, “their kingdom should embrace the world” (COL 290). Jerusalem itself would stand forever (GC 19) and would become the metropolis of the entire earth (DA 577).

26. The first of the firstfruits. The best insurance against falling into idolatry was to be continuing participation in the spirit and practice of true worship as prescribed by God. Faithful and proper regard for the Sabbath, the great annual festivals, the laws of redemption, the various sacrifices, and similar institutions ordained to lead to spiritual consecration would protect them from the temptations and dangers of heathenism they would encounter in the Land of Promise.

Shalt not seethe. See on ch. 23:19. The closing part of this section is parallel to the last section in the “book of the covenant” (ch. 23:19).

27. These words. That is, those of vs. 10–26.

After the tenor. That is, “in harmony with these words.” God would perform His side of the contract if the people would faithfully carry out theirs.

28. Forty days. This duplicated the length of time of Moses’ former stay in the mount (ch. 24:18). On this occasion the people successfully met the test occasioned by the absence of Moses (see ch. 34:30–32).

Did neither eat bread. This also was a repetition of the former experience (Deut. 9:9–12). Moses’ audience with the Lord sustained his physical strength, and this made food and drink unnecessary. The needs of the body were not felt because the desires of the spirit were so fully met (Ps. 16:11). Elijah (1 Kings 19:8) and Jesus (Matt. 4:1, 2) are the only others named in Scripture as having fasted for this length of time. The “he” in the closing sentence of this verse refers not to Moses but to God (Ex. 34:1; Deut. 10:1–4).

29. While he talked with him. Preferably, “because he talked with him.” The radiant face of Moses was but a reflection of divine glory (2 Cor. 3:7). Similarly, at the transfiguration, divinity flashed through humanity (Matt. 17:2). Moses’ previous admission to the divine presence had not left any visible trace upon his countenance (Ex. 24:12–18). This difference was due partly to the fact that since his first ascent Moses had been severely tried and had come forth from that bitter experience a better man, purer and more fit for close communion with his God, and partly to the fact that the people were

now repentant rather than rebellious. Moses had displayed devotion, courage, and zeal in calling a halt to apostasy.

In refusing to become the sole progenitor of a people whom God proposed to adopt instead of iniquitous Israel (ch. 32:10), and in offering himself in atonement for their transgressions (Ex. 32:32; John 15:13), he had manifested a spirit of supreme self-sacrifice. Thereafter he persisted in wholehearted and unselfish intercession for his countrymen (Ex. 33:12–16). In view of this demonstration of the highest type of religious devotion, a reflection of the very character of God Himself, it was appropriate that he should be permitted the unique privilege of seeing the glory of the Creator (chs. 33:18–23; 34:5–8). It is small wonder that his face shone after such an experience. Doubtless Paul had Moses in mind when he penned 2 Cor. 3:18.

He who is filled with the Spirit of God reflects the glorious character of God. From those who live close to God there goes forth an influence which, though like Moses they “wist not” its presence, has a telling effect on the lives of others. It has well been said that when we take care to keep right Godward, He will take care that we keep right manward. Our greatest impression upon men is made, not by that which we labor to achieve, but by that which we achieve unconsciously.

30. *They were afraid.* Their guilty consciences had made Aaron and the people feel that God was still estranged from them, and they shrank from the radiant countenance of Moses. Had they ever been obedient to God, joy would have taken the place of fear and they would have welcomed the light of heaven. This reflection of the glory and majesty of God was designed to impress upon Israel the sacred character of His law and the glory of the gospel revealed through Christ. Both had been presented to Moses in the mount. That divine light symbolized the glory of the dispensation of which Moses was the visible mediator (2 Cor. 3:7, 11, 14; PP 330).

33. *Till Moses had done speaking.* Preferably, “When Moses had done speaking.” The word “till” is not in the Hebrew. While Moses related to the people “all that the Lord had spoken” (v. 32), his face was unveiled. Thereafter he wore a veil over his face in their presence. This veiling of Moses’ face is a type of Jesus Christ, who veiled His divinity with humanity in order that He might fellowship with us (Phil. 2:5–11; DA 23). Had the Son of God come in the glory of heaven, sinful men could not have endured His presence. But as the Son of man He could associate freely with sinners and prepare them for a restoration to the very presence of God.

34. *When Moses went in.* That is, into the “tent of meeting” (ch. 33:7–10). When he came out again to speak the words of God to the people his face was left uncovered until he had given the message. The holy light added divine authority to his message and gave abiding evidence that he spoke to them as God’s representative. Like the moon, it bore witness to the absent sun.

35. *Israel saw.* After each message Moses again covered his face until he re-entered the “tent of meeting.”

In 2 Cor. 3:7–18 the apostle Paul uses this veiling of the face of Moses to typify the veiled glory of the old covenant in contrast to the unveiled and abiding glory of the new covenant. The glory of God may be discerned throughout OT times, though it is so often veiled by the imperfections of the men through whom He worked out His plan. Paul here speaks also of a “vail” upon the “heart” of the Jews of his day, to represent their spiritual blindness in not discerning Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah of prophecy (see Matt.

15:24; 23:16; John 9:39–41). Our Lord found it difficult to remove this blindness even from His own disciples (Luke 24:25).

Moses' removal of the veil also symbolizes the Christian believer's "beholding" with an "open," or unveiled, face "the glory of the Lord," betokening his being "changed into the same image" of his Lord "from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). "The glory reflected in the countenance of Moses illustrates the blessings to be received by God's commandment-keeping people through the mediation of Christ" (PP 330).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-35PP 329-330

5-7MB 157

6 DA 19, 302; Ed 22, 35, 40; FE 177; GC 19; MB 39; MH 465; 8T 322

6, 7 CH 204; COL 162, 285; DA 209; GC 500, 541, 627; MB 75; MH 508; PK 296, 312; PP 628; SC 10; 5T 633; 6T 221

6-8PP 329

7 CH 19, 37, 49, 112; MB 39; PP 469; Te 85; 3T 140

14 3T 238, 248

19, 20 AA 337; 4T 467

24 PP 537

28 PP 313, 329

29 EW 15; GW 143; LS 245; PP 329; 3T 354; 4T 342, 533

30 PP 329; 4T 343

30, 31 3T 354

33 PP 330; 3T 355; 4T 343

CHAPTER 35

1 *The sabbath.* 4 *The free gifts for the tabernacle.* 20 *The readiness of the people to offer.* 30 *Bezaleel and Aholiab are called to the work.*

1. All the congregation. The Israelites were now ready to begin the construction and setting up of the tabernacle that had been planned (chs. 25–31) but delayed because of their apostasy (ch. 32; PP 343) and the need of renewing the covenant (chs. 33, 34). Since this was a project in which all the people were vitally interested and involved by reason of their offerings (ch. 25:2–7) and their labor (see chs. 28:3; 35:10, 25; 36:4; 39:42), Moses "gathered" them "together" for preliminary instructions.

2. Six days. The Hebrews were to be engaged in a holy enterprise and might think this an excuse for working on the Sabbath. But they were not to permit the sacred nature of their work to deceive them into a neglect of the holy observance of that day or to tread thoughtlessly on its sacred time. Herein is a pointed lesson for ministers and others who do God's work on God's day. The construction of the tabernacle, with the different skills and materials required for it was a secular matter, and therefore not a fit occupation for God's holy day.

3. Kindle no fire. In early times the kindling of a fire required considerable labor. The comparatively warm climate of the Sinai region made artificial heating unnecessary, and a fire would have been kindled only for cooking purposes. Not being essential to health in such a climate, warm food was not to be prepared on Sabbath (see on ch. 16:23). This command is still strictly obeyed, even in cold climates, by the Karaite Jews, who permit neither fire nor light in their homes on the Sabbath day. However, many Jews view this

charge as being only temporary in nature, and have both lights and fires, even in Palestine. But strictly orthodox Jews today cook no food on the Sabbath.

18. Pins. These were pegs driven into the ground to hold the ropes that supported the tent covering the tabernacle and the posts in the wall of the court.

25. Did spin. Spinning was a common art among the women of that day, from highest to lowest. There was work for all in the making of the tabernacle and its furnishings. God considers all work done for Him as of great value and importance, whether that of the “rulers” who “brought onyx stones” and precious “stones” and the costly “spice” (vs. 27, 28), or that of the humble women who “spun goats’ hair” (v. 26).

For further information concerning directions for the erection for the tabernacle, see on chs. 25 to 31.

29. A willing offering. The spirit of willingness manifested by the people of Israel must have been most pleasing in the sight of God, for “God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). It is not so much the amount given that counts with Him (Luke 21:3), but the spirit in which it is given (v. 4). Willingness and fidelity are what make our service acceptable to Him (COL 402), and He rewards us according to the generosity of His purpose (COL 397).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

5 WM 2914

20-22SR 151

21 Ed 286; PK 61; WM 291

21, 22 PP 344

21-256T 468

22 5T 268

23-28PP 344

30, 31 PP 343

30-35PK 62

CHAPTER 36

1 *The offerings are delivered to the workmen.* 5 *The liberality of the people is restrained.* 8 *The curtains of cherubims.* 14 *The curtains of goats’ hair.* 19 *The covering of skins.* 20 *The boards with their sockets.* 31 *The bars.* 35 *The vail.* 37 *The hanging for the door.*

3. All the offering. The liberality of the people was truly remarkable. They brought so much that the surplus “stuff” interfered with the progress of the work. The people made a similar response to the appeal of King Hezekiah (2 Chron. 31:4–10).

8. Every wise hearted man. This chapter closely parallels what has been given in ch. 26. Points not previously mentioned are as follows:

22. Equally distant. Preferably, “set in order one against another,” to be inserted into the “sockets” (ch. 26:19).

27. The sides of the tabernacle. Preferably, “the side,” or rear, of the tabernacle.

37. The tabernacle door. Rather, “the door of the tent,” as in ch. 26:36.

38. Chapters. That is, the capitals of the pillars.

The long and accurate repetition in the closing part of this book of the details of the construction of the tabernacle must have had a definite purpose. It shows the importance of the sanctuary and its every part in God’s plan of salvation. It also emphasizes the need of exact and strict obedience to the divine commands. If anyone might have been given

the privilege of changing God's directions in some slight degree, it would seem to be Moses; but no such prerogative is accorded him.

The exact correspondence of detail with detail teaches the lesson that what God commands is to be observed to the letter. These five concluding chapters of Exodus emphasize the extreme exactitude with which Moses and those under him carried out all the directions God had given. If "fifty taches" were ordered (ch. 26:6), "fifty taches" were made (ch. 36:13). If "five pillars" were commanded here (ch. 26:37), and "four pillars" there (ch. 26:32), the five and the four were constructed and set up accordingly (ch. 36:36, 38). If this curtain was to have a pattern woven into it (ch. 26:31), and that curtain was to be adorned with embroidery (ch. 26:36), the embroiderer and the weaver did so (ch. 36:35, 37). Nothing commanded was neglected. In only one or two cases (notably in ch. 36:38) small additions were made, if not to the orders given, at least to those recorded. The same spirit was later reflected by our Lord in His ministry (John 4:34; 17:4). God frowns upon any alteration of His commandments, any turning from them to the right or to the left, any deduction from them or addition to them. We cannot, we are not to attempt, to improve upon the gospel or God's Word (Deut. 4:1, 2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5, 6).

The progressive manner in which the tabernacle was reared, first the erection of its framework, then the covering of the inner and outer curtains, and lastly the boards, bar, and veils, portrays the advancing work of sanctification in the experience of the believer. After his heart is surrendered through faith to Christ as his Saviour, there are added more and more Christian graces, till his whole life "fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord." (Eph. 2:21, 22).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 PK 62
- 3, 5 6T 468
- 5 5T 268
- 5-7WM 292
- 6 PP 344; SR 152; 5T 268

CHAPTER 37

1 *The ark.* 6 *The mercy seat with cherubims.* 10 *The table with his vessels.* 17 *The candlestick with his lamps and instruments.* 25 *The altar of incense.* 29 *The anointing oil and sweet incense.*

1. And Bezaleel. This chapter records the execution of instructions appearing in chs. 25:10-39; 30:1-5, 23-25, 34, 35, to which the reader is referred. Bezaleel commissioned others to do most of the work, but he reserved for himself the construction of the ark, its cherubim, and its mercy seat. This was undoubtedly because the ark was the most important article of equipment in the sanctuary, being, as it was, the abode of the Sacred Presence, and he intended it to be his masterpiece.

CHAPTER 38

1 *The altar of burnt offering.* 8 *The laver of brass.* 9 *The court.* 21 *The sum of that the people offered.*

1. The altar of burnt offering. Verses 1-8 deal with the furniture for the court (see on chs. 27:1-5; 30:18).

8. The lookingglasses. Not mentioned previously, these were of highly polished bronze, circular or oval in form. Such mirrors were used by the women of Egypt, as in

most Oriental lands, from very early times. Inasmuch as there seems to have been no command by Moses that this should be done, the women must have offered them in a spirit of commendable, consecrated self-denial. These mirrors were no doubt highly valued, and their dedication to God therefore an excellent example of sacrificial devotion (see Matt. 26:6–13).

These pious women esteemed the higher adornment of the spirit more than they did that the outward appearance (1 Peter 3:1–5). Their gift testified that they loved God more than they loved themselves.

9. He made the court. For vs. 9–20, see on ch. 27:9–19.

23. Engraver. Inasmuch as Aholiab was skilled in textiles the word “engraver,” which suggests work in metals, should be translated “fabricator” or “craftsman.”

24. All the gold. “All the gold” would weight a little more than 2,204 lb. (1000 kg.). This would make a cube of gold about $142/3$ in. (37.25 cm.) on a side. Gold was abundant in Egypt, being imported from Ethiopia. Much gold also came into the land of the Pharaohs as tribute from subject nations.

25. The silver. The weight of the silver would be about 7,582 lb. (3440 kg.) The “hundred sockets” (v. 27) compare exactly with the total number of “sockets” listed in ch. 26:19, 21, 25, 32.

29. The brass. That is, bronze. Its weight would be about 5,337 lb. (2421 kg.). To this must be added the value of the precious stones, the spices, the woodwork, the cloth, the various animal skins. This speaks well for the liberality of the people (see Ps. 105:37).

When the Hebrews left Egypt they “borrowed” treasure from the Egyptians (see on Ex. 3:22; 12:35, 36). Considerable wealth had also no doubt recently come to the Israelites from the defeated Amalekites (ch. 17:8–13).

CHAPTER 39

1 *The cloths of service and holy garments.* 2 *The ephod.* 8 *The breastplate.* 22 *The robe of the ephod.* 27 *The coats, mitre, and girdle of fine linen.* 30 *The plate of the holy crown.* 32 *All is viewed and approved by Moses.*

1. And of the blue. The priestly garments were made according to the instructions recorded in ch. 28.

3. Beat the gold. Here for the first time an explanation is given of the method whereby gold thread was prepared for embroidering.

32. All the work. Inasmuch as the Israelites did not reach Mt. Sinai till the third month (ch. 19:1), and Moses was with God nearly three months (chs. 24:18; 34:28), construction of the tabernacle began about the sixth or seventh month and was completed before the end of the year (ch. 40:2; PP 349). Six months were thus occupied in its construction. The rapidity with which the work was completed indicates consecrated application, skilled workmanship, brotherly cooperation on the part of all who had part in the project, and the blessing of God that attended their efforts.

43. Moses did look. At the close of the creation God looked upon all the works of His hands. Finding them “very good” He pronounced a blessing upon them (Gen. 1:22, 28, 31). Now, man had completed a “sanctuary” where God promised to dwell (Ex. 25:8). It represented man’s best efforts, and was done “as the Lord had commanded” (ch. 39:43). Appropriately, “Moses blessed” the people for their labors of love and devotion.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

CHAPTER 40

1 *The tabernacle is commanded to be reared, 9 and anointed. 13 Aaron and his sons to be sanctified. 16 Moses performeth all things accordingly. 34 A cloud covereth the tabernacle.*

2. On the first day. That is, the first of the month Abib, or Nisan, which would be toward the end of March or the first of April. To what better task could the people have set their hands on the first day of the new year than the erection of this place of worship?

3. Put therein the ark. The ark of the covenant was the most important article of all the appointments of the tabernacle, the very heart of the sanctuary, the basis of the covenant (Deut. 4:12, 13), the place of God's presence among His people (see Ex. 25:8, 21, 22). It was therefore brought into the tabernacle first. The two tables of stone were already within it (vs. 20, 21).

5. Before the ark. Not in the most holy place, but "before the veil," opposite the ark yet in the holy place (v. 26).

The hanging. That is, the curtain at the front, or eastern, end of the tabernacle (ch. 26:36, 37).

10. An altar most holy. Not because it was holier than other articles of the tabernacle, all of which are said to be "most holy" (ch. 30:29). It was so designated to impress constantly upon the people its sacred nature, inasmuch as they came more in contact with it than with the sanctuary and its contents.

15. Anoint them. There appears to be a difference between the anointing of the high priest and the anointing of the ordinary priests. The oil was first poured upon the head of Aaron, and afterward sprinkled upon his person and garments, but it seems to have been only sprinkled upon the common priests and not poured on their heads (Lev. 8:12, 30; Ps. 133:2). Because of this special anointing, the high priest is often referred to as "the priest that is anointed" (Lev. 4:5, 16; 6:22; 16:32).

17. Second year. The second counted inclusively, reckoning as the first the year in which they left Egypt. The 1st anniversary of the Exodus came two weeks later, on the 15th of the 1st month (see p. 187).

On the first day. Verses 17 to 33 record the actual rearing of the tabernacle. Owing to its portable nature this could easily be done in one day.

18. Fastened his sockets. Inasmuch as the "sockets," or bases, were laid flat on the ground, the word "fastened" should be rendered "set" or "placed." The "pillars" supported the inner "vail" and also the hangings at the east end, or entrance, of the sanctuary (ch. 26:31, 32, 36, 37).

19. The tent over the tabernacle. Here the distinction between the "tent," the "tabernacle," and the "covering" is clarified. The "tent" was the goats' hair covering and the wooden framework that supported it. Over this was the "covering" of rams' and seals' skins (ch. 26:14).

25. He lighted the lamps. Moses, as a type of the great High Priest, Christ (Heb. 4:15; 8:1, 2) himself inaugurated the service of the sanctuary. Not only did he light the "lamps" and burn "sweet incense," but he offered upon the altar of burnt offering the first evening sacrifice, "the burnt offering and the meat offering" (Ex. 29:38-41; 40:29).

30. He set the laver. Verses 31 and 32 are thrown in parenthetically to explain the purpose of the laver concerning which no explanation had yet been given.

33. *Moses finished.* The fabrication of the tabernacle was completed prior to its erection. After the gospel has been preached to the whole world, then the “elect” will be gathered (Matt. 24:14, 31). Then every “living stone” (1 Kings 6:7; 1 Peter 2:4, 5) that has been shaped and finished after the divine similitude will take its place in the temple of God (Rev. 3:12). We are now building the characters that are one day to become part of that eternal dwelling place (Matt. 6:19–21; 7:24–29). When once the preparatory labors in connection with the kingdom of God have been finished, in accordance with the plan, no time will be lost in setting it up in its full glory. Christ will then appear and His people will appear with Him (Col. 3:4).

Just as the rearing of the tabernacle prepared it to be the abiding place of the Lord, so the glorification of the church will open the way for “the tabernacle of God” to be “with men” (Rev. 21:3). As the people participated with Moses in the construction of the earthly sanctuary, so Christ invites us to be fellow workers with Him in the building of His church (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:19–21; 6:1). When the tabernacle was reared, nothing was lacking to make it perfect. Thus will it be when the church is finally glorified (Eph. 5:27).

34. *A cloud.* Literally, “*the cloud.*” This cloud had led Israel from Succoth onward (chs. 13:20–22; 14:19, 20, 24; 19:9; 24:15–18). For a time it also attended the temporary “tent of meeting” (ch. 33:7–10) but now “covered” the tabernacle as “the glory of the Lord filled” it.

The glory of the Lord. How eagerly the people must have crowded around to gaze upon the sacred structure. And while they watched with reverent satisfaction, the pillar of cloud floated majestically over the sanctuary, descended, and enveloped it. Thus God demonstrated His approval of all that had been done. The Lord accepted the house that had been prepared for Him, and entered it. With deep emotion the people beheld the token that the work of their hands was accepted (PP 349, 350). They now realized that God would Himself dwell among them and journey with them (Num. 9:15–23).

The book of Exodus appropriately closes with a sublime manifestation of the glory and power of God. It ends as the history of this world will end, with the descent of the glory of the Lord to dwell among men (Rev. 21:3; 22:5).

6

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

12-16PP 359

17 PP 374

20 PP 349

21 CW 172

30 2T 611

34 PP 349, 359; 6T 468

34, 35 MH 437; SR 156

36, 37 PP 376

36-38SR 156

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⁶Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ex 33:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

⁷Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Le 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.