

Bible Companion Commentary: Exodus

Bible Companion Commentary, Volume 2

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Published by Duncan Heaster, 2026.

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BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: EXODUS

First edition. September 19, 2026.

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PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

EXODUS CHAPTER 1

Exo 1:1 Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came into Egypt (every man and his household came with Jacob)-

"Now these are the names" is the phrase used towards the end of Genesis (Gen. 46:8). Clearly the records are by the same editor / author, who is clearly Moses, according to how these writings are quoted in later scripture.

Exo 1:2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah-

Although Reuben was demoted from being first-born, the list here seems to be in order of birth.

Exo 1:3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin-

The sons of Leah and Rachel are listed first. The sons of the concubines come secondly, perhaps reflecting how this was not God's ideal intention. What Jacob did was not right, but still God worked through his dysfunction to build up the foundation of His people. I suggested in commentary on Genesis that God's ideal intention was that Jacob marry Leah and have his children by her. But he insisted on also marrying Rachel, and had relations with his servant girls. He didn't act in marital life as God intended, but all the same God worked through it all.

Exo 1:4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher-

Eleven sons are listed because these listed in :2-4 are those who came into Egypt; Joseph and his sons Ephraim and Manasseh were already in Egypt (:5).

Exo 1:5 All the souls who came out of Jacob's body were seventy souls, and Joseph was in Egypt already-

LXX "seventy five". The Canaanite explanation of the family of the gods was that it contained a total of 70 gods – Ugaritic Tablet II AB 6.46 speaks of the “seventy sons of Asherah”. This is re-focused by the record of Genesis 10 – which speaks of 70 nations of men. Likewise Gen. 46:27 and Ex. 1:5 speak of the 70 sons of Jacob – and Dt. 32:8 says that the number of the Gentile nations was fixed “according to the number of the sons of God” or, “Israel” (according to some texts). The belief in the 70 gods of the Canaanite pantheon is therefore re-focused down to earth – where there were 70 sons of Jacob, 70 nations in the world around Israel, and Dt. 32:8 may imply that each is cared for by a guardian Angel in Heaven.

Exo 1:6 Joseph died, as did all his brothers, and all that generation-

He lived 110 years, which was not as long as his father Jacob, although he appears to have been more spiritual than his father. Length of life was not and is not the ultimate indicator of Divine blessing.

Exo 1:7 The children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly and multiplied, and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them-

The suffering of Israel at the time of the first Assyrian invasion of 2 Kings 15:29; Is. 9:1,3,4 is spoken of in terms of their experience in Egypt, which is clearly typical of the last days: "Thou hast multiplied the nation (as God did in Egypt - Ex. 1:7), and not increased the

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joy... thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder (the language of Israel in Egypt), the rod of his oppressor" (same word translated "taskmaster" in Ex. 1:11). Biblical history continually interconnects, demonstrating that the same Divine hand has worked throughout history, and likewise works in our lives according to the same style. See on Ex. 14:25; 15:21.

The situation was also a primary fulfilment of the promises to Abraham about the multiplication of the seed. Those same promises are made to us, and likewise have an element of fulfilment in this life, as well as in the Kingdom to come on earth at the last day.

Exo 1:8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who didn't know Joseph-

"Know" seems used here in the sense of respecting Joseph- who had after all saved Egypt and done so much to establish the power of Pharaoh over the nation.

Exo 1:9 He said to his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more numerous and mightier than we are-

Clearly God had poured out His blessing upon Abrahams seed, until it seems there were more of them in Egypt than there were Egyptians- or at least, more than the members of the ethnic group then in power in Egypt.

Exo 1:10 Come, let us deal prudently with them, in case they multiply yet more and it happens that when any war breaks out, they also join themselves to our enemies, and fight against us, and escape out of the land-

Fear of possible consequence has led men to do the most awful things. So may crimes and murders are rooted in fear. And this horrific abuse of the Hebrews arose from this too. And we are to learn from this, and through faith live without fear, and all the bad things which fear leads to.

Exo 1:11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens-

The taskmasters 'afflicted' Israel in their forced labour, the Hebrew meaning to browbeat/depress. These were exactly the tactics of Hitler's bully boys in the death camps. The Hebrew word translated "taskmasters" in the record of their persecutions is also used concerning Nebuchadnezzar (Is. 14:4) and peoples like Damascus, Tyre, Gaza etc. Concerning Israel's latter day deliverance from them, Zech. 9:8 reads, "I will encamp about mine house... because of him that passeth by (Passover language)... and no oppressor (same word "taskmaster") shall pass through them... for now have I seen" (cp. Ex. 3:7). Like the Nazis, the Egyptians seem to have excused their abuse of Israel with a concocted ideology. Stephen says that they "dealt subtly" with Israel, using the Greek word from which "sophistry" comes. Militant Islam has already developed an equivalent to this.

They built storage cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Raamses-

Seeing that all ultimately belongs to God, it is an utter delusion to think that we totally own anything. But the possession of wealth leads to just that illusion; because wealth is of itself a delusion. The very possession

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of wealth tempts us to amass more of it- it truly is potentially addictive of itself. The Hebrew word translated "treasure" is also that used for "store"- hence Ex. 1:11 AV "treasure cities", RV "store cities". The rich fool is a visual presentation of this fact; the more wealth is possessed, the stronger is the desire to store it, amass it- but not use it.

Exo 1:12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out. They were grieved because of the children of Israel-

I will argue throughout Ex. 1-15 that God's intention was that Pharaoh and Egypt should convert to Him. Israel at this time were worshipping the idols of Egypt and were far from Yahweh. But He blessed them by grace, and the more the Egyptians cursed them, the more the Israelites prospered. This was all from God, as part of His wider appeal to the Egyptians to accept Him by perceiving how Yahweh was with His people by grace- even if His own people had effectively rejected Him at the time. The same theme recurs in Ex. 1:20, where the attempt to slay the Hebrew babies results in the Hebrews growing even more.

Exo 1:13 The Egyptians ruthlessly made the children of Israel serve-

We must remember that all the criticisms and denunciations of 'Israel' are denunciations of Jacob, who *primarily* was the man Jacob, whose children shared his characteristics. Therefore in some ways we can feed back from the failures of Israel as a people and see the weakness of Jacob as a man. Thus the way Israel were made

to "serve with rigour" in Egypt reflected the way Jacob served in the same way with Laban (Ex. 1:13,14), and thereby implies that Jacob was suffering for his sins and was also idolatrous as they were at that time (Ez. 20:8), while he served Laban.

Exo 1:14 and they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all kinds of service in the field; they ruthlessly made them serve in all their service-

The Passover, as the prototype breaking of bread, featured bitter herbs to remind Israel of their bitter experience in Egypt. The breaking of bread should likewise focus our attention on the fact that return to the world is a return to bondage and bitterness, not freedom. Israel didn't learn this lesson, they forgot the bitterness of Egypt, and longed to return to it.

"Slime" is the same word as "mortar" in Ex. 1:14, and "mortar" in Gen. 11:3 is the word translated "pitch" concerning how Moses' bulrush basket was made (Ex. 2:3). This conjures up the picture of Amram bringing home some mortar from the building site in order to make that ark.

Exo 1:15 The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah-

The plan to slay the Israelite baby boys didn't apparently get too far, because there were six hundred thousand Hebrew men who left Egypt. So these midwives may have been very local to Pharaoh, perhaps amongst his servants. The command to kill the baby boys may

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therefore have just been quite localized. Puah, "one who cries out", would be representative of the Israelites as they cried out to Yahweh in their affliction. "Shiphrah" is LXX Zipporah.

Exo 1:16 and he said, When you perform the duty of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birth stool; if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live-

One Egyptologist claims that "two or three days before the expected time of delivery, the midwife conveys to the house a chair of a peculiar form, upon which the patient is to be seated during the birth". The idea that they 'did the duty to the Hebrew women' could suggest these women were Egyptians, who came to fear Israel's God.

Exo 1:17 But the midwives feared God, and didn't do what the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the baby boys alive-

See on :19. Apparently they didn't kill a single child. This suggests that the plan to kill the babies was very localized and didn't work; see on :15.

Exo 1:18 The king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said to them, Why have you done this thing, and have saved the boys alive?-

We do well to ask ourselves questions as we read the Biblical narrative. What should they have said? What could they have said? What were their options as they stood there, in fear for their lives? We sense if it were Daniel and his friends, the answer may have been a blunt statement that they feared God more than the king. But

they flunked that and came out with a lie, in that what they said may have been partly true but was a lie in that it wasn't the full truth. And God blessed them for that. We see here the eagerness of God to respond to any sign of faith or movement toward Him, even if it is far less than ideal.

Exo 1:19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women aren't like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous, and give birth before the midwife comes to them-

It is possible that the midwives were in fact Egyptians who were told to take responsibility for the Hebrew births. But midwives were generally not used in primitive societies, as they aren't today. So these women may have been telling more or less the truth, although it was an untruth insofar as it was not the complete truth; for the women "feared God" (:17) and therefore disobeyed the king. As with the lie of Rahab being quoted in the New Testament as an act of faith, and the lies of the Gibeonites enabling them to enter the people of God, we see how morality and ethics are not all so black and white in reality. As discussed on :12,20, this statement that the Hebrew women were more vigorous than the Egyptians was another nudge of the Egyptians towards recognizing that there was something special about the Hebrews; their God was so gracious that He blessed them, even though they were patently unfaithful to them.

Exo 1:20 God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied, and grew very mighty-

This was all from God, as part of His wider appeal to the Egyptians to accept Him by perceiving how Yahweh was with His people by grace- even if His own people had effectively rejected Him at the time. The same theme recurs in Ex. 1:12.

Exo 1:21 It happened, because the midwives feared God, that He made them families-

The natural reading of this would be that the midwives were barren but had children after his incident. But the Hebrew phrase "made them families" isn't usually used to mean 'to give children / conception'. If that were the intention, another phrase would have been used. This is the phrase translated "provide for my own family" (Gen. 30:30), "establish a family" (1 Sam. 25:28; 2 Sam. 7:11). The sense is that their families were established. And yet there is no Biblical record of the families of these two women. Perhaps this potential blessing was disabled by subsequent failure within the families.

Exo 1:22 Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, You shall cast every son who is born into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive-

As noted on :15, this appears to be rather localized. For there was no "river" in Goshen where most of the Hebrews lived. We will read of how the family of Moses lived near to Pharaoh's palace, near the River Nile, to which Pharaoh and his daughter went regularly. The command was now given to all Pharaoh's people, i.e. his own ethnic group who were in power. But this too failed to stop the growth of God's people.

EXODUS CHAPTER 2

Exo 2:1 A man of the house of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi as his wife-

It was God's intention that the people married within their tribes so as to keep inheritances within the tribes. Such commands had not yet been formally given, but perhaps this faithful couple perceived the truth of the principle ahead of time. **Usually the record says that a man takes a wife, she conceives and they have their firstborn child. But the child to be mentioned in :2 is not the firstborn- for Aaron and Miriam were older than Moses.**

This may be to show that the focus of the record is upon Moses; just as we are not told the names of Moses' parents and siblings until much later in the story. Indeed, the story in Ex. 2 is full of people, but none of them are named apart from Joseph. His parents ["a man of the house of Levi and a daughter of Levi"], sister, the Pharaoh, the taskmaster, the Israelite men fighting each other... none are named. Perhaps this is to highlight the name "Moses"; or to give some feel of the depersonalization that was experienced under the Egyptian tyranny. All these anonymous people stand out the more in the Hebrew text, once we recall that the Hebrew name for the book of "Exodus" is *Shemot*, "The names".

But it's also possible that Amram separated from Jochebed because if they lived together, she would

likely become pregnant, and any pregnant woman would be watched by the Egyptians and her child immediately destroyed at birth. Right on the birthing stool, as we learnt in Ex. 1. So we get the impression that Amram remarried Jochebed and they had a child as an act of faithful defiance against the Egyptian policy of murdering every newborn Hebrew baby. The term translated "good" or "fair to God" in :2 can simply mean "healthy" and that is how the word is sometimes translated. So it could be that she gave birth prematurely; and when she saw the child was healthy, she hid him three months. It would've appeared to the watching Egyptian "police" that she had miscarried. Amram's conscious having of a male child by Jochebed can be read as an act of defiance against the regime, just as the preceding passage has recorded such an act by the midwives. And the next part of the story shows Pharaoh's daughter likewise defying her father's regime. They were hoping for a saviour, and so God blessed their plans. We note that Moses' father Amram married his own aunty, a relationship Moses was later to define as incestuous [Ex. 6:20 "Amram took Jochebed his father's sister to himself as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses"]. Moses' beginnings were therefore rooted in weakness and his survival as a healthy child was spiritually and physically against all odds.

Exo 2:2 The woman conceived, and bore a son. When she saw that he was a child fair to God, she hid him three months-

Every faithful mother perceives that her child is "fair to God", so we are to surely read this as meaning that she perceived him as having some particular role in God's purpose. And yet she would have died whilst Moses was apparently lost in the court life of Pharaoh, not making any move towards saving his family nor his people. For only at the age of 40 did it "come into his mind to visit his people". She would have died very disappointed; and will arise at the last day to such a wonderful surprise, when she realizes how Moses turned to God in later life. **Likewise Bithiah [see on :5] may well have died of breast cancer in a neglected corner of a Hebrew slave camp, her body covered with sand anonymously. Lamenting that her adopted child had got caught up in the soft life of Egypt, and that her Hebrew husband had married a woman of Judah in addition to her (1 Chron. 4:18 ESV). Bithia is indeed the unsung heroine of the Old Testament. Perhaps her story is hidden away in the scriptures in reflection of how her amazing heroism likewise was hidden away, and was not generally perceived at the time. Just as the heroism of so many believers isn't perceived now, and they die obscure and unappreciated. But it was Bithiah and Jochebed whose examples and initiatives paved the way for Moses at 80 to become Yahweh's greatest servant after the Lord Jesus. We do not know the way the seeds we sow will later flourish after our time in this world. It may be that only after our death, our 80 year old children will serve God. In my many years pastoring the soup kitchen church in Riga, I baptized so**

many older folks who commented that they first came to faith through faithful grandmothers or mothers in the Soviet years, although it took them a lifetime to personalize it for themselves. And there are examples of older men and women giving the final part of their lives to stellar service of the Lord. So this is indeed reality, and not just a flimsy peg of hope for disappointed Christian parents to hang their desperate desires upon. And the principle is wider than children. This life is a time of sowing seed; but we reap the results of that seed not now, but in the Kingdom. In secular life, there is so much depression and disappointment from realizing that the seeds sown didn't produce a great harvest; be it in children, career, business, relationships. But for us, the harvest is in the Kingdom, and it will be a harvest of eternal moment.

Exo 2:3 When she could no longer hide him, she took a papyrus basket for him, and coated it with tar and with pitch. She put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank-

See on 2:10. Moses is set up as example and representative of his people Israel. Israel is likened in Ez. 16:5 to a child rejected at birth, but miraculously found and cared for, and brought up with every pampered blessing. Just as Moses was. Stephen described the 'putting out' of Moses with the same word used in the LXX for what happened to Israel in Ezekiel 16 (Acts 7:21; Ex. 2:3 LXX).

"Slime" is the same word as "mortar" in Ex. 1:14, and "mortar" in Gen. 11:3 is the word translated "pitch" con-

cerning how Moses' bulrush basket was made (Ex. 2:3). This conjures up the picture of Amram bringing home some mortar from the building site in order to make that ark.

She made the ark of bulrushes and placed it amongst bulrushes. So it was invisible by such camouflage to someone passing along the banks of the river; but :5 informs us that the maids walked by the riverside, didn't notice it, but when Pharaoh's daughter went in to the river, she noticed it. And then, to cap it all, the baby cried. The whole story is so imaginable; a plan works well, but then it fails from another angle, and then the baby cries... and all seems to come crashing down. But we see here a classic example of how every cloud has a silver lining; from this apparent crash arose the salvation of both Israel and Moses personally. Even though Moses' parents would likely have died in disappointment whilst Moses was still apparently forgetting about them and enjoying the cool court life of Egypt. We too must realize that the fruits of our sacrifices may only be seen well after we have fallen asleep. The Lord's babyhood was so similar; very nearly dying as a result of Herod's command to murder all baby boys.

Exo 2:4 His sister stood far off, to see what would be done to him-

Standing afar off is associated in the Bible with mourning. She stood afar off out of morbid fascination as to the fate of her baby brother, feeling utterly powerless to help him. It seems they placed him in the ark

and placed him in the river in technical obedience to Pharaoh's command, and yet desperately prayed that God would save the child, seeing they had done all that was humanly possible. And indeed He did. **We recall the ministering women standing afar off from the crucifixion; the classic case of apparent failure turning into the magnificent defeat, the cloud with the ultimate silver lining.**

I have often noted that the Pentateuch often alludes to contemporary myths, deconstructs them, and shows the true perspective and narrative. Israel in Egypt had been exposed to centuries of such mythology which they had come to believe; and the task of the Torah was to debunk those myths and reveal God's truth. So the account of Moses' birth and babyhood deliverance is very similar to mythical stories of how many heroes were abandoned soon after birth, almost died of exposure in babyhood, experienced a miraculous rescue, were moved into a totally different environment from what they were born into etc. But the deconstruction of these myths is in that presentation of the "abandoning family" as lowly rather than noble, as they are in the myths; and the family who found and raised him are a royal family in Ex. 2, whereas in the myths they are always poor. Thus Sargon of Agade (2296–2240 BC) supposedly had a noble, wealthy mother who puts her baby son in a basket and then into a river, where he is saved by a poor water drawer, who raises him to become a gardener who is then ennobled by the goddess Ishtar. But God's way

is different; all is inverted. The roles of the poor and the noble / wealthy are reversed. For this is typical of Yahweh God of Israel.

Exo 2:5 Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe at the river. Her maids walked along by the riverside. She saw the basket among the reeds, and sent her handmaid to get it-

The account of Moses being found by Pharaoh's daughter is a classic Bible story- but it begs many questions. Why did this young woman risk disobeying her father? Given Moses' age, how did she manage to survive in Pharaoh's court with an adopted child who looked like a Hebrew and ought to have been killed in babyhood? What kind of relationship did she have with her father? Did he tolerate her sympathy and "compassion" for the Hebrews?

Where else do we read about Pharaoh's daughter? Searching through the Bible, perhaps with the help of a concordance, we come to the references to Solomon marrying Pharaoh's daughter. No great answers there to our questions. Sometimes in Bible study we do draw a blank. And that's a blank. And there's only one other reference to Pharaoh's daughter, hidden away in the obscure genealogies of Chronicles, which we likely skip reading in our daily Bible readings. But there... is the answer. "The sons of Ezrah: Jether, Mered, Ephraim, and Jalon. These are the sons of Bithiah, the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered married; and she conceived and bore Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah, the father of Eshtemoa" (1 Chron. 4:17 ESV). Who was Mered? A prince of the tribe of Judah. And yes, he lived around the time of

Moses. So... a daughter of Pharaoh married a Hebrew. A slave. And she was the daughter of Pharaoh. Now we're onto something.

We eagerly look up the meaning of "Bithiah". And we find that Bithiah means 'daughter of Yah' - there is an intended tension therefore in the way in which she is called 'Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh', especially considering that Pharaoh was thought to be God in Egyptian culture. It cannot be an undersigned coincidence that Bithiah is recorded as having a daughter, whom she called Miriam. It's not very common for the names of daughters to be recorded in the genealogies, so it seems a point is being made. Miriam was of course the name of Moses' sister, who had first introduced Bithiah to Moses' family. Her name in Hebrew is almost the feminine form of her father's name, Mered. Mered had another wife who was from the tribe of Judah: "And his Judahite wife bore Jered ... Heber... and Jekuthiel" (1 Chron. 4:18 ESV). Egyptologists have various theories as to who the Pharaoh of the Exodus was. One of them is that it was Amunhotep II. His coffin decorations appear to show that he had a skin condition - perhaps the boils from the plagues? One stele that was discovered shows that two of Amunhotep II's sons have been "erased". Perhaps one of them was Moses?

It seems likely that many Egyptians became proselytes, because many of them left Egypt with Israel. So Bithiah became attracted to God's people, and decided to forego all she could've had in order to save just one Hebrew life. If nothing else we learn that to sacrifice all

for the sake of the salvation of ‘just’ one person is perhaps what we are called to. The woman who could’ve been one of the most powerful women in the world sacrificed it all, to marry a Hebrew slave- who already had a wife. And presumably she changed her name. She was Yah’s daughter now, and not that of ‘god’ Pharaoh. What motivated her? Surely her experience with raising Moses. From the mouth of a child, who may well have been with his Godly parents for up to five years, she learnt more of Yahweh’s ways. And she must’ve got to know the family of origin and been impressed by Moses’ big sister Miriam... for she named her own daughter after her.

We too face choices. To take a second job, rise early and stay up late... to advance in our careers. To get more income, to dispose of upon expensive coffees, the latest gadgets. Or in the spirit of Bithiah and Moses to realize, and realize finally and once for all, that nothing else matters now. The hope of the Kingdom and fellowship of the rejected Son of God is worth so infinitely more than any of Egypt’s temporary glory. Moses rejected it for the sake of his service of God’s people- who for the most part never appreciated him, and turned their backs on “this Moses”. Bithiah likewise, gave it all up... just to be identified with God’s people. Being the second woman in Mered’s life, a Gentile compared to the other wife being a true blue blooded Judahite, couldn’t have been much fun. For all we know, Bithiah died alone and feeling rejected in the corner of a Hebrew slave camp, lamenting how Moses was apparently caught up in the good life of Pharaoh’s court which she had given up, buried in the

hot sand without a grave, a far cry from the glory girl of her teens. But she did it all so as to be connected with God's people, just as Moses chose to suffer affliction with a people of God who didn't want him. There are brethren who set us a great example in these things. They lost their families because they married a believer and not the one expected for them. Married someone of another race or colour because of their spiritual connection with that person, thus losing the status they might have had within their own culture. They declined promotion in their career because... they wanted to get home each day in time to read Bible stories to their kids. Didn't take out a court case but suffered the loss of so much, didn't answer slander, left God to judge... Spent their spare time and cash going to the Post Office and mailing Bibles to people rather than... tropical beach holidays. Spent their evenings emailing or visiting old, sick, suffering, depressed, difficult or plain awkward brethren... instead of watching a screen.

Exo 2:6 She opened it, and saw the child, and behold, the baby cried. She had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children!-

The Hebrew is specifically 'male children'. She unwrapped him and saw he was circumcised. The woman presumably figured in a moment what had happened. The child had been placed in the basket in technical obedience to her father's command, and the family were just hoping and praying that their God would save him. And she wanted to be a part of that desperate hope and faith.

Exo 2:7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, Should I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?-

As with the blessing of the midwives for their telling of untruth through not telling the whole truth, so Miriam does likewise. And is blessed for it. She gives a false impression. And yet through this deception, as with the Gibeonites, life is saved and God's purpose moved forward.

Exo 2:8 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. The maiden went and called the child's mother-

The record is presented here from the perspective of Pharaoh's daughter. The girl went and called the woman mentioned, who was [as we know] the child's mother.

Exo 2:9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Take this child away, and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages. The woman took the child, and nursed it-

God records Moses being found by Pharaoh's daughter, who then (unknowingly) asks his mother to be his nurse: "The maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me... and *the woman* took the child and nursed it" (Ex. 2:8,9). Why not say '*And Moses' mother* (not "the woman") took him (not "it") and nursed him (not "it")'? The answer seems to be that the record adopts the incorrect and ignorant perspective of Pharaoh's daughter— although with no explicit statement that this is so. And again, as with the midwives, we see God working through somewhat unethical dishonesty. We wonder at what point Pharaoh's daughter

realized what had happened. She surely would have perceived the hand of God; in that a Hebrew mother ended up getting paid for nursing her own baby, when she was supposed to have killed the child. **An alternative is that she knew full well all along what the situation was, and acted out of random, gracious pity towards the family.**

Exo 2:10 The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, and said, Because I drew him out of the water-

The fact she names the child is a sign that she considers himself his mother. But Moses is a Hebrew name. It's as if she wanted Moses to retain his Hebrew identity, and herself knew Hebrew; and we can read her actions as another act of defiance against her father's regime. This continues the theme of the midwives and their acts of defiance in Ex. 1, and Amram and Jochebed intentionally having a baby boy in hope he would be Messiah, defying the king's edict. The fact she went away from the palace and bathed, possibly went swimming, in a part of the Nile accessible to Hebrew slaves would suggest of itself that she wanted at best some 'time out' from Palace life.

The very name 'Moses' meaning 'drawn out' suggests he is the prototype for every saint- a called out one. Indeed, *mosheh* in Hebrew and Egyptian could carry the idea of 'drawn out of / born of water', making Jn. 3:3-5 alludes to it- every believer must be born of water ['Moses'] and of the Spirit. The same basic word is used in Ps. 18:17 "He drew me out of mighty waters".

But as with Moses, so for each of us- as we were drawn out, so we are to draw others out. This is why when at the burning bush he is called to 'draw out' Israel, he is addressed as "Moshe! Moshe!", 'drawn out!'. His life's work was to reflect to others what had been done to him. As he was drawn out from death in Egypt at Pharaoh's hands, so he was to draw God's people out from a similar fate. And he does this also to the women at the well, and also at age 40 to the suffering Israelite. But his drawing out had been by a Gentile woman, and God was clearly manifest in her. As Moses was drawn out of the Nile and saved, so he later drew Israel out of Egypt. He could exactly enter into their feelings when they emerged from the Red Sea, as the Lord Jesus exactly knows ours after baptism- better than we appreciate ourselves. Moses was saved by being surrounded by water in an "ark" (Ex. 2:3)- the only other time this word is used is concerning Noah's ark, which is a type of our salvation through baptism. God even worked through Moses' weakness to make him even more representative of his people; as he drew back from the theophany of the burning bush through a bad conscience, so did Israel at the foot of Sinai; as they were excluded from the land for inattention to Yahweh's word, so was Moses. He was touched with the very feeling of their sinfulness. In a marvellous way, the Lord Jesus achieved the same, yet without sin; He really felt like a sinner in His death.

Although Bithia uses the Hebrew word "Moses" to name the child, this is also a common Egyptian

word. The suffix "moses", "meses" or "mose" means "son of" or "descendant of" in Egyptian. It is often found in the names of the Pharaohs like Ahmose, Thutmose, Rameses. But in Egyptian, the name would have begged the question: 'Son of whom?'. Bithia had changed her name to Bithia, meaning 'daughter of Yah', instead of 'daughter of Pharaoh'. So it was understandable that she would name Moses in this enigmatic way.

Exo 2:11 It happened in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brothers, and looked at their burdens. He saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his brothers-

Moses' 120 years of life split clearly into three sections of 40 years- being trained to be a leader in Egypt, able to handle literacy; then 40 years as a humble shepherd in the wilderness, and then 40 years leading and shepherding God's people in humility towards the promised land. Only in the Kingdom, perhaps, will we be able to attach meaning to event. But for sure, our lives are playing out according to a pattern and Divine intention, all from a God who wishes only to do us good in our latter end.

The Hebrew seems to mean that 'at the time that Moses had grown up, he went out to his brothers'. This would be stating the obvious, unless we interpret the growing up as referring to spiritual maturity. Care for others, and the desire to save them, is indeed the acme of spiritual maturity.

As Moses "looked on their burdens" at age 40 (Acts 7:23), so at the start of his ministry, our Lord assessed the weight of ours. His concern for our burdens in Mt. 11:30; 23:4 is perhaps a conscious allusion back to Moses' awareness of Israel's burdens, and his desire to deliver them, even though it cost him all that he had in this world. See on Heb. 11:24

Moses manifested / represented both God and Israel, superbly prefiguring the nature of the Lord's work and mission far later. As God "saw" the oppression of Israel (Ex. 2:25; 3:7,9; 4:31; 5:19), so did Moses (Ex.2:11). He looked on God's people with the eyes / perspective of God- just as we should. Moses 'struck' the Egyptian who was persecuting the Hebrew just as God would strike Egypt (Ex. 2:11 cp. Ex. 12:12,13,29 etc.). See on 2:17.

At age 40, Moses came to a crisis. He had a choice between the riches of Egypt, the pleasures of sin for a season, and choosing rather to suffer affliction with God's people and thereby fellowship the reproach of Christ (Heb. 11:24-26). He probably had the chance to become the next Pharaoh, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; but he consciously refused this, as a pure act of the will, as an expression of faith in the future recompense of the Kingdom. There are a number of passages which invite us to follow Moses' example in this. Paul was motivated in his rejection of worldly advantage by Moses' inspiration. And as in all things, he is our example, that we might follow Christ, who also turned down the very real possibility of temporal rulership of the world- for the sake of living the life of the cross, and thereby securing

our redemption. The description of Moses' rejection of Egypt for the sake of Christ is shown to be our example: "Esteeming the *reproach of Christ* greater riches than the treasures (i.e. Pharaoh's treasures, which he could have had if he succeeded as Pharaoh) in Egypt... let us go forth therefore unto (Jesus) without the camp, *bearing his reproach*" (Heb. 11:26; 13:13). We should be even eager to bear 'reproach for the name of Christ' as Moses did (1 Pet. 4:14), knowing it is a surety of our sharing his resurrection. For Moses, "the reproach of Christ" was his having "respect unto the recompense of the reward". He therefore must have understood in some detail that there would be a future Saviour, who would enable the eternal Kingdom promised to Abraham through his bearing the reproach of this world. Such was Moses' appreciation of this that it motivated him to reject Egypt. His motivation, therefore, was based upon a fine reflection upon the promises to Abraham and other oblique prophecies of the suffering Messiah contained in the book of Genesis. Moses knew he could have a share in the sufferings of the future saviour and thereby share his reward, because he saw the implication that Messiah would be our representative.

"When Moses *was grown*, he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens...when he was *full forty years old* it came into his heart to visit his brethren... by faith Moses, *when he was come to years*, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Ex. 2:11; Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24). The implication seems to be that Moses reached a certain point of maturity, of readiness,

and then he went to his brethren. God looked on the sorrows of His people through the sensitivity of Moses, He *saw and knew* their struggles, their sense of being trapped, their desire to revive spiritually but their being tied down by the painful business of life and living; and He sent Moses to deliver them from this. But these very words are quoted about our deliverance through the 'coming down' of the Lord Jesus (Ex. 3:7; 4:31 = Lk. 1:68).

Going out to "his brothers" shows how after all his adult life in Pharaoh's court, Moses self identified as a Hebrew. This Hebrew self identification is a major theme. The Midianite shepherd girls think that he looks like an Egyptian, but in his heart he was totally identified with God's people. Likewise, the suffering Hebrews had no idea that they had a man with a heart bleeding for them, right inside Pharaoh's court. Just as we can forget the strong identification of the Lord with us in Heaven, to the point that the exalted Lord of Heaven and earth is still called "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

Israel said they wanted salvation from this world, but like man generally, when offered it they refused it. They in their hearts anyway turned back to Egypt. This is the power of conservatism, the desire to stay put whatever and not bravely step out to Divine salvation. A case can be made that only a fifth of Israel left Egypt anyway (Ex. 13:18 Heb.), most didn't keep the Passover as required. That's why the number of firstborns that needed redeeming was very low- be-

cause there weren't as many firstborns as we would expect had all Israel been obedient. The number of firstborn males after Israel left Egypt was remarkably small (around 20,000, Num. 3:43). Women in most primitive societies have an average of 7 births. this would mean that given a total population of around 2,800,000 on leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:37), there should have been around 400,000 firstborn males. But instead, there is only a fraction of this number. Why? **Did Israel eat the Passover?**

Exo 2:12 He looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no one, he killed the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand-

This little incident is typical of how Christ was to destroy the devil, the power of sin, on the cross. The common translation of this passage can give them impression that Moses was very nervous. Yet it does not say that when he saw no man *was looking* he slew the Egyptian. There was at least one man looking- the suffering Israelite. And there must have been others looking for news to get round that Moses had killed the Egyptian. So I would suggest that Moses saw the Israelite suffering, and looked round in wonder to see if any other Israelite was going to go to his rescue. Because he saw there was no man, he himself got involved. This is an eloquent essay in the humility of Moses and the Lord he typified. This is exactly the same picture which we find in Is. 59:16 concerning Christ's decision to achieve our redemption: "He saw that there was no man (quoting the words of Ex. 2:11), and wondered that there

was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation" (God saved Israel from Egypt by the *arm* of Moses, manifesting His arm: Ex. 6:6; 15:16; Dt. 4:34; Is. 63:12). Is. 63:4-6 also contain allusions to Moses and the exodus (the rest of the chapter speaks explicitly about this): "The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year (time) of my redeemed (the one I will redeem) is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation". The implication of these passages is that he was surprised, he "wondered", that there was no one else to save Israel. He looked round for someone else to do it, but he found none- exactly after the pattern of Moses. This is not only an eloquent essay in our Lord's humanity, and the monstrosity of the 'trinity'; it indicates the true humility which he manifested in his work of redemption.

'Looking this way and that way' gives the impression of a nervous Moses. His murder of the Egyptian was done, it seems, rashly. His native anger boiled over and then he seeks to cover it up, and flees in fear when he perceives that he has been discovered. This is typical of Moses' character, but he develops from this to be a confident deliverer of Israel. Acts 7:24,25 says that his attempt to deliver Israel by killing the Egyptian was done at the same time as he "reckoned that his kin would understand that God, through his hand, was giving salvation to them" (Acts 7:25). So killing the Egyptian represents the Lord's conquest of sin; but Israel rejected it, as Moses did. They complained

that he wanted to be a ruler and judge over them, but they didn't want that- just as they didn't want the Lordship of Jesus over them (:14; Acts 7:27,28). The one man who said "Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?" is to be seen as representative of all Israel: "This is the Moses whom *they* denied, saying, "Who appointed you ruler and judge?" (Acts 7:35).

Exo 2:13 He went out the second day, and behold, two men of the Hebrews were fighting with each other. He said to him who did the wrong, Why do you strike your fellow?-

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (Jn. 1:11). Moses in John's Gospel is an opening theme. "When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren... he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them" (Acts 7:23,25). Therefore Moses in the court of Pharaoh = Jesus working in Nazareth until age 30. Was Moses' "surprise" at Israel's lack of response reflected in Christ (cp. Is. 50:2-7; 59:16)? Despite his own righteousness, did Christ think too highly of the potential spirituality of Israel (Lk. 13:9; 20:13 cp. his high regard of others' spirituality: Mt. 8:10; 11:11; 15:28)? If the Lord respected others so much- shouldn't we have deep respect for each other? The pain of Moses' rejection was Christ's; although he was rich, Moses had become poor for their sakes.

Ex. 21:22 may have some relevance to this historical situation: "If men fight and hurt a pregnant woman so that she gives birth prematurely...". Perhaps Moses had

been asked to judge (:14) a situation like this at the time of Ex. 2:13.

Acts 7:26 interprets Moses' words here as appealing for unity between the Hebrews, the people of God, as a result of his killing of the Egyptian: "reconciling them to peace, [Moses] said, 'Men, you are brothers. Why are you mistreating one another?'". But this too was rejected; and Stephen was witnessing Hebrew society again failing to unite despite the Messiah's killing of sin on the cross. Unity between God's people is an outcome of the Lord's victory; but those who don't truly accept reconciliation with God will not therefore be reconciled with each other.

The beating of the Hebrew by the Egyptian is parallel with the Hebrew beating his Hebrew brother. To beat our brother is to act as an Egyptian and to merit Moses' judgment. This is the OT equivalent of NT teaching about losing your brother. The Lord surely had the incident in mind when He spoke of the servant beating his fellow slave.

Exo 2:14 He said, Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you plan to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian? Moses was afraid, and said, Surely this thing is known-

"By faith (Moses) forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the King" (Heb. 11:27). But Moses did flee Egypt, because he feared the wrath of the King (Ex. 2:14,15). It seems that Moses had at best a mixture of motives, or motives that changed over time; yet God sees through his human fear, and discerns an element of calm faith within Moses as he left Egypt. In similar vein, at

the time of the burning bush, Moses seems to have forgotten God's covenant name, he didn't immediately take off his shoes in respect as he should have done, and it seems he feared to come close to God due to a bad conscience, and he resisted God's invitation for him to go forth and do His work (Ex. 3:5-7,10,11,18; 4:1,10-14). And yet at this very time, the New Testament says that Moses showed faith in the way he perceived God (Lk. 20:37).

Moses didn't want Egypt to know that he was trying to save Israel; he thought he could do it secretly. Once he realized that people knew what he was trying to do, he was afraid. His fearfulness has similarities with that of spiritually weak Jacob, who fled from the face of Laban into the unknown, as Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh. Thus God encouraged him after forty years that he need no longer fear: "Return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought your life" (Ex. 4:19). But then he rallied his faith and left Egypt, without (at the point of leaving) fearing the anger of Pharaoh. He so strongly believed, it was as if he physically saw God- as he asked (Heb. 11:27).

The loneliness of Moses as a type of Christ in showing this kind of love must surely represent that of our Lord. They went to a height which was generally beyond the appreciation of the men among whom they lived. The Spirit seems to highlight the loneliness of Moses by saying that at the same time as Moses *refused* to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Israel *refused* him (the same Greek word is used; Heb. 11:24; Acts 7:35).

He was rejected by both the world and God's people: for 40 long years. As Israel envied Moses for spiritual reasons (Ps. 106:16; Acts 7:9), so they did Christ (Mt. 27:18), after the pattern of the brothers' spiritual envy of Joseph (Gen. 37:11). Spiritual envy leading to persecution is quite a common feature in Biblical history (Job, Jeremiah, Paul...). And it isn't absent from the Christian experience either.

The tragedy is that Israel's rejection of Moses is typical of the rejection of Christ by those in the new Israel who turn away. The same word used about Israel *refusing* Moses as their deliverer (Acts 7:35) is used about those who *deny* (same word) the Lord (Jesus) that bought them (2 Pet. 2:1). This latter verse is prefaced by the information that as there were those who lost their faith in the ecclesia in the wilderness, so there will be among the new Israel (2 Pet. 2:1). Therefore "the Lord that bought them" is an allusion back to Moses as a type of Christ. The illogicality of Israel's rejection of Moses when he first appeared to them is so apparent. They were slaves in Egypt, and then one of the most senior of Pharaoh's officials reveals that he is their brother, and has been sent by God to deliver them. Yet they preferred the life of slavery in Egypt.

Moses is recorded as saying "People have found out what I have done!" – surely he said this within himself (Ex. 2:14 GNB). Samuel's comment about Eliab was likewise presumably to himself (1 Sam. 16:6); Saul's "I'll strike [David] to the wall" was surely said to himself (1 Sam. 18:11); likewise his explanation of his plan to trap

David via his daughter Michael was all hatched out within his own brain (1 Sam. 18:21); other examples in 1 Sam. 27:12; 1 Kings 12:26 etc. Only God knew what those men 'said in their heart'; and yet He has recorded it in His inspired word for all generations to see. In this alone we see how ultimately, nothing remains secret; at the day of judgment, what we spoke in darkness (i.e. In our own minds) will be heard in the light of God's Kingdom (Lk. 12:3).

Heb. 11:24 fills out what happened: "By faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter". "When Moses *was grown*, he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens... when he was *full forty years old* it came into his heart to visit his brethren... by faith Moses, *when he was come to years*, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Ex. 2:11; Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24). The implication seems to be that Moses reached a certain point of maturity, of readiness, and then he went to his brethren. We too have points of maturity we must reach before the Lord gives us our next task.

"(Moses) refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; *having chosen rather* (Gk.) to suffer affliction with the people of God" (Heb. 11:24,25) suggests that there was a struggle within the mind of Moses, between the reproach of Christ and the approbation of this world, and he then decisively came down on the right side. If we are truly saints, called out ones after the pattern of Moses, this struggle be-

tween present worldly advantage and the hope of the Kingdom must surely be seen in our minds. For this reason Moses is held up so highly as our example and pattern.

Moses could have been the next Pharaoh; according to Josephus, he was the commander of the Egyptian army. But he walked away from the possibility of being the richest man on earth, he "refused" it, because he valued "the reproach of Christ" and the recompense of the Kingdom to be *greater* riches. Yet what did he know about the sufferings of Christ? Presumably he had worked out from the promises of the seed in Eden and to the fathers that the future Saviour must be reproached and rejected; and he saw that his own life experience could have a close association with that of this unknown future Saviour who would surely come. And therefore, it seems, Moses counted the honour and wonder of this greater than the riches of Egypt. Both Paul and Moses rejected mammon for things which are abstract and intellectual (in the strict sense): the *excellency* of the understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ and His cross, and the Kingdom this would enable. Living when we do, with perhaps a greater knowledge of the Lord's victory and excellency, our motivation ought to be even stronger. He is our pattern; because we too could, should or might have had so much more than we have attained in this life, because we chose the excellency of the Christ who like Moses we only know in an outline sense.

Exo 2:15 Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and lived in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well-

See on Ex. 4:24. This happened when he was "Full forty years old" (Acts 7:23). The Greek phrase could refer to Moses' birthday, and one is tempted to speculate that it had been arranged that when Moses was 40, he would become Pharaoh. Heb. 11:24 says that he refused and chose- the Greek tense implying a one off choice- to suffer affliction with God's people. It is tempting to imagine Moses at the ceremony when he should have been declared as Pharaoh, the most powerful man in his world...standing up and saying, to a suddenly hushed audience, voice cracking with shame and stress and yet some sort of proud relief that he was doing the right thing: "I, whom you know in Egyptian as Meses, am Moshe, yes, Moshe the Jew; and I decline to be Pharaoh". Imagine his foster mother's pain and anger. And then in the end, the wonderful honour would have been given to another man, who became Pharaoh. Perhaps he or his son was the one to whom Moses was to come, 40 years later. After a nervous breakdown, stuttering, speaking with a thick accent, clearly having forgotten Egyptian... walking through the mansions of glory, along the corridors of power, to meet that man, to whom he had given the throne 40 years earlier.

Moses forsook the possibilities of Egypt not just for "the reproach of Christ"; he was also motivated by the fact that "he endured (Gk. was vigorous), as seeing him

who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). It was as if he had seen the invisible God, as he later asked to. **But the fact he later asked to see God could be read as a step backwards for Moses, who at this point saw the invisible God by faith. His life was a very jagged graph of spirituality.** When the disciples asked to see God, Christ said that the manifestation of His character which they had seen in him was the same thing (Jn. 14:8). Our experience of seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, with unveiled face like Moses, ought to be a *wondrous* experience. When Moses asked to physically see God, the Angel proclaimed the characteristics of God before him. So when we read of Moses *as it were* seeing God at the time he decided to forsake Egypt, this must mean that he so appreciated God's Name and character, he so had faith in the future Kingdom which this great Name and character promise, that he left Egypt. The Lord Jesus fed for strength on the *majesty* of the Name of Yahweh (Mic. 5:4).

"(Moses) refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; *having chosen rather* (Gk.) to suffer affliction with the people of God" (Heb. 11:24,25) suggests that there was a struggle within the mind of Moses, between the reproach of Christ and the approbation of this world, and he then decisively came down on the right side. If we are truly saints, called out ones after the pattern of Moses, this struggle between present worldly advantage and the hope of the Kingdom must surely be seen in our minds. For this reason Moses is held up so highly as our example and pattern. He "forsook" Egypt

uses the same word translated "leaving" when we read of a man leaving his parents to be joined to a wife, or of the shepherd leaving the 99 sheep to find the lost one.

Heb. 11:27 comments that at this time, Moses "endured, because he saw Him who is invisible". *Hupomone* is generally translated "patience" or "endurance"; the idea is of the staying power that keeps a man going to the end. The meaning of *hupomone* grows as we experience more trials (Rom. 5:3; James 1:3). We find that the longer we endure in the Truth, the more we can echo the words of Peter, when the Lord asked him (surely with a lump in His throat) if he was going to turn back: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (Jn. 6:68). There is no third road in the daily decisions we face. Over the months and years, *hupomone* becomes part of our essential character; keeping on keeping on is what life comes to be all about, no matter what short term blows and long term frustrations we face. The longer we endure, the stronger that force is, although we may not feel it. Moses is described as having it at the time he fled from Egypt, even though in the short term his faith failed him at the time and he fled in fear (Ex. 2:14,15). Yet God counted him as having that basic ability to endure, even to endure through his own failure and weakness. *This* is what God looks at, rather than our day-to-day acts of sin and righteousness.

Exo 2:16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock-

We think of Jacob meeting his wife at a well, Isaac's servant likewise finding Isaac's wife at a well, and the Lord meeting the Samaritan woman at a well. Such connections within Biblical history become more apparent the more we read the Bible, and thus our faith is confirmed- that here, clearly, there was a higher hand at work over the centuries. Even if we cannot attach exact meaning to event, man is not alone. There are connections within our own lives, and between our lives and those of contemporary believers, as well as with Biblical characters. We through patience and comfort of the scriptures thus have hope (Rom. 15:4).

Exo 2:17 The shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock-

Moses helps and delivers (Ex. 2:17,19) the daughters of Jethro, just as God would help and deliver Israel (Ex. 12:27; 14:13,30; 15:2). He was being shown that his experiences were preparing him for something far greater. Note that at that time when Moses first met Jethro's daughters at the well, Moses was in depression. His plans and vision rejected by his own people, fallen from riches to rags, homeless and alone... and yet in that low moment he was chosen to be a manifestation of God! And this is the wonder of how God rejoices to work with the broken. However, Moses' desire to save others, his concern for the oppressed and helpless, shines through- he seeks to save the slave beaten by his Egyptian master; the neighbour wronged by his Hebrew brother; the unknown women deprived at the well by male nomads (Ex.

2:11,13,17). In all this Moses was manifesting the concern and saving help of God. And when we do likewise, we show God's face to this world. See on 2:11

Exo 2:18 When they came to Reuel, their father, he said, How is it that you have returned so early today?-

Abuse at the hand of the shepherds (:19) was a daily experience for them, just as the Israelites were daily abused- possibly at the hands of the 'shepherd kings' dynasty of Egypt.

Exo 2:19 They said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and moreover he drew water for us, and watered the flock-

Moses flees to Midian, where he helps some unknown shepherd women from being abused by some rough men; he did this without at first receiving any reward, and without the women wanting him to go with them; although they thought he was an Egyptian, showing that he still concealed his relationship with God. See on Jn. 4:7-10.

The whole nature of being human means that we must live in this world, although we are not of it. Consider how Daniel's friends wore turbans (Dan. 3:21 NIV), how Moses appeared externally to be an Egyptian (Ex. 2:19), **as did Joseph and his brothers when they went to Canaan to bury his father**, and how the Lord Himself had strongly Jewish characteristics (Jn. 4:9).

Israel rejected Moses as their deliverer, they failed to see in that dead Egyptian the ability of Moses to save them completely from the life of slavery. And so Moses fled away from them, he came to Gentile, pagan Midian,

and rescued a Gentile woman from the persecution of men, married her, and started a new life in the wilderness- to return many years later in the power of the Holy Spirit and redeem Israel when they were in truly desperate straits. All this naturally points ahead to the work of Jesus after Israel failed to respond to his work on the cross. The word used to describe Moses rescuing his future wife from the shepherds is the same used concerning God rescuing Israel from Egypt (Ex. 2:19; 18:10). Thus Moses was manifesting the redemptive work of God when he saved his wife. But the marriage broke up, as it did between God and Israel- but was apparently restored.

Exo 2:20 He said to his daughters, Where is he? Why is it that you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread-

To eat bread together was a sign of acceptance. The way the Lord Jesus broke His bread with sinners was likewise a message of open acceptance to any who wished to sit at His table. He did this, He explained, in order to win sinners to Him; eating His bread was not a sign that they had cleared some moral bar He had arbitrarily insisted upon. It is a strong argument for an open table amongst God's people today. All who wish are to be welcomed.

Exo 2:21 Moses was content to dwell with the man. He gave Moses Zipporah, his daughter-

Moses "was content to dwell" with the father of the women. The Hebrew for "content" comes from a root which means weakness of mind; the implication is that

he easily yielded to this man. She was not one of the covenant people; she was the daughter of a pagan priest (Ex. 18:11 implies Jethro thought Yahweh was only one of many gods); she did not circumcise their children. Should Moses have married her? The fact Moses did not bother circumcising his son shows he was not really serious about his relationship with God; God tried to kill him because of this. God tried to kill Moses because of this; this shows how serious this was in God's eyes. Zipporah was a Midianite, a descendant of Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25:1-6). Circumcision was a sign of the covenant through Isaac, hence the resentment and bitterness of Zipporah over the circumcision issue; and it seems Moses capitulated to her on this. Their marriage is sure proof that fundamental spiritual differences at the start can only lead to anger and break up later on.

Exo 2:22 She bore a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, I have lived as a foreigner in a foreign land-

Positive self-talk will enable us to maintain our basic human dignity, as well as our faith and spiritual integrity, in the face of rejection, slander and breakup of human relationships. It's all too easy to be negative. Moses said within himself "I am a foreigner in this land" – and his self-talk led to the very public 'word' of naming his son 'Gershom' (Ex. 2:22). **We ask 'Which land was Moses feeling he had lived as a foreigner in? Midian, or Egypt?'. I suggest the record intentionally begs this question. Because the answer is, "Both". He felt he did not fit in where he was, had never fitted in where he grew up. And this is how all God's true Israel feel.**

Exo 2:23 It happened in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed because of the abuse, and they cried, and their cry came up to God because of the abuse-

The whole description of Egypt's judgments in Ez. 29 is also full of links with those in store for Israel. *They* will cry unto Yahweh in their affliction (Is. 19:20), just as Israel did when Egypt persecuted them (Ex. 2:23; 14:10).

The sighing came after the death of the Pharaoh, probably because they hoped that the new rules would change the persecution policy. But he did not and therefore their dashed hopes led them to cry to Yahweh. Perhaps we can deduce from Ex. 4:19 that Moses should have perceived this as the right time to return to Egypt, but he didn't.

Exo 2:24 God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob-

Israel at this time were worshipping Egypt's idols, and took the tabernacles of false gods with them through the Red Sea and the wilderness (Ez. 20:8 etc.). But the wonder of the covenant with Abraham, which is made with all those who are baptized into the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:27-29), is that it is the covenant of grace. God honours it even when those within it are unrighteous and undeserving. And He pities them in their afflictions, even if they are self-inflicted.

Exo 2:25 God saw the children of Israel, and God was concerned about them-

Moses manifested / represented both God and Israel, superbly prefiguring the nature of the Lord's work and mission far later. As God "saw" the oppression of Israel (Ex. 2:25; 3:7,9; 4:31; 5:19), so did Moses (Ex. 2:11). He looked on God's people with the eyes / perspective of God- just as we should. **And our desire to save people should reflect God's desire.**

EXODUS CHAPTER 3

Exo 3:1 Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to God's mountain, to Horeb-

This was where he would later lead God's people, as a flock. Also for 40 years. It can be shown that much of Moses' life, especially his Midian years, were lived in a spirit of semi-spirituality, aware of his responsibility to God, but being slack to rise up to what it really meant, being content, year after year, to live the life of a spiritual minimalist, ever making excuses for himself. Yet somehow God overruled this, as He did the fact that Moses sinned and was excluded from entering the land. The result was that Moses was able to enter exactly into the feelings of rejected, spiritually apathetic Israel in their 40 years wilderness wanderings. For 40 years he too had wandered in the same desert as a shepherd, with the same apathy. This points forward to how the Lord Jesus can enter into the feelings of active sinners, whilst himself being sinless.

Moses was a shepherd for 40 years, and then for 40 years he put this into practice by leading Israel as God's shepherd for 40 years in the same wilderness (Num. 27:17; Ps. 80:1; Is. 63:11). As Moses was willing to sacrifice his eternal life for the salvation of the sheep of Israel (Ex. 32:30-32), so Christ gave his life for us. John's Gospel normally shows the supremacy of Christ over

Moses. In this connection of them both being shepherds willing to die for the flock, Moses is not framed as being inferior to Christ- in that in his desire to die for Israel, he truly reached the fullness of the spirit of Christ. "The good shepherd" was a Rabbinical title for Moses; Christ was saying "I am Moses, in his love for your salvation; not better than him, but exactly like him in this". In a sense, Moses' prayer was heard, in that he was excluded from the land for their sakes (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21; Ps. 106:33); they entered after his death. This was to symbolize how the spirit of his love for Israel was typical of Christ's for us.

Exo 3:2 The angel of Yahweh appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed-

LXX "bramble bush", representing the thorns and thistles brought forth as a result of human sin. And yet within that, the flame of fire of God's manifestation burned, and did not consume that frail, highly flammable, sin cursed bramble bush. It was all a message of how God would dwell within sinful people, and not consume them. Yahweh was likewise to dwell within Israel in the pillar of fire which never consumed them, despite their sins demanding this. This connects with how Moses' hand was made leprous [symbolic of sin], and how he used that hand to catch a snake [sin] by its tail.

Exo 3:3 Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt-

The spiritual growth of Moses was a jagged graph. In the bigger picture of Moses' life, it's clear that God was working with him according to a pattern. His 120 years of life fall into three distinct periods of 40 years. His 40 years as a shepherd in the wilderness were to prepare him for 40 years of shepherding God's people in the same wilderness. The burning bush was to prepare him for the awesome meeting with God in the burning mountain- note how the unusual Hebrew word used for "bush", *seneh*, echoes the name of the mountain, Sinai. Everything was used by God in His personal development plan for Moses. It was likely an acacia bush, the wood of which was to be used for the construction of the tabernacle, over which the fire of God's manifestation was to burn without consuming the sinful people.

Exo 3:4 When Yahweh saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses! Moses! He said, Here I am-

The double repetition "Moses, Moses" may be some kind of rebuke. "I *have*" seen the affliction of Israel could suggest that Moses felt God was not sensitive to the pain of His children; he had been living for 40 years feeling forgotten by God . Moses "wondered" at what he saw and heard at the burning bush (Acts 7:31)- a Greek word which is often used in a negative sense concerning people lacking faith and insight when they should have had it.

"Here I am" was to be matched by Yahweh's declaration that "[Here] I am" (:6). We see here the mutuality intended between God and man. Yahweh's manifes-

tation was apparently predicated upon Moses 'turning aside to see' (Ex. 3:3,4). And the same phrase is used later when God says He will 'turn aside' His hand, so that Moses may 'see' something of Him (Ex. 33:23). Here again we see the mutuality between God and Moses.

Exo 3:5 He said, Don't come close. Take your sandals off from your feet, for the place you are standing on is holy ground-

God appeared to Moses in the flame of fire in the bush, but Moses had to be told to take off his shoes as a sign of respect- even though taking off shoes was understood as a token of respect and recognition of sin (see 2 Sam. 15:30). It sounds as if Moses did not appreciate the holiness of God, and ought to have done this without being asked. Stephen will develop the thought of how a thorn bush in the desert could be made "holy ground"; and therefore the idea that the temple alone was "holy ground" was patently false. We don't need any sacred space or religious structure in order to meet God on holy ground. "Holy ground" is the same phrase translated "holy land" in Zech. 2:12. The land of promise included the desert where Moses was then standing; he was being reminded that he was not in fact in exile, but was within the land of promise.

Exo 3:6 Moreover he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob-

See on Lk. 20:37. Moses is one of the greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should

see a very high level of God manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character. God is His word (Jn. 1:2). Moses is likewise spoken of as if he is his word (Acts 15:21; 21:21; 26:22; 2 Cor. 3:18), so close was his association with it. The words and commands of Moses were those of God. "In the bush God spoke unto (Moses), saying, I am the God of Abraham... Isaac and Jacob" (Mk. 12:26; Mt. 22:31; Ex. 3:6). Yet Lk. 20:37 says that "that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham" etc. Yet this was what God said of Himself.

Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look at God-

Clearly the Angel in the bush (Acts 7:30,35) was functioning as God Himself to Moses, just as the Lord Jesus can function as God without being God. And just as Moses was to be made as God to Pharaoh (Ex. 9:1). We note Moses' spiritual growth; for later he wanted to see God's face.

Exo 3:7 Yahweh said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows-

God looked on the sorrows of His people through the sensitivity of Moses, He saw and knew their struggles, their sense of being trapped, their desire to revive spiritually but their being tied down by the painful business of life and living; and He sent Moses to deliver them from this. But these very words are quoted about our deliverance through the 'coming down' of the Lord Jesus

(Ex. 3:7; 4:31 = Lk. 1:68). Our heart can touch the heart of God. It's a priceless wonder to know and experience this. God saw Israel's depressed *minds* in Egypt and was moved to 'come down' to them in response (Ex. 3:7- the word translated "affliction" is rendered by Strong as 'depression').

Our guardian Angels are emotional beings, capable of changing their plans in accordance with how moved they are by our prayers, and to an extent they fellowship the sufferings they bring upon us- so the Angel in the burning bush could tell Moses "I have seen the affliction of My people (for whom I am guardian)... and have heard their cry... for I know their sorrows: and I am come down to deliver them. . and to bring them up out of that land (again, the work of the Angel)" (Ex. 3:7,8). The purpose of God in Christ is to "bring together in one all things, which are in Heaven (Angels) and which are on earth (us their charges)", and in the day of judgement we will perhaps be united in some special spiritual sense to our Angel who has redeemed us through this life.

Exo 3:8 I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey; to the place of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite-

We know an Angel was physically sent in advance of the Israelites to drive out those tribes, and so the phrase "I am come down" used by the same Angel here may therefore be taken literally- He literally, physically "came down". Although this phrase "came down" is often used

to describe God manifestation, it may be that when it is used in connection with the Angels, it does have a physical, literal application. It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10. We note that "bring them up out of" Egypt to Canaan was also literally true, in that Canaan is far higher than Egypt (this is stressed- Gen. 12:10; 13:1; 37:25; 39:1; 42:2; 46:3,4; 50:25).

The promised land was only 'larger' than Egypt if we accept that it was God's intention to give Israel the entire land promised to Abraham, from the Nile to the Euphrates. But in reality they lacked the faith to inherit it, and so He was willing to work with them to give them the area from around the Jordan to the Mediterranean. And they didn't even possess all that. See on :17.

Exo 3:9 Now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me. Moreover I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them-

Moses manifested / represented both God and Israel, superbly prefiguring the nature of the Lord's work and mission far later. As God "saw" the oppression of Israel (Ex. 2:25; 3:7,9; 4:31; 5:19), so did Moses (Ex. 2:11). He looked on God's people with the eyes / perspective of God- just as we should.

Exo 3:10 Come now therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt-

Isaiah realized his unworthiness: "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips". He felt he was going to be condemned. But then out of the same vision, the Angel comforted him: "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged". And then immediately he offered to go on a preaching mission to Israel, motivated by his own experience of forgiveness and with therefore an appropriate humility: "Here am I, send me" (Is. 6:5-8). This incident is full of allusion to the sending of an equally hesitant Moses. As God appears in the burning bush, so God appears to Isaiah among the seraphim, the burning ones. Moses is reluctant to bear God's word because "I am a man of uncircumcised lips", and Isaiah felt the same. Whom shall I send... who will go? (Ex. 3:8,9) is matched by Is. 6:8,9. The willingness of Moses to go (Ex. 3:4) is that of Isaiah. And it is to be our pattern, going forth in witness firstly convicted of our own utter unworthiness.

Exo 3:11 Moses said to God, Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?-

See on Ex. 4:10. Through Moses allowing himself to become part of God manifestation, he found a confidence to achieve that which felt impossible to him. He asks God: "Who am I...?" to do the great things God required... and the answer was "I will be who I will be" (Ex. 3:11-13). Moses' sense of inadequacy was met by

the principle of God's manifestation in him; and so will ours be, if we participate in it. "Who am I?" is answered by "I am..."

The more we enter into the depths of the Name, the more we will seek the Father; and in this sense, the Name is an endless inspiration to know the Father better and better, closer and closer, world without end. The whole declaration of God's Name to Moses is actually part of a mutuality between God and Moses. Moses has just commented: "Who am I to bring Israel out?" (Ex. 3:11). And God alludes to this in His answer, for His declaration of His Name hinges around the idea of "Who am I? I am...". The implication of the Name seems to be "I will be who I am / I am who I will be" - i.e. 'I will be God for you'. Surely the idea of the Name being declared in this way was to assure a doubting, depressed Moses that God will be God, will be true to Himself, and therefore will be God for us in all aspects, all places, situations. This is what the Name is really all about- assurance. For that was the context in which God declared it to Moses, as part of a relationship with that man

Exo 3:12 He said, Certainly I will be with you. This will be the token to you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain-

See on Jud. 6:12,16; Dt. 31:8; Ex. 4:4. It even seems that Moses had forgotten the significance of God's Name, even though it had been revealed to Abraham (Ex. 3:13). Moses' fear to look upon God suggests a bad conscience.

Note that the promise of Moses that God would not fail nor forsake Joshua, but would be with him (Dt. 31:8) was similar to the very promise given to Moses which he had earlier doubted (Ex. 3:12; 4:12,15). Such exhortation is so much the stronger from someone who has themselves doubted and then come to believe. Joshua was encouraged that "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you" (Josh. 1:5). But these very words are quoted in Heb. 13:5 as the grounds of our matchless confidence that the Lord God will be with us too! As He was with Moses- not just in power, but in wondrous patience and gentleness- so He will be with us too. Not only did God encourage Joshua to see himself as in Moses' shoes; He inspired Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 21:8 = Dt. 30:15,19), and Ezekiel (Ez. 2:3 = Dt. 31:27; Neh. 9:17; Num. 17:10); and He wishes us to also see Moses' God as our God. But if Moses' God is to be ours in truth in the daily round of life, we must rise up to the dedication of Moses; as he was a faithful steward, thoroughly dedicated to God's ecclesia (Heb. 3:5), so we are invited follow his example (1 Cor. 4:2; Mt. 24:45).

Gideon was bidden rise up to the example of Moses- for there were many similarities between his call by the Angel, and the Angelic calling which Moses received at the burning bush. Thus Gideon was called to follow the Angel in faith, "because Ehyeh is with you" (Jud. 6:16)- a direct quotation from the Angelic manifestation to Moses in Ex. 3:12, "I will be [*ehyeh*] with you". And yet he responds: "Alas! For I have seen Yahweh's envoy face

to face!" (Jud. 6:22). Gideon knew full well that Moses had seen the Angel "face to face" (Dt. 34:10). Gideon's fear is therefore rooted in a sense that "No! I'm simply *not* Moses!". And it's the same with us. We can read of all these reasons to believe that Moses is really our pattern, and respond that "No! This ain't me...". But there, in the record of Gideon and his success, lies our challenge to rise up to the spirit of Moses.

Exo 3:13 Moses said to God, Behold, when I come to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you;' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' What should I tell them?-

To the Semitic peoples, a name stands for the essential identity of a person; to know their name gives access to the power and authority which they have. This is why Moses is so urgent to know God's Name (Ex. 3:13,14). Insofar as we grasp and absorb into ourselves the principles of that Name, we likewise will be empowered by the Father. The Name of God is essentially an epitome of who God is. God declared His Name to Moses when He declared His attributes to Him. This means that all that God is, we must be. Our attitudes to God are therefore related to our views about God.

Exo 3:14 God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM; and He said, You shall tell the children of Israel this: 'I AM has sent me to you'-

The Lord Jesus in John's Gospel describes Himself in terms of the "I am..." formula, alluding to the Name He carried. Each time, He was referring back to the burning bush revelation of Yahweh as the "I am"; and by implica-

tion, the Lord's audience are thereby placed in the position of Moses, intended to rise up in response as he did.

The Name speaks of the Father's desire to respond to His children. The root word *ehyeh* from which 'Yahweh' is derived occurs 50 times, mainly in the context of God's help and comfort in real situations. This is the practical nature of the things expressed in the Name. The repeated references to God's Name in Ex. 3 and 6 had a very practical context. Israel needed to summon all their faith to believe that actually, they were not in a hopeless situation there in the concentration camps of Egypt. Even when they were given no straw and told to make the same number of bricks, the comfort they are given is to remember the *Name* of their God, who had acted according to that Name in the past, and would do so in the future for them- because He is and will be who He has been.

Whenever God speaks about His Name, it is in the context of His emphasizing His huge commitment to Israel as His people, often in the face of their weakness (Ex. 12:12; 15:26; 20:2; Ez. 20:5,6). The very meaning of God's Name is of itself encouraging- although it is somewhat masked in English translations. God 'is' not just in the sense that He exists, but in that He 'is' there with and for us. Von Rad puts this in more theological language when commenting upon Ex. 3:14: "It is to be understood in the sense of 'being present', 'being there' and therefore precisely not in the sense of absolute, but of relative and efficacious, being- I will be there (for you)". The verb behind 'YHWH' was "originally

causative", i.e. God not only 'is' but He causes things to happen. We aren't to understand Him as passive, just a stone cold Name... but rather passionately active and causative in our sometimes apparently static and repetitive lives.

Exo 3:15 God said moreover to Moses, You shall tell the children of Israel this, 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you'. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations-

The idea is that God didn't have a new Name. He was going to act according to the principles of His Name as He had acted with their fathers. Nothing had changed; and He had always been a God of salvation by grace. This was to continue; He was to be remembered for how He had articulated His Name in how He had historically acted in saving the patriarchs, and He would be remembered for how He was going to act to save His people from Egypt. What was to be memorialized was therefore His actions, rather than simply the letters YH-WH. It was His wonderful works which were to be remembered [Ps. 111:4, s.w. "My memorial"]. By contrast, the sinful works and persons of the wicked would not be remembered / memorialized, be they Amalek (s.w. Ex. 17:14; Dt. 25:19), or God's apostate people (s.w. Dt. 32:26).

Exo 3:16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and tell them, 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, say-

ing, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt-

The pronouns stress how despite Moses' separation from His people over the last 80 years, he self identified as a Hebrew and God accepted that. Yahweh appeared "to *me*", with the new that He had "visited *you*", and was aware what had been "done to *you*". Moses indeed had felt for his own people there and identified with them, and God recognized that.

The ultimate visitation of Yahweh was in His plan to save His people eternally through the Lord Jesus, the greater than Moses (Lk. 1:68; 7:16). And we too are to look out of ourselves and visit the fatherless and widows (James 1:27), which is how Israel in Egypt are described in Ps. 68:5.

Exo 3:17 and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey'-

We note that only six nations are mentioned as living in the land, in contrast to the ten nations listed when the land was first promised (Gen. 15:18-21). It was as if God had already started to scale back the extent of His potential operations with Israel and His grace toward them, foreseeing they would not be able to cope with it all at one time. See on :8.

Exo 3:18 They will listen to your voice-

And yet there were various levels of possible obedience. Thus if the people don't believe the first sign, they may believe the second; if they don't believe either of

them then there will be a third sign (Ex. 4:8,9). Yet God states in Ex. 3:18 that the people will listen; and yet Ex. 4:8,9 accepts the possibility that they may not. In this we see not only the essential hopefulness of God for human response to Him, but His willingness to go along with our continued weakness and blindness in an open-ended manner. There is, therefore, the possibility of living before God on different levels. See on Ex. 4:1.

And you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt, and you shall tell him, 'Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Now please let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God'-

See on Ex. 6:12; 33:14-16. God had explained to Moses what He wished him to tell Pharaoh: "Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, hath met with us: and now let us go, we pray thee, three days journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God" (Ex. 3:18). But Moses actually doesn't say those exact words. Instead he says: "Thus saith Yahweh, the God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness... The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice unto Yahweh our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword" (Ex. 5:1,3). This seems perilously similar to the way in which Eve added to Yahweh's words when telling the serpent that actually, God had told Adam not to *even touch* the fruit. Moses appears to be painting Yahweh as somewhat draconian and threatening of him personally as well as

Israel- as if to say 'Well sir, please do us this favour, or else our God is gonna get mad with us'. Perhaps this was actually how Moses misperceived Yahweh; or perhaps he added to Yahweh's words in order to make his appeal sound more plausible.

Thus we can as it were do the work of the Saviour Himself, if we truly live as in Him. In this spirit, *Moses'* faith in keeping the Passover led to *Israel's* salvation, they left Egypt *by* him (Heb. 3:16; 11:28); and when Aaron deserved death, he was redeemed by Moses' prayer on his behalf (Dt. 9:20). Moses' prayer, with uplifted hands, resulted in Israel's victory over Amalek; without his prayer, and the intensity of it, there would have been no victory for them. However, he had to learn this lesson; for God first of all taught him that if he explained the power of God's Name to Israel's elders, then they would hearken unto him (Ex. 3:18). But they didn't hearken unto Moses (5:20), because he didn't bother expounding the Name to them. Therefore he did explain it to them (6:1-9 = 3:14-17); but then again they refused to hearken to him (6:9 cp. 3:18). He learnt that what was proclaimed by God as possible all the same depends on human effort. And this lead him on even further, to realize that through his spirituality, he could bring salvation for others.

The concepts of being God manifest and also being representative of a sinful Israel come together in Moses in a wonderful way. Ex. 3:18 is an example of this. The elders of Israel were to tell Pharaoh that "the Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us". Yet Yahweh God of Israel

had only met with Moses. Yet because he was representative of Israel and also because he himself manifested Yahweh God of Israel, the elders had met Yahweh when they met Moses. In this we see a superb prefigurement of the Lord Jesus. He was the supreme, faultless manifestation of God, and yet also the total, empathetic representative of sinful man.

Another reading is found in commentary on Ex. 5:1.

Exo 3:19 I know that the king of Egypt won't give you permission to go, no, not by a mighty hand-

And yet Pharaoh had the real possibility to let the people go, and therefore Ex. 4:23 NRSV implies that God only therefore went ahead with the plan to kill Pharaoh's firstborn. The "mighty hand" speaks of God's huge efforts to save Pharaoh by persuading him to submit to Yahweh. God did bring them out "by a mighty hand" (Ex. 6:1 s.w.), so the sense may be that it would require a "mighty hand" to bring them out, because the king of Egypt would not allow them to.

Exo 3:20 I will reach out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst, and after that he will let you go-

Moses "supposed his brethren would have understood how that God *by his hand* would deliver them" (Acts 7:25); but God told Moses that "I will stretch out *my hand*, and smite Egypt...". Moses only slowly learned the meaning of God manifestation through men. The hand of Moses was to be that of God. But he doubted that. Hence he was given signs relating to his physical

hand; it became leprous, and he used it to catch the snake which his rod had turned into. Both leprosy and snakes are associated with sin. So God is teaching him that despite his weakness, He was still able and willing to work with Him.

Moses was “sent forth” by God to do the work (Ex. 3:12 and frequently); yet the same Hebrew word is used to describe how God ‘sent out’ [“stretched forth”] the hand of God to do it (Ex. 3:20). And Moses was taught this by being told to ‘stretch out’ [same Hebrew word] *his* hand (Ex. 4:4). But Moses, for some moments at least, just didn’t want to do this. Hence God’s anger when Moses comments: “Send [the same word translated “let go” or “put forth” used about Moses being asked to “put forth” his hand in Ex. 4:4] by the hand of him whom thou wilt send” (Ex. 4:13). It was Moses’ hand that God had asked to be ‘put forth’ or ‘sent’. But Moses refuses to play a part in God manifestation. He wanted God to send forth another hand, the hand of God personally perhaps; although God had asked him to put forth *his* hand. We too tend to assume that God cannot manifest Himself through *us*; but we all tend to assume someone else will do the job, when it is *we* who are called to it.

Exo 3:21 I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, and it will happen that when you go, you shall not go empty-handed-

The Egyptians came to fear the Israelites at the end (Ex. 11:3), and therefore wished themselves to give them their wealth in the hope that this would as it were buy off

the threat of death. For after the death of the firstborn, they feared that the rest of them would be slain next. The same word for "empty-handed" is used of how Jacob likewise did not return to his land from his slavery "empty-handed" but wealthy (Gen. 31:42). Constantly they were bidden see how they were being dealt with as their God had previously treated their fathers. And they were to remember this by not sending any slave away from them "empty-handed" (s.w. Dt. 15:13). Always they were to live life under the deep impression of how they had been redeemed themselves, and were to reflect that grace to others in every context and situation of their lives. And the new Israel likewise.

Exo 3:22 But every woman shall ask of her neighbour, and of her who visits her house, jewels of silver, jewels of gold, and clothing; and you shall put them on your sons, and on your daughters. You shall plunder the Egyptians-

We may well ask whether this is commandment or prophecy. It is both, in that so much prophecy is conditional prophecy, dependent upon human obedience to actualize it. The idea was that they would march toward their new land dressed up in the finest clothing and jewellery. And it was this which they were to then give for the work of the tabernacle (Ex. 35:22).

EXODUS CHAPTER 4

Exo 4:1 Moses answered, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor listen to my voice; for they will say, 'Yahweh has not appeared to you'

This was a bald faced denial of the truth of God's statement in Ex. 3:18 that "They will listen to your voice". Moses' insistence that he doesn't want to partner with God is extreme, as is his disbelief. But God held on to him, and worked through him. This is the amazing encouragement from any reflection upon the life of Moses. Apart from a few flashes of devotion, it seems Moses only really came to a mature faith and commitment in the last part of his very long life.

Moses presents as disobedient and defiant of God's word, when he was to be one of the most major vehicles of that word. Why did Moses resist the call? Probably because of awareness of his own sin, represented by the serpent and leprosy. But the encouragement was that he could a handle on the tail of the serpent, and his leprosy could be healed. We saw that at the burning bush, Yahweh has insisted seven times that "I will..." bring salvation, the essence of the Yahweh Name, I will be / do. But Moses is in direct defiance of that when he says that the proposed salvation "will *not*" work.

Another reason Moses so strongly refused the call was because the mire of mediocrity is so strong for all men. Minding his father in law's sheep was not the

greatest job nor situation. But it was something he could do and had felt secure in for forty years. The workaday life may be disliked by us, we may chafe at, but it suddenly feels so safe, so old and familiar, when we are confronted with the Lord's call to be His man in this world. In all this lies the significance of his shepherd's rod, his workaday tool, the symbol of his working life, becoming God's rod.

Exo 4:2 Yahweh said to him, What is that in your hand? He said, A rod-

Moses "supposed his brethren would have understood how that God *by his hand* would deliver them" (Acts 7:25); but God told Moses that "I will stretch out *my hand*, and smite Egypt..." (Ex. 3:20). **Moses struggled to believe [as we all do] that if God works through us, then our hand is God's hand.** Moses only slowly learned the meaning of God manifestation through men. The hand of Moses was to be that of God. But he doubted that. Hence he was given signs relating to his physical hand; it became leprous, and he used it to catch the snake which his rod had turned into. Both leprosy and snakes are associated with sin. So God is teaching him that despite his weakness, He was still able and willing to work with Him.

Exo 4:3 He said, Throw it on the ground. He threw it on the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses ran away from it-

"Ran away" is the usual Hebrew word used for fleeing before enemies. Moses was where he was because he had fled from Pharaoh, with his snake / serpent head

dress (Ex. 2:15; Acts 7:29). He was being taught that he need not have done that. Whilst his reaction had been instinctive and natural, he was to do the counter instinctive, in faith- believing that his hand was God's hand.

Exo 4:4 Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand, and take it by the tail. He stretched out his hand, and took hold of it, and it became a rod in his hand-

Moses is told to “stretch / put forth” his hand. It is the same word repeatedly translated “let go” in the context of God telling Pharaoh to let Israel go [e.g. Ex. 4:23]. “Caught” is the same Hebrew word frequently translated “harden” in the context of God hardening Pharaoh’s heart [e.g. Ex. 4:21]. As the snake hardened in Moses’ hand into a rod, so this was how God would deal with Pharaoh through Moses. Thus God is showing Moses that what Moses will do with *his* hand to the snake- a symbol of Egypt- so the hand of God will do, working through Moses’ hand. Thus Moses’ rod [s.w. Ex. 4:2, about his shepherd’s crook] was a symbol of Egypt and Pharaoh. But the throwing down of the shepherd’s rod surely also indicated that Moses was to cast down the shepherd’s life he had been living, and let God’s hand take hold of him, so that his hand became the hand of God. Moses would thus have perceived some sort of parallel between himself and Pharaoh; God was working in both their lives, and it would take as much courage to grab hold of his own serpent-like life, as it would to do battle with Egypt. Ex. 4:23,24 brings out the parallel between how God told Moses that He would slay the first-born of Pharaoh; and then seeks to slay Moses and *his*

firstborn. And we can see lessons for ourselves here, surely. We throw down our worldly lives, take hold of them in faith, and they are transformed into the rod of God through which He will work wonders. **It really is a case of "getting a grip on your life".** Moses had to perceive the serpent-like aspects of his life and grip them; just as the parallel second sign involved his hand becoming leprous, with all its associations with sin, and then being healed and made strong to be used as the hand of God. What all this shows is that God manifestation, our hand becoming the hand of God, God working through us to deliver His people, is predicated upon our own realization of sinfulness, and grasping it firmly. Ultimately, the hand of Yahweh was revealed through the hand of Moses. Moses was "sent forth" by God to do the work (Ex. 3:12 and frequently); yet the same Hebrew word is used to describe how God 'sent out' ["stretched forth"] the hand of God to do it (Ex. 3:20). And Moses was taught this by being told to 'stretch out' [same Hebrew word] *his* hand (Ex. 4:4). But Moses, for some moments at least, just didn't want to do this. Hence God's anger when Moses comments: "Send [the same word translated "let go" or "put forth" used about Moses being asked to "put forth" his hand in Ex. 4:4] by the hand of him whom thou wilt send" (Ex. 4:13). It was Moses' hand that God had asked to be 'put forth' or 'sent'. But Moses refuses to play a part in God manifestation. He wanted God to send forth another hand, the hand of God personally perhaps; although God had asked him to put forth *his* hand. We too tend to assume that God cannot

manifest Himself through *us*; but we all tend to assume someone else will do the job, when it is *we* who are called to it. The rabbis hold that Moses is not being weak here, rather he is referring to the Messiah- the hand whom Moses knew God would one day send forth to save His people. He would then be saying: 'No, I don't want to do this, let the Christ do it'. The same thought is maybe found in Ex. 5:22, when Moses asks Yahweh: "Why is it that thou hast sent [s.w. "put forth" and "let go"] *me*?"- i.e., why don't You use Messiah, the man of Your right hand? And this, subconsciously and unexpressed, is so often our view; He must do it, not me. I'm just a shepherd, God ought to leave me alone in the comfortable monotony of my working life. But He has called us to greater things, to realize as Moses finally did that *we*, you and me, are the ones through whom God truly will work in this world. The rod of Moses ("*thy* rod") became the rod of God (Ex. 4:20); the shepherd's crook, the symbol of an obscure workaday life, became transformed to the rod and arm of God Almighty. There can be no doubt from all this that God was intensely manifest in Moses. The hand of God was manifested through the hand of Moses. Moses had many deep seated spiritual weakness, and also many traits which were not appropriate to leadership, and yet because of his willingness to participate in God's desire to be manifest through him, he was able to be changed and used by God.

Exo 4:5 That they may believe that Yahweh, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you-

It is by taking hold of our own sin that we witness to others who are sinners; it was Moses' having his own sinful weakness transformed [leprosy, snake] which could lead Israel to believe. But they generally didn't believe. "They *may* believe" shows the conditional nature of all this. For the people didn't immediately believe Moses nor these signs. The whole narrative of the Divine-human encounter is about potentials being offered to men, which are often not perceived or realized.

Exo 4:6 Yahweh said furthermore to him, Now put your hand inside your cloak. He put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, as white as snow-

Leprosy was a symbol of sin. Moses was being again shown that human sin and weakness was not going to stop God's purpose going forward. And we note that his sister Miriam was smitten suddenly with leprosy and quickly healed of it (Num. 12:10). Moses would have been able to see her leprosy with the eye of faith, remembering his own experience; and Miriam likewise would have been encouraged by Moses' experience to believe that the affliction could quickly be healed. If she perceived the similarities between herself and her brother. And we likewise can take encouragement from others' experiences, insofar as we are thoughtful about life. And if we are familiar with the Biblical records and biographies of the lives of God's previous servants.

Exo 4:7 He said, Put your hand inside your cloak again. He put his hand inside his cloak again, and when

he took it out of his cloak, behold, it had turned again as his other flesh-

The hand of Moses was to be the hand of Yahweh (see on Ex. 4:4). But like all of us, Moses sensed his moral inadequacy. And so God was showing him that He indeed recognized that Moses was indeed but sinful flesh; but He could deal with that, in a moment. Although it depended upon Moses' obedience to God's plan and the simple command to use his hand as God told him. The same lesson is for us to learn.

Exo 4:8 It will happen, if they will neither believe you nor listen to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign-

The Father is ever seeking for some positive response, and is highly sensitive to it. The God who knows the end from the beginning gives the impression that He is sure they will believe- even though they didn't. He is so seeking for faith in His creatures (cp. "surely they will reverence My son", Mt. 21:37, and Ex. 19:21 cp. 20:18). In this, Isaiah says, He shows His matchless grace: "For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: *so* [therefore] he was their Saviour... but they rebelled, and vexed his holy [gracious] spirit" (Is. 63:8,10). Our tendency is to notice the negative in others, and let it outweigh the positive. God works quite the other way. He hopes for positive response, and even speaks as if He will get it when He knows He won't.

Exo 4:9 It will happen, if they will not believe even these two signs, neither listen to your voice, that you shall take of the water of the river, and pour it on the dry land.

The water which you take out of the river will become blood on the dry land-

See on :8. The Egyptians perhaps more than any believed in the waters, especially of the Nile, as the source of good and evil. And the Israelites were worshipping the gods of Egypt, so they too needed to see the gods of Egypt revealed as mythical and powerless before Yahweh. God powerfully deconstructed their ideas about the Nile by enabling Moses to turn those waters into blood – i.e. to effectively slay whatever deity was supposed to live in the Nile, and then to revert the water to how it had been. This was surely to demonstrate that whatever deities were associated with “the waters”, Yahweh was greater, and could slay and revive them at perfect ease. Later Scripture identified the Egyptians and not the sea itself as “Rahab... the dragon” (Is. 51:9; Ps. 89:9.10)- whereas the common view was that the sea itself was the Satan figure. Moses’ stress was that the real adversaries / satans to Israel were people, and not some mythical dragon figure. Even if such a figure existed, then Yahweh had destroyed him at the Red Sea, in that He clearly could manipulate the Sea at His whim. The conflict was between Israel and Egypt, God and Pharaoh- and not God and some dragon in the Sea.

Exo 4:10 Moses said to Yahweh, O Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before now, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a stammering tongue-

"Before now" is literally "yesterday", so "since yesterday" may refer to the burning bush incident .

Moses is saying that although he had been called the day before, his speech impediment had not improved. God has not empowered him as he expected. And so we all reason; we expect empowerment to perform our commission when we are simply comforted that I will be with us. Or he is saying that previously he had failed in persuading Pharaoh to let Israel go.

This is how Moses felt he would be perceived, although actually he was previously quite fluent when in the court of Pharaoh (Acts 7:22). Paul would have remembered Stephen saying how Moses was formerly full of worldly wisdom and "mighty in words". Paul felt that he too had been through Moses' experience- once mighty in words as the rising star of the Jewish world, but now like Moses he had left all that behind in order to try to save a new Israel from Judaism and paganism. As Moses consciously rejected the opportunity for leading the 'world' of Egypt, so Paul probably turned down the chance to be High Priest. God maybe confirmed both him and Moses in their desire for humility by giving them a speech impediment (perhaps part of the "thorn in the flesh" which Paul was "given", 2 Cor. 12:7). Thus Moses no longer had the eloquence he once had. Paul clearly alludes to Moses in this in his self descriptions: "His letters, say they (Paul's detractors in the new Israel) are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible... though I be rude in speech... Christ sent me... to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words (mg. speech)" (2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6; 1

Cor. 1:17). Paul says he was "taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers" by Gamaliel, receiving the highest wisdom possible in the Jewish world; but he uses the same word as Stephen in Acts 7:22, describing how Moses was "learned" in all the wisdom of Egypt.

"Stammering tongue" could refer to a literal stammer, in which case we marvel at how so many of God's words to His people were spoken through a mouth and tongue which stuttered. Truly God's strength is made perfect in weakness. But the term can refer to speaking with a heavy accent or in another language (Ez. 3:5,6). Moses might be arguing that he had forgotten Egyptian and Hebrew, as he had been speaking in the language of the Bedouin for the last 40 years. For "not eloquent", LXX has 'weak voiced', and again we marvel that a man who did so much public speaking of God's word had a weak voice. And yet he was "powerful in speech" (Acts 7:22). Exactly because he had a stutter and was weak voiced, God made him a powerful speaker through his message, rather than his presentation. And yet this could also be an excuse from Moses. "I am not eloquent, neither before now, nor since You have spoken to Your servant" seems to be saying that Moses considered he had never been eloquent. This is in contradiction with Acts 7:22, and would therefore appear to be him making desperate excuses for refusing God's call.

NEB "slow and hesitant of speech". It seems Moses was a far cry from the young man learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, mighty in words and works

(Acts 7:22), set up to be the next Pharaoh, and set up by God to be just the right man to interface with Pharaoh and Egypt. We can conclude he had had a breakdown or stroke, resulting in his slow, hesitant, possibly stuttering speech. Or perhaps in the 40 years in Midian he just withdrew into himself and didn't want to come out of that shell. Alternatively, it has been observed that stuttering is largely genetic or from birth, and the fact Moses' parents were aunt and nephew (Ex. 6:20) would explain it; and stuttering is common in those raised in bilingual, stressful environments. This would match Moses' upbringing as the adopted grandson of Pharaoh. The Songs of Moses at the Red Sea and at his death were sung by a stuttering man (Ex. 4:10). This shows for all time how God works through those who apparently are unsuited for His work.

Both Moses and Jeremiah reacted to their preaching commissions by saying that they weren't the right person to do it. Moses wasn't an eloquent speaker, nor [so he said] did he know Egyptian very well any more. His comment was: "Who am I...?" (Ex. 3:11; 4:10). Jeremiah protested that he was simply far too young (Jer. 1:6). But as Peter spoke *a-grammatos*, without grammar to an educated, erudite audience (Acts 4:13 Gk.), so did these men. And this was just the attitude of mind which God wanted to use as His mouthpiece. If you feel your inadequacy, then this is just when you are ready for God's use. It's the young sister who still fumbles for where books are in her Bible who is more likely to be the Lord's agent

for conversion, than the well versed and over-confident brother giving a Christian talk.

Exo 4:11 Yahweh said to him, Who made man's mouth? Or who makes one mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Isn't it I, Yahweh?-

Moses felt so humanly inadequate, not strong enough for the task before him- and he was encouraged by God to find courage from the simple fact that God had created Moses' mouth and senses- and therefore God was able to strengthen them for what He needed to be done. The fact God created us should encourage us to feel adequate for the tasks He gives us. We note that incapacity and sickness ultimately is from God and not a personal Satan. "*The Lord* will bring upon you all the diseases of Egypt" (Dt. 28:60); "an evil spirit *from the Lord* troubled [Saul]" (1 Sam. 16:14).

Moses had complained that his mouth and lips were heavy or uncircumcised. He may well have had a cleft palet, being the offspring of an aunty and her nephew. But God says that He has made the deformations as well. This certainly gives a window onto some theology of disability. God created all. His response is again "I will..." (:12), alluding to the Name as in Ex. 3. No cure is offered, just that God "will be" through all such human weakness.

Exo 4:12 Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you shall speak-

See on Dt. 31:8. This is almost quoted in Mt. 10:19,20 and Mk. 13:11 concerning how we too will be taught what to say when we come before the rulers

of our world. In such moments of crisis, Moses, even in weakness as he was at this time, really is our living example.

Because we're mere humans, we don't know what to ask of God as we should; and His very Name is the comfort that He will be for us as we need, with our eternal salvation in mind. God seemed to have encouraged Israel to understand this by going on to promise simply that "I shall be [*ehyeh*] present" (Ex. 3:12; 4:12). He wanted them to trust that He knew best how to bring them to salvation; He didn't want them to invoke His Name in the primitive way the Egyptians did with their gods, hoping for a quick-fix miracle. God is only *ehyeh* for His people, not for others; and there came a terrible moment when He had to tell them through the prophets that "You are not my people and I am not *ehyeh* for you" (Hos. 1:9). Israel lost this 'presence' of their God. And we know that we are His people by the constant sense we have of the hand of Providence in our lives, even through the unanswered prayers that reveal an altogether higher and ultimately Divine game plan in place in our lives. But like Israel before Moses, we wish for the quick fix, the waving of the wand to resolve the issues, the sense of the saving presence of God in our experiences, working out His ultimate plan of delivering us from Egypt / this world and from ourselves.

Exo 4:13 He said, Oh, Lord, please send someone else-

Heb. "Send whom you will send". This appears a sarcastic allusion to Yahweh's Name, "I will be [and will do] who I will be [what I will do]". Yahweh has just allud-

ed to His own Name as noted on :12. Moses sinks very low here. He has blasphemed the Name, hence the great anger of God against him in :14.

Exo 4:14 The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Moses-

If God's wrath burns hot against people, it means death for them (s.w. Ex. 22:24; Num. 11:1,33; 22:22; 25:3; Dt. 6:15; 31:17). But Moses averted this at the time of Ex. 32:10 by his intercession. He does so because God's wrath had burned hot against him personally (Ex. 4:14 s.w.), but he had been saved from death by grace. And so he reflects this in appealing for he salvation o f others, against whom God's wrath burned hot (Ex. 32:10.11). But Moses at the end of his life warns them not to make God's wrath burn hot against them again-because he will not be around to intercede for them (Dt. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17).

And He said, What about Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Also, behold, he comes out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart-

"I will send you unto Pharaoh, that you may bring forth My people... And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go?... And God said... they shall hearken to your voice... And Moses answered... They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice (he didn't seem to believe God's promise to inspire him)... I am not eloquent, neither heretofore (i.e. in the past)... I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue (although this was untrue- earlier Moses had been an eloquent speaker in Egypt; actual-

ly he was just the right man to do what God wanted)... and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses". Remember that God is *very* slow to this kind of anger (Ex. 34:6). Forty years earlier, Moses had understood, presumably from a direct revelation from God, that God would deliver Israel through him. But he had lost faith in that promise, and was arguing back against God. This was the outcome of many years of spiritual slipping. "Send... by the hand of him whom *You will* send" (alluding to God's Name, I will be) can be seen as indifference; perhaps Moses was saying 'As you do what you will, your name is I will be, then if you send by me, send by men, I can't resist'.

Moses is assured that his older brother Aaron would be happy to be the spokesman for his younger brother; answering Moses' unspoken fear that Aaron would angrily resent having to have an inferior role. In this we see Aaron's humility, rejoicing to play a part even when another has the greater role. This too played a part in leading Moses to become the humblest man (Num. 12:3).

Exo 4:15 You shall speak to him, and put the words in his mouth. I will be with your mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do-

Moses disbelieved these words when in Ex. 6:29 he repeats that Pharaoh will not listen to him because of his lips. God was equally with the mouths of both Aaron and Moses, even though Aaron could "speak well" in his own strength. God didn't cure Moses' speech defect but worked through it. Moses' imped-

iment meant nothing to God and those without impediment likewise need God's work through them rather than their own strength .

The promise of Moses that God would not fail nor forsake Joshua, but would be with him (Dt. 31:8) was similar to the very promise given to Moses here, which he had doubted at the time (Ex. 3:12; 4:12,15). Such exhortation is so much the stronger from someone who has themselves doubted and then come to believe. Joshua was encouraged that "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you" (Josh. 1:5). But these very words are quoted in Heb. 13:5 as the grounds of our matchless confidence that the Lord God will be with us too! As He was with Moses at such a point of Moses' personal weakness (see on :13,14)- not just in power, but in wondrous patience and gentleness- so He will be with us too. Not only did God encourage Joshua to see himself as in Moses' shoes; He inspired Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 21:8 = Dt. 30:15,19), and Ezekiel (Ez. 2:3 = Dt. 31:27; Neh. 9:17; Num. 17:10); and He wishes us to also see Moses' God as our God. But if Moses' God is to be ours in truth in the daily round of life, we must rise up to the dedication of Moses; as he was a faithful steward, thoroughly dedicated to God's ecclesia (Heb. 3:5), so we are invited follow his example (1 Cor. 4:2; Mt. 24:45).

In the last days, God's faithful people will be given a mouth and wisdom which their persecutors will be unable to gainsay nor resist (Lk. 21:15). This evidently alludes to how Moses before Pharaoh was given such a

‘mouth.’ Moses at that time was a type of the faithful remnant of their last days although he was so weak (see on :13,14), in their witness against the world during the tribulation. Hence Rev. 11 describes their witness in terms of Moses doing miracles before Pharaoh.

Exo 4:16 He will be your spokesman to the people; and it will happen, that he will be to you a mouth, and you will be to him as God-

But the plans / intentions for Aaron seem not to have worked out- for Moses ended up doing everything in reality. “It shall come to pass that he shall be to thee a mouth” (RV)- but it didn’t so come to pass. Aaron flunked it. The statement was evidently conditional. It was evidently God’s plan that *Moses* should be His spokesman to Egypt. But when Moses refused, God didn’t just give up; He worked with what He had available, He didn’t totally reject Moses, but instead put a ‘plan B’ into operation by conceding to Moses’ stubbornness and making Aaron the spokesman (Ex. 4:10-17).

Exo 4:17 You shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs-

The rod was to remind Moses that this was the rod which had become a serpent [associated with sin] and changed back to a rod. Although God would work through the rod, the reminder was that He worked through human sin and weakness, of which Moses was strongly afflicted as he began his ministry at this point. **The rod was just random dead wood. Just like Moses. But the comfort was that God would use it, so Moses shouldn’t doubt that God likewise could use him.**

Exo 4:18 Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, Please let me go and return to my brothers who are in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive. Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace-

He seems to make the excuse to Jethro that he is homesick for his family who are still in Egypt, rather than telling him his mission. Moses asks Jethro for permission to return to Egypt to see whether his Hebrew brethren are "still alive"- yet God had just told Moses that there were indeed Hebrews still alive there who he will lead out of Egypt. Of course Moses *may* have been referring to his literal family; but it's possible that his words to Jethro imply a lack of faith in God's word, or at best an unwillingness to openly show his commitment to his new ministry from God. At the very least, he was shy to share God's word to him with Jethro. In this context it may be significant that the words God tells Moses to say to Pharaoh at this time in Ex. 4:23 are in fact never said by Moses throughout the dialogue with Pharaoh recorded in Ex. 11 and 12.

Exo 4:19 Yahweh said to Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead-

Moses didn't want Egypt to know that he was trying to save Israel; he thought he could do it secretly. Once he realized that people knew what he was trying to do, he was afraid. His fearfulness has similarities with that of spiritually weak Jacob, who fled from the face of Laban into the unknown, as Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh. Thus God encouraged him after forty years that he need no longer fear: "Return into Egypt: for all

the men are dead which sought your life" (Ex. 4:19). But then he rallied his faith and left Egypt, without (at the point of leaving) fearing the anger of Pharaoh. He so strongly believed, it was as if he physically saw God- as he asked (Heb. 11:27).

We note the repetition in :24; Pharaoh *sought* Moses' *life*, but then Yahweh *seeks* Moses' *life*, after telling him that all who were *seeking his life* in Egypt had died. Perhaps God is showing that although He has preserved Moses from those who sought his life, this was no automatically created position. Moses was worthy of death but was preserved from it by grace. Moses is also being taught that he is no essentially better than Pharaoh and the Egyptians, despite the judgment Moses was to bring upon them. We too have these kinds of incidents in life, to help us realize we too are saved by grace from God's wrath. This is why God reminds Moses in :23 that Pharaoh's firstborn is to be killed, and then moves to attempt to slay Moses' firstborn. Gershom, or Moses, are saved by touching the blood of the firstborn to his feet- just as the use of the Passover lamb's blood would save the firstborn.

These words are clearly alluded to when the death of Herod, as of the Pharaoh, opens the way for the Lord Jesus to leave Egypt; just as Moses hereby has the way opened to return to Egypt (Mt. 2:20).

Exo 4:20 Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. Moses took God's rod in his hand-

The personal rod of Moses (*"thy rod"*) became the rod of God; the shepherd's crook, the symbol of an obscure workaday life, became transformed to the rod and arm of God Almighty. See on 4:4.

Exo 4:21 Yahweh said to Moses, When you go back into Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your hand, but I will harden his heart and he will not let the people go-

See on Ex. 4:4. The wonders were done by the Angels, so we are told in Psalm 78 and other commentaries on the Exodus in Scripture. But Moses through obeying the Word of God had control over those Angels, they were in His hand, symbolized by the rod. And so with us too.

The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart occur in a positive context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14 "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart"; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought- for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too.

This implies the three signs would be followed by the death of the firstborn. In reality God extended the

plagues to give Egypt more chance to repent. He is so flexible because of His grace.

Exo 4:22 You shall tell Pharaoh, 'Thus says Yahweh, Israel is My son, My firstborn-

It may be significant that the words God tells Moses to say to Pharaoh at this time in Ex. 4:23 are in fact never said by Moses throughout the dialogue with Pharaoh recorded in Ex. 11 and 12. His response to Divine commandment is often incomplete. But out of such weakness he was made strong. **We note Israel were God's "firstborn"; the first nation to be His people, implying all the other nations would also become His children. Just as the Lord Jesus was the firstfruits, with promise that we also shall be the harvest, "at His coming".**

Exo 4:23 and I have said to you, Let My son go, that he may serve Me; and you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn'-

This is the language used of Babylon's reason for destruction: "The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together (i.e. Jews taken out of the land of Israel plus others from the diaspora alike taken to concentration camps in Arab lands?): and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go" (Jer. 50:33). Similarly Babylon is described as not opening "the house of the prisoners" (Is. 14:17). Biblical history continually interconnects, demonstrating that the same Divine hand has worked throughout history, and likewise works in our lives according to the same style. See on Ex. 1:7; 15:21.

Pharaoh had real possibility to let the people go, and therefore Ex. 4:23 NRSV implies that God only therefore went ahead with the plan to kill Pharaoh's firstborn. Likewise if the Israelites don't believe the first sign, they may believe the second; if they don't believe either of them then there will be a third sign (Ex. 4:8,9). Yet God states in Ex. 3:18 that the people will listen; and yet Ex. 4:8,9 accepts the possibility that they may not. In all this we see not only the essential hopefulness of God for human response to Him, but His willingness to go along with our continued weakness and blindness in an open-ended manner. There is, therefore, the possibility of living before God on different levels.

To be caught up in the downward spiral [as we all are at times] doesn't mean that there's no way out. The hearts of Pharaoh's servants were hardened (Ex. 10:1 cp. Ex. 9:34), and yet they did in fact soften when they beg Pharaoh to let Israel go (Ex. 10:7; 11:8). Yet each refusal of Pharaoh to soften his heart made it harder for him to soften it the next time the opportunity was presented. Conditional language is always used about Pharaoh-if he were to refuse to release Israel, more plagues would happen (Ex. 8:2; 9:2; 10:4 cp. 8:21; 4:23 RSV). In fact God wanted Pharaoh to come to realize that there is none like Yahweh in all the earth- and that was actually why He did not immediately kill Pharaoh, but rather appealed to him through the plagues. That's how I read the enigmatic Ex. 9:15: "For now I should have put forth my hand, and smitten thee... and thou hadst been cut off from the earth". Fretheim paraphrases this: "If I had not had the

intention of your knowing that there is none like me in all the earth... then I should have put forth my hand and cut you off from the earth. This is what you have deserved". The hardening of Pharaoh's heart didn't mean that he was thereby bound to chose wrongly each time. Indeed, the plagues themselves were designed to warn Pharaoh and thereby appeal to him to change, in order to avoid worse plagues.

"Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn" provides the connection with the strange incident that follows. Whoever was not circumcised was to be cut off from God's people. Moses had not circumcised his own firstborn. So Moses is being shown that he and his son deserved death for this. But he was saved from it by Divine grace and the intervention of a third party, namely Zipporah, the wife whom Moses was to later divorce. So Moses is being taught that he himself is actually no better than Pharaoh. He had been circumcised by a faithful father, and I suggested in Ex. 2 that this was why Pharaoh's daughter recognized and saved him. But he had not circumcised his son. He had not reflected back the good upbringing he had had. His salvation by grace at this point was to inspire him to reflect the work of Zipporah in saving the uncircumcised Israelites. And to realize that he was essentially the same as the Gentile idolatrous daughter of a pagan priest, whom he likely now secretly despised. Just as much as her despite of him is revealed by her comment that Moses was a "bridegroom of blood" to her.

However the pronoun is unclear; the Lord was seeking to kill "him", but who? It could be Moses or Gershom; and perhaps the ambiguity is because Gershom was uncircumcised, he was to be cut off from his people, and Moses also, for not circumcising him. We can retranslate this section as follows, bearing in mind that NEV is wrong on :24 "Yahweh met Moses"; the Hebrew is "Yahweh met him":

"And you will say to Pharoah, "Thus says YHWH, 'Israel is my son, my firstborn. And I say to you, release my son that he may serve me.' And he will refuse to release him. Behold, I will kill your son [Moses' son], your firstborn. And it happened on the way, in the lodging place, YHWH encountered him and sought to put him to death. And Zipporah took a flint and cut off the foreskin of her son and touched it to his foot and said, "You are a bridegroom of blood to me!". As if to say, when I married you as my groom it turned out you would cause the bloodshed of my firstborn son. This translation makes more sense, because it was the uncircumcised who were to be cut off from the people, not the parents who didn't circumcise them.

Exo 4:24 It happened on the way at a lodging place, that Yahweh met Moses and wanted to kill him-

See on Ex. 4:4; 34:9. The way the Lord "tried to kill" Moses (Ex. 4:24 AV) indicates how God's intentions can be changed by human actions; and it also reflects the limitation of power experienced by the Angel, who presumably was the one who 'tried' to do this but

was thwarted by a woman. However in our context of Moses' weakness we need to reflect how this incident echoes how Pharaoh sought to kill Moses in Ex. 2:15. Even through his weakness, Moses was being taught that his personal salvation and continuation in life was by grace. Moses was saved on this occasion by a Gentile woman, Zipporah- just as he had been saved as a baby by another Gentile woman- as well as by the quick-wittedness of his own mother and sister. As Zipporah mediated with the Angel and saved Moses by touching his son with blood, so Moses would save Israel through his mediation with God and through the Passover ritual (Ex. 12:13,22,23), as well as later throwing blood upon the people (Ex. 24:8). What are we to make of all these echoes and connections of thought? Perhaps that Moses was indeed weak at this time, was saved by grace alone, and yet on that basis he was called to in his turn also save the weak through appealing to God's grace. **We also see reflected how Moses had seen an Egyptian about to kill a Hebrew, and had intervened and saved the Hebrew. Zipporah now plays the role of Moses. She is being set up to Moses as an example to be followed, rather than a pagan woman to be separated from, as he was to do. Indeed the way Zipporah saves Moses [or at least her son] fits with a theme in Exodus, of women saving- we think of the midwives, Moses' mother and sister, Pharaoh's daughter. The Bible was way ahead of its time in reflecting the value God places on every human person regardless of gender;**

and so any claim that the Bible merely reflects the societal views of the day is falsified.

The way conditions are not stated within the actual prophecy is similar to how blanket statements are made in Scripture, and yet there are exceptions to them. Thus here the Lord sought to kill Moses. If He had done so, all His previous statements about delivering Israel by the hand of Moses would not have come true. God only didn't kill Moses because Zipporah intervened. She did this purely of her own freewill and according to the depth of her spiritual vision. Thus the earlier prophecies about delivering Israel by the hand of Moses actually had at least one major, though unspoken, condition: If Moses himself remained faithful. "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue" (Ex. 11:7) was in fact conditional on Israel remaining indoors. But that condition isn't then stated. Even the old covenant, which was in a sense "eternal", was made with Israel "upon all these conditions" (Ex. 24:8 RVmg.). It was eternal, potentially, because it had conditions. But the conditionality of it isn't always brought to the fore when, e.g., we read of the Sabbath as being an eternal ordinance.

Amos 4:12 sums up the idea of conditional prophecy: "Therefore thus will I do unto you, O Israel: and because I will do this unto you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel". Thus God *will* do- but therefore, repent so that it won't happen. There is an allusion here to God in an Angel coming to meet Moses to slay him, but he repent-

ed and thereby changed the purpose / will / intention of God.

Time and again, the Jewish apocryphal literature wrongly sought to distance God from doing anything negative in human life. Gen. 22:1 clearly states that it was *God* who put Abraham to the test by asking him to kill his son Isaac; Jubilees retells the story with "Prince Mastema", the Satan figure, telling Abraham to do this (Jub. 17:15-18). Likewise Ex. 4:24 recounts how "the Lord", presumably as an Angel, met Moses and tried to kill him for not circumcising his son; but Jubilees again claims that Mastema / Satan did this (Jub. 48:1-3). The Biblical record highlights the sin of Aaron and the people; the Jewish myths excuse it by blaming it on Satan. Indeed, several times the Hebrew word *mastema* ['hostility, enmity'] occurs, it is in the context of urging Israel to see that *they* and their internal desires to sin are the true *mastema*. Hosea 9:7 is an example: "Because your sins are so many and your hostility [*mastema*] so great".

Exo 4:25 Then Zipporah took a flint, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said, Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me-

Moses' marriage was weak. After 40 years, Zipporah's frustration boiled over: "Surely a bloody husband art thou to me... then she said (again), A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision" (AV). As a descendant of Ishmael she was angry at Isaac's choice and circumcision. This is probably the closest the Bible gets to recording the real life use of taboo language. "Because of

the circumcision" suggests she despised Moses' religion. Moses divorced her.

A read through the records will indicate that Moses was somewhat temperamental in his faith. For the first forty years of his life, he scarcely let his light show. Yet all the time his conscience was active, enabling him to build up towards heights of spiritual achievement few of us can achieve. At the age of 40, he had a flash of spiritual devotion; he rejected the opportunity for greatness in Egypt, possibly the opportunity to become king of Egypt (as Christ had the opportunity to become king of the world in his wilderness temptations). Yet after that, he went into 40 years of decline. In the eyes of men, he was a finished man. He had gone away from God's people, he was living in a family of idolaters, and had married one of them. His marriage went wrong, he divorced his wife, and picked up some other woman. He didn't circumcise his children, and thus he despised his covenant relationship with God. Eighty years is a long time. They were eighty years of at best mediocre commitment to the God of Israel, with only the occasional flash of spiritual brilliance. Yet this man Moses went on to become one of the greatest spiritual men there has ever been, a man who came closer to God than all others except the Lord Jesus. "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Dt. 34:10). The Lord Jesus was "like unto" Moses (Dt. 18:18)- a high enough commendation for Moses.

"Cast it at his feet" could as well be translated "touched it on his legs", Biblical Hebrew making no

distinction between legs and feet as in several languages today. It was therefore very similar to the salvation of the firstborn by the painting of blood on the doorposts. We wonder why it was Zipporah and not Moses who perceived the problem and acted upon it? For this is the only Biblical example of a woman performing circumcision. Again we are left with the impression that Moses is uncommitted, switched off and not at all spiritually perceptive at this point. And yet he is used by God to save His people and is, bit by bit, dramatically transformed. When Moses appealed to Pharaoh and threatened the death of the firstborn, he would have made the appeal with the humility and intensity of a man who almost lost his own firstborn, had it not been for repentance and intercession. And he would have seen the judgment carried out with awed humility, realizing that he had not responded to the same situation as he should, but rather Zipporah had.

Exo 4:26 So He let him alone-

Martin Buber, one of academic Judaism's finest minds, coined the term "Yahweh's demonism". He perceived in, e.g., the record of the Angel meeting Moses at night, seeking to slay him and then 'letting him go', all the language which was typically applied to demons-meeting and seeking to slay a man of God (Ex. 4:24). But the point is, it is not a demon who did this, but a righteous Angel of God, to the extent that it was possible for the record to state that it was Yahweh who sought to slay Moses, and yet changed His purpose because of

Moses' repentance and the intercession of a woman. Buber's point was that the text is an allusion to the local beliefs about demons, but the Biblical record deconstructs these beliefs by showing that it is Yahweh and His Angels responsible for those situations which pagans would otherwise attribute to supposed 'demons'. Other examples include how the bull cherubim were understood in the surrounding cultures as the abode or throne of a demon; but it is Yahweh who is enthroned upon the bull cherubim; or how the record of Balaam would've lead the contemporary hearers to expect him to receive inspiration from a demon- but instead the inspiration comes from Yahweh, and is *against* those who believed in demons and pagan gods.

"Let him alone" is Heb. 'released his hold '. This would explain why Moses was unable to perform the circumcision. It would be another connection with the Angel holding Jacob and changing his intention to murder him. The same word is in 1 Chron. 21:15 where the Angel intending to kill all Israel 'releases his hand' once sacrifice is offered by David. Another example if Divine intention being changed by human action or intercession.

We think of how God apparently went out to kill Jacob, but was 'foiled' by Jacob's prayer; He went out to kill Balaam, but was stopped by the donkey helping Balaam; and now, He goes out to kill Moses and his son, but is apparently foiled by Zipporah's zippy action. Of course, God is not foiled nor defeated; instead we are invited to see how He is so open to inter-

cession and to changing His intentions in response to human prayer or third party mediation. We likewise deserve to be cut off from God's people, but are saved by the Lord's blood and intervention and initiative of the greater than Zipporah.

Then she said, You are a bridegroom of blood, because of the circumcision-

It seems from this that the Angel also intended to slay Moses' son. The connection with Ex. 4:23 would mean that God tried to kill Moses' son because Moses was not fully believing that God would kill Pharaoh's firstborn. We note that Moses was saved here by a Gentile woman; just as his life had been saved in babyhood by women (his faithful mother, his sister and the Gentile princess).

LXX "and he departed from him, because she said, The blood of the circumcision of my son is staunched". This suggests that the blood of the first-born saved Moses and Gershom from death, thanks to the intercession of Zipporah. In this case we see God not in fact cutting off the man who was not circumcised on the eighth day; for Gershom was far older than eight days old at this point. As ever, He by grace accepted the spirit rather than the letter of obedience.

Exo 4:27 Yahweh said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. He went, and met him on God's mountain, and kissed him-

The wilderness would have been that between Egypt and Horeb, or Sinai, which was now "God's mountain"

(Ex. 3:1). It was quite some obedience by Aaron to escape from Egypt and travel alone in the wilderness to meet Moses, his brother whom he hardly knew and had not heard from for 40 years. Aaron's obedience should be recognized by us. He could easily have turned down this calling as bizarre.

Exo 4:28 Moses told Aaron all the words of Yahweh with which He had sent him, and all the signs with which He had instructed him-

Aaron's faith would have been buoyed up by actually meeting his long absent brother Moses, his faith in the apparently bizarre word of Yahweh to him would have been rewarded. And so he was the more inclined surely to believe the message Moses now shared with him. Aaron was initially more obedient to the call than Moses was; but that changed over time.

Exo 4:29 Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel-

The Jews thought that as Moses hid himself and then re-emerged from obscurity, so Messiah would. Rabbi Berekiah said: "As the first deliverer [Moses] was revealed, then hidden and afterwards appeared again, so will it also be with the last deliverer [Messiah]" (Quoted in J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea In Israel* (London: Macmillan, 1956) p. 17.). John's record is clearly presenting the Lord as Moses in this sense.

Exo 4:30 Aaron spoke all the words which Yahweh had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people-

The fact Moses had to do all the signs shows that they did not believe the first and second signs. Their faith is consistently shown to be weak and superficial from the very start of their relationship with Yahweh; and later prophets will lament his from Egypt onwards, their faith was very weak indeed. Like us at times, they were saved almost against their will, by grace alone.

Exo 4:31 The people believed, and when they heard that Yahweh had visited the children of Israel, and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped-

"When Moses *was grown*, he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens... when he was *full forty years old* it came into his heart to visit his brethren... by faith Moses, *when he was come to years*, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Ex. 2:11; Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24). The implication seems to be that Moses reached a certain point of maturity, of readiness, and then he went to his brethren. But then he stepped back from that apparent maturity, and spent 40 years building up to it again. We can have similar experiences. God looked on the sorrows of His people through the sensitivity of Moses, He *saw and knew* their struggles, their sense of being trapped, their desire to revive spiritually but their being tied down by the painful business of life and living; and He sent Moses to deliver them from this. But these very words are quoted about our deliverance through the 'coming down' of the Lord Jesus (Ex. 3:7; 4:31 = Lk. 1:68).

Moses manifested / represented both God and Israel, superbly prefiguring the nature of the Lord's work and mission far later. As God "saw" the oppression of Israel (Ex. 2:25; 3:7,9; 4:31; 5:19), so did Moses (Ex. 2:11). He looked on God's people with the eyes / perspective of God- just as we should.

The people asked the Lord Jesus "What sign do you show unto us?" (Jn. 2:18). Cynical Israel asked exactly the same of Moses, in effect; and superficially, "the people believed" (Ex. 4:31) after they saw the signs. The hollowness of Israel's 'belief' in Moses was matched by the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet they still both loved Israel.

EXODUS CHAPTER 5

Exo 5:1 Afterward Moses and Aaron came, and said to Pharaoh, This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says, 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness'-

See on Ex. 3:18. The commandment had been that the elders should go with them ("And you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt, and you shall tell him, 'Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Now please let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God", Ex. 3:18); but it seems that only Moses and Aaron go. So this suggests that Moses was pretty much single handed in saving the people; the people and their elders were unenthusiastic and passive, as many in the body of the new Israel. And this is a theme in so many lives. Whilst fellowship with others is indeed a comfort, anyone who seriously does God's work will at many points stand alone-but alone with God. Those who long for more fellowship, for a nearby church and other believers... need to bear this in mind.

Yahweh had asked Pharaoh to let Israel go that they might serve Him. "Let My people go that they may serve Me" is parallel with "Let My people go that they may sacrifice / keep a feast to Me". That "service" was specifically to keep a feast; but that feast was to celebrate their deliverance from Egypt. God's intention was that their journey to Canaan should begin with a feast. If we en-

quire 'What was Yahweh asking Pharaoh to do?'; the answer is that He asked him to let Israel go and "serve" Him through keeping a feast. They were to ob-serve a feast to Him; to keep a feast was to "serve" God. This is why Moses later says that Israel must take all their animals with them, because they don't know with what they are to "serve" Yahweh, i.e. which animals He might ask them to sacrifice. It is why He asks Pharaoh to let Israel go to "sacrifice" (Ex. 8:26-29), to "serve Me in the wilderness", paralleled in Ex. 5:1 by "Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness". The "service" was a specific act at a specific time in a specific place- a "feast", which is a term also used of the Passover. Pharaoh refused, and so the intended feast was kept in the form of the Passover, resulting in the death of his firstborn. For there is no record that Israel did keep a feast after they left Egypt. Here we see God's flexibility in the outworking of His plans. We note that the Passover is called both a "sacrifice" ["It is the sacrifice of Yahweh's passover", Ex. 12:27] and a "service" ["You shall keep this service... you shall keep this service", Ex. 12:25,26; 13:5]. Pharaoh was finally told that he must provide Israel with the sacrifices for their feast (Ex. 10:25); and he did so through the death of his firstborn. Finally, Egypt themselves begged Israel to totally leave them, not just temporarily. K.A. Kitchen has documented evidence from Egypt that brick production was indeed done by slave labour, and there were meticulous records kept of the number of bricks produced each day; but he noted that there were allowances for days off, in order to perform

religious rituals. So God was asking Pharaoh to allow the Hebrews to have some days off to serve their God. This initially relatively small demand became ever more demanding, resulting in Egypt thrusting Israel out completely. This is typical of how God works. Israel were God's firstborn and therefore must be released to Him. Their release was to involve the sacrifice of firstborns—initially, firstborn animals were in view. But Egypt refused, and so it was their literal firstborns who became the sacrifice. I think this is the thinking here. God has total claim upon man. If we refuse that in apparently small ways, the demand becomes greater, and finally we will in any case forfeit our lives in death. Whereas if we willingly surrender, we receive life eternal. Yet God wanted to save Pharaoh. This is why He initially only asked Pharaoh to let His people go for a three day worship ceremony in the wilderness: "Now please let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God" (Ex. 3:18). Egypt refused, and so Pharaoh and his followers had their hearts hardened until they begged Israel to leave Egypt totally, and "thrust" them out. The initial request, as K.A. Kitchen showed, was not unreasonable. But Pharaoh's repeated refusal led to him being hardened until he himself wanted Israel to leave permanent.

Exo 5:2 Pharaoh said, Who is Yahweh, that I should listen to His voice to let Israel go? I don't recognize Yahweh, and moreover I will not let Israel go-

"Who is" could mean that Pharaoh despised Yahweh (Jud. 9:28; 1 Sam. 17:26; 25:10). But it may have been a genuine request, seeing that he didn't "know" Joseph (Ex. 1:8) and the people hardly evangelized their God to the Egyptians, and had largely forgotten about Him. And this would explain Yahweh's revelation of Himself to Pharaoh through the plagues, so that he might indeed "know" Yahweh.

Yahweh claimed to be He who was, is and shall be; but this was what the Pharaohs claimed. An inscription on a temple gives the idea: "I am that which was, and is, and shall be, and no man has lifted my veil".

Exo 5:3 They said, The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to Yahweh, our God, lest He fall on us with plague, or with the sword-

This last phrase is an addition to what Yahweh had told Moses to say in Ex. 3:18. Moses may be adding a human argument in the name of God's word, which wasn't what he should have done. For his idea was 'We're your workforce, we won't be much use to you if our God slays us, will we! So let us go and serve Him!'. This doesn't exactly present Moses as totally loyal to Yahweh. It also misrepresents Yahweh as capricious and likely to lash out and punish His people with death if they don't perform a certain ritual. Moses doesn't come over well here.

Perhaps God's initial intention was that Pharaoh would allow the request to go and sacrifice. And slowly

come to thereby accept the religion of the Hebrews. For the request was not initially that he allow Israel to leave Egypt permanently and totally. It was ultimately the Egyptians themselves who were to beg Israel to leave immediately.

We may well ask why God would fall on Israel with plague and the sword unless they sacrificed to Him. Perhaps the idea is that they had sinned, and knew that only sacrifice could bring atonement and the aversion of judgment upon them. But there is no record of them offering sacrifices, and yet by grace therefore the judgment for their sins was averted. Alternatively, the idea may be that the "us" is Israel and the Egyptians; the sword and plague could have been averted for them all if Israel had been allowed to make an atoning sacrifice. For this is the intention of Israel, to be the saviours of the world. We can likewise save others from just judgment through the Lord's sacrifice. The Passover lamb and the Passover feast was the feast Israel had to keep; and this was for the forgiveness of their sins and to avert judgment. The Egyptians who didn't keep it indeed suffered the judgment of the sword upon their firstborn.

Exo 5:4 The king of Egypt said to them, Why do you, Moses and Aaron, take the people from their work? Get back to your burdens!-

He reasons as if Moses and Aaron were also supposed to be working. Perhaps indeed Moses, like the Lord Jesus, shared in the experience of the people he had

come to deliver. We wonder whether the king realized who Moses actually was. Ps. 81:6 uses the same word for "burdens" in saying that Yahweh "removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the baskets". We get the picture of the Israelites carrying the burdens on their shoulders, and carrying baskets of bricks with their hands.

Exo 5:5 Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land are now many-

This fact was clearly dominant in his mind; and he reasoned that by stopping so many people from working, they were seriously damaging the kingdom. We note Pharaoh doesn't at all engage with the request. His comment is also a tacit reflection of the fact that the genocide of baby male Hebrews had failed to stop Hebrew population growth. He ought to have reflected that man's most concerted plans cannot thwart Yahweh's will for His people.

And you make them rest from their burdens-

Perhaps the Lord alluded to this when saying that His burden was easy and light compared to the heavy burden of legalistic Judaism, which He thereby compared to Egyptian bondage (Mt. 11:29,30). And His allusion presents Moses as representing Himself; although in the short term, the way to escape from that heavy burden was going to appear heavy. But the point is, that Israel suffering in Egypt, bearing heavy burdens, are every man.

"Rest" is shabath, inviting us to imagine that the Egyptians were angry that the Hebrews were refusing to work on the Sabbath. The Egyptian complaint was that Moses and Aaron were making the Hebrews rest or 'sabbath' from their work. Perhaps indeed Moses and Aaron were encouraging the Hebrews to return to their God and keep Sabbath, although the Sabbath had not been formally instituted.

Exo 5:6 The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying-

The taskmasters were presumably Egyptians. "Officers" is the usual word for 'scribe', the idea being that these people kept a careful record of how many bricks were made. Egyptologists have uncovered such records.

Exo 5:7 You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick, as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves-

As explained on :12, this resulted in the people being scattered throughout Egypt, which was part of God's way of appealing to the entire nation.

Exo 5:8 The number of the bricks, which they made before, you are to still require from them. You shall not di-

minish anything of it, for they are idle; therefore they cry, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God'-

Pharaoh's behaviour here is a classic case of "blame the victim", and accords exactly with the psychology of an abuser who has great power. There is a consistent psychological veracity and credibility in the records.

Exo 5:9 Let heavier work be laid on the men, that they may labour therein; and don't let them pay any attention to lying words-

We see here Pharaoh's blasphemy against God's word, calling it "vain" (AV), or lies. "Heavier work laid on men" is the very phrase only elsewhere used in Neh. 5:18, of how the people of God later abused each other. They were treating each other like the Egyptians had done. And all such laying of heavy burdens upon our brethren is making us like the Egyptians, to face a similar judgment. The Lord interpreted this as making unreasonable spiritual demands of our fellow believers (Mt. 23:4).

Exo 5:10 The taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spoke to the people, saying, This is what Pharaoh says: 'I will not give you straw-

They "went out" the same day (:6). The immediacy and extremity of the behaviour reflects how a raw nerve had been touched within Pharaoh. He had a conscience,

which God sought to work with towards his eventual conversion.

Exo 5:11 Go yourselves, get straw where you can find it, for nothing of your work shall be diminished'-

Pharaoh had insisted that nothing should be "diminished" from the quota of bricks he had set (Ex. 5:11), and the same word is later used of how Israel were not to "diminish" from obeying Yahweh's commandments (Dt. 4:2; 12:32). They were being reminded that they had changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

Exo 5:12 So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw-

This may have been a way of making a witness to the entire land of Egypt. Hebrew slaves foraging for straw, pulling up stubble... would have made all Egypt aware of the abuse of God's people, and thereby responsible

to judgment. The language of mud bricks and people spread throughout the land recalls the account of Babel in Gen. 11:34. Thus the hint is given that all Pharaoh builds is to be destroyed.

Exo 5:13 The taskmasters were urgent saying, Fulfil your work quota daily, as when there was straw!-

Ex. 5:13 speaks of the 'daily work quota' of Israel under Egyptian abuse. But the phrase is used of their daily work for Yahweh, in collecting manna (Ex. 16:4) and serving in the tabernacle (Lev. 23:37). They had changed masters, but still there was a requirement for daily service; see on :11.

Exo 5:14 The officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, and questioned: Why haven't you fulfilled your quota both yesterday and today, in making brick as before?-

"Yesterday and today" could mean that this happened just two days after the command was given, and it was given the very day Moses and Aaron had asked Pharaoh to release the people. This situation would have made Sabbath observance very difficult (Ex. 31:15). Those who were sensitive to God's ways would have seen that they faced death for Sabbath breaking, or death at the hands of the Egyptians. They would have been desperate for release from this situation, so that they could serve God acceptably.

Exo 5:15 Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, saying, Why do you deal this way with your servants?-

Their question of course begged the response from Pharaoh: 'Because of your desire to be loyal to your God, as this Moses is teaching you.' The whole thing was set up in order to elicit their solid commitment to Yahweh, or to turn back to accepting their lot in Egypt. They failed in this choice- but still God saved them, by grace. The Hebrew officers of Ex. 5:15 refused to beat their brethren and so were beaten. In Num. 11:16, a point soon after the time of the exodus in Ex. 5:15, there is the assumption that there was already a group of 70 elders or officers over Israel. Presumably these 70 were the 70 Hebrew officers who were placed over the Israeli team slaves. So their taking beating for their brethren became the qualification for eldership in the new Israel who emerged from the Red Sea. This is the real qualification for leadership...

In their desperation, the people cried to Pharaoh to help them, just as the Egyptians cried to Pharaoh during the famine years [s.w.]. They acted like Egyptians; they didn't cry to Yahweh. But still Yahweh saved them; Ex. 2:23 summarizes: "the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of their bondage". Yahweh saw their cry to Pharaoh as a cry to Him. Moses liked to perceive their cry in this positive way: "When we cried to Yahweh, He

heard our voice, and sent an angel, and brought us forth out of Egypt" (Num. 20:16); "we cried to Yahweh, the God of our fathers and Yahweh heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression" (Dt. 26:7; also Neh. 9:27). But this is really how God sees 'prayer'; our crying out is graciously seen by Him as a cry out to Him.

Exo 5:16 No straw is given to your servants, and they tell us, 'Make brick!' and behold, your servants are beaten; but the fault is in your own people-

The Hebrew grammar here is apparently wrong, so we would go with LXX "and thou sinnest against thine own people". This was a protestation of loyalty to Pharaoh, asking him to remember that they were his people, and considered themselves like this. It is unlikely that they would have come asking a favour from Pharaoh, and then criticized his people. It was a tacit statement that they rejected the teaching of Moses, that they were Yahweh's people and therefore Yahweh was going to save them. They sinned against Him from Egypt onwards, as the prophets lament; they wanted to be Egypt's people, not His.

Exo 5:17 But he said, You are idle! You are idle! Therefore you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to Yahweh'-

Pharaoh refuses to accept their protestation of loyalty to Pharaoh as "his people" (:16 LXX). See on :16.

He claims that they were loyal to Yahweh, although they have just effectively denied that, as explained on :16.

Exo 5:18 Go therefore now, and work, for no straw shall be given to you, yet you shall deliver the same number of bricks!-

At Tell el-Maskhuta, the site of Pithom (Ex. 1:11), Egyptologists have found bricks, some made with chopped straw or reed, and some without it.

Exo 5:19 The officers of the children of Israel saw that they were in trouble, when it was said, You shall not diminish anything from your daily quota of bricks!-

Pharaoh had probably ordered straw not to be given to the Israelites without realizing quite what that meant in practice. As he saw men with wheal marks standing before him, the appeal to conscience would surely have been to somehow reduce his demand. But he didn't. We see here God's appeal to his conscience yet again, and how he so persistently resists it.

Exo 5:20 They met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came out from Pharaoh-

Perhaps Moses and Aaron had gone again with the people to ask Pharaoh to reduce the brick quota. God first of all taught Moses that if he explained the power of God's Name to Israel's elders, then they would hearken unto him (Ex. 3:18). But they didn't hearken unto Moses (Ex. 5:20), perhaps because he didn't bother ex-

pounding the Name to them, or perhaps because he did but they refused to believe it. Therefore he did explain it to them again (Ex. 6:1-9 = Ex. 3:14-17); but then again they refused to hearken to him (Ex. 6:9 cp. Ex. 3:18). He learnt that what was proclaimed by God as possible all the same depends on human effort to believe. And this lead him on even further, to realize that through his spirituality, he could bring salvation for others. In this spirit, Moses' faith in keeping the Passover led to Israel's salvation, they left Egypt by him (Heb. 3:16; 11:28); and when Aaron deserved death, he was redeemed by Moses' prayer on his behalf (Dt. 9:20). Moses' prayer, with uplifted hands, resulted in Israel's victory over Amalek; without his prayer, and the intensity of it, there would have been no victory for them. However, he had to learn this lesson at this early stage.

Exo 5:21 and they said to them, May Yahweh look at you, and judge, because you have made us a stench to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants-

They are quoting the words of Jacob in Gen. 34:30, perhaps unconsciously. Yet by grace Jacob was saved out of the position of having been made a stench to the Gentiles. If they were familiar with the Biblical text of their own history, they would have perceived this encouragement. If they weren't, then the potential encouragement wouldn't have been received. And so it is true for us.

Moses' attempts to save Israel have apparently failed. His initial request to Pharaoh to release Israel was refused. He then offers a compromise- Israel will go three days' journey to worship and then return. This is turned down. And then this request to worship leads to the accusation that the Israelites are lazy, no straw is given to make bricks but the quota must still be met. The foremen appeal against the unreasonable demand, but are refused; and then the foremen are beaten, and they turn against Moses. Indeed, the Hebrews conclude that Moses has "put a sword in their hand to kill us" rather than to deliver them. It seemed all abject failure. Just like his nervous attempt to save Israel 40 years previously had failed. Just as Paul's first missionary journey to Cyprus seems to have failed initially. He went around the island and made no converts until the day he left the island, it seems. Initial failure, when we were expecting success, is an experience built in to most human lives. I recall pacing the halls of the first two churches I opened in Latvia when nobody turned up. This experience is to develop our humility and our trust / faith. And above all this principle came to full term in the magnificent defeat of the Lord upon the cross, through which came the ultimate victory. Temporary failure will not thwart nor ultimately foil the "I will..." of the Yahweh who "will" save us. But the people had to be brought to this utter nadir of desperation before God can say "Now [when they were at their depth of despondency] will I deliver..." (Ex. 6:1).

To put a sword in their hand to kill us-

They were so wrong, as we are in our moments of desperation. The very opposite works out to be the case. The same phrase is used of how finally God was to put a sword into the hand of Babylon to slay Egypt (Ez. 30:25).

The Israelites are presented as being in an absolutely awful situation. Perhaps this is to help us appreciate how awful were their later pleas to return to Egypt because all had been so good there (Ex. 16:3 very soon afterwards; Ex. 17:3 "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to kill us", as if there was no threat of death in Egypt; Num. 11:4,5). And in their hearts, they did return to Egypt. We see for all time how human memory is so biased by present circumstances. And how strong is the sense that the former days are better than these; the past was better than the present and our projected future. The way of faith sees the past for what it was, slavery and suffering in Egypt / the world; the present is far better, and the future is eternally glorious. This difference in worldview is profound.

Exo 5:22 Moses returned to Yahweh and said-

"Moses returned to the Lord"- the Angel of the bush? It sounds as if he went to a specific place to meet the Lord- i.e. the Angel. Moses asks why He had sent him- and it was the Angel at the bush who had sent him. Moses complained about the Angel, and so God reminded him that 'Yahweh personally will be your Elohim Angels', and that because of his questioning of the Angels he was in fact doubting God Himself personally.

Lord, why have You brought evil on this people?-

We note that "evil" is seen as always coming from God in the Hebrew Bible. This was a deconstruction of the popular misconception that only good comes from God, and "evil" comes from a supernatural 'Satan' being. But the Bible carefully teaches the very opposite. There is no such 'Satan' in that sense. And Yahweh is all powerful. As discussed on :21, Moses' attempts appeared to have failed; instead of delivering the people, his efforts had resulted in evil coming upon them. But he attributes his own failures to God. He cannot see that there must be initial failure before victory. Yet it was exactly because he and Israel were at such low ebb, that God could say that "Now" He would deliver them (Ex. 6:1).

Moses uses the same word at the end of his life, in saying that the Egyptians "brought evil" on Israel (Dt. 26:6). As if in maturity, he recalled the sins and failures of 40 years ago and puts the matter right. We ought to live like this, rather than assuming that time somehow automatically atones for sin.

Why is it that You have sent me?-

"Why is it that thou hast sent [s.w. "put forth" and "let go"] me?" - i.e., why don't You use Messiah, the man of Your right hand? And this, subconsciously and unexpressed, is so often our view; He must do it, not me. I'm just a shepherd, God ought to leave me alone in the comfortable monotony of my working life. But He has called us to greater things, to realize as Moses finally did that we, you and me, are the ones through whom God truly will work in this world. See on Ex. 4:4.

Moses repeats the same question in Num. 11:11. He struggled with God not doing what He promised straight away. He wanted it right away, and failed to see that any delay which allowed evil to continue could be legitimate. This question lurked within Moses, and it seems at times he only wanted to be part of God's plan if it was going to work out when and how he expected and assumed. This is why Israel rejected a suffering Messiah, and why so many stumble at God today. Because they lack the humility to trust in God and accept their own assumptions of how things should be may be very wrong and short termist.

Exo 5:23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has brought trouble on this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all-

Moses was weak and discouraged, accusing God of wanting to do them evil rather than save them. This was what the people concluded in the desert, when they complained Yahweh had brought them into the desert to slay them. Moses would have found patience with them, because he would have realized that this same desperate conclusion, in the heat of desperation, was what he too had been guilty of. It is awareness of our own failures which provides the basis for others in theirs. God is without that aspect; His patience with human sin is therefore the more wonderful than ours.

EXODUS CHAPTER 6

Exo 6:1 Yahweh said to Moses, Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh, for by a strong hand he shall let them go, and by a strong hand he shall drive them out of his land-

See on Ex. 5:22,23. God doesn't give up with Moses' pathetic loss of faith in Ex. 5:23. He assures him that His saving purpose will indeed work out. Because He is Yahweh, the saviour God, and His purpose "will" work out, because "I will be who I will be". See on :2. **The point is that "now", now both Moses and Israel were at rock bottom in faith, God would act to save. It was not that He turned away from them because of their poor response to Him, thinking 'OK then, well I won't do it then'. We see here His saving grace.**

Exo 6:2 God spoke to Moses, and said to him, I am Yahweh-

The Name speaks of the Father's desire to respond to His children, despite their weakness of faith; see on :1. The root word *ehyeh* from which 'Yahweh' is derived occurs 50 times, mainly in the context of God's help and comfort in real situations. This is the practical nature of the things expressed in the Name. The repeated references to God's Name in Ex. 3 and 6 had a very practical context. Israel needed to summon all their faith to believe that actually, they were not in a hopeless situation there in the concentration camps of Egypt. Even when they were given no straw and told to make the

same number of bricks, the comfort they are given is to remember the *Name* of their God, who had acted according to that Name in the past, and would do so in the future for them- because He is and will be who He has been.

God's answer to Moses' complaint [that He was not saving Israel] is that His Name means "I will...". And now again seven times in the next verses we will read of how He "will" save. YHWH essentially means that God "will" save, as He did historically, as He does, and will eternally do. And so Yahoshua, "Jesus", is the quintessence of His Name- 'Yah saves'.

Exo 6:3 and I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty; but by My name Yahweh was I not known to them?-

The idea may be that "I am" is also "I was". The Yahweh who had come through for the fathers, was just as much going to come through for Israel in abusive slavery in Egypt.

See on Ex. 5:22,23. At the time of the burning bush, the people knew Yahweh's Name as a word- because "By My name Yahweh was I not known?" (Ex. 6:3), and clearly enough the patriarchs had been aware of the Yahweh Name. But the point was that they didn't see from His Name, just as a word, what He was really like, and what He could do for them. The Egyptians and others with whom Israel had had contact invoked their gods by pronouncing their name, and expected a miracle to happen. Presumably Israel had tried doing this with the word 'Yahweh'- and nothing happened. Moses put the

problem to God in Ex. 6, and the response was "*Ehyeh asher ehyeh*". "I am that I am" isn't a purely correct translation, because the Hebrew verb used doesn't mean simply existence in an abstract sense. It refers rather to being there / present / being someone or something for someone. Martin Buber, in my judgment one of the finest of the many fine Jewish minds to have engaged with this matter of the Name, concluded: "'I am that I am' could only be understood as an avoiding of the question, as a statement which withholds any information". I would put it somewhat more gently, in saying that God was saying that He will be present with us, will be what Israel ultimately needs, without defining precisely in what sense. Because we're mere humans, we don't know what to ask of God as we should; and His very Name is the comfort that He will be for us as we need, with our eternal salvation in mind. God seemed to have encouraged Israel to understand this by going on to promise simply that "I shall be [*ehyeh*] present" (Ex. 3:12; 4:12). At this point it seemed Israel were doomed to make bricks without straw, and to be worked to death literally. But through the revelation of His Name, He wanted them to trust that He knew best how to bring them to salvation; He didn't want them to invoke His Name in the primitive way the Egyptians did with their gods, hoping for a quick-fix miracle. God is only *ehyeh* for His people; and there came a terrible moment when He had to tell them through the prophets that "You are not my people and I am not *ehyeh* for you" (Hos. 1:9). Israel lost this 'presence' of their God. And we know that we are His people

by the constant sense we have of the hand of Providence in our lives, even through the unanswered prayers that reveal an altogether higher and ultimately Divine game plan in place in our lives. But like Israel before Moses, we wish for the quick fix, the waving of the wand to resolve the issues, the sense of the saving presence of God in our experiences, working out His ultimate plan of delivering us from Egypt / this world and from ourselves.

God had revealed Himself as Jehovah previously (thus Abraham could speak of 'Jehovah Jireh' in Gen. 22:14, and **God clearly tells Abraham and Jacob "I am Yahweh..."**, Gen. 15:7; 28:13). **One take on this is that** the patriarchs conceived of God as a singular Angel-"God Almighty" (as Jacob: "The Angel that redeemed me from all evil"). Now Yahweh says "you shall know that I am Yahweh your Elohim which brings you out from under the burden of the Egyptians" (Ex. 6:7). God is saying, 'I will be Elohim; I will be manifested not in just one Angel, but in many'.

Another reading is to accept the AV translation "But by My Name Yahweh I was not known to them", but to enquire what it means to "know Yahweh". Verse 7 states that Israel would "know Yahweh" through their experience of the Exodus from Egypt [cp. "My people shall know My Name", Is. 52:5 and often]. So to "know Yahweh" is to have relationship and experience with Him. The idea may therefore be that even Abraham did not "know Yahweh" to the extent that Israel were to "know Yahweh" through what they were about to experience. The intimacy of relationship that

He was offering them far surpasses even the experience of the patriarchs. So the idea would be "I was not known to them [compared to the extent to which I shall be known to you]". They had perceived Yahweh as El Shaddai, a powerful God. But now God was offering intimate relationship. This is the same development seen in those who in immaturity see God as merely a powerful source of answered prayer, to give them something, to sort out life for them. But these should lead to relationship.

Exo 6:4 I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their travels, in which they lived as aliens-

"I am that I am" can equally mean 'I was who I was', and implies that He will be who He was historically. And historically, He had been their saviour God. And although with the cry of the slave drivers fresh in their ears it seemed this was all irrelevant, the point was that the God of historical salvation was going to come through for them now. Because that was what His Name was all about.

Exo 6:5 Moreover I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant-

The "groaning" was that just described at the end of Ex. 5, where the Israelites groan because of having to now make bricks without straw. To try to alleviate the burden, they even plead with Pharaoh that they are his people and not Yahweh's (see on Ex. 5:16). But despite that, God's grace was such that He simply felt sorry for

them in their affliction. He likewise saved them at the time of the judges, not because they had repented or were suddenly faithful to Him- but simply because of His pity for them in their sufferings (likewise Jud. 2:18 "When Yahweh raised up judges for them, Yahweh was with the judge and saved them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge, for it grieved Yahweh because of their distress because of the oppression"). **God's pity was because of His covenant relationship with them, even though they were bitter with Him, wanted to stay in Egypt, worshipped Egyptian gods, and carried the star of Remphan and tabernacle of Moloch with them through the Red Sea. We are in that same covenant and know that same grace.**

But we can also understand from the context that their groanings were against God. But in His love and understanding, He even pitied them that they felt that way about Him, and wanted to save them rather than turn away from them because of their groaning.

Exo 6:6 Therefore tell the children of Israel, 'I am Yahweh, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments-

The three "I will"s clearly allude to 'I will be who I will be / who I was and have been.' This assurance of salvation was and is part of God's most essential characteristics bound up with the very essence of His Name. Those who bear that Name should therefore be able to say that they are assured, at this moment, of final sal-

vation. For this is so much part of God's purpose and essence. The Divine assurance "I will... [save, deliver, redeem, take you out, free] is found seven times, completely, in :6-8. Seven sentences, with seven verbs in the first person ["I will..."]. This is the significance and comfort of baptism into that Name. For in this sense the Name of the Father is the name of the Son, in functional terms. We note the large number of personal pronouns used in these verses: "I... My...". We sense the very personal essence of God, bound up in His Name, very intensely articulated. This is God's insistence that He *will* save, despite our lack of qualification and in the face of every apparent impossibility of that plan. Hence Yah-hoshua, 'Yah Saves', was the name of His Son, 'Jesus'. For in Him we see the supreme articulation of all that God is- a saviour God. Our doubts about our personal salvation are therefore pitted, pitifully, against the absolute essence of who Yahweh is. "Redeem" is the word used of what a relative does to save another relative, the word of the kinsman redeemer, who 'redeemed' a relative who had fallen into slavery, debt or hard times, or who had died without seed. Israel, like us, were being told that this Divine "I will..." was on the basis that we are His very own kith and kin; and we now understand that the more because of the work of the Lord Jesus. We are no longer merely servants, but actual sons; through the Spirit sent forth into our hearts, we cry "Abba, Father", a relationship far beyond being adopted children. We are His actual chil-

dren if we are in His Son (Gal. 4:4-6). And it was well understood that an adopted child could never be disowned by the adoptive Father. This is the force of "You shall know [Me]" (:7, unlike Pharaoh who refused to know Yahweh, Ex. 5:2); to know, in the Hebraic sense, means to have a relationship with. And that relationship is one of family, because Yahweh will be our redeemer, the kinsman redeemer. This is why the ten commandments begin with the command to accept that "I am Yahweh your God". All this is really true. "I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:2,3). This is so much more than 'You must believe that God is one'. It is a command to accept the wonder of the fact that this one God is our God. And so to achieve this, God would bring them out from under the burdens of Egypt, just as His Son saves those who are under heavy burdens. On a spiritual level, we are even now freed from the ties that bind; we have changed masters and are no longer slaves to sin (Rom. 6). We are to respond to this gracious salvation, by doing to others what God did to us. And so these ideas are alluded to later in the law: "If a resident alien among you has prospered, and your brother, being in straits, comes under his authority... he shall have the right of redemption... One of his brothers shall redeem him" (Lev. 25:47,48).

Israel were brought out by "great judgments" (Ex. 6:6; 7:4), i.e. by God's stretched out arm (Ex. 6:6). The

way He acted with His "arm" was a manifestation of His judgment principles which are part of His Name. Therefore the Red Sea deliverance is described as the judgment of God, the day of the Lord etc. because God's people exited from the world whilst judgments came upon it; the Name of God was revealed through this process (Ps. 76:6-9; 103:6,7). For "redeem" see on :7.

Yahweh "purchased" His people from Egypt (Ex. 15:16) in the sense that He "redeemed" them (Ex. 6:6), alluding to the idea of buying a close relative out of slavery to a Gentile. God's people were in slavery to Egypt and wished to remain like that (Ex. 14:12); and had accepted their idols, rather than Yahweh (Ez. 20:8). Yet God bought them out of that slavery, He redeemed them only thanks to His love and pity (s.w. Is. 63:9); so earnest was He to have them as His own. We cannot push the metaphors too far, but the price paid was perhaps represented by the blood of the Passover lamb. For this finally was the price He was willing to pay to redeem us, similarly weak as they were. For we are redeemed (s.w.) by Him from the power of sin and death (Hos. 13:14).

Exo 6:7 and I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and you shall know that I am Yahweh your God, Who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians-

Literally, 'I will take you unto Myself as a people,' as in Ex. 19:4. This is similar to the formulae used for adoption of children into a family. This could continue the family allusion of :6, where we read that God would re-

deem / act as a family redeemer, a *ga'al*, for His people. The idea may not be that they became His people at the point of the exodus, but rather that He took them to Himself "as a people", they received a collective redemption, not one of them was left behind, not even the most faithless. But the collective nature of Yahweh's salvation, in our times seen in Jesus, Yehoshua, Yah's salvation, must be responded to on an individual level.

But "to take", especially when followed by "to know...", is the language commonly used in the Bible for how a man takes a wife and then knows her and they bring forth fruit. The conception of intimacy is amazing. The sex act, when a man knows a woman, is alluded to in seeking to reflect the intended intensity between Yahweh and His people. The ideas alone make slavery in Egypt / the world of such little moment, compared to such intimacy with God Almighty. We note the absence of conditions. God "will" do all these things. It is the image of the man who wants to force through his relationship with a woman until marriage, in the spirit of Boaz having no rest until he had made Ruth his own, and redeemed her. God likewise is not at rest until He has redeemed His Israel. All we have to do is say yes; that, from one viewpoint, is the only condition. The marriage allusions are continued in :8; having taken and known Israel, "I will bring you..." is also a marriage allusion. A man desired a woman, then took her and brought out her into his house: "[If] you see among the captives a beautiful woman and you desire her and would

take her to wife, you shall bring her into your house..."
(Dt. 21:11,12).

Exo 6:8 I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for an inheritance: I am Yahweh'-

This promise was solemnly made, with uplifted hand as it were (Num. 14:30), to that generation who left Egypt (Ex. 6:8). But they did not enter the land, as Num. 14:30 makes clear. This was because Israel broke their side of the covenant, and did not in fact want to enter the land; and continued serving the idols of Egypt, which they took with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:8; Acts 7:43). But that promise was guaranteed by the fact that "I will bring you into the land... I am Yahweh" (Ex. 6:8). The very essence of Yahweh, that 'I will' save, as surely as 'I will be who I will be', a saviour God, was fought against by Israel's idolatry and unfaithfulness to the covenant. And because 'Yahweh' involves His character, which includes His judgment of sin and not turning a blind eye to it (Ex. 34:4-6), human intransigence and faithlessness was allowed to as it were even counteract His most essential 'being' a saviour God for His beloved people.

God lifted up His hand, as men lift up their hand towards Heaven to swear by God that they telling the truth. And so as Paul notes, God swore by Himself as He could swear by no greater. We feel His almost desperation, certainly His zeal, in seeking to persuade man that He will perform His promise of the Kingdom. But despite the sevenfold "I will..." save you,

the generation that heard these words did not enter into Canaan. They thwarted even God's "I will" by their extreme refusal to accept His word of sovereign promise. Likewise God had told Pharaoh to 'let My people go' as if they were His people. But they were still worshipping Egyptian idols and did not fulfil the conditions of Ex. 19 to be His people. But God presents here as the lover who so wants it to work out and dreams of entering marriage covenant with them at Sinai and taking them to live with Him in a new land. But they spurned such live in their hearts returned to Egypt.

The following verses are an intentional anticlimax to this intense protestation of saving love by Almighty God. Israel were too narrow minded and obsessed by their immediate horizon (:9), to believe it or feel it. And Moses still felt a failure because of his uncircumcised lips. And in countless millions of cases, God's love and desire to 'make it work' has been spurned by short sighted people. We have the genealogy of Moses and Aaron as if to highlight their weakness; and as well as the genealogy of their tribe Levi, we have that of Reuben and Simeon as well. These were the three tribes cursed by Jacob on his deathbed. We are given the overall impression of human weakness.

Exo 6:9 Moses spoke so to the children of Israel, but they didn't listen to Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage-

Literally, from shortness of breath. We imagine them panting under their burdens. But "anguish of

spirit" is literally 'narrow spirited / minded'. Like so many, they only saw the narrow limits defined by what we are seeing and experiencing at this moment.

Yet still they later thought Egypt was better than the path to the Kingdom. In Ex. 4:31 we read that the people believed Moses, but now they disbelieve. The Lord's challenge "DO you now believe?" comes down to us all. Fickleness in faith has so often characterised God's people.

The Hebrew behind "cruel bondage" has a numerical value of 430, the number of years Israel were to be in Egypt (Ex. 12:40,41). This is a good example of how implicit deep within the experience of suffering is the certainty of ultimate deliverance. The cloud truly has within it a silver lining.

This appears to be God, through the inspired narrative, being generous to them. Rather like the sleeping disciples in Gethsemane being excused because they supposedly 'slept for sorrow'. The good news of the Gospel is for those afflicted by bondage and anguish of Spirit, as the Lord makes clear in the beatitudes. But here, the weight of the bondage is used as an excuse for their disbelief and disobedience- which later the prophets were to deeply lament. We marvel at God's grace.

Exo 6:10 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

It seems that Yahweh now tells Moses to speak directly himself to Pharaoh; although He does take account of Moses' excuses about his stammer and poor knowledge of Egyptian. And He provides Aaron as a concession to that weakness. But His ideal intention was

that Moses should speak to Pharaoh; because He loves to use the stammering, nervous tongue through which to speak His word.

Exo 6:11 Go in, speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land-

There is no contradiction here with the requests to let them go and keep a feast to Yahweh for three days (Ex. 3:18; 4:23). For that still required the people to "go out of his land". But it could also be that once Pharaoh turned down that initial request, for the men to go and keep a feast and return, then the demands upon Pharaoh got progressively larger- not just the men, but all Israel, along with their children and animals, and not for three days but permanently. God clearly was working according to a carefully devised program with Pharaoh. Those who refuse God's requests likewise find that to avoid condemnation, the requests become larger and larger.

Initially, God had told Moses to take the elders with him and speak to Pharaoh (Ex. 3:18). Then, He had told Moses to take Aaron with him as his spokesman to Pharaoh. Now, He tells Moses to go and talk directly himself with Pharaoh- leading to Moses' outburst about his speech impediment in :12. We see the same God working in our lives; making concessions to our weakness, but ever seeking for us to live up to our personal callings, stripping us of all our crutches and excuses.

Exo 6:12 Moses spoke before Yahweh, saying, Behold, the children of Israel haven't listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, who am of uncircumcised lips?-

We noted earlier that Pharaoh's daughter immediately knew that the baby Moses was a Hebrew boy because she noticed he had been circumcised. But here, Moses argues as if he is uncircumcised. He means "I am a man of impeded speech, with a speech impediment", but he expresses this in terms of being uncircumcised of lips. This is Moses at a weak point.

Uncircumcised lips may imply he had superfluous skin on his lips, another hint that Moses had a cleft palat. And yet through that came the words of Yahweh. This is typical of the God who ever seeks to hide pride from man. And yet Moses concludes that Israel hadn't listened to him because of his lips- assuming that if he were a better spokesman, then they would have listened to him. He is tacitly criticizing God's choice of him, and overlooking how God had used Aaron in deference to Moses' complaint about his lips. And he is failing to believe that God stands for "I will...". Moses is also assuming that the only way Israel can get out of Egypt is if Pharaoh listens to him. But God had said that Pharaoh would not listen- and that was to be the basis of their salvation. Moses is still fixated on his own plans and assumptions about how Israel could be saved. Again forgetting the "I will..." implicit in Yahweh.

God had explained that His Name means "I will...", and Moses is effectively denying the power of the Name. God had promised Moses earlier that Israel *would* hear him (Ex. 3:18). God solemnly told him to go and speak to Pharaoh, because God had told him to do so. But

Moses has the nerve to say exactly the same words to God a second time. In a chapter which speaks much of Moses' reluctance, the record encourages us: "These are that Aaron and Moses... these are they which spake to Pharaoh... these are that Moses and Aaron" (Ex. 6:26,27). They who were so weak, full of excuses, incomplete fulfilment of what they were commanded to do...

Exo 6:13 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, and gave them a command to the children of Israel, and to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt-

This summary statement appears to be reminding us that they were given a commandment and potential power to bring Israel out of Egypt. But Moses made every excuse not to, and railed against this command. And thus this section concludes in :26,27 that these are that Moses and Aaron. This was the extremely weak moral material which God used to save His people; and out of their weakness they were indeed made strong.

Exo 6:14 These are the heads of their fathers' houses. The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are the families of Reuben-

Hanoch [s.w. Enoch] was named after the son of Cain (Gen. 4:17) and means "initiated", rather hinting at unspirituality and paganism.

Exo 6:15 The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the families of Simeon-

But 1 Chron. 4:24 simply has "The sons of Simeon were Nemuel, Jamin... and Shaul"; but here and Gen. 46:10 shows that Shaul was Simeon's son by a wrong, casual relationship. Yet this is not recorded in Chronicles, even though so many other weaknesses are. Surely this is to demonstrate how if God imputes righteousness for a repented of sin, there really is no record of this kept by Him. This and other such lessons from Chronicles only come from digging under the surface.

Exo 6:16 These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari; and the years of the life of Levi were one hundred thirty-seven years-

"Gershon" means 'expelled', maybe meaning that like Reuben he was expelled from the role of firstborn [he is mentioned first as if he was the firstborn]. This is a theme of the Genesis record. But perhaps because of these weaknesses, the line to the high priest ran through Kohath. See on :20.

Exo 6:17 The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, according to their families-

We note that both Moses and Aaron had sons called Gershon (Ex. 2:22). Such repetition of names within families and in the same generation was quite common, and is one thing which makes the study of the genealogies difficult in places.

Exo 6:18 The sons of Kohath: Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel; and the years of the life of Kohath were one hundred thirty-three years-

We note the lack of emphasis upon the children of Moses and Miriam, the great wilderness leaders of Israel. There was to be no cult of personality nor nepotism, no riding on the name of a forefather in order to be a leader of God's people. Spiritual leadership in the Bible was intended to be based upon spiritual qualification. **The sons and relatives of Aaron all feature at various points in the narrative. Those of Moses don't. He divorced with his wife and she took the kids back home to her father. Moses married again but with no record as to how their children turned out. "This is that Moses..." may require us to assume that he had a failed family life. But still God used him. His family life contrasts with Aaron, who married well, into the kingly line of Judah, and whose children and descendants appear again in the record as serving God.**

Exo 6:19 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their generations-

"Mahli" and "Mushi" mean 'sickly' and 'sensitive' respectively. This confirms the suggestion I have often made, that names were given in response to later character and life experience. Sometimes in these genealogies we read the birth names, at others, the names they were given later in life. And therefore the same person can have more than one name.

Exo 6:20 Amram took Jochebed his father's sister to himself as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram were a hundred and thirty-seven years-

Amram lived to the same age as Levi (:16). Numbers and ages are used in Semitic literature often in a non literal sense, in order to make some point. Perhaps the idea here is that Amram was indeed a true son of Levi; despite Israel's general apostacy in Egypt, he married within his own tribe, as if seeking to keep the spirit of the later legislation to this effect. **We note that Moses' father Amram married his own aunty, a relationship Moses was later to define as incestuous [Ex. 6:20 "Amram took Jochebed his father's sister to himself as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses"]. Moses' beginnings were therefore rooted in weakness and his survival as a healthy child was spiritually and physically against all odds.**

Exo 6:21 The sons of Izhar: Korah, and Nepheg, and Zichri-

The theme of this section, as explained on :13,26,27, is how the leaders of Israel, Moses and Aaron, were so weak. And with the benefit of our knowledge of Korah's later apostacy, we see the theme repeated here.

Exo 6:22 The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, and Elzaphan, and Sithri-

The recording of four generations is surely to prove how the prediction of Gen. 15:16 came true- in the fourth generation they were to return to Canaan.

Exo 6:23 Aaron took Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab, the sister of Nahshon, as his wife; and she bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar-

The theme of this section, as explained on :13,26,27, is how the leaders of Israel, Moses and Aaron, were so weak. And with the benefit of our knowledge of Nadab and Abihu's later apostasy (Lev. 10:1-4), we see the theme repeated here.

We also see here how Aaron married a woman from the tribe of Judah. The connection between the kingly and priestly lines was made right at the start of Israelite history.

Exo 6:24 The sons of Korah: Assir, and Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the families of the Korahites-

1 Chron. 6:22,23 defines the relationships more closely; , Elkanah was the son of Assir, and only a "son of Korah" in the sense of being a descendant of him. The sons of Korah didn't perish with their father (Num. 16:32; 26:11), and became authors of some of the Psalms, working as gate keepers in the temple (1 Chron. 9:19; 26:1-19).

Exo 6:25 Eleazar Aaron's son took one of the daughters of Putiel as his wife; and she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites according to their families-

Putiel isn't mentioned elsewhere, but it appears to be a common Egyptian name, "He whom God gave". This continues the theme of spiritual weakness (see on :23)-even the mother of Phinehas was an Egyptian, whom his father ought not to have married. Although we could ar-

gue the other way- that for an Egyptian to marry one of the slave Hebrews could be a reflection of this woman's acceptance of Yahweh as her God, even though most of His people were very far from Him. Just as it seems the daughter of Pharaoh who adopted Moses married into the Israelites.

Exo 6:26 These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom Yahweh said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies-

This summary statement appears to be reminding us that they were given a commandment and potential power to bring Israel out of Egypt. But Moses made every excuse not to, and railed against this command. And thus this section concludes in :26,27 that these are that Moses and Aaron. This was the extremely weak moral material which God used to save His people; and out of their weakness they were indeed made strong.

Exo 6:27 These are those who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt. These are that Moses and Aaron-

The point of :26 is laboured here a second time- that "these are those...", these weak ones, stubbornly not wanting to be used by God, initially little better than Pharaoh, resistant to His word of salvation... who were used, and out of their weakness they were indeed made strong.

Exo 6:28 It happened on the day when Yahweh spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt-

There is solemn emphasis in :28,29, stating the same thing twice, that Yahweh really spoke to Moses. And he had resisted this Divine calling.

Exo 6:29 that Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, I am Yahweh. Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I speak to you-

As explained on :1-4, the Yahweh Name promised that "I will..." redeem Israel, and yet Moses refused to believe that. And a comparison of what God told Moses to tell Pharaoh, and what he is recorded as telling Pharaoh, would suggest Moses was not fully obedient to this solemn calling.

Exo 6:30 Moses said before Yahweh, Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh listen to me?-

Because of his weakness, we are able to relate to Moses, and see him as our example. It is possible that Moses was not circumcised (Ex. 6:12,30); which would make him even closer to us. As noted on :26,27, this refusal of Moses to respond to God's word, and his making of pathetic excuses, is being laboured. For "these are those" (:27) who were used. That we might glorify God for His patience, and soften ourselves to work with Him without resistance. **The genealogy just provided shows that Moses was the offspring of an aunty and her nephew; and I have suggested that this made it likely that Moses had a cleft palate. Hence his description of himself as of uncircumcised lips, as if he had superfluous flesh that needed cutting off. And this is how we all feel, that we have flesh that ought to have been**

cut off by now. And yet God still speaks and works through us. This is His style and way with men.

EXODUS CHAPTER 7

Exo 7:1 Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, I have made you as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet-

A prophet is thus defined as someone who is as a mouth for someone else (as in Dt. 18:18). Here we have another window into the meaning of the Divine inspiration of the scriptures. His prophets were as His mouth to their audiences. And we note that Moses, a man, can function as God. And yet he was not God. There should therefore be no reason for thinking that the Lord Jesus is "God" in the misguided Trinitarian sense. Like Moses, He could bear the Name of God and function as God, without being God Himself.

The amazing promise that Moses had been made as God to Pharaoh comes as response to his feeling he was unable to engage with Pharaoh, because of his cleft palet or speech impediment. But Yahweh is manifested through that. And that is the answer to Moses' inadequacy. His impediment was not healed. But God was manifest through it. However the point may be that Pharaoh perceived Moses as an incarnation of a God- which explains why Pharaoh doesn't simply have Moses executed.

Exo 7:2 You shall speak all that I command you; and Aaron your brother shall speak to Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land-

And yet throughout the record of the plagues, Aaron says nothing. This concession to Moses' weakness was not in fact required. Or it could be that God's 'plan B' didn't work out because Aaron failed to speak as required. And so Moses did the speaking, despite his concerns about his stuttering. These kinds of chops and changes between possible potential plans fill the entire Divine - human interaction which we are part of.

Exo 7:3 I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt-

Hardening isn't a negative, bad idea of itself. The same word is used of how God "strengthens" the hearts of the righteous. Idea is that we are confirmed in the psychological attitudes we ourselves choose to adopt.

It is Israel who were to later be often described as of hard hearts. They ended up acting as the Egypt which they loved. And this went too for their most religiously fanatical people. The Lord Jesus grieved for the hardened hearts of the Pharisees (Mk. 3:5), and we note the similarity between the Greek words *Pharao* and *Pharisaios*.

Hebrew tends to reason through placing 'blocks' of ideas are put in opposition to each other, or 'dialectic', in order to come to conclusions. That's why we can read of God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart (Ex. 7:3; 8:15). To Greek, step-logic thinkers, that's a worrying contradiction- only because they don't pick up the way that Hebrew reasoning involves these kinds of statements being put in opposition

to each other, so that through the dialectic process we come to understand what is meant. Summing up, our covenant relationship with God is a "living intercourse" as Abraham Heschel put it; it's not merely knowing a set of doctrines and information about the covenant promises, the terms of the covenant etc. In that case the covenant would be a tether or chain; but instead it is a relationship.

Exo 7:4 But Pharaoh will not listen to you, and I will lay My hand on Egypt, and bring out My armies and My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments-

He will not, but I will... is an allusion to the "I will be who I will be" theme of Yahweh's Name just explained to Moses. In Ex. 6, Moses has lamented that Pharaoh will not listen to him, because he has uncircumcised lips, he had flesh that had not been cut off. He was missing the point; that Yahweh, "I will be who I will be", would release Israel exactly because Pharaoh would not listen to him. This is in response to Moses complaining that Pharaoh wouldn't hear-ken to him because of his speech impediment. God is saying that exactly because Pharaoh would not hear-ken, He would deliver Israel. And so no persuasive eloquence was required from Moses.

It would appear that all the people of Israel had a guardian Angel- this seems to be implied by Ex. 7:4 "(I will) bring forth Mine armies (of Angels), and My people the children of Israel", implying that there were two armies leaving Egypt- one of Angels, another of their

charges. Thus we read in Ex. 12:41 "it came to pass that *all* the hosts of the LORD (a phrase often used about the Angels- but here concerning the Israelites too) went out from the land of Egypt". In the same way as the Angels were especially Israel's guardians in guiding them out of Egypt, it may be that the Angels minister in a guardian capacity to us especially in leading us out of the world to baptism (cp. the Red Sea). Heb. 1:14 offers tentative support in that the Angels are said to "minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation". At baptism we become heirs of salvation (Rom. 4:13; Gal. 3:27-29)- those who "shall be heirs" are those as yet outside the promises of salvation. Confirmation of all this is provided by a careful reading of Dt. 33:2,3. This describes God coming "unto them" (Israel) "with ten thousands of saints"- i.e. Angels- and giving them "a fiery Law". The next verse records: "Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy Hand (Angelic language)... every one shall receive of Thy words". Here the saints appear to be the people, thus showing that God's love to Israel was shown by each of them having an Angel (thousands of saints for thousands of people), who individually taught them the word of God, albeit all at the same time. The Angels in the court of Heaven are watching us, almost with baited breath. We are made a theatre unto the Angels, as if they are in the audience as we act out our lives (1 Cor. 4:9 RVmg.).

Israel were brought out by "great judgments" (Ex. 6:6; 7:4), i.e. by God's stretched out arm (Ex. 6:6). The way He acted with His "arm" was a manifestation of His judgment principles. Therefore the Red Sea deliverance

is described as the judgment of God, the day of the Lord etc. because God's people exited from the world whilst judgments came upon it; the Name of God was revealed through this process (Ps. 76:6-9; 103:6,7).

Exo 7:5 The Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them-

This could continue the theme of God's hopeful intention that Egypt would be converted to Him by the whole process of Israel's redemption from Egypt. Just as the prophetic hope was that the surrounding Gentiles would be converted by Judah's redemption from the lands of their exile.

Or we could read this as meaning that all too late, having received God's judgments, the Egyptians would know Yahweh. The rejected will not only see how they could have been in the Kingdom; judgment results in men knowing God's Name / character. When God's judgments had been poured out on Egypt, then they knew God's Name. The rejected will come to appreciate true spirituality- but tragically all too late.

God remembers mercy in wrath, and His judgments are always creative. The plagues soon stopped applying to the Israelites; as evidence that they could be avoided by identification with Israel. And the later plagues included pleas to the Egyptians to avoid experiencing them, e.g. by bringing in their cattle from the field. Yet there was no warning in the third plague in the three cycles of 3 plagues [which preceded the killing of the firstborn]. The message was that they in-

deed deserved judgment and God could afflict them legitimately. The endings of the plagues often teaches that God can intervene and end judgment in response to human desire ['Please say the time when the plague shall end?'- again, a nudge towards Egyptian repentance]. The penultimate plague of darkness simply gave the Egyptians some time to reflect, to sit at home and think. And the final plague was completely avoidable if they shared in the Passover lamb.

Exo 7:6 Moses and Aaron did so. As Yahweh commanded them, so they did-

Moses and Aaron agreed to continue speaking to Pharaoh and Israel; they "did as the Lord commanded them, so did they". This is saying the same thing twice-stressing their obedience. **This could be a notice inserted to make the point that Moses had previously not been at all obedient. Now he was, and indeed fr.now on he would be. It's as if he has gone a rung up the ladder.**

Exo 7:7 Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh-

Aaron would have been only say seven years old at the most when Moses disappeared into the court of Pharaoh. He hardly knew Moses, so his obedience to the Divine call to make a long desert journey to meet his brother at a remote mountain was therefore the more commendable.

Exo 7:8 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-

The trumpets of Rev. 8-11 are clearly based upon the plagues of Ex. 7-12. Yet those plagues were each one de-

signed to induce repentance in Egypt; there were various possible futures and outcomes related to each of them. If, e.g., after plague eight, Pharaoh had truly repented- then the other plagues wouldn't have happened. And perhaps it will be the same with the trumpets of the last days.

Exo 7:9 When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Perform a miracle!' then you shall tell Aaron, 'Take your rod, and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it become a serpent'-

There is no mention here of the serpent turning back into a rod. A man's rod was his personal possession and indicative of his power and standing; we recall Judah giving his rod as a guarantee to Tamar and being humiliated by losing it. It is significant that the rods of Pharaoh's courtiers were gobbled up by Aaron's rod / serpent- and they were left, as it were, without their symbols of power. Even if the snakes produced by the magicians were just let out of a bag, all the same, the courtiers could not then suddenly claim their rods had returned to them. They would have had to at least conceal them.

There was serpent imagery on Pharaoh's head dress and crown. Serpents bend and twist (and Ez. 29:3 uses the term to describe Egypt as a serpent of the waters), so he was being warned in this sign that God could both harden and unharder him. And that is to be our take away lesson. The word for "sign" also means "portent". This was a portent of what would be if he didn't repent.

Exo 7:10 Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, as Yahweh had commanded: and Aaron cast

down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent-

Despite the stress upon the impudence of Moses and his refusal to obey his Divine commission, the record now emphasizes his obedience to God's commands.

Exo 7:11 Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers. They also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same thing with their enchantments-

Surely they used trickery, releasing serpents out of a bag. But it is recorded here and in :12 as if they really succeeded in doing this 'miracle' (:9). Likewise the language of demons is used in the New Testament, as if they really existed as radically evil spirits, and were responsible for sickness; when the rest of the Bible denies this.

Exo 7:12 For they each cast down their rods, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods-

This was to warn the perceptive Egyptians that Yahweh could easily swallow them up if He wished; and He did so at the Red Sea, to those who refused to learn this lesson (Ex. 15:12). **This is the only other usage of "swallowed". The account of the plagues starts and finishes with this idea of 'swallowed'.** There is no record that their 'serpents' turned back into rods. They were left without their rods; and perhaps Aaron's rod / serpent literally gobbled up their rods, thus taking their symbols of power and authority away from them.

We don't read that Aaron's serpent swallowed their serpents, but that his rod sowed their rods. After they had supposedly turned back into rods. Rods symbolising power, this was a statement of domi-

nance over them. Seeing they used their rods as wands, the magicians were effectively rendered powerless. These were all nudges intended to lead them and all Egypt to repentance.

Exo 7:13 Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he didn't listen to them; as Yahweh had spoken-

The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart occur in a positive context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought- for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too.

Exo 7:14 Yahweh said to Moses, Pharaoh's heart is stubborn. He refuses to let the people go-

"Stubborn" is used of how ears of hearing are dull [s.w. stubborn; Is. 6:10; 59:1; Zech. 7:11). He was consciously refusing to hear God's word.

Exo 7:15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning. Behold, he goes out to the water; and you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand-

The idea was that God, the "I will be who I will be", can change things; a rod to a serpent, and now water into blood. He can and will change things on earth; that

is part of the declaration of His Name and the salvation and redemption which are the lead characteristics of His Name. Pharaoh likely went to the Nile to worship the gods he believed to be there. And the changing of water into blood was therefore a judgment of his gods. Seeing that Pharaoh considered himself a divine figure, and related to the gods, this was therefore a judgment upon himself personally.

Pharaoh would be alone by the river, without pressure to maintain appearances before his courtiers. Moses was to meet him there privately. We see here God's desire to convert even Pharaoh and His sensitivity to the role of peer pressure on men.

Exo 7:16 You shall tell him, 'Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to you, saying, Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness, and behold, until now you haven't listened-

See on Ex. 34:27. Ex. 7:16 brings out the unity between Moses and Israel by a play on words: "The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me [lit. 'let me go'] unto thee, saying, Let my people go". "Let go" translates the same Hebrew word as "sent me". Just as Moses had been let go by Yahweh, so Israel were to be. Likewise, both the Lord Jesus and Israel are called "the elect" (Is. 42:1; 45:4); both are fulfillments of the servant songs in Isaiah.

"Serve Me" could refer specifically to the initial request to keep a feast to Yahweh. But the call was for Israel to be allowed to change masters, from Pharaoh to Yahweh. They changed masters when they crossed the

Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

Exo 7:17 Thus says Yahweh, In this you shall know that I am Yahweh. Behold, I will strike with the rod that is in My hand on the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood-

The signs done by Moses before Pharaoh have evident connection with the later plagues brought upon him- they were all "that you may know" (Ex. 7:17 etc.). The staff, stretched out right hand, snakes, the rod "swallowing" the serpent rods of Egypt (symbols of Pharaoh- Ez. 29:3-5; 32:2) just as the Egyptians were to be swallowed at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:12), leprosy / boils, water / blood all repeat. The signs were thus both an encouragement to believe as well as a warning of judgment to come. Pharaoh was presented with the possibility of either faith, or destruction. Note in passing that God's hardening of that man's heart didn't mean that He made no effort to save him nor appeal to him. It was God's desire that he repent. I suggest the Lord Jesus had God's intentions with Pharaoh in view when He said that He was

doing miracles "that you may know that the Son of Man has power to forgive sins" (Mk. 2:10).

"My hand..." again shows how Yahweh's hand is that of Moses, his rod, the symbol of an obscure workaday life working for his father in law, like a paintbrush or roller for a house painter, becomes God's instrument and the path to salvation.

"You shall know" can be read as a command more than a prediction. It parallels "that you may know that I am Yahweh" (Ex. 9:14). It is even a plea for their repentance and entering relationship with Yahweh along with Israel. For Yahweh has said in Ex. 6 that *His people* would "know" Him in relationship. His intention was that Egypt and Pharaoh came to relationship with Him. This is certainly how the idea of 'Egyptians coming to know Yahweh' is used in Isaiah: "When they [the Egyptians] cry to the LORD because of oppressors, he will send them a savior, and will defend and deliver them. The LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the Egyptians will know the LORD on that day... The LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing; they will return to the LORD" (Is. 19:20-22). To "know Yahweh" is to repent, to "return to Yahweh". Yahweh revealed in Ex. 3 and 6 that He wanted His people to "know" Him, to be in relationship with Him, and the plagues show that He wished this for Egypt and even Pharaoh too.

The magicians and surely all Egypt got to a point of recognizing that "this is the finger [power] of God" (Ex. 8:19), but they generally did not come from that

to know Yahweh. This recalls how God said in Ex. 6 that He was previously known as God Almighty, El Shaddai, the God of power- but now He was revealing Himself as Yahweh, the God who could be intimately known. The plagues were intended to make Pharaoh know Yahweh (Ex. 8:22); as if God wanted the persecutor of His children to become a repentant member of the family and enter covenant relationship with Him. And there was an overall increase in the gradation of the plagues. Striking with death is used in the death of the livestock [plague 5] and then plague 6 brings boils on men, as if to show that people can also be judged. Egypt are being set up to expect that soon the plagues will mean striking people dead, and not just animals. But the increasing gradation of the plagues appears to stop with the penultimate plague of darkness- because that was in order to make the Egyptians stop and sit at home in darkness and meditate, before the final slaying of the firstborn. All through, God wanted their repentance.

So we can read the plagues as the articulation of the Yahweh Name, which seeks to save as well as uphold integrity. Grace and desire to save is seen all through the plagues, because that is what God's Name is all about. The plagues destroyed all the harvests of the Egyptians. But Goshen wasn't affected, and so when the Israelites left, the Egyptians would have gone to the place of the Hebrews for food. In this we see God's grace.

Exo 7:18 The fish that are in the river shall die, and the river shall become foul; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink water from the river'-

"Foul" has the sense of being morally obnoxious. The use of this word, with its moral overtones, is appropriate once we perceive that the god represented by the river was being targetted. The intention of the plagues was to turn the people against their own gods, and to Yahweh. The god of the Nile became odious to them, and it was seen to have failed to provide them with water. **We see the power of selective memory in that Israel later lamented how they had eaten fish in Egypt, and so wished to return there.**

Exo 7:19 Yahweh said to Moses, Tell Aaron, 'Take your rod, and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their ponds of water, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone'-

"Ponds of water" is NIV "reservoirs". The destruction of the water was a case of "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am Yahweh" (Ex. 12:12; 15:11; Num. 33:4). The "gods" are spoken of for a moment as real and existing, in order to show Yahweh's total superiority over them to the point that they didn't exist. Note how it was the Egyptian people who were judged (Gen. 15:14); their idols ("gods") are used by metonymy to stand for those who believed in them. Likewise "demons" is sometimes put by metonymy for those who

believed in them (e.g. Mk. 2:32,34). The judgment upon Egypt's gods is brought out by an otherwise obscure reference in Ex. 7:19 to how "there shall be blood in all the land of Egypt on wood and in stone". "Wood and stone" is a term usually used in the Bible for idols; and "the Egyptian priests used to wash the images of their gods in water every day early in the morning". Thus the gods were shown to be effectively dead and bleeding.

Exo 7:20 Moses and Aaron did so, as Yahweh commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood-

Blood implies death, and the idea was that the gods associated with the Nile had been effectively slain. All the plagues were intended to lead the Egyptians to ditch their faith in their gods, and accept Yahweh. There is always ultimate spiritual purpose in all God's judgments; they are never to be seen as the lashing out of an offended deity. **Yet without doubt this was to remind the Egyptians of their policy 40 years previously of murdering the Hebrew babies in the Nile. They were being shown that effectively, they had turned the river into blood by what they had done. They were being shown what their sins of 40 years ago really looked like. And so God works with men to this day.**

Exo 7:21 The fish that were in the river died; and the river became foul, and the Egyptians couldn't drink water from the river; and the blood was throughout all the land of Egypt-

As noted on :18, "foul" has the sense of being morally obnoxious. The use of this word, with its moral overtones, is appropriate once we perceive that the god represented by the river was being targeted. The spiritually perceptive were intended to realize that if God could manipulate the Nile as He wished, He could do so with the Red Sea. Those who charged into it pursuing the Israelites had refused to learn this obvious lesson. The drying up of waters and death of fish is the language of Babylon's destruction; Judah were asked to believe that as God had acted with Egypt in order to release God's people, so He could do so with Babylon (Is. 50:2).

Exo 7:22 The magicians of Egypt did the same thing with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he didn't listen to them; as Yahweh had spoken-

Their claims would have been almost comical; because *all* the Nile water was made blood, it was impossible for them to take some of it and turn it to blood. But the record does not record a word of this *explicitly*. Their false claims are recorded uncorrected – to bring home (to the sensitive reader) the power of Yahweh's triumph over them. It's the same with the language of demons in the NT. And the miracle was clearly aimed at showing that the gods of the Nile had been slain by Yahweh; for the magicians to seek to replicate this was therefore driving them to as it were slay their own gods.

"Pharaoh's heart was hardened," is linked grammatically with the previous clause, "the magicians did so". The fake miracles by the magicians were laughable. But Pharaoh's heart was hardened because he

thought that at least something had been said or done in response to Yahweh's claims. And that is the mentality today. It is vaguely hoped or thought that "science" has some answer to theism. The fact that there is some counter argument, no matter how pathetic, hardens unbelievers. So the Biblical account is so absolutely psychologically credible and true to experience today.

There were so many similarities between Elijah and Moses; Dale Allison points out:

Confronted Ahab (1 Kings 17:1) = Confronted Pharaoh (Ex. 5:1)

Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (1 Kings 19:3) = Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (Ex. 2:15)

Miraculously fed "...bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening..." (1 Kings 17:6) = Miraculously fed "...meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning..." (Ex. 16:8, 12)

Gathered all Israel to Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:19)=Gathered all Israel to Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:17)

Combated the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40) = Combated the magicians of Pharaoh (Ex. 7:8-13, 20-22; 8:1-7)

Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (1 Kings 18:36-39) = Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (Ex. 32:11-14)

Elijah took twelve stones at Carmel "...according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob..." (1 Kings

18:30-32) = Moses had twelve pillars set up at Sinai "...corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel..." (Ex. 24:4)

The Lord accepted Elijah's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (1 Kings 18:36-39) = The Lord accepted Moses and Aaron's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (Lev. 9:22-24)

By Elijah's authority 3000 idolatrous prophets were slain (1 Kings 18:40) = By Moses' authority 3000 idolaters were slain (Ex. 32:25-29)

After killing the prophets of Baal Elijah climbed Carmel to pray. (1 Kings 18:42) = After killing the idolaters Moses climbed Sinai to pray (Ex. 32:30)

Went without food for forty days and forty nights (1 Kings 19:8) = Went without food for forty days and forty nights (Ex. 34:38; Dt. 9:9)

Elijah was in "the cave" on Horeb (=Sinai) when the Lord "passed by" (1 Kings 19: 9-11) = Moses was hidden "in the cleft of the rock" when the Lord passed by Sinai (Ex. 33:21-23)

Elijah saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Horeb (=Sinai). (1 Kings 19:11-12) = Moses saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Sinai (Ex. 19:16-20; 20:18; Dt. 4:11; 5:22-27).

Prayed that he might die (1 Kings 19:1-4) = Prayed that he might die. (Num. 11:10-15).

The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon his enemies (2 Kings 1:9-12) = The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon those who rebelled against him (Num. 16; cf. Lev. 10:1-3)

Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan by striking the waters with his cloak and passed over on dry ground. (2 Kings 2:8) = Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea by stretching out his staff and passed over on dry ground (Ex. 14:16, 21-22)

His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had (2 Kings 2) = His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had the Red Sea. (Josh. 3)

Was taken away in the Transjordan (2 Kings 2:9-11) = Died in the Transjordan (Dt. 34:5)

Mysteriously translated (2 Kings 9-18) = Died mysteriously and buried in a valley, but his burial place was unknown. (Dt. 34:6)

The point of these similarities was that the Angel wanted Elijah to be like Moses; to pray for the peoples' salvation, to return to the people and lead them and teach them. Moses had begged for God's mercy for His people; but Elijah was so full of self-justification that he prayed against Israel. And so with us, we are potentially led into situations where we are to discern the similarities between us and Bible characters; we are set up with opportunities to respond in a way that reflects how we have learnt the lessons from them. The way the Lord

Jesus perceived this in His wilderness temptations is a great example.

Exo 7:23 Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he didn't even take this to heart-

Because God had hardened his heart (:22), meaning He had removed sensitivity from his conscience. His heart was turned by God, because that was the direction he himself wanted (Ps. 105:25). Pharaoh's response gets increasingly better, confessing sinfulness, asking for prayer, etc. And yet we have to read this as his conscience being increasingly touched, and yet he refused to act upon it. The movement of conscience within him was overcome by the movement of hardness; and as hardness was his dominant desire, it was that which Yahweh confirmed.

The first plagues were intense forms of what was well known in Egypt. At times the Nile did appear reddish because of sediment colorization after flooding. But now it turned to actual blood so that the fish died. After the flood season, frogs appeared around the Nile every year. But now they appeared in huge numbers. God was nudging Egypt to accept Him, although testing Pharaoh as to whether he would just explain away the first plagues as mere natural phenomena. He does the same today. But if ignored or rationalised away, the nudges get louder, harder and more intrusive and painful. Like Pharaoh, they refuse to "fix his attention even on this thing" (:23 LXX). Spiritual focus is in short supply in the natural man. But if we do make the effort to focus, and that is one

purpose of the breaking of bread, then the message is clear and powerful.

Exo 7:24 All the Egyptians dug around the river for water to drink; for they couldn't drink of the water of the river-

Pharaoh was condemned and Egypt overthrown because of his hard heart- but the very word is used to describe the hardness of Israel's heart at the time (Ex. 32:9; 33:3-5; 34:9). Israel were really no better than Egypt- just as Egypt was plagued "so that they could not drink the water" (Ex. 7:24), so we find Israel in the same situation right after leaving Egypt (Ex. 15:23). As the Egyptians were stripped of their jewellery, so Israel stripped themselves of it before the golden calf (Ex. 12:36; 33:6). **The God who knows the future knew all this. So we see that He didn't save Israel because they were soft hearted, and Egypt were hard hearted. Most were hard hearted, but God therefore saved Israel by grace.**

Exo 7:25 Seven days were fulfilled, after Yahweh had struck the river-

This period was intended to allow the Egyptians to meditate upon what had been done. The language of Yahweh striking is appropriate to the striking of a person; the idea was consistently that the gods supposedly behind the Nile had been slain.

EXODUS CHAPTER 8

Exo 8:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh, and tell him, This is what Yahweh says, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me-

"Serve Me" could refer specifically to the initial request to keep a feast to Yahweh. But the call was for Israel to be allowed to change masters, from Pharaoh to Yahweh. They changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

Exo 8:2 If you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague all your borders with frogs-

The land was 'smitten' in Ex. 8:2 as a foretaste of the 'smiting' of the Egyptian firstborn (Ex. 12:23,27). It was an appeal for Pharaoh's repentance, in the hope that the final smiting of the firstborn would not be necessary. It was God's intention and hope to save Pharaoh, but he would not.

The Nile floods, with reddish sediment brought from as far south as Uganda- but instead the water

was turned to actual blood and the fish died. After the annual flooding, frogs come out of the river. But now there was a plague of frogs, throughout the land. The mounds of dead frogs led to the plague of gnats [plague three]; and gnats grow into flies [plague four]. But the scale was unprecedented, and from plague four onwards, the Israelites were not affected. Gnats and flies bite animals and humans, leading to plague five [disease of cattle] and plague six, boils breaking out on people. This is typical of how God works- exaggerating natural process to an extreme point. He works through us, and above all through the Lord and His human nature; through the words and deeds of a man with the larynx of a Palestinian Jew, whose body sweated and secreted and excreted just like any other human being. And with us too. We are of human nature and appear as one of the herd of humanity; but He works powerfully through us and above all in His very human Son.

In Robert Roberts' terms, the hand of providence as it were turned into the visible hand of God in the plagues which followed- hail [plague seven] that killed people and animals unless they were brought under cover. The first six plagues could therefore have been written off as just bad luck, extreme natural events. But this was the temptation to the Egyptians- to desperately try to rationalize the visible hand of God. We see the same in those who try to rationalize obvious miracles like the crossing of the Red Sea as mere freak natural events. And this is our temptation,

for Pharaoh's mind can easily be in us too. We tend to want to rationalize God's hand- maybe that meeting with an 'Angel' was just because I was tired and imagined it, it was my subconscious. Like Pharaoh we have moments of spiritual reality, but we slump back into rationalizing things instead of the total surrender required. In all the plagues, there was something clearly of the Divine- e.g. heavy rain occurs *before* the Nile floods and turns slightly reddish. But the hail comes well *after* that in God's sequence of plagues. And seeing the last plague was at Passover time, Easter, the timing of the sequence was not at the right time. Plague eight, the locusts, is a clear example- the Nile floods in Spring and locusts come to Egypt in Summer, but the plague of locusts came soon after the 'flooding' of the Nile, when it turned red as blood. And then the plague of darkness was, I suggest, totally unnatural and was to give Egypt pause to sit at home and consider. The death of the firstborn, the family priest, was then totally beyond any natural explanation.

Exo 8:3 and the river shall swarm with frogs, which shall go up and come into your house, and into your bedroom, and on your bed, and into the house of your servants, and on your people, and into your ovens, and into your kneading troughs-

What God did at creation, He can do at any time. As He made the waters "swarm" in Gen. 1:20, so He made the waters of the Nile "swarm" with frogs in order to save His people from a no-hope, chaotic, disordered, hope-

less situation. The language of creation is here used about judgment; but the idea is that God's judgments are creative, not destructive in the way that human judgment is destructive. From judgment He brings new life.

Heqt, the Egyptian god symbolized as a frog, abounded to such an extent that the Egyptians wanted no more of him. And then he died and stunk. Truly "I will bring judgment upon all the gods of Egypt" (Ex. 12:12). Egyptian priests weren't allowed to do their work with any lice or gnats on their bodies; frogs were sacred and not to be stepped on. But inevitably every Egyptian trod on a frog during the plague. All the way through, the Egyptians found their religious system targetted. The Nile was supposed to be the God who blessed Egypt. But now from the Nile, from their god, comes the cursed plague of frogs.

Exo 8:4 and the frogs shall come up both on you, and on your people, and on all your servants'-

"On you" shows how the plagues were specifically aimed at Pharaoh. We marvel at God's repeated efforts to bring this man to accept Him. It is a parade example to us of how we should never give up with anyone, not even the most apparently unlikely candidate for the Kingdom.

Exo 8:5 Yahweh said to Moses, Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your rod over the rivers, over the streams, and over the pools, and cause frogs to come up on the land of Egypt'-

All these water courses were part of the Nile system. Again, the gods supposed to be associated with the Nile are being targetted, as well as the god associated with the frog.

Exo 8:6 Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt-

The 'covering' of Egypt with frogs in Ex. 8:6 and locusts in Ex. 10:5,15 looked ahead to the 'covering' of the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:28; 15:5,10). It was an appeal for repentance, in the hope that the final smiting would not be necessary. It was God's intention and hope to save the Egyptians, but they would not.

Only the very short sighted and superficial reader will read the Red Sea destruction of the Egyptians, and indeed all the sufferings caused by the plagues, as the actions of a hard God. Every opportunity was given for people not to die. But they chose otherwise.

Exo 8:7 The magicians did the same thing with their enchantments, and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt-

Their claims would have been almost comical; because *all* the country was full of frogs anyway. **The obvious miracle that Pharaoh wanted was to take the frogs away, but they couldn't do that.** But the record does not record a word of this *explicitly*. Their false claims are recorded uncorrected – to bring home (to the sensitive reader) the power of Yahweh's triumph over them. It's the same with the language of demons in the NT. The miracle was clearly aimed at showing that the gods of the Nile had been slain by Yahweh, and their frog god was

actually turned into a curse for them; for the magicians to seek to replicate this was therefore driving them to as it were slay and disparage their own gods.

Exo 8:8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat Yahweh, that He take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to Yahweh-

The frogs "destroyed them" (Ps. 78:45), and they even appeared in the bedroom of the king (Ps. 105:30). Pharaoh had made no response to the first plague, but now he is forced to make some response. He freely uses the Yahweh Name; he was being led to "know" Him.

Exo 8:9 Moses said to Pharaoh, I give you the honour of setting the time that I should pray for you, and for your servants, and for your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, and remain in the river only-

The record of the miracles is framed to show God commanding Moses to do certain things to bring and end the plagues, and him obedient to this. But Ex. 8:9 RV contains a strange sentence: "Have thou this glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee... to destroy the frogs?". It could be that, in the words of Bro. Mark Vincent, "Moses with an excessive and sarcastic politeness, is asking, 'And (pray tell me!) when exactly would you like the frogs to be gone?', as though Pharaoh might miss them and fondly wish them to stay around for a couple more days". This sarcasm on Moses' part surely doesn't score very highly in spiritual terms; and neither does Elijah's mockery of Baal's absence as being because he was going to the toilet. And yet God worked through him.

'Glory over me' could be read as Moses sarcastically saying that if Pharaoh is really his superior, then he can glory over Moses by commanding him when to remove the frogs. In this case, we see Moses at this point still had some travelling left to do to get to the point where he would be the meekest man on earth.

Moses offers Pharaoh the destruction of the frogs. Pharaoh likely didn't realize that his agreement with Moses' offer would mean huge mounds of stinking frogs everywhere, underscoring Yahweh's supremacy over the frog god.

Exo 8:10 He said, Tomorrow. He said, Be it according to your word, that you may know that there is none like Yahweh our God-

Pharaoh naturally wanted to say "Right now!". But he was given the chance to define a time in order to coax him toward repentance, and the realization that God was in absolute control of all this.

Exo 8:11 The frogs shall depart from you, and from your houses, and from your servants, and from your people. They shall remain in the river only-

The whole situation here shows the development of Moses. He had departed from the Divine script by asking Pharaoh sarcastically when he wanted the plague removed. And Moses had given him a time. But he had to pray for this to happen (:12), and so his confident statement was made in faith.

Exo 8:12 Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to Yahweh concerning the frogs which He had brought on Pharaoh-

This is the language of intense prayer. **This crying to God is significant. It's the only time that his prayers for the plagues to be removed are described in this way. Perhaps he had to pray this intensely because of the pride and over confidence that had crept into him, as noted on :9. Again we have an example of where the Bible is so psychologically credible.** The removal of the frogs was far from automatic. As noted on :11, although Moses gave way to inappropriate sarcasm and over confidence in :10, he is starting to flourish spiritually. No longer is he the unsure, unwilling participant in the coalition with Yahweh which he had felt almost railroaded into. He is taking initiative, and stating things which can only come about through his own intense prayer.

Exo 8:13 Yahweh did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courts, and out of the fields-

The frogs were being slain by the word of Moses which was as it were a command to Yahweh. The Egyptians saw their frog god being slain by Yahweh, at the word of His servant Moses. And Moses in turn was being led to understand the power of prayer, how our words can become a word of command to Yahweh; such is His earnest, even humble desire to respond to the words of men to Him.

Exo 8:14 They gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank-

The smell of the death of their frog god would have been an abiding testimony to the idea that their god was totally dead- and they had buried him. "Heaps" is s.w. clay or mud. There is no record that the water turned to blood was reversed, so perhaps the land was still covered in "blood", now with heaps of putrid frogs in it. It would have been a terrible scene and experience.

Exo 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart, and didn't listen to them, as Yahweh had spoken-

Hebrew tends to reason through placing 'blocks' of ideas are put in opposition to each other, or 'dialectic', in order to come to conclusions. That's why we can read of God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart (Ex. 7:3; 8:15). To Greek, step-logic thinkers, that's a worrying contradiction- only because they don't pick up the way that Hebrew reasoning involves these kinds of statements being put in opposition to each other, so that through the dialectic process we come to understand what is meant. Summing up, our covenant relationship with God is a "living intercourse" as Abraham Heschel put it; it's not merely knowing a set of doctrines and information about the covenant promises, the terms of the covenant etc. In that case the covenant would be a tether or chain; but instead it is a relationship.

This is a case of "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness" (Is. 26:10). People

like this "despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads them to repentance". And so they "treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:4,5). Paul surely wrote this in conscious allusion to Pharaoh, as a representative of all who will ultimately fail of God's grace.

Moses had complained that Pharaoh would not hearken to him because of his speech impediment. Yahweh's reply was that it was through Pharaoh not hearkening, that He would save Israel. We see how His plan of salvation is so different from ours. He reveals to work through human weakness.

Exo 8:16 Yahweh said to Moses, Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt'-

LXX "mosquitoes". The plagues and miracles often involve a transformation of one thing to another, in this case, dust to lice. Man is made of "the dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7). God can transform man, in all his lowliness and earthiness, as He wishes. That is the simple take away.

Exo 8:17 They did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and struck the dust of the earth, and there were lice on man, and on animal; all the dust of the earth became lice throughout all the land of Egypt-

"They did so" shows again the careful obedience now manifest in these men. Moses spoke to Aaron just as commanded, and Aaron did exactly what he was told. This is all a far cry from Moses' grudging struggle to be obedient when he was first commissioned.

This too was a hit at the Egyptian priests, who shaved their bodies closely lest they have any lice, which made their service unacceptable. So Egypt were left unable to serve their gods, without a priesthood. But they didn't learn, and so all their firstborn were slain. Only firstborn sons could be priests, and now they were all slain. God seeks to remove all our excuses, our religion, our attempts to rationalize His hand, our partial surrenders to Him... but even so, He will not totally force us.

Exo 8:18 The magicians tried with their enchantments to produce lice, but they couldn't. There were lice on man, and on animal-

Their previous attempts to replicate the plagues had been apparently successful. But apparently something went wrong with their usual trickery, and they failed to replicate this one. And it would only have been creating yet more judgment and suffering for themselves if they had succeeded. The folly of trying to mock Yahweh was increasingly apparent.

Exo 8:19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, This is the finger of God-

Grammatically this implies a singular God, whereas the Egyptians were polytheists. But they were being led toward monotheism; Yahweh alone could do such

things, and all their gods were being systematically deconstructed.

We note God's response to their comment that this was the finger of God, *elohim*. It was that the entire *hand* of *Yahweh* was upon them now, Ex. 9:1. We see here the continual upping of the tempo. And so it is with every man who resists God's call and only partially surrenders to it.

It was the plague using the smallest, tiniest elements, dust and lice, that was to persuade the Egyptians that this was the finger of God, i.e. done by Him. And this is indeed God's style.

And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he didn't listen to them; as Yahweh had spoken-

Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 7:22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34,35). And yet God hardened his heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:8). The references to God hardening Pharaoh's heart generally occur after Pharaoh had first hardened his own heart. The fact Pharaoh hardened his heart was a sin (Ex. 9:34), and yet God encouraged him in this. God offered Pharaoh a way of escape after each of the plagues; all he had to do was to agree to let Israel go. But the conditions got tougher the longer he resisted God's demand: he finally had to not only let Israel go, but also provide them with sacrifices (Ex. 10:25). Likewise when Nebuchadnezzar lifted his heart up, God hardened it (Dan. 5:20).

Exo 8:20 Yahweh said to Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; behold, he comes out

to the water; and tell him, 'This is what Yahweh says, Let My people go, that they may serve Me-

See on :1. Pharaoh was still going to worship at the Nile, despite the effective destruction of all the gods associated with it.

There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

Exo 8:21 Else, if you will not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of beetles on you, and on your servants, and on your people, and into your houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of beetles, and also the ground whereon they are-

The beetle god was now to be deconstructed. This god was presented as effectively the destruction rather than the salvation of Egypt. They were to have so much of their 'god' that they came to detest him. **Just as men become tired of sin, it never satisfies; and some deliver themselves to satan [the flesh] for the destruction of the flesh.** Again, the whole exercise was to lead them to ditch their gods and accept Yahweh.

Exo 8:22 I will set apart in that day the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of beetles shall be there; to the end you may know that I am Yahweh in the midst of the earth-

The 'setting apart' of Israel from Egypt is a major theme (Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 11:7 "put a difference"). It was part of a 'sanctifying' of Israel for priestly service to Yahweh as a nation, as well as a lesson for Egypt that the only way to salvation was through separation from their own people and culture, and joining the people of God. We marvel at the multi functional way in which God works. The same word is used to describe how God "has set apart him that is Godly for Himself" (Ps. 4:3); even though Israel were far from being Godly. **Their setting apart was by grace; and so Paul in Romans uses the calling of Israel as the parade example of God's grace. Our own calling is another example; for we were not called because we were better than the man next to us.** The word is used in this sense in Ex. 33:16, where Moses reasons that it is God's grace and the visible presence of that grace which is what sets apart Israel from all other peoples: "how would people know that I have found favour

[grace] in Your sight, I and Your people? Isn't it in that You go with us, so that we are separated, I and Your people, from all the people who are on the surface of the earth?". And that is true to this day. God's grace is what is the lead and distinguishing characteristic of His way from all other religions. It is the experience of that grace which makes us distinct from all others who have not claimed it for themselves. And it all began with God 'setting apart' a sinful, idolatrous Israel from the Egyptians around them, all by grace, seeing they were largely no better than Egypt.

Exo 8:23 I will put a division between My people and your people: by tomorrow shall this sign be'

This implies that outside Goshen, when an Egyptian and Hebrew were together, the Hebrew would not be hurt by the beetles. It was all another nudge to join the people of God. Ps. 78:48 says that the swarms of flies "devoured them", so we can imagine some Egyptians dying.

This "division" was the setting apart of God's people for Himself, by grace; see on :23. Egypt were being led to realize that salvation was through identifying with Yahweh's people. And the fact a mixed multitude left Egypt with Israel is evidence that some did respond to this. The Hebrew for "division" is elsewhere always translated "redemption". In the exodus context, "He sent redemption unto His people" (Ps. 111:9). Our redemption involves our separation from our 'Egypt'. Separation, holiness, being separated both from the world and unto the things of God, is therefore part and parcel of our redemption

process. It is this which is the basis of our separation from the world. Not simply in a negative sense, of being separated from the world, but more importantly, separated unto the things of the new life and redemption.

Exo 8:24 Yahweh did so; and there came grievous swarms of beetles into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses: and in all the land of Egypt the land was corrupted by reason of the swarms of beetles-

"Corrupted" has a moral sense. The same word means both morally corrupt, and destroyed. Thus the land / earth was "corrupt" before God at the time of the flood, and was "destroyed"; the same word is used (Gen. 6:11,13). The religious sense of the word is relevant here- for the plague was to show that Egypt's beetle god had corrupted the land of Egypt unto destruction. Their gods were the cause of their destruction; they needed to quit those gods and accept Yahweh.

Exo 8:25 Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go, sacrifice to your God within the land!-

Pharaoh again has to make some concession here, but he struggles with all his might against the total capitulation to Yahweh which is required. And we do the same. **We sense the parallel movements within him- of conscience toward God, finally admitting he has sinned and asking for forgiveness; and yet hardening of heart.**

Exo 8:26 Moses said, It isn't appropriate to do so; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to Yahweh our God. Behold, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and won't they stone us?-

Cows were sacred to Apsis, rams to Jupiter, goats to Bacchus, heifers to Juno. Indeed all animals were likewise thought to be sacred to various other deities. Clearly there were principles of sacrifice established for Yahweh's people well before they were codified in the Mosaic law. To sacrifice those animals to any other god apart from the deity of those animals was considered blasphemy by the Egyptians. And stoning was the punishment for religious apostasy. They considered that offering e.g. a cow to a deity other than Apsis meant a rejection of Apsis as unworthy to accept sacrifice. And that indeed was the message being taught to the Egyptians—that their gods were dead and to be rejected, and Moses is now manipulating Pharaoh to a position whereby he had to accept the blasphemous dismantling of his entire religious system.

Exo 8:27 We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to Yahweh our God, as He shall command us-

The three days connects with the time the Lord was dead before His resurrection. The people of Israel as a body were going through the death and resurrection experience of the Lord Jesus, through the process of the Passover and Exodus through the Red Sea. Israel ate Passover (Ex. 12:6) [14th Abib], as the Lord died on the cross as the Passover lambs were slain; Israel left Egypt the next day (Num. 33:3) [15th Abib] and journeyed three days (Ex. 8:27) [15th-17th Abib], and the Lord Jesus was three days in the tomb. Israel then came through the Red Sea [17th Abib], connecting with the Lord's be-

ing resurrected. As we come out of the baptismal water, we really are united with the resurrected Lord- a new creation. His newness of life, His deliverance and successful exodus from the world- all this becomes ours.

Exo 8:28 Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to Yahweh your God in the wilderness, only you shall not go very far away. Pray for me-

Pharaoh is clearly no longer in control of the situation. No longer is this the man who barked out the order that the Israelites should be given no straw for their bricks. "Pray for me" is pregnant with possible meaning. For it is not simply a request to pray that the beetles be removed. It sounds like he realizes his own moral need. The probing and prodding of his conscience was partly succeeding, but he keeps going back from where he is being led. Just as so many do.

Exo 8:29 Moses said, Behold, I go out from you, and I will pray to Yahweh that the swarms of beetles may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow; only don't let Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to Yahweh-

Moses emphasizes that it is his own prayers to Yahweh which are critical in saving Egypt. We note again that the beetles specifically targetted Pharaoh personally.

Exo 8:30 Moses went out from Pharaoh, and prayed to Yahweh-

The plagues were not removed by a mere wave of a rod, or some other formalism. They required Moses to sincerely pray for them to be removed. This was both to teach Pharaoh the power of Moses' prayers; and also

to teach Moses that prayer changes things, and he really had the power to change things through his prayers. He learned that lesson to its ultimate term when he successfully prayed that God would not destroy Israel as He intended. But faith in prayer is developed through experiences, and we see this happening with Moses.

Exo 8:31 Yahweh did according to the word of Moses, and He removed the swarms of beetles from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. There remained not one-

"There remained not one" beetle (Ex. 8:31), locust (Ex. 10:19) nor Egyptian who pursued the Israelites (Ex. 14:28). The same phrase is used. Again we see how both Egyptians and Israelites were intended to learn from the plagues, and how this came to full term when "not one" of their enemies was left- thanks to the prayer of Moses.

Exo 8:32 Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he didn't let the people go-

Because God had hardened his heart (Ex. 7:22), meaning He had removed sensitivity from his conscience. His heart was turned by God, because that was the direction he himself wanted (Ps. 105:25). Pharaoh's response gets increasingly better, confessing sinfulness, asking for prayer, etc. And yet we have to read this as his conscience being increasingly touched, and yet he refused to act upon it. The movement of conscience within him was overcome by the movement of hardness; and as hardness was his dominant desire, it was that which Yah-

weh confirmed. **The final question of self examination must always be: What is my dominant desire?**

EXODUS CHAPTER 9

Exo 9:1 Then Yahweh said to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh, and tell him, 'This is what Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let My people go, that they may serve Me-

Yahweh is now fully defined as the God of the Hebrews. It was His intention that Pharaoh should come to know Him, in relationship with Him.

Exo 9:2 For if you refuse to let them go, and hold them still-

Ex. 8:2; 9:2; 10:4 emphasize the real choice before Pharaoh; he was refusing to let Israel go and "held" them. Babylon was warned that no nation could "hold them fast [and] refuse to let [Israel] go [because] their redeemer is strong" (Jer. 50:33,34). The Hebrew for "strong" is that translated "hold". God had a stronger grip and claim on them than did Pharaoh. They were Yahweh's, not Pharaoh's. And it could be argued that Babylon-Persia did listen to this message, and allowed and encouraged the exiles to return. We too are to learn from all this historical precedent; that our hand is not stronger than God's.

Exo 9:3 behold, the hand of Yahweh is on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks with a very grievous pestilence-

We see here how God works. His hand was already on their animals- but the destruction didn't need to happen. It was conditional upon their dis-

obedience. The "pestilence" which was the plague upon Egypt (Ex. 9:3) was to come upon a hard hearted Israel (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Num. 14:12; Dt. 28:21; Jer. 21:6). The plagues upon Egypt form the basis for the vials and seals of Revelation, which speak of judgment to come upon the land of Israel. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues.

Exo 9:4 Yahweh will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt; and nothing shall die of all that belongs to the children of Israel'-

The 'setting apart' of Israel from Egypt is a major theme (Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 11:7 "put a difference"). It was part of a 'sanctifying' of Israel for priestly service to Yahweh as a nation, as well as a lesson for Egypt that the only way to salvation was through separation from their own people and culture, and joining the people of God. We marvel at the multi functional way in which God works. The same word is used to describe how God "has set apart him that is Godly for Himself" (Ps. 4:3); even though Israel were far from being Godly. And it is used of God's special grace, 'set apart', a grace known by no other people (Ps. 17:7). The word is used in this sense in Ex. 33:16, where Moses reasons that it is God's grace and the visible presence of that grace which is what sets apart Israel from all other peoples. And that is true to this day. God's grace is what is the lead and distinguishing char-

acteristic of His way from all other religions. It is the experience of that grace which makes us distinct from all others who have not claimed it for themselves. And it all began with God 'setting apart' a sinful, idolatrous Israel from the Egyptians around them, all by grace, seeing they were largely no better than Egypt.

Exo 9:5 Yahweh appointed a set time, saying, Tomorrow Yahweh shall do this thing in the land-

The plague upon cattle was clearly prophesied as going to happen at a specified time: "The Lord appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the Lord shall do this thing"; but it was conditional upon Pharaoh refusing to let Israel go (Ex. 9:1,2,5). He *could* have complied, and therefore the plague wouldn't have happened. And yet the prophecy is so specific that it would seem that this conditionality just didn't exist. But it did. Pharaoh had a real choice whether or not to obey God's word.

Exo 9:6 Yahweh did that thing on the next day; and all the livestock of Egypt died, but of the livestock of the children of Israel, not one died-

Clearly not all Egyptian cattle died because there were still some alive in the next plague (:19). So I suggest going with the translation of Adam Clarke: "All the cattle that did die belonged to the Egyptians".

This plague was avoidable, preparing them for the possibility to escape the death of the firstborn. God's hand was upon the animals left in the field but they need not have died if the Egyptians had obeyed the command to bring them under cover. All "the cattle of Egypt died" suggests that whoever was obedient

to Yahweh was not "of Egypt ". Disobedient Israelites were "of Egypt". A new people was being formed.

Exo 9:7 Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not so much as one of the livestock of the Israelites dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was stubborn, and he didn't let the people go-

Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 7:22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34,35). And yet God hardened his heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:8). The references to God hardening Pharaoh's heart generally occur after Pharaoh had first hardened his own heart. The fact Pharaoh hardened his heart was a sin (Ex. 9:34), and yet God encouraged him in this. God offered Pharaoh a way of escape after each of the plagues; all he had to do was to agree to let Israel go. But the conditions got tougher the longer he resisted God's demand: he finally had to not only let Israel go, but also provide them with sacrifices (Ex. 10:25). Likewise when Nebuchadnezzar lifted his heart up, God hardened it (Dan. 5:20).

Exo 9:8 Yahweh said to Moses and to Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the sky in the sight of Pharaoh-

"The ashes of the furnace" which created the plague of boils (Ex. 9:8) may have been a reference to the furnaces used for the brick kilns, where the Hebrews were made to slave away making bricks. The result of this abuse was to come down upon the Egyptians as boils (Ex. 9:9). Egypt is therefore likened to a furnace of oppression to Israel (Dt. 4:20; Jer. 11:4). The Lord describes condemnation as being cast into a furnace (Mt.

13:42,50). He is not speaking literally, but rather using the figure of Egypt as a furnace- for the condemnation of the unworthy in God's Israel is to be sent back into Egypt / the world (Hos. 8:13; 9:3), and share their judgments.

Exo 9:9 It shall become small dust over all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking out with boils on man and on animal, throughout all the land of Egypt-

This affliction was so terrible that it became known as "the boil of Egypt" (Dt. 28:27). Apostate Israel were to be punished with the judgments of Egypt. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues. **In terms of the progressive nature of the plagues, we note that boils were intensely personal. Pharaoh and the Egyptians felt this intimately; it was God touching their bodies and most private parts. The Egyptians again would have been tempted to rationalize this plague as being a skin anthrax which had come from the piles of dead frogs and livestock, or from the plague of flies. Always there was this and is this temptation to rationalize God's hand. And this was what hardened Pharaoh's heart. We must beware of it, and accept miracle as miracle.**

Exo 9:10 They took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward the sky;

and it became a boil breaking out with boils on man and on animal-

The plagues upon Egypt form the basis for the vials and seals of Revelation, which speak of judgment to come upon the land of Israel, and feature a furnace with ascending smoke turning into judgments upon the land. See on :9.

The plagues often reflect how the apparently total destruction of the previous plagues was in fact not total. All Egyptian animals were killed but then the plague of sores breaks out upon their animals. In wrath God remembers mercy. A remnant was preserved by grace alone. That was the message.

Exo 9:11 The magicians couldn't stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boils were on the magicians, and on all the Egyptians-

Dt. 28:27 describes this plague in more detail when we read of how it would come upon an apostate Israel, who identified with Egypt in their hearts and ways: "Yahweh will strike you with the boil of Egypt and with the tumours, the scurvy and the itch, from which you cannot be healed". **The magicians hardly wanted to bring yet more boils on themselves. We see again how the religious structure of Egypt was being destroyed; and the vacuum left was to prepare them to accept Yahweh.**

Exo 9:12 Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he didn't listen to them, as Yahweh had spoken to Moses-

The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart occur in a positive context- for God also

hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought-for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too.

When Paul insists that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Rom. 9:14-18), he is not only repeating the Biblical record (Ex. 9:12,16; 33:19), but he is alluding to the way that the Jewish *Book of Jubilees* claimed that Mastema [the supposed personal Satan] and not God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Exo 9:13 Yahweh said to Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and tell him, 'This is what Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let My people go, that they may serve Me-

"Serve Me" could refer specifically to the initial request to keep a feast to Yahweh. But the call was for Israel to be allowed to change masters, from Pharaoh to Yahweh. They changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather

than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

Exo 9:14 For this time I will send all My plagues against your heart, against your officials, and against your people; that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth-

Heb. "I will send all My plagues upon your person". Again we see the focus on Pharaoh personally.

To 'know Yahweh', to have a relationship with Him, is God's greatest desire. And it was His desire even for Pharaoh. "You *may* know" suggests this was potentially true. When God earlier said that Israel "will know" Him, this doesn't mean they would; it is rather a statement of potential, of God's wish. Just as God told that generation that they would enter Canaan; but they effectively chose not to. The idea of knowing Yahweh as a result of the plagues is found in Ex. 10:2 in relation to Israel: "... that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your son's son, what things I have done to Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them; that you may know that I am Yahweh".

As Pharaoh's heart was plagued (Ex. 9:14), so was Israel's (1 Kings 8:38); as Egypt was a reed, so were Israel (1 Kings 14:15). As Pharaoh-hophra was given into the hand of his enemies, so would Israel be (Jer. 44:30). She would be "Condemned with the world...". Time and again the prophets describe the judgments to fall upon Israel in the same terms as they speak of the condemnations of the surrounding nations. The message was clear: rejected Israel would be treated as Gentiles. Thus Joel describes the locust invasion of Israel in the language of locusts covering the face of Egypt (Joel 2:2,20 = Ex. 10:14,15,19). Israel's hardness of heart is explicitly likened to that of Pharaoh (1 Sam. 6:6); as the Egyptians were drowned, so would Israel be (Am. 9:5-8).

The plagues upon Pharaoh were to bring him to repentance, although his lack of response to them led him to only harden his heart. Consider how carefully they

were planned- these were not random acts of wrath from an offended Deity. They are in three cycles. First: Blood, frogs, gnats; second cycle: Flies, pest, boils; third cycle: Hail, locusts, darkness, and each cycle begins in the same way- the first plague of each cycle has Moses standing before Pharaoh in the morning, and warning him; the second plague of each cycle has Moses simply coming to Pharaoh and warning him; and the third plague in each cycle has no warning. My simple point is that a huge amount of thought went into the plagues, and the careful planning behind them was surely intended to appeal to Pharaoh and convict him that a God far mightier than himself or his deities was at work in his life.

Exo 9:15 For now I would have stretched out My hand, and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth-

The argument is that God could have destroyed Pharaoh immediately, but He didn't. And this ought to have humbled Pharaoh. This is a powerful argument. The fact God keeps us alive should mean that every moment we are attentive to Him and appreciative of Him, and never hard. Thus Belshazzar was told: "the God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways, you have not glorified" (Dan. 5:23). David's Psalms likewise reflect his awareness that every breath and heartbeat is a conscious gift from God. The reason Pharaoh was not immediately destroyed was because God wanted Pharaoh to perceive His power, and to declare His Name in all the earth (:16). God wanted him to "know that there is

none like Me in all the earth" (:14), which would mean Pharaoh declaring God's Name in all the earth. The intention was that Pharaoh would come to know "that the earth / land is Yahweh's" (:29); it did not belong to Pharaoh, as had been arranged in Joseph's time, but Yahweh. And so Pharaoh was intended to declare this throughout that land. But instead, Pharaoh exalted himself, declaring his own name, rather than Yahweh's (:17). In other words, God didn't kill him outright because God so wanted his repentance. Just as He delays judgment of this world so that more may have a chance to repent.

This seems to imply that the only reason God had not immediately "cut off" Pharaoh was because He so wished him to repent (:14). Finally at the Red Sea, the unbaptized Egyptians were "cut off" (Ex. 9:15); "all flesh" that was not baptized into the Christ-ark was "cut off" (Gen. 9:15). "The uncircumcised man child... that soul shall be cut off" (Gen. 17:14). The New Testament matches this by the oft repeated teaching that outside of Christ, there can be no salvation.

To be caught up in the downward spiral [as we all are at times] doesn't mean that there's no way out. The hearts of Pharaoh's servants were hardened (Ex. 10:1 cp. Ex. 9:34), and yet they did in fact soften when they beg Pharaoh to let Israel go (Ex. 10:7; 11:8). Yet each refusal of Pharaoh to soften his heart made it harder for him to soften it the next time the opportunity was presented. Conditional language is always used about Pharaoh-if he were to refuse to release Israel, more plagues would hap-

pen (Ex. 8:2; 9:2; 10:4 cp. 8:21; 4:23 RSV). In fact God wanted Pharaoh to come to realize that there is none like Yahweh in all the earth- and that was actually why He did not immediately kill Pharaoh, but rather appealed to him through the plagues. That's how I read the enigmatic Ex. 9:15: "For now I should have put forth my hand, and smitten thee... and thou hadst been cut off from the earth". Fretheim paraphrases this: "If I had not had the intention of your knowing that there is none like me in all the earth... then I should have put forth my hand and cut you off from the earth. This is what you have deserved". The hardening of Pharaoh's heart didn't mean that he was thereby bound to chose wrongly each time. Indeed, the plagues themselves were designed to warn Pharaoh and thereby appeal to him to change, in order to avoid worse plagues.

Exo 9:16 but indeed for this cause I have raised you up: to show in you My power, and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth-

"The earth" specifically refers to the land / *eretz* promised to Abraham. Abraham's seed were brought out of Egypt in order to inherit the earth / land promised to them. Thus the Name was declared in all the earth due to the exodus- i.e. throughout the whole land promised to Abraham. Rahab etc. heard about it, but not the whole planet (Josh. 4:23,24). They were brought into the land, but reminded in Ex. 19:5 that "all the earth is mine". This may refer to the whole planet, but surely it has special reference to the land? In one sense, all nations are Yah-

weh's, and yet He has also chosen Israel as His special people. And so it is with the earth / land of Israel.

These words are cited in Rom. 9:17 to explain how even in the lives of those who will not ultimately be saved, there is a saving purpose- that the Name might be declared in all the earth. And that phrase is associated with descriptions of the future Kingdom of God upon earth (Dt. 28:10; 1 Kings 8:43; Ps. 66:4; 83:18; 102:15; Zech. 14:9). Yahweh's Name was declared to Moses in terms of a declaration of His attributes, and in a sense it was declared throughout the earth / land of Egypt through the plagues and judgments. But ultimately the condemnation of sinners will lead to this happening on a global scale. Again we learn that God's judgments are always intended to ultimately save someone, even if those experiencing the judgments will not themselves be saved (Is. 26:9).

The essence of the Yahweh Name was His desire to save, coming to full term in His Son, Yah-Hoshua, 'Yah saves'. The whole 'thing' with Pharaoh was to declare for all time that Yahweh wants to save- especially Pharaoh, even abusive Egypt, and certainly His people. "To show you My power" (GNB), as He later did to Moses on Sinai. The Hebrew hiph'il here is definitely causative; God raised up Pharaoh to cause him to know His power, and to declare the Yahweh Name which is all about saving people, even those like Pharaoh. But Pharaoh refused. Just as men are called and set up to know God, but refuse. "To show *in* you My power" could mean that Pharaoh in his heart was

to know God's power. Yahweh wanted to reveal Himself to Pharaoh in that same way. It was God's vision that Pharaoh repent and made a declaration of God's Name throughout the world. The great commission is alluding to this. That is God's intention and we have Him totally behind us when we try to fulfil it. Rom. 9:16-18 appears to interpret these words as a parade example of God's mercy to Pharaoh: "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. For [in demonstration of *mercy*] the scripture says of Pharaoh: For this very purpose did I raise you up, that I might show in you My power, and that My Name might be published abroad in all the earth. So then He has mercy on whom He wishes to, and hardens who He wishes".

Exo 9:17 as you still exalt yourself against My people, that you won't let them go-

Pharaoh was exalting himself against God, but attitudes to God's people are taken as attitudes to Him. It's why we can't claim to love God if we don't love His people. "Won't let them go" is the language used of Babylon's reason for destruction: "The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together: and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go" (Jer. 50:33). Similarly Babylon is described as not opening "the house of the prisoners" (Is. 14:17). Biblical history continually interconnects, demonstrating that the same Divine hand has worked throughout history, and likewise works in our lives according to the same style. See on Ex. 1:7; 15:21.

Exo 9:18 Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as has not been in Egypt since the day it was founded even until now-

The specification of the time was surely in order to give Pharaoh and his courtiers a chance to repent. **The word hail occurs 14 times in the record here. And the Hebrew word for hail has a numerical value of 14. Surely the beauty is in the detail.**

Exo 9:19 Now therefore command that all of your livestock and all that you have in the field be brought into shelter. Every man and animal that is found in the field, and isn't brought home, the hail shall come down on them, and they shall die'-

There is increasing opportunity given for response to God's word of judgment. They had time to repent (:18), and now the opportunity to show their faith in Yahweh's word.

Exo 9:20 Those who feared the word of Yahweh among the servants of Pharaoh made their servants and their livestock flee into the houses-

Fearing the word of Yahweh is associated with entering covenant with Him (Dt. 4:10; 17:19; 28:58). The hint may be that these people then showed their commitment to the covenant by leaving Egypt with Israel.

Exo 9:21 Whoever didn't respect the word of Yahweh left his servants and his livestock in the field-

Zech. 6:12 says that later God's people hardened their hearts and didn't respect Yahweh's word (s.w.). Their apostasy is so often described in the language of Egypt. For that was where their hearts were. God's apos-

tate people act as Egypt / the world and are judged as the world / Egypt..

Exo 9:22 Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man, and on animal, and on every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt-

The exceeding great plague of hail was one of the plagues which lead to Israel's Passover deliverance (Ex. 9:22), and yet this is the language of the last days (Rev. 16:21)- as if there will again be a Passover deliverance for God's people, heralded by the pouring out of plagues upon those who persecute them. The plagues of Revelation upon the land of Israel are based upon those upon Egypt. See on :21.

Exo 9:23 Moses stretched out his rod toward the heavens, and Yahweh sent thunder, hail, and lightning flashed down to the earth. Yahweh rained hail on the land of Egypt-

The same word for "stretched out" is used of how Yahweh would stretch forth His hand upon His land of Israel (Ez. 14:13). As noted on :21,22, the language of Egypt's judgment is used about that of an apostate Israel, because they acted as Egypt and returned there in their hearts. This is why the rejected of the new Israel will simply be sent back into the world which they loved, and be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32).

Exo 9:24 So there was very severe hail, and lightning mixed with the hail, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation-

This is the language of the cherubim in Ez. 1:4, where the same words are used for the "great cloud, with a fire taking hold of itself". The visible sight of this would have been terrifying, and yet it was to be seen as a manifestation of the cherubim to save Israel and deliver them from captivity- which is the very context of the vision of Ez. 1:4 which uses identical language.

Exo 9:25 The hail struck throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and animal; and the hail struck every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field-

The breaking of trees is a phrase which appears to refer to the breaking of twigs and branches, meaning there would be no fruit on them.

Exo 9:26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail-

The 'setting apart' of Israel from Egypt is a major theme (Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 11:7 "put a difference"). It was part of a 'sanctifying' of Israel for priestly service to Yahweh as a nation, as well as a lesson for Egypt that the only way to salvation was through separation from their own people and culture, and joining the people of God. We marvel at the multi functional way in which God works. The same word is used to describe how God "has set apart him that is Godly for Himself" (Ps. 4:3); even though Israel were far from being Godly. And it is used of God's special grace, 'set apart', a grace known by no other people (Ps. 17:7). The word is used in this sense in Ex. 33:16, where Moses reasons that it is God's grace and the visible presence of that grace which is what sets apart

Israel from all other peoples. And that is true to this day. God's grace is what is the lead and distinguishing characteristic of His way from all other religions. It is the experience of that grace which makes us distinct from all others who have not claimed it for themselves. And it all began with God 'setting apart' a sinful, idolatrous Israel from the Egyptians around them, all by grace, seeing they were largely no better than Egypt.

Exo 9:27 Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, I have sinned this time. Yahweh is righteous, and I and my people are wicked-

Confession of sin requires the appreciation that not only have we sinned, but that "Yahweh is righteous". Pharaoh really seems to 'get there' with these words. But he slipped back into the hardness of heart and spiritual insensitivity which was to be his condemnation. **The movement of progressive hardness of heart occurred along with a progressive sense of sin and desire to repent. But the hardness was stronger, in Pharaoh's case.**

Exo 9:28 Pray to Yahweh; for there has been enough of mighty thunderings and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer-

Although Pharaoh has come to a very fine expression of repentance (:27), he still asks Moses to pray for him to Yahweh- rather than praying himself. This desire to have someone else as an interface between us and God is a major abiding theme. Israel themselves wanted Moses as an intercessor, rather than to forge an independent relationship with God. **The Egyptians had con-**

flict with other nations around them; and along with other such situations in the ancient near East, the people being attacked were threatened with curses if they did not surrender. Evidence of this has been discovered not only regarding Egypt, but also the Hittites and Assyrians. Some lists of such Egyptian curses upon their enemies and opponents are exactly the ten plagues threatened and brought upon Egypt. Pharaoh was being called upon to surrender. And at this point, he apparently does. But his surrender was not total, and this is the huge lesson- total surrender, as the Lord taught in His parable of the man faced by a larger army coming towards him.

Exo 9:29 Moses said to him, As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands to Yahweh. The thunders shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that you may know that the earth is Yahweh's-

Let's not read these records as implying that Moses simply uttered a few words to God, waved a wand- and then each of the plagues was lifted. There was an element of real fervency in Moses' prayers- which may well be lacking in ours. This is surely an example of genuinely praying for our enemies (perhaps it is the Old Testament source of Christ's words in Mt.5:44?). The intention as ever was to that Pharaoh might realize that the earth / land, specifically of Egypt, was Yahweh's- not Pharaoh's, and not the territory of the gods he worshipped.

Moses only prayed when he was outside the city. Perhaps the idea was for the Egyptians to see him

walking through the deadly hail without being hurt.
Just as they could if they identified with Israel's God.

Exo 9:30 But as for you and your servants, I know that you don't yet fear Yahweh God-

Despite his fine expression of repentance, Moses knew that this was surface level. There is apparent repentance, and real repentance. **We too are tempted by mere surface level repentance, partial surrender, hiding behind forms of words like "we're all sinners".** But he lived in hope of Pharaoh's repentance- "you don't *yet* fear Yahweh". Here for all time we are set an example of hopefulness in witness. If Yahweh and Moses could hope for Pharaoh's conversion, so can we towards all those we witness to.

Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. "Fear the Lord your God" of Ex. 9:30; Lev. 19:14,32; 25:17 becomes "love the Lord your God" in Deuteronomy (Dt. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the

word *ekklesia* eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses; maturity at the end of his life, at the time of Deuteronomy. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

The statement that Pharaoh didn't fear Yahweh (Ex. 9:30) is alluded to in Ex. 20:20: "God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, that you won't sin". Israel were warned to fear Yahweh all the time and not just at a few points in life [as Pharaoh] and not to be hardened in sin; hence their judgments were expressed in terms allusive to the plagues upon Egypt. The point is that Pharaoh stands as the classicized warning to all God's people for all time. The implication here is that true fear of God is what happens after the immediate situation or crisis of need has passed. True spirituality is shown in who we are outside times of urgent need for God.

Exo 9:31 The flax and the barley were struck, for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was in bloom-

Flax was used to make the linen which was so widely used in Egyptian religious practices, and barley was used to make beer and alcoholic drinks used in those practices. So again this was a judgment upon Egypt's gods.

Exo 9:32 But the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they had not grown up-

These were apparently the crops grown in Goshen, where the Israelites were. See on :26. Egypt were being

led to realize that salvation was through identifying with Yahweh's people. And the fact a mixed multitude left Egypt with Israel is evidence that some did respond to this.

Exo 9:33 Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands to Yahweh; and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured on the earth-

Again we see the intensity of prayer required for the plagues to be removed. It was far from automatic.

Exo 9:34 When Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants-

This is a case of "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness" (Is. 26:10). People like this "despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads them to repentance". And so they "treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:4,5). Paul surely wrote this in conscious allusion to Pharaoh, as a representative of all who will ultimately fail of God's grace. **The Lord understood a hardened heart as a mindset which refuses to understand: "Do you not yet see or understand? Have you still hardened your heart?" (Mk. 8:17). This is clearly an allusion to Pharaoh ["not yet see..."], and again we see Pharaoh being used as a warning to all of us.**

Hebrew tends to reason through placing 'blocks' of ideas are put in opposition to each other, or 'dialectic', in order to come to conclusions. That's why we can read

of God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart (Ex. 7:3; 8:15). To Greek, step-logic thinkers, that's a worrying contradiction- only because they don't pick up the way that Hebrew reasoning involves these kinds of statements being put in opposition to each other, so that through the dialectic process we come to understand what is meant.

Exo 9:35 The heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he didn't let the children of Israel go, just as Yahweh had spoken through Moses-

The phrase "let go" is often used of how God let Israel go from Egypt, overruling how the wicked Pharaoh refused to let the people go. The term is used later in the Mosaic legislation; the way Israel had been "let go" from Egypt was to determine how they "let go" others from slavery (Dt. 15:12,13,18); their own experience of redemption was to influence how they released others. Just as ours should. The letting go of the scapegoat into the wilderness was likewise to remind them of how they had been let go from Egypt into the wilderness without being slain for their sins- all by grace (Lev. 14:7,53; 16:10,21,22,26).

EXODUS CHAPTER 10

Exo 10:1 Yahweh said to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I may show these My signs in their midst-

To be caught up in the downward spiral [as we all are at times] doesn't mean that there's no way out. The hearts of Pharaoh's servants were hardened (Ex. 10:1 cp. Ex. 9:34), and yet they did in fact soften when they beg Pharaoh to let Israel go (Ex. 10:7; 11:8). Yet each refusal of Pharaoh to soften his heart made it harder for him to soften it the next time the opportunity was presented. And so it is with us. Conditional language is always used about Pharaoh-if he were to refuse to release Israel, more plagues would happen (Ex. 8:2; 9:2; 10:4 cp. 8:21; 4:23 RSV). In fact God wanted Pharaoh to come to realize that there is none like Yahweh in all the earth- and that was actually why He did not immediately kill Pharaoh, but rather appealed to him through the plagues. That's how I read the enigmatic Ex. 9:24: "For now I should have put forth my hand, and smitten thee... and thou hadst been cut off from the earth". Fretheim paraphrases this: "If I had not had the intention of your knowing that there is none like me in all the earth... then I should have put forth my hand and cut you off from the earth. This is what you have deserved". The hardening of Pharaoh's heart didn't mean that he was thereby bound to chose wrongly each time. Indeed, the plagues themselves were

designed to warn Pharaoh and thereby appeal to him to change, in order to avoid worse plagues.

The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart occur in a positive context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought- for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too.

Exo 10:2 and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your son's son, what things I have done to Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them; that you may know that I am Yahweh-

Repeatedly God has held out hope that Pharaoh would "know that I am Yahweh". But he had refused this, and it was God's hope now that His own people would perceive the truths He had tried to teach Pharaoh, and come to the required repentance and humility. For to know Yahweh, in the Hebraic sense, is not so much to know facts about Him; but to be in relationship with Him.

Exo 10:3 Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and said to him, This is what Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, says: 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me-

"Humble yourself" is the word used for how the Egyptians had afflicted or humbled the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). The only way Pharaoh could undo that was by afflicting / humbling himself before God. What was [and is] required was not the desperate repentance of a moment, in the face of urgent personal need, but humility as a permanent characteristic.

"Serve Me" could refer specifically to the initial request to keep a feast to Yahweh. But the call was for Israel to be allowed to change masters, from Pharaoh to Yahweh. They changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

Exo 10:4 Or else, if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country-

Ex. 8:2; 9:2; 10:4 emphasize the real choice before Pharaoh; he was refusing to let Israel go and "held" them. Babylon was warned that no nation could "hold them fast [and] refuse to let [Israel] go [because] their redeemer is strong" (Jer. 50:33,34). The Hebrew for "strong" is that translated "hold". God had a stronger grip and claim on them than did Pharaoh. They were

Yahweh's, not Pharaoh's. And it could be argued that Babylon-Persia did listen to this message, and allowed and encouraged the exiles to return. We too are to learn from all this historical precedent; that our hand is not stronger than God's.

The defining of a specific time, "tomorrow", was again in order to give Pharaoh the opportunity for repentance.

Exo 10:5 and they shall cover the surface of the earth, so that one won't be able to see the earth. They shall eat the residue of that which has escaped, which remains to you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which grows for you out of the field-

The 'covering' of Egypt with frogs in Ex. 8:6 and locusts in Ex. 10:5,15 looked ahead to the 'covering' of the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:28; 15:5,10). It was an appeal for repentance, in the hope that the final smiting would not be necessary. It was God's intention and hope to save the Egyptians, but they would not.

Exo 10:6 Your houses shall be filled, and the houses of all your servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; as neither your fathers nor your fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were on the earth to this day'-

The language of the locust plague here is alluded to throughout Joel, where the invaders of Israel are likened to an unprecedented locust invasion. Thus the filling of houses with locusts is repeated in Joel 2:9. The idea was that an apostate Israel were to be treated as the Egyptians. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their

hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues. The Egyptians were likewise tempted to understand the locusts as symbolizing an invading army- of Israelites. They would destroy Egypt- unless they let them go. See on :26.

He turned himself about, and went out from Pharaoh-

Being easily provoked was one of Moses' characteristics; consider how he turned himself and stormed out from Pharaoh (Ex. 10:6; 11:8); how his anger waxed hot when he returned from the mount, how he went out from Pharaoh in great anger, how he first of all feared the wrath of Pharaoh and then stopped fearing it; how Moses was "very wroth" at Israel's suggestion that he was appropriating the sacrifices for himself; how he was "angry" with Eleazer (Ex. 32:19; 11:8; Num. 16:15; Lev. 10:16,17). This temperament explains his swings of faith. Was the Lord Jesus likewise afflicted? And yet Moses went on to become the most humble of all men. It came to full term when Moses' faith slipped for a moment; because his spirit was provoked by Israel, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips and was therefore barred from entering the land (although maybe such an apparently temporary slip was the reflection of deeper problems?). Yet it does seem uncharacteristic, a tragic slip down the graph of ever rising spirituality. There must have almost been tears in Heaven.

Moses turned and left Pharaoh without asking for permission to leave. He didnt retreat from the King's

presence by stepping backwards facing the king, but turned his back on him and walked out. He was showing total disrespect to Pharaoh as monarch. He was indeed acting as God to Pharaoh.

Exo 10:7 Pharaoh's servants said to him, How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve Yahweh, their God. Don't you yet know that Egypt is destroyed?-

The magicians had earlier admitted "This is the finger of God" (Ex. 8:19); but the courtiers had "hardened their hearts" like Pharaoh (Ex. 9:34). But now they are realizing the power of Yahweh. They were the landowner class. But they had now lost their cattle and crops, and the land was ruined.

"Not yet" suggests they sensed God had an intended point of realisation for Pharaoh and he needed to hurry up and get there. Likewise in :3 "How long will you refuse..".

Exo 10:8 Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh, and he said to them, Go, serve Yahweh your God; but who are those who will go?-

Pharaoh surely originally intended to tell them to leave immediately; but his lack of total capitulation to Yahweh meant that at the last minute, he still brings in a proviso- 'Who will go?'. We have in him an example of what happens when we offer God anything less than total capitulation. Sinless perfection is not what's required- but total capitulation to Him is.

Exo 10:9 Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old; with our sons and with our daughters, with

our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast to Yahweh-

This was an argument back against the idea that religion was just a male preserve. Yahweh's covenant was with all His people, including women and children. It was no mere hobby or external religious ritual.

Exo 10:10 He said to them, Yahweh be with you if I will let you go with your little ones! See, evil is clearly before your faces-

The greatest Egyptian god was the sun-god Ra, and the Pharaoh was seen as his manifestation on earth. It may be that Pharaoh alludes to this when he threatens Moses: "Look, for there is evil [*ra'a*] before you" (Ex. 10:10). And Yahweh's response was to darken the sun and create a darkness which could be felt (Ex. 10:21). The AV brings out the strong but indirect threat: "Look to it". We wonder why Pharaoh didn't just slay Moses and Aaron out of hand. For he was so angry with them. But this is the closest he gets to threatening them personally. I suggest it was only his conscience and subconscious fear of Yahweh which stopped him from killing them as they stood before him. For that, surely, was the logical way out of all these plagues which these troublesome brothers kept bringing upon him.

Exo 10:11 Not so! Go now you who are men, and serve Yahweh; for that is what you desire! They were driven out from Pharaoh's presence-

Pharaoh clearly saw that he was going to have to allow the entire nation leave. But his rage increases as he

realizes this, and desperately clings on to his petty power.

Exo 10:12 Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up on the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail has left-

The continual destruction of what had remained from the previous plagues was a carefully calculated way of trying to bring the Egyptians progressively towards repentance.

Exo 10:13 Moses stretched out his rod over the land of Egypt, and Yahweh brought an east wind on the land all that day, and all the night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts-

It was the east wind which was to open the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21). The people were being taught that God could control the winds as He wished; and "wind", *ruach*, is the word also used for God's Spirit-Angels. But the east wind was to judge an apostate people of God (Is. 27:8; Jer. 18:17; Ez. 17:10; 19:12; Hos. 13:15). The idea was that an apostate Israel were to be treated as the Egyptians. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues.

Exo 10:14 The locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the borders of Egypt. They were very grievous. Before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such-

Egypt at the time was 520 miles from north to south, and about 20 miles wide apart from at the Nile delta. This was a huge number of locusts. The "locusts" appear to have been a special creation, never seen before nor afterwards.

Time and again the prophets describe the judgments to fall upon Israel in the same terms as they speak of the condemnations of the surrounding nations. The message was clear: rejected Israel would be treated as Gentiles. Thus Joel describes the locust invasion of Israel in the language of locusts covering the face of Egypt (Joel 2:2,20 = Ex. 10:14,15,19). Israel's hardness of heart is explicitly likened to that of Pharaoh (1 Sam. 6:6); as the Egyptians were drowned, so would Israel be (Am. 9:5-8). As Pharaoh's heart was plagued (Ex. 9:14), so was Israel's (1 Kings 8:38); as Egypt was a reed, so were Israel (1 Kings 14:15). As Pharaoh-hophra was given into the hand of his enemies, so would Israel be (Jer. 44:30). She would be "Condemned with the world..."

Exo 10:15 For they covered the surface of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened, and they ate every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. There remained nothing green, either tree or herb of the field, through all the land of Egypt-

The darkening of the land could refer to the locust clouds blotting out the light of the sun. But it's likely a

reference to the way that their brown bodies and wings literally darkened the ground after settling (:5). The destruction described would have been felt particularly by the landowner class who surrounded Pharaoh.

Exo 10:16 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and he said, I have sinned against Yahweh your God, and against you-

His previous summonings of Moses and Aaron in Ex. 8:8,25; 9:2 had lacked this element of haste. We see a man increasingly desperate, being forced to repentance. And his repentance has greater depth to it than before in Ex. 9:27; for he realizes he has sinned also against Moses and Aaron personally. The Lord puts his words in the mouth of the repentant prodigal son. He had the right form of words, and probably the right attitude of heart-at that moment. But the lesson is that repentance is not a passing realization of sin, but a permanent change of attitude and behaviour. And that is a critical lesson for all of us, for all time.

Exo 10:17 Now therefore please forgive my sin again, and pray to Yahweh your God, that He may also take away from me this death-

Pharaoh asked Moses to pardon his sin, rather than asking Yahweh directly. By contrast, David asks God directly to "pardon my sin" (Ps. 25:18; 32:5). Likewise Saul's mere religiosity is reflected by the way in which he asks Samuel to "pardon my sin", when he ought instead to have been asking this of God. For Yahweh is the God who delights to pardon sin (s.w. Ex. 34:7). But whilst Saul uses the correct vocabulary, he misdirects it-

to Samuel and not to God. And he ends up using the very phrase of Pharaoh (Ex. 10:17), also without ultimate sincerity.

Exo 10:18 He went out from Pharaoh, and prayed to Yahweh-

What Moses prayed for isn't recorded. It is left purposefully ambiguous as to whether he simply prayed for the locusts to be removed, or for Pharaoh's forgiveness. There are many such intentional ambiguities in the Biblical narrative- to provoke our imagination and questions, so that we might enter more fully into the narrative.

Exo 10:19 Yahweh turned an exceeding strong west wind, which took up the locusts, and drove them into the Red Sea. There remained not one locust in all the borders of Egypt-

The wind which blew the locusts in and then to blow them away again, until "not a single locust was left" (Ex. 10:19) is just what happened to the Egyptians- the wind blew the waters to and fro, and left not a single Egyptian soldier alive (Ex. 14:21,28). The locust plague was an appeal for their repentance, and an encouragement for them to perceive what Yahweh could do again. The plagues began by affecting everyone, but then focus in on the Egyptians and then zoom closer in upon the personal possessions of Pharaoh. In Pharaoh's case, it would be true to say that God's hardening activities gather momentum, like a swimmer sucked closer and closer towards the waterfall. There has to come a moment when the pull is now too strong, and the plunge is inevitable.

It is that moment which perhaps we need to fear more than anything else in human experience.

"There remained not one" beetle (Ex. 8:31), locust (Ex. 10:19) nor Egyptian who pursued the Israelites (Ex. 14:28). The same phrase is used. Again we see how both Egyptians and Israelites were intended to learn from the plagues, and how this came to full term when "not one" of their enemies was left- thanks to the prayer of Moses.

Exo 10:20 But Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he didn't let the children of Israel go-

Hebrew tends to reason through placing 'blocks' of ideas are put in opposition to each other, or 'dialectic', in order to come to conclusions. That's why we can read of God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart (Ex. 7:3; 8:15). To Greek, step-logic thinkers, that's a worrying contradiction- only because they don't pick up the way that Hebrew reasoning involves these kinds of statements being put in opposition to each other, so that through the dialectic process we come to understand what is meant.

This is a case of "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness" (Is. 26:10). People like this "despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads them to repentance". And so they "treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:4,5). Paul surely wrote this in conscious allusion to Pharaoh, as a representative of all who will ultimately fail of God's grace.

Exo 10:21 Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt-

The rejected will be sent to a mist of darkness (2 Pet. 2:17). Thick darkness is associated with God's judgment (Is. 8:22; Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15)- and recall how the judgment of darkness upon Egypt was so severe that human movement required 'groping' (Ex. 10:21). Perhaps there will be a literal element to this in the experience of the rejected. Be that as it may, the utter *pointlessness* of life without God will be so bitterly apparent. And yet they would not face up to it in their day of opportunity.

The plagues upon Egypt recorded in Ex. 7-10 are frequently alluded to in later Scripture concerning the judgments upon the apostate people of God. The judgment of darkness is a case in point. Quite simply, God's rejected people suffer the judgments of this world. All this has a powerful imperative for us. If we love the world, we will be sent back into it. The Lord will effectively tell the rejected: 'Go back and watch telly. That's what you liked doing. Go back and sail your pleasure boat, take a holiday to Spain, go back to the guys at the bar and have another drink with them... that's what you always liked, compared to the things of My people and My Kingdom'. And the last thing, the very last thing, that the rejected will want is to go back to all that. But they will have to. For in their lives, they made their answer. The pointlessness of the life of the world will then be only too apparent to them. As Adam was made to realize he was made of dust and must tend that dust and

then return to it, living a pointless existence, so the rejected whom he typified will realize all too late the vanity of life in the flesh. Rejected Israel in the wilderness had their years of prolonged existence "consumed with vanity" (Ps. 78:33). The faithless of the new Israel will go through the same. *So let us, while we have opportunity, learn the utter vanity of all else apart from the things of the Lord, His people and His Kingdom.*

The darkness would have been "felt" in that it may have been associated with a sandstorm which blotted out the sun's light.

Exo 10:22 Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days-

Three days was the period associated with death and mourning. We think of the Lord's death for three days. They were being taught that God could bring about intense mourning and death- and they would all feel it, as they felt this darkness (:21). The death of the firstborn was therefore avoidable, and was only God's most desperate attempt, as it were, to bring about their repentance. The plague of darkness was intended to help them realize that He could slay them, and to elicit their repentance before He did.

Exo 10:23 They didn't see one another, neither did anyone rise from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings-

Israel in Egypt had light, but Egypt was in darkness. And yet later, at the time of the Exodus, it was the Angel in the pillar of cloud and fire that gave light to the Is-

raelites and darkness to the Egyptian pursuers. One possible conclusion could be that the guardian Angel of each Israelite was physically with them at the time of the plague of darkness, giving them light and yet darkness to the Egyptians. It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10.

Again we see how the plagues were designed to teach. If Egyptians wanted light, they must go into the house of Israelites. This was to prepare them to go into their houses for salvation from the final plague. And Israelites only had light in their homes. They were taught to see their homes as the place of safety, to prepare them to abide in their homes during the death of the firstborn. It is only when we refuse to accept meaning in event that we fall into the sense that life is random and pointless, and we are held captive by the winds of fortune. And the many associations between death and darkness were to encourage them all to see that escape from death was only through association with God's people within their homes. And we have here the basis for house churches, light and escape from death for the world.

Exo 10:24 Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, Go, serve Yahweh. Only let your flocks and your herds stay behind. Let your little ones also go with you-

Again we see Pharaoh capitulating- and then putting on the brakes, by trying to make some proviso. He agreed now that their women and children could leave- but their animals must stay behind. Most of the animals of the Egyptians had been slain, and so Pharaoh was desperate for animals. But again we see the lesson- that anything less than total capitulation to God is the same as resisting Him.

Exo 10:25 Moses said, You must also give into our hand sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God-

Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 7:22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34,35). And yet God hardened his heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:8). The references to God hardening Pharaoh's heart generally occur after Pharaoh had first hardened his own heart. The fact Pharaoh hardened his heart was a sin (Ex. 9:34), and yet God encouraged him in this. God offered Pharaoh a way of escape after each of the plagues; all he had to do was to agree to let Israel go. But the conditions got tougher the longer he resisted God's demand: he finally had to not only let Israel go, along with their animals, but also provide them with sacrifices (Ex. 10:25). Likewise when Nebuchadnezzar lifted his heart up, God hardened it (Dan. 5:20).

Exo 10:26 Our livestock also shall go with us. Not a hoof shall be left behind, for of it we must take to serve Yahweh our God; and we don't know with what we must serve Yahweh, until we come there-

"Serve" is used in the sense of sacrifice. "Left behind" is the word just used for how not a single locust "remained" in Egypt (:19). I suggested on :6 that the Egyptians saw the locust invasion as representing the swarming multitudes of Hebrews which had come into their land. And Moses goes along with this parallel; he says that just as not a single locust remained, so neither would a single Israelite animal. Just as Egypt wanted the locusts to totally leave their land, so they had to let all Israel leave.

Exo 10:27 But Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he wouldn't let them go-

When Paul insists that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Rom. 9:14-18), he is not only repeating the Biblical record (Ex. 9:12,16; 33:19), but he is alluding to the way that the Jewish *Book of Jubilees* claimed that Mastema [the supposed personal Satan] and not God hardened Pharaoh's heart. He is deconstructing this wrong idea. See on :25.

Exo 10:28 Pharaoh said to him, Get away from me! Be careful to see my face no more; for in the day you see my face you shall die!-

I discussed on :10 how Pharaoh could easily have apparently rid himself of these plagues by slaying Moses and Aaron. The only reason I can see for not doing so was his subconscious awareness that they were of God, and he would suffer terribly if he did so. This is the tragedy of it all- that Pharaoh had a conscience. But he refused to be led to follow it.

Exo 10:29 Moses said, You have spoken well. I will see your face again no more-

The LXX makes this sound as if Pharaoh was as it were being judged out of his own mouth: "And Moses says, Thou hast said, I will not appear in thy presence again". Pharaoh had said that he wouldn't see Moses again, and indeed he wouldn't- for he would soon be slain. That is the implication of Moses' words. And yet according to Ex. 12:31, there was one last brief meeting between them. So the idea may be that Moses would not again appear before God's face again in intercession for Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Pharaoh and Egypt were now beyond Moses' intercession and prayer.

EXODUS CHAPTER 11

Exo 11:1 Yahweh said to Moses, Yet one plague more will I bring on Pharaoh, and on Egypt; afterwards he will let you go. When he lets you go, he will surely thrust you out altogether-

We can read this and :4 as that God "had said"... and Moses said these things to Pharaoh. This would explain the apparent contradiction with Moses having said in Ex. 10 that Pharaoh would not see his face again.

"Altogether" can mean 'all of you'. Previously Pharaoh had argued about whether men, women or children could leave. But they were all to be thrust out. And yet there is evidence that many of them remained or did not keep the Passover. Just as God's efforts to bring men out of the world are resisted by man's love of his miserable world. "When Israel conducted their census of the Levites and the firstborn from the rest of the tribes (Numbers 3:39, 46), the number of firstborn males is recorded as just over twenty thousand. Using the traditional interpretation of 600,000 adult males implies that firstborns made up only 1 out of every 30 men. If that were the case, the average Israelite family would have about 60 children, boys and girls combined". Israel were typically disobedient to God [think of how they tried to gather manna when told not to], so it is unlikely they were all obedient to the Passover regulations. Ex. 13:18 "the

children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt" can be translated "went up as a fifth", as if only a fifth of Israel left Egypt. The rest remained from fear of the unknown, from connection with the Egypt which they hated. In the wilderness, the people often suggest that Israel never actually wanted to leave Egypt anyway and that is why they wanted to return.

The number of firstborn males after Israel left Egypt was remarkably small (around 20,000, Num. 3:43). Women in most primitive societies have an average of 7 births. This would mean that given a total population of around 2,800,000 on leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:37), there should have been around 400,000 firstborn males. But instead, there is only a fraction of this number. Why? Did Israel eat the Passover?

My suggestion- and this is well in the category of things you will never know for sure and can only ponder- is that many Hebrew firstborns died on Passover night. Israel were warned that if they did not properly keep the Passover, "the Destroyer" Angel would kill their firstborn (Ex. 12:23). "The Destroyer" is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:10: "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer" (*olothreutes*; this is a proper noun in the Greek). Who was the Destroyer? If Scripture interprets Scripture, it was the 'Destroyer' Angel of Passover night. In similar vein Heb. 11:28 speaks of "He (the Angel) that destroyed (Gk. *olothreuo*) the firstborn".

Israel were side-tracked from what should have been the central object of their attention: the blood of the lamb. They were disobedient from the day God knew them, i.e. Passover night (Dt. 9:24). *Very* soon afterwards, the people reminded Moses of this incident: “Would to God *we* (maybe this is the emphasis) had (also) died by the hand of the Lord (a phrase often associated with Angel’s work at passover: Josh. 4:24; Is. 11:11; 19:16; Dan. 9:15; Heb. 8:9) in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pot (Young’s Literal) and when we did eat bread” (Ex. 16:3). They weren’t just saying they wished they had died in Egypt; they wished they had died by the hand of the Lord. Sitting by the flesh pot and eating bread is perhaps a reference to eating Passover that night, when in (perhaps) 90% of Hebrew families the firstborn had slumped down in death. They wished they too had died that Passover night. They felt Moses was going to kill them as, by implication, they blamed him for killing the firstborn.

God’s purpose will be achieved. His desire was that Pharaoh should let Israel go. He refused, but in the end, he and his people begged them to leave and hastened them to get out, loading them with their wealth, desperate that they should leave immediately. The lesson is that we will as it were be forced to be obedient to God’s will; but we will not be saved unless we willingly do this.

Exo 11:2 Speak now in the ears of the people, and let them ask every man of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold-

The same phrase "of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass" is used of the vessels taken from the Gentile world and dedicated to the tabernacle (Ex. 11:2; 12:35; Josh. 6:19; 2 Sam. 8:10; 1 Kings 7:51). The generosity of others in Biblical history, their right perspective on the wealth taken from this world, was to inspire other believers in later history. And this is how the body of Christ should function today, with members inspiring others to spirituality. This request for high value material goods was playing on the basic human tendency to think that we can buy salvation. And in times of desperation, that sense is all the stronger. And God played on that aspect of human nature. **But the whole idea was that they gave what they took from Egypt / the world to the work of the tabernacle. And that is the principle for us.**

Egyptians are defined as Israel's neighbours from whom they were to ask gold etc. (Ex. 11:2), so we can assume the neighbours with whom Passover was to be shared included Egyptians (Ex. 12:3). The first passover was open to Egyptians and there were no commands about being clean or ritually pure in order to eat it. It could be argued that taking the lamb on the 10th day of the month and keeping it carefully until the 14th was itself a witness to Egypt, and an invitation to them to join in. Lambs were seen as deities in Egypt; they had to accept that salvation involved the slaying of their gods and a total resignation from their religious system.

Exo 11:3 Yahweh gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians-

Again we see God's power through His Spirit to give attitudes to people, to work directly upon the human heart.

Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people-

Note that God's comment on Moses was: "the man Moses was very great" (Ex. 11:3). Yet it is also written that "the man Moses was very meek" (Num. 12:3). Putting the two passages together we have the clear lesson that he who humbles himself is made great; and in this, Moses was not only a type of Christ but also a pattern for all who would go through the pattern which the Lord Jesus set before us: of humbling ourselves now that we might be made great in due time. Moses our example is really a challenge in this.

Exo 11:4 Moses said, This is what Yahweh says: 'About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt-

It is stressed that Israel were taken out from the "midst of Egypt" (Dt. 4:34; 1 Kings 8:51). The plagues and wonders were done in "the midst of Egypt" (Ex. 3:20; Dt. 11:3). The midst of Egypt appears to be defined in Ps. 135:9; Is. 19:3; Ez. 29:3 as being Pharaoh and his servants. The narrative therefore stresses so much his response to the plagues. God's especial focus had been upon his conversion, and yet he refused. Israel were taken out right from under his nose, from the very heart of Egypt. Ez. 20:8 reveals what is not recorded in the

historical record; that because the Israelites were so devoted to Egyptian idolatry still, His thought had been to destroy them "in the midst of the land of Egypt" (Ez. 20:8 "Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for my name's sake"). **His Name is all about saving by grace. He went out to slay them, but saved them, working for His Name's sake, struggling within Himself, as He said in Hosea "My repentings are kindled together".** God's pole of grace overcame the pole of necessary judgment. He tolerated them and saved them, with enthusiasm, by the grace which comes from love- love taken to its ultimate, saving term. The whole narrative speaks as if the Hebrews were all at one place at one time and left "the midst of Egypt" together. Although unrecorded in the historical narrative, this would have meant that they gathered together "in the midst of Egypt" with Moses, who was not in Goshen but in the locality and presence of Pharaoh.

Exo 11:5 and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of livestock-

"That sits upon his throne" is superfluous or out of place unless it means to tell us that the Pharaohs placed their firstborn upon their thrown as co regents. Which implies what Egyptologists tell us, that the firstborn son became Pharaoh. Which means Pharaoh himself was a firstborn and indeed firstborn of the gods was a title of Pharaoh. His life was preserved by grace. God really wanted to save him. Just as the Lord gave the sop, the favoured piece, to Judas as a desperate attempt to win him by His grace at the last moment. And the Father and Son likewise seek that their goodness and grace lead us to a repentance that is not repented of. The comment that Pharaoh's servants would bow down to Moses after the death of the firstborn could be read as intimating that Pharaoh their Lord was to be slain. We marvel at how this gem about Pharaoh being a firstborn is hidden, to be discovered by those who reflect on a few inspired words. The connection between the firstborn and taking the throne is made clear in 2 Chron. 21:3, which implies Jehoram automatically became king because he was the firstborn: "the kingdom gave he to Jehoram; because he was the firstborn". Likewise Ps. 89:27 implies that to be made firstborn means to be made king: "Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth".

Women grinding at the mill therefore refer to the lowest class in society (Is. 47:2; Jud. 14:21; Lam. 5:13). Yet from amongst them will some be snatched away to meet their Lord at His return, just as those with the

leisure to be lounging in bed will be called away (Lk. 17:34,35). Animals were worshipped in Egypt as representatives of the various gods, especially the firstborn of animals; and we recall therefore that the plagues were judgments against the gods of Egypt. **The firstborn of domestic animals were often worshipped. Just as the firstborn whether of man or woman was the family priest. Again we see the dismantling of Egypt's religion. The vacuum was intended to be filled by a turning to Yahweh.**

How did the firstborn feel? They would have left the house and looked at the blood and remembered the slain lamb they had eaten. It would have felt incredible that just because of faith in that, they were saved. We are the church of firstborns (Heb. 12:23 Gk.), just as all Israel were God's firstborn. Israel is My firstborn, God had told Pharaoh. We have the same feeling at the breaking of bread. What we ate and associated with has saved us. And therefore the firstborns were to be dedicated to Yahweh's service as we are. We are His. And they would have reflected on all the firstborns who did die, and God's grace to them through having obedient family. Perhaps only the great cry of the Egyptians and seeing the carcasses of firstborn animals everywhere would have made them appreciate what had happened.

The Passover deliverance was to be the beginning of months for Israel (Ex. 12:2); time and history, and our sense of where we are in time and history, were to be constantly governed by this experience of great

salvation. Yet people tend to live without this sense of their place in history, never learning from history and never seeing the long term horizon, just living life as it is experienced right in front of their eyes and ears. Hence the Hebrew months are called just the second month, the third month etc. The names of the Hebrew months were picked up only in Babylonian exile. And this is how radically our great salvation should affect our lives. It could be argued that Israel's entire wilderness experience was lived in the shadow of the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They were in an envelope of Divine protection and their sense of day and night was governed by these things, rather than their sight of the sun or moon. Likewise the arrival of the quail and manna gave them their sense of "morning" and of the sixth day, when double manna was given, and the Sabbath when there was no manna. They lived without any way of telling the time as we do. We likewise are to live in a total environment of awareness of God's salvation, that I have been redeemed and am on my path to the Kingdom. And yet even whilst living in this total environment of salvation, Israel rebelled and wanted to return to Egypt.

Exo 11:6 There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been, nor shall be any more-

This "great cry" is described with the same phrase used in Gen. 27:34, when Esau cries with a great cry-realizing that he had been rejected from God's purpose and that could not now be put right. Whilst the great

cry was indeed because of their loss, the connection with Esau is to make the point that despite all God's efforts, they had turned down His invitation to have a part in His purpose- and realized that all too late.

Exo 11:7 But against any of the children of Israel a dog won't even bark or move its tongue, against man or animal; that you may know that Yahweh makes a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel-

The way conditions are not stated within the actual prophecy is similar to how blanket statements are made in Scripture, and yet there are exceptions to them. "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue" (Ex. 11:7) was in fact conditional on Israel remaining indoors. But that condition isn't then stated. Even the old covenant, which was in a sense "eternal", was made with Israel "upon all these conditions" (Ex. 24:8 RVmg.). It was eternal, potentially, because it had conditions. But the conditionality of it isn't always brought to the fore when, e.g., we read of the Sabbath as being an eternal ordinance.

The 'setting apart' of Israel from Egypt is a major theme (Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 11:7 "put a difference"). It was part of a 'sanctifying' of Israel for priestly service to Yahweh as a nation, as well as a lesson for Egypt that the only way to salvation was through separation from their own people and culture, and joining the people of God. We marvel at the multi functional way in which God works. The same word is used to describe how God "has set apart him that is Godly for Himself" (Ps. 4:3); even though Israel were far from being Godly. And it is used

of God's special grace, 'set apart', a grace known by no other people (Ps. 17:7). The word is used in this sense in Ex. 33:16, where Moses reasons that it is God's grace and the visible presence of that grace which is what sets apart Israel from all other peoples. And that is true to this day. God's grace is what is the lead and distinguishing characteristic of His way from all other religions. It is the experience of that grace which makes us distinct from all others who have not claimed it for themselves. And it all began with God 'setting apart' a sinful, idolatrous Israel from the Egyptians around them, all by grace, seeing they were largely no better than Egypt.

This promise was of course conditional- upon obeying the Passover legislation. When the Destroyer angel saw the blood, then it passed over; or, the Passover protective angel hovered over the homes identified with the blood [s.w. Is. 31:5 "As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it"], so that the Destroyer Angel didn't slay anyone there. There is good reason to think that not all Israel kept the Passover. The small number of firstborns recorded in the census after leaving Egypt would rather suggest that. The simple requirement was identification with the blood of the lamb. We do this through taking the wine at the breaking bread, through life lived in identity with Him. And our sins are thereby passed over. Possibly Rom. 3:24,25 alludes to this: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past [passed over]".

Exo 11:8 All these your servants shall come down to me, and bow down themselves to me, saying, Get out, with all the people who follow you; and after that I will go out'-

GNB tries to make better sense here: "Moses concluded by saying, "All your officials will come to me and bow down before me, and they will beg me to take all my people and go away. After that, I will leave." Then in great anger Moses left the king".

Bowing down to Moses rather than Pharaoh suggests that the servants of Pharaoh would now become servants of Moses. They would change master. Just as developed by Paul in Romans 6, that the crossing of the Red Sea was Israel changing masters. From Pharaoh to God. But not "all" Pharaoh's servants did this; probably many of them were themselves first-borns and were slain. Just as not "all" Israel followed Moses out of Egypt and not all Israelite firstborn were saved. The whole record is one of missed possibilities and unrealized potentials, which is really the story of God's gracious project with man.

To be caught up in the downward spiral [as we all are at times] doesn't mean that there's no way out. The hearts of Pharaoh's servants were hardened (Ex. 10:1 cp. Ex. 9:34), and yet they did in fact soften when they beg Pharaoh to let Israel go (Ex. 10:7; 11:8). Yet each refusal of Pharaoh to soften his heart made it harder for him to

soften it the next time the opportunity was presented. Conditional language is always used about Pharaoh-if he were to refuse to release Israel, more plagues would happen (Ex. 8:2; 9:2; 10:4 cp. 8:21; 4:23 RSV). In fact God wanted Pharaoh to come to realize that there is none like Yahweh in all the earth- and that was actually why He did not immediately kill Pharaoh, but rather appealed to him through the plagues. That's how I read the enigmatic Ex. 9:15: "For now I should have put forth my hand, and smitten thee... and thou hadst been cut off from the earth". Fretheim paraphrases this: "If I had not had the intention of your knowing that there is none like me in all the earth... then I should have put forth my hand and cut you off from the earth. This is what you have deserved". The hardening of Pharaoh's heart didn't mean that he was thereby bound to chose wrongly each time. Indeed, the plagues themselves were designed to warn Pharaoh and thereby appeal to him to change, in order to avoid worse plagues.

He went out from Pharaoh in hot anger-

Moses' faith slipped for a moment; because his spirit was provoked by Israel, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips and was therefore barred from entering the land (although maybe such an apparently temporary slip was the reflection of deeper problems?). Yet it does seem uncharacteristic, a tragic slip down the graph of ever rising spirituality. There must have almost been tears in Heaven. Being easily provoked was one of Moses' characteristics; consider how he turned himself and stormed out from Pharaoh (Ex. 10:6; 11:8); how his anger waxed

hot when he returned from the mount, how he went out from Pharaoh in great anger, how he first of all feared the wrath of Pharaoh and then stopped fearing it; how Moses was "very wroth" at Israel's suggestion that he was appropriating the sacrifices for himself; how he was "angry" with Eleazer (Ex. 32:19; 11:8; Num. 16:15; Lev. 10:16,17). This temperament explains his swings of faith. Was the Lord Jesus likewise afflicted? **Yet despite this characteristic, he was the meekest man on earth. This gives an insight into what it is to be humble. It doesn't mean being passive or passionless.**

Exo 11:9 Yahweh said to Moses, Pharaoh won't listen to you, that My wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt-

God is never ultimately defeated by human intransigence and lack of response to Him. Pharaoh's refusal to listen would result in God's wonders being multiplied, and thereby more glory being given to Him. The multiplication of wonders could be a form of saying [as an intensive plural] that there would be a multiplied wonder, a very great wonder, performed- in the events of the Red Sea.

Again it is stressed that God's glory would be achieved through God not hearkening to Pharaoh. Whereas Moses had earlier reasoned that their salvation was only possible if Pharaoh hearkened to him. Which Moses considered impossible due to his speech impediment. He is reminded of this so many times as we need to be; that God works in a counter instinctive way, through our inadequacy, and destroys

and counter points our assumptions that our imagined way is the only way out. And anyone who thinks God treated Pharaoh harshly has just never really thought carefully but rather rushed to a desired conclusion.

Exo 11:10 Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he didn't let the children of Israel go out of his land-

The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart occur in a positive context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought- for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too.

God hardened his heart, meaning He had removed sensitivity from his conscience. His heart was turned by God, because that was the direction he himself wanted (Ps. 105:25). Pharaoh's response gets increasingly better, confessing sinfulness, asking for prayer, etc. And yet we have to read this as his conscience being increasingly touched, and yet he refused to act upon it. The movement of conscience within him was overcome by the movement of hardness; and as hardness was his dominant desire, it was that which Yahweh confirmed.

The phrase "let go" is often used of how God let Israel go from Egypt, overruling how the wicked Pharaoh refused to let the people go. The term is used later in the Mosaic legislation; the way Israel had been "let go" from Egypt was to determine how they "let go" others from slavery (Dt. 15:12,13,18); their own experience of redemption was to influence how they released others. Just as ours should. The letting go of the scapegoat into the wilderness was likewise to remind them of how they had been let go from Egypt into the wilderness without being slain for their sins—all by grace (Lev. 14:7,53; 16:10,21,22,26).

EXODUS CHAPTER 12

Exo 12:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying-

The idea is that He had spoken to them in Egypt, before they left. For what we read now is partly retelling what had been told them before.

Exo 12:2 This month shall be to you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you-

Seeing they had been 430 years in Egypt, they would previously have followed the Egyptian beginning of the year- which commenced with the overflowing of the Nile at the summer solstice. But Israel were to begin their year by celebrating the overflowing of the Red Sea which destroyed the Egyptians. **The Passover deliverance was to be the beginning of months (Ex. 12:2) for Israel; time and history, and our sense of where we are in time and history, were to be constantly governed by this experience of great salvation. Hence the Hebrew months are called just the second month, the third month etc. The names of the Hebrew months were picked up only in Babylonian exile. And this is how radically our great salvation should affect our lives. It could be argued that Israel's entire wilderness experience was lived in the shadow of the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They were in an envelope of Divine protection and their sense of day and night was governed by these things, rather than their sight of the sun or moon. Likewise the arrival of the**

quail and manna gave them their sense of "morning" and of the sixth day, when double manna was given, and the Sabbath when there was no manna. They lived without any way of telling the time as we do. We likewise are to live in a total environment of awareness of God's salvation, that I have been redeemed and am on my path to the Kingdom. And yet even whilst living in this total environment of salvation, Israel rebelled and wanted to return to Egypt.

Exo 12:3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth day of this month, they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household-

"Every man a lamb" is purposefully ambiguous. The idea is that the heads of households should do this, but it is phrased in such a way as to imply that every Israelite was to do this. They were to each see in the lamb the source of their personal redemption. The Passover, like the breaking of bread service which it anticipated, has both a collective and a personal aspect. We note God's method of salvation by households, with those without families apparently taken in to existing household units (Ps. 68:6). And we wonder whether there is not an element of that within His present economy of working, through the lamb which represents the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:7).

Exo 12:4 and if the household is too little for a lamb, then he and his neighbour next to his house shall take one according to the number of the souls; according to what everyone can eat you shall make your count for the lamb-

The implication was that the slain lamb was to be totally consumed, and therefore there needed to be enough people present to ensure this would happen.

The Mosaic command to give, every man according to the blessing with which God had blessed him (Dt. 16:17), is purposely similar in phrasing to the command to eat of the Passover lamb, every man according to his need; and to partake of the manna (cp. the Lord Jesus), every man according to his need (Ex. 12:4; 16:6,16). According to the desperation of our need, so we partake of Christ; and in response, according to our blessing, we give, in response to the grace of His giving.

Egyptians are defined as Israel's neighbours from whom they were to ask gold etc. (Ex. 11:2), so we can assume the neighbours with whom Passover was to be shared included Egyptians (Ex. 12:3). The first passover was open to Egyptians and there were no commands about being clean or ritually pure in order to eat it. It could be argued that taking the lamb on the 10th day of the month and keeping it carefully until the 14th was itself a witness to Egypt, and an invitation to them to join in. Lambs were seen as deities in Egypt; they had to accept that salvation involved the slaying of their gods and a total resignation from their religious system.

Exo 12:5 Your lamb shall be without blemish-

This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:7). The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect")

before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

A male a year old-

Male not only because it looked forward to the Lord Jesus, but also because it represented the firstborn males who were to be saved from death by the death of the lamb. We note therefore that the lamb died as a representative of those redeemed, rather than a substitute for them.

You shall take it out from the sheep-

"Take it out" implies that it was not to be kept aside specially, but was to be one of the flock. This eloquently points forward to the Lord Jesus as taken out of the flock of humanity. He was of our nature, and not God Himself.

Or from the goats-

We get the impression that God was very strict about the offerings. He was. But He made concession to the man who couldn't bring what he ought to: "If he be

poor, and cannot get much... two young pigeons, such as he is able to get" (Lev. 14:22). If they were blemished in some way, and even though they were not the animal God desired, God would accept such as the man was able to get. Likewise the offerings had to involve the shedding of blood; but God was prepared to accept a food offering if a man really couldn't get an animal. The eagerness of God to accept what a man can do rather than the insistence on legal principles really comes over. He recognized the Israelites would be living on different levels. Such an eagerness involved accepting a lower standard of adherence to God's ideal principles. In harmony with this, the Passover 'lamb' (:3) could be either a sheep, or if necessary, a goat (Ex. 12:5), even though the use of a goat would somewhat spoil the foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Exo 12:6 and you shall keep it-

LXX "it shall be kept by you". The idea may be that the lamb was to be kept in their homes from the 10th to the 14th day. The family would become fond of the lamb, it was even more one of them that was to be sacrificed for the salvation of the family. And this again speaks of the Lord's absolute sharing of human nature, as our representative, truly 'one of us'.

Until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at evening-

Why was the lamb or kid kept for four days (Ex. 12:2,6)? If the effects of circumcision take three days to wear off (Gen. 34:25), it could be that the uncir-

cumcised males were intended to circumcise themselves, chose the lamb, and then keep the Passover four days later. Some Jewish commentators claim that God fell in love with Israel whilst she was still in her blood (Ez. 16:6) in that some Jews circumcised themselves at the time of the first Passover- hence one Rabbi speaks of the blood of circumcision and the blood of the first Passover running together. See on Ex. 12:48.

The people of Israel as a body were going through the death and resurrection experience of the Lord Jesus, through the process of the Passover and Exodus through the Red Sea. Israel ate Passover (Ex. 12:6) [14th Abib], as the Lord died on the cross as the Passover lambs were slain; Israel left Egypt the next day (Num. 33:3) [15th Abib] and journeyed three days (Ex. 8:27) [15th-17th Abib], and the Lord Jesus was three days in the tomb. Israel then came through the Red Sea [17th Abib], connecting with the Lord's being resurrected. As we come out of the baptismal water, we really are united with the resurrected Lord- a new creation. His newness of life, His deliverance and successful exodus from the world- all this becomes ours.

Exo 12:7 They shall take some of the blood, and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel, on the houses in which they shall eat it-

Time and again we find that the local pagan myths about Satan are alluded to and deconstructed by Moses. It has been observed that the Passover ritual of smearing the blood of the sacrifice on the doorposts was very similar to what Bedouin tribes have been doing in the Mid-

dle East for millennia- they smear the blood on their tent poles and tent entrances when they erect a new home or tent, in order to keep 'satan' figures away (Roland De Vaux, *Studies In Old Testament Sacrifice* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961) p. 7). But the Exodus record is at pains to point out that the 'Destroyer' was one of Yahweh's Angels; and thus it was ultimately Yahweh Himself who slew the firstborn in those homes without the daubed blood. Again- yet again- we see a pagan idea concerning 'satan' being taken up and reinterpreted in light of the fact that the 'satan' figures don't really exist, and God is the ultimate and unrivalled source of disaster. See on Ex. 21:6.

We note that the blood was not to be placed on the threshold, lest it be trodden under foot in disrespect (Heb. 10:29). It clearly looked forward to the blood of the Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 1:2). This seems one of many things in the Passover commandments which was relevant only for that first Passover, and was not an abiding part of the later Passover ritual; for the lambs were slain at the sanctuary and the blood put on the altar, not on the individual homes of the Israelites. Thus the command not to allow Gentiles to participate was only for the first Passover, whereas in the later Passover legislation they were allowed to. See on :9,11.

Grandparents would have nervously eyed their firstborn, who would likewise have watched or cuddled their firstborn, summoning all their faith to believe in the power of that blood which they had publicly associated themselves with. Such should be the pattern of our eccle-

sial life on the eve of the Lord's coming, which was prefigured by Passover night.

Exo 12:8 They shall eat the flesh in that night, roasted with fire, and unleavened bread. They shall eat it with bitter herbs-

The Passover, as the prototype breaking of bread, featured bitter herbs to remind Israel of their bitter experience in Egypt (Ex. 1:14). The breaking of bread should likewise focus our attention on the fact that return to the world is a return to bondage and bitterness, not freedom. Israel didn't learn this lesson, they forgot the bitterness of Egypt, and longed to return to it. The idea was that the sweetness of the lamb's roasted meat was to assuage the bitterness of the herbs; and we see here prefigured the intended effect of the Lord's sacrifice.

Exo 12:9 Don't eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted with fire; with its head, its legs and its inner parts-

Israel were told specifically that the Passover lamb must be roasted and not boiled (Ex. 12:9 uses two distinct words for 'boiled' and 'roasted'). But the word used in Ex. 12:9 for "boiled" is that used in Dt. 16:7 of how the Passover could be boiled, although many Bible versions misleadingly translate the word there as "roast". The translators need not have feared such contradiction. For it is the contradiction of grace. Moses in Dt. 16:2,7 was allowing a less strict observation of the Passover than originally intended, typical of the way Deuteronomy, 'the second law', seems to make concessions to Israel's weaknesses. Or it could be that here we have another ex-

ample of where the Passover regulations given in Exodus were specific only to that time at the exodus. Thus a foreigner was not allowed to eat of that sacrifice, but foreigners were welcome to eat of the Passover later. See on :7,11.

The prohibition against boiling may have been because of the desire that no bone of the lamb be broken. It was to be roasted on a spit, whereas a lamb would never have fitted into a pot as required for boiling. It would have had to be cut up into parts.

Exo 12:10 You shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; but that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire-

There is the possibility of living before God on different levels. Hence nothing was to remain, but God foresaw that some would allow part of the sacrifice to remain. This was a concession to human weakness, and reflects God's awareness of human liability to failure.

Exo 12:11 This is how you shall eat it: with your belt on your waist, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: it is Yahweh's Passover-

Here we have another example of where the Passover regulations given in Exodus were specific only to that time at the exodus. Thus a foreigner was not allowed to eat of that sacrifice, but foreigners were welcome to eat of the Passover later. See on :7,9.

This captures the spirit of expectancy and readiness to leave at any moment- which we should have, as we, too, await the coming of the angel.

Exo 12:12 For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and animal-

"The angel of death" is an idea picked up by Moses in his account of the Passover deliverance, to show that the Angel of death is not in fact Mot but an Angel of Yahweh, completely under His control. For it was none less than Yahweh Himself who slew the firstborn of Egypt (Ex. 12:11,12). Likewise it was Yahweh's Angel who played the role of the 'Angel of death' in smiting the Assyrian army dead (Is. 37:36).

Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments-

The plagues specifically targetted Egyptian gods: Nile water turned to blood = HAPI – the god of the spirit of the Nile; Frogs = HEKOT – the goddess of magic who had a frog's head; "The dust of the land" turned to lice or gnats (Ex. 8:16) = SEB – god of the dust of the earth; "Swarms of beetles" (Ex. 8:21 Hebrew) = RA and the forerunner of BEELZEBUB were likened to beetles; much pagan Egyptian jewellery features beetles; Murrain of cattle = APIS – the sacred bull god; Boils (Ex. 9:8-9) = NEIT – the queen of the heavens; Thunder and hail = SHU – god of the atmosphere; Darkness = RA – the sun god; Locusts = SERAIJA – protector of Egypt from locusts.

The "gods" are spoken of for a moment as real and existing, in order to show Yahweh's total superiority over them to the point that they didn't exist. Note how it was the Egyptian people who were judged (Gen. 15:14); their idols ("gods") are used by metonymy to stand for

those who believed in them. Likewise “demons” is sometimes put by metonymy for those who believed in them (e.g. Mk. 2:32,34). The judgment upon Egypt’s gods is brought out by an otherwise obscure reference in Ex. 7:19 to how “there shall be blood in all the land of Egypt on wood and in stone”. “Wood and stone” is a term usually used in the Bible for idols; and “the Egyptian priests used to wash the images of their gods in water every day early in the morning”. Thus the gods were shown to be effectively dead and bleeding.

I am Yahweh-

Whenever God speaks about His Name, it is in the context of His emphasizing His huge commitment to Israel as His people, often in the face of their weakness (Ex. 12:12; 15:26; 20:2; Ez. 20:5,6). The very meaning of God’s Name is of itself encouraging- although it is somewhat masked in English translations. God ‘is’ not just in the sense that He exists, but in that He ‘is’ there with and for us. The verb behind ‘YHWH’ was “originally causative”, i.e. God not only ‘is’ but He causes things to happen. We aren’t to understand Him as passive, just a stone cold Name... but rather passionately active and causative in our sometimes apparently static and repetitive lives.

Exo 12:13 The blood shall be to you for a token on the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be on you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt-

“Pass over” is literally ‘hover over’. The angel of death, “the destroyer”, went out to slay all the firstborn. But the

Passover Angel hovered over the doors of the Israelites who had daubed blood on their door posts, and stopped the Destroyer from slaying in that house. We see here an example of Angelic cooperation. The slaying of the Egyptians apparently happened in a moment, so this is representing things from a human point of view. We are invited to imagine the Destroyer going from house to house, and the Passover Angel hovering over Israelite houses. But the whole thing happened in a moment of time as we understand time. The meaning of time was collapsed, just as will happen at the time of the Lord's second coming- which Passover night typified. This collapsing of time would involve the collapsing of space as well, if Einstein indeed got it right about the space-time relationship. This helps us to better cope with the apparent logistic problems which arise when considering the nature of the judgment seat, with millions of people having a personal interview with the Lord Jesus at one place on earth.

"Token" is the word used for the "mark" set upon Cain which preserved him from being slain (Gen. 4:15). The similarity is intended; Israel were being presented as sinful Cain, but they as sinners were being saved by grace.

Exo 12:14 This day shall be to you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a feast to Yahweh: throughout your generations you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever-

The feasts of Yahweh have now been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. "*Olahm*", "forever", literally means 'to the vanishing point', the point where time can no longer be per-

ceived. Of itself it doesn't mean 'infinity'. Indeed it could be argued that there is no Biblical Hebrew word for literal eternity. And this is why "forever" doesn't have to mean literal eternity, but a period, the end of which isn't in view at the time.

Exo 12:15 'Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; even the first day you shall put away yeast out of your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel-

The leaven or yeast in our context is to be understood as the leaven of malice and wickedness (1 Cor. 5:8). The search for leaven at the time of the Passover would therefore look ahead to our self examination at the breaking of bread.

Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and

the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

Exo 12:16 In the first day there shall be to you a holy convocation, and in the seventh day a holy convocation-

This is the first time we read of "convocations". "Convocation" is LXX *ekklesia*. This is the word rendered "church" in the New Testament. We could reason from this therefore that "church" specifically refers to a gathering of God's people. At that time and during those moments, they are a church. When the entire community of believers is referred to as "church", this is how God views them- as if they are all gathered together at a gathering or

convocation before Him. The word in its Biblical usage therefore doesn't refer to what we might call a denomination or fellowship.

No kind of work shall be done in them, except that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you-

In the lead up to the feast (cp. our Lord's return), "no manner of work shall be done, save that which ever man must (do to) eat", or "that which every man must necessarily do" (LXX; Ex. 12:16). Thus in our lives now, having food and clothing we should be content, not working any more than necessary, so that "the loins of our mind" will be girded, looking forward to the Passover feast.

Exo 12:17 You shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this same day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations by an ordinance forever-

They were to see their own redemption in the historical redemption of Israel. And indeed, David and later believers continually alluded to the Red Sea deliverance, as if it had happened to them personally. And we can likewise. Our membership of the body of believers gives us connection with all other believers, not just those alive today, but also historically.

Exo 12:18 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty first day of the month at evening-

These seven days were to recall the seven days of creation; for the exodus was a new creation of Israel, out of the water of the Red Sea.

Exo 12:19 There shall be no yeast found in your houses for seven days, for whoever eats that which is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a foreigner, or one who is born in the land-

The run-up to Passover was to feature a business-like searching of the house for leaven, reflecting the close self-examination which we should undertake individually and ecclesially ("your houses") in this prelude to the Passover-coming of our Lord. See on :21,42. The picture of Israel in their family units huddled together around the Lamb, desperately focusing their attention on that saving blood, watching and praying, examining themselves- this is us, right now. For there can be no serious doubt that the second coming is almost upon our generation. The run up to the final tribulation will provoke a "praying always, that ye may be accounted worthy... to stand before the Son of man" (Lk. 21:36).

"Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven...of malice and wickedness" (1 Cor. 5:8). The disciples' question at the first breaking of bread, "Lord, is it I?" is another prototype of the command to examine ourselves at the feast (Mt. 26:22). Combining Paul's command to examine ourselves that we are really focusing upon our Lord's sacrifice, and the Exodus allusion which implies that we should examine our own lives for wickedness, we conclude that if we properly reflect upon Christ and His victory for us, then we will inevitably be aware of our own specific failures which Christ really has vanquished. But this will come as a by-product of truly grasping the fullness of the Lord's victory.

Exo 12:20 You shall eat nothing leavened. In all your habitations you shall eat unleavened bread'-

The prohibition is repeated so often. "Leaven" literally means that which is sour, and is translated "cruel" (Ps. 51:4) and "grievous" (Ps. 73:21). Paul therefore sees leaven as a symbol of malice and wickedness, which we must purge out (1 Cor. 5:8).

Exo 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said to them, Draw out, and take lambs according to your families, and kill the Passover-

The focus of the Passover feast was the lamb, and this should be the centre of our thinking in these last days. Some very intense Hebrew words are used to describe their association of themselves with it: "Draw out (to seize) and take you a lamb... strike ('lay the hand on', a word used about rape) the lintel... with the blood" (Ex. 12:21,22).

Exo 12:22 You shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning-

Heb. 10:25 may refer to this; we are not to forsake assembling ourselves together in Christ, on pain of spiritual and eternal death. We note the association of hyssop with the Lord's death on the cross (Jn. 19:29). That hyssop had been dipped in red wine, representing blood, and the Lord surely saw the relevance to Himself. "I am that hyssop", He would have thought. On the cross, He was the door (Jn. 10:9), and He experienced hyssop with

red wine (representing blood) brushed against Him. Just as the doors at Passover had blood brushed onto them using a hyssop plant, and this was the basis of Israel's salvation.

Exo 12:23 For Yahweh will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel, and on the two doorposts, Yahweh will pass over the door, and will not allow the Destroyer to come in to your houses to strike you-

The Passover Angel would "pass (hover) over the door and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you". 'The destroyer' refers to an Angel- Ps. 78 speaks of the "Angels of evil" who brought the plagues, and as the plague of the firstborn was one of them, it follows that this too must have been brought about by an Angel. The same Angel is referred to in Jer. 51:1- the "destroying spirit" ["wind", AV] who was sent forth by God to smite Babylon; note how Revelation also describes Babylon as being destroyed by a singular Angel. In another Angelic context we read: "O Lord my Lord; will you be the destroyer of the remnant of Israel?" (Ez. 9:8 Heb.). "Let the Angel of the Lord persecute them" (Ps. 35:5,6) has the same Angel in mind. The destroyer Angel is perhaps alluded to in Job 18:13: "The firstborn of death". Job 33:23 LXX certainly is relevant: "Though there should be one thousand Angels of death...". This same 'destroyer' Angel is referred to again in the context of being present with Israel to punish them if they disobeyed in 1 Cor. 10:10 -"they were destroyed of the destroyer". So we have here on this first

Passover night the situation where one Angel is commissioned to do a certain task- in this case kill all firstborn in Egypt- and goes ahead with this task blind to any other consideration, e. g. whether the people concerned were obedient Israelites or not. Therefore another Angel was needed, presumably more powerful or senior to the 'destroyer', to stop the faithful Israelites being killed. Of course God could have given the 'destroyer' additional instructions about not killing the Jews; but it seems to be God's way of working both amongst us and among the Angels to assign each a specific role in the execution of His purpose, and to take pleasure in seeing each Angel or saint working in loving co-operation with another, after the pattern of the Angelic co-operation. Ez. 20:8-14 talks more about this destroyer Angel: "Neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out My fury upon them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted among the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt. Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them My statutes. . My Sabbaths. . the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. . but I wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted" . The destroyer Angel went out through the midst of the land of Egypt to kill the first-born. He wanted to kill the Jews too because they were not forsaking the idols of Egypt- i. e. they were prepar-

ing to take them out of Egypt with them (Ex. 13:17 and Acts 7:43 lend support here). "I"- God manifest now in the Passover Angel- "wrought for My name's sake" (v. 9) against the Destroyer that this should not be done. He remembered how He had "made myself known unto them" in the burning bush, by saying there "I am the Lord your God" (v. 5). "Mine eye (the Passover Angel) spared them from destroying them", v. 17; i. e. from the work of the Destroyer Angel, both in Egypt at the night of Passover and also in the wilderness. Notice how God is spoken of as both wanting to destroy them and also striving for His Name's sake (born by the Angels) so this should not happen. It seems sensible to interpret this by reference to the two powerful Angels active at this time, perhaps representing the groups of Angels of good and Angels of evil (i. e. disaster bringing) which appear to be in Heaven.

Exo 12:24 You shall observe this thing for an ordinance to you and to your sons forever-

There is such repeated emphasis upon the need to celebrate this redemption. Salvation was achieved for us in the death of the Lord Jesus on both a collective and personal level. Our personal salvation is on account of our participation in the collective redemption of God's children which He achieved on the cross.

Exo 12:25 It shall happen when you have come to the land which Yahweh will give you, according as he has promised, that you shall keep this service-

It could be that the "you" refers to the people of God in a collective sense. But the more comfortable appli-

cation is to that generation to whom Moses was then speaking. This promise of entering the land was solemnly made, with uplifted hand as it were, to that generation who left Egypt (Ex. 6:8; Num. 14:30). But they did not enter the land, as Num. 14:30 makes clear. This was because Israel broke their side of the covenant, and did not in fact want to enter the land; and continued serving the idols of Egypt, which they took with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:8; Acts 7:43). But that promise was guaranteed by the fact that "I will bring you into the land... I am Yahweh" (Ex. 6:8). The very essence of Yahweh, that 'I will' save, as surely as 'I will be who I will be', a saviour God, was fought against by Israel's idolatry and unfaithfulness to the covenant. And because 'Yahweh' involves His character, which includes His judgment of sin and not turning a blind eye to it (Ex. 34:4-6), human intransigence and faithlessness was allowed to as it were even counteract His most essential 'being' a saviour God for His beloved people. But that salvation was recalculated and reinterpreted with reference to another generation, and to the people of God generally rather than to the initially intended audience.

Exo 12:26 It will happen, when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this service?'

A striking difference between the Pentateuch and other contemporary legal codes is that those codes are straight codices of statutes; whereas God's law isn't like that. It is commandment interspersed between historical documents and incidents. We read of some incident in the wilderness journey, then we have some command-

ments recounted, then another incident, some more commandments, etc. This surely reflects how God intended obedience to His law to not be a legalistic exercise- it was a code for real human life, which should affect the very spirit of human existence in a way which no dry legal code really could. It was to set a rhythm of life, revealing how that law was "for our good always, that God might preserve us" (Dt. 6:24)- the person who obeyed the law was to live in it (Hab. 2:4 etc.). The motive for obedience to the law was not so that God might give them salvation or status as His people- it was precisely because He had done that, by grace, that they were to respond in obedience (Ex. 12:26; 13:8,14; Dt. 6:20).

Exo 12:27 that you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of Yahweh's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians, and spared our houses.' The people bowed their heads and worshiped-

The land was 'smitten' in Ex. 8:2 as a foretaste of the 'striking / smiting' of the Egyptian firstborn (Ex. 12:23,27 s.w.). It was an appeal for Pharaoh's repentance, in the hope that the final smiting of the firstborn would not be necessary. It was God's intention and hope to save Pharaoh, but he would not. God "delivered" or "spared" (s.w.) His people from Egypt and Pharaoh, just as He delivered Moses personally from the sword of Pharaoh (Ex. 18:4,8 s.w.). Moses was the representative of his people, they were saved "in" him, and baptized into him (1 Cor. 10:1,2). They were apostate idolaters (Ez. 20:8), and were in a way only saved "in" Moses, just as we are saved "in Christ". They were "spared" or delivered not on-

ly from Egypt, but also from the wrath of God which was upon them (Ez. 20:8).

Exo 12:28 The children of Israel went and did so; as Yahweh had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did-

Their obedience is presented as total, but I will suggest on :37 that they were not all obedient, and many Israelite firstborn died that night. The prophets will later lament that Israel were disobedient to Yahweh from Egypt onwards. But He had decided to save them by grace, and so their limited obedience is counted as total.

Exo 12:29 It happened at midnight, that Yahweh struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of livestock-

We note that Egypt had a system of prisons and dungeons, as we know from the story of Joseph. This begs the question as to why Moses was not slain or imprisoned by Pharaoh- for that would have been the logical way to stop this troublesome man from bringing plagues upon Egypt. The answer seems to be that Pharaoh had a conscience, and he feared to lay hands on Moses. His failure to follow that strong conscience was therefore the more culpable and tragic.

Moses was the foremost intercessor for Israel, and is actually called 'the Paraclete' in the Midrash here on Ex. 12:29.

Exo 12:30 Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry

in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead-

This "great cry" is described with the same phrase used in Gen. 27:34, when Esau cries with a great cry-realizing that he had been rejected from God's purpose and that could not now be put right. Whilst the great cry was indeed because of their loss, the connection with Esau is to make the point that despite all God's efforts, they had turned down His invitation to have a part in His purpose- and realized that all too late.

There may have been some literal houses where there were no firstborns present. So I suggest that "house" here refers to a family unity rather than houses as in buildings.

Exo 12:31 He called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go, serve Yahweh, as you have said!-

At the point of Ex. 10:29 Moses had told Pharaoh that "I will see your face again no more". So perhaps they didn't attend this meeting. Or perhaps we are to read Ex. 10:29 as meaning that Moses would not again appear before God's face again in intercession for Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Pharaoh and Egypt were now beyond Moses' intercession and prayer.

Exo 12:32 Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also!-

Earlier, Pharaoh had failed to totally capitulate to Yahweh. He had tried to reach a negotiated settlement, whereby their animals would remain behind. This was

especially significant because the Egyptian livestock had been destroyed by the plagues. Now he appears to totally capitulate, and asks for Moses to also "bless" him, a term which can imply forgiveness. Again we note that he doesn't pray himself to Yahweh, but asks Moses to do so for him. And again we see that his repentance may have been absolutely sincere at that point in time; but true repentance is not the emotion or passion of a moment, but an abiding way of thought and action. And he failed to retain that, thus becoming a warning to all who experience 'repentance' as a passing experience.

Exo 12:33 The Egyptians were urgent with the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, We are all dead men-

They feared that the death of the firstborn was but a prelude to mass slaughter, just as they now perceived that the plagues had been progressively demanding upon them. They feared the next step. We know that there were only ten plagues, but they didn't have our perspective. For all they knew, there could be more coming. Eventually, man is brought to conformity with God's demands- they urged the people to leave immediately, having tried to stop them doing so before. But the lesson is to willingly submit to God's ways, rather than having to be forced to through the process of judgment and condemnation.

Exo 12:34 The people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes on their shoulders-

We wonder as to the extent to which the Israelites knew the game plan. Because although they were expecting to leave Egypt, we have the impression of a haste which reflects surprise at the speed of the whole turn of events. This exactly prefigures our position at the Lord's coming, which Passover night typified. They had been commanded to keep seven days of unleavened bread after the night of the 14th Abib. But we get the impression that they were not intending to be obedient to that. They were forced to be obedient to it by circumstance- they grabbed the dough before they had a chance to leaven it, because the Egyptians were almost literally pushing them out of the country. It could be argued that "troughs" were only required if they had the intention of making leavened bread. Unleavened flat bread would not have required them. Thus :39 emphasizes that they only ate unleavened bread because they didn't have time to bake leavened bread. The salvation of this disobedient people was indeed by grace alone, as is ours.

Exo 12:35 The children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and clothing-

The same phrase "of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass" is used of the vessels taken from the Gentile world and dedicated to the tabernacle (Ex. 11:2; 12:35; Josh. 6:19; 2 Sam. 8:10; 1 Kings 7:51). The generosity of others in Biblical history, their right perspective on the wealth taken from this world, was to inspire other believers in later history. And this is how the body

of Christ should function today, with members inspiring others to spirituality.

Ezra 6:4 records how God moved the local authorities to pronounce that the residents around the returning exiles should give them silver, gold and goods. This was an exact re-living of how Israel left Egypt with Egypt's gold and silver (Ex. 12:35). Yet most of the Jews didn't want to return, they didn't want to live out the type.

Exo 12:36 Yahweh gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked-

There are examples galore of God acting on the minds of men to give them a certain attitude which they would not otherwise have had (consider how He gave Saul another heart, or gave Israel favour in the eyes of the Egyptians so that they lent to them, Ex. 12:36). This is the work of the Holy Spirit directly upon human hearts, to this day.

They despoiled the Egyptians-

"Despoiled" is the same word commonly used for God's sparing or delivering His people from the Egyptians (s.w. :27). It is an unusual word choice if the idea was solely "despoiled". The hint may be that Israel delivered the Egyptians, in that we are now going to read that some Egyptians left Egypt along with them (:38).

Exo 12:37 The children of Israel travelled from Raamses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot who were men, besides children-

The number of firstborn males after Israel left Egypt was remarkably small (around 20,000, Num. 3:43). Women in most primitive societies have an average of 7 births. this would mean that given a total population of around 2,800,000 on leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:37), there should have been around 400,000 firstborn males. But instead, there is only a fraction of this number. Why? Did all Israel eat the Passover? Were many in fact slain. My suggestion- and this is well in the category of things you will never know for sure and can only ponder- is that many Hebrew firstborns died on Passover night. Israel were warned that if they did not properly keep the Passover, "the Destroyer" Angel would kill their firstborn (Ex. 12:23). "The Destroyer" is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:10: "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer" (*olothreutes*; this is a proper noun in the Greek). Who was the Destroyer? If Scripture interprets Scripture, it was the 'Destroyer' Angel of Passover night. In similar vein Heb. 11:28 speaks of "He (the Angel) that destroyed (Gk. *olothreuo*) the firstborn".

The Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resolvable using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and

five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of

such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers. Ex. 13:18 seems to say they marched five abreast. Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night. This would then make better sense of Ex. 23:30 GNB: "I will drive them out little by little, until there are enough of you to take possession of the land". This indeed sounds as if Israel were the smallest of the nations, and not a huge nation comprising several million people.

Exo 12:38 A mixed multitude went up also with them, with flocks, herds, and even very much livestock-

The Hebrew text says that "a great mixture" of people "went up also" with Israel out of Egypt. There can be no doubt that this refers to the many references in the promises that the seed would come to include such a "mixed multitude" (Gen. 17:6; 22:17; 26:4; 28:3,14; 35:11), thereby showing that by reason of leaving Egypt and passing through the Red Sea these Gentiles became part of the seed (cp. 1 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 3:27-29). But the supreme fulfilment of these promises will be after the 'Red Sea' of the last days. We note that this "mixed multitude" had many animals. This means they had been obe-

dient to the call to bring their animals into shelter during the plague of hail.

Exo 12:39 They baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought out of Egypt; for it wasn't leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt, and couldn't wait, neither had they prepared for themselves any food-

As explained on :34, this emphasizes that they only ate unleavened bread because they didn't have time to bake leavened bread- not because they were obedient to the command just given to eat unleavened bread for seven days after Passover night. The salvation of this disobedient people was indeed by grace alone, as is ours.

Apart from the jewellery taken from the Egyptians for the construction of the tabernacle, the total unmaterialism of Israel on Passover night is something to be marvelled at. They only had the clothes they wore, and just the one pair of shoes. This is confirmed by the reminder that these things were miraculously preserved throughout the wilderness journey (Dt. 8:4). It is also highlighted that they had no food when they left - they just grabbed some dough which later they baked into "unleavened cakes" (Ex. 12:34,39). Our Lord's perceptive mind picked out the picture of Israel as they were then, as an illustration of how his disciples should be on their preaching mission. "He called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth... and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats". All this is couched in the language of Israel on Passover

night. His next words for them appear to be stating the obvious, unless they allude to Israel remaining at whatever place they reached until the fire and cloud moved them on: "In what place soever ye enter... there abide till ye depart from that place" (Mk. 6:8-10). It must be remembered that God intended Israel to be a missionary nation, teaching the surrounding world of His ways by their example of obedience to His law. As Israel left Egypt with the gold and jewels of Egypt, so, Jesus implied, the disciples were to carry the precious things of the Gospel.

The meaning of this in the typology of the Passover is twofold: firstly, it teaches that one way of being properly prepared for the second coming after the pattern of Israel that night, is to live a life committed to preaching; this will keep the loins of our minds girded, ever looking for the Lord's return which we preach, and often depriving us of the temptations of materialism. And, secondly, those of the new Israel who are found ready at the angel's coming will be prepared and eager to start on the greatest missionary campaign of all, in the establishment of the Kingdom.

Exo 12:40 Now the time that the children of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred thirty years-

Paul, under Divine inspiration, measures this period from the time of the promises given to Abraham in Canaan (Gal. 3:17). The LXX and the Samaritan Pentateuch here read "in Egypt and in the land of Canaan". And this reading of the text is clearly confirmed by the New Testament quotation and interpretation. Again we

have an example of where the LXX is quoted in the New Testament in preference to the Masoretic Text. It is noteworthy however that the 430 years appears split into two groups of 215 years. From Abraham's entry into Canaan to the birth of Isaac was 25 years (Gen. 12:4; 17:1-21; Jacob was born when Isaac was 60 (Gen. 25:26); and Jacob was 130 when he entered Egypt (Gen. 47:9), totalling 215 years. This would then require that the Israelites were in Egypt for 215 years. This would be corroborated by Ex. 13:18 LXX "and in the fifth generation the children of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt".

Exo 12:41 It happened at the end of four hundred thirty years, even the same day it happened, that all the armies of Yahweh went out from the land of Egypt-

"All the hosts (Angels) of the Lord went out (with Israel) from the land of Egypt". See on Lk. 15:6; Ex. 7:4. The 400 years of Gen. 15:13 speak of Israel being foreigners in a land not theirs; and this would refer to their time in both Canaan and Egypt, seeing that Canaan was not fully given to them until the conquest. See on :40.

Exo 12:42 It is a night to be much observed to Yahweh for bringing them out from the land of Egypt. This is that night of Yahweh, to be much observed of all the children of Israel throughout their generations-

Because God preserved [s.w. "observed"] His people, they were to observe the Passover feast. We see here the mutuality encouraged between God and His children.

Not surprisingly, in the light of what was noted on :19,21, Passover night was to be "a night of watching" (Ex. 12:42 RV mg.), strongly suggesting "watching in

prayer" (Eph. 6:18; 1 Pet. 4:7; 2 Cor. 11:27?). Similarly those who are found "watching" at the Lord's midnight coming (cp. that of the Passover angel) will be found acceptable (Lk. 12:37).

Israel both kept Passover and went through the Red Sea at night. Indeed, it is stressed six times in Ex. 12 that it was "night", and hence Dt. 16:1 reminds them to carefully keep the Passover (i.e. at night), "for... thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night". Other latter day prophecies speak of the events of the second coming being at "night" : Lot left Sodom in the very early hours of the morning; and it was "at midnight (that) there was a cry made" informing the virgins of their Lord's return (Mt. 25:6).

Lk. 12:35-39 speaks of the Master coming at night and then sharing the Passover meal with those who are "watching". Israel were told to 'watch' throughout that first Passover night (Ex. 12:42 RV mg.), eating the meal with loins girded. Our Lord matches this with "let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning", referring to the virgins parable. Israel eating that meal together, huddled around the slain lamb, the oil burning lamps revealing their tense faces, is therefore a picture of what the new Israel should be like just prior to their deliverance.

Exo 12:43 Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the Passover. No foreigner shall eat of it-

I explain on :48 that these commands were specifically for the first Passover; and I have noted earlier in this chapter various other features of the commands which were only relevant to the first Passover. Eating in haste

with belts on, ready to leave Egypt, was clearly only relevant to them then. Likewise the daubing of blood on lintels was replaced by offering the Passover lambs at the sanctuary and daubing the blood on the altar there.

Exo 12:44 but every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then shall he eat of it-

I have argued on :43,48 that these commands were specifically for the first Passover. The idea may be that those Egyptian members of Israelite households were to be circumcised on the 10th of Abib, and then they could eat the Passover, and would have recovered after three days in time to leave Egypt.

Exo 12:45 A foreigner and a hired servant shall not eat of it-

Num. 9:14 is clear that later, these people could do so if they wished. But they were not allowed to at the time of the first Passover, because God was making a very clear distinction between Israel and Egypt; and He wanted the Egyptians to accept covenant relationship with Him and be circumcised.

Exo 12:46 In one house shall it be eaten; you shall not carry out anything of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall you break a bone of it-

As noted on :43,48, this was specific to the first Passover. For in future, the Passover was to be sacrificed at the sanctuary, and not kept in individual houses. The Israelites were "delivered", but the same word is translated "spared" in :27, when we read of how practically this was articulated- the houses of Israel were spared / deliv-

ered. Salvation depended upon being in "the house" of Israel. The efficacy of the sacrificed lamb was predicated upon being located within the house of Israel. Eating it outside of those houses was not going to be effective. The Egyptians had to humble themselves and come within the houses of Israel. Likewise there must be some level of identity with the people of God, otherwise the slain lamb, the Lord Jesus, will not save isolated individuals who refuse to take that step of identity.

Jn. 19:36 stresses that not a bone of the Lord Jesus was broken when He was crucified. We are the Lord's body, of His flesh and bones (Eph. 5:30). Crucifixion was designed to torture the bones; and yet none was broken. We suffer in Him, but shall not be finally broken. As the Passover lambs were being killed, the Lord died; and it was critical that not a bone of the Passover lambs be broken (Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12). John seems so keen to point out that the Lord died as the Passover lamb, and Paul perceives this when stating that He is "our Passover" (1 Cor. 5:7). For no bone of the Lord to be broken, the nails driven through His hands [the Greek can refer to the arms or wrists too] would not have been large, and would probably have been driven through the 'Destot gap', the set of nerves in between the large wrist bones. The pain would have been intense at that point. The rough hammering of the nails through that point would have paid no attention to detail; but those hammer blows were Divinely guided so that no bone broke. And this would have been even more amazingly guided for the nails driven through the feet not to

break a bone. It was only by the Lord refusing to relieve the pain by pushing down on the sedile that He avoided breaking any bones.

Exo 12:47 All the congregation of Israel shall keep it-

Personal engagement with the slain lamb was absolutely required. It was no good thinking that 'I am an Israelite, so I shall be saved', or 'My family are keeping it in the house next door, I shall therefore be saved'. And here we see a challenge to all who [however subconsciously] consider that a vague association with Christian culture will save them.

Exo 12:48 When a stranger shall live as a foreigner with you, and will keep the Passover to Yahweh, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one who is born in the land: but no uncircumcised person shall eat of it-

See on :43. It has been argued that the breaking of bread is the equivalent of the Jewish Passover, and Ex. 12:48 says that only the circumcised could eat of it. Here are a few comments:

- Whatever interpretation we wish to place upon Ex. 12:48, we have to reconcile it with the above evidence for the openness of the Lord Jesus with regard to His table fellowship, using it to bring people to Him, rather than as a test of fellowship or intellectual / moral purity of understanding or living.

- Peter ate with the uncircumcised- and got into trouble with the Judaist brethren exactly because the Law had forbidden the uncircumcised from eating the first Passover (Acts 11:3). The Jews had put a [very

large!] hedge around this law by forbidding Jews from eating with Gentiles period. Yet Peter was taught that this was wrong- and he ate with Gentiles, it seems even before they were baptized. But the point is, he had been taught by the vision that all the old Mosaic category distinctions of clean / unclean, circumcised / uncircumcised, had now been ended. It seems this was as large a challenge to the church in the 1st century as it is today.

- Although the Passover and memorial meeting are related, the relation is at times by way of contrast rather than only similarity; e.g. in the first Passover, the families were to provide a lamb; whereas in the antitype, the Lord Jesus is the lamb of Divine and not human provision. The Paschal lamb of God takes away the whole world's sin, rather than just providing blood for the temporal redemption of Israel's firstborn, etc.

- Circumcision under the new covenant doesn't refer to anything outward, visibly verifiable. For now "he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. 2:29)- seeing we can't judge the secret things of others' hearts, how can we tell who is circumcised in heart or not? The 'sealing' of God's people today, the proof that they are the Lord's (2 Tim. 2:19), is not anything external, but the internal matter of being sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30), or being sealed with a mark in the mind / forehead, as Revelation puts it (Rev. 7:3; 9:4).

- The Gentiles in Israel, circumcised or not, could keep the feast of unleavened bread (Ex. 12:17-20) which was related to the Passover.

- If Ex. 12:48 is read on a literalistic level, i.e. that only the circumcised could eat the Passover, this would surely mean that no female could eat it? Yet this was not the case.

- It's Num. 9:14 which speaks in more general terms of whether or not a Gentile could partake of the Passover- and here it's made clear that yes he/she could, and no mention is made of being circumcised: "And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the Passover unto the Lord; according to the statute of the Passover, and according to the ordinance thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one statute, both for the stranger, and for him that is born in the land".

- Commands that were intended for subsequent generations often include the kind of rubric we meet in Ex. 12:14,17: "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord: throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever... therefore shall ye observe this day throughout your generations by an ordinance for ever". But we don't meet that 'throughout your generations' with regard to the uncircumcised men not being allowed to eat it.

- Israel were told specifically that the Passover lamb must be roasted and not boiled (Ex. 12:9 uses two distinct words for 'boiled' and 'roasted'). But the word used in Ex. 12:9 for "boiled" is that used in Dt. 16:7 of how the Passover could be boiled, although many Bible versions misleadingly translate the word there as "roast". The translators need not have feared such contradiction. For it is the contradiction of grace. Here we have another ex-

ample of where the Passover regulations given in Exodus were specific only to that time at the exodus. Thus a foreigner was not allowed to eat of that sacrifice, but foreigners were welcome to eat of the Passover later.

- So my suggestion is that the command of Ex. 12:48 that no uncircumcised could eat of the Passover, and that the Gentiles amongst the people should be circumcised if they wanted to eat it, was specific to that first Passover. As Israel and the mixed multitude that went with them sat in Egypt under threat of losing their firstborn sons, they could find salvation by keeping the Passover and entering into covenant with God through circumcision. Both Jewish tradition and the implication of Moses not circumcising his sons is that the Jews in Egypt weren't circumcised; yet "all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised" (Josh. 5:5). Implication would be that many were circumcised in order to keep the first Passover according to the command given them in Ex. 12. We could therefore take Ex. 12:48 as a specific command for those who kept the first Passover to be circumcised, rather than an ongoing principle. The Jewish sage Maimonides (*A Guide For The Perplexed* Vol. 3 ch. 46) explains: "The reason of the prohibition that the uncircumcised should not eat of it (Exod. xii. 48) is explained by our Sages as follows: The Israelites neglected circumcision during their long stay in Egypt".

- This approach would explain why Num. 9:14 doesn't demand that Gentiles be circumcised to keep fu-

ture Passovers; why there's no comment that the exclusion of the uncircumcised should be kept "throughout your generations"; and why Ex. 12:50 speaks as if Israel fully obeyed the command about circumcision and Passover eating in a once-off sense when they kept that first Passover. And of course this is the reason for many branches of Judaism welcoming uncircumcised Gentiles to the Passover celebration- for they don't understand Ex. 12:48 to preclude it, but rather Num. 9:14 encourages it.

- This approach also helps answer a difficult question: Why was the lamb or kid kept for four days (Ex. 12:2,6)? If the effects of circumcision take three days to wear off (Gen. 34:25), it could be that the uncircumcised males were intended to circumcise themselves, chose the lamb, and then keep the Passover four days later. Some Jewish commentators claim that God fell in love with Israel whilst she was still in her blood (Ez. 16:6) in that some Jews circumcised themselves at the time of the first Passover- hence one Rabbi speaks of the blood of circumcision and the blood of the first Passover running together.

Exo 12:49 One law shall be to him who is born at home, and to the stranger who lives as a foreigner among you-

There were Egyptians who lived amongst the Israelites, for they borrowed jewels from their Egyptian neighbours. But such material generosity was not going to save them. They too must follow the "law" of the lamb, Yahweh's law, and identify with the lamb.

Exo 12:50 All the children of Israel did so. As Yahweh commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did-

Their obedience is presented as total, but I suggested on :37 that they were not all obedient, and many Israelite firstborn died that night. The prophets will later lament that Israel were disobedient to Yahweh from Egypt onwards. But He had decided to save them by grace, and so their limited obedience is counted as total.

Exo 12:51 It happened the same day, that Yahweh brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies-

God did this. But Ez. 20:8 and Acts 7:43 imply that they carried the Egyptian idols with them through the Red Sea. Indeed, Ez. 20:16,18 state that God gave Israel in the wilderness His statutes and judgments, but they actually lived according to their own statutes and judgments; and therefore He appealed to the younger generation not to walk in the statutes and judgments of their parents, but in those which He had given them. But “the children rebelled against me; they walked not in my statutes, neither kept mine ordinances to do them, which if a man do, he shall live in them; they profaned my Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness” (Ez. 20:21). Even in the wilderness, Israel didn’t keep the Sabbaths, and the younger generation refused God’s laws. Although unrecorded in the Pentateuch, Ez. 20:8,23,24 describes a threat from God to Israel, whilst they were still in the wilderness, that He would scatter them among the nations. Yet this drastic

appeal went unheeded, because "their eyes were after their father's idols". They were so obsessed with the idols worshipped by their parents' generation- the generation who left Egypt. Yet for all this, God did " not behold iniquity in Jacob" (Num. 23:21,22), such was the righteousness imputed to them. And yet that generation were indeed types of us.

EXODUS CHAPTER 13

Exo 13:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

It seems this legislation about the firstborn was given the same day they left Egypt (:3,4).

Exo 13:2 Sanctify to me all of the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of animal. It is mine-

The Levites had not yet been chosen as the priestly tribe. Perhaps it was God's initial intention that all the firstborn should be sanctified to His service, from whatever tribe. But this plan didn't work, and so He called one tribe to be His sanctified priests. And they also didn't really do their ministry, and so under the new covenant, all are priests.

The idea that we are God's, we "the church of first-borns" (Heb. 12:23) are His, answers man's existential fear of loneliness, his desire to belong, to be in a family, to belong to another. For "they are mine" and finally in the Kingdom as Malachi puts it, "they shall be mine". Man is not alone. We are God's. We belong. Our need to belong is ultimately met. This is part of the sex drive within man. It is why refugee families are desperate not to be divided. The childhood desire to have something "of my very own" remains for a lifetime. My room, my flat, my house, my section, my area, however small; my career, my job. And yet the human structures for belonging go wrong. Families break up, people die. Things go wrong. What you

once knew as yours, as you, disintegrates and goes bad. Only in "you are Mine" is there the answer. Our need both to own "of our very own" [stronger when we are younger], and yet also to belong to another [stronger as we get older], are met only in becoming "the very own" of God.

The command to sanctify the firstborn was given to all Israel. They were to sanctify or set apart their firstborns unto God. The firstborns were the priests. But they failed to remember their great salvation on passover night, the blood of the lamb failed to imprint deeply upon them. For at the time of the golden calf, they led the desire to return to Egypt. And so they were replaced by the tribe of Levi as priests. This is why "Lest we forget" is so important for us. It's why we have the breaking of bread service. It's why we must remind ourselves of the blood of the lamb and our redemption. For as all Israel were the firstborn ["Israel is My firstborn"], so we are the church of firstborns.

Exo 13:3 Moses said to the people, Remember this day, in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand Yahweh brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten-

The 'remembrance' was to be of the power of Yahweh's grace in as it were forcing Israel out of Egypt, when they actually wanted to remain there (Ez. 20:7,8 "I said to them, Throw away every man the abominations of his eyes, and don't defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God.

But they rebelled against Me, and would not listen to Me; they didn't throw away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt... So I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt"), were idolatrous and had told Moses to leave them alone and let them serve the Egyptians. Yahweh's strength therefore refers to the power of His grace in continuing His program with them.

Exo 13:4 This day you go out in the month Abib-

"Abib" is a young ear of green corn. The idea was that there was hope now of spiritual fruit to be brought forth.

Exo 13:5 It shall be, when Yahweh shall bring you into the land of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, which he swore to your fathers to give you-

This land inhabited by those tribes was significantly smaller than the territory sworn to the fathers, which was from Egypt to the Euphrates. It seems God had recalculated the extent of the inheritance, or at least realized that they needed a more limited objective to achieve first. He is so sensitive to our weaknesses.

A land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month-

The promised land was to flow with milk and honey to those who kept covenant. And yet Saul later precluded the people from experiencing the blessings of the covenant by petty legalism and a desire for personal control. The people were obedient to his word, but then totally disobeyed Yahweh's command about not eating blood as a result of it (1 Sam. 14:25,33).

Exo 13:6 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to Yahweh-

This refers to the feast of unleavened bread, which was not the same as the feast of the Passover, which was seven days earlier. These seven days were to recall the seven days of creation; for the exodus was a new creation of Israel, out of the water of the Red Sea.

Exo 13:7 Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and no leavened bread shall be seen with you, neither shall yeast be seen with you, in all your borders-

Their "borders" aren't defined, but the idea was that their houses in Egypt were to become as the entire territory they then controlled- be it their individual land inheritances, or the entire land.

Exo 13:8 You shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'It is because of that which Yahweh did for me when I came out of Egypt'-

The Hebrew understanding of hope and memory is such that past events can be presented again through rituals like the Passover in a very palpable manner; and "This is my body... this is my blood" is a classic example. Paul's language of "showing the Lord's death" at the breaking of bread (1 Cor. 11:26) is rooted in the Passover being a 'showing' of what God had done in the death of the Paschal lamb (Ex. 13:8 Heb.). The breaking of bread is therefore a calling to an acting out, just as the Passover was.

The Passover meal was in order to remember the great salvation which God had wrought for all Israel at

the Red Sea. Egypt, representing the power of sin, was gloriously vanquished there. Yet the faithful Israelite of all ages was to also proclaim that "This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt" (Ex. 13:8). Our memorial meeting has this same two fold structure; remembering the deliverance which God wrought for us personally, as well as for the whole community of the redeemed. This is why at the breaking of bread there ought to be an awareness of personal fellowship with God, and also with each other, and with those who have gone before.

A striking difference between the Pentateuch and other contemporary legal codes is that those codes are straight codices of statutes; whereas God's law isn't like that. It is commandment interspersed between historical documents and incidents. We read of some incident in the wilderness journey, then we have some commandments recounted, then another incident, some more commandments, etc. This surely reflects how God intended obedience to His law to not be a legalistic exercise- it was a code for real human life, which should affect the very spirit of human existence in a way which no dry legal code really could. It was to set a rhythm of life, revealing how that law was "for our good always, that God might preserve us" (Dt. 6:24)- the person who obeyed the law was to live in it (Hab. 2:4 etc.). The motive for obedience to the law was not so that God might give them salvation or status as His people- it was precisely because He had done that, by grace, that they were to respond in obedience (Ex. 12:26; 13:8,14; Dt. 6:20).

Exo 13:9 It shall be for a sign to you on your hand, and for a memorial between your eyes, that the law of Yahweh may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand Yahweh has brought you out of Egypt-

The only two sacraments which we have- baptism and the breaking of bread- are related, in that both show in physical symbolism our association with and blessing from the Lord's sacrifice. The breaking of bread is in a sense an ongoing reminder of the same principles which we showed at our baptism. Likewise the Jewish Passover (cp. our breaking of bread) was in order to bring to mind the deliverance achieved at their national baptism. They were even to wear a sign on their hand and between their eyes that reminded them of the exodus (Ex. 13:9); all their thinking and doing was to be overshadowed by the awareness of the fact that they had been redeemed that day. It seems they never did this, although the idea may be that there to remember their redemption as if it were a seal on their hand and between their eyes. If we do feel that we have fallen so deeply into the rut of semi-spirituality that we can't crawl out, then think back to your baptism, or to the days when you first read Christian literature, bought a Bible, started praying...

"Sign" is s.w. "token" in Ex. 12:13, "the blood shall be for a token". Just as the blood was put on the lintel and doorposts, so Israel were to as it were have that blood on their hands and between their eyes always. Their vision, their worldview, all that they did with their hands, was to be influenced by the blood of the lamb. Smearing the blood on doorposts was part

of the original Passover which was not repeated in the subsequent legislation about the feast of Passover; instead, it was to be as a token permanently on every Israelite. The pagans wore tokens of their gods on their hands and between their eyes; God's people were to instead have their mental awareness of the lamb's blood as the equivalent. All this speaks of the huge awareness we should have of the implication of the Lord's blood and the great salvation achieved. Not just when as it were we keep Passover at the communion meal, but in life lived with a worldview affected by it.

Exo 13:10 You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year-

The reference is specifically to the feast of unleavened bread, not Passover.

Exo 13:11 It shall be, when Yahweh shall bring you into the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and shall give it you-

It could be that the "you" refers to the people of God in a collective sense. But the more comfortable application is to that generation to whom Moses was then speaking. This promise of entering the land was solemnly made, with uplifted hand as it were, to that generation who left Egypt (Ex. 6:8; Num. 14:30). But they did not enter the land, as Num. 14:30 makes clear. This was because Israel broke their side of the covenant, and did not in fact want to enter the land; and continued serving the idols of Egypt, which they took with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:8; Acts 7:43). But that promise was

guaranteed by the fact that "I will bring you into the land... I am Yahweh" (Ex. 6:8). The very essence of Yahweh, that 'I will' save, as surely as 'I will be who I will be', a saviour God, was fought against by Israel's idolatry and unfaithfulness to the covenant. And because 'Yahweh' involves His character, which includes His judgment of sin and not turning a blind eye to it (Ex. 34:4-6), human intransigence and faithlessness was allowed to as it were even counteract His most essential 'being' a saviour God for His beloved people. But that salvation was recalculated and reinterpreted with reference to another generation, and to the people of God generally rather than to the initially intended audience.

God swore / lifted His hand to Heaven as He had no greater to swear by. He swore to their fathers, :5, but also "to you". Likewise the Passover deliverance was done "to me". There is a strong sense that all these things were done to each individual in history, just as baptism makes the promises to Abraham personal to each of us. Hence "He will give it thee", you singular.

Exo 13:12 that you shall set apart to Yahweh all that opens the womb, and every firstborn which you have that comes from an animal. The males shall be Yahweh's-

I suggested on :2 that it was God's initial intention that all the firstborn should be sanctified to His service, from whatever tribe. And the sacrificial animals would be provided by the firstborn of every animal. But this plan didn't work, and so He called one tribe to be His sanctified priests, and all Israel were to provide animals for sacrifice. And they also didn't really do their ministry,

and so under the new covenant, all are priests. We marvel at how God continually seeks to forge ahead with His plans for relationship with man.

Exo 13:13 Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and you shall redeem all the firstborn of man among your sons-

The redemption of unclean devoted animals was to be at the basis of the animals value plus one fifth (Lev. 27:27). But the firstborn of donkeys were to be redeemed with a lamb, and a lamb would have been of less value than a newborn donkey. The firstborn of the donkey was to be redeemed by a lamb (Ex. 13:13) as a ritual reminder of the power of the Passover lamb's redemption. The value of its blood was far greater than its commercial value. And this was to point forward to the value of the blood of the Lord Jesus, far more precious than of any gold or silver (1 Pet. 1:18). The donkey was the most common domestic animal, and it was an unclean animal. It was therefore representative of common people, in their unclean state. Firstborn donkeys were to be redeemed because they were to be understood as representative of God's people, redeemed by the Passover lamb.

Donkeys were unclean animals. The firstborn of their flocks would have been clean animals as they were only to keep clean animals. The donkey was the one unclean animal whose firstborn was to be redeemed and given to God. Ez. 23:20 uses the donkey as a symbol of Egypt. Perhaps this was for all time

to reflect and remind Israel of God's desire to save Egypt. We recall His huge efforts to save Pharaoh.

Exo 13:14 It shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall tell him, 'By strength of hand Yahweh brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage-

The son was to be taught that 'we' were delivered from Egypt. What had been done in history had been done to all within the body of God's people. David and the writers of the Psalms and restoration prophets clearly grasped this, as they constantly glory in what God had done for them and "us" at the Red Sea. The Biblical approach to history is unique. God's word is seen as a living word, and all His previous acts of salvation are to be felt as experienced by us. In our world, human history is generally felt to be bunk, irrelevant to this generation, of merely passing cultural fascination to the hurrying man of modern society. And in some ways, that may indeed be a legitimate take on secular history. But Biblical history is to be seen quite otherwise by God's people. It is a living word spoken to us, and the salvation acts which are there recorded happened to us. For "all live unto Him"(Lk. 20:38), those now dead people who experienced Divine salvation are alive in God's mind [although not personally conscious]. We therefore live out our lives as it were on a stage, before the great crowd of witnesses of God's people over history (Heb. 12:1). It requires us to see ourselves as part of a far greater whole, the Israel of God, and not individuals isolated at a point of time. Salvation has both a collective and an individual

dimension. Our individual salvation is predicated upon our choice to identify with the collective salvation of God's people which began with God's grace to Adam in Eden. Just as the sin of Adam and Eve is that of everyman, in that in essence we repeat it in our own failings; so the plan of salvation which began there can be accepted by everyman.

Exo 13:15 and it happened, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that Yahweh killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of animal. Therefore I sacrifice to Yahweh all that opens the womb, being males; but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem'-

OMIT As the firstborn, Moses should have been slain on Passover night (Ex. 13:15); but he made the Passover sacrifice for his own redemption, although Heb. 11:28 says that he did it for the sake of Israel's redemption. Likewise the Lord's almost incomprehensible victory over human nature was not motivated by a selfish desire for his redemption; he did it for himself, that it might be for us. And this is what strengthened him. And on a far lower level, our own salvation is surely worked out through the sacrifices we make for the sake of others' spirituality. The fact that the Lord, as Moses, has gone along the same path to salvation really should be a comfort to us; it should lessen the distance which we feel between us and our Lord. Thus a study of typology and of the atonement is not barren; it really will bring us closer to the Lord Jesus if we do it in the right spirit.

Exo 13:16 It shall be for a sign on your hand, and for symbols between your eyes: for by strength of hand Yahweh brought us out of Egypt-

Contemporary ideas about Satan, demons etc. are often alluded to in the Pentateuch, and Israel are given the true understanding. Take the well known command to Israel to wear a phylactery as a reminder of the Passover deliverance from Egypt: "You shall have the record of it as a sign upon your hand, and upon your forehead as a phylactery, because by the strength of his hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt" (Ex. 13:16 N.E.B.). Wearing a phylactery wasn't a new concept; the idea "refers to amulets which were worn in order to protect their wearers against demons". So by giving this command, Israel's God was showing His people that instead of being on the *defensive* against demons, needing good luck charms against them, they should instead replace these by a positive remembrance of how Yahweh had saved His people from all the power of evil which was symbolized by Pharaoh's Egypt. Rejoicing in His salvation and constantly remembering it was intended to totally sideline the various false beliefs about demons which were prevalent at the time.

As discussed on :9, the equivalent of ["it shall be for..."] pagan amulets on the hand and forehead was to be the mental awareness of the great salvation wrought through the blood of the lamb. Likewise the whole law was to be "for" a token on the hand and forehead (Dt. 6:8). The idea is not that the entire law could literally be placed there. Rather, the equivalent

of pagan amulets was to be a mental awareness of God's law. The use of phylacteries in Judaism is a complete missing of this point.

Exo 13:17 It happened, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God didn't lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and they return to Egypt-

The fear of God lest Israel would not attain the promised land ("lest perhaps") shows His humility, in being so concerned for the salvation of petty man; and that characteristic likewise will be His, right up to and through and beyond the day of judgment.

We see here a window onto God's sensitivity towards us. "For God said..."- to whom? This opens up His internal thinking, what He said to Himself. He will not let us be tested beyond what we can bear; and He will not allow the rod of the wicked to be so strong that the righteous put forth their hands to sin. So He knows our levels. He knew Israel's levels. Later in their journey, they did encounter war- with Amalek, with Og king of Bashan etc. He knew that they could endure those experiences [perhaps because by then their faith should have been increased by the daily experience of manna and water, and the presence of the cloud and fire]; but not the experience of war with the Philistines at this early point. We know the geography of the area from what the Bible tells us about Isaac and Abraham going down south of Israel into the land of the Philistines. Dt. 1 tells us that it takes

only 11 days to travel by the highway from Egypt to Canaan- through the land of the Philistines. God knew their likelihood of wanting to return to Egypt- and He knew that if they were just a few days journey out of Egypt, on the main highway, then they would be tempted to return to Egypt. When they did later state they wanted to return to Egypt (Ex. 32; Num. 14:4), this was therefore inexcusable. God knew they did not need to have decided that. He knew that if they had encountered war with the Philistines, then they would have been overpowered by the temptation to want to return to Egypt. The result is that every failure before temptation is inexcusable. There can be no situational ethic. God foresees our likely sins and seeks to save us from them- by taking Israel on a longer route, perhaps leading them by the fire and cloud in such a way that there was no clear return path for them through the trackless wilderness, whereas the quicker way was on a well established highway. God likewise foreknew that the Philistines would not honour the peace treaty made with Isaac and Abraham, and would attack Israel as they passed through their land. We think how God drove Adam and Eve out of Eden, lest they take of the tree of life and live eternally in a fallen, miserable state. He foresees likely human behaviour despite our freewill.

It was the Angel which led Israel in the pillar of fire and cloud. Despite their limitations, we know that the work of our guardian Angel is so over-ruled that we will never be tested above what we are able to bear. The tri-

als they choose for us are in accordance to the spiritual strength they know we possess- thus the Angel leading Israel through the wilderness "led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines; for God (the Angel leading them) said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt; but God led the people about through the way of the wilderness" (Ex. 13:17,18). So we see the great fear our guardian Angel has that we will return to Egypt (the flesh), and therefore He gives us trials which will prevent this, although at the time we feel like Israel that the trials are actually enough to make us want to return to the world.

Exo 13:18 but God led the people around by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea; and the children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt-

"Armed" is literally 'in fives', perhaps implying they marched five abreast. Hence LXX "and in the fifth generation the children of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt". If the LXX is correct then we have here confirmation of the argument made on Ex. 12:40 that Israel were in Egypt for 215 years, not 430. If we read "in fives" as 'five abreast' then as discussed on Ex. 12:37, a group of 600,000 men plus women, children and a "mixed multitude" would require a column of around 1000 km. long. See my suggestion on Ex. 12:37 that the numbers were far smaller. **"Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael plays around with the letters of the word "armed" (chamushim) to suggest that if the vowels are altered slightly, it might actually mean that only one out of five (chamishah) Israelites left Egypt".** This would fit with the small

number of firstborn given in the census of Num. 3- as if many firstborn were slain from disobedience to the Passover laws.

Or we can understand that they went up armed as in with arms, prepared for war; which fits the context of :17, where God foresaw that if they did encounter actual war, they would be tempted to return to Egypt. They went up armed because they were frightened there would be warfare, and God saw that this fear could become obsessive to the point that they would return to Egypt if they ever had to use their weapons. Again we see how sensitively God foresaw their situations ahead of time.

"Red Sea" can be "the sea of reeds"; just as even in English there is a similarity of spelling between "red" and "reed". It is the same word in Ex. 2:3 of the reeds where Moses was hidden. The idea of salvation in the reeds was the narrative of Moses' life. He has been saved out of the reeds, and this was to encourage him that God would save him and Israel again. And again, his sister Miriam was involved, as she led the women in praise afterwards. We see how circumstances repeat, in Moses' example, after 80 years- experiences are intended to reinforce and develop faith.

Exo 13:19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the children of Israel swear, saying, God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones away from here with you-

Despite living a long life in the opulence of Egypt, without apparently falling from power and wealth, the

heart of Joseph was not in it at all, but rather in the land of promise, in the things of the Kingdom. An example to us all.

We note it was Moses personally who carried Joseph's bones, possibly hinting that the Israelites were so burdened down with the wealth of Egypt. Acts 7:16 implies the bones of his brothers were also carried back and buried in Shechem.

Exo 13:20 They took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness-

Etham in Egyptian means a 'closed place, fortress, castle'. Presumably there was a Philistine garrison there, as it was a border town, and remnants of the castle have been unearthed. Again we sense the Egyptians as powerless before this huge column of Divinely liberated slaves. This incident was providentially arranged to strengthen the Israelites in faith when a far greater Egyptian force approached them. See on Ex. 14:3.

Exo 13:21 Yahweh went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them on their way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, that they might go by day and by night:-

This is very rhythmic and poetic in Hebrew, as if part of a marching song: "And YHWH went before them / by day in a pillar of cloud / to lead them by the way / and by night in a pillar of fire / to give them the light / to go by day and night. / Aside turns not / the pillar of cloud by day / nor the pillar of fire by night / before the people".

"He spread a cloud for their covering" (Ps. 105:39). We note God's sensitivity to His people in the desert- fire at night to warm them against the desert cold, and cloud in the day time to shield them from the heat of the sun. He is likewise sensitive to our issues on our wilderness journey to His promised land.

The Passover deliverance was to be the beginning of months for Israel (Ex. 12:2); time and history, and our sense of where we are in time and history, were to be constantly governed by this experience of great salvation. Yet people tend to live without this sense of their place in history, never learning from history and never seeing the long term horizon, just living life as it is experienced right in front of their eyes and ears. Hence the Hebrew months are called just the second month, the third month etc. The names of the Hebrew months were picked up only in Babylonian exile. And this is how radically our great salvation should affect our lives. It could be argued that Israel's entire wilderness experience was lived in the shadow of the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They were in an envelope of Divine protection and their sense of day and night was governed by these things, rather than their sight of the sun or moon. Likewise the arrival of the quail and manna gave them their sense of "morning" and of the sixth day, when double manna was given, and the Sabbath when there was no manna. They lived without any way of telling the time as we do. We likewise are to live in a total environment of awareness of God's salvation, that I have been

redeemed and am on my path to the Kingdom. And yet even whilst living in this total environment of salvation, Israel rebelled and wanted to return to Egypt.

Exo 13:22 the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, didn't depart from before the people-

Ex. 13:21,22 says that there was a pillar of cloud in the day time and a pillar of fire by night. But at the time of the Exodus, there was a pillar of cloud for the Egyptians and a pillar of fire to give light in the night for the Israelites (Ex. 14:20,24). Could this mean that the meaning of time was collapsed at this time? It was night for the Israelites but daytime for the Egyptians? Is. 42:16, amidst many exodus / Red Sea allusions, speaks of how God makes the darkness light before His exiting people. The many Johanine references to the Lord Jesus being a light in the darkness for His followers would then be yet more elaborations of the idea that the Lord Jesus is the antitype of the Angel that led Israel out of Egypt (Jn. 8:12; 12:35,46). Num. 9:21 says that the pillar of cloud was with the Israelites at *night*, and sometimes it was taken up in the night and they therefore had to move on. Does this mean that there were times when the meaning of time was collapsed during their journey, and the night was made as the day (perhaps Ps. 139:12 alludes to this experience)? When Yahweh came down on Sinai, He was enveloped in a *cloud of fire*- suggesting that there was no day and night for Him (Ex. 24:15-17; Dt. 5:22).

EXODUS CHAPTER 14

Exo 14:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

It was Moses who wrote these accounts, and his humility shines through in speaking of himself in the third person.

Exo 14:2 Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn back and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal Zephon. You shall encamp opposite it by the sea-

"Turn", Heb. 'turn back, return', to retrace their steps; see on :3. God told them to go to a location which humanly speaking was a trap- as the Egyptians realized, :3. The "turn" back on themselves was humanly senseless when they needed to put as much distance as they could between them and the Egyptians, and gave the appearance of being lost [AV "entangled"]. So God leads us to baptism, leads us to redemption from this world, through bringing us into desperate situations. They were taken to a situation where there was no way out- the sea to the east, high mountains to the south and west, and the Egyptians approaching from the north.

God led Israel into a dead end and made them turn around and start facing back the way they had come , as if to start them marching towards Pharaoh rather than away from him. But this dead end was "Pihahiroth", 'the mouth of freedom'. For there they were "brought out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 29:2), it was as it were the gateway to the prison and they were leaving it. The path

we are led by God appears senseless and unwise, by human judgment. But our dead ends lead to the ultimate freedom; although we only see this afterwards. And according to Maslow and other psychologists, the desire for freedom is the most powerful inbuilt human need. We were born with it, but it can only be realized and fulfilled in the freedom God gives in Christ. Isaiah often uses the Red Sea parting as the basis upon which we can believe that God will make a way when there appears no way: "This is what the LORD says, the one who made a road through the sea, a pathway through the surging waters" (Is. 43:16,17). This is why the Exodus is the most alluded to historical incident of the Old Testament- it's a pattern to us all. Israel were not to be passive to their history of redemption, and neither can we be. Both the ten commandments and the rest of the law began with reference to Israel's exodus deliverance: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me..." (Ex. 20:2,3); the rest of the law began with the commands about releasing slaves because this was the outcome of their own exodus experience: "Now these are the ordinances which you shall set before them. If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years and in the seventh he shall go out free without paying anything" (Ex. 21:1,2). And throughout the law, there were references to the exodus as the motive for obeying the law, e.g. Ex. 23:9 "You shall not oppress an alien, for you know the heart of an alien, since you were aliens in the land of Egypt".

They and Pharaoh had the impression that they were lost in the desert. The desert shut them in, in that the pillar of cloud had led them through a trackless waste and the wind had covered their tracks. They were hyper vulnerable. And this is the kind of position God leads us to. In order to throw ourselves upon Him and to work a great salvation. The Egyptians however were brought to the same confusion. The breadth of crossing for Israel would have had to have been very wide. And it was dry ground, with the pillar of darkness in front of them. They probably charged after the Israelites unaware they were in the midst of the Sea. They then fled against the waters when the wind blew and found themselves in an absolute dead end. Israel crossed from West to East, so the blowing of the East wind meant that God as it were was carving a path towards them to rescue them. We can assume that the wind blew from the West to cover the Egyptians; the water was coming towards them and yet they fled against and not from the waters. This means the waters were coming towards them and yet also coming behind them. They and not Israel were in a dead end by the Sea.

Exo 14:3 Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are entangled in the land. The wilderness has shut them in'-

"Entangled" has the sense of "confused / perplexed"; he assumed they had lost their way. They had turned back on themselves, and he had likely been informed of this by his garrison at Etham; see on Ex. 13:20. "The wilderness" which he supposed had now blocked them

off was that between the Nile valley and the Red Sea. To pass west of the Bitter Lakes made no human sense- and so often, God's strategies for victory involve doing that which is absolutely counter instinctive to all secular wisdom. "Shut them in" is the word also translated "surrender". He thought they would have no option but to surrender to him.

Exo 14:4 I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will follow after them-

The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart occur in a positive context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought- for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too.

And I will get honour over Pharaoh, and over all his armies; and the Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh. They did so-

The rejected at the last day will not be indifferent. It will be an awful end; finally grasping the real essence of spirituality and so desperately wanting to know God in the sense of having a loving relationship with Him- in the very last moments of their existence. The most Biblically emphasized reason for the Red Sea experience is

“that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord” (Ex. 14:4,17) and therefore honour Him. It was surely only in Pharaoh’s last few moments of life that he came, through his experience of condemnation, to know the essence of Yahweh. As the tidal wave crushed down upon him, as water filled his lungs...he desperately came to know Israel’s God in absolute truth. But it was all too late. We must know Him *now*...

Exo 14:5 It was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled; and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was changed towards the people, and they said, What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?-

The Egyptian beast being so furiously determined to destroy Israel at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:5; 15:9) is the basis for the dragon being "wroth with the woman, and went to make war (as Pharaoh 'went') with the remnant of her seed", chasing her into the wilderness and trying to destroy her with water (cp. the Red Sea); but "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood" (Rev. 12:13-17), as at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:12). This passage in Revelation has reference to the latter day persecution of God's people, which is clearly based upon what Pharaoh did.

"That *we* have done" shows clearly the interplay between human freewill and Divine confirmation. Pharaoh let Israel go but God made him do it.

Exo 14:6 He prepared his chariot, and took his army with him-

The Hebrew Bible usually speaks of leaders having their chariots prepared by others, but Pharaoh person-

ally was eager and committed to this enterprise. "His army" would refer to his own personal bodyguard.

Pharaoh still had some horses despite the plagues upon them. Again we see how a remnant was always left to Egypt through all the plagues, as a reminder that God saves by grace and dislikes punishing people and even in wrath remembers mercy just for the sake of pity. His pity is a huge part of His character, and this is the God with whom we have to do.

Exo 14:7 and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over all of them-

This may mean that every chariot in Egypt, all her human strength, was gathered against Israel.

Exo 14:8 Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel-

Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 7:22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34,35). And yet God hardened his heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:8). The references to God hardening Pharaoh's heart generally occur after Pharaoh had first hardened his own heart. The fact Pharaoh hardened his heart was a sin (Ex. 9:34), and yet God encouraged him in this. God offered Pharaoh a way of escape after each of the plagues; all he had to do was to agree to let Israel go. But the conditions got tougher the longer he resisted God's demand: he finally had to not only let Israel go, but also provide them with sacrifices (Ex. 10:25). Likewise when Nebuchadnezzar lifted his heart up, God hardened it (Dan. 5:20).

For the children of Israel went out with a high hand-

See on :31. "With a high hand" means effectively the lifted up hand of God (Ex. 15:12; Is. 26:11). Yet the term also refers to God's solemn oath. The fact He had brought them out of Egypt meant that He was taking an oath to bring them to His Kingdom. Whilst baptism (cp. the Red Sea crossing) is no guarantee of salvation of itself, as we ourselves may choose to return to Egypt, it is His oath to us that from His side, He will now save us and bring us to His Kingdom- if we let Him.

Going with a high hand can mean with confidence in their own strength; hence Job 38:15 "the high arm is broken". So Dt. 32:27 warns against thinking that their own hand had saved them. Pharaoh's heart was hardened in that he was enraged by the fact Israel marched out of Egypt "armed" or in ranks of five, and not as a rabble of runaway slaves. They were wrongly confident in themselves. But it provoked Pharaoh. And this confidence in self suddenly collapsed; see on :10.

Or we can understand the "high hand" as that of God. "Yahweh, when Your hand is lifted up..." (Is. 26:11). Hence Num. 33:3 "They went out with a high hand in the sight of the Egyptians". Moses' uplifted, tiny human hand... was the high hand of Yahweh.

Exo 14:9 The Egyptians pursued after them: all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen, and his army; and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal Zephon-

We note the stress upon "of Pharaoh", "his... his...". He was personally responsible for all this, and the whole narrative is about Pharaoh and Moses locked in conflict.

It may be worth noting that there they camp "by" the sea, whereas in :2 they are specifically commanded to camp "before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea". It could be that they were disobedient to the command but were saved anyway- which is quite a theme of the record.

Exo 14:10 When Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were very afraid. The children of Israel cried out to Yahweh-

The people saw the Egyptians marching after them by the dust clouds from their chariots. These dust clouds ought to have been contrasted by them with the cloud of God's presence which was over them.

When Israel left Egypt God "led them on safely, so that they feared not" (Ps. 78:53). But they *did* fear (Ex. 14:10-12). Surely we must read in some conditions here- God's care for them was such that they need not have feared, but they failed to discern His care and power and therefore they *did* fear.

Israel's deliverance through the Red Sea seems to be attributed to Moses' faith (Heb. 11:28,29; Acts 7:36,38). Yet in the actual record, Moses seems to have shared Israel's cry of fear, and was rebuked for this by God (Ex. 14:15,13,10). Yet in the midst of that rebuke, we learn from the New Testament, God perceived the faith latent within Moses, beneath that human fear and panic. He likewise sees beneath our Christian hypocrisy to what true spirituality there is in us.

The whole description of Egypt's judgments in Ez. 29 is also full of links with those in store for Israel. *They* will cry unto Yahweh in their affliction (Is. 19:20), just as Israel did when Egypt persecuted them (Ex. 2:23; 14:10).

Egypt had 600 chariots but Israel had 600 thousands or military divisions. Yet they feared Egypt. Their high handed attitude of :8 was bravado not underpinned by faith. Their fear is totally psychologically credible. They had always feared the Egyptians as their superiors and couldn't break out of the slave mentality.

Exo 14:11 They said to Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you treated us this way, to bring us out of Egypt?-

Moses had been weak and discouraged in the same way, accusing God of wanting to do them evil rather than save them (Ex. 5:23). And now this was what the people concluded in the desert, when they complained Yahweh had brought them into the desert to slay them. Moses would have found patience with them, because he would have realized that this same desperate conclusion, in the heat of desperation, was what he too had been guilty of. It is awareness of our own failures which provides the basis for others in theirs. God is without that aspect; His patience with human sin is therefore the more wonderful than ours.

Again it is so psychologically credible that God's people cry to Yahweh and yet in the same moment display lack of faith, here, in wishing they had stayed in

Egypt. As noted earlier, their fear of so few Egyptians shows they had not risen above their slave mentality. As so many today will not. Ps. 106:7 comments that Israel rebelled against Yahweh at the Red Sea. And yet for the sake of Moses' faith (Heb. 11), and God's special grace and desire to save Israel, He mightily saved them. He heard their cry at the Red Sea (Neh. 9:9), He focused on the positive, on their cry to Him rather than their lack of faith in His purpose.

Exo 14:12 Isn't this the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?' For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness-

This is so significant; the people didn't actually want redemption. God had been minded to slay them in Egypt for their idolatry and rejection of serving Him in favour of serving the Egyptians (Ez. 20:8). But the pole of His saving grace was stronger than that of His necessary judgment of sin. He saved them against their will. The crossing of the Red Sea was like baptism for us (1 Cor. 10:1,2). We were led to that point by grace alone. It is so wrong to think that leading was some reward for our own righteous hearts. It was by grace alone. It's like the prophecies about Israel's return from the Gentiles and rebuilding their land *after repentance* were fulfilled by God in the 20th century- even though they were not penitent.

Here we learn that Israel had bluntly told Moses whilst in Egypt that they didn't want to leave. They preferred their slavery to a journey with God. This is the

force of the statements that God took Israel out of Egypt with a strong hand, almost against their will. This was the extent of His love for them and His "I will..." desire to save. For all time we see how God really does want to save His people and is very far from indifferent.

Exo 14:13 Moses said to the people, Don't be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of Yahweh, which He will work for you today: for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall never see them again-

Yet his faith was weak at this time; see on :15. He had faith and unbelief at the same time, just as he left Egypt at age 40 "not fearing the wrath of the king", and yet also he fled from fear of death at the hands of the king. To believe and disbelieve at the same time is a sad feature of human nature (Mk. 9:24).

Ex. 14:13 could appear to be prophecy: "The Egyptians... you shall see them again no more for ever". But it is understood as a command not to return to Egypt in Dt. 17:16- and because of Israel turning back to Egypt in their hearts, they would be taken there again (Dt. 28:68). So we must be prepared to accept that what may appear to be prophecy is in fact commandment, which we have the freewill to obey or disobey. Ez. 43:7 likewise is more command than prediction: "The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name" (RV). It isn't saying 'this is a prophecy that they will not do this'- for they did. Rather is it a plea, a command, that they are not to do this any more.

It was by Moses' faith that the Red Sea parted (Heb. 11:29). His faith was based upon the promises of deliv-

erance from and judgment upon Egypt found in Gen. 15:14; 46:3,4. Faith comes from the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Exo 14:14 Yahweh will fight for you, and you shall be still-

"Still" is "silent". Rahab's house had to be identified by a scarlet cord- like the blood of the Passover lamb sprinkled on the two doorposts and lintel of the Israelites' homes in Egypt. The silence demanded of the people when Jericho was taken was surely to recall Ex. 14:14, there the people standing before the Red Sea were assured: "The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent". Compare the command to keep silent whilst Yahweh fought, with the common practice of yelling war cries as an ancient army approached their enemy. All human convention, wisdom and strength, was placed in purposeful opposition to what seemed quite counter-instinctive- to be utterly silent whilst God did the fighting.

Exo 14:15 Yahweh said to Moses, Why do you cry to me? Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward-

"By faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them (Israel). By faith they (Israel) passed through the Red Sea" (Heb. 11:28,29). Yet at this time Israel were weak in faith, they passed through the Red Sea cuddling the idols of Egypt (Ez. 20:8), from the day God knew them they were rebellious against Him; so runs the refrain of the prophets. It seems that due to Moses' faith

Israel were saved by the Passover lamb, through his faith they passed through the Red Sea; his faith was so great, his desire for their salvation so strong, that God counted it to the rest of Israel. Thus "he (Moses, in the context) brought them (Israel) out" of Egypt (Acts 7:36,38). This points forward to Christ's redemption of us, and also indicates how quickly Moses' faith rallied. And yet just prior to crossing the Sea, God rebuked Moses: "Why do you cry unto me?" - even though Moses calmly exhorted the people to have faith (Ex. 14:15 cp. 13). Yet by faith he brought them through the Red Sea. Therefore as with his first exit from Egypt (he feared the wrath of the King, and then he didn't), his faith wavered, but came down on the right side.

So at the shores of the Red Sea, it seems Moses' faith wavered, and he prayed something at best inappropriate. All we read is God's response: "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Ex. 14:15). It seems that Moses' 'cry' isn't recorded- by grace. Likewise it seems Zacharias probably said far more than "Whereby shall I know this?" when Gabriel told him he would soon have a son. It would seem the conversation went on for so long that the people outside wondered why he was staying so long. Presumably he remonstrated with the Angel with other, graciously unrecorded words, and thereby earned the punishment of dumbness (Lk. 1:18-22). We too are to have the love that seeks to cover sin and not unduly record it by keeping a record of wrongs.

There is no record that Moses cried to God, but man's unspoken feelings are read by God as prayer. Moses is rebuked here, as the "you" is you singular, yet Heb. 11 says that it was by his faith that the Sea parted. Again we see faith and unbelief coexist in man but God focuses upon the faith.

They were told to go forward- before the sea was opened. It was really a leap of faith, to as it were cast themselves into the sea, to do what was counterintuitive. They were set up by God with no real choice, seeing they so feared the Egyptians. And this is how it is- we move forward in faith and God does more than His part. We can assume from Ps. 77:17-20 that Moses and Aaron were the first to enter the sea, thus leading the people in: "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters. Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron". Just as the Lord Jesus leads us in such totally counterinstinctive following.

Exo 14:16 Lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground-

The Babylonian Account of Creation claims (Tablet 4, line 137) that Marduk cleft Tiamat, the ocean goddess, with his sword. The Biblical idea of Yahweh cleaving the waters clearly picks up this idea (Hab. 3:9; Ps. 74:15; 78:13,15; Ex. 14:16,21; Jud. 15:19; Is. 35:6; 48:21; 63:12; Neh. 9:11). But these passages largely refer to the miracle God did at the Red Sea, bringing about the creation of His people out of the cleft waters of the Sea. Again, pagan creation is reinterpreted with refer-

ence to a historical, actual event in the experience of God's people.

"Lift up" can mean to put aside. Moses only lifted his hand, :21. Or was that disobedience? And God worked through that partial obedience to save Israel through one of the greatest miracles of the Old Testament? Moses' hand was God's and that hand at the Exodus is called a strong and mighty hand. This shows how if we use our hand for Him, a mightier hand is behind us. The hand that taps on a keyboard, that builds a baptismal bath, that helps another into a wheelchair, that takes the hand of another in grief... a hand mightier far is working through that hand.

Moses sinned later by using his staff to hit the rock, whereas he had been told to have his staff but not use it. We wonder if he failed to perceive the connection. He obeyed here the command about not using his staff, but failed when the test was repeated. Or we can think that here he was disobedient and did use his staff. But later he made the same mistake.

Exo 14:17 I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall go in after them: and I will get Myself honour over Pharaoh, and over all his armies, over his chariots, and over his horsemen-

Hebrew tends to reason through placing 'blocks' of ideas are put in opposition to each other, or 'dialectic', in order to come to conclusions. That's why we can read of God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart (Ex. 7:3; 8:15). To Greek, step-logic thinkers, that's a worrying contradiction- only because

they don't pick up the way that Hebrew reasoning involves these kinds of statements being put in opposition to each other, so that through the dialectic process we come to understand what is meant.

God had hardened their hearts, meaning He had removed sensitivity from their consciences. Pharaoh's heart was turned by God, because that was the direction he himself wanted (Ps. 105:25). Pharaoh's response gets increasingly better, confessing sinfulness, asking for prayer, etc. And yet we have to read this as his conscience being increasingly touched, and yet he refused to act upon it. The movement of conscience within him was overcome by the movement of hardness; and as hardness was his dominant desire, it was that which Yahweh confirmed.

However, it would be wrong to consider the 'hardening' of Pharaoh's heart as solely meaning that Pharaoh was given a hard heart. The words translated 'hardened' are not bad words of themselves; the idea is of strengthening and confirmation. The same idea of a hardened / strengthened heart is found when the words appear later: "Be of good courage, and He will strengthen your heart" (Ps. 27:14). "Of good courage" is the same word used for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Or Is. 35:4 "Say to them of a fearful heart, be strong", or hardened-by God. We will be hardened / confirmed in the psychological positions we ourselves adopt. If we truly wish to be in God's Kingdom and love the Lord's appearing... then we shall be there. This means however that it is the state of our spirit which is so critical. To desire God's

Kingdom "first" is far more than mere religion or involvement with church meetings. This desire is to take a grip upon our entire being.

When Paul insists that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Rom. 9:14-18), he is not only repeating the Biblical record (Ex. 9:12,16; 33:19), but he is alluding to the way that the Jewish *Book of Jubilees* claimed that Mastema [the supposed personal Satan] and not God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Exo 14:18 The Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh, when I have gotten Myself honour over Pharaoh, over his chariots, and over his horsemen-

When they are appointed their portion with the hypocrites and there is wailing and gnashing of teeth, *then* shall the Kingdom be likened unto the five wise and five foolish virgins. *Then* the rejected will understand the principles of that parable, crystal clearly. Members of the ecclesia of Israel will say "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" - but be rejected (how else to understand Mt. 23:39?). Likewise the Egyptians, fleeing in the mud from Yahweh as they vainly hoped against hope that the returning waters wouldn't somehow reach them...they came to know Yahweh (Ex. 14:18). It could well be that this knowing of Yahweh involves a desperate recounting of their sins, seeing that one of the purposes of condemnation is to make men aware of their sinfulness and the depth of God's grace. Num. 32:23 prophesied of Israel in their time of condemnation: "You will be sensible of your sin when evil overtakes you" (LXX).

Or the idea could be that the Egyptians in Egypt were to know Yahweh through Pharaoh's destruction. Again God's intention was to bring good out of judgment. The Egyptians "shall know that I am Yahweh", just as God promised that "I will bring you [Moses' generation] into the land". But the Divine "will" was foiled by human intransigence. Not all Egyptians came to know Yahweh, nor did all Israel enter the land. But the potential and Divine "will" was there. The nature of how Pharaoh was destroyed is full of allusion to Egyptian ideas of the afterlife, as seen in the Coffin Spells and "The Book of the Dead". The idea was that Pharaoh was "Lord of the winds" and at his death, he brought an east wind that ushered back the Nile waters, opened by a glittering pathway, and he passed through a pillar of fire and the Nile waters to eternity at the dwelling place of the gods. All this was deconstructed. He was not "Lord of the winds", Yahweh was. The east wind brought his destruction. The pathway through the water which he eagerly followed led to his shameful destruction, drowning in mud, and not to eternal glory. He could not pass through the pillar of fire. The dwelling of Yahweh was at Sinai, but Pharaoh did not make it there. The description of Sinai as Yahweh's "holy dwelling place" is alluding to these Egyptian ideas of passing through the waters on a pathway to a divine dwelling place. This was all set up so that the Egyptians would be further encouraged to quit their entire religious system and accept Yahweh's way.

Exo 14:19 The angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them, and stood behind them-

The Mount burning with fire when Moses ascended it was due to the pillar of fire standing there, appearing to reach to the "midst of Heaven", showing Heaven and earth were connected through this manifestation (Dt. 4:11). The Angel led them through the wilderness, and elsewhere we read that the pillar of fire led them; the conclusion is therefore that the pillar of fire was where the Angel dwelt. Thus the Angel literally "went before" them as God promised it would, in the form of the pillar. Angels are elsewhere associated with pillars of fire, e. g. the one which came to Manoah, and not least in that God came down in a pillar of fire to speak to Moses. Ex. 14:19 conclusively shows the pillar of fire/cloud and the Angel to be identical: "the Angel of God which went before the camp of Israel removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud (the Shekinah glory) went from before their face, and stood behind them".

Recognizing the extent of Angelic work in our lives should in itself be a humbling experience, not least because if we recognize we are led by the Angels through life, we cannot plan ahead in our own strength. When Israel crossed the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud that led them went behind them so that the Egyptians could not see ahead of them to where the Israelites were, although the actual distance was not great at all (Ex. 14:19,20). This means that the pillar of cloud, which represented the

Angel leading them, was too thick to see through, and so it follows that if the Egyptians could not see through it when it went in front of them, neither could the Israelites for most of the wilderness journey. And if our lives are truly led by the Angel, we should not expect to see the way ahead stretching in front of us, but just rest assured that we are actually being led.

Exo 14:20 It came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud and the darkness, yet gave it light by night: and the one didn't come near the other all the night-

The Angel was light to Israel and darkness to the Egyptians. The Angelic appearance on Sinai featured both bright fire and darkness (Dt. 4:11; 5:22). Hence Israel had light but Egypt had darkness in the plague of darkness- because the Angels stood with each Israelite family. What's light to us is darkness to this world. Josh. 24:7 says that God placed darkness between Israel and the Egyptians. Again this shows that the pillar was thick and effectively darkness. To follow it meant walking with no vision of what was ahead.

Exo 14:21 Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and Yahweh caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided-

The Red Sea lay broadly North-South in orientation. The people crossed from West to East. This meant they would've been walking across the Red Sea against a powerful wind. Participating in God's great salvation in-

volves walking against the wind. But it's this which saves us and opens the way to redemption.

The driving back of the Red Sea, and its return, is explained in Exodus by a "wind". But in Ps. 77:17,18 we find that the wind was in fact a whirlwind, associated with an earthquake and lightnings- all language of a theophany. The historical record doesn't much mention the thunder and theophany which was experienced, according to the later Biblical descriptions of what happened.

The idea of waters being divided in "the midst" (Ex. 14:22) recalls the language of creation- the waters were divided "in the midst" (s.w.) (Gen. 1:6). Remember that Moses [albeit inspired by God] wrote both Genesis and Exodus. He may be suggesting that his faith in creation lead to his faith that the waters would part. For God had mightily parted waters "in the midst" before. And so our faith in the Genesis creation leads us to faith in God's creative salvation of us in life's crises. Thus the Psalms so often allude to creation as an inspiration for faith.

The East wind which blew the locusts in and then to blow them away again, until "not a single locust was left" (Ex. 10:19) is just what happened to the Egyptians- the East wind blew the waters to and fro, and left not a single Egyptian soldier alive (Ex. 14:21,28). The locust plague was an appeal for their repentance. And the plagues began by affecting everyone, but then focus in on the Egyptians and then zoom closer in upon the personal possessions of Pharaoh. In Pharaoh's case, it would be true to say that God's hardening activities gather momentum,

like a swimmer sucked closer and closer towards the waterfall. There has to come a moment when the pull is now too strong, and the plunge is inevitable. It is that moment which perhaps we need to fear more than anything else in human experience

Exo 14:22 The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand, and on their left-

Indeed the ground was so dry that Ps. 106:9 says that "He led them through the depths, as through a desert". There are a number of hints in the record at a new creation. Whilst this has primary reference to the creation of Israel as a nation through the exodus experience, it is fitting that it points forward to the fuller 'new creation' that will be brought about by baptism. Ex. 14:20-22 speak of the Red Sea in terms of "darkness... (giving) light... sea... dry land... the waters were divided", the waters covered [the Egyptians]... all reminiscent of Gen. 1:2,3,10,9,7, respectively. "This month shall be unto you the beginning (Heb. 'rosh') of months: it shall be the first month of the year" (Ex. 12:2) indicates how Passover was to be a new beginning. It is possible to see in the ten plagues brought about by God's word to Moses an echo of the ten times it is recorded that "God said" in Gen. 1. Ps. 105:28-36 describes the plagues on Egypt as a reversal of creation - starting with darkness (cp. "let there be light") and ending with the slaying of the firstborn to match the creation of man last of all. There are also many connections with the flood narrative- again, judgment, destruction and a new world or-

der arising. Israel were to be the new creation born out of those waters. So much potential power was available to them. But still they clung to the idols of Egypt which they carried through those waters.

The wall of water on their right hand and left when they crossed the Red Sea is twice emphasized (Ex. 14:22,29). It is alluded to later, when they are urged to not depart from God's way, not to the right hand nor left (Dt. 5:32; 17:11,20; 28:14). We passed through the Red Sea when we were baptized (1 Cor. 10:1,2). We were set upon a path which is walled up to keep us within it. And we are to remain in that path upon which we were set. To turn aside from it would be as foolish as Israel turning away from their path and trying to walk into the walls of water.

Exo 14:23 The Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea: all of Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen-

It's emphasized that the Egyptians perished in the midst of the sea (Ex. 14:27). It happened in the morning, when Israel were all safely onshore. The Red Sea at the place of crossing suggested by the geographical references in Ex. 14:2 is only about 1 kilometer wide at most. So if the Egyptians were in the middle of the sea when the last of the Israelites had arrived onshore, the distance separating them would've been only 500 meters at most. They were really close and likely could've heard each other. 14:13 says the Israelites saw the Egyptians- they were that close.

Exo 14:24 It happened in the morning watch, that Yahweh looked out on the Egyptian army through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and confused the Egyptian army-

Morning watch- 02:00 to 06:00 a.m. For the two million Israelites plus their animals to all cross so quickly, they must've been moving in a very wide column, which means that the path cut through the waters was very broad.

Especially do we find the essence of the Red Sea deliverance repeated in life after life, situation after situation, in Israel's history. This happens to the extent that some of the Psalms can speak as if we were there present; and Paul stresses how that passage through water remains a type of the baptism of every believer to this day (1 Cor. 10:1). Take for example how just as Yahweh confounded Israel's enemies at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:24), so He did in Deborah's victory over Sisera (Jud. 4:15); and "not one was left" (Jud. 4:16), just as happened with the Egyptians (Ex. 14:28).

Ex. 13:21 says that there was a pillar of cloud in the day time and a pillar of fire by night. But at the time of the Exodus, there was a pillar of cloud for the Egyptians and a pillar of fire to give light in the night for the Israelites (Ex. 14:20,24). Could this mean that the meaning of time was collapsed at this time? It was night for the Israelites but daytime for the Egyptians? Is. 42:16, amidst many exodus / Red Sea allusions, speaks of how God makes the darkness light before His exiting people. The many Johanine references to the Lord Jesus being a light in the darkness for His followers would then be yet

more elaborations of the idea that the Lord Jesus is the antitype of the Angel that led Israel out of Egypt (Jn. 8:12; 12:35,46). Num. 9:21 says that the pillar of cloud was with the Israelites at *night*, and sometimes it was taken up in the night and they therefore had to move on. Does this mean that there were times when the meaning of time was collapsed during their journey, and the night was made as the day (perhaps Ps. 139:12 alludes to this experience)? When Yahweh came down on Sinai, He was enveloped in a *cloud of fire*- suggesting that there was no day and night for Him (Ex. 24:15-17; Dt. 5:22).

Exo 14:25 He took off their chariot wheels, and they drove them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, Let's flee from the face of Israel, for Yahweh fights for them against the Egyptians!-

He jammed the wheels- as a result of the rain making the ground mud beneath them (Ps. 77:17-19). Likewise Sisera "lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet" (Jud. 4:15), due to the mud produced by the hail (Ps. 83:9). "There was not a man left" (Jud. 4:16) of those enemies; matched by the comment concerning the Egyptians, that "there remained not so much as one of them" (Ex. 14:28). Biblical history continually interconnects, demonstrating that the same Divine hand has worked throughout history, and likewise works in our lives according to the same style. See on Ex. 1:7; 15:21.

Exo 14:26 Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come again on the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen-

Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched out arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to perceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8). That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez. 20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Aaron had earlier stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt (Ex. 8:6 s.w.) to produce the plague of frogs- and the Egyptians ought to have perceived that all he needed to do was stretch out his hand, and the waters would return and drown them. But their hearts were hardened against such spiritual perception.

Exo 14:27 Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its strength when the morning ap-

peared; and the Egyptians fled against it. Yahweh overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea-

"Overthrew" translated a word elsewhere always used for being shaken; later references to what happened suggest there was an earthquake, and they may well have been slain by this, although not all were swallowed- as their bodies washed up on the shore in the morning. The fleeing of the Egyptians from Israel in the midst of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:25,27) was a case of fleeing when none pursued them. This was the judgment upon Israel (Lev. 26:17,36; Dt. 28:25), which was to arise because in their hearts they had returned to Egypt (the world) and were therefore to be judged as Egypt, "condemned with the world" they had loved (1 Cor. 11:32).

The fleeing of the Egyptians was to be repeated in all Israel's conflicts with their enemies; every time, the essence of the Red Sea deliverance [which was by grace alone, as Israel then were so weak spiritually] was to be repeated throughout the history of God's people (Num. 10:35; Dt. 28:7).

If Israel crossed over by the morning, they must have crossed quickly and one or two thousand abreast. The way through the sea was therefore very wide.

Exo 14:28 The waters returned, and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even all Pharaoh's army that went in after them into the sea-

The 'covering' of Egypt with frogs in Ex. 8:6 and locusts in Ex. 10:5,15 looked ahead to the 'covering' of the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:28; 15:5,10). It was an appeal for repentance, in the hope that the final smiting

would not be necessary. It was God's intention and hope to save the Egyptians, but they would not.

There remained not so much as one of them-

"There remained not one" beetle (Ex. 8:31), locust (Ex. 10:19) nor Egyptian who pursued the Israelites (Ex. 14:28). The same phrase is used. Again we see how both Egyptians and Israelites were intended to learn from the plagues, and how this came to full term when "not one" of their enemies was left- thanks to the prayer of Moses.

We find the essence of the Red Sea deliverance repeated in life after life, situation after situation, in Israel's history. This happens to the extent that some of the Psalms can speak as if we were there present; and Paul stresses how that passage through water remains a type of the baptism of every believer to this day (1 Cor. 10:1). Take for example how just as Yahweh confounded Israel's enemies at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:24,25), so He did in Deborah's victory over Sisera (Jud. 4:15); and "not one was left" (Jud. 4:16), just as happened with the Egyptians (Ex. 14:28).

Exo 14:29 But the children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand, and on their left-

"A wall" suggests a defence, twice emphasized (:22,29); although they would have been tempted to not see them as a wall of defence at the time, but rather glanced at them in terror, fearing they might come crashing down upon them. Only in hindsight did they perceive, as we do, that what had seemed so terrifying at the time was actually God's wall of defence.

Exo 14:30 Thus Yahweh saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore-

As noted on :23, the Egyptians perished in the midst of the Red Sea, only about 500 meters from the shore. Their bodies would have washed up on the shores. These small touches of detail are what to me add absolute credibility to the narrative.

Exo 14:31 Israel saw the great work which Yahweh did to the Egyptians, and the people feared Yahweh; and they believed in Yahweh, and in his servant Moses-

This was faith that lasted just for a moment. That is the challenge; to not be spiritual just on the cusp of the moment but to have an abiding faith. Right at their birth by the Red Sea, the Almighty records that "the people feared Yahweh, and believed Yahweh, and His servant Moses" (Ex. 14:23). No mention is made of the Egyptian idols they were still cuddling (we don't directly learn about them until Ez. 20). Nor do we learn that this "belief" of theirs lasted a mere three days; nor of the fact that they rejected Moses, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. "There was no strange god" with Israel on their journey (Dt. 32:12); but there were (Am. 5:26). The reconciliation is that God counted as Israel as devoted solely to Him.

There are many references in the Upper Room discourse to Moses- without doubt, Moses was very much in the Lord's mind as He faced His end. Consider at your leisure how Jn. 14:1 ["you believe in God, believe also in Me" = Ex. 14:31; Jn. 14:11 = Ex. 14:8]. When the

Lord speaks in the Upper Room of manifesting the Father and Himself unto the disciples (Jn. 14:21,22), he is alluding to the way that Moses asked God to “manifest thyself unto me” (Ex. 33:18 LXX). The Lord’s allusion makes Himself out to be God’s representatives, and all those who believe in Him to be as Moses, receiving the vision of God’s glory. Note that it was that very experience above all others which marks off Moses in Rabbinic writings as supreme and beyond all human equal. And yet the Lord is teaching that that very experience of Moses is to be shared to an even higher degree by all His followers. It would’ve taken real faith and spiritual ambition for those immature men who listened to the Lord that evening to really believe it... And the same difficult call comes to us too.

EXODUS CHAPTER 15

Exo 15:1 Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to Yahweh, and said, I will sing to Yahweh, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea-

The singular horse and rider refers to Pharaoh as the other Egyptians were in chariots.

The Psalms so often encourage Israelites to feel as if they personally had been through the Red Sea experience. Generation would tell to generation the Passover story, and would also sing of God's greatness as Israel did in Ex. 15 (Ps. 145:5-7). Hence: "He turned the sea into dry land... there let us (AV: did we) rejoice in him" (Ps. 66:6 RVmg.). We too are enabled by Scripture to feel as if we were there, and to rejoice in what God did for us there. This of course depends upon our sense of solidarity with God's people over time, as well as over space.

Therefore the saints will sing "The Song of Moses", which Ex. 15 records was sung after the triumph at the Red Sea. This indicates that Israel in Egypt prior to that represents the saints, just before the Lord's coming. Rev. 15:2-4 is all in the context of the Exodus: "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire (cp. the calm Red Sea after it had returned over the Egyptians): and them that had gotten the victory (God was victorious at the Red Sea, Ex. 15:1) over the beast (Egypt is the prototype beast, Is. 51:9; Ez. 29:3)... having the harps of God (cp. Miriam's timbrels)... they sing the song of Moses... Who

shall not fear Thee (cp. Ex. 15:14-16)... all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest", referring to how the nations of Canaan were subdued as a result of the Red Sea victory (see Ex. 15:15). There must therefore be a latter day equivalent of the Red Sea deliverance of God's people, **and this is why the events of the exodus are alluded to throughout Rev. 12 and 13- the destruction of the latter day beast system matches that of Pharaoh, and God's people will likewise rejoice over this destruction. But the idea clearly is that the deliverance at the Red Sea is the deliverance of every man in Christ. We have a part in it, this is not mere history, this deliverance is ours. Lk. 9:51 speaks of the Lord's *exodos* which He accomplished at Jerusalem at His death- at the same Passover time as the exodus. His passing out of Egypt to eternal life is therefore to be seen as prefigured by the Red Sea crossing and the destruction of Pharaoh [cp. the devil, sin, which held us in slavery]. It was through Him that Yahweh became *el gibbor*, a man of war (:3)- a title of the Lord Jesus in Isaiah 9. This is why Rev. 15:3 speaks of the Song of Moses as being the Song of the Lamb.**

The Songs of Moses at the Red Sea and at his death were sung by a stuttering man (Ex. 4:10). This shows for all time how God works through those who apparently are unsuited for His work.

Exo 15:2 Yah is my strength and song. He has become my salvation-

Moses perceived that the essence of Yahweh and His Name was salvation. To save weak sinners like Israel were at the time is what He is all about. He is a God of salvation, not condemnation; and this should encourage us in our weakness.

Heb. "He has become to me a salvation". The idea is that we each sing this song at the last day, just as all Israel were to sing it, feeling that the exodus happened to me personally. "He has become my salvation" uses a form of the verb 'to be'. Moses perceived that seven times, Yahweh had declared that "I will..." save. Yahoshua, Yah saves, 'Jesus', is the essence of our God, and He articulated that same basic characteristic to Moses and all Israel through the Red Sea salvation and the power of the blood of the lamb. Hence :3 "Yahweh is His Name".

This is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him-

Moses was only with his parents in babyhood and maybe very early childhood. They inculcated in him the faith of Yahweh at that early age. They likely died whilst he was still in the court of Pharaoh and looked like an ungrateful child who had gone the way of the world and forgotten his God and his people and their efforts to raise him in the faith. Moses here and in Ex. 18:4 pays tribute to them. What a surprise awaits them in the Kingdom!

Exo 15:3 Yahweh is a man of war. Yahweh is His name-

Moses hereby resigns all possible idea that he himself was a mighty warrior who had saved Israel out of Egypt. He had not fought, and the Egyptians had fled when none pursued them. Yahweh alone was the warrior of Israel.

Exo 15:4 He has cast Pharaoh's chariots and his army into the sea. His chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea-

The Egyptians themselves chased after the Israelites into the sea, but God was confirming them in their decision- He was casting them into that water. But if they'd been interviewed as they charged in, they'd have said that they were of their 100% freewill chasing after the Israelites. But God works through and confirms people in their freewill decisions.

Exo 15:5 The deeps cover them. They went down into the depths like a stone-

The 'covering' of Egypt with frogs in Ex. 8:6 and locusts in Ex. 10:5,15 looked ahead to the 'covering' of the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:28; 15:5,10). It was an appeal for repentance, in the hope that the final smiting would not be necessary. It was God's intention and hope to save the Egyptians, but they would not. They may well have been swallowed by some kind of earthquake (see on Ex. 14:27) and then their bodies floated to the surface, to be washed up on the shore as a witness to Israel of the destruction of their enemies. The destruction of Babylon is described as a stone being cast into the depths, and this latter day triumph is to be based upon the historical destruction of the Egyptians.

Exo 15:6 Your right hand, Yahweh, is glorious in power. Your right hand, Yahweh, dashes the enemy in pieces-

The present tenses inculcate the grand theme- that the victory at the Red Sea was to be experienced as ongoing throughout the history of God's people. They were to be continually saved, and their enemies likewise defeated.

Exo 15:7 In the greatness of Your excellency, You overthrow those who rise up against You. You send forth Your wrath. It consumes them as stubble-

As noted on :6, the present tenses suggest that the victory at the Red Sea was to be forever ongoing in the experience of God's people. What happened in the past (note the past tenses of :8) was to become ongoing experience. And so we like David **and** other later writers can feel that God comes through for us in our lives, just as He did at the Red Sea; and He shall do so for us ultimately.

Exo 15:8 With the blast of Your nostrils, the waters were piled up. The floods stood upright as a heap. The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea-

"A blast" (Heb. *ruach*, a spirit / Angel?) being sent upon Sennacherib uses the same term used here about Pharaoh's destruction, and it is also used of that of Babylon (Jer. 51:1). As noted on :21, these similarities show the same Divine hand working throughout the centuries of human history. "Congealed" can mean frozen, although the idea is likely that the water appeared like that, rather than being literally frozen.

Exo 15:9 The enemy said, 'I will pursue. I will overtake. I will divide the spoil. My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them'-

But they were cast into the sea by God (Ex. 15:21). We see here how God confirms people in the desires of their heart, for both good and bad.

The Egyptian beast being so furiously determined to destroy Israel at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:5; 15:9) is the basis for the dragon being "wroth with the woman, and went to make war (as Pharaoh 'went') with the remnant of her seed", chasing her into the wilderness and trying to destroy her with water (cp. the Red Sea); but "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood" (Rev. 12:13-17), as at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:12). This passage in Revelation has reference to the latter day persecution of God's people.

We note here the six [not seven] "I will..." statements. Egypt were pitted against God's purpose, His seven fold statement of His Name, which meant that "I will..." save Israel.

Exo 15:10 You blew with Your wind-

The reference may be to God's wind / spirit in an Angel.

The sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters-

Rev. 18 describes the latter day Babylon as being destroyed by being cast into the sea as a stone. This is definitely based on the description of Egypt as suffering the same fate in the Red Sea (Ex. 15:5,10), thus associating the historical 'Egypt' with last days Babylon. All this

would suggest that the Lord could return at Passover, or the final tribulation begin then. "The day of the Lord" is the same phrase used about a Jewish feast. "Let the feasts come round: then will I distress Ariel" (Is. 29:1,2 RV).

Exo 15:11 Who is like You, Yahweh, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?-

The earlier books of the Bible declare Yahweh as greater than all other gods; later on, especially in Isaiah, it's more specifically stated that the other gods don't exist. Rather like the earlier parts of the Gospel records speaking of God's supremacy over demons / pagan gods; but then such references fade as it becomes apparent that Yahweh is *so* great that the other gods don't exist at all. God is very gentle in how He progressively teaches and reveals Himself to His people. We at times need to do the same in teaching misbelievers and unbelievers. The Lord's attitude to the question of demons is an example.

As in Ex. 12:12; 15:11; Num. 33:4, the "gods" are spoken of for a moment as real and existing, in order to show Yahweh's total superiority over them to the point that they didn't exist. Note how it was the Egyptian people who were judged (Gen. 15:14); their idols ("gods") are used by metonymy to stand for those who believed in them. Likewise "demons" is sometimes put by metonymy for those who believed in them (e.g. Mk. 2:32,34). The judgment upon Egypt's gods is brought out by an otherwise obscure reference in Ex. 7:19 to how "there shall be blood in all the land of Egypt on wood and in stone". "Wood and stone" is a term usually used

in the Bible for idols; and "the Egyptian priests used to wash the images of their gods in water every day early in the morning". Thus the gods were shown to be effectively dead and bleeding.

Exo 15:12 You stretched out Your right hand. The earth swallowed them-

As later happened to apostate Israel in the wilderness (Num. 16:32; 26:10). The punishment / judgment upon the world [Egypt] will come upon God's renegade people; they shall be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). The swallowing up of the Egyptian rods by that of Aaron's (Ex. 7:12) had been to warn the perceptive Egyptians that Yahweh could easily swallow them up if He wished; and He did so at the Red Sea. Because they failed to learn from His prior warning.

They may well have been swallowed by some kind of earthquake (see on Ex. 14:27) and then their bodies floated to the surface, to be washed up on the shore as a witness to Israel of the destruction of their enemies.

Exo 15:13 You, in Your grace, have led the people that You have redeemed. You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation-

"You have guided them" suggests that the Exodus was a guarantee that final entry into the Kingdom was assured and as good as done. This is what baptism means too, but as with the Israel who first sung these words, we can go back to Egypt because we prefer the **slave mentality**. The Exodus deliverance was seen as part and parcel of being given inheritance in the promised land; just as baptism is for us. We can upset the process, as faithless Israel did in the wilderness. Whilst baptism of itself will not save us (cp. crossing the Red Sea, 1 Cor. 10:1,2), it is a guarantee that God from His side will guide us to His Kingdom.

Moses' song of triumph after the Red Sea deliverance shows a fine spirituality. However, we note here his possible misunderstanding in Ex. 15:13,17- that Sinai was to be "the place" where God would dwell with Israel.

Exo 15:14 The peoples have heard. They tremble. Pangs have taken hold on the inhabitants of Philistia-

Rahab was aware of what Israel had done to their enemies on their way to Jericho- and she appears to allude to Moses' commands to destroy utterly and not make covenant with the peoples of the land (Dt. 2:32-37; 7:1-5; 20:16-18). When she says that she was aware that God had "given you the land" (Josh. 2:9), she uses the same two Hebrew words used repeatedly in Deuteronomy regarding God's promise to give Israel the land of the Canaanites. "Your terror is fallen upon us" is likewise an allusion to Ex. 15:16; 23:27 [the same Hebrew word for "terror" is used by Rahab]. Rahab speaks of how her people are "fainting" in fear- quoting Ex. 15:15 about how the inhabitants of Canaan would "faint" (AV "melt away") because of Israel. Knowing all this, she has the ambition to request the impossible- that she would be the exception, that with her a covenant would be made. When she says that "we have heard" about the Exodus (Josh. 2:10), she may be referring to the prophecy of Ex. 15:14: "The people shall hear and be afraid". In this case, her emphasis would have been upon the word "have"- 'yes, we have heard indeed, as Moses sung, and yes, we are afraid'. Seeking God's face is actually to strive for the unachievable in this life; but it's what we are to do. Spiritual ambition of the type Rahab had lifts us far above the

mire of mediocrity which there is in all human life under the sun.

Exo 15:15 Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed-

We must put this together with the way Edom "refused to give Israel passage through his border" (Num. 20:18-21). Edom's refusal was because they were "dismayed" and terrified, not because they had some nonchalant confidence against Israel. Rather like the walls of Jericho appearing so strong- yet they were built from chronic fear of the Israelites. This is an example of where we must place scripture together to get an accurate picture.

Trembling takes hold of the mighty men of Moab-

This is indicated by the way Balak king of Moab tried to hire Balaam to curse Israel.

All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away-

Israel doubtless sung this song with great gusto. And truly it happened, that the Canaanite nations melted in fear of Israel (Josh. 2:11). But Israel's hearts "melted" for fear of those melting Canaanites (Josh. 14:8). Do *we* believe the words we so fervently sing...? For Israel didn't. It remained as words on a hymn sheet, and never took lodgment in their hearts.

Exo 15:16 Terror and dread falls on them. By the greatness of your arm they are as still as a stone- until Your people pass over, Yahweh, until the people pass over whom You have purchased-

As the Egyptians sunk as a stone (Ex. 15:5), so would the Canaanite nations. If God could do this to the Egyptians, He would remove all other obstacles to enter-

ing the Kingdom. The 'passing over' of the Red Sea was to be seen as the entire passing over into the Kingdom. Their entire journey was to be done in the spirit of the crossing of the Red Sea. The fact we have been brought out of the world, baptized through the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:1-3), is comfort and encouragement that all the other obstacles on the Kingdom road will also be dealt with. We can never under-estimate the significance of our own baptisms.

Yahweh "purchased" His people from Egypt (Ex. 15:16) in the sense that He "redeemed" them (Ex. 6:6), alluding to the idea of buying a close relative out of slavery to a Gentile. God's people were in slavery to Egypt and wished to remain like that (Ex. 14:12); and had accepted their idols, rather than Yahweh (Ez. 20:8). Yet God bought them out of that slavery, He redeemed them only thanks to His love and pity (s.w. Is. 63:9); so earnest was He to have them as His own. We cannot push the metaphors too far, but the price paid was perhaps represented by the blood of the Passover lamb. For this finally was the price He was willing to pay to redeem us, similarly weak as they were. For we are redeemed (s.w.) by Him from the power of sin and death (Hos. 13:14).

Exo 15:17 You shall bring them in-

The prophets had the spirit of Moses, who wished to see Israel in the land glorifying God, and was willing for his name to be blotted out of the book of eternal remembrance for that to happen. In that spirit, Moses even earlier could rejoice in song that "Thou wilt bring *them* in

and plant *them*" (Ex. 15:17) rather than "You will bring *us* in...". The prophetic desire was to see God glorified rather than their own success. This is the spirit of the prophets. This is what led them to see the tragedy of insincerity, of indifference, of the don't care attitude.

And plant them-

Gen. 2:5 explains how God created "every plant of the field before it was in the earth / *eretz* / land [promised to Abraham]". Quite simply, the plants Israel knew had been made by God and somehow transplanted or moved into the land, just as one does when developing a garden. It was Moses' understanding that on entering the land, God would be planting Israel there (Ex. 15:17; Num. 24:6), just as God had planted in Eden (Gen. 2:8 s.w.).

In the mountain of your inheritance-

The parable of the pounds describes the reward of the faithful in terms of being given ten or five cities (Lk. 19:17). This idea of dividing up groups of cities was surely meant to send the mind back to the way Israel in their wilderness years were each promised their own individual cities and villages, which they later inherited. The idea of inheriting "ten cities" occurs in Josh. 15:57; 21:5,26; 1 Chron. 6:61 (all of which are in the context of the priests receiving their cities), and "five cities" in 1 Chron. 4:32. As each Israelite was promised some personal inheritance in the land, rather than some blanket reward which the whole nation received, so we too have a personal reward prepared. The language of inheritance (e.g. 1 Pet. 1:4) and preparation of reward (Mt. 25:34;

Jn. 14:1) in the NT is alluding to this OT background of the land being prepared by the Angels for Israel to inherit (Ex. 15:17 Heb.; 23:20; Ps. 68:9,10 Heb.) . We must be careful not to think that our promised inheritance is *only* eternal life; it is something being personally prepared for each of us. The language of preparation seems inappropriate if our reward is only eternal life.

The place, Yahweh, which You have made for yourself to dwell in; the sanctuary, Lord, which Your hands have established-

The whole land of Israel was intended to be the sanctuary ultimately, and not just the temple mount (Ps. 78:54). But this was one of the many potentials made possible for Israel which never materialized, because of their failures.

Exo 15:18 Yahweh shall reign forever and ever-

The sense of this statement is explained by the next verse explaining that this is because Yahweh had destroyed the Egyptians. "Reign over" can mean to defeat. The idea is that His victory over Egypt would continue eternally; the same victories required for the salvation of His people (in whatever form) would continue always. The Red Sea was not to be seen as an isolated victory, but programmatic for all His victories. David in the Psalms so often alludes to the Red Sea victory like this; and felt he was experiencing similar salvation from God. And we can too.

The whole song alludes to the Baal myth. Baal had a conflict with Yam, the god of the sea, which Baal won, the nations and other gods all feared him, he

built a sanctuary on a mountain, and declared himself eternal King. Israel worshipped Baal at this time, Hosea says. But they are being shown that Yahweh and not Baal was to be worshipped. Yet despite singing this song, possibly as a kind of national anthem, they continued their worship of Baal despite giving this lip service to Yahweh's supremacy. We can do the same with our idols...

Exo 15:19 For the horses of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and Yahweh brought back the waters of the sea on them; but the children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea-

AV has "the horse of Pharaoh". Consistently, the record is focused upon this man, who pitted himself against Yahweh in abusing His people. The language of the plagues and exodus is so frequently used in the book of Revelation and other latter day prophecies, leading us to see Pharaoh as a type of the latter day antiChrist figure.

Exo 15:20 Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dances-

Ps. 150:4 bids all God's people take up the tambourine and dance because of what God has done and will do at the coming of His Son. The same Hebrew words are used as here. Again and again the point is made- that we are to see the Red Sea as our victory, to be replicated in essence in our lives; we too are to rejoice in that victory. "*They* went through the water on foot... and [therefore] there did *we* rejoice in him" (Ps. 66:6).

Exo 15:21 Miriam answered them-

She appears to have sung words to them, to which they responded with a chorus. Or perhaps the idea is that she and the women answered "them" in the sense of the words sung by the men in the song of Moses, in a kind of part singing.

Sing to Yahweh, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea-

They ran into the sea of their own freewill (:9), but God confirmed them in this. The language is used again in the description of Babylon's judgments: "the horse and his rider... the chariot and his rider" (Jer. 51:19-23) is quoting Ex. 15:4,21. Biblical history continually interconnects, demonstrating that the same Divine hand has worked throughout history, and likewise works in our lives according to the same style. See on :8; Ex. 1:7; 14:25.

Exo 15:22 Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water-

This is where we are located- we have been "saved" from Egypt, we are out of slavery, but we are at some point in the wilderness between slavery and final freedom. "Shur" means 'the wall', and may refer to the wall built to define the boundary of Egypt by an earlier dynasty. Num. 33:8 defines the part of the wilderness as being near Etham, where there was a garrison of Egyptians (see on Ex. 13:20). It had been God's intention that they would go three days journey from Egypt into the wilderness and then worship Him (Ex. 8:27). But they

didn't. It seems God purposefully didn't provide water for them- because this great trial was intended to lead them to worship and faith. **They should have coped with it, because He knew their levels, and knew that if they saw war by going through Philistine territory, that test would be too great for them and they would've returned to Egypt.** But instead they rebelled, and His intention they would worship Him then didn't come to fruition. How many billions of such plans are made and frustrated each day by human short-sightedness... We note that very soon after their baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2), they ran into testing. Just as the Lord did, and as we do.

Exo 15:23 When they came to Marah, they couldn't drink from the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore its name was called Marah-

Pharaoh was condemned and Egypt overthrown because of his hard heart- but the very word is used to describe the hardness of Israel's heart at the time (Ex. 32:9; 33:3-5; 34:9). Israel were really no better than Egypt- just as Egypt was plagued "so that they could not drink the water" (Ex. 7:24), so we find Israel in the same situation right after leaving Egypt (Ex. 15:23). As the Egyptians were stripped of their jewellery, so Israel stripped themselves of it before the golden calf (Ex. 12:36; 33:6).

Egypt's experience in Egypt had been bitter (Ex. 1:14), and the Passover herbs were to recall that bitterness (Ex. 12:8). Their complaint was that the wilderness life was as bitter as Egypt had been. This can be our feeling at times- that life is bitter, it's suf-

fering either way, be it in Christ or in the world. But they were being reminded that this bitterness could be lifted. They were being shown that the deliverance from Egypt had to be experienced throughout the wilderness journey, as situations arose which were reminiscent of Egypt- and again, they could be saved from them. We are still in the now / but not yet point between slavery and ultimate freedom.

We learn from Dt. 33:8-11 that in some way at this time, some of the tribe of Levi showed themselves faithful to God, whilst others didn't, and the faithful Levites opposed the unfaithful ones- although this isn't here recorded. This kind of faithfulness was shown again at the time of the golden calf, and therefore the system of the firstborn being priests was changed so that the tribe of Levi became the source of the priests. Priesthood was therefore given on the basis of qualification, and Levi's behaviour at this point was one of those qualifications: "Of Levi he said, Your Thummim and your Urim are with your holy one [the faithful Levites] whom You proved at Massah, with whom You strove [the unfaithful Levites] at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and of his mother, 'I have not seen him'. Neither did he acknowledge his brothers, nor did he know his own children; for they have observed Your word and keep Your covenant.

They shall teach Jacob Your ordinances, and Israel Your law. They shall put incense before You and whole burnt offering on Your altar".

Exo 15:24 The people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?-

Israel continually "murmured" against Moses (Ex. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3; Num. 14:2,27,29 cp. Dt. 1:27; Ps. 106:25; 1 Cor. 10:10). Nearly all these murmurings were related to Israel's disbelief that Moses really could bring them into the land. Likewise Israel disbelieved that eating Christ's words (Jn. 6:63) really could lead them to salvation; and their temptation to murmur in this way is ours too, especially in the last days (1 Cor. 10:10-12).

The record seems to place Moses and "the people" in juxtaposition around 100 times (e.g. Ex. 15:24; 17:2,3; 32:1 NIV; Num. 16:41 NIV; 20:2,3; 21:5). They accused Moses of being a cruel cult leader, bent on leading them out into the desert to kill them and steal their wealth from them (Num. 16:13,14)- when in fact Moses was delivering them from the house of bondage, and was willing to lay down his own salvation for theirs. The way Moses submerged his own pain is superb; both of their rejection of him and of God's rejection of him from entering the Kingdom. The style of Moses' writing in Num. 20:12-14 reveals this submerging of his own pain. He speaks of himself in the third person, omitting any personal reflection on his own feelings: "The Lord spake unto Moses... Because you believed me not... you shall not bring the congregation into the land... and Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom...". Likewise all the references to "the Lord spake unto Moses" (Lev. 1:1). Moses submerged his own personality in the way he wrote his books.

The test as to "What shall we drink?" was to be repeated in Ex. 17 and Num. 20. The same basic test, although in regard to "What shall we eat?", was repeated in Ex. 16. The Lord alludes to this when warning us not to ask what we shall eat or drink but to live life trusting in God's provision. And this is how life goes- tests repeat, in essence, and we are intended to learn from how God provides and acts in earlier tests in our lives. And also from how He has provided historically, in the Biblical record. It's the same with how God had carefully instructed Moses how to use his rod, and therefore his failure with his rod was seen as so culpable.

Exo 15:25 Then he cried to Yahweh. Yahweh showed him a tree, and he threw it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet-

We could see in the tree a foretaste of "the tree" on which the Lord was crucified. **We note the connection with how at Elim there was good water with palm trees next to it, as if continuing the theme of a tree making water good.**

Moses was asked to *throw down* wood into the waters (Ex. 15:25). His staff, also made of wood, had to be *lifted up* in order to open the Red Sea and in order to get victory over Amalek (Ex. 17:9). The plagues had involved specific commandment about lifting up the rod. He was being taught careful obedience to commandment about wood, and yet he failed to learn- for the sin which excluded him from entering Canaan was that of not obeying commandment about

his rod / the wood. He was told to take the rod in his hand but not use it. This may explain the apparent harshness of God's condemnation of him over this incident.

There He made a statute and an ordinance for them-

What exactly this was isn't defined. It seems it was some simple test of their obedience, perhaps related to the gathering of the water, just as the commandments about the gathering of the manna were a simple test of obedience- which they failed. It was intended to teach them the need for the more detailed set of ordinances which they were to soon receive (:26).

Perhaps Jer. 7:22,23 allude here: "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you".

And there He tested them-

At the very time Israel put God to the test at Marah (Dt. 6:16), God responded by testing *them* (Ex. 15:25). When Israel were weary of God, He wearied them (Is. 43:22,24). Because they turned their back on Him (Jer. 2:27), He turned His back on them (Jer. 18:17); because they broke His eternal covenant with them, He eventually did likewise. On the other hand, God set the rainbow in the sky so that whenever *He* looks upon it, He will remember His covenant with man (Gen. 9:16). The pronouns seem wrong; we would expect to read that the

rainbow is so that whenever *we* look upon it, we remember... but no. God condescends to man to such an extent that He invites us to understand that whenever we remember the covenant with Him, He does likewise.

Exo 15:26 and He said, If you will diligently listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, and will do that which is right in His eyes, and will pay attention to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you, which I have put on the Egyptians-

The plagues upon the Egyptians were plagues upon their gods. If Israel worshipped their gods (and they did- Ez. 20:8), then the plagues would come upon them. And we often see the judgments upon an apostate Israel described in terms of what came upon Egypt. Thus the descriptions in Revelation of the seals and vials of judgment to come upon Israel are based around the plagues upon Egypt.

For I am Yahweh who heals you-

Whenever God speaks about His Name, it is in the context of His emphasizing His huge commitment to Israel as His people, often in the face of their weakness (Ex. 12:12; 15:26; 20:2; Ez. 20:5,6). The very meaning of God's Name is of itself encouraging- although it is somewhat masked in English translations. God 'is' not just in the sense that He exists, but in that He 'is' there with and for us. The verb behind 'YHWH' was "originally causative", i.e. God not only 'is' but He causes things to happen. We aren't to understand Him as passive, just a stone cold Name... but rather passionately active and

causative in our sometimes apparently static and repetitive lives.

Again, God's healings of Israel are to be programmatic for His people of all time (Ps. 103:3). It seems that as a result of their lack of faith, they were perhaps struck with some of the plagues of Egypt at this point (for they were all healthy on leaving Egypt, Ps. 105:37)- and then healed from them.

We need to imagine the feelings of God as He provided food and drink for them:

He fed and watered them as a doting parent does a young child. Consider: "In the wilderness, you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you traveled until you reached this place (Dt. 1.29-31). If a child finds water bitter, we naturally want to give them sweet water. "There you are darling, you'll like this". And for all the world, that's how it seems God treated Israel here. Or Hos. 11:1-4:

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness,

with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks,

I bent down to them and fed them".

Note that last line: "I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks, I bent down to them and fed them". That was the spirit of love behind His feeding of them. And yet they demanded food and water like an ungrateful person assumes that the royal "they" must provide for me... and worshipped their idols more and more instead of being grateful. You could weep for God. Israel's desire for food and drink was not a simple request of a child to the parent for sustenance. "They had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert" (Ps. 106:14). "You have been rebellious against the Lord as long as he has known you" (Dt. 9:24).

And yet God saw their very small love for Him, despite their idol worship, as wonderful: "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, How you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown" (Jer. 2.2). "Therefore, I will now allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. From there I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she shall respond to me as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt" (Hos. 2.14,15). This all sounds like the lover almost over eager to wildly over interpret any sign of love for him or even interest in his approaches. And we... love God. We thereby touch His heart, given His tragic experience with Israel.

That heals *you* suggests they were bitter with the bitterness of Egypt, the world, and could be healed by

the tree, looking forward to the cross. This is the psychological miracle possible through engagement with the Lord's death for us and the subsequent gift of His spirit.

Exo 15:27 They came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water, and seventy palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters-

There were twelve wells- one for each of the tribes. The lesson was that God had foreseen Israel's need for water long ago, and arranged those wells for them. As for us in our wilderness journeys. Yet 70 is the number of the Gentile nations in Gen. 10. They were being shown that God's intention was to combine Israelites and Gentiles within a new multiethnic people of God. Perhaps this arrangement of 12 springs and 70 palms was to help Israel to better incorporate the "mixed multitude" amongst them, as being equally God's people. Hence "Elim" implies "holy trees", or "trees of God", as if to remind Israel that He accepted the mixed multitude of Gentiles as equally His redeemed people. **Possibly the 70 palm trees were intended to represent the 70 elders of Ex. 24 who were currently the leaders of Israel. The righteous grow upright as the palm tree, David will later say. Perhaps the idea is that the elders of Israel were intended to bring forth good water for all Israel; and yet in reality they failed to reach this potential, and the system of 70 elders was replaced.**

EXODUS CHAPTER 16

Exo 16:1 They took their journey from Elim-

After one stop over to camp by the Red Sea (Num. 33:10,11). This stop next to the Red Sea was perhaps to help them reflect further upon the wonder of their deliverance through that sea.

This is the time of Jer. 2:2, when God saw Israel as following after Him in love into the wilderness. Yet at this very time the entire congregation murmured against Moses (:2). So this was His desire to see them positively because they still had their idols and were rebellious against Him from the day He knew them. Because He was so in love with them He was eager to interpret any move from them as love for Him. He likewise does not behold iniquity in Jacob, in us, His love imputes righteousness to us. He sees the positive and not the negative, and this is how we should see each other who are in Christ.

And all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt-

"All the congregation" could be stressing the totality of deliverance. Although it is possible some Israelites preferred Egypt and remained in Egypt, they were not now part of the congregation. Crossing the Red Sea, like baptism for us (1 Cor. 10:1,2), defined who was in the congregation.

Exo 16:2 The whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness-

Israel continually "murmured" against Moses (Ex. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3; Num. 14:2,27,29 cp. Dt. 1:27; Ps. 106:25; 1 Cor. 10:10). Nearly all these murmurings were related to Israel's disbelief that Moses really could bring them into the land. Likewise Israel disbelieved that eating Christ's words (Jn. 6:63) really could lead them to salvation; and their temptation to murmur in this way is ours too, especially in the last days (1 Cor. 10:10-12). The Hebrew for "murmur" is the word for "stop", and is usually translated in that way. The idea is that they didn't want to go further on the journey; they wanted to return to Egypt. Despite the wonder of the Red Sea deliverance. Their hearts truly were in Egypt. This sense of not wanting to go onwards towards the Kingdom, to put a brake on God's saving process, is the same temptation which in essence afflicts all God's people who have started the journey with Him.

Presumably the food taken with them from Egypt was now exhausted, and perhaps they had found fish to eat during their encampment by the Red Sea mentioned in Num. 33:10,11.

Exo 16:3 and the children of Israel said to them, We wish that we had died by the hand of Yahweh in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots, when we ate our fill of bread, for you have brought us out into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger-

The number of firstborn males after Israel left Egypt was remarkably small (around 20,000, Num. 3:43). Women in most primitive societies have an average of 7 births. this would mean that given a total population of around 2,800,000 on leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:37), there should have been around 400,000 firstborn males. But instead, there is only a fraction of this number. Why? Did all Israel eat the Passover? Were many in fact slain. My suggestion- and this is well in the category of things you will never know for sure and can only ponder- is that many Hebrew firstborns died on Passover night. Israel were warned that if they did not properly keep the Passover, “the Destroyer” Angel would kill their firstborn (Ex. 12:23). “The Destroyer” is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:10: “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer” (*olothreutes*; this is a proper noun in the Greek). Who was the Destroyer? If Scripture interprets Scripture, it was the ‘Destroyer’ Angel of Passover night. In similar vein Heb. 11:28 speaks of “He (the Angel) that destroyed (Gk. *olothreuo*) the firstborn”. *Very* soon afterwards, the people reminded Moses of this incident: “Would to God *we* (maybe this is the emphasis) had (also) died by the hand of the Lord (a phrase often associated with Angel’s work at Passover: Josh. 4:24; Is. 11:11; 19:16; Dan. 9:15; Heb. 8:9) in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pot (Young’s Literal) and when we did eat bread” (Ex. 16:3). They weren’t just saying they wished they had died in Egypt; they wished they had died by the hand of the Lord. Sitting by the flesh pot

and eating bread is perhaps a reference to eating Passover that night, when in (perhaps) 90% of Hebrew families the firstborn had slumped down in death. They wished they too had died that Passover night. They felt Moses was going to kill them as, by implication, they blamed him for killing the firstborn.

Moses had been weak and discouraged in the same way, accusing God of wanting to do them evil rather than save them (Ex. 5:23). And now this was what the people concluded in the desert, when they complained Yahweh had brought them into the desert to slay them. Moses would have found patience with them, because he would have realized that this same desperate conclusion, in the heat of desperation, was what he too had been guilty of. It is awareness of our own failures which provides the basis for others in theirs. God is without that aspect; His patience with human sin is therefore the more wonderful than ours.

It may seem incredible that the people so often assumed God was evil and not good, and wanted to destroy them. But we too are faced with these two choices- if we don't believe God is going to save us, then we are faced with the alternative of believing that He brought us out of the world just in order to condemn us. And it is unthinkable that God is evil. He is good and had already historically demonstrated that to Israel through the exodus and the plagues.

The test as to "What shall we drink?" in Ex. 17 was a repeat of that in Ex. 15 and Num. 20. The same basic test, although in regard to "What shall we eat?",

was repeated in Ex. 16. The Lord alludes to this when warning us not to ask what we shall eat or drink but to live life trusting in God's provision. And this is how life goes- tests repeat, in essence, and we are intended to learn from how God provides and acts in earlier tests in our lives. And also from how He has provided historically, in the Biblical record. It's the same with how God had carefully instructed Moses how to use his rod, and therefore his failure with his rod was seen as so culpable.

The people complained they had had both bread and meat in Egypt. God gave them the manna every day, but they were not satisfied. So He now gives them meat, but that didn't continue. By the time of Ki-brothhattaavah in Num. 11, they were complaining that they had no meat and were bored of manna. It is the basic human feature of never feeling satisfied. The flesh is indeed insatiable. The quail were therefore only sent on two occasions. Unlike quail, manna was specially designed and created food for God's people. Verse 38 is clear that they ate manna 40 years, but no reference to eating quail. The simple message from the gifts of quail was that we do not in fact need extras beyond what God has provided.

Exo 16:4 Then Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from the sky for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law, or not-

Ex. 5:13 speaks of the 'daily work quota' of Israel under Egyptian abuse. But the phrase is used of their

daily work for Yahweh, in collecting manna (Ex. 16:4) and serving in the tabernacle (Lev. 23:37). They were being reminded that they had changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

"A day's portion" is literally 'a word for a day'. "Portion" is *dabar*, the common word translated "word". Their obedience to the commandments relating to this gift of bread was to be a test of their obedience to God's word. **The Lord, quoting Dt. 8, taught that man does not live by bread alone but by every word from God. The idea was that the manna was not "bread alone", but was created by God's word. And in Jn. 6 He interprets the manna as Himself, in the sense that He was God's word and was begotten by that word.**

The Hebrew is, "The thing / word of the day on its day ". The Lord alludes to this when teaching that we should allow the evil of each day to be dealt with on that day, not worry about the future, and just believe in God's daily provision. Truly it is in living life like this that "I will test you". The idea is to gather enough for the day. But I suggest the idea is also that whether

or not they gathered less or more, it still worked out as an omer / person. And this was the test- a daily test, a test of their daily discipline in this matter, a test every day of whether they would put what they wanted over what they needed... wants over needs is the spirit of our age. Those who thought they were gathering more and thereby getting on better in life... found that for all their gathering more, it came out at the same. We need to learn that now, rather than learn it too late as we face our grave planks after a wasted life. For you can't keep any extra manna until the morning...

Ps. 78:18,19 gives us more insight- they tested God in their hearts by asking for bread, thinking "Will God be able to set a table in the desert?". Yet despite this, God graciously gave them the manna. And thereby, He tested *them*.

We need to imagine the tone of voice in which God spoke this, and how He felt as He provided food and drink for them:

He fed and watered them as a doting parent does a young child. Consider: "In the wilderness, you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you traveled until you reached this place (Dt. 1.29-31). Or Hos. 11:1-4:

"When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.

The more I called them,
the more they went from me;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals,

and offering incense to idols.

Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,

I took them up in my arms,

but they did not know that I healed them.

I led them with cords of human kindness,

with bands of love.

I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks,

I bent down to them and fed them"

Note that last line: "I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks, I bent down to them and fed them". That was the spirit of love behind His feeding of them. And yet they demanded food and water like an ungrateful person assumes that the royal "they" must provide for me... and worshipped their idols more and more instead of being grateful. You could weep for God.

And yet God saw their very small love for Him, despite their idol worship, as wonderful: "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, How you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown" (Jer. 2.2). "Therefore, I will now allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. From there I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she shall respond to me as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt" (Hos. 2.14,15). This all sounds like the lover almost over eager to wildly over interpret any sign of love for him or even interest in his approaches. And we... love God.

We thereby touch His heart, given His tragic experience with Israel.

Exo 16:5 It shall come to pass on the sixth day, that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily-

Israel's wilderness journey is a clear enough type of our own path after baptism. They were fed with manna one day at a time- this is so stressed (Ex. 16:4,19,20). There was to be no hoarding of manna- anything extra was to be shared with others (Ex. 16:8; 2 Cor. 8:15). But we live in a world where the financial challenges of retirement, housing, small family size [if any family at all]... mean that there appears no other option but to 'hoard manna' for the future. To some extent this may be a reflection of the way that life in these very last days is indeed quite different to anything previously known in history; but all the same, we face a very real challenge. Are we going to hoard manna, for our retirement, for our unknown futures? Or will we rise up to the challenge to trust in God's day by day provision, and share what's left over? "Give us this day our bread-for-today" really needs to be prayed by us daily.

The idea is that the same amount of manna was gathered on Fridays but when they came to use it, it was miraculously doubled. They lived with these daily and weekly miracles, let alone the water and cloud of fire... and still wanted to return to Egypt and eat their food. The believer experiences this kind of thing time and again. All basic needs are taken care of and we do not need to worry about how we shall live tomorrow.

It is through the daily practice of this kind of life that we come to know / have relationship with Yahweh.

Exo 16:6 Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, At evening, then you shall know that Yahweh has brought you out from the land of Egypt-

The stress is upon "Yahweh". The people wanted to perceive Moses as the one who had brought them out of Egypt, perhaps attributing the Red Sea deliverance to some ability to work magic which they supposed he had. Despite all the stress upon Yahweh as their deliverer, they preferred to think it was all due to a man. We have here a window onto the mindset which human nature so easily slips into; attributing God's clear action in our lives to human power.

It is living in this experience of daily provision and not worrying about tomorrow which makes us know / experience the Lord, and realize that indeed we were brought out of Egypt by baptism. No unbeliever has this amazing life experience. And knowing Him as our saviour, the One who brought us out of Egypt, is paralleled with seeing or perceiving His glory, just as powerful as Moses did on Sinai. For all Israel are called the men who saw His glory, although they turned away from it (Num. 14:22). They had His constant guidance in the cloud just as we do. But they didn't want to see it and perceive the wonder of it, whilst being technically aware of it.

Exo 16:7 and in the morning, then you shall see the glory of Yahweh-

I will suggest on :14 that when the cloud of glory went up from them in the morning, the manna was revealed. The glory of Yahweh was therefore not simply a visible aura of Divine light, but His glory was revealed in providing food for them at the very time of their rebellion. For His glory is in His grace to sinners.

Because He hears your murmurings against Yahweh. Who are we, that you murmur against us?-

Israel's rejection of Moses was a rejection of the God who was working through Moses to redeem them. Thus Korah and his followers "strove against Moses... when they strove against Yahweh" (Num. 26:9 cp. 16:11). Moses understood that when Israel murmured against him, they murmured against Yahweh (Ex. 16:2,7; Num. 17:5; 21:5). They thrust Moses away from them (Acts 7:27,39) - yet the same word is used in Rom. 11:2 concerning how God still has not cast away Israel; He has not treated them as they treated Him through their rejection of Moses and Jesus, who manifested Him. "Who are we...?" has the flavour of Moses' first response to his Divine commissioning: "Who am I?". Through the experience of their complaining and murmuring, he was further humbled.

Exo 16:8 Moses said, Now Yahweh shall give you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to fully satisfy you-

It's twice emphasized in Ex. 16:8,12 that the manna would completely fill them. In the morning, said Moses,

you shall be filled. So the families were to have one big meal a day. Most rural African cultures likewise survive quite happily on one big meal in the morning. The manna gave complete satisfaction; and Jesus commented on this when He said that through His word we would be completely filled, we would eat and not hunger, drink and not thirst.

Because Yahweh hears your murmurings which you murmur against Him. And who are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against Yahweh-

Israel's murmurings about the lack of food did not discourage Moses, because he now better perceived the degree to which he was manifesting God. Here we see the beginnings of some real humility in Moses, due to his appreciation of God manifestation in him.

Exo 16:9 Moses said to Aaron, Tell all the congregation of the children of Israel, 'Come near before Yahweh, for He has heard your murmurings'

"Come near before Yahweh" is usually translated "offer [sacrifice] before Yahweh", and is translated that way multiple times. Although rarely (Ex. 16:9; Lev. 9:5) it is used of the congregation coming near before Yahweh. But the congregation didn't generally want to come before Yahweh, and so He chose just the Levites to come before Yahweh (Num. 8:10; 16:9 s.w.). It was God's intention that all Israel should be His servants, a nation of priests. But He changed and amended His approach, and chose just the Levites for this. We see here how open God is to change, so that by all means He may have relationship with His people. Under the new covenant, all

believers are part of a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) as He initially intended even under the old covenant. And yet there is always the tendency to leave the priestly work to specialists rather than perceiving our personal call to do it.

Exo 16:10 It happened, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of Yahweh appeared in the cloud-

The Angel dwelt in the cloud, which at that time stood ahead of them in the surrounding desert. But it seems now that Angel revealed himself more, so that the glory of Yahweh visibly appeared through the cloud. But see on :14.

Exo 16:11 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

Moses wrote the Pentateuch, but there may well have been a Divinely inspired editor who added comments like this.

Exo 16:12 I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At evening you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread: and you shall know that I am Yahweh your God'-

Israel were to be filled with the manna, so that they would know that "I am Yahweh your God" (Ex. 16:12). This was to be the meaning of the manna. There was a daily manifestation of God's glory along with the manna (Ex. 16:7 cp. 12). The daily sense of living with God's glory is so vital for each of us in our deeply personal spirituality. We know that faith comes from hearing God's word; so our feeding on God's word should lead us to

know Yahweh. There was something intensely personal about the teaching of the manna: "He fed thee (singular-not "ye") with manna, that he might make thee know that (every) man (lives spiritually) by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord" (Dt. 8:3).

Exo 16:13 It happened at evening that quail came up and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay around the camp-

"The quail was among the ancient Egyptians the emblem of safety and security". In which case we marvel at God's grace; assuring His rebellious people of their security at the very point of their rebellion against Him. Num. 11:31 says they were brought by a wind, and we have noted how Angel-winds had brought the plagues and driven back and forth the waters of the Red Sea. They were being taught how the essence of God's previous work for them (at their deliverance from the world and Red Sea baptism) was continuing for them. Ps. 78:28 stresses that God thoughtfully made the birds settle immediately around their tents- as if delivering food to their door, showing such grace at the very time of their murmuring against Him. **The one off gift of quail at this time was to answer their desire for the meat of Egypt; they were fully satisfied by the manna, and were given quail to just demonstrate that actually, they didn't need it.**

Exo 16:14 When the dew that lay had gone, behold, on the surface of the wilderness was a small round thing, small as the frost on the ground-

The dew would have come from a low lying cloud, and when it lifted the manna was revealed. The cloud of dew may have been part of the cloud of glory, through which the glory of God was to be revealed (:7). The glory of Yahweh was therefore not simply a visible aura of Divine light, the so called shekinah glory, but His glory was revealed in providing food for them at the very time of their rebellion. For His glory is in His grace to sinners.

Exo 16:15 When the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is it? For they didn't know what it was. Moses said to them, It is the bread which Yahweh has given you to eat-

As noted on :14, the provision of manna was the revelation of God's glory, in that He was being gracious to sinners. But they didn't perceive His glory in providing food for their needs; just as they didn't perceive His glory in the Lord Jesus, who taught that the manna, the bread of God, represented Himself.

Exo 16:16 This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded: Gather of it everyone according to his eating; an omer a head, according to the number of your persons, you shall take it, every man for those who are in his tent-

An omer is three pints, about 1.5 liters. The Mosaic command to give, every man according to the blessing with which God had blessed him (Dt. 16:17), is purposely similar in phrasing to the command to eat of the Passover lamb, every man according to his need; and to partake of the manna (cp. the Lord Jesus), every man according to his need (Ex. 12:4; 16:6,16). According to the desperation of our need, so we partake of Christ;

and in response, according to our blessing, we give, in response to the grace of His giving.

This may not so much be a command, as a statement that no matter how much you try to gather, you only get what you need; it still came out at 1.5 liters, an omer. These profound truths are not just warnings for wealthy or materialistic. They are warnings for the poor, who may consider that wealth comes from abilities which they assume they lack. All of us in the end gather and get only what we need. Because beyond food, drink and shelter of God's provision, there is no further need.

Unlike the quail, the manna was miraculously in various ways. No matter how much was gathered, it was an omer per person. Those with greater appetites or need for food intake were all the same satisfied by an omer of manna. This was miraculous. Whatever gender or age, their needs were met by it. Again, our perceived needs are all equally met by God's daily provision. For the daily provision of manna is the basis for the Lord's teaching about trusting God's provision for our needs, and the manna likewise becomes the symbol for God's spiritual provision in the Lord crucified. The lesson of the manna is a radical attack upon consumerism and the quest for luxury living which has become the heartbeat of our society. Over consumption, obsession with expensive luxury food, chocolates, clothes, homes, holidays... is what wrecks society and dehumanizes individuals to deform the image of God. And it breeds pride. Yet "He humbled

you... feeding you with manna" (Dt. 8:3); to trust on Him daily and seek for nothing else is indeed humbling, and yet human pride seeks for so much more. This is no call to asceticism, but to 'gathering enough' and trusting in Divine provision.

Exo 16:17 The children of Israel did so, and gathered some more, some less-

They failed the test of simple obedience to the regulations given. They were to gather enough for their families. But some gathered more than that. See on :18.

We may think that some men gather more than others in this life, because some generate more wealth than others. The challenge of the manna story is to believe that actually we all gather the same. God provides for His rich and poor people alike. Those who worked harder to gether still found they had an omer of it / person.

Exo 16:18 When they measured it with an omer, he who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack. They gathered every man according to his eating-

This states that the Israelites in the wilderness went out and gathered manna, they returned and measured it with an omer measure, and found that each person had the same omer of manna. The Jewish Midrash strayed from the Bible text, claiming that the stronger men gathered more manna and gave to the weaker, so that everyone had the same. This is a twist of the actual Biblical text; and yet Paul alludes to the idea in 2 Cor. 8:15 in order to make a point to his audience- that the wealthy

should support the poorer. He does so in the same spirit as a Christian might quote the Koran in order to make a point to a Moslem- but this doesn't mean that the Christian believes the Koran is God's word. Paul and the Bible writers weren't so on the back foot all the time that they as it were footnoted their allusions to incorrect beliefs with comments to the effect that "Now this is not actually what happened".

Exo 16:19 Moses said to them, Let no one leave of it until the morning-

The Lord alludes to this in bidding us take no anxious thought for tomorrow (Mt. 6:34). They were not to store it up for the next day, but trust in God's provision each day. And again, the Lord's prayer alludes to this, in asking for the bread of today to be given us. The implications of these principles are huge, larger for us than for any other generation- living as we do in an age where we generally have no personal agricultural provision for our food, and must plan our savings in order to survive. Nothing was to be left until morning, just as with the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:10 s.w.). See on :24,29.

This could mean that they were to eat the entire omer. Because by a miracle this would satisfy their needs. They were not to eat just part of the omer. The supernatural nature of the manna is shown by the way it stunk and bred worms in the hours between midnight and morning if not eaten on the day it was given (:20). And yet this didn't happen on the sabbath (:24), again reflecting the supernatural nature of this food. Indeed some of the manna was as it were eternal

in that it was kept in the ark for future generations. It was Angels' food (Ps. 78:25). This is why it was called manna, 'What is it?', because it was so outside their experience.

Exo 16:20 Notwithstanding they didn't listen to Moses, but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and became foul: and Moses was angry with them-

"Foul" is s.w. "stink", used of the results of some of the plagues upon Egypt (Ex. 7:18,21; 8:14). Again we see the theme of a disobedient Israel being treated as Egypt, and experiencing their judgments. For their hearts were in Egypt.

Exo 16:21 They gathered it morning by morning, everyone according to his eating. When the sun grew hot, it melted-

As discussed on :22, it could be that this means that when they measured what they had gathered, they found it was just enough for their needs. We note too that they were encouraged to be morning people, to gather the food in the morning, before the sun was high in the sky.

Exo 16:22 It happened that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one, and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses-

There is an apparent confusion as to whether Moses had told them on the sixth day to gather twice as much. I suggest that when they measured what they had gathered, they found it came to two and not one omer. And Moses then explained why this was the case (:23).

Again this is not describing what they did, but the miraculous way that manna gathered on a Friday became two omer worth per person. They told Moses about this experience because he had not previously explained to them what would happen. He wanted them to experience how God provides and that provision means we never have to sin (in this case to break the sabbath by collecting manna) in order to survive. It is in the context of the manna that Israel are formally told for the first time to keep the sabbath, :23, which is likewise a command about trusting in God's provision rather than our own works. Remember that the ten commandments, which include the sabbath, had not yet been given. The sabbath is therefore a gift from God to man, :29, and not a chain nor burden. The Sabbath is not so much a command to rest from work because we all need a break; but rather a mechanism to stop people working all the time because they think this can lead them to success. It was a mechanism to stop materialism and the pursuit of wealth by work. And this is why it is introduced to man in the same context as the manna, inculcating trust in God's provision rather than trust in our own works. And it is therefore God's gift to man. The principle was to "gather enough", for you and your family. And if you gathered more in disobedience, it still didn't come to anything ultimately more.

Exo 16:23 He said to them, This is that which Yahweh has spoken, 'Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to Yahweh. Bake that which you want to bake, and boil that which you want to boil; and all that remains over lay up for yourselves to be kept until the morning'-

This was so that they did not bake nor boil on the Sabbath- even though the legislation about the Sabbath had not yet formally been given. But clearly the law of Moses was a codification of previously existing conceptions and Divine requirements.

Exo 16:24 They laid it up until the morning, as Moses asked, and it didn't become foul, neither was there any worm in it-

I suggested on :19 that not storing manna for the next day was the basis of the Lord's command to not worry about tomorrow, and not to think we must prepare against it. But what we are to do is instead store up against the eternal tomorrow of God's Kingdom, which was represented by the Sabbath of rest, the seventh day of the creation week (Heb. 4:9).

Exo 16:25 Moses said, Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to Yahweh. Today you shall not find it in the field-

These were the words of Moses on the first Sabbath after the manna was given. That morning, they were told to eat "that" which they had gathered on the previous day.

Exo 16:26 Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day is the Sabbath. In it there shall be none-

The concept of the Sabbath may have been around prior to the time of Moses. But Israel in Egypt had not

kept it, and so they are now being helped to get into the rhythm of keeping it- through the manna being given in double rate on the sixth day. We note how gentle God is in preparing the way towards obedience.

Exo 16:27 It happened on the seventh day, that some of the people went out to gather, and they found none-

Their disbelief and disobedience is quite astonishing. The miracle of the Red Sea obviously meant little to them; and Pentecostalism needs to note that it is simply not Bible teaching that dramatic miracles are required in order to believe. Israel had such miracles, and clearly were unaffected beyond an initial "Praise God!", no matter how sincerely that was felt at that moment.

The manna represented the word of God and the salvation which comes through its revelation of Christ (Jn. 6). Israel could gather it on six days of the week, but not on the seventh. The seventh day represents the Kingdom of God (Heb. 4:9; cp. how the manna ceased as soon as they entered Canaan, representing the Kingdom). Yet on the seventh day Israel sought to collect manna (Ex. 16:27), but found none- as the foolish virgins of the new Israel will seek the oil of the word when it is no longer available.

Exo 16:28 Yahweh said to Moses, How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?-

See on :27. Again, their disobedience is presented in terms of how Pharaoh and the Egyptians had sinned. For it was Pharaoh who had "refused" to obey God's commandment to let Israel go (s.w. Ex. 4:23; 7:14). Indeed, "How long do you refuse...?" was the very phrase ad-

dressed to Pharaoh (Ex. 10:3). Israel never left Egypt in their hearts, and acted as Egyptians, worshipping their gods still (Ez. 20:8). And so they are spoken to as the Egyptians they really were.

Despite having been given double bread on the Friday, they still wanted more. The manna shows God's provision contrasted with man's tendency to never be satisfied by it.

Exo 16:29 Behold, because Yahweh has given you the Sabbath, therefore He gives you on the sixth day the bread of two days. Everyone stay in his place. Let no one go out of his place on the seventh day-

There are a number of similarities between the record of the gathering of the manna and that of the Passover. They were to gather the manna according to the size of their families, and the collection was to be organized by the head of the house. Nothing was to be left until morning (Ex. 12:10 = Ex. 16:19,20). They were to not go out of their houses [to get manna] on the seventh day, as Israel had to remain at home on Passover night. This is all the language of the Passover. The lamb represented Jesus, and so did the manna. In John 6 the Lord says that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood to have eternal life; and He says the same about eating His words, which He has likened to the manna (Jn. 6:63). The idea may also be that they were to keep every seventh day as if it were a mini Passover, a celebration of the exodus deliverance. No wonder Paul compares the week-

ly breaking of bread service in Corinth to the Passover (1 Cor. 5:8).

Exo 16:30 So the people rested on the seventh day-

The Divine record is being very generous to them. Because some of them didn't rest that seventh day (:27).

Exo 16:31 The house of Israel called its name Manna, and it was like coriander seed, white; and its taste was like wafers with honey-

"Manna", literally "What is it?", suggests they never really grasped what it was. It was the revelation of Yahweh's grace to them, in that despite their deep apostacy and unbelief, He was daily feeding and saving them. And so the Lord Jesus likens Himself to the manna in Jn. 6, seeing that He was likewise not comprehended by Israel. The taste was as of "fresh oil" (Num. 11:8). The freshness of the taste was to demonstrate that it had been created specifically for them every morning.

One possible meaning of the Hebrew word for manna is "gift", that which is given as a present for no hope of return. Just like the Sabbath was a gift from God, and is mentioned in the very same context. Our pride recoils against grace because we don't like pure gifts. We prefer to work for them. The amazing manna was amazing grace, but it was not satisfying to Israel. They preferred the hard labour and flesh pots of Egypt. The amazing grace of manna is therefore applied by the Lord to Himself. To His word and specifically to the gift of Himself on the cross.

The manna was "what you knew not, neither you nor your fathers" (Dt. 8:3,16). Those who literally re-

ceived it did not know or perceive the amazing grace behind it. And neither did "you", i.e. subsequent generations. This is our challenge, to know the manna. It is not simply a challenge to believe in God's material provision, but also in His spiritual provision in the Lord, the true bread from Heaven. We eat this even we break bread, for the Lord's words about drinking and eating Him in Jn. 6 are clearly John's version of the breaking of bread teaching. The simple truth is that God provides for us spiritually every day. His word, His spirit, His salvation assured, are daily experiences. As a result we live with no fear nor worry of tomorrow.

Exo 16:32 Moses said, This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded, 'Let an omer-full of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt'-

"An omer" is LXX "the omer", suggesting that the pot in which it was placed contained an omer in volume. If the pot of manna was to be kept "hidden" within the ark in the most holy place, briefly visited once / year by the High Priest alone, we wonder how this could be 'seen' by subsequent generations. Was the high priest on their behalf to report back to them about it each year? I suggest however that God's purpose is open, and He changes the details as the Divine-human encounter progresses. Maybe it was initially His view that the pot of manna be kept in a more openly accessible place, but He

withdrew the witness into the ark in the most Holy, as He perceived Israel's hardness of heart.

Exo 16:33 Moses said to Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer-full of manna in it, and lay it up before Yahweh, to be kept throughout your generations-

The manna, which went bad after only 12 hours, was miraculously preserved. It was a testimony to God's grace. He gave them manna at the very time that they rebelled against Him; and had as it were immortalized this piece of very temporary manna. The message was that His grace can likewise immortalize the weak human beings whom His grace engages with.

Exo 16:34 As Yahweh commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept-

It was to be "before the Testimony" and yet somehow visible to all Israel (:32). I suggest that God's primary intention was that the place of "the testimony" was to be regularly opened to the common people, or the pot of manna regularly displayed to them. It was intended to be in front of the ark, or the tables of the covenant [both of which could be termed "the Testimony"], perhaps not even in the Most Holy Place; but it ended up being placed inside the ark (Heb. 9:4), and became known as the "hidden manna" (Rev. 2:17), when it was intended to be a public, openly beheld witness. But as Israel retreated from God, so it seems to me did Yahweh as it were retreat from His people, hiding Himself ever deeper within the ark, the Most Holy place etc.

Before the testimony meant before the tables of testimony, bearing the 10 commandments. Those

stone tables are called the testimony in Ex. 25:16. The principles behind the manna, of living day by day in trust in God's provision and not seeking more, were to be before God's law, they are the essence of all Divine law about human life.

Exo 16:35 The children of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land. They ate the manna until they came to the borders of the land of Canaan-

This could suggest that we feed on the Lord Jesus and His word throughout our journey to the Kingdom, but then there will spiritual sustenance of a completely different nature. We will have no need of spiritual nutrition in the sense we required it during the journey there. The Bible is often not precise with figures and numerics, as was the case with all Semitic writings. God didn't feel the need to defend Himself against petty critics. And so here, the actual period was one month less than 40 years (Ex. 16:1 cp. Josh. 5:10-12).

Exo 16:36 Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah-

Roughly 1.5 liters or three pints. Here and :35 would be examples of where a later, Divinely inspired editor [Ezra?] added explanatory words to the Pentateuch.

EXODUS CHAPTER 17

Exo 17:1 All the congregation of the children of Israel travelled from the wilderness of Sin, by their journeys, according to Yahweh's commandment, and encamped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink-

The events of Ex. 17 are the basis for Ps. 95. This is largely a Psalm of praise for what God did for Israel in the wilderness, whilst also commenting on the way they tragically put God to the test, and complained about His care for them. Now the words of Ps. 95:7- 11 are directly quoted in Heb. 3:7- 11 concerning the experience of the new Israel. The simple conclusion from this is that we are really intended to see the events of Ex. 17 as directly relevant for us.

At this time, Israel were faithless and complaining. But this first movement of Israel from the Red Sea towards Sinai was seen quite differently by God, years later. He saw their very small love for Him, despite their idol worship, as wonderful: "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, How you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown" (Jer. 2:2). This for all the world sounds like the man madly in love with a faithless woman, who over eagerly sees every slight movement of her towards him as a sign of her love. God's love for Israel at this time was huge, and He saw their travelling towards Sinai as a requite to that love.

Exo 17:2 Therefore the people quarrelled with Moses, and said, Give us water to drink. Moses said to them, Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test Yahweh?-

Stephen in Acts 7 stresses the way in which Moses was rejected by Israel as a type of Christ. At age 40, Moses was "thrust away" by one of the Hebrews; and on the wilderness journey the Jews "thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Acts 7:27,35,39). This suggests that there was far more antagonism between Moses and Israel than we gather from the Old Testament record- after the pattern of Israel's treatment of Jesus. It would seem from Acts 7:39 that after the golden calf incident, the majority of Israel cold shouldered Moses. Once the point sank in that they were not going to enter the land, this feelings must have turned into bitter resentment. They were probably unaware of how Moses had been willing to offer his eternal destiny for their salvation; they would not have entered into the intensity of Moses' prayers for their salvation. The record seems to place Moses and "the people" in juxtaposition around 100 times (e.g. Ex. 15:24; 17:2,3; 32:1 NIV; Num. 16:41 NIV; 20:2,3; 21:5). They accused Moses of being a cruel cult leader, bent on leading them out into the desert to kill them and steal their wealth from them (Num. 16:13,14)- when in fact Moses was delivering them from the house of bondage, and was willing to lay down his own salvation for theirs. The way Moses submerged his own pain is superb; both of their rejection of him and of God's rejection of him from entering the Kingdom. The style of Moses' writing in Num.

20:12-14 reveals this submerging of his own pain. He speaks of himself in the third person, omitting any personal reflection on his own feelings: "The Lord spake unto Moses... Because you believed me not... you shall not bring the congregation into the land... and Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom...". Likewise all the references to "the Lord spake unto Moses" (Lev. 1:1). Moses submerged his own personality in writing his books.

Exo 17:3 The people were thirsty for water there; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?-

Israel continually "murmured" against Moses (Ex. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3; Num. 14:2,27,29 cp. Dt. 1:27; Ps. 106:25; 1 Cor. 10:10). Nearly all these murmurings were related to Israel's disbelief that Moses really could bring them into the land. Likewise Israel disbelieved that eating Christ's words (Jn. 6:63) really could lead them to salvation; and their temptation to murmur in this way is ours too, especially in the last days (1 Cor. 10:10-12). The Hebrew for "murmur" is the word for "stop", and is usually translated in that way. The idea is that they didn't want to go further on the journey; they wanted to return to Egypt. Despite the wonder of the Red Sea deliverance. Their hearts truly were in Egypt. This sense of not wanting to go onwards towards the Kingdom, to put a brake on God's saving process, is the same temptation which in essence afflicts all God's people who have started the journey with Him.

Moses had been weak and discouraged in the same way, accusing God of wanting to do them evil rather than save them (Ex. 5:23). And now this was what the people concluded in the desert, when they complained Yahweh had brought them into the desert to slay them. Moses would have found patience with them, because he would have realized that this same desperate conclusion, in the heat of desperation, was what he too had been guilty of. It is awareness of our own failures which provides the basis for others in theirs. God is without that aspect; His patience with human sin is therefore the more wonderful than ours.

The test as to "What shall we drink?" was a repeat of that in Ex. 15 and Num. 20. The same basic test, although in regard to "What shall we eat?", was repeated in Ex. 16. Exodus explains their journey up to Sinai, and Numbers ["In the wilderness", in Hebrew] their journeys afterwards. The Lord alludes to this when warning us not to ask what we shall eat or drink but to live life trusting in God's provision. And this is how life goes- tests repeat, in essence, and we are intended to learn from how God provides and acts in earlier tests in our lives. And also from how He has provided historically, in the Biblical record. It's the same with how God had carefully instructed Moses how to use his rod, and therefore his failure with his rod was seen as so culpable.

They counted Moses as responsible for their coming out of Egypt and lack of water. Clearly God had receded from their thinking. They related to Moses as

if he were God. Just as people don't separate church from God, and just as they only see His representatives, rather than looking through them to the God behind them. The Jews likewise told the Lord that Moses gave them manna. The Lord replied that it was God and not Moses who gave them manna.

God allowed the people to hunger and thirst, and had them squeal for help, before He met those needs. Seeing food and water are obvious needs for a wilderness journey, we enquire why God didn't tell them ahead of time that these needs would be provided. Surely it is an example of how God leads us to know our needs before He fulfils them. He wants us to see what our core heart desires are. We think of asking the blind man what he wanted, appearing to walk past the disciples, appearing to be asleep in the boat. He does the same with us.

Exo 17:4 Moses cried to Yahweh, saying, What shall I do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me-

As at the crossing of the Red Sea, Moses responds to the people in a very confident manner, when his own cries to God indicate the depth of his distress. Death by stoning was a punishment for religious apostacy; perhaps this reflected their commitment to the gods of Egypt which they then worshipped (Ez. 20:8).

Exo 17:5 Yahweh said to Moses, Walk on before the people, and take the elders of Israel with you, and take the rod in your hand with which you struck the Nile, and go-

Again, unbelieving Israel are made parallel to Pharaoh and his Egyptian courtiers. For the miracle was

to persuade Israel and bring them to repentance, just as had been intended with the Egyptians through the miracle performed with water through striking with the rod.

It was Aaron who struck the river, so we can see that someone's representative can be spoken of as them without being them. This explains the relationship between God and Jesus.

We need to imagine the feelings of God as He provided food and drink for them:

He fed and watered them as a doting parent does a young child. Consider: "In the wilderness, you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you traveled until you reached this place (Dt. 1.29–31). Or Hos. 11:1–4:

**"When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.**

**The more I called them,
the more they went from me;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals,
and offering incense to idols.**

**Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them up in my arms,
but they did not know that I healed them.
I led them with cords of human kindness,
with bands of love.**

I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks,

I bent down to them and fed them"

Note that last line: "I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks, I bent down to them and

fed them". That was the spirit of love behind His feeding of them. And yet they demanded food and water like an ungrateful person assumes that the royal "they" must provide for me... and worshipped their idols more and more instead of being grateful. You could weep for God. Israel's desire for food and drink was not a simple request of a child to the parent for sustenance. "They had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert" (Ps. 106:14). "You have been rebellious against the Lord as long as he has known you" (Dt. 9:24).

And yet God saw their very small love for Him, despite their idol worship, as wonderful: "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, How you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown" (Jer. 2:2). "Therefore, I will now allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. From there I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she shall respond to me as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt" (Hos. 2:14,15). This all sounds like the lover almost over eager to wildly over interpret any sign of love for him or even interest in his approaches. And we... love God. We thereby touch His heart, given His tragic experience with Israel. We at least can say "Father I am ashamed for how my people treated you. I am not much of a lover, not much of a partner for You, but I swear with all my little heart, I will be loyal to You, I love You".

Exo 17:6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb-

God through the Angel stood upon a rock in Sinai with Moses next to Him (Ex. 17:6). Later, Yahweh asks Moses to stand upon a rock in Sinai next to Him (Ex. 33:21 s.w.). We see how God gently and progressively leads His people closer to Him, using every experience He gives us to prepare for the next one, on an ever more intimate level with Him.

The LXX suggests the text means that I, Yahweh in the Angel, will be standing there before [you get there], understanding "before" in terms of time rather than space. So often we find this in our crises- that God is already there. We think of the women worrying as to who would roll away the stone, to find it already rolled away by Angels.

You shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink. Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel-

Moses was asked to throw down wood into the waters (Ex. 15:25). His staff, also made of wood, had to be lifted up in order to open the Red Sea. He was being taught careful obedience to commandment about wood, and yet he failed to learn- for the sin which excluded him from entering Canaan was that of not obeying commandment about his rod / the wood. He was told to take the rod in his hand but not use it. This may explain the apparent harshness of God's condemnation of him over this incident.

The first time Moses struck the rock, he was standing in the presence of the Angel- "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock" (Ex. 17:6), but it would seem that the second time Moses took the rod "from before the LORD (the Angel)" (Num. 20:9) and went alone to the rock; this lack of Angelic presence perhaps accounts for his rashness at this time.

Paul in 1 Cor. 10:4 alludes to a Jewish tradition that the rock followed Israel through the wilderness, always giving water. Some traditions suggest Miriam carried it; the supposed "Rock of Moses" is a piece of rock which could have been carried. Paul emphasizes that the point of his allusion is that the water which they drank of represented "Christ", the strength which comes from Him as the smitten rock; he alludes to the tradition just as he quotes pagan poets and makes a point out of their words (Acts 17:28). The Bible often features this kind of thing; and God isn't so paranoiac and apologetic that He as it were has to footnote such things with a comment that "of course, this isn't true".

It should be evident enough that the rock which Moses smote in the desert was simply a rock; it wasn't Christ personally. The Jewish book of Wisdom claimed that "the rock was Wisdom" (Wisdom 11). Paul, as he so often does, is picking up this phrase and saying that more essentially, the rock represented Jesus personally, and not 'Wisdom' in the Jewish misunderstanding of this figure. It "was" Him in the sense that it represented Him. Likewise He said about the communion wine: "This is my blood". It wasn't literally His blood; it was and is His

blood only in that it represents His blood. Paul is describing the experience of Israel in the wilderness because he saw in it some similarities with the walk of the Corinthian believers towards God's kingdom. The whole of 1 Cor. 10 is full of such reference. And this is why he should speak about the rock which Moses smote as a symbol of Christ. The Israelites had been baptized into Moses, just as Corinth had been baptized into Christ; and both Israel and Corinth ate "the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink". "Spiritual food... spiritual drink" shows that Paul saw the manna they ate and the water they drank as spiritually symbolic- just as He saw the rock as symbolic. Paul goes on in 1 Cor. 10:16,17 to write of how Corinth also ate and drank of Christ in the breaking of bread, and in chapter 11 he brings home the point: like Israel, we can eat and drink those symbols, "the same spiritual meat... the same spiritual drink", having been baptized into Christ as they were into Moses, and think that thereby we are justified to do as we like in our private lives. This is the point and power of all this allusion. The picture of their carcasses rotting in the wilderness is exhortation enough. Baptism and observing the 'breaking of bread' weren't enough to save Israel.

The Lord Jesus Himself had explained in John 6 how the manna represented His words and His sacrifice. He spoke of how out of Him would come "living water", not still well water, but bubbling water fresh from a fountain (Jn. 4:11; 7:38). And He invites His people to drink of it. It was this kind of water that bubbled out of the

smitten rock. Ps. 78:15,16,20; 105:41; Is. 48:21 describe it with a variety of words: gushing, bursting, water running down like a high mountain stream, "flowed abundantly".....as if the fountains of deep hidden water had burst to the surface ("as out of the great depths", Ps. 78:15). So the Lord was saying that He was the rock, and we like Israel drinking of what came out of Him. **All this speaks of the gift of the Spirit which was given as a result of the Lord's death. He there becomes the source of endless inspiration and spirituality; which is why we regularly focus upon Him there, not least through the breaking of bread.**

The Law of Moses included several rituals which depended upon what is called "the running water"(Lev. 14:5,6,50-52; 15:18; Num. 19:17). "Running" translates a Hebrew word normally translated "living". This living water was what came out of the smitten rock. The Lord taught that the water that would come out of Him would only come after His glorification (Jn. 7:38)- an idea He seems to link with His death rather than His ascension (Jn. 12:28,41; 13:32; 17:1,5 cp. 21:19; Heb. 2:9). When He was glorified on the cross, then the water literally flowed from His side on His death. The rock was "smitten", and the water then came out. The Hebrew word used here is usually translated to slay, slaughter, murder. It occurs in two clearly Messianic passages: "...they talk to the hurt of him [Christ] whom thou hast smitten"(Ps. 69:26); "we esteemed him [as He hung on the cross] smitten of God"(Is. 53:4).

It was in a sense God who "clave the rock" so that the waters gushed out (Ps. 78:15; Is. 48:21). "Clave" implies that the rock was literally broken open; and in this we see a dim foreshadowing of the gaping hole in the Lord's side after the spear thrust, as well as a more figurative image of how His life and mind were broken apart in His final sacrifice. Yahweh, presumably represented by an Angel, stood upon [or 'above'] the rock when Moses, on Yahweh's behalf, struck the rock. Here we see a glimpse into the nature of the Father's relationship with the Son on the cross. He was both with the Son, identified with Him just as the Angel stood on the rock or hovered above it as Moses struck it... and yet He also was the one who clave that rock, which was Christ. As Abraham with Isaac was a symbol of both the Father and also the slayer, so in our far smaller experience, the Father gives us the trials which He stands squarely with us through. And within the wonder of His self-revelation, Yahweh repeatedly reveals Himself as "the rock"-especially in Deuteronomy. And yet that smitten rock "was [a symbol of] Christ". On the cross, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself". There He was the most intensely manifested in His beloved Son. There God was spat upon, His love rejected. There we see the utter humility and self-abnegation of the Father. And we His children must follow the same path, for the salvation of others.

The rock "followed [better, 'accompanied'] them" (1 Cor. 10:4). We must understand this as a metonymy, whereby "the rock" is put for what came out of it, i.e. the

fountain of living water. It seems that this stream went with them on their journey. The statement that "they drank" of the rock is in the imperfect tense, denoting continuous action- they kept on drinking of that water, it wasn't a one time event, it continued throughout the wilderness journey. A careful reading of Ex. 17:5,6 reveals that at Rephidim, Moses was told to "Go on before the people", to Horeb. There he struck the rock, and yet the people drank the water in Rephidim. The water flowed a long way that day, and there is no reason to think that it didn't flow with them all the time. The records make it clear enough that the miraculous provision of water was in the same context as God's constant provision of food and protection to the people (Dt. 8:15,16). The rock gave water throughout the wilderness journey (Is. 48:21). This would surely necessitate that the giving of water at Horeb was not a one-off solution to a crisis. There is a word play in the Hebrew text of Is. 48:21: "He led them through the Horebs [AV 'desert places']" by making water flow from the rock. The Horeb experience was repeated for 40 years; as if the rock went on being smitten. Somehow the water from that smitten rock went with them, fresh and bubbling as it was the first moment the rock was smitten, right through the wilderness. It was living, spring water- not lying around in puddles. The water that came from that one rock tasted as if God had opened up fresh springs and torrents in the desert (Ps. 74:15 NAS). It always tasted as if it was just gushing out of the spring; and this wonder is commented upon by both David and Isaiah (Ps. 78:15,16,20;

105:41; Is. 48:21). It was as if the rock had just been struck, and the water was flowing out fresh for the first time.

In this miracle, God clave the rock and there came out rivers (Hab. 3:9; Ps. 78:16,20; Is. 43:20). Each part of Israel's encampment had the water as it were brought to their door. And so it is in our experience of Christ, and the blessing enabled by His sacrifice. The blessings that come to us are deeply personal, and directed to us individually. He died once, long ago, and yet the effect of His sacrifice is ever new. In our experience, it's as if He has died and risen for us every time we obtain forgiveness, or any other grace to help in our times of need. We live in newness of life. The cross is in that sense ongoing; He dies and lives again for every one who comes to Him. And yet at the end of their wilderness journey, Moses reflected that Israel had forgotten the rock that had given them birth. The water had become such a regular feature of their lives that they forgot the rock in Horeb that it flowed from. They forgot that 'Horeb' means 'a desolate place', and yet they had thankfully drunk of the water the first time in Rephidim, 'the place of comfort'.

Exo 17:7 He called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because the children of Israel quarrelled, and because they put Yahweh to the test, saying, Is Yahweh among us, or not?-

The continual presence of the stream of water amongst them (see on :6) was evidence that He was among them. The Angel was visibly dwelling amongst them in the pillar of fire and cloud; and yet faith is clear-

ly enough not based upon that which is seen. The visible evidence was clearly not enough to convict them; for as Heb. 11:1,2 explains, faith is not based upon that which is visible.

Clearly Israel did far more than simply cry out to their Heavenly Father for water. Dt. 6:16 warns them never again to put Yahweh their God to the test as they did at Massah. This reveals that their motives were not simply the need for water, but to test whether Yahweh was really amongst them- despite the pillar of cloud and fire with them and the daily gift of manna. Nobody gets angry with a thirsty child who begs for water. But what they did was a kind of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Again we see that the daily presence of miracles does not of itself convict anyone of faith in God; for "faith" really means "trust". And they had none of that. And yet despite this lack of faith and cynicism of God, He still gave them water. This grace was to humble them- and humility is an intended outcome of grace: "He [God] made water flow for you from flint rock [at Massah and Meribah], and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and test you, and in the end to do you good" (Dt. 8:15,16). And yet God was working on another level too. Dt. 33:8-11 seems to say that Yahweh tested Moses and Aaron through this incident, and they came through that test: "Of Levi [the Levite descendant Moses] he said, Your Thummim and your Urim are with your holy one whom You proved at Massah, with whom You

strove at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and of his mother, 'I have not seen him'. Neither did he acknowledge his brothers, nor did he know his own children; for they have observed Your word and keep Your covenant". The LXX there speaks of "the holy man whom they put to the test by testing. They reviled him (Moses) at the water of testing", referring to Moses.

We learn from Dt. 33:8-11 that in some way at this time, some of the tribe of Levi showed themselves faithful to God, whilst others didn't, and the faithful Levites opposed the unfaithful ones- although this isn't here recorded. This kind of faithfulness was shown again at the time of the golden calf, and therefore the system of the firstborn being priests was changed so that the tribe of Levi became the source of the priests. Priesthood was therefore given on the basis of qualification, and Levi's behaviour at this point was one of those qualifications: "Of Levi he said, Your Thummim and your Urim are with your holy one [the faithful Levites] whom You proved at Massah, with whom You strove [the unfaithful Levites] at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and of his mother, 'I have not seen him'. Neither did he acknowledge his brothers, nor did he know his own children; for they have observed Your word and keep Your covenant.

They shall teach Jacob Your ordinances, and Israel Your law. They shall put incense before You and whole burnt offering on Your altar".

Exo 17:8 Then Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim-

Dt. 25:18 fills us in with some more details: "(Amalek) smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary". **God's special hatred of Amalek was perhaps reflective of how He so hates an abuse of power and picking upon the weak, in whatever way.** So Israel were "faint and weary", some of them had fallen by the way-side, others were being picked off almost daily by the bands of aggressive Amalekites. Israel were living through the aftermath of their rebellion against Moses; they had been chronically thirsty, and perhaps their spiritual tiredness was matched by the mental and physical faintness of clinical dehydration. The effects of this can last quite some time after liquid is received. So they were at low ebb.

After Israel's blasphemy of the Holy Spirit discussed on :7, the attack of Amalek could be seen as Divine judgment upon them. Amalek would have destroyed them, despite Israel's huge numerical superiority. Israel were only saved by the intensity of Moses' intercesion; for when he let down his hands, Amalek prevailed against Israel. So Moses saved Israel from destruction, preparing him for how he would do so after the golden calf incident.

Dt. 25:18 says that Amalek attacked Israel whilst they were thirsty, weak and feeble. So the attack hap-

pened whilst they were thirsty and demanding water. They were also spiritually feeble and weak. But God so loved Israel that He was angry with those who punished them in their weakness, just as He was to be with the Babylonians and Assyrians. His special hatred of Amalek was maybe because they picked on the weak. God is so sensitive to abuse of the weak, especially the spiritually weak.

Exo 17:9 Moses said to Joshua, Choose men for us, and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with God's rod in my hand-

Despite his youth, Joshua's love of the word, and subsequent spiritual insight, led him to be chosen to accompany Moses, to witness the mighty theophany in the mount. In his relative youth, soon after leaving Egypt, Joshua was made the leader of the Israelite army which fought Amalek. He was told to compose that army of men of his personal choice (Ex. 17:9). One wonders if the condemned generation had much heart for a fight. Can we not imagine him choosing the zealous young reformers of Egypt, along with the warrior-priests?

The attack by Amalek can be read as a punishment for the sense they had that Yahweh was not among them. We could go so far as to say that it was intended to destroy them, but they were saved by the intense intercession of Moses. Remember that although Amalek were outnumbered, surely, by Israel they were winning whenever Moses let down his hands. All this was to prepare Moses for his finest moments when later he intercedes for 40 days and

changes God's intention to destroy Israel. At this point he had Aaron and Hur to encourage him, but up the mountain he would be alone. God leads us likewise- doing something with human encouragement, and then, giving us a greater opportunity for service but alone.

Moses was asked to *throw down* wood into the waters (Ex. 15:25). His staff, also made of wood, had to be *lifted up* in order to open the Red Sea and in order to get victory over Amalek (Ex. 17:9). He was being taught careful obedience to commandment about wood, and yet he failed to learn- for the sin which excluded him from entering Canaan was that of not obeying commandment about his rod / the wood. He was told to take the rod in his hand but not use it. This may explain the apparent harshness of God's condemnation of him over this incident.

Exo 17:10 So Joshua did as Moses had told him, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill-

The battle which swayed to and fro between Israel and Amalek clearly points forward to our battle with the flesh. Moses/Jesus is away above us, earnestly praying for our victory. Yet in the same way as Israel had Joshua actually with them in the field, so Joshua- Jesus is not only some remote Heavenly helper. He is with us, leading us in the practical business of fighting this war. The personal effort which the Israelites had to make to follow Joshua is surely implied by the fact the victory was no walk-over. The weak among Israel were killed by the

Amalekites (Dt. 25:17,18); despite the incredible level of Christ's mediation for us, such is the power of sin and the apathy of human nature that we can still lose the battle.

Given the similarities with the battle against Amalek, were Joshua's arms held up in fervent prayer in Josh. 8:26 [**"Joshua didn't draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai."**]? This is a common association with upholden arms. Moses held his hand up, and Joshua led the army into battle, succeeding because Moses had his hands held up in prayer (Ex. 17:10). Now, Joshua is the one holding his hands up in prayer, whilst Israel are in battle. Lesson: We go through experiences which later repeat; and we are in the position of those who had before prayed for us, and are expected to replicate their examples.

Exo 17:11 It happened, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed-

Uplifted hands are something consistently- and frequently associated with intense prayer, often for the forgiveness of God's people Israel (Lam. 2:19; 2 Chron. 6:12,13; Ezra 9:5; Ps. 28:2; 141:2; 1 Tim. 2:8). The only time we read of Moses lifting up his hands elsewhere is in Ex. 9:28,29, where his spreading out of his hands is made parallel with his entreating of God to lift the plagues on Egypt. It must be significant that uplifted hands is also related to a confirmation of God's covenant (see especially Ez. 20:5,6,15,23,28,42; 36:7; 47:14); for this is ex-

actly what Christ did on the cross. And in a sense, this is what was happening in Ex.17; Israel had sinned, God had forgiven them, and was reconfirming the covenant through Moses (notice that one of the terms of the covenant was that God would save Israel from their enemies, e.g. Amalek). See on Jn. 19:18; Gen. 49:22.

As the Lord Jesus prayed on the cross, so we should arm ourselves with the same attitude of mind in prayer (1 Pet. 4:1).. **We are to have the mind that was in Him there (Phil. 2).** Heb. 12:12 alludes here: "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees". This is an allusion back to feeble-kneed Moses, with his hanging-down hands being held up. And the apostle says: 'You are the one with feeble knees and hands, represented by Moses in Ex. 17!' - although Moses is also representing Christ praying for us on the cross. So the Spirit is teaching us that with the intensity that Moses prayed for Israel's salvation on that hill in Ex. 17, with the intensity that Christ prayed on the hill of Golgotha - so we should be praying for each other's salvation, and our own.

Typically a leader would be on the top of a hill holding up the national or tribal flag to inspire the troops. But Moses subverted this by holding up his rod, the symbol of his workaday life in God's power. Holding a mere piece of wood whilst in intense prayer... naturally suggests a type of the Lord's intercession for us on the piece of wood now known as "the cross", with a man on each side of him until sunset. Afterwards he speaks of Yehovah Nissi, Yahweh (as opposed to any flag) is my banner. It was the princi-

ple of prayer, of God working through a man's working ordinary life, that was the real basis for victory. Hence :16 GNB "He said, "Hold high the banner of the LORD! The LORD will continue to fight against the Amalekites forever!"". The banner was invisible, it was "Yahweh", His salvation of His people by grace. The rod in the hand of a shepherd may as well have been a paint brush or roller in the hand of a house painter. It was the symbol of how Yahweh's salvation works through the ordinary and obscure.

Exo 17:12 But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side. His hands were steady until sunset-

A righteous man, Moses the superb and detailed type of Christ, with his hands above his head in prayer, fellowshiping Israel's sufferings, battling with intense spiritual, mental and physical weariness, praying intensely, with a man either side of him, until sundown. Of course this is pointing forward to our Lord's crucifixion-on account of which our weariness can really be overcome, we really can find the victory over sin which we fain would have.

Moses began to pray standing up, with his hands above his head, with the blazing midday sun beating down upon him (so is implied by the fact that he kept his hands steady until the sun went down. The battle would surely have lasted a few hours; perhaps eight, **from morning to sunset**, which was the length of time the Lord hung on the cross. But he just couldn't maintain

this intensity of mental and spiritual concentration; he let down his hands. But from his high viewpoint, he could see (and hear?) the panic of Israel as they started to flee before their enemies. So he returned to his mental battle. No doubt when he let down his hands, he continued praying, but not so intensely. Yet he came to realize, perhaps after a few cycles of Israel starting to flee before Amalek, that his prayer was absolutely essential for Israel's survival and victory. But he knew that he just couldn't physically go on. His knees were weak, he was going to have to abandon his favourite prayer posture of standing (cp. the earlier records of his prayers in Exodus). His mind must have desperately raced as to how he could go on. At the back of his mind, he would have thrown his predicament upon the Lord. And a way was made. "They took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands" (v.12). Note how Moses did not waste his energy in getting the stone for himself; we get the picture of total mental devotion to Israel's cause, a man all consumed with his prayer, being humanly helped by lesser men. Israel's salvation depended on his totally voluntary intercession. The type is powerful. Peter reasons that Christ's attitude in prayer should be ours (1 Pet. 4:1). His prayers then, and ours now, were a struggle, after the pattern of Jacob.

John's Gospel has many references to Moses. When John records the death of the Lord with two men either side of Him, he seems to do so with his mind on the record of Moses praying with Aaron and Hur on each

side of him (Ex. 17:12). John's account in English reads: "They crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one" (Jn. 19:18). Karl Delitzsch translated the Greek New Testament into Hebrew, and the Hebrew phrase he chose to use here is identical with that in Ex. 17:12. Perhaps this explains why John alone of the Gospel writers doesn't mention that the two men on either side of the Lord were in fact criminals- he calls them "two others" (Jn. 19:18) and "...the legs of the first and of the other" (Jn. 19:32). Thus John may've chosen to highlight simply how there were two men on either side of the Lord, in order to bring out the connection with the Moses scene.

Gen. 49:22 speaks of the Messianic descendant of Joseph as a fruitful vine, with branches. The Lord Jesus seems to have quarried His description of Himself as a vine with branches from this very passage (Jn. 15:5). Verse 23 continues: "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; from thence is the shepherd, the stone (more Messianic allusions here) of Israel". The upholding of Moses' arms is being unmistakably prophesied here; in a Messianic prophecy. The "God of Jacob" in Gen. 48:15,16 refers to God manifest in Angels; Jacob there defines his God as "the Angel that redeemed me". There are plenty of other reasons for thinking that "the God of Jacob" is Angelic language. So Messiah's arms were to be upheld with Angelic strength. But we have seen that Christ's uplifted hands on the

cross refer to the way in which he was intensely praying at the time. The hymn writer put two and two together and came to the right conclusion: '...and Angels there / sustained the Son of God in prayer'. This was one of the ways in which "God was in Christ" in his sufferings; He gave Him special Angelic encouragement to keep on praying, to keep on asking for help, without forcing Christ in any way to be righteous. Surely in this we get some light on the mystery of the atonement; the mystery of the degree to which the Father helped the Son to overcome without in any way affecting Christ's freewill. It is perhaps significant that there were two men (Aaron and Hur) upholding Moses' arms, in enacted prophecy of how the Angels would strengthen Christ in prayer. Does this point forward to the two Angels especially associated with Christ, Gabriel and Michael? Physically, of course, it was the nails which kept Christ's hands uplifted above his head; yet are we to infer that the Angels even overruled that for a purpose?

Exo 17:13 Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword-

"Amalek" appears to be a title like "Pharaoh". **We note how little is recorded of the ebb and flow of the battle. No acts of heroism are recorded, the strategy and battle plans are insignificant in the story. But the spotlight is very much on the details regarding Moses- the stone brought for him to sit on, his weariness, his rod, his arms, the men upholding his arms etc. And so it is with us- it is the Lord's intercession which is all important, and which is the ultimate issue**

in our victory, rather than the ebb and flow of our own efforts.

Exo 17:14 Yahweh said to Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under the sky-

This points forward to God's purpose to obliterate the memory of the "former things" - i.e. Amalek, the things of our moral weakness (Rev. 21:4); note how the "former things" in several Old Testament passages refer to the things of Israel's sad spiritual past. The forgetting of the former things therefore refers to the lack of awareness of the things with which we battled in this life. In the same way as God can 'forget' our sins, so one of the Kingdom joys will be the lack of memory of anything sinful.

Yahweh's Name, by contrast, was to be an eternal memory (Ex. 3:15). He was to be remembered for how He had articulated His Name in how He had historically acted in saving the patriarchs, and He would be remembered for how He was going to act to save His people from Egypt. What was to be memorialized was therefore His actions, rather than simply the letters YHWH. It was His wonderful works which were to be remembered [Ps. 111:4, s.w. "My memorial"]. By contrast, the sinful works and persons of the wicked would not be remembered / memorialized, be they Amalek (s.w. Ex. 17:14; Dt. 25:19), or God's apostate people (s.w. Dt. 32:26).

The intended fulfilment of this was at the hand of Saul in 1 Sam. 15. But he didn't fulfil it totally, he was

told to "utterly destroy Amalek" but he didn't. We see here how the fulfilment of Bible prophecy can depend upon human freewill obedience. We have here a window onto the flexible nature of the outworking of God's purpose. "I will blot out the remembrance of Amalek" depended upon whether Israel as God's instrument would do this- for Dt. 25:19 is clear: "*You shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heavens.*

You shall not forget". But Israel did not fully blot out Amalek, and so in that sense God allowed Himself to be limited by man. Had Saul eliminated Amalek, there would have been no Haman the Agagite, the Amalekite.

Exo 17:15 Moses built an altar, and called its name Yahweh our Banner-

That memorial was physically symbolized by the building of the altar called Jehovah- Nissi. This literally means 'Jehovah is my pole'; this is a word used indirectly in prophecies about the cross of Christ. "There is no God else beside; a just God and a Saviour (Jesus)... look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Is. 45:21,22) is evident allusion to the snake on the pole to which all Israel were bidden look and be saved. And yet that saving symbol of the crucified Jesus is in fact God Himself held up to all men. The other reading "YHWH is my banner" suggests that the raised staff was as a flag-pole, but Moses wanted to show that the victory was in Yahweh and not in the rod of itself.

Exo 17:16 He said, Yah has sworn: 'Yahweh will have war with Amalek from generation to generation'-

The work of Moses led to the declaration that God will be perpetually at war with Amalek; in prospect, Amalek was destroyed when the sun went down. The same happened with our sinfulness on the cross. In a sense Amalek was destroyed for good, in another sense a long warfare was started; "the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation". Within our natures, as well as in our dealings with the world, we are experiencing this warfare. There is no respite from it. Yet we have this marvellous assurance: God is at war with sin, He is truly on our side in these struggles, these wrestlings with our very natures, which we all go through. This is the comfort as we strive onwards.

Some manuscripts have: "Because a hand was lifted up upon the throne of Yahweh...". Amalek had put his hand upon God's throne, which was Israel. He did dwell in their midst, although they doubted this. And yet Amalek did this as punishment for their not wanting to be Yahweh's throne. We conclude that by grace God accepted Israel as His throne even though they were so rebellious against Him, and punished those who sought to lay hands upon them.

EXODUS CHAPTER 18

Exo 18:1 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, how that Yahweh had brought Israel out of Egypt-

Israel were "brought forth" from Egypt by God; they had been unwilling to leave Egypt, preferring to serve the Egyptians rather than Yahweh (Ex. 14:12). God had as it were forced through His project of saving Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. And He had done so largely for the sake of Moses, by whose faith the Red Sea parted and they were delivered (Heb. 11:28,29). Therefore Yahweh's bringing Israel out of Egypt was what He did for Moses, and only thereby for His people. We too are brought out of this world towards God's Kingdom by His grace alone, with His consistently taking the initiative in our hearts and life circumstances, in accord with the loving intercession of the Lord Jesus [represented by Moses]. Thus Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 18:1; 19:1; Lev. 23:43; 25:55; Num. 26:4; 33:1,3,38; Dt. 4:45,46;), but Moses did (Ex. 3:10,11).

Jethro was a Kenite (Jud. 1:16; 4:11), and the Kenites lived among the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15 tells them to separate from them lest they also be destroyed). This explains why this incident follows the victory over Amalek and their threatened obliteration in Ex. 17. Yet Jethro returned to his place when urged to remain with Israel. He allowed an argument over

divorce and remarriage and the related family feelings to stop him joining God's people. This continues the theme of openness, which we noted when discussing how God said He would destroy Amalek, and yet that task was given to Israel- and they failed to do so. Likewise Jethro could have come out from the condemned Amalekites and avoided their judgement, but he chose to return. Despite coming at this point to Moses in homage because of his victory over Amalek. This is why Balaam's prophecies specifically condemn the Kenites in Num. 24:21,22. But they could have avoided that by joining in with Israel as they were here invited to. Just as if Saul had destroyed Amalek as asked, there would have been no Haman.

Exo 18:2 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, received Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her away,-

Moses "sent / put away" his wife- Ex. 18:2 LXX is the same "put away" as in 1 Cor. 7:11-13. Moses allowed divorce for the hardness of Israel's hearts (Mt. 19:8) and yet he himself appears to have divorced her- for the hardness of his heart? Her anger with him is seen over the circumcision of their sons, the night when she saved him from the Angel who sought to slay him.

Exo 18:3 and her two sons. The name of one son was Gershom, for Moses said, I have lived as a foreigner in a foreign land-

Moses' children had names which showed some faith, and a recognition he was a stranger in the land where he was living; he lived as a stranger in Midian. Few people live in a country for 40 years without feeling

they belong to it. But his mind was in the past, in how God had been good to his father, and how God had saved him from Pharaoh's death threat. He hardly felt Egypt was his homeland, and neither was Midian. Like us, he was set up by God's hand in life experiences to desire "another country", the Kingdom of God.

Exo 18:4 The name of the other was Eliezer, for he said, My father's God was my help and delivered me from Pharaoh's sword-

Although Moses had little contact with his father, he praises his father's God. Moses was only with his parents in babyhood and maybe very early childhood. They inculcated in him the faith of Yahweh at that early age. They likely died whilst he was still in the court of Pharaoh and looked like an ungrateful child who had gone the way of the world and forgotten his God and his people and their efforts to raise him in the faith. Moses here and in Ex. 15:2 pays tribute to them. What a surprise awaits them in the Kingdom!

Exo 18:5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses into the wilderness where he was encamped, at the Mountain of God-

Moses is described as encamping in the wilderness, when the reference clearly is to all Israel. He, like the Lord Jesus, was clearly the representative of God's people. See on Ex. 34:27.

Exo 18:6 He said to Moses, I, your father-in-law Jethro, have come to you with your wife, and her two sons with her-

This is not in chronological sequence. Moses speaks in Ex. 18:16 of how "I judge between a man and his neighbour, and I make them know the statutes of God, and His laws". Those laws were not given at the time of Ex. 18, so the passage there is out of chronological order. For the people only arrived at Horeb ("the mountain of God", Ex. 18:5) at the time of Ex. 19:1,2. It was only when they left Horeb on the 20th day of the 2nd month of the 2nd year that Moses established the system of judges as Jethro had advised (Dt. 1:12-15). At the time of Num. 10:11,29, Moses asks Jethro ["Hobab"] to remain with the people as a guide through the desert. I suggest that the events of Ex. 18 should be inserted after Num. 10:10 and before Num. 10:11. In this case the argument between Moses, Aaron and Miriam about Zipporah in Num. 12:1 would have occurred after Zipporah had been accepted again by Moses as his wife.

The children are described as belonging to Moses in :5. But Jethro says the children belong to Zipporah his daughter. This is the petty politics of divorce and family politics. He came with an agenda.

Exo 18:7 Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and bowed and kissed him. They asked each other of their welfare, and they came into the tent-

"The tent" could refer to the tabernacle, which at that time was effectively Moses' own personal tent. The Septuagint tells us that Moses "pitched his own tent" and called it the tabernacle (Ex. 33:7 LXX); in which case

we can speculate that the Angel as it were lived with Moses in his own tent.

Exo 18:8 Moses told his father-in-law all that Yahweh had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardships that had come on them on the way, and how Yahweh delivered them-

God "delivered" His people from Egypt and Pharaoh, just as He delivered Moses personally from the sword of Pharaoh (Ex. 18:4,8 s.w.). Moses was the representative of his people, they were saved "in" him, and baptized into him (1 Cor. 10:1,2). They were apostate idolaters (Ez. 20:8), and were in a way only saved "in" Moses, just as we are saved "in Christ". They were saved really for Moses' sake, for the sake of his faith Egypt had been judged (Heb. 11:28,29), but with characteristic humility, Moses says that this had all been for their sakes.

Exo 18:9 Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which Yahweh had done to Israel, in that He had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians-

The phrase "delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians" is used three times by Jethro here and in :10. It could be that he sung a little ditty about it, in his evident joy.

Exo 18:10 Jethro said, Blessed be Yahweh, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh; who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians-

See on :9. This is the phrase used for how Moses had delivered his wife from the shepherds, perhaps Egyptians related to the shepherd king dynasty. Israel rejected

Moses as their deliverer, they failed to see in that dead Egyptian the ability of Moses to save them completely from the life of slavery. And so Moses fled away from them, he came to Gentile, pagan Midian, and rescued a Gentile woman from the persecution of men, married her, and started a new life in the wilderness- to return many years later in the power of the Holy Spirit and redeem Israel when they were in truly desperate straits. All this naturally points ahead to the work of Jesus after Israel failed to respond to his work on the cross. The word used to describe Moses rescuing his future wife from the shepherds is the same used concerning God rescuing Israel from Egypt (Ex. 2:19; 18:10). Thus Moses was manifesting the redemptive work of God when he saved his wife. But the marriage broke up, as it did between God and Israel- but was apparently restored.

Exo 18:11 Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all gods because of the thing in which they dealt arrogantly against them-

This implies Jethro thought Yahweh was only one of many gods. **Midian, where Jethro lived, were idolaters (Num. 25; 31:16), and Jethro was a priest of Midian, who "returned to his own country" (:27)- all very much identifying him with Midian.** Yet he apparently came to respect Yahweh as the greatest of them all. Likewise over time in the Lord's ministry, and in the whole NT, reference to demons becomes less and less, as His preaching of Truth by example and miracle made

the point that these things really don't exist. Likewise the gods of Egypt were not specifically stated to not exist: but through the miracles at the Exodus, it was evident that Yahweh was unrivalled amongst all such 'gods', to the point of showing their non-existence (Ex. 15:11; 18:11). See on Ex. 20:3.

Exo 18:12 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God. Aaron came with all of the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God-

The usage of the word "God" rather than "Yahweh" could suggest that Jethro still saw Yahweh as one of many gods, although the greatest of them (see on Ex 18:11). And yet the elders of Israel ate bread with him "before God", clearly an expression of religious fellowship. They were not at all caught up with the idea of a closed table. They were happy to fellowship with Jethro where he stood, although he didn't ever fully identify with the covenant people, and returned to his own home.

Exo 18:13 It happened on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from the morning to the evening-

We are hereby given the impression that the people were endlessly arguing with each other. They were not wholly devoted to Yahweh, and this was reflected in their disunity and animosity between each other. **In Ex. 17, Moses had sat down with the people around him, and interceded for them unto exhaustion. In Ex. 18 he is presented doing just the same, but this time he**

gives in to the easy way out. We likewise may pass one test but then fail an identical one.

Exo 18:14 When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that you do for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning to evening?-

Surely what Jethro suggested had already occurred to Moses. The fact was that he probably didn't consider that there were many who were able to be judges, because they were still idolaters and not familiar with Yahweh's laws. **Moses was alone because he was the sole mediator between the people and God at the tent of meeting with God. But Jethro didn't get that. For him, democracy trumped spirituality. The statutes and commands (:16) he made known to them were later codified into the "law of Moses". And Jethro wanted to stop that process. "It will be easier for you..." (:22) was the reasoning of the flesh, and it's one of Moses' negative traits that he often spiritually gave in when under pressure. And I suggest this is an example of that. Even in :23, Jethro ventures that his advice should only be followed if God confirmed it: "If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure". God didn't confirm it, but Moses still did it. And despite that, he did endure and his natural strength was not abated even at 120 years old.**

Exo 18:15 Moses said to his father-in-law, Because the people come to me to inquire of God-

Although they were idolaters (Ez. 20:8), they still wanted to have Yahweh's opinion, and sought to prove that they had Him on their side in their disputes with their brethren. This is absolutely imaginable and true to observation of human behaviour when it comes to this kind of thing. "Inquire" is the same word translated "require". The judgment will be the time when God 'requires' of us our behaviour. And yet the Hebrew word is used about our enquiring / searching to God in prayer now (Gen. 25:22; Ex. 18:15; Dt. 4:29; 12:5; 1 Kings 22:5), as well as His 'requiring' / searching of us at the last day (Dt. 18:19; 23:21; Josh. 22:23; 1 Sam. 20:16; 2 Chron. 24:22; Ez. 3:20; 33:6,8). There is a mutuality between a man and his God.

Their enquiry of God suggests the people were coming to Moses to hear God's word. Jethro reasons from a secular perspective, separating church from state. He reasons as if the other judges would all judge rightly; but surely Paul had the situation in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians that likewise there was not one wise man amongst them. But they didn't know Yahweh's law. The law of Moses was revealed to Moses and he had to reveal it to the people. So what Moses was doing was not wrong but necessary at the time. We note in :7 a reference to "the tent", and wonder if this refers to the tent of meeting where Yahweh met with Moses and gave him His laws- for "the tent" is usually used in this way in Exodus. The terms "all the people" and "the tent" are used like this in Ex. 33:8-10: "It happened that when Moses went out to

the Tent, that all the people rose up, and stood, each one at their tent door, and watched Moses, until he had gone into the Tent. It happened, when Moses entered into the Tent, that the pillar of cloud descended, stood at the door of the Tent, and spoke with Moses. All the people saw the pillar of cloud stand at the door of the Tent". This hunch is then confirmed when in :15 we read that all the people came to Moses to enquire of God. This is just what they did at the tent of meeting: "It happened that everyone who sought Yahweh went out to the Tent of Meeting, which was outside the camp" (Ex. 33:7). "The tent" spoken of in Ex. 33 is the same "the tent" of Ex. 18:7. The law of Moses had not yet been given, but it was surely in this process that the principles and judgments contained in it were first communicated to Israel. The people came to Moses to hear him speak God's word to them, given to him by the Angel in the tent, regarding their various practical issues. Jethro was therefore wrong to urge this to cease and instead for people to listen to human wisdom and teaching on their issues. And he was obviously inappropriate to suggest that in an apostate, rebellious Israel as they were, there would be righteous, spiritually wise men of integrity in such abundance. There was hardly a wise man amongst them. I suggest Jethro was jealous that Moses had suddenly risen to be leader of millions of people, after having spent 40 years as Jethro's underdog. And he was obviously upset about Moses having divorced Zipporah and returned her to Jethro's

house along with the children. But Amalek, amongst whom he lived, had just been defeated by Moses. He wanted peace, and yet wanted to undercut Moses' authority. The whole incident is often used by those who argue for a broad based, democratic system rather than a single strong leader; but the fact is, the system Jethro proposed failed. By the time of Num. 11:16,17, it was again the Spirit which was critical in being a teaching elder, and not the system of Jethro: "Yahweh said to Moses, Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you. I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit which is on you, and will put it on them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you not bear it yourself alone". It was being Spirit filled which was the qualification for leadership, not simply being randomly appointed by democratic process.

Exo 18:16 When they have a matter, they come to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbour, and I make them know the statutes of God, and His laws-

I suggested on :6 that this incident is inserted here out of sequence, and refers to a time after God had given His laws to Moses. Moses had perhaps delayed appointing judges over the people because he was using the ceaseless stream of cases as an opportunity through which he could teach God's law to the people. Jethro's suggestion had surely already occurred to him, but he

was doing as he did in order to introduce God's laws to the people. But he accepts Jethro's suggestions because he concluded that perhaps he had for long enough been teaching them personally.

Exo 18:17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, The thing that you do is not good-

As explained on :18, Jethro's advice and statements was not quite as "good" as may appear.

Exo 18:18 You will surely wear away, both you, and this people that is with you; for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to perform it yourself alone-

Moses accepts Jethro's advice on the basis that he will "surely wear away"; even though his natural strength never abated (Dt. 34:7), and God surely would not have asked him to do the impossible. So Jethro is presented as wrong on this point, and perhaps Moses need not have taken his advice. Jethro at this time seems to have seen Yahweh as only one of many gods; he was a pagan priest. He prophesied that if Moses followed his advice, "all this people shall go to their place in peace"(:23)- which they didn't.

Exo 18:19 Listen now to my voice. I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You represent the people before God-

Moses like the Lord Jesus did indeed represent the people before God; the basis of their redemption by him was predicated upon him being their representative. When he later offered his eternity as a substitute, that was not accepted. **Moses therefore obeyed the voice of Jethro rather than God's words of judgment.** "Lis-

ten to my voice" recalls the bad advice of Eve and Rebekah. But in Dt. 1, at the end of his life, Moses rewrites the narrative. He justifies what he did, although he carefully omits reference to Jethro: "I spoke to you at that time saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone; Yahweh your God has multiplied you and behold, you are this day as the stars of the sky for multitude. May Yahweh the God of your fathers make you a thousand times as many as you are and bless you, as He has promised you! How can I myself alone bear your encumbrance and your burden and your strife? Take wise men of understanding and well known according to your tribes and I will make them heads over you. You answered me and said, The thing which you have spoken is good to do. So I took the heads of your tribes, wise men and known, and made them heads over you, captains of thousands, captains of hundreds, captains of fifties and captains of tens and officers, according to your tribes. I commanded your judges at that time, saying, Hear cases between your brothers and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the foreigner who is living with him. You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike; you shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me and I will hear it, I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do". Here Moses wishes to claim that he had the idea and the people agreed it and liked it. He is not at all penitent

for listening to man over God. And in Dt. 1 we are at the end of Moses' life. If a man of his spiritual stature had a way of rewriting his own narrative- how much more do we have this tendency? It's like his way of always blaming his bar on entry to the land upon the people, "for your sakes", rather than accepting it was a judgment for his own sin.

And bring the causes to God-

From :22,26, we are to read him as meaning "the more important or difficult cases".

Exo 18:20 You shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and shall show them the way in which they must walk, and the work that they must do-

Moses had been using the various interpersonal difficulties amongst the congregation as an opportunity to teach Yahweh's newly given laws to the common people, on an individual basis. Jethro suggests just teaching them to their elders, and allowing the laws to filter down that way. Moses accepts this, but we wonder whether that was God's ideal intention. We may compare this with the way that God wanted to speak His words to all the people, but they backed away from Him, wanting Moses to tell them what God had said. So we see the theme continued here, of the ordinary people being increasingly isolated from the direct engagement with God's word which He ideally wished. And this is a theme which has continued amongst God's people to this day.

Exo 18:21 Moreover you shall provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God: men of truth, hating unjust gain; and place such over them, to be rulers of thou-

sands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens-

If indeed 600,000 men left Egypt (although see on Ex. 12:37), this would have meant at the very least 600 rulers of thousands, 6000 rulers of hundreds, 12,000 rulers of fifties and 60,000 rulers of tens; making in the whole 78,600 officers. Were there really such a huge number of men of integrity in the congregation? All the evidence is that there were not. This again leads us to consider that Jethro's advice had secular common sense to it, but was not God's ideal desire.

Exo 18:22 Let them judge the people at all times. It shall be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they shall judge themselves. So shall it be easier for you, and they shall share the load with you-

"The load" of God's people was carried by Moses; yet it had been carried by Yahweh; for He was the One who had carried Israel out of Egypt and through the desert (s.w. Ex. 19:4; Is. 46:3). Moses was carrying the people too, through patiently bearing with their petty squabbles and trying to help them see through them by wise judgment.

But in Num. 11:14 Moses laments: "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me". This complaint of Moses had supposedly been answered by Jethro's suggestion to appoint elders "to share the load with you" (Ex. 18:22); and I suggested that Ex. 18 is out of chronological sequence, and should be inserted between Num. 10:10 and Num. 10:11 (see note

there, and on Ex. 18:6). So in reality, Jethro's secular advice hadn't worked.

Exo 18:23 If you will do this thing, and God commands you so, then you will be able to endure, and all of these people also will go to their place in peace-

Jethro perceived the vital personal role of Moses in Israel's salvation; if Moses 'endured', then he would bring the people to Canaan. This is the power of just one man's faith, and indeed so much in Israel's salvation was predicated upon Moses' faith (Heb. 11:28,29). But "these people" did not come in peace to their place of inheritance; that generation perished in the wilderness. Jethro's advice didn't really work. See on :18.

Exo 18:24 So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said-

As discussed on :18, not all that Jethro said was true, nor was it true that his plan would succeed in bringing Israel to their inheritance in peace. It didn't. So we wonder whether Moses was correct in just accepting his advice; perhaps he did it in order to achieve reconciliation with his wife, Jethro's daughter. Even Jethro advised that his suggestions should only be accepted if "and God commands you so" (:23). There is no statement to the effect that Moses did await God's commands, and there were various problems with the entire suggestion, as noted in this section.

Exo 18:25 Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens-

There is no evidence that this system really worked. However we do read the same word translated "ruler" used of the "captains" of Dt. 1:15; and whenever we later read of "rulers / captains of thousands", it refers to captains of military divisions (1 Sam. 8:12; 2 Kings 1:9). So it could be that this system was used not for judgment but for military organization. Again we see that Jethro's secular advice, much as it made good common sense, was not really God's way- and it didn't work. **If the suggested system had been put in place, there would've been no need for Moses to later command in Dt. 16:18 "You shall make judges and officers in all your gates which Yahweh your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment".**

Exo 18:26 They judged the people at all times. They brought the hard causes to Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves-

Here we have another example of how the record of Israel at this time is very positive about them. For as noted throughout this section, the vision of Jethro didn't really work well in practice. But in His love, God saw no iniquity in Israel, He saw them as the wonderful, attractive young women whom He fell in love with in the desert. And the Divinely inspired record reflects that.

Exo 18:27 Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way into his own land-

We note from 1 Chron. 23:15-17 that there were descendants of Moses through Gerhsom and Eliezer in Israel at David's time, who could demonstrate their pedi-

gree. They were given designated roles of service within David's plans for the new temple system; which is why they are mentioned in 1 Chron. 23. So we can deduce from this that they did not remain in Midian but identified themselves with Israel. In Num. 10:29 we read that Jethro turned down Moses' invitation to remain with Israel and be their guide in the desert. But Ex. 18:27 says that "Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way into his own land". Here we have another example of where we need to put the scriptures together in order to get a full picture of what really happened. Perhaps the Biblical narrative is constructed in this way so that we must indeed read and meditate upon it all, respecting it all as God's word, in order to more fully see the entire narrative as God wishes us to.

Num 10:29-32 appears to be relevant to this point in the history. Moses begs Jethro to remain with them and be to them instead of eyes, a rather faithless request because the Angelic "eyes" of Yahweh were to go ahead of Israel in the pillar of fire and cloud and seek out a resting place for them. So this is not Moses at this spiritual best at all: "Moses [had] said to Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying to the place of which Yahweh said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will treat you well; for Yahweh has spoken good concerning Israel. He said to him, I will not go; but I will depart to my own land, and to my relatives. He said, Don't leave us, please, because you know how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and you can be

to us instead of eyes. It shall be, if you go with us, yes, it shall be, that whatever good Yahweh does to us, we will do the same to you". But Jethro refused, and the good Yahweh did to His people didn't apply to Jethro- as he didn't want it. We see here the same basic weakness- Moses preferred his ex-father in law to guide them, rather than relying upon the Angel in the pillar of cloud, with whom he spoke face to face as a man speaks to his friend. And likewise he preferred Jethro's idea of secular judges rather than giving people individual judgments from God's word. The essence of this failure is in us all. If it was in a man of Moses' spiritual stature, how much more will it be with us.

Had Jethro joined Israel, perhaps the judgment of the Kenites spoken of by Balaam need not have happened. God stated there that He would destroy the Kenites along with the Amalekites (Num. 24:20,21); yet in 1 Sam. 15 He tells the Kenites to depart from amongst the Amalekites so they wouldn't be destroyed. We see here how God hates to judge and condemn people, and will ever seek not to do this.

EXODUS CHAPTER 19

Exo 19:1 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt-

"Gone out" is s.w. "brought forth". Israel were "brought forth" from Egypt by God; they had been unwilling to leave Egypt, preferring to serve the Egyptians rather than Yahweh (Ex. 14:12). God had as it were forced through His project of saving Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. And He had done so largely for the sake of Moses, by whose faith the Red Sea parted and they were delivered (Heb. 11:28,29). Therefore Yahweh's bringing Israel out of Egypt was what He did for Moses, and only thereby for His people. We too are brought out of this world towards God's Kingdom by His grace alone, with His consistently taking the initiative in our hearts and life circumstances, in accord with the loving intercession of the Lord Jesus [represented by Moses]. Thus Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 18:1; 19:1; Lev. 23:43; 25:55; Num. 26:4; 33:1,3,38; Dt. 4:45,46), but Moses did (Ex. 3:10,11).

On that same day they came into the wilderness of Sinai-

There are various options in understanding "that same day". It could mean the same day of the month, the 15th, in which they had departed from Egypt. Or it might mean the same day of the same month, i.e. the 3rd day of the 3rd month. Or we could follow the Jewish view that the phrase implies "the first day of the month".

This would mean it was 45 days after leaving Egypt, on the fifteenth day of the first month. On the next day, Moses went up to the mountain, and then the people are given three days to sanctify themselves. The day after that, the glory of God appeared. This would have been fifty days after Passover, the day which was to be called the day of Pentecost. And thus the Jewish tradition is confirmed- that the law was given on the day of Pentecost.

Exo 19:2 When they had departed from Rephidim, and had come to the wilderness of Sinai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the mountain-

We are intended to connect this with how they had arrived in Rephidim and rebelled (Ex. 17:1). They moved on from there apparently repentant, and now encamped before Yahweh in the mountain. The impression is of a repentant people, now suitably humble to receive God's law. At least that is the idealized picture given. For God fell in love with Israel in the wilderness and spread His skirt over them at Sinai, accepting them as His wife, despite all their idolatry and weakness. **And despite their failure to sanctify themselves, and their turning away from the intimacy of coming up to the mountain to the close fellowship with Yahweh which Moses enjoyed.**

Exo 19:3 Moses went up to God, and Yahweh called to him out of the mountain, saying, This is what you shall tell the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel-

The way they were the descendants of the historical Jacob is stressed, as is his name change from Jacob to Israel. They were being reminded that Jacob too had been so weak, as they were. And yet he had been accepted and transformed by God's grace. And this was God's hope for them too.

At this point, all Moses had to go on was Ex. 3:12 "He replied, "Surely I will be with you, and this will be the sign to you that I have sent you: When you bring the people out of Egypt, you and they will serve God on this mountain". He, Moses, was to serve God on the mountain they had now arrived at. And so Moses takes the initiative in going up the mountain. And he who seeks, finds. God responded by reaching out to him in His word, and by a huge theophany in response to his faltering initiative.

The stress on leaving Rephidim could be to remind us of their poor behaviour there and how they must move on. This may explain the parallel between Jacob and Israel made here, to show the possibility of transformation from Jacob to Israel. "House of Jacob" is female, children of Israel is male, perhaps suggesting the covenant was for men and women. His religion was not just to be a hobby for males, as was often the case with contemporary religions.

Exo 19:4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings-

The point is that God judged Egypt but saved Israel. Although they wanted to remain in Egypt, worshipped their idols and were Egyptians at heart. Israel were taken to God by grace alone.

See on Num. 11:12, where Moses later doubts these words. God wants us to be independent, as good parents wish for their children; He wants us to serve Him on our initiative and not merely obey a set of legal codes. Thus He carries us an eagle teaching its young to fly, pushing them out of the nest, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them (Ex. 19:4; Ps. 17:8; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4). The pushing out of the nest in Israel's context refers to their leaving Egypt (cp. baptism for us); and throughout the wilderness journey the Father was teaching them to fly independently. But does God know in advance every failure we will commit? It seems to me that He doesn't, for in our efforts to 'learn to fly', we have freewill- the whole enterprise could go this way, or that, or the other. **But as in Dt. 32:11, the idea may be that the mother eagle [or vulture, Heb.] flies beneath the young bird as it teaches it to fly, in case it fails and drops from the air. Hence Dt. 32:11 speaks of the eagle "catching" its young on its wings as it flies beneath them. In this case, the young bird alights on the back of the mother bird. And Israel failed. They had to be caught on the wings of God. But were all the same brought by God to Himself. This is the huge significance of how God brought Israel out of Egypt. Or the allusion could be to how the eagle can carry other**

smaller birds on its wings. The eagle was unclean- and yet is a symbol of God here.

"The load" of God's people was carried by Moses (Ex. 18:22); yet it had been carried by Yahweh; for He was the One who had carried Israel out of Egypt and through the desert (s.w. Ex. 19:4; Is. 46:3). Moses was carrying the people too, through patiently bearing with their petty squabbles and trying to help them see through them by wise judgment.

And brought you to Myself-

Israel's passing through the Red Sea was an undoubted type of baptism and the new creation (1 Cor. 10:1). God brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea baptism, "and brought you unto myself" (Ex. 19:4). It was as if God was waiting for them there, in the wilderness; as He waits to receive every man or woman who passes through the waters of baptism. Time and again they were bidden look back to their exodus/ Red Sea experience. In times of dire spiritual failure or sluggish indifference to their God, as well as at their pinnacles of faith, the Spirit in the prophets directed their minds back to these things- either by explicit statement, or by indirect allusion. We too, as the baptized new Israel, ought to likewise look back to our baptism with an ever-increasing appreciation.

Literally, 'I will take you unto Myself as a people,' as in Ex. 6:7. This is similar to the formulae used for adoption of children into a family. This could continue the family allusion of :6, where we read that God would redeem / act as a family redeemer, a *ga'al*, for His people.

The idea may not be that they became His people at the point of the exodus, but rather that He took them to Himself "as a people", they received a collective redemption, not one of them was left behind, not even the most faithless. But the collective nature of Yahweh's salvation, in our times seen in Jesus, Yehoshua, Yah's salvation, must be responded to on an individual level.

"To Myself" could be a reference to the actual personal descent of Yahweh onto Sinai. We note that God "brought" Israel to Himself; not led them. They didn't want to come, but He so wanted them.

Exo 19:5 Now therefore-

Israel were to be a Kingdom of priests exactly because "You have seen what I did... how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself" (Ex. 19:4-6). The redemption which we have personally experienced must be the motivation to rise up to this challenge. The spirit of priesthood should therefore be seen in each of us.

If you will indeed obey My voice, and keep My covenant, then you shall be My very own possession from among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine;-

"My very own possession", as a child desires to own something "of my very own", is a concept hard to appreciate in our days of private ownership and private wealth. Wealth, lands, homes etc. at that time were all collectively owned, as a family or group. Your "very own possession" was something unusual and of deep personal sentimental value; something you had personally acquired. And this was how God saw His

people; they were very significant and personally valuable to Himself, and how He defined Himself as an individual. Whilst all of creation is God's in another sense, that too has [by His grace] become of collective ownership. But Israel, His people, are His very own personal possession. He likewise allows Himself, in a sense, to be defined by us.

We are to live out in practice what we have been made in status by our gracious Father. The very fact He counts us as in Christ, as the spotless bride of His Son, must be both felt and lived up to by us. The way He counts us like this is a wonderful motivation to rise up to it all. Consider how God told Israel that *if* they kept His commandments, *then* they would be His “peculiar treasure” (Ex. 19:5). This conditional promise is then referred to by Moses as having been fulfilled- Israel became His “peculiar treasure” by status even though they did *not* keep His commandments (Dt. 7:6; 14:2 s.w.; Ps. 135:4). Moses concludes by saying that “the Lord has avouched you this day to be His peculiar people [s.w.]... *that* you should keep all His commandments” (Dt. 26:18). See what’s happening here. God said that *if* they were obedient, *then* they would be His special people. Yet He counted them as His special people even though they were not obedient. And He did this so that they would be so touched by this grace that they *would* be obedient.

The Hebrew word for ‘hear’ is also translated ‘obey’ (Gen. 22:18; Ex. 19:5; Dt. 30:8,20; Ps. 95:7). We can hear God’s word and not obey it. But if we really hear

it as we are intended to, we will obey it. If we truly believe God's word to be His voice personally speaking to us, then we will by the very fact of hearing, obey. The message itself, if heard properly and not just on a surface level, will compel action. We can delight to know God's laws and pray daily to Him, when at the same time we are forsaking Him and His laws; if we are truly obedient, then we will delight in God's law (Is. 58:2 cp. 14). We have a tendency to have a love of and delight in God's law only on the surface. John especially often uses 'hearing' to mean 'believing' (e.g. Jn. 10:4,26,27). And yet the Jews 'heard' but didn't believe. We must, we really must ask ourselves: whether we merely hear, or hear and believe. For we can hear, but not really hear.

God saw no iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21). He fulfilled His promise here at Sinai that if they were obedient, He would make them His people; and He did, counting them as obedient. Yet the events of the intervening forty years hardly sound like Israel being obedient; He "suffered their manners" forty years (Ps. 95:10; Acts 13:18). And yet at the end of that period, they were counted as having been sufficiently obedient to be made God's people (Ex. 19:5 cp. Dt. 27:9).

Dt. 4:19,20 reasons that God had chosen Israel out of the nations when He refined them in Egypt. But this was conditional upon their obedience. They were disobedient, but God in His love chose them. Simply because He loved them: "When you look up to the sky and see the sun, moon, and stars – the whole heavenly creation – you must not be seduced

to worship and serve them, for the LORD your God has assigned them to all the people of the world. You, however, the LORD has selected and brought from Egypt, that iron-smelting furnace, to be his special people as you are today".

Exo 19:6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation'. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel-

God intended Israel to be "a Kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6). **This could be read as meaning they were to have priests for kings; but they turned away from this by wanting a singular king who was not a priest. Or we can understand it as meaning that the entire kingdom were to be priests. A priest teaches and mediates for people; so we see here the mission of Israel in this world, as a whole nation who were intended to bring the world to Yahweh. This is what it is to be Israel, as God intended. And these words are transferred to us in 1 Peter 2:5. "All the people of Israel" were the builders of the spiritual house of God, i.e. His people (Acts 4:10,11). It was God's intention that there should be no specialist priests. It was everyone's job, to teach their neighbour and family God's word. But His plans were amended as their general failure became apparent, and the Levites were chosen. But His ideal intention remained. Thus when Israel were rejected, they were told that they as a nation could no longer be God's priest (Hos. 4:6). By baptism, we become spiritual Israel; and this idea is relevant to us too. Peter picks up these words in Exodus and applies them to every one of us,**

for the new covenant returns to this original intention of the old covenant: "You also are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. 2:5,9, quoting Ex. 19:6 LXX).

As it was God's intention that Israel were to be a nation of priests to the rest of the world, so the new Israel likewise are to *all* discharge the priestly functions of teaching their brethren (Ex. 19:6 cp. 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9,10). Under the new covenant, we should *all* teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). Indeed, God told Israel [unrecorded in the historical records]: "Ye are gods [*elohim*] and all of you are sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6 RV). Further, Ps. 96:9 makes the paradigm breaking statement that even the Gentiles could come before Yahweh of Israel in holy, priestly array- they too could aspire to the spirit of priesthood (Ps. 96:9 RVmg.). Moses spoke of how all Israel should pray that God would establish the work of their hands (Ps. 90:17)- but this was in fact his special request for the blessing of Levi, the priestly tribe (Dt. 33:11). Ps. 135:19,20 parallels all Israel with the priestly family: "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron: bless the Lord, O house of Levi: ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord...praise *ye* the Lord". All Israel were to aspire to the spirit of priesthood. Indeed, the Psalms often parallel the house of Aaron (i.e. the priesthood) with the whole nation (Ps. 115:9,10,12; 118:2,3).

The "Kingdom of God" is not only a future political entity to be established on earth; the term refers also to whatever God has Kingship over now. A Kingdom is es-

entially a people. God's people are His Kingdom, here and now. By entry into the body of Christ by baptism, we are like Israel being declared as God's Kingdom on earth (Ex. 19:5,6) after their Red Sea 'baptism'. Life in [the body of] Christ now, the Kingdom life now [as the Lord speaks of it in Mt. 5-7], the life to be eternally experienced in the future manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth... it's all about life in a community. It's not about splendid isolation now, because it won't be about that in the eternal future either.

Exo 19:7 Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which Yahweh commanded him-

"All these words" were the invitation to be God's priestly kingdom. The first simple step in relationship with God is to say "Yes" to that general invitation. And then the details follow, but it seems God saw their initial agreement as so significant. There is some parallel in the way that the very simple gospel of the resurrected Lord Jesus is to be taught, accepted in baptism, and then after that, those who have accepted it are to be taught "to observe all things whatever I have commanded" (Mt. 28:20). See on :11.

Exo 19:8 All the people answered together, and said, All that Yahweh has spoken we will do. Moses reported the words of the people to Yahweh-

"Answered together" could imply that they spoke these words in unison, at the same time. **But there was a group think here. For the people were soon drawing back from personal meeting with God because they**

refused to be personally sanctified. God of course heard those words, but Moses "reported the words" as if this was required in order for the proposed covenant to be formally ratified. See on :19.

Exo 19:9 Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, I come to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever. Moses told the words of the people to Yahweh-

The Angel told Moses that the people would hear him, "and believe you for ever". But this was only true potentially, as are many such statements. For things turned out the opposite. At this time, God saw no iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21), He was the young man in love with the girl called Israel whom He had met in the desert. And so the record reads very positively about them. See on :21. **The people didn't believe Moses. The idea was that God's personal descent and Israel hearing His words ought to have permanently persuaded them. But it didn't and neither did God's descent in His Son.**

Exo 19:10 Yahweh said to Moses, Go to the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments-

This command to sanctify themselves suggests separation from something. And surely the idea was that they were to repent of their idolatry and ditch the idols of Egypt which they had taken with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:8). There is no evidence they did so, for they carried the tabernacles of other gods through the desert, along with Yahweh's (Acts 7:43).

Exo 19:11 and be ready against the third day; for on the third day Yahweh will come down in the sight of all the people on Mount Sinai-

"Be ready" is the phrase used in the covenant to David, rendered "be established... be confirmed" (2 Sam. 7:16,24,26). Their readiness or preparedness, basically their willingness, was to be the qualification for entering the covenant. See on :7. In one sense, all we have to do is say yes.

Exo 19:12 You shall set bounds to the people all around, saying, 'Be careful that you don't go up onto the mountain, or touch its border. Whoever touches the mountain shall be surely put to death-

Moses apparently obeyed this (:23), although there is no record of his doing so. The Hebrew for "bounds" is literally to tie a rope; it was but a rope. The boundary therefore made the mountain holy / sanctified (:23). They were not to touch the holiness of Yahweh, whereas later whatever touched holy things was made holy (s.w. Ex. 29:37; 30:29; Lev. 6:18). The implication could be that God knew that in reality, they were not a sanctified / holy people. He had asked them to make themselves holy by rejecting their idols, but they had not done so (:10). And so they were warned not to touch the holy mountain, or else they would die for having defiled God's holiness by their unholiness.

Exo 19:13 No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether it is animal or man, he shall not live'-

The commentary of Heb. 12:20 is that "They could not endure [s.w. "uphold"] that which was commanded- If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned". The argument in the context seems to be that Israel were disobedient even to the peripheral command not to touch the mountain; let alone to the actual content of the covenant. Although they disobeyed, there is no record of their being slain. Their curiosity overcame any respect they may have had for God's law, and thus they repeated in essence the sin of Adam and Eve in touching and taking the forbidden fruit.

When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come up to the mountain-

LXX "when the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come up on the mountain". But this didn't happen- see on :14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on :10. **The cordonning off of the mountain was not therefore to stop the people coming up it; it was to stop them coming up it prematurely. But as it happened, they chose not to go up the mountain. They asked Moses to deal with this amazing God, and report to them about what He wanted. They thereby shunned intimacy with their God, in the way so many do today. They had a passing curiosity in wanting to gaze upon their God, but when they realized His greatness and the need for sanctification before approaching Him- they wanted Moses to do their religion for them.**

Exo 19:14 Moses went down from the mountain to the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes-

I suggested on :10 that this command to sanctify themselves suggests separation from something. And surely the idea was that they were to repent of their idolatry and ditch the idols of Egypt which they had taken with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:8). But Moses sanctified them in a ritual sense. But I have argued on :10 that they were not in fact sufficiently holy, and therefore they did not ascend the mountain as originally planned (:13).

Exo 19:15 He said to the people, Be ready by the third day. Don't have sexual relations with a woman-

They had three days to sanctify themselves, and I suggested on :10 that this meant throwing away their idols and being sanctified to Yahweh alone. But as noted on :14, they merely went through external rituals of sanctification, and thought that washing their clothes and abstaining from sex for three days would make them sanctified. It didn't.

Exo 19:16 It happened on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain, and the sound of an exceedingly loud trumpet; and all the people who were in the camp trembled-

"Thunders" is LXX "voices"; the thunders were to be understood as the great voice of God. And then according to Ex. 19:13 LXX "when the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come

up on the mountain". But this didn't happen- see on :14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on :10. Moses himself trembled (Heb. 12:21).

Exo 19:17 Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the lower part of the mountain-

The idea was as in :13 LXX "when the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come up on the mountain". But this didn't happen-see on :14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on :10. Instead of all of them ascending the mountain, only Moses was invited to ascend (:20). This was a departure from the initial intention. And when he got to the top, he was simply told to go down and ensure the people didn't break through the cordon and come up the mountain as originally planned. Some of them had already touched the mountain; for the commentary of Heb. 12:20 is that "They could not endure [s.w. "uphold"] that which was commanded- If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned". The argument in the context seems to be that Israel were disobedient even to the peripheral command not to touch the mountain. The whole narrative is the story of an intimacy with God which didn't come about as potentially possible. And that is the sad story of so much of the Divine-human encounter.

Exo 19:18 Mount Sinai, all of it, smoked, because Yahweh descended on it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly-

This reference to fire, smoke, furnace, earthquake and the descent of Yahweh is very similar to the language of Divine judgment, especially of Sodom (Gen. 19:28; Rev. 9:2). And we know from the prophets that Israel were considered by God as Sodom. We could read this as His wrath with Israel for breaking His simple commandments about not touching the mountain, and for not having sufficiently sanctified themselves (see on :10,14,18). The argument of Heb. 12 appears to be that the scene here is one of condemnation of sinful man—and we have not been called to that, but to salvation by grace in the new covenant in Christ. But this condemnation wasn't the original intention; which had been rather that all Israel would ascend Sinai and meet God (:13).

Dt. 4:11 explains that the "mountain burned with fire unto the very midst of the heavens". It was as if the pillar of fire now extended to Heaven itself, from the top of the mountain. The whole image suggests the direct connection between God Himself and the mountain. As if He Himself had directly descended. The pillar of fire went with them to daily remind them of this connection. Indeed it could be that the pillar of fire now had moved onto the top of the mountain, but it turned into an infinitely tall pillar, extending into the centre of Heaven itself.

Exo 19:19 When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice-

What did Moses speak? Presumably the words of :7,8, whereby the people had agreed to enter covenant with Yahweh. The response was that Moses alone, and not the people as originally planned (see on :13), was invited up to God. And was simply told to return to the people, with no covenant, but rather a repeated message not to touch the mountain in their unclean state (see on :10,14,15). **Alternatively we can see this as enigmatically unstated-** Moses asked for 'something' and Yahweh "answered". What Moses asked for on Sinai at other times was the salvation of Israel. God responded by accepting them into covenant anyway.

The fact Moses spoke and God answered would implies He asked at least one question. Perhaps he intercedes for the people in asking that they might hear God's voice. Hence Dt. 5:5 saysbthat Moses stood between the people and Yahweh at this time. Or maybe the idea is that Moses spoke a commandment and then God spoke the next one, as if God was answering to Moses as a choir or singer answers to another. A matchless picture of the Divine human symphony between God and a mere man. No wonder Heb. 12 says that Moses feared and quaked.

The people were not allowed near the base of the mountain. Yet they each heard Moses speaking and God's reply, clearly by a miracle. Dt. 5:4,19 stress that Yahweh spoke directly to the people out of the fire. God's word likewise is brought personally to each person in the new covenant.

Exo 19:20 Yahweh came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. Yahweh called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up-

See on :19. Wherever an ordinary Israelite offered sacrifice, "I will come unto thee ['you' singular] and bless thee" (Ex. 20:23 AV). This is the very language of God coming unto Moses on the top of Sinai (Ex. 19:20 RV)- as if to imply that the very pinnacle of Moses' relationship with God, meeting Him on the top of the mount, is just as attainable for each of God's people who truly sacrifices to Him.

God Himself is spoken of as coming, descending etc. when He 'preaches' to humanity (e.g. Gen. 11:5; Ex. 19:20; Num. 11:25; 2 Sam. 22:10). In Jer. 39:16, the imprisoned Jeremiah is told to "go, tell Ebed-melech..." a word from the Lord about him. Jeremiah couldn't have literally left prison to do so- but the idea is that a person encountering the Lord's word has as it were experienced the Lord 'going' to him or her. And in this sense the message of the Lord Jesus (in its essence) could 'go' to persons without Him physically going anywhere or even existing consciously at the time (1 Pet. 3:18-21).

Exo 19:21 Yahweh said to Moses, Go down, warn the people, lest they break through to Yahweh to gaze, and many of them perish-

We eagerly await the words of Yahweh to Moses. The narrative sets us up to expect some profound revelation; but Moses is told simply to go all the way back down the

mountain and warn the people of their tendency to disobedience. Heb. 12:20 says the people had touched the mountain, and they were not sufficiently sanctified. See on :10,14,15. They had religious curiosity, they wanted to gaze upon God- but not to personally sanctify themselves in order to enter true relationship with Him. And that is so true of people today.

The way Moses in Deuteronomy sees Israel as far more righteous than they were reflects the way the Lord imputes righteousness to us. He says that Israel didn't go near the mountain because they were afraid of the fire (Dt. 5:5), whereas Ex. 19:21-24 teaches that Israel at that time were not so afraid of the fire, and were quite inclined to break through the dividing fence and gaze in unspiritual fascination at a theophany which was beyond them. See on Dt. 13:6.

Exo 19:22 Let the priests also, who come near to Yahweh, sanctify themselves, lest Yahweh break forth on them-

Clearly there were some priests before Aaron and his sons were consecrated. So many elements of the Mosaic law were in operation before it was given, so that some of it was really just a codification of existing concepts. But it was God's intention that all His people be priests, and under the new covenant, this priestly language of coming / drawing near to God is applied to all believers (Heb. 7:19). Indeed it is through having the sure hope of the Kingdom that we are inspired to "draw near to God" in such priestly service.

Exo 19:23 Moses said to Yahweh, The people can't come up to Mount Sinai, for you warned us, saying, 'Set bounds around the mountain, and sanctify it' -

Moses over-estimated their obedience, so much did he love them. Unknown to him at the time, they had touched the mountain and had broken the command not to touch it (Heb. 12:20). And as explained on :10,13,14, they were not sufficiently sanctified before God.

Exo 19:24 Yahweh said to him, Go down and you shall bring Aaron up with you, but don't let the priests and the people break through to come up to Yahweh, lest He break forth on them-

They had religious curiosity, they wanted to gaze upon God- but not to personally sanctify themselves in order to enter true relationship with Him. And that is so true of people today.

If Israel broke through to gaze, Yahweh would break through upon them (Ex. 19:24); their punishment would be appropriate to their sin. Under the Law, every sin received an appropriate judgment, and this anticipates the final meting out of punishment at the last day (Heb. 2:2,3). Because Israel said "No; for we will flee upon horses [and not need Yahweh's protection]; therefore shall you flee [in the condemnation process]: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift" (Is. 30:16). Because Israel thought they could flee God's judgments on swift horses, therefore their judgment came to them on swift horses. Adam and Eve were punished in ways appropriate to their in-

dividual failures. The lazy servant was punished out of his own mouth (Lk. 19:22); and even in Job's time, this principle of Divine condemnation was known (Job 9:20; 15:6). The Judaizers too were to have an "end [that] will correspond to their deeds" (2 Cor. 11:14,15 RSV).

Exo 19:25 So Moses went down to the people, and told them-

We are left to imagine him making the long journey back to the people, without having received the covenant as expected. He had merely been told to ensure the people didn't break through and touch the holy mountain. He would have realized on the climb down that they must have sinned. Something had gone wrong, and they had not in fact been invited up the mountain as initially planned (:13).

EXODUS CHAPTER 20

Exo 20:1 God spoke all these words, saying,-

The ten commandments are unique amongst the legal codes of ancient peoples, in that they speak of Divine commands given to individuals- AV "thou", you singular, shall do this, or not do that. God shows in this crucial covenant statement that He wished for personal obedience from every one of His people, not just certain sacrifices offered by representatives of the tribe.

Exo 20:2 I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage-

The language echoes that of God to Abraham: "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur" (Gen. 15:7). They were being asked to act as Abraham's seed, and respond as He did to the Divine initiative in separating them from the world- by following His commandments.

"You" is you singular, AV "thee". This was addressed primarily to those who heard it, so that Dt. 5:3,4 could reflect: "The Lord made this covenant with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day". The whole theme is of personal intimate relationship with Yahweh, concluding with the encouragement to kick some earth together to make an altar, and personally have that as their Sinai where God would likewise come down.

The decalogue was written in God's handwriting and engraved upon stones (Ex. 32:16). The Hebrew for "engraved" is *haruth*, the same consonants as

heruth, freedom / liberty. This connection between law and freedom is played on in James 1:25; 2:12. The law, therefore, is not a leash, a chore to be performed, but as David often observes, God's law is the way to run free. Divine law is the way to help man find his true identity and spiritually blossom. This of course is the opposite to human law, which seeks to constrain and 'keep the loonies on the path'. A comparison of God's law with other legal codes of the time, such as the laws of Hammurabi, reveals how God seeks to value the human person. His law was the same for all, unlike the contemporary human laws which excused the higher classes from obedience. Human life always trumped material issues; the death penalty was used very sparingly in God's laws. And above all, the Divine laws are always positioned in relation to the fact that "I am Yahweh your [personal, AV "thy"] God". Obedience was part of a personal covenant relationship with God, and an act of gratitude for His personal salvation. There is constant connection between law and covenant relationship; hence Hos. 8:1 "they have broken My covenant, and rebelled against My law". Related to this is the constant repetition that the law was given by God, and "You shall be holy, for I am holy"- and not arrived at from human consultation and development of legal tradition. This is why God's law begins with the statement "I am Yahweh your God" (Ex. 20:2). Thus the Sabbath rest was because God had rested on the seventh day; and the ten "He said..." statements of the

Genesis creation can be connected with the ten commandments, which were aimed at a new spiritual creation of people. The command not to have other gods was because Yahweh is a jealous God. The laws are always based around who God is.

Whenever God speaks about His Name, it is in the context of His emphasizing His huge commitment to Israel as His people, often in the face of their weakness (Ex. 12:12; 15:26; 20:2; Ez. 20:5,6). The very meaning of God's Name is of itself encouraging- although it is somewhat masked in English translations. God 'is' not just in the sense that He exists, but in that He 'is' there with and for us. The verb behind 'YHWH' was "originally causative", i.e. God not only 'is' but He causes things to happen. We aren't to understand Him as passive, just a stone cold Name... but rather passionately active and causative in our sometimes apparently static and repetitive lives.

Dt. 4 and 5 repeatedly stress the wonder of Israel hearing the very voice of God. How awesome to hear Him pronounce His own Name. "Yahweh spoke with you face to face on the mountain out of the midst of the fire, (I stood between Yahweh and you at that time to show you the word of Yahweh, for you were afraid because of the fire, and didn't go up onto the mountain)" (Dt. 5:4,5). Hence Moses urges them to obedience because they have been given these commands from God's own voice. Grasping the wonder of Biblical inspiration should inspire us likewise. The fact

God brought them out of Egypt us likewise cited as an inspiration to obedience.

As discussed on Ex. 6:1, the first commandment is to accept that Yahweh is our God; we are in relationship with Him, and therefore we have no other gods than Him. Our relationship is one of family, because Yahweh will be our redeemer, the kinsman redeemer. This is why the ten commandments begin with the command to accept that "I am Yahweh your God". All this is really true. "I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:2,3). This is so much more than 'You must believe that God is one'. It is a command to accept the wonder of the fact that this one God is our God.

The Exodus is the most alluded to historical incident of the Old Testament- it's a pattern to us all. Israel were not to be passive to their history of redemption, and neither can we be. Both the ten commandments and the rest of the law began with reference to Israel's exodus deliverance: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me..." (Ex. 20:2,3); the rest of the law began with the commands about releasing slaves because this was the outcome of their own exodus experience: "Now these are the ordinances which you shall set before them. If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years and in the seventh he shall go out free

without paying anything" (Ex. 21:1,2). And throughout the law, there were references to the exodus as the motive for obeying the law, e.g. Ex. 23:9 "You shall not oppress an alien, for you know the heart of an alien, since you were aliens in the land of Egypt".

Exo 20:3 You shall have no other gods before Me-

"Before Me" can mean that Yahweh is to be the most honoured of all gods. This could suggest a tolerance of having other gods, but in the hope that Yahweh's supremacy would become so obvious that faith in the other gods would fade away. This was the attitude taken by the Lord Jesus in His tolerance of belief in demons, which were also false gods and connected with idols. But "before Me" can also mean 'in My presence'. To come into Yahweh's presence with any idol... would be unthinkable. See on Ex. 18:11.

"Before Me" means "in My presence". Israel were in God's presence but had not separated / sanctified themselves from the Egyptian gods: "I said to them, Throw away every man the abominations of his eyes, and don't defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God. But they rebelled against Me, and would not listen to Me; they didn't throw away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt" (Ez. 20:7,8). We are no less in His presence. If we read "before Me" as meaning 'I must be your number one god', then we have Yahweh saying that having other gods was acceptable if He was the first one. Through the promise of the Comforter, which alludes to Yahweh's presence amongst Israel,

we likewise are bound to serve Him alone. That presence is more than an eery awareness of the supernatural at times, e.g. when encountering a beautiful sunset. It is a deeper and abiding sense of His presence, His commitment to us and ours to Him, which only He can give.

Exo 20:4 You shall not make for yourselves an idol, nor any image of anything that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:-

"Likeness" is used in the LXX in the frequent warnings not to make an image or likeness of any god, let alone Yahweh (Ex. 20:4; Dt. 4:16-25; Ps. 106:20; Is. 40:18,19). The reason for this prohibition becomes clearer in the New Testament; the ultimate likeness of God is in His Son, and we are to create the likeness of His Son not as a mere physical icon, but within the very structure of our human personality and character.

We wonder whether the command to make the molten cherubim over the ark was therefore a concession to the human desire for some kind of image; for it was a "pattern of the things in the heavens" as Paul puts it.

Exo 20:5 you shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them, for I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and on the fourth generation of those who hate Me,-

The prophets were up against the same passionless spirit that pervades our societies today. "The Lord thy God [is] a jealous God" (Ex. 20:5) was changed in the

Targums to "I am a God above jealousy" (*Mechilta*). The prophets speak so often of God's wrath, love, hurt, pain, passion, anger, pathos... And they speak too of the terrible "repentings", the kindling of contradictory impulses, which there apparently is in the mind of God. But jealousy is a lead feature within Yahweh's personality (Ex. 20:5; 34:14). It speaks specifically of the jealousy of a man concerning the faithfulness of his wife (Num. 5:14). God was the passionate lover and husband of His people, and it is inevitable therefore that the extent of that love would produce jealousy when they spurned Him and went after other men, the idols.

We may well enquire why God limits the effect of sin to the third or fourth generation; and why He speaks generally of "third or fourth". I suggest the reason is that He doesn't have generational curses in view, but rather judgment upon an extended family living together, which typically included three or four generations under the same roof. This interpretation enables us to easily square this passage with the other statements that God doesn't punish generations for the sins of their ancestors. But a head of house does bring blessing or curse upon those within his house. Likewise :6 speaks of blessing coming upon "thousands" of those who love God. But that word for "thousands" often means a family, tribe, or some unit of population. This would continue the theme- that the head of family brings blessing or curse upon their family. The apparently parallel statement in Dt. 7:9 "unto / upon a thousand generations" doesn't contra-

dict this, once we realize that "generations" is strangely singular. The idea is therefore 'a generation of a family', as discussed on Ex. 20:5.

Exo 20:6 and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love Me and keep my commandments-

God is His word (Jn. 1:1); to love God is to love His word. If we love Christ, we will keep His words (Jn. 14:15,21; 15:10). This is evidently alluding to the many Old Testament passages which say that Israel's love for God would be shown through their keeping of His commands (Ex. 20:6; Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,13,22; 30:16; Josh. 22:5). Israel were also told that God's commands were all related to showing love (Dt. 11:13; 19:9). So there is a logical circuit here: We love God by keeping His commands, the essence of which is love of people, therefore His commands are fundamentally about love. Thus love is the fulfilling of the law of God; both under the Old and New covenants (Rom. 13:10). **I discuss on :5 how "thousands" refers to family units. The idea may be that thousands, or "many", will be blessed for the sake of a faithful third party, far more than the numbers of those cursed because of the disobedience of a wicked man (:5). Blessing or curse for the sake of a third party is found throughout the Bible, coming to full term in the blessing of all the sinners who are "in Christ".**

Exo 20:7 You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain-

One reference of this is to the idea of a wife taking her husband's name; just as we do when we call the

Name upon ourselves in baptism (Acts 15:17; 22:16). The Hebrew for "take" is also translated "marry" or "accept". Perhaps 2 Cor. 6:1 alludes to the idea in urging us not to "accept" or 'take' God's grace [the essence of His Name] "in vain". The vulnerability and sensitivity of God is reflected in the way that He is concerned that His covenant people, His wife, who bears His Name, might profane His Name (Lev. 19:12; Ex. 20:7; Dt. 5:11). His repeated concern that His Name be taken in vain doesn't simply refer to the casual use of the word "God" as an expression of exasperation. God is concerned about His people taking His Name upon themselves (Num. 6:27) in vain- i.e., marrying Him, entering covenant relationship with Him, taking on His Name- but not being serious about that relationship, taking it on as a vain thing, like a woman who casually marries a man who loves her at the very core of his being, when for her, it's just a casual thing and she lives a profligate and adulterous life as his wife. When God revealed His Name to His people, opening up the very essence of His character to them, He was making Himself vulnerable. We reveal ourselves intimately to another because we wish for them to make a response to us, to love us for what we revealed to them. God revealed Himself to Israel, He sought for intimacy in the covenant relationship, and therefore was and is all the more hurt when His people turn away from Him, after having revealed to them all the wonders of His word (Hos. 8:12).

But the idea of not taking Yahweh's Name "in vain", 'vanity', is often associated with idolatry. Israel never for-

merly rejected Yahweh, and never became atheists. They mixed Yahweh worship with idolatry on the basis that they claimed that they worshipped Yahweh through worshipping the idols. This is what emboldened them to later place idols in Yahweh's temple. They were taking Yahweh's Name as a form of vanity, "in vain", a kind of idol. Thus their relationship with Yahweh was not to be a "vain thing" (Dt. 32:47).

"Guiltless" is a term which can mean "clear of responsibility to covenant relationship" (Gen. 24:8,41). God would not overlook the fact they were in covenant with Him and had taken His Name upon them, just as we take His Name upon us in baptism. And we are therefore not guiltless or clear of responsibility to Him.

To take on the Name in vain refers to entering covenant in vain, in a lighthearted, not serious way. As Israel first heard these words, they were being offered covenant and were warned not to enter it in vain. Likewise they are told in :4 not to hew out images, the same word for the hewing out of the stones on which the decalogue was written. This was all the first context of the 10 commandments, they were an invitation and warning to Israel as they were first offered the covenant. Hence they there in God's presence were to have no other gods in that presence. The 10 commandments are not much referenced in their later history because they were specifically relevant to Israel then and there. The rest of the law was likewise for them there and then, and was an extension of the 10 commandments. The 613 letters of the deca-

logue are the essence of the 613 later Mosaic commandments.

Exo 20:8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy-

"Remember" could mean 'celebrate', but that seems axiomatic. More likely the idea is that the Sabbath was established from creation onwards, and Israel were being bidden "remember" that. We note that the Sabbath was one of the ten commandments. But the Sabbath was specifically "a sign between them (Israel) and Me (God), that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them" (Ez. 20:12). As such, it has never been intended to be binding on Gentiles (non-Jews). "... the Lord has given *you* [not all mankind] the Sabbath (Ex. 16:29); "... You [God] made known to them [Israel] Your holy Sabbath" (Neh. 9:14). The Old Covenant refers to the Law of Moses, which was replaced on the cross by the New Covenant. The ten commandments, including that concerning the Sabbath, were part of the Old Covenant which was done away by Christ. God "declared to you (Israel) His covenant which he commanded you (Israel) to perform, that is the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone" (Dt. 4:13). God "wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments" (Ex. 34:28). If we argue that keeping the covenant made in the ten commandments is necessary, we must also observe every detail of the entire Law, seeing that this is all part of the same covenant. It is evidently impossible to do this. "There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb ... the ark, in which is the covenant of the

Lord" (1 Kings 8:9,21). Those tablets, on which were the ten commandments, were the covenant. Heb. 9:4 speaks of "the tablets of the covenant". The ten commandments were written on the tablets of stone, which comprised "the (old) covenant". Paul refers to this covenant as "written and engraved on stones", i.e. on the tablets of stone. He calls it "the ministry of death... the ministry of condemnation..." that which is "... passing away" (2 Cor. 3:7-11).

However, nine of the ten commandments have been reaffirmed, in spirit at least, in the New Testament: 1st. - Eph. 4:6; 1 Jn. 5:21; Mt. 4:10; 2nd. - 1 Cor. 10:14; Rom. 1:25; 3rd. - James 5:12; Mt. 5:34,35; 5th. - Eph. 6:1,2; Col. 3:20; 6th. - 1 Jn. 3:15; Mt. 5:21; 7th. - Heb. 13:4; Mt. 5:27,28; 8th. - Rom. 2:21; Eph. 4:28; 9th. - Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:25; 2 Tim. 3:3; 10th. - Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5. Numbers 3,5,6,7,8 and 9 can be found in 1 Tim. 1 alone, and numbers 1,2 and 10 in 1 Cor. 5. But never is the fourth commandment concerning the Sabbath repeated in the New Testament as obligatory for us.

Exo 20:9 You shall labour six days, and do all your work-

The idea is that man's week of labour is to reflect God's six days of labour during the creation week (:11). This parallel empowers us to see the grind of daily work as ultimately creative, and not mere vanity. The daily work which was part of the curse in Eden now becomes creative- if done "as unto the Lord". But we could also consider "you shall labour" to be a command to work, rather than laze around and by all means seek to avoid

the results of the curse. Rather we are to see in the six days of labour an opportunity to reflect God's creative work; to use our labour to create, rather than to merely exist. This lifts the curse of labour so far above what it otherwise is.

Exo 20:10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Yahweh your God. You shall not do any work in it, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your livestock, nor your stranger who is within your gates-

The Lord Jesus invites those who follow Him to accept the "rest" which He gives (Mt. 11:28), using the word which is used in the Septuagint for the Sabbath rest. Jesus was offering a life of Sabbath, of rest from trust in our own works (cp. Heb. 4:3,10). We shouldn't, therefore, keep a Sabbath one day per week, but rather live our whole lives in the spirit of the Sabbath. Just as we are to live the "eternal life" now, the type of life we will eternally live in the Kingdom is to be lived and experienced now. In this sense, as Hebrews makes clear, we "have entered into rest", and yet in another sense we labour now to enter into that rest at the Lord's return. This is a classic case of the "now but not yet" theme of the Bible.

Exo 20:11 for in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day, and made it holy-

Yahweh *blessed* the Sabbath (Ex. 20:11). Work was not to be done so as to rest and remember God's creative grace, His salvation of man without works; whereas in

pagan thought, work wasn't done because 'Sabbath' was an unlucky day on which it was best to do as little as possible in case some 'Satan' figure struck. Such belief was being deconstructed in the Sabbath law. The Mosaic 10 Commandments included the unique commandment not to covet / lust. This was unknown in any Mesopotamian legal code- because obviously it's impossible to know what a person is thinking within themselves, and so impossible to judge or punish it. But God's law introduced the whole idea that sin / transgression of law is ultimately internal, and this will be judged by the one true God. See on Ex. 35:3.

The Israelite Sabbath was instituted, it seems, in antithesis to the Mesopotamian system. Thus most pagan festivals of the time were begun by the lighting of a candle in the home; but a candle was not to be kindled on the Sabbath (Ex. 35:3). Yahweh *blessed* the Sabbath (Ex. 20:11). Work was not to be done so as to rest and remember God's creative grace; whereas in pagan thought, work wasn't done because 'Sabbath' was an unlucky day on which it was best to do as little as possible in case some 'Satan' figure struck. Such belief was being deconstructed in the Sabbath law.

God spoke the words He did on six literal, consecutive days, and the orders ('fiats' is the word Alan Hayward uses) were therefore, in this sense, as good as done. But the actual time taken to carry them out by the Angels may have been very long. The Genesis record can then be understood as stating these commands on six lit-

eral days, and then recording their fulfilment- although the fulfilment wasn't necessarily on that same day.

Exo 20:12 Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which Yahweh your God gives you-

Paul quotes this in Eph. 6:2, with the comment that this is "the first commandment with promise". Paul clearly saw "the promise" of the old covenant as being the hope of the new covenant; the hope of the promises made to the Jewish fathers was the Christian hope, as Paul so clearly stated at his trials. This involves eternal possession of a glorified earth- and not going to Heaven on death as an immortal soul. **But the promise of long life "in the land" could also reinforce the idea that these commandments were specifically given to that generation who stood on the brink of the promised land of Canaan.**

The contemporary Near Eastern legal codes prescribed the most severe penalties for crimes against the wealthy and their property. Rich people were given lesser punishments than poor people for the same crime. The value of persons reflected in Yahweh's law meant that all people were judged equally before the law, and truly there was no respect of persons with the true God. Both father and mother are placed together as worthy of equal honour (Lev. 19:3; Ex. 20:12)- whereas the contemporary laws were oriented towards respect of the male rather than females.

The Lord Jesus saw as parallel the commands to honour parents and also not to curse them. These two sep-

arate commands (from Ex. 20:12 and 21:17) He spoke of as only one: "*the* commandment" (Mk. 7:9). He therefore saw that not to honour parents was effectively to curse them (Mk. 7:10). *Omitting* to honour parents, even if it involved appearing to give one's labour to God's temple, was therefore the same as *committing* the sin of cursing them. Sins of omission are perhaps our greatest weakness.

The first five commandments relate to love towards God, and the second five commandments concern love of our neighbour. So this fifth commandment to honour parents is presented as a direct part of loving God.

Exo 20:13 You shall not murder-

The command not to murder has as its basis the fact that human life is not for us to use as we will (Ex. 20:13; Lev. 17:11; Gen. 9:6). It is God's life and is His- and this applies to our view of others lives as well as our own. Others, therefore, are not for us to use as we will. Gentleness and sensitivity to the life of others, in family life, the workplace, on the road... is therefore an outcome of our belief that the 'other' person likewise has been created by God and has life from Him. To drive in an unkind way, to act in a thoughtless way to others detriment, is therefore the same basic error as taking human life in murder.

The command "You shall not murder" must be understood in the context of a situation where the same Law also commanded certain sinners to be put to death within the community, and at times Israel were Divinely commanded and enabled to kill others outside of the

community. We have to look, therefore, for a more specific meaning for this commandment- and it seems it is speaking specifically of blood revenge, killing the person who murdered one of your relatives. According to Num. 35:25-28, if the murder was unintentional, i.e. manslaughter rather than murder, then the person could flee to a city of refuge lest he be slain by the avenger of blood. There is no guidance for the avenger of blood in these 'cities of refuge' passages; rather is there the assumption that he might well attempt to take revenge even for manslaughter, and in this case the unintentional murderer should flee from him into a city of refuge. But clearly enough, this was not God's will- for "You shall not kill". But such is God's grace that He built into His law a recognition that His people would fail. This isn't what we would expect of a $2+2=4$ God, where broken commandments are to be punished and period. In this case, we see here a tacit recognition even within the Mosaic Law that the commandments- in this case "You shall not kill"- wouldn't always be obeyed, and therefore extra legislating was added to enable this situation to be coped with. This isn't only an example of God's sensitivity to human sin and weakness of hot blood [although it is that]. It's an insight into how the very structure of His law is such that He understands human weakness, and is eager to ensure that it hurts others as little as possible. No mere human 'god' would have dreamed this up. This grace has the stamp of the ultimately Divine, and any attempt to understand it within the frames of literalistic, legalistic analysis are doomed to failure.

Exo 20:14 You shall not commit adultery-

This is as is, but we note the majority of references to "adultery" in the Hebrew Bible refer to unfaithfulness to God. And we cannot rule out the possibility that God also had that in view; for these commandments were the basis of His relationship with His people.

Exo 20:15 You shall not steal-

The Hebrew indeed means to steal, but also carries the idea of deceit. For to deceive another is to effectively steal from them, to take away and misuse their belief and trust in you and your integrity. And all deceit is ultimately in order to gain something wrongly, even the thing gained isn't anything material.

Exo 20:16 You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour-

AV "bear false witness". But the Hebrew for "bear" means not only "to give" in a legal sense. Otherwise this commandment would only apply to the need to be truthful in a court case. The Hebrew *anah* is literally "to eye", 'to give heed to'. Don't pay attention to lies, don't listen to gossip- understood like that, this commandment becomes relevant to daily life, and not just to the occasional times when a person might have to bear legal witness against someone.

Exo 20:17 You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's-

The command not to covet what looks good is very much rooted in a warning not to commit Eve's sin of

seeing the fruit and yielding to temptation (Ex. 20:17 = Gen. 3:6). The sin in Eden was every sin; we see elements of every one of our own sins in that sin. The frequent command "You shall not covet" (Ex. 20:17 etc.) uses the same Hebrew word translated "desire" when we read of how Eve "desired" the fruit (Gen. 3:6); yet Israel "desired" the wrong fruit (Is. 1:29). As Eve saw the fruit and fell for it, so the people of Reuben and Gad saw the land East of Jordan and imagined how good it would be to have it, despite having been given 'all the land' West of Jordan to enjoy [cp. Adam and Eve's dominion in Eden] (Num. 32:1,2,7). In all these allusions [and they exist in almost every chapter of the Bible] we are being shown how human sin is a repetition in essence of that of our first parents. The insistent emphasis is that we should rise above and *not* be like them. And yet this call for personal effort and struggle with ourselves in order to overcome sin is muted and misplaced by all the stress upon a supposed Devil tempting Eve, pushing the blame onto him, and thereby de-emphasizing our role in overcoming sin within ourselves. And so we see so many loud-mouthed condemners of the Devil totally not 'getting it' about the need for personal self-control and spiritual mindedness in daily life and private character.

God's law differs from human laws in that it criminalizes internal attitudes. It was impossible to prove the sin of covetousness, nor enforce the law against it- because it's invisible to others. Yet the God who sees all stands in judgment upon our innermost thoughts and desires.

Exo 20:18 All the people perceived the thunderings, the lightnings, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking. When the people saw it, they trembled, and stayed at a distance-

The Angel told Moses that the people would probably want to come up the mountain, closer to God, when in fact in reality they ran away when they saw the holiness of God; almost suggesting that the Angel overestimated their spiritual enthusiasm (Ex. 19:21-24 cp. 20:18). Likewise the Angel told Moses that the people would hear him, "and believe you for ever" (Ex. 19:9). Things turned out the opposite. At this time, God saw no iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21). His enthusiasm and positive hope for them was the outflow of an amazing love and grace toward them, and it is reflected all throughout the record.

The original plan had been as in Ex. 19:13 LXX: "When the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come up on the mountain". But this didn't happen- see on Ex. 19:14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on Ex. 19:10. The people "perceived" Yahweh's holiness and their sinfulness and continued idolatry. And they shied away from Him, whereas His intention was that they came close. These words are so sad. It was a rejection of intimacy with God, **and so Dt. 5 records that God confirmed this by telling Israel to return to their tents.**

Exo 20:19 They said to Moses, Speak with us yourself, and we will listen; but don't let God speak with us, lest we die-

People prefer not to have a direct relationship with God, hence the hierarchies and pyramid structure of many churches. But God wants to have a direct personal relationship with us as individuals. They failed to see that Divine words given through another person really are the voice of God to us personally. Perhaps our difficulty with appreciating an inspired Bible is similar; we know the theory, but do we really see the wonder of the fact that what we read is the awesome voice of God Himself to us?

Moses is one of greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should see a very high level of God manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character. Thus the law was “a law... which I (Yahweh) have written” (Ex. 24:12). Yet the Lord Jesus speaks of Moses writing the precepts of the Law (Mk. 10:5). “The book of the law of Moses” is parallel with “the book of the law of Yahweh” (Neh. 8:1; 2 Chron. 17:9); it was “the book of the law of Yahweh given by Moses” (2 Chron. 34:14). His personal blessing of the people was that of God (Dt. 33); and when he looked with pleasure upon the completed tabernacle and blessed Israel, he was imitating God’s inspection and blessing of the completed natural creation (Ex. 39:43). Yet Israel tragically failed to appreciate the degree to which God was manifest in the words of Moses, as they did with Christ. This is shown by them asking for Moses to speak with them, not God; they failed to realize that

actually his voice was God's voice. They failed to see that commandments given 'second hand' really are the voice of God (Ex. 20:19). Perhaps our appreciation of inspiration is similar; we know the theory, but do we really see the wonder of the fact that what we read is the awesome voice of God Himself?

Exo 20:20 Moses said to the people, Don't be afraid-

As discussed on :18, God's initial plan had been for the people to come close to Him. But they had shied away. Moses urges them to come close to him and to Yahweh, as Joseph did with his doubting brothers. **We note Moses asks them not to be afraid, but then says that this coming down of God is so that "His fear may be before you, that you won't sin". We have here the explanation of what it is to fear Yahweh, which is the beginning of wisdom. Not to fear Him in the quaking, guilty sense that Israel feared, but to fear in the sense of reverence, given His majestic presence in our lives.**

For God has come to test you-

God wanted the people to come close to Him, as explained on :18. So why then did He give them such a fearful display of His might and holiness, replete with thunder and some kind of volcano (:18)? To test them- whether they would really believe that despite His holiness and great power, He passionately loved them and was eager to overlook their sin and idolatry. But they failed the test- they didn't believe in His love and grace. And that finally is what faith is about- believing in the extent of His love, grace and salvation, to little me.

And that His fear may be before you, that you won't sin-

The commentary of Heb. 12:20 is that Israel could not endure what God had spoken at this time. As explained above, the display of physical power and glory was in order to help them realize that despite all that, God was so eager to forgive and accept them. Believing that of itself would inspire them not to sin; a far stronger motivation than a bald statement of law and consequence for disobedience. But they couldn't believe it. And so they fled from Him both physically (see on :18) and finally, morally.

Because God saved them from Egypt by grace [cp. baptism- 1 Cor. 10:1,2], with they themselves so spiritually weak at the time, still taking idols of Egypt through the Red Sea with them- *therefore* they were to keep the law (Dt. 11:7,8). Because God gave them the land of Canaan, a land for which they did not labour, didn't do any 'work' to receive, but were given because "You did a favour unto them" (Ps. 44:3)- *therefore* they were to keep the law (Dt. 26:15,16; 29:8,9; Josh. 23:5,6). David said that he loved keeping the law *because* God's testimony to him was so miraculous (Ps. 119:129 Heb.). There is an awesomeness to God's grace in all this. Hence the paradox of Ex. 20:20: "Fear not... that the fear of God may be before your faces". We are not to fear Him, for such perfect love casts out fear... yet it is exactly because of the wonder of all this that we live life in some fear / awe of misusing and abusing that grace.

The fear of judgment is used by Paul as a motivation for obedience in Heb. 2:1-4; 4:1. An element of fear is not wrong in itself. Israel in the wilderness had the pillar of fire to remind them of God's close presence, and to thereby motivate them not to sin: "His fear (will) be before your faces, that ye sin not" (Ex. 20:20).

God wanted to speak directly with Israel at Sinai; and yet they urged Moses personally to go and hear what God wished to say, and tell them about it: "Go thou [you singular] near and hear" (Dt. 5:23,27 AV). Moses urged them not to fear, and told them that this was all a test from God for them (Ex. 20:20). But they didn't rise to it. Yet God accepted this lower level, so did He wish to communicate with them. And He used Moses as a mediator through whom He spoke His word to His people.

The statement that Pharaoh didn't fear Yahweh (Ex. 9:30) is alluded to in Ex. 20:20. Israel were warned to fear Yahweh and not to be hardened in sin; hence their judgments were expressed in terms allusive to the plagues upon Egypt. The point is that Pharaoh stands as the classicized warning to all God's people for all time.

Exo 20:21 The people stayed at a distance-

In Ex. 24:1, Yahweh tells the people to "worship from a distance" (s.w.). They shied away from Him (Ex. 20:18), whereas His intention was that they came close. But they retreated to "a distance" (s.w. Ex. 20:18,21). And yet God wanted at least some level of relationship with them, and so He still allows and encourages them to worship Him "from a distance", even although that

was not His ideal initial intention. He had hoped for more intimacy with them.

And Moses drew near-

Although it had been God's intention that the priests should "draw near" to Him (Ex. 19:22 s.w.) and that the people "shall come up on the mountain" (Ex. 19:13 LXX). Moses alone did this. Whilst he did so as their representative, it is all a tragic reflection of their rejection of intimacy with God.

To the thick darkness where God was-

The personal relationship which we have had with Christ will be very evident at the judgment. What we say to the Lord Jesus in His ear in the bedroom in the darkness, will be openly spoken by Christ at the judgment (Lk. 12:2,3). God dwells in darkness (Ex. 20:21; 1 Kings 8:12). Speaking in the bedroom in secret with the knowledge we will be openly rewarded is the language of prayer (Mt. 6:6). Our private relationship with the Lord now, praying to Him in our bedroom, meditating about Him there, will then be spoken out loud. But there is a related statement from the Lord: What we hear from Him in the ear, we must speak openly (Mt. 10:26,27; after the pattern of Isaiah in Is. 22:14). Putting these passages together, we get the picture of us speaking to God through Christ, talking in His ear, as one might whisper something very personal into a friend's ear, in the darkness of our bedroom. And then the Lord whispers back in our ear, i.e. His revelation to us (through the word) is very personal and not perceived by others; but we must openly, publicly act upon it.

Exo 20:22 Yahweh said to Moses, This is what you shall tell the children of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven-

A true understanding of the word of God for what it is will be related to realistic response to it. Insofar as we believe that the Bible is inspired, we will feel the passion and power of it the more, and thereby its impact upon us will be the greater. Because of the wonder of having heard God's voice, therefore idolatry of any form will be meaningless for us. They 'saw' that God "talked with you"; they didn't "hear", but they had seen the visible evidence of His voice. No nation had a God like this. We see that it was through the testimony of His word that Yahweh revealed Himself as uniquely real, and no other god was therefore possibly real (see on :23). The inspired Bible which we have today is similar witness to us.

Exo 20:23 You shall most certainly not make alongside Me gods of silver, or gods of gold for yourselves-

Having seen the awesome theophany of Yahweh, it was utterly inappropriate and even laughable to consider that He could somehow be placed alongside a piece of gold and worshipped as one of a line of deities upon a shelf. There was no comparison. And yet men worship gold and silver not only as Yahweh's equal, but even more than Him. In this lies the deep blasphemy of all materialism and worship of wealth. And yet this is the spirit of our age. For the Hebrew word for "silver" is that also translated "money".

**"Make alongside Me" is literally "make with Me".
Again the allusion is to the fact that Israel at this**

point stood in the very presence of Yahweh. Appreciating that meant that any construction of other gods was naturally outlawed. We see the contrast between "make with Me" and "make for / next to yourselves". Making anything for yourself, having any idol next to you, was inappropriate if indeed you are standing before God Himself. This is the practical import of appreciating the promise of God's presence in Christ, especially as we have it in the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. And we wonder whether the Israelites even now were doing, or considering doing, what they did when Moses was up the mountain in Ex. 32- making a graven image, with the adultery etc. which went with it. Again we suspect the ten commandments were all specifically relevant to them at that time.

Exo 20:24 You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your cattle-

God told Israel that He wanted altars made of earth; but He knew they would want to make altars of stone like the other nations, and He made allowance for this (Ex. 20:24,25). The Law has several examples of this living on different levels. "You shall let nothing of (the Passover) remain until the morning; and that which remain of it until the morning you shall burn with fire" (Ex. 12:10) is an evident example. God foresaw their disobedience to His stated principle, and made a concession and provision. Or take the Law's ruling about tithes: "...neither shall he change it: and if he change it..." (Lev. 27:33).

We are made from the dust of the earth, which Genesis says was cursed. God doesn't want beautiful externalities, He wants us to worship Him from the heart, accepting us as we are. The Law of Moses recognizes so often that Israel wouldn't be fully obedient, hence the next verse goes on to speak of how *if* they still insisted on building not an earth altar but a stone one, then even if they make use of God's concession to human weakness, they must still abide by His principles.

However it could be argued that later Israel did make more permanent altars, and God went along with this and allowed acceptable sacrifice to be offered upon them. The commandment to make altars of earth could therefore be one of the many parts of the law of Moses which only applied to Israel in the wilderness. For they were constantly on the move. **Dt. 12 is clear that God wanted a single, centralized place of worship. We could read this as implying these laws of Ex. 20 were relevant only for the wilderness generation; or that after 40 years, He accepted that this system was not working. The Israelites are never recorded as making such altars in the wilderness, and so God perhaps changed this attempt to inculcate spontaneous spirituality, whereby anyone could just build a simple altar and offer upon it with no priest as mediator.**

Ex. 27:8 commands the building of the bronze covered altar, with hollow boards. It could be that the hollow nature of the altar meant that a pile of earth was made, and the altar structure placed on top of it. But this would make it hard to understand how the ashes of the

sacrifices could be collected. Surely the idea of a "grate" as commanded would have been meaningless if effectively the altar was solid earth inside it. So we are left with the conclusion that the 'altar of earth' instruction was not to apply to the tabernacle, but to altars for sacrifice which were used more local to the tents of the people. Or perhaps it was intended to only apply in the wilderness until the tabernacle was built. For clearly later altars were accepted by God, when they were not made of earth. We see in these considerations that the law of Moses was not inflexible, and God is not a literalist. Changed circumstances for His people changed His operational style with them, and His expectations of them.

In every place where I record My name-

It is man who is to record or remember / memorialize the things of Yahweh's Name (s.w. Ps. 20:7; 45:17; Is. 12:4; 26:13), making no mention / record of the name of other gods apart from Yahweh (s.w. Ex. 23:13; Zech. 13:2). But in Ex. 20:24 it is God who records or remembers His Name when He is worshipped acceptably. We see here the mutuality between God and man which is achieved in worship when it is done His way.

I will come down to you and I will bless you-

They had just witnessed Yahweh coming down in awesome majesty. Now they were told that He would in essence do this every time His people offered to Him on a humble earthen altar. There is a conscious juxtaposition between His coming down, and the idea of coming down upon an earthen altar. **But clearly they didn't want this, and so Dt. 12 amends this law to the idea**

of one centralized place of worship. Again we reflect that the commandments of Ex. 20 were specific to the generation of Israelites that first heard them. They were to realize that a mound of earth kicked together, with them acting as their own priest, be they male or female, was to be their personal Sinai. But they didn't want this, just as they didn't want intimacy with God and asked Moses to do it all for them. The connection with Yahweh's 'coming down' explains why these commands about altars occur straight after the giving of the ten commandments at Yahweh's 'coming down' upon Sinai.

"You" is you singular in the Hebrew here. Wherever an ordinary Israelite offered sacrifice, God would come to them personally. Yet this is the very language of God coming unto Moses on the top of Sinai (Ex. 19:20 "came down")- as if to imply that the very pinnacle of Moses' relationship with God, meeting Him on the top of the mount, is just as attainable for each of God's people who truly sacrifices to Him. Wherever an ordinary Israelite offered sacrifice, "I will come unto thee ['you' singular] and bless thee" (Ex. 20:23 AV). This is the very language of God coming unto Moses on the top of Sinai (Ex. 19:20 RV)- as if to imply that the very pinnacle of Moses' relationship with God, meeting Him on the top of the mount, is just as attainable for each of God's people who truly sacrifices to Him. It is the equivalent of the promised presence of the Lord Jesus wherever two or three gather in His Name (Mt. 18:20).

Exo 20:25 If you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of cut stones; for if you lift up your tool on it, you have polluted it-

Ex. 20:25 says that the use of any tool upon an altar would defile it (also see Dt. 27:5). This is how strongly God despises chic externality, and wants us to offer to Him as we are, uncut stones. He wants us, as we are, and not covered by cosmetics. In this we see the deep unspirituality of the altars in the temple, as designed by David and Solomon. I have suggested that although Solomon claims all this was commanded by God, in fact that was merely His assumption. Solomon attempted to get around this law by ensuring that the stones were cut away from the temple construction site (1 Kings 6:7). But this surely was breaking the spirit of the law.

Israel had lived generations in Egypt, and had taken the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:7,8). The Egyptian altars were all of hewed stones, with images of their gods engraved upon them. Perhaps the insistence that "cut stones" must not be used was in order to strengthen them against the temptation to engrave images upon the sides of the altar, as they had seen in Egypt. We see how God's laws are designed not as a burden, but to ease our overall obedience to His ways.

Exo 20:26 Neither shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed to it'-

We note that the altar of Ezekiel's temple plan had steps leading up to it (Ez. 43:17), whereas this was forbidden in Ex. 20:26. The system described there was not a revival of the Mosaic system. **Israel generally failed to**

make use of God's invitation to every man and woman to kick some earth together and offer a sacrifice without a priest, and so His system of the tabernacle made concessions to human need for religion; there was an ornate altar with steps, and there were the cherubim, which were "patterns of things in the heavens" although the first commandment makes it clear that this was not God's ideal intention. The picture of fallen man in Genesis is never far away from God's commandments. He had asked them to make Him an altar from the dust of the earth (:24), alluding to how man was made from dust and that dust was now cursed. They were to be aware of Adam's fall, of his nakedness, and God's covering of it. And when they worshipped, they were to be particularly aware of their fallen state; and remind themselves of their need for a covering of nakedness.

EXODUS CHAPTER 21

Exo 21:1 Now these are the ordinances which you shall set before them-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Exo 21:2 If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years and in the seventh he shall go out free without paying anything-

Slaves could be bought out of slavery by others or by themselves somehow raising the required amount. Often they went into slavery in order to pay a debt. But

six years was the maximum they could serve- that was enough to pay any debt. They could not be then forced to still pay some debt. This total freedom from debt may look forward to the intended "rest" of the Kingdom at the end of the 6 days / 6000 years of Biblical human history.

The Exodus is the most alluded to historical incident of the Old Testament- it's a pattern to us all. Israel were not to be passive to their history of redemption, and neither can we be. Both the ten commandments and the rest of the law began with reference to Israel's exodus deliverance: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me..." (Ex. 20:2,3); the rest of the law began with the commands about releasing slaves because this was the outcome of their own exodus experience: "Now these are the ordinances which you shall set before them. If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years and in the seventh he shall go out free without paying anything" (Ex. 21:1,2). And throughout the law, there were references to the exodus as the motive for obeying the law, e.g. Ex. 23:9 "You shall not oppress an alien, for you know the heart of an alien, since you were aliens in the land of Egypt".

Exo 21:3 If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself. If he is married, then his wife shall go out with him-

This reflects God's desire that husband and wife not separate nor be separated by others, especially for mate-

rial reasons. The idea here seems to be that the husband could as it were save his wife from slavery; if he was the one in debt who had gone into slavery, or her debt was greater than his; then all the same, his redemption became hers. This too looks forward to the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus, "the servant of Yahweh" *par excellence*.

Exo 21:4 If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself-

This might possibly suggest that the "him" in "She bears *him*" is the master and not the husband. But this apparently oppressive ruling is to be read in the context of the next verses. The servant could retain his wife and children if he devoted himself to his master's house for the rest of his life. The situation was set up in order to make the servant pay a price for his wife and children. He made a free choice to marry whilst a servant; and he was to make that choice aware of the huge long term price he was going to have to pay for it. That was in order to help him understand the long term commitment required from a man in marrying and having children. It was a resignation of his personal freedom (:5), and the man had to knowingly make that choice. We can deduce that the marriage was completely his choice; if it were forced upon him by the master, then this would be the kind of personal manipulation and robbing of personal freedom which the law of Moses outlaws. And that is the take away lesson from this- all the more relevant in our age of casual relationships, married men refusing to re-

sign personal freedom and fathering of children without taking personal responsibility. See on :5.

Exo 21:5 But if the servant shall plainly say, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children. I will not go out free;'

The Lord's crucifixion was likened to His ear (His hearing of the master's word) being nailed to an upright piece of wood (cp. the cross; Ex. 21:6 = Ps. 40:6-8 = Heb. 10:5-12). That was the sign of His total dedication to the house of Yahweh, but it was motivated by His love for us, and commitment to entering an eternal relationship with us (see on :4). His relationship with us is described as "I and the children whom God has given me" (Heb. 2:13). This would allude to this situation, where the servant was 'given' a wife and thence children by the master, God (:4). The children were given to Him by God, the master, because He plainly declared His love for us, His wife and children. And that plain declaration was surely on the cross.

Exo 21:6 then his master shall bring him to the elohim, and shall bring him to the door or to the doorpost, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall serve him for ever-

This speaks of bringing a slave "to God". This could refer to the *elohim*, the elders. Or it could refer to the door post of the home, and nailing his ear to it. "God" is paralleled with the door post. The servant was saying that he was now permanently attached to the household, symbolized by his ear being physically attached to it. The ear was chosen because this was a symbol of obedience to the master's word. R.E. Clements notes that this al-

ludes to the ancient pagan practice whereby "a household god would have been kept by the threshold of a house to guard it" (R.E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 133). Moses is attacking this idea- by saying that God, Israel's God, is the One there- and not the household gods which those around Israel believed were there. See on Ex. 12:7.

This custom is alluded to in Ps. 40:6, and applied to Christ in Heb. 10:5-10. For love of us, the wife whom He was given by God His "master" (:4), Christ chose to stay in the Father's house for ever. The nailing of the ear to a piece of wood is understood in Hebrews 10 as prophetic of Christ's nailing to the cross. The ear represented obedient listening to the Master's word. Christ on the cross was ultimately obedient to God's word- for our sakes. That we are seen as His wife should inspire us to the utmost faithfulness and support of His cause in this world.

The question is whether this apparently lifelong commitment was undone by the provisions for the release of slaves at the year of Jubilee. The nature of the language used here would suggest that the freedom of the year of Jubilee didn't apply in this case. So we again see how the law of Moses, like any legal code, had internal contradictions, and times when one law must take precedence over another. These features of the law of Moses were in order to elicit thoughtful obedience to it, rather than blind obedience of a perfectly consistent legal code. For the law was to inculcate thoughtful relationships, both with God and man.

Exo 21:7 If a man sells his daughter to be a female servant, she shall not go out as the male servants do-

Men in debt would typically sell their daughters as servants, but they were often bought with a view to marrying them- either by the purchaser, or by his children.

Exo 21:8 If she doesn't please her master, who has married her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her-

The servant who was bought may have been bought blind, never having met her. Or the 'being evil in the eyes' (Heb.) of the master may be because she was found not to be a virgin. He could then sell her to another, but not to a Gentile. His 'deceit' was in that he had purchased a woman ostensibly as a female servant, when it was his plan to marry her.

Exo 21:9 If he marries her to his son, he shall deal with her as a daughter-

Although she had been purchased as a servant, she was now effectively to be set free from that by her marriage to his son. She was not to be allowed to slip into the category of 'wife second class'. She was to be treated fully as his daughter in law and not as a servant, to run his errands.

Exo 21:10 If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marital rights-

If a man betrothed his slave girl unto his son, he "must" ["shall"] treat her as he would his own daughter (:9). But if he didn't, she could go free (Ex. 21:9-11).

There were clearly different levels of obedience envisaged. "Her marital rights" seems to refer to sex. The man was to treat this woman still as his wife, even if he took another wife. We note that sex was considered a basic human need, as much as food and clothing. And we can infer from that as we will, guided by God's moral principles elsewhere expressed. But it should guide and help us in our consideration of all the moral and sexual issues we at times encounter in church life. We also note here that to continue having sex with her was required by the law; but as with the commands not to covet and to observe intimate hygiene in order to be "clean", there could be no mechanism to ensure obedience to this. How often the man was to sleep with the first wife was not defined. The law of Moses was God speaking to the hearts and personal consciences of people, rather than being merely a legal code, obedience to which could be judged solely by external behaviour. In this way, God's law was unlike any other legal code.

Exo 21:11 If he doesn't do these three things for her, she may go free without paying any money-

"These three things" may not refer to the three things of Ex. 21:10, but rather to the three courses of action in Ex. 21:8-10. She would go out free, her father would not be required to repay any of the money which had been paid for her. Going out free might also imply that she was free to remarry. Clearly second marriage was envisaged and tolerated under the law of Moses.

Exo 21:12 One who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death-

"Surely" foresees situations whereby there was a temptation for the death penalty for murder not to be enforced. In surrounding cultures, a wealthy person could murder their servants with impunity; the fits of rage of the wealthy and powerful were excused. But that was not to be so with God's people.

Exo 21:13 but not if it is unintentional, but God allows it to happen-

This is a comforting perspective on manslaughter- it was allowed by God to happen.

Then I will appoint you a place where he shall flee-

That place was the altar (:14). Later, when Israel were in the land, cities of refuge were designated for these cases. And they were promised more cities of refuge if they continued in the path of obedience. We see here how God's saving purpose expands and changes form over time. It would also be an example of where many of the commands of the law of Moses were only relevant to the wilderness generation. Although in this case, using the altar as a city of refuge is found in 1 Kings 1:50; 2:28.

Exo 21:14 If a man schemes and comes presumptuously on his neighbour to kill him, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die-

The altar represented Christ (Heb. 13:10). He is the place of refuge whither we may flee, we who like the man of :13 have committed sins worthy of death and yet against our deepest will. Whilst we cannot justify all our sins by blaming them on circumstances, within some kind of 'situational ethic', it is also true that God rec-

ognizes that at times and in some ways we sin without deeply intending to.

Exo 21:15 Anyone who attacks his father or his mother shall be surely put to death-

Significantly, the mother is treated on the same level as the father. The law of Moses afforded the same human dignity to both genders, and was far ahead of its time in this- for it reflects the huge value which God places upon the human person. As in :17 the law exalts the value of parents, and seeks to inculcate particular honour towards them. Instances of hitting or cursing parents (:17) were most likely to occur in heated domestic squabbles where there was no outside witness. So here again we have an example of God's law legislating about intimate personal matters, rather like the law not to covet. There was no way that this could be legally proven. The law was intended as a personal dialogue between God and the individual Israelite.

The laws of Hammurabi stated that if a man struck his father, his hand was to be cut off. But God's law was far stricter- the punishment was death. For God so deeply wanted respect for parents. I suggest the allusions to the laws of Hammurabi were in order to explain to Israel where the existing laws they had known were wrong, where they were right, and where they were partly right and needed reframing. The greatest difference is that the law of Moses sees sin as being against God, whereas the other legal codes see failure as a sin against society alone.

Exo 21:16 Anyone who kidnaps someone and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death-

To deprive someone of their personal freedom is treated here in the same context as murder (:14). Whilst we may not be tempted to kidnap anyone, there are other ways in which in essence we can deprive another of their personal freedom, treating them as a thing rather than a person. The selling of the kidnapped Israelite (Dt. 24:7) was likely to a Gentile nation. This was going to distance the person from the sanctuary and the ways of God. To cause another to spiritually stumble is worthy of eternal death, the Lord was to later teach.

"Found in his hand" could mean that he had purchased such a kidnapped person. Or maybe he had kidnapped him and was keeping him as a captured person, with a view to selling him. But the idea is that he had taken another person and deprived them of their freedom, inappropriately asserting control over another. And this is a principle which can apply to many situations which may not today be judged as criminal.

Exo 21:17 Anyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death-

The Lord Jesus saw as parallel the commands to honour parents and also not to curse them. These two separate commands (from Ex. 20:12 and Ex. 21:17) He spoke of as only one: "*the* commandment" (Mk. 7:9). He therefore saw that not to honour parents was effectively to curse them (Mk. 7:10). *Omitting* to honour parents, even if it involved appearing to give one's labour to God's

temple, was therefore the same as *committing* the sin of cursing them. Sins of omission are perhaps our greatest weakness. To deal with a person as if they are an object is judged by God as bad as murder. The value and meaning of the human person is paramount with God, and is reflected in His law.

Exo 21:18 If men quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone, or with his fist, and he doesn't die, but is confined to bed-

The idea seems to be that the injured party was also guilty because he had been involved in the quarrel. AV "strive together" may imply that the two men were in an actual fight, rather than simply quarreling.

Exo 21:19 if he rises again and walks around with his staff, then he who struck him shall be cleared: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall provide for his healing until he is thoroughly healed-

This is not a light punishment. Rather the injured man was paying the price for having been involved in the fight in the first place; see on :18.

The idea of the Lord as the good Samaritan taking care for the man is expressed in the language of Ex. 21:19, which says that if a man wounds another, "he shall pay... and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed". This somewhat odd allusion (at first sight) surely indicates that the Lord took upon Himself the full blame for our stricken condition, presumably in the sense that as the second Adam He took upon Himself the guilt of Adam. This is why there are so many connections between His death and the effects of Adam's sin (e.g. the

crown of thorns, the Garden etc.). The way Christ compared Himself to a Samaritan, half Jew and half Gentile, shows that especially on the cross, this is how He felt.

Exo 21:20 If a man strikes his servant or his maid with a rod, and he dies under his hand, he shall surely be punished-

A slave was to be respected as a person no less than anyone else. A person's social or economic standing can never excuse abusing them. However we note the lack of a specific death penalty. The law does allow meaning to the fact that a person was a servant, and thereby the property of another. There appears to be the acceptance of corporal punishment even for a slave (Prov. 10:13; 13:24).

Exo 21:21 Notwithstanding, if he gets up after a day or two, he shall not be punished, for he is his property-

We may well wonder why the whole idea of slavery was permitted under the law of Moses. I see it as the same question as to why polygamy was permitted. It was a concession to their weakness. To square these commands with other principles in the law of Moses, the Rabbis suggest that the servant in view must be a Gentile one.

Exo 21:22 If men fight and hurt a pregnant woman so that she gives birth prematurely, and yet no harm follows, he shall be surely fined as much as the woman's husband demands and the judges allow-

The situation may be of men fighting between themselves, and a pregnant woman being unintentionally damaged. These may have been the situations which

Moses had so far encountered whilst leading the people. Or perhaps Moses had been asked to judge a situation like this at the time of Ex. 2:13.

Exo 21:23 But if any harm follows, then you must take life for life-

The "harm [which] follows" appears to be to the child when it is born. "Follows" implies that the harm is only later revealed, and therefore the reference is to the child and not to the woman. The value of the health and state of a newborn child is thereby taught.

Exo 21:24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot-

The Lord Jesus didn't come to destroy the Law of Moses. It still stood when He gave His teaching (Mt. 5:38). Yet He said that instead of insisting upon an eye for an eye in situations like a pregnant woman having a deformed child because of the violence of a man, she should instead try to forgive him (Ex. 21:22-24). He was not changing the Law, as some have wrongly thought. He was saying that the Law was capable of being lived on different levels, and that some aspects of it were a concession to human weakness. Thus the woman with a deformed child could legitimately express her anger by insisting on the physical deformation of the man who had attacked her during pregnancy; but this, the Lord was saying, can give way to a higher level: simply forgive the man.

Exo 21:25 burning for burning, wound for wound, and bruise for bruise-

"Burning" or (Heb.) 'branding' would refer to permanent scars, and that is likely also the idea of 'wound' and 'bruise'.

Exo 21:26 If a man strikes his servant's eye, or his maid's eye, and destroys it, he shall let him go free for his eye's sake-

This may seem fair enough, but then there is juxtaposed against this the command in :27 that this is also true if the tooth of a servant was knocked out. To loose a tooth is far less than to loose an eye. But the sense was that any permanent damage to another, even if they were a slave, was to result in the granting of freedom. Most people were in slavery because they had been sold into it because of debts. The debts were thereby cleared and the master stood at a financial loss because of his fit of temper.

Exo 21:27 If he strikes out his male servant's tooth, or his female servant's tooth, he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake-

See on :26. We note that the law stressed the equality of male and female servants; whereas female servants were considered of far less legal value under the surrounding legal codes. Again we see the huge value attached to the human person by the Divine law, regardless of gender.

Exo 21:28 If a bull gores a man or a woman to death, the bull shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the bull shall not be held responsible-

These laws are almost verbatim with the laws of Hammurabi 250-252. The question is, who copied

whom? In this section of Ex. 21 there are various allusions to the Hammurabi laws- but with significant differences. I suggest the allusions to the laws of Hammurabi were in order to explain to Israel where the existing laws they had known were wrong, where they were right, and where they were partly right and needed reframing. The greatest difference is that the law of Moses sees sin as being against God, whereas the other legal codes see failure as a sin against society alone.

Exo 21:29 But if the bull had a habit of goring in the past, and it has been testified to its owner, and he has not kept it in, but it has killed a man or a woman, the bull shall be stoned, and its owner shall also be put to death-

Because Eli wouldn't exercise discipline, he was somehow seen as committing those very things which he failed to rebuke. The man who wouldn't discipline his wayward ox was to be treated like as if he had committed the crime the ox did, and therefore must die if the ox killed a man (Ex. 21:29).

Exo 21:30 If a ransom is laid on him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is laid on him-

Remember that the Rabbis taught that salvation was impossible for Gentiles: "For the heathen nations there will be no redemption", so reads the targum on Ex. 21:30. Like us, the early Jewish converts were influenced by their backgrounds and their limited world views. Until the Lord brought experiences to bear which, when responded to, taught them what is now the obvious meaning of His words- that we each have a duty to take the good news of Him to the whole planet. After His resur-

rection, the Lord Jesus was *sent* to preach blessing and forgiveness to Israel (Acts 3:26). But after His resurrection, He sent His men to preach this message. His witness became expressed through, and therefore limited by, His preachers. When they willfully misunderstood His commission as meaning preaching to Jews from all nations, rather than taking the message to the whole planet literally, His work was in that sense hindered and His intention delayed.

Exo 21:31 Whether it has gored a son or has gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him-

Again we see the huge value attached to the human person by the Divine law, regardless of gender (also in :32). To gore is in Hebrew literally 'to push down'. The leaders of Israel were later condemned for pushing down the weak and vulnerable in the flock of God (Ez. 34:21 s.w.). And so a wider principle emerges- that we are culpable before God if we allow others to be pushed down by our indifference and inattention.

Exo 21:32 If the bull gores a male servant or a female servant, thirty shekels of silver shall be given to their master, and the ox shall be stoned-

The price of a slave was thirty shekels of silver, and this was the price of the Lord Jesus. He is constantly hinted at throughout the Mosaic law, as the consummate "servant of Yahweh".

Exo 21:33 If a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit and doesn't cover it, and a bull or a donkey falls into it-

The Lord's story about the little boy who falls down the well spoke of how He was out to save Israel, who had fallen down the well for the sake of the inattention of others. The legalistic mind would have gone straight to Ex. 21:33: the man who dug a well and didn't cover it was responsible for any deaths arising from it. The Lord's story would imply that the father of the child was the owner of the well. The Lord doesn't draw the lesson that 'It's your own fault for being disobedient to the Law'. He focuses instead on the need to act *urgently* to save, without maxing out on the issue of whose *fault* it was that the tragedy had occurred.

I once heard a middle class woman say to her child (in that irksome White Anglo-Saxon Protestant way): "Look at that bad man lying there in the gutter. He's been *drinking!* Silly man, hey!". She didn't want to imagine how that red, contoured face had once been a sweet baby, a mothers pride and joy; a mischievous little lad at school; a young man with an ambition to marry a young woman and have a family. Yes, on one level it was his fault he was in the gutter. But the heart that bleeds sees the tragedy, the human pain and wastage of it all. The heart that bleeds cant walk on by. It will realize our limited ability to judge the total circumstances in any human encounter, but more than that, it will be hopeful and seeking for Gods glory to be achieved in the most apparently hopeless of cases. God need not have grieved for the grief of Israel. It *was* their fault. But He did, and He eventually grieved for it to the extent of giving His own son to be done to death.

Exo 21:34 the owner of the pit shall make it good. He shall give money to its owner, and the dead animal shall be his-

These laws were seeking to inculcate sensitivity to others. We too should live our lives thinking about the possible consequence to others of our actions, both in what we commit and what we omit to do.

Exo 21:35 If one man's bull injures another's, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live bull, and divide its price; and they shall also divide the dead animal-

Arguments amongst herdsmen were infamous. We think of the various conflicts which the patriarchs were involved in. God shows Himself absolutely aware of and sensitive to such very common human situations. Truly man is not alone, but God knows and is aware. And seeks to guide us through them.

Exo 21:36 Or if it is known that the bull was in the habit of goring in the past, and its owner has not kept it in, he shall surely pay bull for bull, and the dead animal shall be his own-

We see here the principle that knowledge brings responsibility. The abiding principle is that of restraint of situations which are likely to lead to damage.

EXODUS CHAPTER 22

Exo 22:1 If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it, or sells it; he shall pay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep-

We note that the Mosaic law had no concept of prisons or custodial sentences, even though this was practiced in the surrounding world. We think of Joseph in prison in Egypt. God wanted issues to be decided immediately, forgiven and resolved- and "play on". And this is reflected in the law of Moses. Prison seems not to really reform many people. And that is why we are to immediately reconcile with our brother.

Exo 22:2 If the thief is found breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt of bloodshed for him-

The original text here is difficult. GNB suggests: "If a thief is caught breaking into a house at night and is killed, the one who killed him is not guilty of murder. But if it happens during the day, he is guilty of murder". The idea would then be that if a man kills a thief while he is in the act of breaking in to a home, this is not to be counted as murder. But if some time passes and then the owner as an act of revenge murders the thief, this is seen by God differently. Surely this reflects the fact that God is more lenient to sins committed in hot blood than those more premeditated. Yet on the other hand, sin is sin. His law, as law, can appear to make no distinction between sins of passion and premeditated sins, if the same act is committed in the end. However, this and other ex-

amples indicate God's willingness to concede to human weakness, and recognize sins of passion more leniently than others. And our judgment in ecclesial life should reflect this too.

Exo 22:3 If the sun has risen on him, guilt of bloodshed shall be for him; he shall make restitution-

See on :2. There was perhaps the possibility of making restitution with money even when guilty of murder.

If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft-

This presumably speaks of the thief, if he survived; whereas the first part of the verse speaks of the person who killed a thief.

Exo 22:4 If the stolen property is found in his hand alive, whether it is ox, donkey, or sheep, he shall pay double-

The way God restored double to Job at the end has echoes of how a thief had to restore double (Ex. 22:2-4)-as if God in His love for Job wished to show Himself as having been somehow 'guilty' for taking away from Job what He had? Is. 40:2, in the context of Israel's punishment by the Babylonians, says that their judgment had been double what it ought to have been; and yet Ezra says it was less than the promised proportionate recompense for their sins. Here we have the utter, inconsistent grace of God; almost taking guilt for punishing them (cp. how God likewise takes the blame in Is. 54:6-8, as if He had forsaken Israel as a sweet innocent young wife).

Exo 22:5 If a man causes a field or vineyard to be eaten, and lets his animal loose, and it grazes in another

man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field, and from the best of his own vineyard-

There was to be no excuse in claiming that an animal had done this, and not the owner. The abiding principle is that we are not to manipulate others of diminished responsibility, such as an animal in this case, and claim we did nothing wrong.

Exo 22:6 If fire breaks out, and catches in thorns so that the stacks of grain, or the standing grain, or the field are consumed; he who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution-

"Breaks out" implies it gets out of control, burning beyond the intended area within one property, catching thorns on fire and thereby burning up harvested grain in time of harvest. The principle is that we may unintentionally begin something which then ignites a third party, the thorns, and this then causes huge damage. The fire in the standing grain had in fact been kindled by the man who first kindled the fire in his own territory. What we begin can have huge repercussions, because it is spread further through a third party. And we must bear some responsibility, even if the consequences were not envisaged by us initially. Thus a relationship breakdown between two people within their own home may ignite another person, who in turn spreads the breakdown on a massive scale, with large scale damage. And thus many church divisions have come about.

Exo 22:7 If a man delivers to his neighbour money or stuff to keep, and it is stolen out of the man's house; if the thief is found, he shall pay double-

But Zacchaeus paid back four times what he had stolen (Lk. 19:8). The existence of God's law shouldn't inculcate a spirit of minimalism in us, doing the letter of the law and no more. Rather if we perceive the principles behind it, we will do far over and above what the letter of the law requires.

Exo 22:8 If the thief isn't found, then the master of the house shall come near to God, to find out if he hasn't put his hand to his neighbour's goods-

"God" is the *elohim*, the judges or priests who represented God. In the context of these situations which required a yes or no decision, it could be that the urim and thummim were used. These two stones in the breastplate flashed out binary answers to requests, so truly the case came "to God". We note how the law given in the wilderness envisaged Israel soon living in houses in the promised land.

Exo 22:9 For every matter of trespass, whether it be for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, or for any kind of lost thing, about which one says, 'This is mine', the cause of both parties shall come before God. He whom God condemns shall pay double to his neighbour-

'God' here refers to the judges or elders; to come before God's representative is to come before God. Hence GNB "the two people claiming the property shall be taken to the place of worship". LXX "according to every injury alleged... and every alleged loss".

Exo 22:10 If a man delivers to his neighbour a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep, and it dies or is injured, or driven away, no man seeing it-

This again is a commandment particularly relevant to the infamous quarrels between herdsmen, which would have been common in the wilderness journey. For Israel left Egypt with much cattle, whom they herded through the desert. We think of the various conflicts which the patriarchs were involved in. God shows Himself absolutely aware of and sensitive to such very common human situations. Truly man is not alone, but God knows and is aware. And seeks to guide us through them.

Exo 22:11 the oath of Yahweh shall be between them both, whether he hasn't put his hand to his neighbour's goods; and its owner shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution-

The initial intention was that Israel would so fear Yahweh that an oath before Him was assumed to be sufficient. But the Lord Jesus saw that there was a strong tendency to swear falsely, and so He urges us not to take such oaths, but to make our "yes" or "no" mean just that. This was in fact demanding an even higher level of truthfulness.

Exo 22:12 But if it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner-

The man who had his neighbour's animal with him was responsible for it if it were stolen, but not if it were killed by wild animals (:13). This might imply that the person was held responsible for finding the thief and getting restitution from him.

Exo 22:13 If it is torn in pieces, let him bring it for evidence. He shall not make good that which was torn-

The brothers allowed Joseph to be stolen away (Gen. 40:15), and then presented his garment as evidence that he had been "torn in pieces" by wild animals (s.w. Gen. 37:33; 44:28). So again we see that the essence of the Mosaic law was known well before, but was now being codified formally.

Exo 22:14 If a man borrows anything of his neighbour's, and it is injured, or dies, its owner not being with it, he shall surely make restitution-

We see the internal consistency of the Biblical record in the concern over the loss of the axe head (2 Kings 6:5), which was a situation directly envisaged in the law here. See on :15.

Exo 22:15 If its owner is with it, he shall not make it good. If it is a leased thing, it came for its lease-

The requirement to restore the lost or damaged borrowed item (:14) was only if the owner wasn't present. If the owner were present when it was lost or broken, then he would know that the item had not been stolen. It was the kind of loss which anyone who hires things out must be prepared to bear. The intention of :14 was therefore to cut off any possibility of suspicion that the item had not in fact been genuinely lost, but rather had been stolen. By all means, we too should seek to develop situations whereby the possibility of suspicion is removed.

Exo 22:16 If a man entices a virgin who isn't pledged to be married, and lies with her, he shall surely pay a dowry for her to be his wife-

Here again we have a law which spoke directly to the personal conscience of the individual Israelite. If a young

couple slept with each other and she didn't get pregnant, then it was only up to their conscience as to whether they were obedient to this. We notice that there was no unduly heavy condemnation for consensual premarital sex. That is not at all to justify it, but we should note that the New Testament's heavy condemnation of "fornication", Greek *pornos* , is not generally referring to this. Rather is the reference often to the casual sex which accompanied idol worship.

Exo 22:17 If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins-

The amount of this dowry isn't defined. The father would have to set the amount; but if he had refused to let the man marry his daughter, it would surely have had to be fairly small. See on :16.

Exo 22:18 You shall not allow a sorceress to live-

The feminine form shows that a particular kind of female sorceress was in view. "To live" is literally "to revive, to live again". If the idea was simply that she must be killed, then the phrase used in :19 would be used. Hence LXX "Ye shall not save the lives of sorcerers". It seems something specific was in view which may not be immediately apparent to us.

Exo 22:19 Whoever has sex with an animal shall surely be put to death-

Such was God's desire to teach that we are made in His image, and must not act as animals, bringing ourselves down to their level as if we are equal only to them. So the message for us is that we are to respect ourselves

as made in God's image, and not act on a purely animal level.

Exo 22:20 He who sacrifices to any god, except to Yahweh only, shall be utterly destroyed-

"Utterly destroyed" is *haram*, the word used for devotion to Yahweh. The person who didn't want to devote themselves to Yahweh was to be devoted to Yahweh through execution. So we see the choice which remains before us for all generations- to either totally devote ourselves to Yahweh, or be devoted to Him through the second death of condemnation at the last day.

Exo 22:21 You shall not wrong an alien, neither shall you oppress him, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt-

Israel were to be motivated in kindness to others by the recollection that they had been redeemed from Egypt; the memory of our redemption through the waters of baptism [cp. the Red Sea] should have the same effect upon us.

Exo 22:22 You shall not take advantage of any widow or fatherless child-

"Take advantage" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). Repeatedly, Israel were taught that they were to remember their redemption from affliction; and redeem others from their affliction on that basis, and never to afflict people as Egypt had done to them.

Exo 22:23 If you take advantage of them at all, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry-

As discussed on :22, "take advantage" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews

(Ex. 1:11,12). And God had heard the cry of the afflicted Hebrews. It is absolutely natural that the abused seek to abuse. But God is here asking His people to consciously break that natural cycle, and to not abuse others even if we have been abused. Only the experience of grace can motivate us to do this.

Exo 22:24 and My wrath will grow hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless-

We see here God's extreme anger against all taking advantage of others (:22,23). And there are many ways in which we can do this; by not paying bills on time, or paying low wages to workers. What we do to others in this way will in some form have to be our experience.

Exo 22:25 If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor; neither shall you charge him interest-

In some ways, Moses became more demanding in Deuteronomy, whilst at the same time there emphasizing grace and love. Thus under the Law, Israel were not to lend to their poor brother upon usury (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:37); but in Deuteronomy Moses forbids them to do this to *any* Israelite (Dt. 23:19).

Israelites weren't to lend to each other for interest. Yet Jesus tells the rejected man that he should've done at least this (Mt. 25:7)- as if to say that the man should've done at least something with what God had given him, even if it wasn't the ideal, and even if it technically infringed God's law. Indifference and selfish laziness with

God's gifts is therefore highlighted as being so reprehensible to Jesus.

Exo 22:26 If you take your neighbour's garment as guarantee of a loan, you shall restore it to him before the sun goes down,-

Moses does not repeat every single commandment in the Law. Rather are there several themes of Moses in Deuteronomy presented. His choice of which ones he does repeat indicates his feelings towards Israel. His sensitivity towards the weakest and poorest of Israel comes out in this. He was reaching the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who said that the weakest of his brethren represented him (Mt. 25:40 Gk.). Thus Moses stresses how they were not to go into the house of a poor man to take back his pledge (Dt. 24:10); Moses could enter into the sense of shame and embarrassment of the poor man when a richer man enters his home. The Law in Exodus 22:26 did not stipulate that the house of the poor man should not be entered; by making this point in his farewell speech, Moses was showing his sensitivity, his ability now to enter into the feelings of the poorest of God's people. Indeed, the whole passage in Deuteronomy (Dt. 24:6-17) about pledges is quite an expansion upon what the Law actually said in Ex. 22. And this from a man who could have been the king of Egypt, who could have had the world. What marvellous similarity with our Lord!

It was forbidden by the Law to keep a man's outer garment overnight (Ex. 22:26,27). But the Lord taught whilst the law was still in operation that we should be willing to give it up, and even offer it (Mt. 5:40). The

threatened man could have quoted the Law and kept his clothing. But the Lord bids us go to a higher level, beyond using God's law to uphold our own rights. And in this He raises a vital if difficult principle: Don't always enforce what Biblical rights you have against your brother. Don't rush to your own defence and justification even if Scripture is on your side. Live on the level of true love and non-resistance to evil.

Exo 22:27 for that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What would he sleep in? It will happen, when he cries to Me, that I will hear, for I am gracious-

Israel had cried to God in Egypt, and had been heard, by His grace. And they were to respond likewise. They were to give nobody any reason to cry to God because of how they were being oppressed by their brothers. And yet many are those who have cried to God in pain at how their brethren have treated them, through excluding them or judging them. God is extremely sensitive to the suffering of the abused; He could imagine the poor man shivering at night because his warm jacket was being held by his creditor.

Lev. 25:38 reasons that because of Israel's experience of the Red Sea redemption, therefore they were to have a generous spirit to their brother. Because the Egyptians were hard taskmasters, and Israel had been graciously saved from them, *therefore* they were not to be hard on each other (Lev. 25:40). If the oppressed [as Israel were oppressed] cry out unto you [as Israel cried out for their affliction], you must hear them, otherwise God will hear them and punish you, as if you are the Egyptian taskmas-

ter (Ex. 22:24-27). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is shot through with direct and indirect reference to the Red Sea experience. It was as if this was to be the motivator for their obedience and upholding of the culture of kindness which the Law sought to engender (Lev. 23, 24; Dt. 17:7; 24:19-24). And our experience of redemption from this world ought to have the same effect.

Exo 22:28 You shall not blaspheme God, nor curse a ruler of your people-

Clearly the *elohim*, rendered "God", were the rulers of the people. The two are here placed in parallel. Paul understood 'cursing' as threatening a person with Divine judgment and calling them names like 'hypocrite' (Acts 23:3,5).

Exo 22:29 You shall not delay to offer from your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. You shall give the firstborn of your sons to Me-

"The outflow" refers to liquid products. When you perceive an opportunity to do the Lord's service, respond immediately. Say yes straight away. See it as another opportunity for "redeeming the time". This is a major Biblical theme. Israel were not to delay in offering their firstfruits to God (Ex. 22:29), lest their intentions weren't translated into practice. The disciples immediately left the ship, simply put their nets down and followed (Mt. 4:20,22); Matthew left his opened books and queue of clients in the tax office and walked out never to return (Lk. 5:17,18 implies). There is a marked theme in the NT of men and women hearing the Gospel and immediately responding by accepting baptism.

Exo 22:30 You shall do likewise with your cattle and with your sheep. Seven days it shall be with its mother, then on the eighth day you shall give it to Me-

This implies that there would be local sanctuaries (as Ex. 20:24); the intention was not that they should travel up to Jerusalem every time an animal gave birth to its firstborn. Animals often died after birth, and it was only by the eighth day that it was apparent whether or not it was deformed. This was to remind them that they were to offer the best to God, and not to offer that which cost them nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).

Exo 22:31 You shall be holy men to Me, therefore you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by animals in the field. You shall cast it to the dogs-

This command wasn't only for hygienic reasons. God wished to encourage His people to have a healthy work ethic, not taking short cuts, but eating animals they had raised themselves for that purpose. We live in a society where laziness and trying to live for free has become almost an art form. We cannot ultimately get around the curse, that we shall eat only as a result of the sweat of our own labour. We have to accept our humanity and our fallen condition, looking for the lifting of the curse in God's future Kingdom.

EXODUS CHAPTER 23

Exo 23:1 You shall not spread a false report-

This is paralleled in the second half of the verse with being a false witness. Spreading gossip quietly is as bad as standing up in court as a false witness.

Don't join your hand with the wicked to be a malicious witness-

Here and in :2 we see the tendency to adopt positions based upon the view of the majority which surround us.

Exo 23:2 You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; neither shall you testify in court to side with a multitude to pervert justice-

We go astray "like sheep" (Is. 53:6)- we tend to sin because of others' influence, because we're not as strongly individualistic and independent as we like to think we are. God has never advocated democracy as a means of governing His people, because of His awareness of our tendency to follow the majority; and "crowd / multitude" can mean just that, the majority.

Exo 23:3 neither shall you show partiality to a poor man in his legal case-

As noted on :4, this could be a command not to show partiality in the heart, when we are called upon to give an opinion or judgment upon another. We are warned here against bias in any way- feeling pity for a poor man who has done wrong is as bad as bias toward

the wealthy (:6). Economic status is of no matter, compared to human behaviour and the human person.

Exo 23:4 If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again-

Those "going astray" are the spiritually weak (Heb. 5:2). We are to be concerned for them, rather than ignoring them because we don't like which stable they came from. These are further examples of how God's law differs from human laws in that it criminalizes internal attitudes. It was impossible to prove the sin of omitting to help your enemy's animal, nor enforce the law against it- because it would've been invisible to others. Yet the God who sees all stands in judgment upon our innermost thoughts and desires. Note too that sins of omission are just as bad as sins of commission; the man who refused to help the animal could've returned to his home that day feeling he hadn't actually committed anything wrong. But his sin of omission would've been noticed by God.

Exo 23:5 If you see the donkey of him who hates you fallen down under his burden, don't leave him, you shall surely help him with it-

The psychological intensity of our inner battles is recognized throughout Scripture. This Divine law perceived that in such a case, there would be the inner temptation to "forbear" assisting; but no, "you shall surely release it". The very structure of Biblical Hebrew as a language is often instructive as to how God wishes us to perceive things. There is actually no specific word in Biblical Hebrew for 'to think' – instead there is a word

meaning 'to say in one's heart'. And there are times when the word is wrongly translated simply "say" (e.g. 1 Sam. 16:6 – NEB correctly renders as "thought"). This provides a window into understanding how the Greek *logos* means both 'speech' and 'reason'; and sets the backdrop for the repeated teaching of Jesus that God counts human thoughts as if they are the spoken word or acted deed. But my point in this context is that the Hebrew Bible continually focuses our attention upon the internal thought processes – for here is the real 'Satan', the real enemy to true spirituality.

Exo 23:6 You shall not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "justice", s.w. "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. And thereby they became the judgments or justice of Israel. His judgment / justice is to be ours. But the word also has the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing to show justice to others. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mish-*

pat, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

We are warned in :3 against bias in any way- feeling pity for a poor man who has done wrong is as bad as bias toward the wealthy (:6). Economic status is of no matter, compared to human behaviour and the human person.

Exo 23:7 Keep far from a false charge, and don't kill the innocent and righteous-

These commandments seem aimed particularly at judges and witnesses in court. But all Israel were to know the basis upon which judgment should be made. Keeping far from a false charge may mean that frivolous, obviously false complaints shouldn't even be entertained. Just as those clearly innocent shouldn't be condemned. The two commandments go together in that wasting time upon that which is obviously untrue, giving thereby credibility to slander, is as bad as condemning the innocent.

For I will not justify the wicked-

GNB takes this as meaning "for I will condemn anyone who does such an evil thing". The Septuagint uses the word translated "imputed" in the NT with regard to sacrifices [symbolic of Christ's death on the cross] being "reckoned" to a person (Lev. 7:18; Num. 18:27,30); and of Shimei asking David not to "reckon" his guilt to him, to judge him not according to the obvious facts of the case (2 Sam. 19:20). The Old Testament is at pains to

stress that Yahweh will *not* justify the guilty (Ex. 23:7; Is. 5:23; Prov. 17:15). This is where the unique significance of Jesus comes in. Because of *Him*, His death and our faith in it, our being in Him, God can justify the wicked in that they have died with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5), they are no longer, they are only "in Christ", for them "to live is Christ". They are counted as in Him, and in this way sinners end up justified.

Exo 23:8 You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds those who have sight and perverts the words of the righteous-

"The righteous" in view may be those giving testimony, or being judged. Their words become perverted if those judging them have ulterior motives for not taking their words on face value.

Exo 23:9 You shall not oppress an alien, for you know the heart of an alien, since you were aliens in the land of Egypt-

Try to see the historical events which occurred to Israel as relevant to you personally. They were "types of us". Note how 1 Cor. 10:1 speaks of "*our* fathers"- even when Paul is writing to Gentiles. He intended them to see in the Jewish fathers a type of themselves. Israel's keeping of the Passover implied that each subsequent Israelite had personally been redeemed that night. All down the years, they were to treat the stranger fairly: "for you know the heart of an alien". The body of believers, the body of Christ, is not only world-wide geographically at this point in time; it stretches back over time as well as distance, to include all those who have truly believed.

This is why David found such inspiration from the history of Israel in his own crises (e.g. Ps. 77).

The Exodus is the most alluded to historical incident of the Old Testament- it's a pattern to us all. Israel were not to be passive to their history of redemption, and neither can we be. Both the ten commandments and the rest of the law began with reference to Israel's exodus deliverance: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me..." (Ex. 20:2,3); the rest of the law began with the commands about releasing slaves because this was the outcome of their own exodus experience: "Now these are the ordinances which you shall set before them. If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years and in the seventh he shall go out free without paying anything" (Ex. 21:1,2). And throughout the law, there were references to the exodus as the motive for obeying the law, e.g. Ex. 23:9 "You shall not oppress an alien, for you know the heart of an alien, since you were aliens in the land of Egypt".

Exo 23:10 For six years you shall sow your land, and shall gather in its increase-

The assumption at this point was that those hearing these words would soon be established in the promised land. God foreknew they would not, but He goes ahead with His ideal potentials with absolute enthusiasm and legitimate enthusiasm. The parallel here is with six days of work followed by the seventh day of rest. The seventh year was therefore to be a temporary suspension of the

curse, the possibility of having a taste of the Kingdom now; just as we today can live "the eternal life", the kind of life which we will eternally live in the Kingdom. The idea of the Sabbath year was also to lead Israel away from the mentality of justification by works. And that was to involve faith in God's provision, rather than trust in our own works.

Exo 23:11 but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the animals of the field shall eat. In the same way, you shall deal with your vineyard and with your olive grove-

It's true that often, although not always, poverty is partly due to poor decisions and mismanagement, and any aid given is often misused. And it's true that the materially poor are partly poor [in many cases] exactly because of that. And yet the Bible teaches generosity to "the poor". There is no attempt in the Bible teaching about "the poor" to subdivide them into the genuinely poor, and those who are poor because of their own fault or laziness, or who are asking for support when they don't actually need it. A person who comes to you claiming need is "the poor". Thus Israel were not to farm their land in the seventh year, "that the poor of your people may eat" (Ex. 23:11). This immediately raised the issue that all manner of people could eat the fruit which grew naturally on the land that year- but there is no legislation to try to limit who had access to it. Those who had food in their barns might eat what grew- but there was no mechanism within the law which controlled that. The

point is, in our spiritual poverty we are just the same. We are in that position partly because of our human situation and other factors over which we have no control; but also partly and largely because we choose to be in it. We cry to God for the riches of His forgiveness- and we waste it, by doing the same sin over and again. Our hold on spiritual things is weak, we don't respond with the grace and appreciation we ought to. We're spiritually lazy. We're no better than those who are materially poor through nothing but their own fault. Our generosity to them is a reflection of our recognition of this.

Exo 23:12 Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your handmaid, and the alien may be refreshed-

God's sensitivity to animals shines through the Law- the fact even animals are living beings and not mere machines should be felt by us too. God's intention was to inculcate an all round spirit of sensitivity and culture of kindness to others in human life, and that included animals. Our hope of experiencing the "rest" of the Kingdom (Heb. 4:9) means that we are to give "rest" to others in this life.

Exo 23:13 Be careful to do all things that I have said to you; and don't invoke the name of other gods, neither let them be heard out of your mouth-

We need to let passages like Eph. 5:3-5 have their full weight with us. Fornication, covetousness, all uncleanness should not be "named amongst us", in the same way Israel were not to take even the names of the Gentile

idols onto their lips (Ex. 23:13) – “but rather giving of thanks”, knowing that those who do such things will not be in the Kingdom of God. A thankful attitude, thinking and speaking of those things with which we will eternally have to do, is to replace thinking and talking about all the things which shall not be our eternal sphere of thought in the Kingdom age. And yet our generation faces the temptation like none before it – to privately watch and read of those things, vicariously involved in them, whilst being under the illusion that we’re not actually doing them ourselves. For this is what the entertainment industry is based around.

It is man who is to record or remember / memorialize the things of Yahweh's Name (s.w. Ps. 20:7; 45:17; Is. 12:4; 26:13), making no mention / record of the name of other gods apart from Yahweh (s.w. Ex. 23:13; Zech. 13:2). But in Ex. 20:24 it is God who records or remembers His Name when He is worshipped acceptably. We see here the mutuality between God and man which is achieved in worship when it is done His way.

Yahweh repeatedly forbade His people to mention the name of other gods. In the Ancient Near East, all conflict between peoples and nations was seen as conflict between gods. The role of prophets or priests on either side was to bring curses upon the other gods. And so they repeated the names of the other gods in incantations supposed to bring curses upon those gods. This however is forbidden to God's people. They instead were to focus upon the Name of their God Yahweh. And we see in this a pattern for our-

selves; to focus upon the ultimate truth and truths of the one true God, and not be caught up in wishing cursing upon those who believe otherwise. To focus upon the positive, which is the source of all victory, rather than going on the defensive against other views by cursing them.

Exo 23:14 You shall observe a feast to Me three times a year-

The law was based around regular rituals. God knew that this was what His people needed, and although under the new covenant we don't have such structure, the true Christian life is really one of having the right habits.

Exo 23:15 You shall observe the feast of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib (for in it you came out from Egypt), and no one shall appear before me empty-

"Empty" may mean that they were to not attend without bringing a sacrifice, with empty hands. But "empty" is s.w. "without cause", "in vain". Attendance at the feasts was not to be mere ritual, appearing before Yahweh for no purpose. The meaning of the feasts was to be allowed to have the spiritual results intended. And this is a challenge to all whose Christian lives involve regular attendance at meetings. We can so easily slip into a rut of ritual observance, just going through motions "without cause".

Exo 23:16 And the feast of harvest, the first fruits of your labours, which you sow in the field: and the feast of

harvest, at the end of the year, when you gather in your labours out of the field-

"Your labours" is put by metonymy for "the crops you grew with your labour". And the best of them were to be given to God. We are to understand this as a resignation of human works; the Sabbath year and weekly Sabbath sought to teach the same. Living in the spirit of this meant that daily work was no longer simply the result of the curse in Eden; the work was done "as unto the Lord", and for Him rather than as merely for self preservation.

Exo 23:17 Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord Yahweh-

The Pentateuch uses the term "before Yahweh" or 'to see the face of God', usually translated as 'to come into God's presence'; this was a pagan term used at the time to describe seeing an image of a god (R.E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 152). But Israel were being taught that their God had no image, but all the same, they could come into His presence.

Exo 23:18 You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread, neither shall the fat of My feast remain all night until the morning-

Perhaps this was to remove the temptation to go back and take part of the sizzling fat for themselves; for this was seen as the most tasty and desirable part of the animal. We are not to place fences around the law in the legalistic way Judaism has done, but we are to be aware of our own liability to spiritual failure, our weakness in the face of temptation; and to arrange our lives appro-

priately. Ex. 34:25 is parallel with this, and "My feast" is defined there as Passover.

Exo 23:19 The first of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of Yahweh your God-

God was to be honoured with "the first of the first". Yahweh was "one", or "the first [and only]", and so all was to be devoted to Him.

You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk-

The laws in the "Book of the Covenant" abruptly end with this, as if it summed up the spirit of all the others (Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Dt. 14:21). Middle Eastern goats often give birth to twins [the twinning rate of shammy goats is nearly 2.0, i.e. they nearly always have twins], and produce enough milk for both of them. It was customary to kill one of the goats so that the over supply of milk from the mother could be used by the owner, and this abundance of milk was used for boiling the killed baby goat. And kid goats were thought to be most tasty when boiled in their mother's milk. It seems that God considered this narcissistic and absolutely over indulgent, and without thought to the feelings of the mother goat; even though goats (rather than sheep) are at times a symbol of sinners and the unclean. The principle is that narcissistic over indulgence at the expense of others' feelings is wrong. And our age like none other is full of this kind of thing. The rich indulge themselves in expensive restaurants whilst the poor go hungry. And yet we note that Solomon apparently thought that abundance of goat's milk (which arose from killing one of the kid goats) was a sign of Divine blessing (Prov. 27:27). The

Mosaic law sought to inculcate a culture of kindness and extreme sensitivity to all, even animals- we are not to think that we "need not care a rush" for those who are unclean goats. Read like this, it is similar to the prohibitions of killing on the same a cow and a calf, or a ewe and her lamb (Lev. 22:28). It is likely that this was also related to a pagan fertility ritual, performed at harvest time (which is the immediate context of the prohibition); and God didn't want His people to even remotely be associated with that. For He alone was the source of all fertility. The prohibition not to boil a young goat follows straight on from the command to give the firstfruits to God. This was so that they might be blessed with fertility. Israel were not to seek to get around God requirements and principles by using a pagan ritual intended to assure fertility. The principle is that there is no short cut, no getting around God's principles, by using technology or tradition or secular wisdom.

Exo 23:20 Behold, I send an angel before you-

It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10.

To keep you by the way-

Israel's guardian Angel was to "keep" them in the way (Ex. 23:20), clearly echoing how the Angels kept the way to the tree of life in Eden. The same Hebrew word for "keep" occurs very often in Exodus in the context

of Israel being told to keep God's commands; but their freewill effort was to be confirmed by the Angel keeping them in the way of obedience. They were to "keep" themselves in the way (Dt. 4:9 and many others; s.w. "take heed", "observe" etc.), but the Angel would keep them in it. This mutuality is developed in Ex. 23:21, where having said the Angel will keep them, Israel are told "Beware of him, and obey his voice". "Beware" translates the same Hebrew word as "keep". The Angel would keep them, but they were to keep to the Angel. And they didn't, and so that generation died and were not brought to the Kingdom as was potentially possible. This is an example of how we are intended to have a mutual relationship with the Lord, leading to Him strengthening us in the one way. This word translated "keep" is also translated "spies" in Jud. 1:24; the spies were the keepers in the way of Israel, to bring them in to the land. And yet the Angel at the exodus was their 'keeper' to bring them into the land. The spies were working in harmony with their Angels; and thus they succeeded.

This is an evident allusion to the Angel-cherubim keeping the way to the tree of life. But did all Israel remain "in the way" whilst in the wilderness? Evidently not. Did the Angel fail? No. The Angel was given power and strength in order to potentially enable Israel to remain "in the way", just as our Angels are given that same power. But Israel refused to work with the Angel; they didn't make use of the Angel's efforts to keep them in the way.

The command to prepare a way along which to flee to the cities of refuge (Dt. 19:3) is expressed with the very same words used about God through the Angels preparing a way for Israel to flee along, out of Egypt to the promised land (Ex. 23:20). This was obviously done purely at God's initiative. But now, Israel were asked to do the same- to prepare a way for their and others' salvation. When we reflect upon our own way of escape from this world, it's clear enough that it was by grace. By God's sole initiative we came into contact with the Gospel, or were born into such a family at such a time as enabled us to hear it. Our response to that grace must be like Israel's- to prepare a way for others to flee, when they like us find themselves in a situation that is spiritually against them, although not of their conscious choice.

And to bring you into the place which I have prepared-

See on Hos. 12:13. "I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn. 14:1-3) is based upon the idea of Moses and the Angel bringing Israel "into the place which I have prepared" (Ex. 23:30).

The parable of the pounds describes the reward of the faithful in terms of being given ten or five cities (Lk. 19:17). This idea of dividing up groups of cities was surely meant to send the mind back to the way Israel in their wilderness years were each promised their own individual cities and villages, which they later inherited. The idea of inheriting "ten cities" occurs in Josh. 15:57; 21:5,26; 1 Chron. 6:61 (all of which are in the context of the priests receiving their cities), and "five cities" in 1 Chron. 4:32. As each Israelite was promised some per-

sonal inheritance in the land, rather than some blanket reward which the while nation received, so we too have a personal reward prepared. The language of inheritance (e.g. 1 Pet. 1:4) and preparation of reward (Mt. 25:34; Jn. 14:1) in the NT is alluding to this OT background of the land being prepared by the Angels for Israel to inherit (Ex. 15:17 Heb.; 23:20; Ps. 68:9,10 Heb.) . We must be careful not to think that our promised inheritance is *only* eternal life; it is something being personally prepared for each of us. The language of preparation seems inappropriate if our reward is only eternal life.

Exo 23:21 Pay attention to him, and listen to his voice. Don't provoke him, for he will not pardon your disobedience, for My name is in him-

God's Name being carried by the Angel explains how Moses later is recorded as talking with Yahweh face to face, even though we are also told that He cannot ever be seen by humans. Moses spoke with the Angel who carried the Yahweh Name, and who was therefore functionally as God to men. The same principle explains how men, and especially Christ, can be spoken of as God because they carried His Name, without this making them God Himself in person.

The Angel is described as not forgiving their sins, but in Ex. 32:30-32 Moses goes up to the 'LORD' (Angel) in the mount and asks for forgiveness for the people's sin with the golden calf- see on Ex. 34:9. Moses knew God well enough to know that He is open to dialogue. The 'Lord' in the mount must have been an Angel because Moses saw his back parts- and there is no way this is pos-

sible of God Himself in person, "whom no man hath seen ,nor can see" (1 Tim. 6:16). "No man has seen God at any time" (John 1:18). This 'Lord' on the mount gave Moses the Law- and elsewhere we are told that the Law was ministered by Angels. The Angel on the mount then says He has sent "Mine Angel before thee" (to Canaan), Ex. 32:34. So we have one Angel sending another here. And it seems one Angel was prepared to forgive, the other wasn't. What implications does this have for us, if we are to be made like unto the Angels (Lk. 20:35,36)? See on Josh. 24:17.

Exo 23:22 But if you indeed listen to his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and an adversary to your adversaries-

- see on Dan. 9:14. The opposite to not being forgiven (:21) is unity with God, so that our enemies are His.

Exo 23:23 For My angel shall go before you, and bring you in to the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Canaanite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite-

This happened invisibly, with the Angel working through circumstances to weaken those tribes. But the Israelites failed to believe this verse, feeling that those tribes were far too strong for them (Num. 13:30-33). Only six of the seven nations of Canaan are mentioned (although LXX includes "the Girgashites"). Perhaps these six were to be destroyed first; then the Girgashites and then finally all the other tribes who lived in the territory promised to Abraham (:31). The inheritance was therefore to be given to Israel in stages, as they could

handle it. But sadly they didn't want this, and refused to even take all the territory of these six nations.

And I will cut them off-

They had seen this done to Egypt (s.w. Ex. 9:15), and they were intended to understand this as a foretaste of their overcoming of all obstacles between them and inheritance of the Kingdom. We receive similar foretastes and encouragement in this life.

Exo 23:24 You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor follow their practices, but you shall utterly overthrow them and demolish their pillars-

The pillars were erected by the Canaanites in memoriam of various things which their gods had supposedly done for them, and were then worshipped in hope that the gods would come through for them again. So to worship them would mean accepting the entire thought, history and culture of Canaan. That Israel did so reflected their lack of faithfulness to their own fathers. Moses wrote Genesis to bring this history and true culture before them.

Exo 23:25 You shall serve Yahweh your God, and He will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from your midst-

These were the blessings specifically to be experienced by Israel in the wilderness, before they actually entered Canaan (:27,28). Hence the reference to bread [manna] and water. There was not one feeble person amongst them when they left Egypt (Ps. 105:37), and this was to continue.

Exo 23:26 No one will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will fulfil the number of your days-

The idea is that there would be neither barren cattle nor barren land; because these were the blessings specifically to be experienced by Israel in the wilderness, before they actually entered Canaan (:27,28). In their resting places they would have sown and raised crops, at least to provide fodder for their animals. But these was not to be the case; for they rebelled, and wasted their years in the wilderness, as Ps. 90 laments.

Exo 23:27 I will send My terror before you, and will confuse all the people to whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you-

Jacob likens his guardian Angel to "the God before whom my fathers walked" (Gen. 48:16), who is called "the fear of Isaac" (Gen. 31:42,53) when Jacob describes the personal presence of God in his life. So the "fear of God" is associated with an Angel; God sent His fear, an Angel, before Israel into Canaan, as promised explicitly in Ex. 23. As Rahab testified, the Canaanites had turned their backs in fear upon Israel; but they failed to believe it, and instead turned *their* backs in fear and wanted to return to Egypt. All the potential barriers between us and the Kingdom have been overcome- but we are to believe that.

Exo 23:28 I will send the hornet before you, which will drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before you-

The sending of hornets ahead of Israel parallels the sending of the Angel ahead of them (:23). The reference

may be to literal hornets devastating and weakening the Canaanites; or it could refer instead to Egyptian tribes or the Philistines, some of whom had hornets on their armour, attacking and weakening the Canaanite tribes just before the Israelites arrived. This situation was providentially arranged by the Angel who went before Israel. The obstacles to our possessing the Kingdom seem huge and strong, but in fact they have been significantly weakened by God's providence. Invisible to us, the Angels likewise are potentially preparing our way to enter the Kingdom.

The fear amongst the Canaanites prior to Israel's approach and the weakness of those nations was due to "the hornet" being sent before Israel (Dt. 7:20; Josh. 24:12); it would seem that this is a reference to the Angels softening up the Canaanite tribes, perhaps through inciting the Egyptians to raid them and ruin the economy. And specifically, the two kings of the Amorites attacking the other Canaanites. "The hornet" could also refer to the Phoenician raiders, who had hornets as totems; they too weakened Canaan before the Israelites arrived, and would have been manipulated to do so by an Angel. In Ex. 23:27 God says He will "send My fear before you, and will destroy all the people to whom you shall come". Jacob likens his guardian Angel to "the God before whom my fathers walked" (Gen. 48:16), who is called "the fear of Isaac" (Gen. 31:42,53) when Jacob describes the personal presence of God in his life. So the "fear of God" is associated with an Angel; God sent His fear, an Angel, before Israel into Canaan, as promised ex-

plicitly in Ex. 23. "The hornet" could have referred to literal hornets, used by God to destroy the nations of Canaan. For they were indeed a problem in the land; "Zorah" in Judah means "place of hornets". But I prefer the idea that the Angel manipulated Gentile nations to soften up the Canaanites before Israel's arrival. The same figure is found in Is. 7:18, where God whistled for the "fly that is in Egypt and the bee that is in Assyria". We note that this was all built in to God's wider plan; for had Israel entered Canaan 40 years before they did, they would've found the Canaanites that much stronger than they were after "the hornet" had weakened them for 40 years. It's as if God recalculated the program according to the great weakness of Israel. They didn't enter when they could have done, and so He used the period of their wilderness wanderings to make their entrance to the land that much easier than it would otherwise have been.

Exo 23:29 I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the animals of the field multiply against you-

The God who is so far away from this earth foresees the situations we will face in life, and like a true Father, arranges things so that they will not be too great for us to overcome. His sensitivity to us is amazing. The truth is that God would have given them the land immediately had they wanted it; He intended giving it to them by stages because of the weakness of their faith (see on :23).

Exo 23:30 Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and inherit the land-

The idea is as in GNB "until there are enough of you to take possession of the land". This implies that Israel were very small in number, and the land too great for them. This would confirm our suggestion on Ex. 12:37 that the numbers who left Egypt were far smaller than commonly thought.

Exo 23:31 I will set your border from the Red Sea even to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you-

Just as all the animals and everything in the *eretz* promised to Abraham was 'delivered into the hands' of Noah (s.w. Gen. 9:2), so the nations of that *eretz* were delivered into the hands of Israel (s.w. Ex. 6:8; 23:31; Dt. 2:24; 3:2,3; 7:24; 21:10; Josh. 2:24; Jud. 1:2). Tragically, like Adam in Eden [perhaps the same *eretz* promised to Abraham] and Noah in the new, cleansed *eretz*, Israel didn't realize this potential. What was delivered into the hand of Joshua (Josh. 2:24) actually wasn't delivered into their hand, because they disbelieved (Jud. 2:23); and this looks ahead to the disbelief of so many in the work of the Lord Jesus, who has indeed conquered the Kingdom for us. They considered the promise of the nations being delivered into their hand as somehow open to question, and only a possibility and not at all certain (Jud. 8:7; Num. 21:2 cp. Num. 21:34). Some like Jephthah (s.w. Jud. 11:32; 12:3), Ehud (Jud. 3:10,28), Deborah (Jud. 4:14), Gideon (Jud. 7:15) did, for a brief historical moment; but as individuals, and their victories were not followed up on. Instead they were dominated

by the territory. And so instead, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies within the *eretz* (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Jud. 13:1). As discussed on :23, God's plan was to give them the Kingdom progressively. But they spurned it.

Exo 23:32 You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods-

The people are made parallel with their gods; hence the warning that to marry the people meant covenant with their gods. The tragedy was that Israel were not thus identified with their God. The temptation to make a covenant with the supposed gods of the land was because it was thought this would guarantee fertility; whereas God promised fertility if Israel were loyal to their covenant with Him (:23). But they liked to think they could just guarantee themselves a good harvest by also making covenant with the fertility gods of the land. So we could identify the prime attraction of idolatry as being the promise of material success and stability which it carried with it. And that likewise is the essence of all our modern forms of idolatry.

Exo 23:33 They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me-

We can make others sin (Ex. 23:33; 1 Sam. 2:24; 1 Kings 16:19). There is an urgent imperative here, to really watch our behaviour; e.g. to not drink alcohol in the presence of a brother whose conscience is weak.

For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you-

Twice in 1 Timothy, Paul speaks about a snare; the snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:7), and the snare of wanting wealth (1 Tim. 6:9). The desire for wealth in whatever form is the very epitome of the devil, our inherent sin which we must struggle against. The idea of a snare is that it results in a sudden and unexpected destruction. The unexpectedness of the destruction should set us thinking: surely the implication is that those who are materialistic don't realize that in fact this is their besetting sin, and therefore their rejection in the end because of it will be so tragically unexpected. It's rather like pride; if you're proud and you don't know it, then you really are proud. And if we're materialistic and don't know it, we likewise really have a problem. The idea of riches being a snare connects with copious OT references to idols as Israel's perpetual snare (Ex. 23:33; Dt. 7:16; Jud. 2:3; 8:27; Ps. 106:36; Hos. 5:1). Paul's point is surely that the desire of wealth is the equivalent of OT idolatry.

EXODUS CHAPTER 24

Exo 24:1 He said to Moses, Come up to Yahweh, you, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship from a distance-

Or, "afar off". The original plan had been as in Ex. 19:13 LXX: "When the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come up on the mountain". But this didn't happen- see on Ex. 19:14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on Ex. 19:10. The people "perceived" Yahweh's holiness and their sinfulness and continued idolatry. And they shied away from Him (Ex. 20:18), whereas His intention was that they came close. But they retreated to "a distance" (s.w. Ex. 20:18,21). These words are so sad. It was a rejection of intimacy with God. And yet God wanted at least some level of relationship with them, and so He still allows and encourages them to worship Him "from a distance", even although that was not His ideal initial intention. He had hoped for more intimacy with them.

"I will that they also... be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (Jn. 17:24) alludes to the 70 elders sharing some of Moses' experience in the Mount; it is as if Christ is saying that his disciples really can enter into his relationship with God, we can be where he was spiritually in his mortal life.

Exo 24:2 Moses alone shall come near to Yahweh, but they shall not come near, neither shall the people go up with him-

See on :1. "Where I am, thither you cannot come" (Jn. 7:34) sounds like Moses ascending the Mount, leaving Israel behind him. Yet "Where I am" refers to Christ's unity with God; the heights of his relationship with God connect with the physical ascension of Moses into the mount to hear God's words. Moses' ascents of the mountain were seen as representing an ascension to Heaven; but he had not ascended up to the "heavenly things" of which Christ spoke. Consider the spiritual loneliness of rising to heights no other man has reached, as far as Heaven is above earth. John the Baptist recognized this (Jn. 3:31).

Exo 24:3 Moses came and told the people all the words of Yahweh, and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Yahweh has spoken will we do-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way

in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Exo 24:4 Moses wrote all the words of Yahweh, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the mountain, and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel-

Moses was obviously literate, having been trained with the best wisdom and education of Egypt.

There were so many similarities between Elijah and Moses; Dale Allison points out:

Confronted Ahab (1 Kings 17:1) = Confronted Pharaoh (Ex. 5:1)

Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (1 Kings 19:3) = Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (Ex. 2:15)

Miraculously fed "...bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening..." (1 Kings 17:6) = Miraculously fed "...meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning..." (Ex. 16:8, 12)

Gathered all Israel to Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:19)=Gathered all Israel to Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:17)

Combated the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40) = Combated the magicians of Pharaoh (Ex. 7:8-13, 20-22; 8:1-7)

Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (1 Kings 18:36-39) = Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (Ex. 32:11-14)

Elijah took twelve stones at Carmel "...according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob..." (1 Kings 18:30-32) = Moses had twelve pillars set up at Sinai "...corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel..." (Ex. 24:4)

The Lord accepted Elijah's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (1 Kings 18:36-39) = The Lord accepted Moses and Aaron's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (Lev. 9:22-24)

By Elijah's authority 3000 idolatrous prophets were slain (1 Kings 18:40) = By Moses' authority 3000 idolaters were slain (Ex. 32:25-29)

After killing the prophets of Baal Elijah climbed Carmel to pray. (1 Kings 18:42) = After killing the idolaters Moses climbed Sinai to pray (Ex. 32:30)

Went without food for forty days and forty nights (1 Kings 19:8) = Went without food for forty days and forty nights (Ex. 34:38; Dt. 9:9)

Elijah was in "the cave" on Horeb (=Sinai) when the Lord "passed by" (1 Kings 19: 9-11) = Moses was hidden "in the cleft of the rock" when the Lord passed by Sinai (Ex. 33:21-23)

Elijah saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Horeb (=Sinai). (1 Kings 19:11-12) = Moses saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Sinai (Ex. 19:16-20; 20:18; Dt. 4:11; 5:22-27).

Prayed that he might die (1 Kings 19:1-4) = Prayed that he might die. (Num. 11:10-15).

The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon his enemies (2 Kings 1:9-12) = The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon those who rebelled against him (Num. 16; cf. Lev. 10:1-3)

Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan by striking the waters with his cloak and passed over on dry ground. (2 Kings 2:8) = Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea by stretching out his staff and passed over on dry ground (Ex. 14:16, 21-22)

His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had (2 Kings 2) = His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had the Red Sea (Josh. 3)

Was taken away in the Transjordan (2 Kings 2:9-11) = Died in the Transjordan (Dt. 34:5)

Mysteriously translated (2 Kings 9-18) = Died mysteriously and buried in a valley, but his burial place was unknown. (Dt. 34:6)

The point of these similarities was that the Angel wanted Elijah to be like Moses; to pray for the peoples' salvation, to return to the people and lead them and teach them. Moses had begged for God's mercy for His

people; but Elijah was so full of self-justification that he prayed against Israel. And so with us, we are potentially led into situations where we are to discern the similarities between us and Bible characters; we are set up with opportunities to respond in a way that reflects how we have learnt the lessons from them. The way the Lord Jesus perceived this in His wilderness temptations is a great example.

Exo 24:5 He sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of cattle to Yahweh-

Joshua appears to have been only one of a group of Moses' "young men", who moved around the camp running his errands (Ex. 24:5; Num. 11:27,28); as a similar group did for Nehemiah and Paul years later. The young men of the New Testament were also characterized by their love of the word (1 Jn. 2:14). Moses would have had a special fondness for this generation who were to enter the land. A large part of the Law was concerned with Israel's behaviour after they had settled in the land; these would only have been relevant to that younger generation. It is fitting that both Moses and Caleb (and Joshua?) maintained their youthful vigour right up to their death (Dt. 34:7; Josh. 14:11).

Exo 24:6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar-

Some covenants of the time were confirmed by the two parties drinking, daubing or touching the blood of the other party. God has no blood, but the sprinkling of blood was as it were His maximum way of telling them

that His life, His "blood", was poured out for them and to them. And this was looking forward to the pouring out of the blood of His Son on the cross; not that Jesus was God Himself, but He represented God- and His life, His blood, His essence, His love, poured out toward His people to assure them that the covenant promise of salvation would indeed come true. There is therefore the intended ambiguity of Acts 20:28, "the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood". The idea seems to be that God was manifested in the blood of His Son.

Exo 24:7 He took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people, and they said, All that Yahweh has spoken will we do, and be obedient-

Moses could read- for he had been raised with the best of the Egyptian education system (Acts 7:22). This kind of internal corroboration within the Biblical record is to me the strongest argument for the Bible's Divine inspiration. The blood represented God's side of the confirmation; their side was to vow obedience and loyalty to their covenant with Him. And this is likewise our response to the blood of the new covenant, which was God's way of showing His loyalty to us to the ultimate extent.

Exo 24:8 Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Look, this is the blood of the covenant, which Yahweh has made with you concerning all these words-

Even the old covenant, which was in a sense "eternal", was made with Israel "upon all these conditions"

(Ex. 24:8 RVmg.). It was eternal, potentially, because it had conditions. But the conditionality of it isn't always brought to the fore when, e.g., we read of the Sabbath as being an eternal ordinance. The way conditions are not stated within the actual prophecy is similar to how blanket statements are made in Scripture, and yet there are exceptions to them. The Lord sought to kill Moses in Ex. 4:24. If He had done so, all His previous statements about delivering Israel by the hand of Moses would not have come true. God only didn't kill Moses because Zipporah intervened. She did this purely of her own freewill and according to the depth of her spiritual vision. Thus the earlier prophecies about delivering Israel by the hand of Moses actually had at least one major, though unspoken, condition: If Moses himself remained faithful. "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue" (Ex. 11:7) was in fact conditional on Israel remaining indoors. But that condition isn't then stated.

Moses bound the people into covenant relationship with the words: "Behold the blood of the covenant" (Ex. 24:8). These very words were used by the Lord in introducing the emblems of the breaking of bread (Mk. 14:24). This is how important it is. We are showing that we are the covenant, special Israel of God amidst a Gentile world. Indeed, "the blood of the covenant" in later Judaism came to refer to the blood of circumcision (cp. Gen. 17:10) and it could be that the Lord was seeking to draw a comparison between circumcision and the breaking of bread. For this is how His words would have

sounded in the ears of His initial hearers. This is how vital and defining it is to partake of it.

It wasn't that the blood *was* the covenant, but the death of the slain animal represented the confirmation and certainty of the covenant. Christ's death confirmed the new covenant which was made in the promises to Abraham (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:15-19). Believers take the cup of the new covenant in the breaking of bread service (1 Cor. 11:25), as a token of the absolute certainty of God's basic promises to us who have had those same covenant promises made to us through baptism (Gal. 3:27-29). We will eternally inherit the earth- and the blood of Christ confirmed that to us.

Exo 24:9 Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up-

Perhaps :1,2 were originally between :8 and :9 but became dislodged. It seems to me that God's intention was that His people Israel were to develop their nation into the world-wide Kingdom of God on earth- a calling they miserably failed to achieve in the past, even though the prophets speak of the wonderful way it will come true in the future. Their territory would have literally been "to the ends of the earth"- and perhaps that's why there's the ambiguity in the Hebrew word *eretz*, which can mean both 'the land / earth' of Israel, and the whole planet earth. Further, the 70 Jewish elders appointed in Ex. 24:9-11 were what the New Testament letter to the Hebrews calls a reflection of the things of Heaven on earth- for there were 70 Gentile nations within the *eretz* / land promised to Abraham (tabulated in Genesis 10),

and I suggest that these 70 elders were intended to ultimately rule over them. This would explain the enigmatic Dt. 32:8, which speaks of the boundaries / differentiation of the Gentile nations being set according to "the sons of Israel", or (LXX) "the Angels of God". Putting the evidence together, it would seem that there were 70 Gentile nations in the *eretz* / land, represented in Heaven by 70 Angels, who in turn were represented on earth by the 70 elders of Israel. It was God's intention that His people should rule over the nations- and yet they as it were marred the reflection of what was in Heaven, the pattern of things in Heaven became ignored. And yet the day is yet to come when men will eagerly take hold of the skirts of a Jew and go with him to worship the true God. From all this I see yet again all the potentials God has made possible for us in our age... and how, despite the fact He may foreknow that we'll waste them, He still sets up those potential possibilities for us. We are too are chosen to be king-priests over this world (Rev. 5:10), we too have a representative Angel in Heaven beholding God's face... yes, *you*, and me. We have an Angel there. It's for us to go ahead and reflect the pattern of Heaven here on earth.

Exo 24:10 They saw the God of Israel-

This surely refers to His manifestation in the Angel which specifically represented Israel, Michael (Dan. 12:1,2).

Under His feet was like a paved work of sapphire stone, like the skies for clearness-

The mention that Jesus stood before Pilate “in a place that is called the Pavement” (Jn. 19:13) reminds us of Ex. 24:10, where Yahweh was enthroned in glory on another ‘pavement’ when the old covenant was made with Israel. The New Covenant was inaugurated with something similar. “In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9) would have been easily perceived as an allusion to the way that Yahweh Himself as it were dwelt between the cherubim on the mercy seat (2 Kings 19:15; Ps. 80:1). And yet the Lord Jesus in His death was the “[place of] propitiation” (Heb. 2:17), the blood-sprinkled mercy seat.

Exo 24:11 He didn't lay His hand on the nobles of the children of Israel. They saw God, and ate and drank-

To eat and drink with the Lord is a sign He accepts us and does not wish to destroy us. This is the comfort of doing so at the breaking of bread meeting. The implication is that He didn't slay the elders, even though their were somehow unclean and deserved it. All the same, God fellowshiped with them in the covenant meal (cp. the breaking of bread under the new covenant). So the covenant began with grace being shown. Or the idea could be that although they “saw God”, they didn't die-as was commonly supposed.

The Bible images salvation as a feast with God at His table. The salvation of Israel from Egypt forms the source material for many later allusions to our salvation in Christ- and it was celebrated by Israel being invited up to Mount Sinai to eat and drink with God (Ex. 24:9-11); and it was regularly commemorated in the Passover

meal. The future Kingdom of God was spoken of as a meal on a mountain, “a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, for all peoples” (Is. 25:6-8). Then, death itself will be on the menu and God will swallow it up. It is pictured as an eternal feast which will last eternally. People from all nations of the earth are to be God’s guests. No one is to be excluded. The records of the feeding miracles are presented in terms of this Messianic banquet. We are reminded of how at the Last Supper, Jesus shared bread and wine with those who seriously misunderstood Him, of whom He had to ask “Do you now believe...?”, and knowing full and painfully well that one of the twelve was to betray Him.

Exo 24:12 Yahweh said to Moses, Come up to me on the mountain, and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and the commands that I have written, that you may teach them-

The Law was “a law... which I (Yahweh) have written” (Ex. 24:12). Yet the Lord Jesus speaks of *Moses* writing the precepts of the Law (Mk. 10:5). “The book of the law of Moses” is parallel with “the book of the law of Yahweh” (Neh. 8:1; 2 Chron. 17:9); it was “the book of the law of Yahweh given by Moses” (2 Chron. 34:14). God was so strongly manifest in Moses.

Exo 24:13 Moses rose up with Joshua, his servant, and Moses went up onto God’s Mountain-

When Paul says that we *each* with unveiled face have beheld the glory that shines from the face of the Lord Jesus, just as the glory to a lesser extent shone from the face of Moses (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). Yet the only person to be-

hold Moses' unveiled glory was Joshua, who alone lived in the tabernacle where Moses received the glory (Ex. 33:11). And it was he who alone accompanied Moses up the mount to meet with God (Ex. 24:13). When Moses left Joshua and went out to the people, he veiled his face. But Joshua would have seen the glory shining off Moses' unveiled face.

Exo 24:14 He said to the elders, Wait here for us, until we come again to you. Behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever is involved in a dispute can go to them-

As those miserable men argued over the clothes at the foot of the cross, so when Israel stood before the glory of Yahweh at Sinai, they still suffered "disputes" amongst themselves (Ex. 24:22 NIV cp. Heb. 12:29). So pressing and important do human pettinesses appear, despite the awesomeness of that bigger picture to which we stand related.

Exo 24:15 Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain-

When Yahweh came down on Sinai, He was enveloped in a *cloud of fire*- suggesting that there was no day and night for Him (Ex. 24:17; Dt. 5:22). Ex. 13:21 says that there was a pillar of cloud in the day time and a pillar of fire by night. But at the time of the Exodus, there was a pillar of cloud for the Egyptians and a pillar of fire to give light in the night for the Israelites (Ex. 14:20,24). Could this mean that the meaning of time was collapsed at this time? It was night for the Israelites but daytime for the Egyptians? Is. 42:16, amidst many exodus / Red Sea allusions, speaks of how God makes

the darkness light before His exiting people. The many Johanine references to the Lord Jesus being a light in the darkness for His followers would then be yet more elaborations of the idea that the Lord Jesus is the anti-type of the Angel that led Israel out of Egypt (Jn. 8:12; 12:35,46). Num. 9:21 says that the pillar of cloud was with the Israelites at *night*, and sometimes it was taken up in the night and they therefore had to move on. Does this mean that there were times when the meaning of time was collapsed during their journey, and the night was made as the day (perhaps Ps. 139:12 alludes to this experience)?

Exo 24:16 The glory of Yahweh settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. The seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud-

The six days followed by the seventh recalls creation. The idea was in those six days of contemplation of Yahweh's glory, Moses and Israel were to be suitably humbled so that Moses might enter into the things of the rest of God, the Kingdom.

Exo 24:17 The appearance of the glory of Yahweh was like devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel-

See on :15. Our God remains a consuming fire of judgment to this day (Heb. 12:29). But the idea was that Israel were intended to understand that despite this, a man like Moses could fellowship with this God. And so could they. And despite living in full view of God's judgment and His glory for 40 days, they worshipped the golden calf. This is evidence for all time that visible ev-

idence doesn't guarantee true faith, let alone obedience (Heb. 11:1,2).

Exo 24:18 Moses entered into the midst of the cloud, and went up on the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights-

This was the more impressive when we understand that the cloud was a cloud of fire (:17; Dt. 5:22). Israel ought to have got the message that mere man could indeed fellowship with such a holy and awesome God. Yet instead they shied away from it, to the pathetic worship of gods of wood and stone. Moses neither ate nor drank during those forty days (Dt. 9:11). Ex. 24:16 says that Moses was six and a half days on the mountain waiting for the call to meet God, so he was with God for 33 and a half days. This perhaps looks forward to the 33 and a half years ministry of the Lord Jesus.

EXODUS CHAPTER 25

Exo 25:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The commands to build the tabernacle are repeated in Exodus, and there is the record of Israel's golden calf apostasy set in the middle of them. Ex. 25:1-31:18 give the tabernacle building commands, then there's the golden calf incident, and then the commands are repeated in Ex. 35-40. Surely this was edited in this manner to give encouragement to the exiles- the commands to rebuild the temple had been given in detail in Ez. 40-48, but the exiles failed- and yet, the implication runs, God was still willing to work again with His people in the building of His sanctuary despite their failure. There is good internal reason to think that the Pentateuch likewise was re-written in places to bring out the relevance of Israel's past to those in captivity.

Exo 25:2 Speak to the children of Israel, that they take an offering for Me. From everyone whose heart makes him willing you shall take My offering-

2 Cor. 8:12 alludes here: "If there be first (i.e. most importantly) a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not". Every man was to contribute to the building of the tabernacle (cp. the ecclesia) with a willing heart (Paul surely alludes here). They weren't told: 'Whoever is willing and able to contribute, please do so.' And yet the majority of us have at least something materially; and as we have been blessed, so let us give.

Willing hearted giving to God is important- the giving must never be from a sense of unavoidable obligation. In appealing for generosity to our poorer brethren, Paul uses this idea- speaking of how a willing heart in a cheerful giver is so loved by God (2 Cor. 8:19; 9:7).

Exo 25:3 This is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, brass-

All these valuable things had mostly been taken from or given to Israel by the Egyptians. They were to now voluntarily give them back to God. For all is of Him. What we take from this world we are to give to God, and He will dwell amongst us thereby (:8). And in the wilderness, all these valuable things were of little real value; they were just a human guarantee against future needs. But God had promised to bring them to Canaan, where all would be lavishly provided for them by His grace. And that is about the view we should have of present wealth.

Exo 25:4 blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goats' hair-

There is an apparent juxtaposition between the scarlet, the clothing of kings and rulers, and goats' hair. They had taken the scarlet clothing from Egypt when they left, but the goats' hair was what they had shorn from their own animals which they had with them. So God was asking them to bring their own small offerings along with the more valuable things they had taken from Egypt / the world. This all speaks of our attitude to giving and wealth on our wilderness journey.

Exo 25:5 rams' skins dyed red, sea cow hides, acacia wood-

The acacia wood was just the common bush wood found in the desert. See on :4. The sea cow hides were what they had picked up whilst camped on the shores of the Red Sea. Likewise what we pick up along the way in our wilderness journey is to be given to God.

Exo 25:6 oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense-

The incense was "sweet" in that it smelled sweet to God. But that depended upon the components being brought to Him. "A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according

to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Exo 25:7 onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod and for the breastplate-

The precious stones were donated by the princes or elders (Ex. 35:27). Yet in Ex. 25:4-7 they are listed along with common acacia wood and goats' hair. There was to be a culture of giving, from the wealthiest to the poorest, which was to characterize the community of God's people.

Exo 25:8 Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them-

The commands concerning the tabernacle were given to Moses by the Angel- do phrases like "Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8) have primary reference to the Angel speaking the words? In the same way, does Ps. 99:1 refer also to the physical presence of an Angel between the cherubim? "The LORD reigns... He sits between the cherubim (through His Angel); let the earth (land of Israel) be moved". Similarly "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel (the Angel- so Isaiah 63 describes the wilderness Angel), You that leads Joseph like a flock (the Angel lead them through the wilderness); You who dwells between the cherubims, shine forth" (Ps. 80:1). And again in Ps. 20:1,2 "The God of Jacob (i.e. the Angel whom Jacob recognized had been so much in his life) defend you; send you help from the sanctuary", as if it was in the sanc-

tuary (Holy Place) that the Angel was located. See on Ps. 78:60.

Exo 25:9 According to all that I show you, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all of its furniture, even so you shall make it-

In Jn. 5:19,20 we read that the Son does (*poieo*) what He sees the Father doing, and the Father shows Him (*deiknumi*) all (*panta*) that He does. "All these works... I have not done them of mine own mind" (Num. 16:28). This is referring to Ex. 25:9 LXX, where Moses makes (*poieo*) the Tabernacle according to all (*panta*) that God shows him (*deiknuo*). The reference of Jn. 5:19,20 is therefore to the Lord Jesus working with His Father in the building up of us the tabernacle... and all things God planned for us were revealed to the Son even in His mortality, prefigured by this revelation to Moses. What great wealth of understanding was there within His mind, within those brain cells... and how tragic that the head and body that bore them was betrayed and ignored and spat upon and tortured by men...

Exo 25:10 They shall make an ark of acacia wood. Its length shall be two and a half cubits, its breadth a cubit and a half, and a cubit and a half its height-

A cubit is about 18 inches (45 cm.). The ark was not at all large, for God's glory doesn't require grandiose human artistry nor anything large scale. His glory is manifested in the small and humble things. This was a lesson which David and Solomon failed to learn in their obsession about building a grandiose building for God's glory to dwell in.

"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

Ex. 25:10 "They shall make an ark" becomes "I made an ark" in Moses' autobiography (Dt. 10:3). The people were generous when asked, but were not real workers. Perhaps Moses himself had to make the ark because they

didn't get to it. Or maybe his work was counted as theirs, as happens between the Lord Jesus and ourselves.

Exo 25:11 You shall overlay it with pure gold. You shall overlay it inside and outside, and you shall make a gold moulding around it-

The weak acacia wood was to be overlaid with gold. "Overlay" in Hebrew carries the idea of to be seen, to be looked at. This was how God looked at that weak acacia wood, as if it was the finest gold. This was an Old Testament anticipation of what the New Testament calls imputed righteousness; we the weak acacia wood, the thorn bush, are looked at as pure gold. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, and one outcome of love is to consider the beloved as far more glorious than they are. The mention of a "crown" or "moulding of gold" is as if it represented a person, a King- the Lord Jesus.

Exo 25:12 You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in its four feet. Two rings shall be on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it-

The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally

'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God. See on :27.

The ark had feet, literally "walking feet", feet bent as if walking, to symbolize how the ark was always moving on. We recall that God spoke of how He had "walked" in the tabernacle and therefore didn't want a fixed temple (2 Sam. 7:6).

Exo 25:13 You shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold-

"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold.

Exo 25:14 You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark-

This was a deconstruction of the Egyptian religious arks, which were displayed and carried in processions. God's ark was concealed, and only carried when it was without religious significance, being moved between sanctuaries.

Exo 25:15 The poles shall be in the rings of the ark. They shall not be taken from it-

This was to emphasize that the ark was always to be ready to move on; see on :12. Even when Israel were settled in their land and the temple was built, the staves were always to remain in the rings of the ark to symbolize this (1 Kings 8:7). In our more settled existence, even

if we live in the house we were born in for all our days, we should have this spirit of being ready to be moved on in our spiritual journey.

Exo 25:16 You shall put the testimony which I shall give you into the ark-

The tables of the covenant were only given to Moses at the end of the 40 days. Hence "which I shall give you", for Moses at this point was on Sinai hearing these commands for the first time, and was only to be given the testimony at the end of it. Again we note the internal corroboration within the Biblical record.

Exo 25:17 You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two and a half cubits shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth-

This was the cover of the ark, with the wings of the cherubim overshadowing it, and upon this the blood of atonement was sprinkled each year at the day of atonement. The blood would have built up over the years. Paul interprets this as symbolic of the blood of the Lord Jesus on the cross. It is a seat or throne in that it is upon that that God's glory is enthroned. But we note the small size of it. God doesn't need anything large scale by human standards. "Mercy seat" is a form of the Hebrew word for 'covering' which is usually used for the covering of sins; literally "the means of propitiation". The LXX word used here is directly applied to the Lord Jesus in Rom. 3:25. It was the blood which was the basis of atonement (Lev. 17:11), but the actual mercy seat, the slab of gold which was the cover of the ark, was put by metonymy for the blood. It is upon this that God's glory dwells and is re-

vealed. His forgiveness is Yahweh at His most glorious, and it is in this that God meets with man (Ex. 25:22). We note that the mercy seat or cover was of pure gold, not acacia wood overlaid with gold. It may have been a literal cover over the ark which was detachable.

Exo 25:18 You shall make two cherubim of hammered gold. You shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat-

The cherubim had wings (:28) and could have human and animal forms, according to Ez. 1,10. In this sense they could be said to resemble the sphinx forms which were such a common part of Egyptian religion. The similarity is in the fact that God was deconstructing Egyptian religion, just as the plagues were aimed at the gods of Egypt. Instead of openly displayed sphinx like creatures memorializing the dead, these were the hidden symbols of God's living presence amongst His people, hidden away in the holiest place, and only briefly seen once every year by the high priest.

Exo 25:19 Make one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end. You shall make the cherubim on its two ends of one piece with the mercy seat-

The cherubim represented those through whom God was manifested, be it Angels or His people. For this is how the cherubim are used in Ezekiel. But they are of one part with the mercy seat, which represented the Lord Jesus (Rom. 3:25). This speaks of His deep unity with us, shown in His life by His being of our nature, and now through the presence of His Spirit within those who are "in" Him.

Exo 25:20 The cherubim shall spread out their wings upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces toward one another. The faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat-

Speaking of the things of the blood of the Lord Jesus, Peter comments: "Which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12), as if he saw in the cherubim some representation of the Angels looking down at the blood of atonement sprinkled upon the mercy seat. And yet Peter implies that we too "look into" those things. And thus we note that the cherubim were looking down at the blood, not at each other; as our focus should be upon the Lord's blood, and not each other.

The pagan god tabernacles all feature some kind of throne, upon which the god visibly sits. The cherubim of the Israelite tabernacle are similar to the Mesopotamian *karibu*, cherubim, upon which their gods sat. Phoenician and Egyptian art uncovered by archaeologists shows they believed in cherubim very similar in form to those described in Ezekiel's visions of Yahweh's cherubim. The throne of Yahweh was the ark, covered by the cherubim. There, above the blood spattered lid of the ark (or "mercy seat"), supported by the cherubim, the pagan mind expected to see Israel's God enthroned. The similarities to the pagan shrines were intentional- to set up this expectation. But there was nothing there. It was, to their eyes, an empty throne- just as God appears to be absent to so many people today. There was no visible image resting upon the wings of the cherubim, nothing on

the throne / lid of the ark but the blood of atonement (which pointed forward to that of God's Son).

Exo 25:21 You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I will give you-

This implies that the slab of gold which was the "mercy seat" was separate from the ark, and covered it like a lid. The blood of atonement was sprinkled each year upon the top of the ark, the place known as "the mercy seat" or 'atonement cover'. This blood represented the blood of Christ. The Angel cherubim shadowed the blood on the cover, representing how the Angels watched over Christ in His sacrifice and especially upon the cross. Hence His temptation to call Angels to deliver Him from it (Mt. 26:53). Peter alludes to this in saying that the Angels intently look down upon the things of the blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:12). Pagan religions typically had a throne in their temples, on which their God sat. The throne of the true God was apparently empty- there was a "mercy seat", but no god or idol sat upon it. But He was enthroned there. Faith is about believing in the God who cannot be seen (Heb. 11:1,2), and whose saving mercy to us is confirmed in the blood of His Son.

Exo 25:22 There I will meet with you, and I will tell you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the testimony, all that I command you for the children of Israel-

See on 2 Sam. 23:1-3. "In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9) would have been easily perceived as an allusion to the way that Yahweh Him-

self as it were dwelt between the cherubim on the mercy seat (2 Kings 19:15; Ps. 80:1). And yet the Lord Jesus in His death was the "[place of] propitiation" (Heb. 2:17), the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. In His Son on the cross, God met with man and communed with us (Rom. 3:25), commanding us the life we ought to lead through all the unspoken, unarticulated imperatives which there are within the blood of His Son. There in the person of Jesus nailed to the tree do we find the focus of God's glory and self-revelation, and to this place we may come to seek redemption.

God meets with us over the blood of Christ, and from there His voice is heard. "Tell you" translates the usual Hebrew word *dabar* used for "word". Hence Heb. 12:18-29 likens the blood of Christ to a huge voice; we cannot imagine Him there on the cross and be passive, we hear, as it were, God's voice for us. This is why we must regularly remember Christ on the cross, replaying the scene continually before our eyes. For there we hear God's voice and we have our meeting with Him. The breaking of bread service is a practical help to this end.

God met with Israel over the ark in the most holy place (Ex. 25:22; 30:6; Num. 17:4). But they were never allowed there. And so He also "met" (s.w.) with Israel at the door of the tabernacle, and spoke with them there (Ex. 29:42,43; 30:36). As if God like a king came forth to meet with His people and speak with them. But the word for "meet" is used in Am. 3:3, where God laments that Israel had not "met" with Him and therefore they could not walk further together. The idea of the "meet-

ing" was that God's word might be revealed, so that the people could walk with Him in His ways. It was an awesome invitation, to be able to meet with the God who only otherwise met with His people in the glory of the most holy place, over the ark. He as it were came out of that most holy place and met with them at the door of the tabernacle. But they weren't interested. Just as so many today.

Seeing Israel generally never entered the Most Holy, this could be read as a prophecy ["I *will* meet with you"] of the day when the veil would be torn down and the way into the holiest opened to all Israel- which happened at the Lord's death.

Exo 25:23 You shall make a table of acacia wood. Two cubits shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth, and one and a half cubits its height-

The Ugaritic poems speak of the furniture in Baal's heavenly temple, and it's very similar to that in the Most Holy Place. But the poems especially focus upon Baal's bed and chests of drawers for his clothing. These are noticeably absent in Yahweh's tabernacle furniture.

The table of show bread was to be made of acacia wood, which was effectively the weak wood from a thorn bush; but David planned to make it of pure gold, and even worked out the weight of gold required for it (1 Chron. 28:16). And Solomon indeed made it of gold (1 Kings 7:48), leading to it being known as "the pure table" (2 Chron. 13:11). Religion had overtaken spirituality, form had eclipsed content. Likewise the "tables of silver" David ordered to be made (1 Chron. 28:16) do

not feature in the tabernacle. He was missing the point—that God wanted His holiest symbols made of common, weak things like acacia wood. For His strength and glory is made perfect in weakness. David claims these plans were from God (1 Chron. 28:19), although as discussed on 1 Chron. 28:12, they were in fact from his own mind. The way these things were taken into captivity, with no record of this golden table ever being returned, surely reflects God's judgment upon this kind of religious show. He prefers a humble house church in an inner city room, rather than a gold plated cathedral. The way some exclusive churches speak of 'maintaining a pure table' suggests they have made the same essential mistake as David did.

Exo 25:24 You shall overlay it with pure gold, and make a gold moulding around it-

The table of shewbread looked ahead to the breaking of bread in the Christian experience. It had a crown (NEV "moulding") around it, as if it were the king's table. And indeed it is. We sit there as guests at the king's table, and it is not for us to use it as "our" table, excluding or ejecting others from it.

Exo 25:25 You shall make a rim of a handbreadth around it. You shall make a golden moulding on its rim around it-

The golden moulding or crown is twice stressed (:24), as if it really was the king's table. The purpose of the rim was for the rings for carrying it (:27).

Exo 25:26 You shall make four rings of gold for it, and put the rings in the four corners that are on its four feet-

The ark also had feet, literally "walking feet", feet bent as if walking, to symbolize how the ark was always moving on. We recall that God spoke of how He had "walked" in the tabernacle and therefore didn't want a fixed temple (2 Sam. 7:6).

Exo 25:27 The rings shall be close to the rim, for places for the poles to carry the table-

"Places" is the Hebrew word usually used for a house. A different word would have been used if the idea was merely a "place". There is a purposeful juxtaposition between the image of stability carried by the idea of a "house", and the fact that the rings and poles were in order that this furniture could be carried and moved on. God's permanent, characteristic way is the way of dynamism, moving on. That is the point; see on :12.

Exo 25:28 You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be carried with them-

The need to be mobile and always moving on is stressed throughout the record of the tabernacle. There could have been some blanket statement like "All the tabernacle equipment had rings on it so that poles could be put in the rings, and it could be carried". But the record labours this mobile nature of the whole system; see on :12.

Exo 25:29 You shall make its dishes, its spoons, its ladles, and its bowls to pour out offerings with. You shall make them of pure gold-

Yahweh had a "table". The Mesopotamian gods likewise had a table (*passuru*) upon which food was placed

as a meal for the god (as in Is. 65:11). But the beakers, cups and vessels on Yahweh's table remained empty (Ex. 25:29); the wine was poured out onto the sacrifices and vaporized; the priests ate the shewbread. There was no pretence that Yahweh was a hungry god who needed to be fed by His worshippers. To the pagan mind, this would've meant that if He didn't eat, He wasn't actually around nor powerful. Again, the difference and similarities were intentional, in order to point up the need for *faith* in the power and existence of Yahweh.

Exo 25:30 You shall set bread of the presence on the table before me always-

"The bread of the presence" doesn't simply mean that it was bread which was in God's presence; for that is the meaning covered by "before Me always". Rather the idea is that God's especial presence was there in the eating of the bread. The God who dwelt the other side of the veil, over the mercy seat, as it were came out from there and was present when the bread was eaten. We may have here some hint that there is a special presence of the Father and Son at the breaking of bread, which is the Christian equivalent of this table (Mt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 11:10).

Exo 25:31 You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. Of hammered work shall the lampstand be made, even its base, its shaft, its cups, its buds, and its flowers, shall be of one piece with it-

"The candlestick" or menorah is only ever spoken of in the law of Moses in the singular, but in 1 Chron. 28:15 David decided there were to be multiple such candlesticks. By doing so, he ignored the symbolism of the

one candlestick, the one people of God; such was his obsession with mere religion. See on :23.

Exo 25:32 There shall be six branches going out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of its one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of its other side-

The lampstand represents God's people (Rev. 1:20), and it had seven lamps; the six branches and the central stem, upon which there was also a lamp. Seven is the number of wholeness and completion. Perhaps the idea is that there is to be a complete manifestation of God through the witness of His people, burning the oil of the Spirit. Each component member witnesses to Him in a slightly different way, not only in this life but throughout the generations of God's people. Likewise the body of Christ in the same way manifests Christ to the world.

Exo 25:33 three cups made like almond blossoms in one branch, a bud and a flower; and three cups made like almond blossoms in the other branch, a bud and a flower, so for the six branches going out of the lampstand-

The almond is the first tree in Palestine to bud, so it means literally the watching tree, as if it were alive and eager to come to life. So it is appropriate for the candlestick, which represented God's people. Jeremiah sees the branch of an almond tree and is comforted that "I watch over My word to perform it" (Jer. 1:11,12). The word translated 'hasten' or "watch over" is very similar to the word for 'almond'. Almonds are associated with God's eyes; the bowls of the lampstands were almonds (Ex. 25:33,34). Zech. 4:2 talks about these almond bowls on the candlestick, and Zech. 4:10 interprets them as the

"eyes of the LORD which run to and fro through the whole earth". 2 Chron. 16:9 talks about the Angels in the same way; "the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him". Similarly in Rev. 4:5 the lamps in the bowls of almond are equated with the "seven spirits (or Angels) of God". Rev. 5:6 equates the seven eyes with the seven spirits. Thus the almond rod which Jeremiah saw represented God's eyes or Angels who would watch over the word of God which Jeremiah was to speak to perform it. And He does likewise with the witness of all those represented within the candlestick.

Exo 25:34 and in the lampstand four cups made like almond blossoms, its buds and its flowers-

The *menorah* or "candlestick" is from a root meaning to yoke. In the Christian context, the yoke, the uniting power, is the Lord Jesus (Mt. 11:30). He is the unique power which binds together His otherwise disparate people into one candlestick. Thereby Christian unity becomes a witness to the world, at least that is the intention. All disunity between believers therefore causes the candlestick not to function, and the light of witness is thereby the less.

Exo 25:35 and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of the lampstand-

The lampstand represents God's people (Rev. 1:20), but it is presented here as a tree with branches, buds and

blossoms (:33). In this sense the ecclesia, the community of believers, is to be as the tree of life to others by their words (Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 15:4).

Exo 25:36 Their buds and their branches shall be of one piece with it, all of it one beaten work of pure gold-

The candlestick represents the assembly of believers (Rev. 1:20). It was made of beaten work, representing how all those in the true church will be beaten into a shape through which they can be lights for God. "Hammered" suggests that through blow by blow on material heated in the furnace of affliction (Is. 48:10), God works out a place where His glory may be revealed. And that place is our lives.

Exo 25:37 You shall make its lamps seven, and they shall light its lamps to give light to the space in front of it-

The mention of seven lamps confirms that there was a central stem with a lamp, and six branches coming out of it with a total of six lamps on them- making seven lamps. The candlestick was on the south end of the holy place, shedding light "opposite" (Heb., NEV "in front of it"), i.e. towards the northern end where the veil was, and where the table of shewbread was, symbolizing fellowship with God. This is the purpose of our witness; to direct people towards fellowship with God and entry to the most holy place.

Exo 25:38 Its snuffers and its snuff dishes shall be of pure gold-

Gold wasn't the strongest or most practical material for these instruments. But it represents faith (1 Pet. 1:7). We aren't the best instruments for God to use in His

house, but He prefers to use the soft and those who aren't humanly qualified for His work- because He works by faith in us, and by our faith in Him rather than our human strength.

Exo 25:39 It shall be made of a talent of pure gold, with all these accessories-

A talent was 94 pounds or 42.6 kg. This was a huge amount of gold, but all the same, due to the dense weight of gold, the candlestick would have been quite small if it were solid. 42 kg. of solid gold is about the size of two standard size books. This fits the theme that everything in the tabernacle was small scale, not large. The ecclesia of God, represented by the candlestick (Rev. 1:20), is small but gives huge light in a dark place, pointing towards the entrance to the most holy place. It is depicted as large and a source of particular glory in the famous depiction of the capture of Jerusalem by Titus, but either the candlestick of those times was only gold plated, or the size was exaggerated.

Exo 25:40 See that you make them after their pattern, which has been shown to you on the mountain-

Paul's comment is that this "pattern" was itself a pattern of heavenly things. The tabernacle was a reflection in essence of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9:23,24), with the priests doing the work of the Angels; hence both are called *elohim*.. At least that was how Israel were bidden understand it.

EXODUS CHAPTER 26

Exo 26:1 Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains; of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cherubim. By the work of the skilful workman you shall make them-

The ark was covered in the tabernacle by the various layers of the tent detailed in Ex. 26:1-6: sea cows' skins, red rams skins, goats hair, blue, purple, scarlet and linen. These would form a kind of rainbow over the ark, and above that there was the Angel in the pillar of cloud or fire. This "pattern of things in the Heavens" (Heb. 9:23,24) replicated the visions of a throne (the ark) over-arched by a rainbow and the glory of God.

When David says in 2 Sam. 7:2 that he doesn't want Yahweh to have to dwell in "curtains", this doesn't mean that David was concerned that God's ark was under a tent, whilst he lived in a house. Rather is the reference to the ten curtains which comprised the tabernacle. David was assuming that he could change the Mosaic commandments about the tabernacle, and move God's purpose forward to something more permanent. We see here how he didn't consider the laws of Moses [of which the commands about the tabernacle were part] to be static. He saw them as open to interpretation and development. This was not a position he came to lightly, seeing he had been terribly punished for thinking he could flout the legislation about how the ark was to be transported.

Many of the commands within the "law of Moses" were clearly only intended for the wilderness generation, indeed they could only have been obeyed by them then; and David wondered whether the entire commands about the tabernacle were in that category. Those today who claim that Mosaic legislation is eternally binding need to give this due weight. It's not just that the Mosaic law was abrogated by the Lord's death; but the whole nature of that law was that it was never intended to all be literally applied to every subsequent generation. And that meant that it was the spirit of it which was to be discerned and followed.

Exo 26:2 The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits: all the curtains shall have one measure-

28 cubits is 42 feet (12.8 meters), and 4 cubits is 6 feet (1.8 meters). "Curtain" in Hebrew is literally a thing which hang and shakes, and the essential word is used for "fear". The impression is of man trembling before Yahweh's holiness.

Exo 26:3 Five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and the other five curtains shall be coupled one to another-

"Coupled together" is s.w. "have fellowship with" (Ps. 94:20), and often of men 'joining together'. Clearly we are to sense that the curtains represented God's people. The theme of coupling and joining together occurs throughout the record of the tabernacle. Unity amongst believers is to be the outcome of the indwelling of God's glory. Disunity results from simply not having perceived

His glory. For before that, all disunity disappears as we are awed by His grace and convicted of our own smallness and unworthiness.

Exo 26:4 You shall make loops of blue on the edge of the one curtain from the edge in the coupling; and likewise you shall make in the edge of the curtain that is outmost in the second coupling-

See on :3. "Blue" may refer to a mussel they had picked up on the shores of the Red Sea, which was used for dying things blue. If we wish to attach symbolic meaning to everything- and that isn't necessarily the right way to read the tabernacle account- then we could think of "blue" as representing the sky, heaven. It is of God that we are bound together, linked together by His Spirit in a unity which can only come from Him. For the human tendency is naturally to disagreement and disunity rather than to unity.

Exo 26:5 You shall make fifty loops in the one curtain, and you shall make fifty loops in the edge of the curtain that is in the second coupling. The loops shall be opposite one to another-

The record loves to stress the interlocking nature of the tabernacle. This points forward to our unity between each other, linked together by the blue loops of Heaven; God's unity. See on :4.

Exo 26:6 You shall make fifty clasps of gold, and couple the curtains one to another with the clasps: and the tabernacle shall be one-

There is great emphasis in Ex. 26 that the tabernacle was "one", joined together in such a way that taught the

lesson of unity. The spiritual tabernacle, the believers, was "pitched" by the Lord- translating a Greek word which suggests 'crucifixion' (Heb. 8:2). Through the cross, the one, united tabernacle was pitched. To tear down that structure by disuniting the body is to undo the work of the cross.

Exo 26:7 You shall make curtains of goats' hair for a covering over the tabernacle. You shall make them eleven curtains-

"Covering" is literally 'a tent'. There was to be a tent over the tent, as if a vertical expression of the horizontal division of the tabernacle into the holy and most holy places. The external appearance of the tabernacle would therefore have been rough; and beauty was on the inside. This contrasts with the pagan way of attaching value to external beauty, whilst inside, the places of worship were not so attractive. God looks upon the internal, upon the heart; and leaves the external as unattractive to secular eyes.

Exo 26:8 The length of each curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits: the eleven curtains shall have one measure-

Comparing this with the size of the actual tabernacle, which is far smaller, it is clear that the tent which covered it must have been sloped, and also probably extended to each side of the tabernacle. Hence the mention of an overhang in :12.

Exo 26:9 You shall couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shall double over the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tent-

"By themselves" is s.w. "pole" or "stave", and this makes better sense. The idea is 'curtains on poles' or curtain rods.

Exo 26:10 You shall make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain which is outmost in the second coupling-

The tabernacle represents God's dwelling place. He now no longer lives in any physical structure, but in the hearts of His people, who between them comprise His new dwelling place. We can however learn lessons from the principles behind the tabernacle construction. Great emphasis was placed on how the components were all interlocking- the curtains coupled together, the boards were joined by bars etc. It is by our unity and connection with each other that God will dwell amongst us. Christianity can't be lived in isolation- we need each other.

Exo 26:11 You shall make fifty clasps of brass, and put the clasps into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one-

As noted on :10, the language looks forward to the unity of the body of believers. "That it may be one" is clearly alluded to by the Lord Jesus when He prayed "that they may be one" (Jn. 17:11,21-23).

Exo 26:12 The overhanging part that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle-

See on :8. The "part that remains" is the half-breadth by which the rough outer tent would overlap the linen covering.

Exo 26:13 The cubit on the one side, and the cubit on the other side, of that which remains in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it-

The outer tent of goats' hair was 30 cubits broad (Ex. 26:8), whilst the internal linen 'tent' was 28 cubits. There was therefore one cubit overhang on each side. "The cubit" here therefore means "one cubit".

Exo 26:14 You shall make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of sea cow hides above-

They were dyed red to represent how the blood of Christ is the covering for God's people. Presumably they had picked up the sea cow hides from the shores of the Red Sea. What we pick up along life's way is to be devoted to the things of God.

Exo 26:15 You shall make the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing up-

"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses

it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

"Standing up" seems to mean that the boards were not to merely sink into the dust of the earth, but to hold together in such a way that they would be stable, because the outer tent would keep the wind from blowing over the structure. This detail may be significant if we follow through the idea that the boards represent God's people. They are not to sink into the dust, but to take strength and stability from connection with each other, and to trust in God's protection from the wind.

Exo 26:16 Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and one and a half cubits the breadth of each board-

Acacia bushes don't grow so long nor straight. These boards would have been very difficult to construct (see on :15), and would have involved much joining together of pieces of wood which were difficult to work with. It was an appropriate symbol for the kind of human mater-

ial which goes to make up God's dwelling place. For God dwells in the community of His people, and not within wood and stone. The materials of the tabernacle therefore represent us His people. See on :17.

Exo 26:17 There shall be two tenons in each board, joined to one another: thus you shall make for all the boards of the tabernacle-

"Tenons" is the word for "hands", again encouraging us to see the boards as God's people, joined together by as it were holding hands. See on :16.

Exo 26:18 You shall make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards for the south side southward-

Heb. "on the south side, to the right". Semitic thought is often expressed from the perspective of a person facing east. See on :20.

Exo 26:19 You shall make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for its two tenons, and two sockets under another board for its two tenons-

If each socket weighed a talent (Ex. 38:27), the forty silver sockets would have been really big and solid. The connection between the boards was critical, because according to Ex. 26:15 they were "standing up". This seems to mean that the boards were not to merely sink into the dust of the earth, but to hold together in such a way that they would be stable. So the large size and weight of the sockets is appropriate. The internal cohesion and corroboration within the account of the tabernacle is such that it is a profound reflection of the Divine inspiration of the record.

Exo 26:20 For the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, twenty boards-

"The north side" is literally "the left side". As noted on Ex. 26:18, the south side was "to the right". Semitic thought is often expressed from the perspective of a person facing east. The left hand side was considered the side of lesser favour (Gen 48:13-20). This perhaps was why the candlestick was placed on the right or south side of the tent (Ex. 40:24).

Exo 26:21 and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board-

Sockets, *eden*, is related to *adon*, "Lord", in that the word carries the same idea of strength. Again, language appropriate to persons is used of the tabernacle components; for the whole thing pointed forward to the body of believers, in whom God walks and dwells.

Exo 26:22 For the far part of the tabernacle westward you shall make six boards-

"Westward" is LXX "the back". These six boards would have given a breadth of only nine cubits. We can therefore conclude that the corner post boards of :23 on each side were half a cubit broad, to account for the extra cubit.

Exo 26:23 You shall make two boards for the corners of the tabernacle in the far part-

As explained on :22, these corner posts were half a cubit broad.

Exo 26:24 They shall be double beneath, and in the same way they shall be whole to its top to one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners-

The Hebrew is unclear. GNB, which uses "frames" instead of NEV "boards", offers: "These corner frames are to be joined at the bottom and connected all the way to the top. The two frames that form the two corners are to be made in this way".

Exo 26:25 There shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board-

The LXX gives "posts" instead of "boards", suggesting there may have been other material in between those posts. "Sockets" is rendered "bases" by some. The idea was that the boards did not sink down into the dust of the earth (see on :15), but the whole structure was kept upright by the tight connection between the boards / posts. These "eight boards" are the six and two of :22,23.

Exo 26:26 You shall make bars of acacia wood: five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle-

As noted often, acacia wood is very weak. The bars themselves would likely have been made from various parts of this weak bush wood being joined together. The boards likewise were made of this very weak material which it was difficult to join together. But the overall design enabled the whole system to stand strongly, without sinking into the earth (:15), because of the strength of the interconnections. It is a profound picture of the strength of the overall body of believers thanks to the working of God's Spirit and His design; at least potentially. And the strength is only possible if the interconnections are made and not broken by petty arguments about "fellowship".

Exo 26:27 and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the far part westward-

We are left to assume that these bars would have passed through rings made on the boards for this purpose.

Exo 26:28 The middle bar in the midst of the boards shall pass through from end to end-

This middle bar would therefore have been 30 cubits / 45 feet long. It would have had to be constructed of bits of acacia, which is no more than a common thorn bush. This singular middle bar, which held the boards in shape and close to each other, looks forward to the Lord Jesus.

Exo 26:29 You shall overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and you shall overlay the bars with gold-

The weak acacia wood was to be overlaid with gold. "Overlay" in Hebrew carries the idea of to be seen, to be looked at. This was how God looked at that weak acacia wood, as if it was the finest gold. This was an Old Testament anticipation of what the New Testament calls imputed righteousness; we the weak acacia wood, the thorn bush, are looked at as pure gold. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, and one outcome of love is to consider the beloved as far more glorious than they are.

Exo 26:30 You shall set up the tabernacle according to the way that it was shown to you on the mountain-

We wonder whether Moses was given a vision of how the tabernacle would look when constructed.

Exo 26:31 You shall make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cherubim. The work of the skilful workman shall it be made-

The veil represented the flesh of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 10:20), and also the fact that the way into the most holy place, representing God Himself in Heaven, was somehow barred. But when the Lord died, the veil was torn from top [by God] to bottom (Mt. 27:51), and thus the way into direct personal fellowship with God was permanently opened for all- not just the high priest once a year (Heb. 9:8,24; 10:19). This understanding was so radical for Jewish minds. For the high priest could only nervously enter the most holy place briefly, once every year on the day of atonement. But now the believer in Christ can enter into full and permanent fellowship with God Himself. This was all achieved through the Lord's flesh being torn. The fine linen speaks of His righteousness (Rev. 19:8), the blue of His association with God in Heaven, the crimson of His blood, and the purple of His Kingship (Jn. 19:2). All this was worked into the veil, and the overall product of it was glory to God, represented by the image of cherubim superimposed upon all this.

The veil represents Christ in His humanity (Heb. 10:20). His character was complexly woven and beautiful, with the white linen or righteousness (Rev. 19:8) running as a thread through His entire character. Weaving complex strands and patterns therefore speaks of how God worked to develop the character of Christ, and

He likewise weaves in our lives too, if we are open to His working.

Exo 26:32 You shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold; their hooks shall be of gold, on four sockets of silver-

At this point we may note that the LXX usually gives "incorruptible wood" for "acacia". Yet as noted on :15, "acacia" is s.w. "thorn". It was the common thorn bush of the desert, a result of the curse in Eden; and yet there is this sense of incorruption and eternity associated with it by the LXX. The LXX has Ex 30:1-10 coming after Ex. 26:32, and this may well be correct.

Exo 26:33 You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and shall bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil: and the veil shall separate the holy place from the most holy for you-

The veil screened off the Most Holy Place, where the very presence of God was. When Christ died, this veil was torn down (Mt. 26:51), from top to bottom- indicating it was done by God and not men. Through His death, anyone who believes in Him can do continually what the High Priest could do only once per year- come right into the very presence of God Himself. But the High Priest entered in order to serve God, and to attain salvation for sinners. This, then, is to be our work. We are all to function not only as priests (1 Pet. 2:5), but in a sense, as the High Priest.

Exo 26:34 You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the most holy place-

This again indicates that the mercy seat was not part of the ark, but was a detachable lid.

Exo 26:35 You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side-

The structure of the tabernacle pointed ahead to man's approach to God under the Christian dispensation. First, a man had to bow his head in order to pass through the gate. Humility is essential. Then there was acceptance of the principle of sacrifice, the large altar; followed by the laver or washing basin, speaking of baptism. Beyond that is the table of shewbread (breaking of bread), the candlestick (church life) and the incense altar (prayer). After this is the veil, through which we can pass in Christ into the most holy place, and the presence of God Himself.

Exo 26:36 You shall make a screen for the door of the Tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the embroiderer-

The New Testament therefore speaks of "the second veil" (Heb. 9:3) which screened the most holy place. This was of the same material as the veil which covered the door into the holy place, but was more elaborate, including the cherubim motif whereas the first veil didn't. Perhaps the idea is that it is through the Lord Jesus, represented by the veil, that we enter into the community of believers; He is the door and by Him alone a sheep can enter the fold. But it is likewise also through Him, dis-

playing an even greater glory and beauty, that we shall enter into the presence of God Himself.

The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined linen from Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made from yarn of which each thread was composed of many delicate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work.

Exo 26:37 You shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and overlay them with gold: their hooks shall be of gold; and you shall cast five sockets of brass for them-

We contrast this gold and brass with the gold and silver fittings for the veil which screened the most holy place. It is easy to over interpret, to see significance never intended, in our European obsession with a 'this = that' schema or hermeneutic. Probably the simple idea was that there was to be an increasing sense of glory as one approached closer to the most holy place. We may note that the expense, beauty and intricacy of the tabernacle grew greater the closer one got to the most holy. There was no natural light in the tabernacle; it had no windows. And only the high priest could enter the most holy once / year. The progressive beauty of God's tabernacle was revealed to fewer and fewer people, the further one progressed. This is in total contrast to the religious ways of the surrounding religions, which made the greatest display of glory and beauty on the outside, in the eyes of as many as possible; and progressively decreased in detail and beauty within them.

EXODUS CHAPTER 27

Exo 27:1 You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and its height shall be three cubits-

In 2 Chron. 4:1, David and Solomon replaced this with "An altar of brass, twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and ten cubits in height". This was far larger than the altar of the tabernacle, which was 5 x 5 x 3. 5 cubits is 7.5 feet (225 cm.), 3 cubits is 1.5 feet (45 cm.) Clearly the idea was that far more animals were going to be offered. And yet David and Solomon were forgetting the lesson taught through the sin with Bathsheba, Solomon's mother; God doesn't want sacrifice, but rather broken, contrite hearts (Ps. 40:6-8). Just as God didn't want a physical house built to Him, but rather wanted to build a house of people with humble hearts open to the working of His Spirit. The altar was of brass, whereas that of the tabernacle was of common, weak acacia wood (Ex. 27:1,2). This taught that the basis of acceptable sacrifice and approach to God is the recognition of our common weak humanity, and sacrifice is offered to God upon that basis. But Solomon had no recognition of his own moral frailty and humanity, and was convinced that as David's son and the Messianic seed [as he imagined], he was therefore perfect. And it seems David too somehow rationalized his sin with Bathsheba by the end of his life, and lacked grace and humility.

Although the altar was very low, only three cubits (45 cm.) high (Ex. 27:1), Aaron "came down" from it (Lev. 9:22). This may be understood in the same way as people "went up" and "came down" from the temple. Sacrifice was a 'height'. However the more obvious sense is that the altar was placed upon a mound of earth or rocks.

Exo 27:2 You shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it; and you shall overlay it with brass-

Whilst there are similarities with the concept of religion which Israel had been used to in Egypt, there were significant differences. The altars of Egypt tended to have the horns of previously sacrificed animals attached to them. But the horns of Yahweh's altar were in order to bind the sacrifices (Ps. 118:27), they had practical function; and were a symbol of Yahweh's salvation (1 Kings 1:50)- not the triumph of secular man over an impressive animal.

Exo 27:3 You shall make its pots to take away its ashes, its shovels, its basins, its flesh hooks, and its fire pans: all its vessels you shall make of brass-

Jewish tradition has it that the fire which came down from Heaven in Lev. 9:24 remained burning; and this fire was preserved burning all night and day. Hence the need for "fire pans" (Ex. 27:3) to keep the fire burning whilst the altar was being cleaned or the remains of sacrifices removed from it.

Exo 27:4 You shall make a grating for it of network of brass: and on the net you shall make four bronze rings in its four corners-

This implies that the altar was a brass plated box, with a grating on the top to feed air to the fire with air. Through this the ashes would have fallen into a pan below.

Exo 27:5 You shall put it under the ledge around the altar beneath, that the net may reach halfway up the altar-

"Put it" is LXX "put them", referring to the rings. Or GNB "Put the grating under the rim of the altar, so that it reaches halfway up the altar". If the grate was only halfway up the altar, this could mean that the altar was placed over a heap of earth which was "halfway up the altar"; see on :8.

Exo 27:6 You shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with brass-

"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in

God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

Exo 27:7 Its poles shall be put into the rings, and the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar, when carrying it-

"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold. The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God.

Exo 27:8 You shall make it with hollow planks. They shall make it as it has been shown you on the mountain-

The earlier insistence had been that Israel only worship upon an altar of earth or unhewn stones (Ex. 20:24). It could be that the hollow nature of the altar meant that a pile of earth was made, and the altar structure placed on top of it. But this would make it hard to understand how the ashes of the sacrifices could be collected. Surely the idea of a grate would have been meaningless if effectively the altar was solid earth inside it. So we are left with the conclusion that the 'altar of earth' instruction was not to apply to the tabernacle, but to altars for sacrifice which were used more local to the tents of the people. Or perhaps it was intended to only apply in the wilderness until the tabernacle was built. For clearly later altars were accepted by God, when they were not made of earth. We see in these considerations that the law of Moses was not inflexible, and God is not a literalist. Changed circumstances for His people changed His operational style with them, and His expectations of them.

Exo 27:9 You shall make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen one hundred cubits long for one side-

The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined linen from Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made from yarn of which each thread was composed of many deli-

cate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work. It perhaps appropriately designated the boundary between the believer and the world, represented by the linen fence which marked the enclosure of the tabernacle. 100 cubits is 58 yards or 53 meters.

Exo 27:10 and its pillars shall be twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver-

"Fillets" is rendered "connecting rods" by some, and "sockets" as "bases".

Exo 27:11 Likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings one hundred cubits long, and its pillars twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver-

Nearly all the features of the tabernacle suggest parts of the body. The girl in Solomon's song portrays her lover as having "legs as pillars [s.w. "pillars" here] set upon sockets [s.w. "sockets" here, meaning "bases"] of gold" (Song 5:15). The pillars therefore correspond to legs, and the bases / "sockets" to feet. It was as if the tabernacle was surrounded by men's legs and feet, holding hands with each other.

Exo 27:12 For the breadth of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits; their pillars ten, and their sockets ten-

GNB "with ten posts and ten bases".

Exo 27:13 The breadth of the court on the east side eastward shall be fifty cubits-

LXX adds "their pillars ten, and their sockets ten".

Exo 27:14 The hangings for the one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three-

Verses 14 and 15 are summed up in GNB: "On each side of the entrance there are to be 71/2 yards of curtains, with three posts and three bases". Fifteen cubits is 6.8 meters, or 7.5 yards. But LXX gives "fifty cubits".

Exo 27:15 For the other side shall be hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three-

See on :14. But LXX gives "fifty cubits".

Exo 27:16 For the gate of the court shall be a screen of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the embroiderer; their pillars four, and their sockets four-

Entrance to both the court and to the most holy place was through a veil made of the same design. The Lord Jesus alludes to this in teaching that "I am the door". The only way to get on the path to God is through Him. This rules out all non-Christian paths to God. Christ is the door of the tabernacle through which we enter at our conversion and baptism (Jn. 10:9). By doing so we also enter, in prospect, through the veil into the Most Holy of eternity and Divine nature. The veil symbolized the flesh of the Lord; and yet in it was woven scarlet, a symbol of His blood and sacrifice (Ex. 27:16), which permeated His mortal life. The lesson is that the cross is a daily way of life. The Lord taught this when He asked us to take up the cross daily: to live each day in the exercise of the same principles which He lived and died by. Let's not see spiritual life as a survival of a few

crises, as and when they present themselves. It's a way of life, and the principles which lead us to the little victories (when we scald ourselves with hot water, when we dirty a newly washed shirt...) will give us the greater ones also, when (e.g.) we stand before a tribunal, or face death in whatever form.

Exo 27:17 All the pillars of the court around shall be filleted with silver; their hooks of silver, and their sockets of brass-

GNB "All the posts around the enclosure are to be connected with silver rods, and their hooks are to be made of silver and their bases of bronze". Silver rods seems another feature of the tabernacle which might appear at first blush to not at all be how man would have designed things.

Exo 27:18 The length of the court shall be one hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty everywhere, and the height five cubits, of fine twined linen, and their sockets of brass-

The relatively low height meant that the tent containing the holy place and most holy place was visible to the ordinary people even from outside the tabernacle. It also meant that to enter into the tabernacle, a man would have to bow his head. Humility was to be for all time the required prerequisite for beginning any approach to God.

Exo 27:19 All the instruments of the tabernacle in all its service, and all its pins, and all the pins of the court, shall be of brass-

The "pins" are the tent pegs.

Exo 27:20 You shall command the children of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually-

"Pure olive oil" apparently refers to olive juice which bursts naturally from the first ripe olives. But we enquire where Israel obtained olive oil from in the wilderness, especially such "pure" olive oil to such great amounts as required here? Perhaps they had been given lots of it as they left Egypt and gave it to the priests. But for 40 years? I suggest as on :8 that this was God's ideal intention, and many of these laws were applicable only in contexts when obedience to them was possible. God's law is not therefore at all a reflection of a God who is a literalist or legalist. For by its nature, the law of Moses shows that He was not like that.

The lampstand is used as a symbol of the ecclesia in the visions of Revelation 2 and 3. The purpose of the ecclesia is to enable the oil of the Spirit to be burnt, to turn it into light. We are to keep our own personal light burning continually, day and night. Jesus had this in mind when He likened us to women waiting for the bridegroom to come at night, whose oil lamps should not be allowed to go out (Mt. 25:8).

Exo 27:21 In the Tent of Meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before Yahweh: it shall be a statute forever throughout their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel-

"The tent of meeting" is the tent where God met with His people over the blood of atonement upon the ark of the covenant. But that "meeting" was effectively not with the people, as only the priests entered into the holy place, and the high priest alone, only once / year, into the ultimate place where God met with His people—the Most Holy place. But the candlestick was to be kept burning in order to point the way into the Most Holy. All this suggested that there was something lacking in the entire system. God was prepared and even willing to meet with His people over the blood of atonement on the day of atonement. That meeting was therefore predicated upon their repentance and forgiveness. But it would have left the people aware that a fuller meeting with God was somehow promised. And this would come to full term when the Lord's death tore down the veil, and the way into the holiest was opened for all, not just the priests nor the High Priest.

We note that Aaron and his sons have not yet been chosen and dedicated to the priestly work. So this may have been edited in, under Divine inspiration, from Lev. 24:1-4; Num. 8:1,2.

EXODUS CHAPTER 28

Exo 28:1 Bring Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, near to you from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons-

God intended Israel to be "a Kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6). "All the people of Israel" were the builders of the spiritual house of God, i.e. His people (Acts 4:10,11). It was God's intention that there should be no specialist priests. It was everyone's job, to teach their neighbour and family God's word. But His plans were amended as their general failure became apparent, and the Levites were chosen. But His ideal intention remained. Thus when Israel were rejected, they were told that they as a nation could no longer be God's priest (Hos. 4:6). By baptism, we become spiritual Israel; and this idea is relevant to us too. Peter picks up these words in Exodus and applies them to every one of us, for the new covenant returns to this original intention of the old covenant: "You also are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. 2:5,9, quoting Ex. 19:6 LXX).

Exo 28:2 You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty-

The idea is not that the clothes should be beautiful and glorious; they were "for" the manifestation of the glory and beauty of God's saving ways, once their significance was perceived. The naked flesh of man was to

be covered over with a glory and beauty which was to come from God, looking forward to the idea of imputed righteousness which Paul explains in Romans. Glory and beauty were to be the features of all Israel in their role as priests / teachers of the Gentile world (Dt. 26:19 s.w.). Again we see repeated the ideal intention that all Israel were to be a nation of priests, and not just resign the work of witness to the priestly tribe.

Exo 28:3 You shall speak to all who are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments to sanctify him, that he may minister to Me in the priest's office-

LXX "in which apparel he shall minister to me as priest". The wise were given wisdom, in keeping with God's principle of confirming people in the way in which they themselves choose to go. This is how God's Spirit also works today on human hearts. "That they *may* make..." (AV) hints at the way in which God's Spirit is given, but people must still respond to it. Thus the Corinthians were given the Spirit (1 Cor. 1), but didn't use it; and so Paul couldn't speak to them as spiritual people (1 Cor. 3:1).

Exo 28:4 These are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash; and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, and his sons, that he may minister to Me in the priest's office-

Moses may well have struggled with this decision. For Aaron was consistently spiritually inferior to himself. Yet his family, and not that of Moses, was to be cho-

sen for this special honour. It was all part of the humbling process which resulted in Moses reaching acme of humility in the declaration that he was made the meekest man on earth (Num. 12:3).

Exo 28:5 They shall take the gold, and the blue, and the purple, and the scarlet, and the fine linen-

The precious stones were donated by the princes or elders (Ex. 35:27). Yet in Ex. 25:4-7 they are listed along with common acacia wood and goats' hair. There was to be a culture of giving, from the wealthiest to the poorest, which was to characterize the community of God's people.

Exo 28:6 They shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the skilful workman-

The ephod was a kind of waistcoat, onto which the breastplate was attached. The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined linen from Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made from yarn of which each thread was composed of many delicate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work. We also see that the religious style which they had been used to in Egypt was being alluded to but deconstructed. They were being given a system of religion not completely foreign to them, but also radically different to all systems they had previously used or encountered. This is why the Pentateuch alludes to

things like the laws of Hammurabi, or the existing creation myths- to deconstruct them.

The High Priestly clothing involved clothing woven using a specific blend of gold, dyed wool (blue, purple, and scarlet), and fine linen. This was strictly forbidden for other clothing (Lev. 19:19, Dt. 22:9-11). Perhaps the point of the prohibition was therefore not simply to teach the concept of separation, but to show that the ordinary Israelite could never be the High Priest. Or, the other way around, to perhaps suggest that there was a unique mixture of holiness and also non-Mosaic elements in the High Priest, looking forward to the Lord's unique work and relationship with sin.

Exo 28:7 It shall have two shoulder straps joined to the two ends of it, that it may be joined together-

LXX "It shall have two shoulder-pieces joined together, fastened on the two sides". "Joined / Coupled together" is s.w. "have fellowship with" (Ps. 94:20), and often of men 'joining together'. The theme of coupling and joining together occurs throughout the record of the tabernacle, and is used e.g. of the joining together of the curtains (Ex. 26:3). Unity amongst believers is to be the outcome of the indwelling of God's glory. Disunity results from simply not having perceived His glory. For before that, all disunity disappears as we are awed by His grace and convicted of our own smallness and unworthiness. See on :13.

Exo 28:8 The skilfully woven belt band which is on it, that is to be put on him, shall be like its work and of the

same piece; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen-

The significance of the colours should not be over emphasized. Israel in the wilderness only had a limited range of things with them, and as with the use of the acacia wood for the tabernacle construction, God was [and is] in a sense limited by the material He choses to have available to work with.

Exo 28:9 You shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the children of Israel-

LXX "emerald". The LXX is the version quoted repeatedly in the New Testament, often preferring its renderings to that of the Masoretic text. And yet the LXX differs from the Hebrew in the description of the precious stones, and their order in the breastplate. It is unwise therefore to seek to find meaning in the actual stones. These precious stones would have been extracted from the amulets or jewellery given to Israel by the Egyptians when they left Egypt. The significant thing is that the names of God's people were engraved upon them. God's people were carried before God by the High Priest, looking forward to how we are personally represented by name before God, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus in Heaven itself. Man is not alone, none are forgotten or unknown. That is the simple take away.

Exo 28:10 six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the six that remain on the other stone, in the order of their birth-

The names of the tribes were to be written on the two shoulder stones of the High Priest "in the order of

their birth" (Ex. 28:10). Seeing that Reuben was deposed from being the first born, we may wonder why there is this curious requirement. And the answer is perhaps just very practical. For if we take the tribes in the order of their birth, the list is: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali upon one stone, and Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin upon the other stone. There are then exactly 25 Hebrew letters on each stone. This kind of perfect symmetry would be impossible to arrange by any uninspired hand. It is this kind of internal corroboration which to me is the most powerful argument for a Divinely inspired Bible.

Jacob had tried to re-arrange the order of his sons according to his judgment of them, but his judgment was somewhat human. God takes no notice of it here. Note that we are to wear the breastplate of righteousness (Eph. 6:14); all that is true of Christ is in some sense true of those who are in Him. We too are to seek to bear others' burdens of sin, enter the Most Holy and seek to reconcile others to God. The way into the holiest has now been opened- for us to enter, for the sake of others. The many applications of the OT High Priestly language to ordinary believers would've been so difficult for our early Christian Jewish brethren to accept. We are right now sitting in heavenly places [cp. the Most Holy] with Christ, who sits there at God's right hand (Eph. 2:6).

Exo 28:11 With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones, according to the names of the children of Israel: you shall make them to be enclosed in settings of gold-

The names of God's people were engraved upon the stones which were on the High Priest's clothing. God's people were carried before God by the High Priest, looking forward to how we are personally represented by name before God, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus in Heaven itself. Man is not alone, none are forgotten or unknown. That is the simple take away. But "engraved" is the word usually translated "open", "to make appear". We are revealed before God, our life situation and personality type is openly made to appear before God, by our great High Priest.

Exo 28:12 You shall put the two stones on the shoulder straps of the ephod, to be stones of memorial for the children of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before Yahweh on his two shoulders for a memorial-

Bearing on the shoulders by the High Priest in order to gain atonement surely looks forward to the Lord bearing the cross on His shoulders. Yet He bore our sins. The cross is presented as symbolic of the weight of our sins. This is symbolic of how Christ, our High Priest, carries the names of all God's people on His shoulders and over His heart (:29) as He stands for us in God's presence. The preciousness of the stones reflects our high value in God's sight. The idea of "stones of memorial" wasn't that God might forget His people and so He needed to be reminded by the Priest wearing these stones with their names on; rather they were a reminder to Israel that they were each personally remembered by God all the time..

Exo 28:13 You shall make settings of gold-

LXX "circlets". The golden chains (:14) were to go into them. There is a constant theme of interconnection in all the commands given about the tabernacle. See on :7.

Exo 28:14 and two chains of pure gold; you shall make them like cords of braided work: and you shall put the braided chains on the settings-

LXX "and thou shalt make two fringes of pure gold, variegated with flowers wreathen work; and thou shalt put the wreathen fringes on the circlets, fastening them on their shoulder-pieces in front". Again we note the constant theme of interconnection in all the commands given about the tabernacle. See on :7.

Exo 28:15 You shall make a breastplate of judgment, the work of the skilful workman; like the work of the ephod you shall make it; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, you shall make it-

"Breastplate" is LXX "oracle", as if the judgment flashed out from the urim and thummim associated with the breastplate (:30) was God's word or oracle to His people. For "linen" see on :6. "The skilful workman" may specifically refer to Aholiab (Ex. 38:23). Perhaps Paul saw in this man a representation of us all- for he urged us likewise to be careful workmen when it comes to the understanding and teaching of God's word (2 Tim. 2:15).

Exo 28:16 It shall be square and folded double; a span shall be its length of it, and a span its breadth-

GNB "9 inches long and 9 inches wide". 23 x 23 cm. Again we note the small size of the things associated with the tabernacle, compared with the grandiose sur-

face level religion of the other peoples. David and Solomon's obsession with building a large scale temple reflects how they failed to grasp this.

Exo 28:17 You shall set in it settings of stones, four rows of stones: a row of ruby, topaz, and beryl shall be the first row-

The faithful believers are likened to a stone with a unique name written on it (Rev. 2:17). We are each called to uniquely reflect and refract the light of God's glory in a way slightly different to anyone else, just as the stones on the breastplate all glimmered with their own unique beauty. Unity isn't the same as uniformity.

LXX "a sardius, a topaz, and emerald". See on :9 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text.

Exo 28:18 and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald-

LXX "a carbuncle, a sapphire, and a jasper". See on :9 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text.

Exo 28:19 and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst-

LXX has "a ligure" for "jacinth". See on :9 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text.

Exo 28:20 and the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be enclosed in gold in their settings-

LXX "chrysolite, and a beryl, and an onyx stone". See on :9 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text. "Chrysolite" is Hebrew '*tarshish*', from the idea of long endurance. "Ships of tarshish" therefore refer

to long distance trading vessels, not a specific location called Tarshish.

Exo 28:21 The stones shall be according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, each one according to his name, they shall be for the twelve tribes-

The long sentence here belabours the point several times over that the names of Israel were engraven or 'opened up' upon the stones. The idea is that the people of God were individually represented by name before God by the High Priest / the Lord Jesus.

Exo 28:22 You shall make on the breastplate chains like cords, of braided work of pure gold-

LXX calls "the breastplate" "the oracle", see on :15. The attachment of the breastplate to the inner clothes of the High Priest is emphasized. The impression is of careful connection of the precious stones to the person of the High Priest- all looking forward to our connection with the Lord Jesus.

Exo 28:23 You shall make on the breastplate two rings of gold, and shall put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate-

As noted on :22, the impression is of careful connection of the precious stones to the person of the High Priest- all looking forward to our connection with the Lord Jesus. LXX is quite different: "And Aaron shall take the names of the children of Israel, on the oracle of judgment on his breast; a memorial before God for him as he goes into the sanctuary".

Exo 28:24 You shall put the two braided chains of gold in the two rings at the ends of the breastplate-

The almost monotonous stress continues- that the chains connected the breastplate to the ephod. The lesson from all this is that God's people are indeed truly connected to their High Priest. And that connection, like they themselves, is all supremely precious- the most valuable metal and stones are used to represent it.

Exo 28:25 The other two ends of the two braided chains you shall put on the two settings, and put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod in its forepart-

As noted on :23,24, the cameraman of Divine inspiration is zoomed in very close up here. The connection of God's people to their High Priest is being laboured.

Exo 28:26 You shall make two rings of gold, and you shall put them on the two ends of the breastplate, on its edge, which is toward the side of the ephod inward-

GNB "make two rings of gold and attach them to the lower corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod".

Exo 28:27 You shall make two rings of gold, and shall put them on the two shoulder straps of the ephod underneath, in its forepart, close by its coupling, above the skillfully woven band of the ephod-

GNB "attach them to the lower part of the front of the two shoulder straps of the ephod, near the seam and above the finely woven belt". There is nowhere that we have more detail about a piece of clothing in the Bible. The attachment of the symbols of God's people to the High Priest is clearly of the utmost importance to Him.

Exo 28:28 They shall bind the breastplate by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be on the skilfully woven band of the ephod, and that the breastplate may not swing out from the ephod-

GNB "so that the breastpiece rests above the belt and does not come loose". Again we note the constant emphasis upon the connection between the breastplate and the ephod, looking ahead to the unbreakable connection between God's people and the Lord Jesus in His work of mediation for us before God.

Exo 28:29 Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart, when he goes in to the holy place, for a memorial before Yahweh continually-

The names of God's people are in the heart of the Lord Jesus, our great High Priest (Ex. 28:29); just as God's words are to be upon the hearts of His people (Dt. 6:6). We are not dealt with automatically, as it were, or as part of a theological transaction. We are in His heart, He has us on His heart, deep in His feelings.

The Hebrew word for 'intercede' means also 'to meet'; every prayer is a meeting with God (Job 21:15; Is. 47:3; 64:5; Jer. 7:16; 15:11). Phinehas "executed judgment" or, as some translations, 'prayed / interceded' for Israel (Ps. 106:30). Judgment and prayer are linked. The "breastplate of judgment" enabled the High Priest to bear the names of all Israel before God in mediation- and their judgment was carried by him, as it is by Jesus, in the

process of mediating for them (Ex. 28:29,30). Romans is full of legal language, of interceding, pleading, finding a favourable verdict etc., and refers this to the judgment and also to the cross. But Romans 8 uses these very ideas in relation to prayer, for in coming before the throne of grace now on account of the Lord's sacrifice, we come in essence before judgment. Coming before the throne of God in prayer (Heb. 9:24; Ps. 17:1,2) is the language of the judgment seat. If we become before His throne and are accepted, it follows that this is a foretaste of the outcome of the judgment for us, were we to be judged at that time. Our boldness before the Father in prayer will be the same attitude we have to Him at the judgment throne (1 Jn. 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14 all use the same Greek word).

Exo 28:30 You shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before Yahweh; and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Yahweh continually-

LXX "The Manifestation and the Truth". These stones appear to have flashed out binary yes / no responses or judgments in response to issues brought before God; they were the means of the manifestation of His truth. This is how they were used on the occasions we will later read of them. This is perhaps why "Breastplate" is LXX "oracle", as if the judgment flashed out from the urim and thummim associated with the breastplate was God's word or oracle to His people. The urim and thummim are where the precious stones of the

breastplate were (:29)- on the heart of the high priest. The answer of God concerning His people was on the heart of the Lord Jesus. The outcome of His judgment of us is so deeply in His heart.

Exo 28:31 You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue-

This plain single colour [perhaps indigo] would have thrown into contrast the variegated patterns of the ephod and breastplate.

Exo 28:32 It shall have a hole for the head in its midst: it shall have a binding of woven work around its hole, as it were the hole of a coat of mail, that it not be torn-

The Lord's robe He wore to the cross was without seam and not torn (Jn. 19:23,24). There He acted as High Priest, with the names of God's people on His shoulders, upon which He carried the cross; and in His heart. "Now is the judgment of this world", He predicted of the cross; and the cross was indeed the judgment of the world. This was matched by the urim and thummim being on the breastplate, flashing out judgment.

The Lord having His own clothes put back on Him meant that He would have been dressed in blood sprinkled garments for the walk to Golgotha. Again His holy mind would have been on the Messianic prophecies of Is. 63:3 about a Messiah with blood sprinkled garments lifted up in glorious victory. Or perhaps He saw the connection to Lev. 8:30, where the priests had to have blood sprinkled garments in order to begin their priestly work. This would have sent His mind to us, for whom He was interceding. Likewise when He perceived that His gar-

ment would not be rent, He would have joyfully perceived that He was indeed as the High Priest whose garment was not to be rent (Ex. 39:23).

Christ died as the supreme High Priest, and the soldiers decided not to rend His garment but instead to throw dice to see which of them should get it (Jn. 19:24). As He hung on the cross, looking down and noticing what they were doing, He would have remembered this teaching about the High Priest's garment, and taken encouragement that He was indeed doing the High Priestly work to its ultimate term. His blood stained, dirty outer garment- perhaps woven by his social outcast of a mother- was equivalent of the High Priest's robe of "glory and beauty" (Ex. 28:2).

Exo 28:33 On its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, around its hem; and bells of gold between and around them-

The golden bells on the High Priest's garments were familiar in local religions as charm to ward off demons by their noise. But they are used in the Divine scheme of things to remind of God's holiness and the danger of human sin impinging upon this and thus leading to death. And thereby fear of demons was to be replaced by fear of God's holiness and human sin; see on :36.

LXX "pomegranates of a flowering pomegranate tree".

Exo 28:34 a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, around the hem of the robe-

The pomegranate was full of seeds. The suggestion was that the mediation of the High Priest was to pro-

duce a multitudinous seed, in fulfilment of the promises to Abraham. Hebrew tradition claims there were 12 pomegranates on the hem, appropriate to the 12 tribes of Israel. All this came to full term in the priestly work of the Lord Jesus. As noted on :32, the robe looked ahead to that of the Lord Jesus, and so we note how He healed those who took hold of the hem of His robe (Mt. 9:20; 14:36). Perhaps they perceived His High Priestly nature.

Exo 28:35 It shall be on Aaron to minister; and his sound shall be heard when he goes in to the holy place before Yahweh, and when he comes out, so that he will not die-

"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16) may be alluding to how the High Priest had to have bells so that "his sound may be heard... that he die not" (Ex. 28:35; this idea of the sound being heard is picked up in Ps. 19 concerning the spread of the Gospel).

Exo 28:36 You shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engravings of a signet, 'HOLY TO YAHWEH'-

Most of the surrounding tabernacles featured quite a lot of noise- especially incantations and spoken formulas regarding the holiness of the god and shrine. There were few spoken words in the Mosaic rituals; "Holy to the Lord" was written upon the forehead of the High Priest rather than stated by incantations (GNB 'Dedicated to the LORD', LXX has "holiness of the Lord"). We could maybe go so far as to say that we see here the exaltation of God's written word, with all the faith and understanding which this requires, as opposed to

the incantations of other worship systems. The plate or rosette on the High Priest's turban would've recalled pagan plates which warded off supposed demons; but this one spoke of "Holiness to Yahweh", again replacing the negative with the positive; see on :33.

Exo 28:37 You shall put it on a lace of blue, and it shall be on the sash; on the front of the sash it shall be-

"Lace" is s.w. "wire", "ribband", "line"; we note it was not a golden chain but a lace.

Exo 28:38 It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall make holy in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always on his forehead, that they may be accepted before Yahweh-

"Accepted" has the idea of delighted in, great pleasure. Those whose names are carried by the High Priest thereby and therefore become God's great pleasure and delight. His delight in us, seeing us as unblemished, is a great Bible theme. The transaction seems in a sense unfair- that because of the work of one man, many could come into that status. But this is the challenge of faith.

Exo 28:39 You shall weave the coat in chequer work of fine linen, and you shall make a turban of fine linen, and you shall make a sash, the work of the embroiderer-

That the Priest's crown was to be made of linen rather than solid gold or some other precious metal could appear some kind of anticlimax- most leaders of other religions had something solid on their heads. White linen represents righteousness (Rev. 19:8); it's as if the intention was to highlight the fact that simple

righteousness is of such great value and power in God's sight rather than any visible ostentation.

Exo 28:40 You shall make coats for Aaron's sons, and you shall make sashes for them and you shall make headbands for them, for glory and for beauty-

"Sashes" is AV "girdles". The idea is not that the clothes should be beautiful and glorious; they were "for" the manifestation of the glory and beauty of God's saving ways, once their significance was perceived. The naked flesh of man was to be covered over with a glory and beauty which was to come from God, looking forward to the idea of imputed righteousness which Paul explains in Romans. Glory and beauty were to be the features of all Israel in their role as priests / teachers of the Gentile world (Dt. 26:19 s.w.). Again we see repeated the ideal intention that all Israel were to be a nation of priests, and not just resign the work of witness to the priestly tribe.

Exo 28:41 You shall put them on Aaron your brother, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me in the priest's office-

The Lord died that He might "sanctify" us to God. This is the word used by the LXX to describe the consecration of the priests to service of the body of Israel (Ex. 28:41). If we reject the call to priesthood today, we reject the point of the Lord's saving suffering for us.

Exo 28:42 You shall make them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness; from the waist even to the thighs they shall reach-

The entire body of believers are described as being figuratively clothed in linen at the Lord's return, in that it represents the imputed righteousness of the saints / believers (Rev. 19:8). The allusion to the 'clothing upon' of the nakedness of flesh at the Lord's return is clear; the same figure is found in 2 Cor. 5:4. But the implication is that we shall then be as ordained priests- we shall go forth into eternity to do the work of priesthood, helping others to come to Yahweh. Our experiences now, especially our frustrations in being unable to do or achieve this work, are all in order to prepare us for such an eternity.

Exo 28:43 They shall be on Aaron, and on his sons, when they go in to the Tent of Meeting, or when they come near to the altar to minister in the holy place; that they don't bear iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute forever to him and to his descendants after him-

"Bear iniquity" is therefore an idiom for being personally guilty. Yet the idiom is used about the Lord Jesus Christ in His bearing of our iniquity on the cross (Is. 53:11). The Lord Jesus was our sin bearer and yet personally guiltless. This is the paradox which even He struggled with, leading to His feeling of having been forsaken by God (Mt. 27:46). This means that although Christ never sinned, He knows the feelings of sinners, because His identity with us was so deep and complete.

EXODUS CHAPTER 29

Exo 29:1 This is the thing that you shall do to them to make them holy, to minister to Me in the priest's office: take one young bull and two rams without blemish-

This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus, on account of which we are sanctified or made holy in God's service (Jn. 17:19). His death makes us all as priests; our lives should be of work and concern for the salvation of others. The Lord's sacrifice sanctifies us to do this. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Exo 29:2 unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil: you shall make them of fine wheat flour-

This suggests that the bull and rams of :1 were associated with peace offerings. But the usual sequence is of sin offering, burnt offering [representing dedication to Yahweh's service after the experience of forgiveness] and then peace offering, celebrating peace with God. The three animals may have represented those sacrifices, indeed :14 is clear that the bull was a sin offering; and the three types of unleavened bread products were used as part of the peace offering. The experience of forgiveness, and the promise of dedication elicited from us by this, is utterly critical in order for us to do any priestly work for others.

Exo 29:3 You shall put them into one basket, and bring them in the basket, with the bull and the two rams-

LXX "offer them in the basket". The bringing in the basket looked ahead to the sons of Aaron being brought to God (:8).

Exo 29:4 You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and shall wash them with water-

This clearly looks ahead to baptism. It is one outcome of baptism that we are sanctified in order to do priestly work. Our life afterwards is therefore to be lived in the spirit of priesthood. Again we note that the Mosaic rituals allude to those of Egypt, although are different: "In Egypt, the priests were compelled to wash themselves from head to foot in cold water twice every day, and twice every night" (Herodotus). This amount of washing wasn't required. For the water of itself was insignificant;

it was made powerful by the blood of the sacrifice, just as baptism is.

Exo 29:5 You shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the coat, the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate, and clothe him with the skilfully woven band of the ephod-

Aaron was not to clothe himself, but to be clothed by Moses. This may have been to remind Aaron that this was not of his doing, he was merely being used by God, manifest through Moses. But it would also have been to humble Moses, who might have been tempted to assume that he ought to be this new high priest figure. For Aaron had consistently been spiritually inferior to Moses. But it was part of Moses' humbling process to make him array his brother as the High Priest, and to realize that not his own sons, but those of his brother, were to be the priests. And so he ended up the humblest man (Num. 12:3).

Exo 29:6 and you shall set the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban-

The commands relating to the rebuilt temple of Ez. 40-48 are expanded upon in Zechariah 3. There we read that Joshua the high priest was to be dressed first with the headpiece and then with the rest of the priestly garments (Zech. 3:5). This is the reverse order to the Mosaic commands in Ex. 29:5-7 and Lev. 8:7-9- implying that this was to be a new kind of high priest. Likewise the two onyx stones and the twelve gemstones of the Mosaic breastplate are replaced by a singular stone for

the restored high priest (Zech. 3:9). Clearly this "law of Moses" was not of itself intended to be eternal.

Exo 29:7 Then you shall take the anointing oil, and pour it on his head, and anoint him-

The Septuagint word used for 'anointing' here occurs in the New Testament only in 1 Jn. 2:20,27, where we read that we have each been anointed. The idea of anointing was to signal the initiation of someone. I'd therefore be inclined to see 1 Jn. 2:20,27 as alluding to baptism; when we become in Christ, in the anointed, then as 2 Cor. 1:21 says, we too are anointed in a sense. We're given a specific mission and purpose. "The anointing that you received" would therefore refer to our commissioning at baptism. It seems to imply a one time act of being anointed / commissioned / inaugurated for service. Baptism isn't therefore merely an initiation into a community; it's a specific commissioning for active service, in ways which are unique to us. We do well to bring this point out to those we prepare for baptism. The words for 'anointing' are unique to 1 John but they occur in the LXX to describe the anointing / initiation of the priests, and of the tabernacle / dwelling place of God (e.g. Ex. 29:7; 35:14,28). John sees us as the dwelling place / tabernacle of the Father, and specifically as the priests.

Exo 29:8 You shall bring his sons, and put coats on them-

See on :5. The bringing of the dedicatory offerings in the basket looked ahead to the sons of Aaron being brought to God (:3).

Exo 29:9 You shall clothe them with belts, Aaron and his sons, and bind headbands on them; and they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute; and you shall consecrate Aaron and his sons-

It was promised to the family of Aaron that the priesthood would be theirs for a perpetual statute. And yet the family of Eli, a descendant of Aaron (1 Kings 2:27; 1 Chron. 24:3), were told that they were to be cut off as they had abused the priesthood. The promise of Exodus was therefore conditional, although the conditions weren't laid down. Indeed, just because of this fact, the Levites often assumed that they were acceptable just by reason of who they were.

Exo 29:10 You shall bring the bull before the Tent of Meeting; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull-

This was a sin offering (:14). The priests identified with the slain animal by placing their hands upon its head; they saw it as their representative [not their substitute]. The foundation for all service of God is a recognition of sin and a belief in sin's forgiveness; and our service will then be performed in a humble spirit of gratitude.

Exo 29:11 You shall kill the bull before Yahweh, at the door of the Tent of Meeting-

"The tent of meeting" is the tent where God met with His people over the blood of atonement upon the ark of the covenant. But that "meeting" was effectively not with the people, as only the priests entered into the holy place, and the high priest alone, only once / year,

into the ultimate place where God met with His people—the Most Holy place. But the candlestick was to be kept burning in order to point the way into the Most Holy. All this suggested that there was something lacking in the entire system. God was prepared and even willing to meet with His people over the blood of atonement on the day of atonement. That meeting was therefore predicated upon their repentance and forgiveness. But it would have left the people aware that a fuller meeting with God was somehow promised. And this would come to full term when the Lord's death tore down the veil, and the way into the holiest was opened for all, not just the priests nor the High Priest.

Exo 29:12 You shall take of the blood of the bull, and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger; and you shall pour out all the blood at the base of the altar-

Because the altar represented the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:10), it has been wrongly argued that these rituals speak of the cleansing of the nature of the Lord Jesus by His own death. This runs far too close to making the Lord Jesus a sinner who needed reconciliation with God; whereas His perfect character made Him for ever "one" with His Father, both before and after His death. Rather I suggest the blood of the sin offering was placed on the altar (and other items) in order to demonstrate how they achieved any forgiveness of sin. They only functioned in practice through their identification with the blood of Christ, represented by that of the bull slain as a sin offering. It is impossible that the blood of a bull could take away sin; it only functioned in this way in-

so far as God foresaw the blood of His Son (Heb. 10:4). The horns of the altar were perceived as the place of salvation for sinners (1 Kings 1:51; 2:28). But this was only finally to be true through the power of the blood of Christ. This idea was taught by the daubing of sin offering blood on the horns of the altar- as an act of identification of the altar with the blood, rather than to somehow make the metal of an unclean altar now clean. The whole system was dedicated to God, and accepted by Him, only through its association with the future blood of the Lord Jesus.

Exo 29:13 You shall take all the fat that covers the innards, the cover of the liver, the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, and burn them on the altar-

Pagan sacrifices included the fat, but not all the other "innards". There is huge emphasis upon the "inward parts" in the regulations about sacrifices. Our inward parts and thoughts of the heart are laid open before God and should be offered to Him, not just the externalities which men see (Heb. 4:12). The same word is used of Sarah's laughing "within herself" (Gen. 18:12). The sacrifice of Christ was so perfect because His innermost thoughts were offered to God. And it is our thoughts when nobody else is watching which are of the essence to God; "to be spiritually minded", as the New Testament expresses it. This is why Yahweh could not go up in "the midst" of Israel (Ex. 33:3; Num. 14:42; Dt. 1:42), because they didn't have Him in their midst. Thus to marry unbelievers would be a snare "in the midst of you" (Ex. 34:12), right in the inner mind which is what God seeks

above all. David in the Psalms speaks of the "inward parts" of the human mind, which are critical in God's judgment of a person as wicked or righteous (e.g. Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11 and Ps. 64:6, where "inward thought" is s.w. "inward parts"). It is those inward parts which were to be washed (Lev. 1:13), just as our innermost heart can be washed by the Spirit which is given at baptism. For this is the gift of the Spirit in the new covenant, whereby God's law is placed within our inward parts (s.w. Jer. 31:33; Ez. 36:26,27) by the God who can form the spirit of man in man's inward parts, the God who can work directly upon the human heart (Zech. 12:1).

The fat was understood as the best part of the animal, although today for health reasons we tend to consider the meat to be of more interest than the fat. They were to give to God that which they perceived to be the most valuable, within the frames of understanding and perception within which they then lived.

Exo 29:14 But the flesh of the bull, and its skin, and its dung, you shall burn with fire outside of the camp: it is a sin offering-

Heb. 13:11-13 alludes to this, making the point that not only the blood represented the blood of the Lord Jesus, but even the flesh of the bull, burnt outside the camp, looked ahead to the Lord suffering death outside the walls of Jerusalem. We are invited to see the cross therefore as the final destruction of flesh in the life of the Lord Jesus. The mention of its skin and dung shows too the total level of identification with human sin and dirt,

achieved so wonderfully by the Lord in His death on the cross.

Exo 29:15 You shall also take the one ram; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram-

Laying the hands on the head was an act of identity, taking the animal as their representative rather than their substitute.

Exo 29:16 You shall kill the ram, and you shall take its blood, and sprinkle it around on the altar-

To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

Exo 29:17 You shall cut the ram into its pieces, and wash its innards, and its legs, and put them with its pieces, and with its head-

See on :13. Sacrifice of an entire animal (:18) was not practiced in Egypt. They thought their gods were

only interested in the externally attractive parts, or the fat which burned with a bright flame. But Yahweh wants every part of the animal, as He wishes every part of our lives.

Exo 29:18 You shall burn the whole ram on the altar: it is a burnt offering to Yahweh; it is a pleasant aroma, an offering made by fire to Yahweh-

To offer the "whole ram" would have been unusual in the religious culture of the day. Only the best parts of animals were offered, especially those which appeared the most attractive to human eyes. But "whole burnt offerings" were very much on Yahweh's agenda- to symbolize how He wants the whole person, every innermost part of human life, even if it appears irrelevant and unclean in human eyes. For "pleasant aroma", see on :41.

Exo 29:19 You shall take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram-

This dedication ceremony was really a peace offering, as the sacrifice was also eaten by the priests; although there is the addition here of the ritual of sprinkling the blood. All who enter upon priestly service [which is all of us, under the new covenant] are to go through the process of sin offering (:14), dedication to God in response to the forgiveness received, and then the experience of peace with God, symbolized by the peace offering. It is from this basis that we can go on to serve others; and those who have not passed through this will not be effective ministers to others.

Exo 29:20 Then you shall kill the ram, and take some of its blood, and put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron,

and on the tip of the right ear of his sons, and on the thumb of their right hand, and on the big toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood around on the altar-

Their hearing, walking and acting with the hand was to be influenced by their experience of association with the blood of the sin offering. And this is to be the effect of the blood of the Lord Jesus upon us. Our whole worldview, perceptions, actions and direction in life can never be the same again. He died for us, and we have been forgiven, and thereby sanctified for priestly service. His death can never be a mere doctrine, a theological teaching, resulting in a hobby level commitment to occasional religious meetings; but if really experienced, then every part of life and outlook is radically affected.

Exo 29:21 You shall take of the blood that is on the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron, and on his garments, and on his sons, and on the garments of his sons with him-

We note the mixture of the anointing oil and blood of the sacrifice. Perhaps this was to make a connection with the blood of the future anointed one, the 'Christ', the Lord Jesus.

And he shall be made holy, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him-

'To make holy' or to 'sanctify' is something the Lord Jesus often spoke in discussing the meaning of His death. He makes many allusions to the language of the High Priest in His prayer of John 17, e.g. "for their sakes I sanctify Myself so that they also may be sanctified" (Jn. 17:19). We are all called to be part of a new priesthood

(1 Pet. 2:5,9); Christ's death sanctified us, prepared us for service in God's house. Spiritually serving others is therefore not something just for a specialist minority, but for *all* who are in Christ, 'the anointed one', anointed just as the priests were anointed to serve (:21). The unblemished animals which were sacrificed in order to sanctify the priests therefore represent the sacrifice of Jesus.

Exo 29:22 Also you shall take some of the ram's fat, the fat tail, the fat that covers the innards, the cover of the liver, the two kidneys, the fat that is on them, and the right thigh (for it is a ram of consecration)-

The idea is as in LXX "the fact [even] the fat tail" (as Lev. 3:9; 7:3). There were species of sheep with a large fatty tail, which was considered in their culture to be a great delicacy. We see here how the law of Moses was limited in application to an immediate context, and was simply not intended to be a global law for all time. But the take away lesson is that we are to give to God whatever is for us, in our culture and worldview, the best and most desirous.

Exo 29:23 and one loaf of bread, one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before Yahweh-

This confirms that this part of the dedication was a peace offering, which the offerer ate in fellowship with God. We see something of this reflected in the way the breaking of bread service is a celebration of our peace with God through the work of His Son. All who enter upon priestly service [which is all of us, under the new

covenant] are to first go through the process of sin offering (:14), dedication to God in response to the forgiveness received, and then the experience of peace with God, symbolized by the peace offering.

Exo 29:24 You shall put all of this in Aaron's hands, and in his sons' hands, and shall wave them for a wave offering before Yahweh-

Preaching work isn't glamorous. It is a living out of the cross. Paul felt he had been "separated unto the [preaching of the] gospel of God" (Gal. 1:15); and he uses a word which the LXX uses for the separation of part of a sacrifice to be consumed (Ex. 29:24,26). The Greek word for "witness" is *martus*, from whence 'martyr'. To witness to Christ is to live the life of the martyr; to preach Him is to live out His cross in daily life.

Exo 29:25 You shall take them from their hands, and burn them on the altar on the burnt offering, for a pleasant aroma before Yahweh: it is an offering made by fire to Yahweh-

The bread of the peace offering was usually eaten, but this dedication ceremony was a peace offering with some modifications. There was perhaps here a reflection of how they were unworthy of fellowship with God, and wanted to devote even that to Him. This is indeed how we are to feel as we embark upon any priestly service.

Exo 29:26 You shall take the breast of Aaron's ram of consecration, and wave it for a wave offering before Yahweh; and it shall be your portion-

The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the al-

tar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Exo 29:27 You shall sanctify the breast of the wave offering, and the thigh of the wave offering, which is waved, and which is heaved up, of the ram of consecration, even of that which is for Aaron, and of that which is for his sons-

"Heaved up" may suggest that the meat was literally lifted up in the hands (:25) to God, as well as "waved" (see on :26). This would have been another way of saying that the food of the priests was really God's, and they recognized that by literally lifting it up toward Him.

Exo 29:28 and it shall be for Aaron and his sons as their portion forever from the children of Israel; for it is a wave offering; and it shall be a wave offering from the children of Israel of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, even their wave offering to Yahweh-

The priests had no land inheritance, and so they were to depend upon the food from the peace offerings made by the other Israelites. But this meant that their material survival depended upon the spiritual state of the Israelites; whether they were at peace with God. If

the Levites taught them well, and they responded, then they would make these offerings. But the whole system became dysfunctional. The people weren't taught properly, they became idolaters, the priests weren't supported and gave themselves to farming and other business interests in order to support themselves. They didn't therefore study God's word and teach it as intended. And so the whole spiritual fabric of Israel broke down.

Exo 29:29 The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him, to be anointed in them, and to be consecrated in them-

Although there was a special priesthood, it was clearly God's intention that all Israel should be like priests; they were to be a "Kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6). Israel were all "saints", and yet saints and priests are paralleled in passages like Ps. 132:16. Israel in the wilderness had clothes which didn't wear out- just as the Priestly clothes didn't, and were handed down from generation to generation (so Ex. 29:29 implies). This was to encourage them to see themselves as all being priests.

Exo 29:30 Seven days shall the son who is priest in his place put them on, when he comes into the Tent of Meeting to minister in the holy place-

This seems to be saying that a new High Priest must go through this dedication ritual, which was to last seven days (:35). The implication is that the priestly clothing was to last for every generation of priesthood; see on :29.

Exo 29:31 You shall take the ram of consecration, and boil its flesh in a holy place-

The holy place in view was the court (Lev. 6:16), in front of the tent of meeting (Lev. 8:31).

Exo 29:32 Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, at the door of the Tent of Meeting-

This was the element of the peace offering which was the final part of the dedication ritual. An individual must be at peace with God through forgiveness if he or she is going to be able to minister to others. Remember that we are all called to priestly service. Yahweh "met" with man over the ark of the covenant in the most holy place, but the entrance to the holy place was also effectively the place of meeting with God. They were to eat with Him there, although He was visibly absent. But He was there, eating with them in fellowship; just as we experience at the breaking of bread meeting.

Exo 29:33 They shall eat those things with which atonement was made, to consecrate and sanctify them, but a stranger shall not eat of it, because they are holy-

Eating the things with which the atonement was made points forward to the breaking of bread service. We can see in this echoes of the consecration of the priests; and we should realize each time we do it that we have been sanctified in order to proactively serve in God's house.

Exo 29:34 If anything of the flesh of the consecration, or of the bread, remains to the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire: it shall not be eaten, because it is holy-

Peace offerings could be eaten on the next day (Lev. 7:16; 19:5,6). But although the dedication of the priests was a peace offering, there were differences. The similarity is with the legislation about the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:10), perhaps to direct them to understand that they were eating the symbols of their redemption, as we do at the breaking of bread. The Passover lamb represented the Lord Jesus, and His flesh didn't see corruption (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:27), hence the lamb was not to be allowed any possibility of corruption.

Exo 29:35 You shall do so to Aaron, and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you. You shall consecrate them seven days-

This period was perhaps to recall creation. They were to realize they were part of a new creation, and were now to go forth as Adam to tend what God had created.

Exo 29:36 Every day you shall offer the bull of sin offering for atonement; and you shall cleanse the altar, when you make atonement for it-

"Atonement *for* it" can as well be "atonement *upon* it". The preposition *al* is of very wide meaning, but generally means "upon", "over" or "above". *Al* an altar is usually rendered "upon the altar", multiple times (e.g. :20). The idea of 'cleansing' surely requires the use of water and not blood. The same word is used of "purified / cleansed with water" (Num. 31:23). They were to offer a sin offering for Aaron and his sons, every day of the seven days. After each sacrifice, they were to clean the altar, upon which atonement had been made. There is no idea here that inanimate objects are somehow sinful. The altar it-

self, like the Lord Jesus, was not sinful. It was a means to the end of atonement.

And you shall anoint it, to sanctify it-

The anointing was by sprinkling oil upon it seven times (Lev. 8:11). This pointed forward to the Lord Jesus, the Christ, the anointed one, through whom all the sacrifices were made ultimately meaningful. Without Him in the future, the whole system wouldn't have worked.

Exo 29:37 Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and the altar shall be most holy: whatever touches the altar shall be holy-

As noted on :36, "atonement *for* it" can as well be "atonement *upon* it". The preposition *al* is of very wide meaning, but generally means "upon", "over" or "above". *Al* an altar is usually rendered "upon the altar", multiple times (e.g. :20). The atonement required was for real and actual sinfulness, that of the priests and the people; not for the altar of itself.

Exo 29:38 Now this is that which you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old day by day continually-

The continual sacrifice of lambs was to remind them that the Passover deliverance through the lamb was effectively ongoing. The Passover lamb was likewise to be a year old (Ex. 12:5). We too are to live constantly under the impression of the Lord's sacrifice and redemption of us. Israel were asked to use a lamb of the first year to record various times when they should be thankful for God's redemption of them in the events which comprise life (Lev. 9:3; 12:6; 23:12,18,19; Num. 6:12,14;

7:15,17,21; 28:3,9,11,19; 29:2,8,13). This was to continually recall to them the events of their great redemption through the Red Sea. And the essence of our redemption, our baptism and salvation through the blood of the lamb, must likewise be brought ever before us.

Exo 29:39 The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at evening-

Literally "between the two evenings", as at Passover night (Ex. 12:6); see on :38.

Exo 29:40 and with the one lamb a tenth part of an ephah of fine flour mixed with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil, and the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering-

Bread and wine were effectively offered with the lamb. The Lord's choice of symbols for the breaking of bread surely had this in mind. They are but the side offerings, as it were, compared to the lamb. To take bread and wine would beg the question: 'And where is the slain lamb?'. And the answer to that at the breaking of bread is 'Here in our midst'.

The law of Moses was not an iron law which had to be obeyed in every context. Clearly this law about oil and wine being offered with the daily sacrifices would have been practically impossible to keep during the forty years wandering. Every day, half a hin (1.8 liters, 3.8 pints, around half a gallon) of olive oil and the same of wine would have been required. And this was just for the daily offerings; there were many days when more sacrifices were offered. It was by grace that God would have overlooked this. I suggest that it is to this which Am.

5:25 refers, challenging Israel to remember that God had accepted them in the wilderness by grace alone, as they were unable to keep His ideal requirements: "Did you bring Me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness?"

Exo 29:41 The other lamb you shall offer at evening, and shall do to it according to the meal offering of the morning, and according to its drink offering, for a pleasant aroma, an offering made by fire to Yahweh-

"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to

what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Exo 29:42 It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the Tent of Meeting before Yahweh, where I will meet with you, to speak there to you-

Although we are a great multitude of redeemed, yet the communication of the Father and Son to us are still amazingly unique, even though we all hear and read the same actual words, and reflect upon the same facts. Right back at the beginning of God's relationship with Israel He had made the point that "I will meet you [plural] to speak there unto thee [you singular]" (Ex. 29:42 AV). Yahweh "met" with His people over the ark in the most holy place, but He as it were stepped out from there to the door of the holy place, and met with His people there too. He spoke with them, as it were, over the sacrificed lamb; just as the cross of the Lord Jesus is likened in Heb. 12 to a voice speaking to us, insistently and constantly, louder than the voice which shook Sinai.

Exo 29:43 There I will meet with the children of Israel; and the place shall be sanctified by My glory-

God met with Israel over the ark in the most holy place (Ex. 25:22; 30:6; Num. 17:4). But they were never allowed there. And so He also "met" (s.w.) with Israel at the door of the tabernacle, and spoke with them there (Ex. 29:42,43; 30:36). But the word for "meet" is used in Am. 3:3, where God laments that Israel had not "met" with Him and therefore they could not walk further to-

gether. The idea of the "meeting" was that God's word might be revealed, so that the people could walk with Him in His ways. It was an awesome invitation, to be able to meet with the God who only otherwise met with His people in the glory of the most holy place, over the ark. He as it were came out of that most holy place and met with them at the door of the tabernacle. But they weren't interested. Just as so many today.

We could however argue that this verse had a specific one time fulfilment in Lev. 9:4, when the fire came down and consumed the sacrifices when the tabernacle was established: "the glory of the Lord became manifest before the whole people" (Heb.).

Exo 29:44 I will sanctify the Tent of Meeting and the altar: Aaron also and his sons I will sanctify, to minister to Me in the priest's office-

Although they were to do the rituals required to sanctify themselves, it was God who ultimately sanctified them. For man cannot cleanse himself, all he can do is allow God to do this, and recognize the principles by which God will do so- through the shedding of blood (Lev. 17:11).

Exo 29:45 I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God-

"The tabernacle of God" being God's people; He being our God; God living and walking with us (Rev. 21:3) is evidently alluding to Lev. 26:11,12 and Ex. 29:45,46 concerning the ultimate blessings of the covenant after Israel's final repentance. The shadowy fulfilment they have had in the past through God's manifestation in an

Angel doesn't mean that these promises can and must only be fulfilled by some form of God manifestation. Surely Rev. 21:3 is saying that at the second coming, the principle of God manifestation will change- in that God will personally be with His people. Because we have so far lived under the paradigm of God manifestation, let's not think that it's not possible for God to personally be with us.

Rev. 21:3 understands this as coming true when Christ returns to earth, seeing that God's intention for this to happen with Israel didn't materialize. And yet, having prophesied that He *will be* their God, He says that He is right now their God (:46). This could mean that even if God's people choose not to have Him as their God, yet He keeps His side of the covenant; He is their God. In this we see God's hopefulness for us, His earnest desire to have a relationship with His people.

Exo 29:46 They shall know that I am Yahweh their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them: I am Yahweh their God-

Often we read this two fold intention of God- to bring His people *out* from the world [Egypt], and then to do something positive with them. Our separation from the world isn't therefore negative; for 'holiness' means both separation *from* and separation *unto*.

EXODUS CHAPTER 30

Exo 30:1 You shall make an altar to burn incense on. You shall make it of acacia wood-

For "acacia", see on :5. The LXX has Ex 30:1-10 coming after Ex. 26:32, and this may well be correct. Man first had to bow his head to enter the court, referring to humility. Then there was accepting the principle of sacrifice at the altar, followed by baptism in the laver- and then entry to the holy place, where there was the incense altar [prayer- Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3,4], the table of shewbread [the breaking of bread] and candlestick [church life], shining light towards the entrance to the most holy place where God dwelt between the cherubim.

Exo 30:2 Its length shall be a cubit, and its breadth a cubit. It shall be square, and its height shall be two cubits. Its horns shall be of one piece with it-

GNB "18 inches long and 18 inches wide, and it is to be 36 inches high". Again we note the small scale of the tabernacle and its furniture. God doesn't need grandiose religious symbols.

Exo 30:3 You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top, its sides around it, and its horns; and you shall make a gold moulding around it-

The weak acacia wood was to be overlaid with gold. "Overlay" in Hebrew carries the idea of to be seen, to be looked at. This was how God looked at that weak acacia wood, as if it was the finest gold. This was an Old Testament anticipation of what the New Testament calls im-

puted righteousness; we the weak acacia wood, the thorn bush, are looked at as pure gold. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, and one outcome of love is to consider the beloved as far more glorious than they are.

Exo 30:4 You shall make two golden rings for it under its moulding; on its two ribs, on its two sides you shall make them; and they shall be for places for poles with which to bear it-

The mention of a "crown" or "moulding of gold" is as if it represented a person, a King- the Lord Jesus. The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God.

Exo 30:5 You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold-

"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the

desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold.

Exo 30:6 You shall put it before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with you-

The incense, representing prayer (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3,4), would have come through to the most holy place, where Yahweh dwelt between the cherubim. This symbolized how prayer enters into heaven itself, into the very presence of God. Passing through the veil suggests the role of the Lord Jesus in our prayers (Heb. 10:20).

The principles God will use in the final judgment are manifested now, and have been reflected in His previous judgments of men. In our very personal lives, there are foretastes of that future judgment. When we receive forgiveness, this gives a knowledge of the future salvation (Lk. 1:77). Indeed, whenever man meets with God, whenever His ways have contact with those of men (which so often happens in the life of the believer) there is a judgment experience; His holiness, His demands, the imperatives which lay within His very being, reveal quite naturally our failures. The Hebrew word used to describe God's 'meeting' with men is also used in the senses of 'summoning' or gathering to a trial (Ex. 30:6). And positively, the *degree to which* we have responded to Him will be revealed by our meeting with Him. Men fell down before Him when they realized who He was (Lk. 8:28,47), just as they will at judgment day (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10; Rev. 4:10).

Exo 30:7 Aaron shall burn incense of sweet spices on it every morning. When he tends the lamps, he shall burn it-

The lambs were to be offered morning and evening (Ex. 29:39), and along with them, incense was to be offered and the lamps tended. The incense spoke of prayer being offered to God, and the lamp of His Spirit still

burning- all because of the offering of the Passover lamb which the daily lamb offerings alluded to (see on Ex. 29:38,39). Although our lamps need tending, the fire of the Spirit is to burn within us constantly. The Lord's parable about all the faithful 'tending their lamps' at the last day (Mt. 25:7) suggests that we are all priests, even High Priests [for the command to tend the lamps is given here to Aaron specifically].

Exo 30:8 When Aaron lights the lamps at evening, he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before Yahweh throughout your generations-

The continual burning of incense, night and day, was a reminder that prayer (cp. incense, Rev. 8:3,4) was a way of life, not only specific statements. David's references to making constant prayer (e.g. Ps. 88:1) may allude to the constant rising up of the incense. We cannot be literally praying all the time, but our basic spirit of life can rise up as a prayer to God constantly. Our lives are, in a sense, our prayer.

Exo 30:9 You shall offer no strange incense on it, nor burnt offering, nor meal offering; and you shall pour no drink offering on it-

The Law seems to have foreseen the difference between real and apparent prayer by warning that the true incense was to be burnt [representing prayer], but not any other kind of incense, or incense comprised of other kinds of ingredients. .

Exo 30:10 Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once in the year: with the blood of the sin offering of atone-

ment once in the year he shall make atonement for it throughout your generations. It is most holy to Yahweh-

"Atonement *for* it" can as well be "atonement *upon* it". The preposition *al* is of very wide meaning, but generally means "upon", "over" or "above". *Al* an altar is usually rendered "upon the altar", multiple times (e.g. Ex. 29:20). The idea is not that the altar was somehow sinful. Rather was there the need to regularly demonstrate the connection between the blood and prayer; for that blood of itself was meaningful to God only because it spoke to Him of the future blood of His Son (Heb. 10:4).

Exo 30:11 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The Mosaic Law required a half shekel temple tax, but He reduced it- such was His desire to work with them and have them as His people (Ex. 30:11-16 cp. Neh. 10:32,33). But still they feared, still they didn't fully believe, still they saw the establishment of God's Kingdom as only their concern insofar as it coincided with their self-interest; and so the promised establishment of the Messianic Kingdom just didn't come. We note from Mt. 17:24 how this tax was abused into an annual tax to be paid to the temple, regardless of whether a census was taken or not.

Exo 30:12 When you take a census of the children of Israel, according to those who are numbered among them, then each man shall give a ransom for himself to Yahweh, when you number them; that there be no plague among them when you number them-

Having bowed the head in humility in order to get through the low gate into the court, sacrifice at the altar

was the first thing the Israelite who approached God had to grasp. And so here too, the simple lesson is taught that to be numbered amongst God's people, one has to give. The prosperity Gospel could not be more wrong; we are here to give, not to receive. It was God who ransomed Israel from Egypt, but the people were to as it were give a ransom for themselves in response to that. Always, the grace of their salvation was to be the motivation for their generous living. Their giving was to be a remembrance of their deliverance (:16). The threat of plague was also allusive to the plagues upon Egypt; if they did not act as the ransomed redeemed, then they would be judged as Egypt.

Exo 30:13 They shall give this, everyone who passes over to those who are numbered: half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs); half a shekel for an offering to Yahweh-

The idea of being numbered by passing over implies they were a flock of sheep (Jer. 33:13). The census of Ex. 30:16 required each man of military age to pay a half shekel of silver. It was used for the silver sockets in the boards of the tabernacle etc. There were 600,000 men of military age who left Egypt (Ex. 12:37); if they each paid a half shekel, this would have been 300,000 shekels of silver. 3000 shekels make one talent, so this would have made 1000 talents of silver. Which is exactly the amount of silver mentioned in Ex. 38:27. However, there were actually 603,550 men (Ex. 38:26). And we wonder whether each man actually paid what was asked. We see here the way in which the Biblical record often

doesn't worry about literal exactitude, but presents an overall picture.

A half shekel was not a large amount of money, it was the money one might throw to a beggar (1 Sam. 2:36 s.w.). The point was that they were to accept the principle of giving in response to God's gift of redemption to them.

Exo 30:14 Everyone who passes over to those who are numbered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the offering to Yahweh-

The idea of passing over, from the group that had not yet been numbered to the group which had been, recalls the Passover 'passing over'; both of the Red Sea, and the Angel passing over the houses of Israel. And I explained on :12 that the motivation for this gift was that they had been redeemed from Egypt; so the allusion was appropriate. "Offering" in Ex. 30:13-15 is s.w. "heave offering". It could be that the small coin was to be symbolically given to God and then taken back. This is why both rich and poor were to 'give' the same amount (:15). It was an acceptance that there must be giving on some level, in response to God's gift. This is why the financial ability of the donors wasn't taken into account; and the coin was in any case very small value (see on :13).

Exo 30:15 The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when they give the offering of Yahweh, to make atonement for your souls-

Personal wealth was and is irrelevant when it comes to our spiritual position before God. The atonement for their souls came not from a monetary gift, but from the blood

which looked ahead to that of the Lord Jesus (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 10:4). But it had to be responded to, and one way of doing so was through making this donation. See on :14.

Exo 30:16 You shall take the atonement money from the children of Israel, and shall appoint it for the service of the Tent of Meeting that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before Yahweh, to make atonement for your souls-

As explained on :12, the redemption money was in memory of their own redemption from Egypt; in this sense it was a remembrance or "memorial". The immediate usage of the silver is given in Ex. 38:27,28- it was used for the silver sockets in the boards of the tabernacle etc. There were 600,000 men of military age who left Egypt (Ex. 12:37); if they each paid a half shekel, this would have been 300,000 shekels of silver. 3000 shekels make one talent, so this would have made 1000 talents of silver. Which is exactly the amount of silver mentioned in Ex. 38:27.

Exo 30:17 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

Man first had to bow his head to enter the court, referring to humility. Then there was accepting the principle of sacrifice at the altar, followed by baptism in the laver- and then entry to the holy place. We see here the vital step which baptism is.

Exo 30:18 You shall also make a basin of brass, and its base of brass, in which to wash. You shall put it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it-

This may represent the need for the washing of baptism in order to come to Christ, the altar (Heb. 13:10). This was required if they didn't want to die (:20). It is baptism which is the washing or "laver" of regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5). The fact we are to wash in this laver suggests that all baptized are all priests; we are a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). It is for us to take seriously the work of priestly service, it falls to all who are baptized; and we must therefore overcome the typical human tendency to leave such work to others.

Exo 30:19 Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in it-

The Lord alludes to this in Jn. 13:10. Again, as noted on :18, the implication is that all His people are priests, consecrated to priestly service by the act of baptism and the associated cleansing and regeneration.

Exo 30:20 When they go into the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water, that they not die; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to Yahweh-

All God's people are priests, in a sense (1 Pet. 2:5,9); the washing of baptism is an absolute necessity before we can be God's priestly people. To pass through this 'baptism' was in order to make an offering. And that is the next step after baptism- to devote our lives as living sacrifices, as both the offering and the priest (Rom. 12:1).

Exo 30:21 So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they not die; and it shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his descendants throughout their generations-

See on :19. There are many allusions to the language of priesthood in the New Testament, both as major statements and also in passing. The idea of baptism as a washing suggests that we afterwards enter into priestly service; we're not declared by baptism to be merely members of a denomination, hobby level theologians who now agree to a set of doctrines. We instead, in a very real sense, are cleansed and consecrated into the service of God, ministering to His people, doing His work.

"He that is washed needs only to wash his feet" (Jn. 13:10) was surely suggesting that all baptized believers ("washed") were like the priests, who firstly washed their bodies and then their hands and feet, before entering on service (Ex. 30:21). Even the elderly brothers and sisters in Crete who were to be guided by specially appointed elders were to be encouraged to behave "as those who are engaged in sacred service" (Tit. 2:3, M.R. Vincent *Word Studies In The N.T.*).

Exo 30:22 Moreover Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

Moses personally was to make this special oil, although in reality Bezaleel did it (Ez. 37:29).

Exo 30:23 Also take fine spices: of liquid myrrh, five hundred shekels-

Literally, "myrrh of freedom" or "freely flowing myrrh". The idea was that the myrrh was to be taken from the shrub not by extraction, but the higher quality myrrh which exuded naturally from it. We may well enquire where they would have found these kinds of shrubs in the desert. Perhaps we have here an example of where the law given was not all intended for immediate obedience

there in the desert. Or perhaps they had taken some of these spices with them from Egypt; but the free flowing myrrh means it was taken directly from a living shrub in the ground, and so that explanation doesn't fully fit.

And of fragrant cinnamon half as much, even two hundred and fifty-

Cinnamon was quite rare, and unknown in Egypt. It was made from the inner bark of a tree similar to the laurel. They would have only found this in Palestine. Again, we get the impression that the full obedience to these commandments was only intended once they had entered the land.

And of fragrant cane, two hundred and fifty-

This "cane" was a specific product of Judah (Ez. 27:17), so again it seems that the Divine intention was that soon Israel would be in the land and able to make this kind of oil from the spices there.

Exo 30:24 and of cassia five hundred, after the shekel of the sanctuary; and a hin of olive oil-

Cassia was a product of the inner bark of the cinnamon tree; see on :23. A hin is just over one gallon. The amount of anointing oil produced was very small in order to anoint all the items mentioned, so the anointing was done just with a few drops; perhaps because of the difficulty in obtaining larger quantities of the spices required, or in order to focus attention on the significance of each drop of anointing. See on :31, where it could be that the oil was miraculously multiplied.

Exo 30:25 You shall make it a holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded after the art of the perfumer: it shall be a holy anointing oil-

The specific perfumer in view was Bezaleel (Ez. 37:29).

Exo 30:26 You shall use it to anoint the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the testimony-

We now read of the anointing of the tabernacle and all its component parts, and then the anointing of the priests. Anointing is really most appropriate to persons. "The Christ" is 'the anointed one', and so we are invited to see the entire tabernacle as pointing forward to a person, the Lord Jesus.

Exo 30:27 the table and all its articles, the lampstand and its accessories, the altar of incense-

There are now specific articles / utensils listed in the law as required for the table of shewbread. But clearly there were some, as they were anointed. We see again how the law of Moses was flexible and open to expansion or incomplete fulfilment. For it was not to prescribe a rigid way of life, but to inculcate a spirit of living.

Exo 30:28 the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin with its base-

AV correctly reads "his articles..." as in :27. The idea is that all of these components of the tabernacle system were to be seen as representing a person, the anointed ["Christ"] Lord Jesus.

Exo 30:29 You shall sanctify them, that they may be most holy. Whatever touches them shall be holy-

These inanimate items were not of themselves holy, as was thought to be the case in many pagan religions of the time. Their sanctification was granted to them by God, working through the rituals Moses was to perform. LXX "Everyone that touches them shall be hallowed" may not mean that whatever touched them was thereby made holy by touching. Rather the idea is that only sanctified priests were to touch the furniture. "Holy" is the same word as "sanctify" in :30, about the priests being made holy or sanctified Hag. 2:12 makes the point that true holiness cannot be passed on by merely touching.

Exo 30:30 You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me in the priest's office-

Any service of God therefore required being sanctified. The Lord had this theme much on His mind in His prayer of Jn. 17. He sanctified Himself that we might be sanctified (Jn. 17:19). The idea is that all sanctified by the cross are therefore prepared for ministry. We all therefore have a ministry. We are all called to it- not just some. We are sanctified by the Lord's death so that we might minister; and we do well to ask early on after our conversion "What is my ministry?"

Exo 30:31 You shall speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations-

The idea could be that the oil Moses made would somehow never run out, rather like the oil created by Elisha and Elijah. Just as the clothes of Aaron are assumed

to last permanently. I noted on :24 that the amount of anointing oil produced was very small in order to anoint all the items mentioned, so the anointing was either done just with a few drops, or it was miraculously multiplied- and preserved throughout the generations, just as Aaron's clothing was, and as the clothes and shoes of the wilderness generation lasted for 40 years. It is therefore not chance that later read in the Bible of oil being miraculously multiplied and extended in its function.

Exo 30:32 It shall not be poured on man's flesh, neither shall you make any like it, according to its composition: it is holy. It shall be holy to you-

"Holy to you" could mean that Moss alone was to make it and it would last for all generations; see on :31. It was to be poured upon the priests whilst they were clothed, and not come on their flesh. Or the idea may be that only the priests, the sons of Aaron, were to be sanctified with it- and not, as Jeroboam did, people from other tribes.

Exo 30:33 Whoever compounds any like it, or whoever puts any of it on a stranger, he shall be cut off from his people'-

The "it" may refer specifically to that oil made by Moses; see on :31. The idea may be that the gift of the Spirit, for we too are anointed to service if we are in Christ the anointed one (2 Cor. 1:21), will not come upon those who are not sanctified in Christ and washed in the laver of regeneration (cp. baptism). Birth of water is

required for the birth of the Spirit (Jn. 3:3-5). For "cut off", see on :38.

Exo 30:34 Yahweh said to Moses, Take to yourself sweet spices, gum resin, and onycha, and galbanum; sweet spices with pure frankincense: there shall be an equal weight of each-

These spices would have been difficult to find in the wilderness, because they were gum from specific trees which didn't grow in the wilderness; and this would confirm the suggestion on :31 that the oil made once by Moses through Bezaleel lasted, or was intended to, throughout the generations of the tabernacle system. **Note that many of these spices and ingredients are not native to Israel. They would have been taken from Egypt. And we wonder whether it was God's long term intention that His people should make this anointing oil. This is one of many hints that the law of Moses was largely intended for Israel in the wilderness, and the details of the various rituals were widely and locally interpreted over their history. Thus the Passover was celebrated at various times in their history, but not always strictly according to the initial specifications.**

Exo 30:35 and you shall make incense of it, a perfume after the art of the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy-

Incense is a symbol of prayer (Rev. 8:3,4). Whilst there is a place for instantaneous and emotional prayers, this doesn't mean that we should overlook the fact that another kind of prayer should be prayer that is carefully

prepared, just as the incense was. Our speech, Paul says, should be "seasoned with salt" (Col. 4:6). He's alluding here, perhaps with the idea that the way we speak generally should be in the same manner as we pray to God, like the incense.

Exo 30:36 and you shall beat some of it very small, and put some of it before the testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be to you most holy-

If incense is like prayer, this may refer to how we shouldn't be afraid nor ashamed to pray to God about the smallest things. Nothing is outside of His control, indeed, God is so often in the details.

God met with Israel over the ark in the most holy place (Ex. 25:22; 30:6; Num. 17:4). But they were never allowed there. And so He also "met" (s.w.) with Israel at the door of the tabernacle, and spoke with them there (Ex. 29:42,43; 30:36). But the word for "meet" is used in Am. 3:3, where God laments that Israel had not "met" with Him and therefore they could not walk further together. The idea of the "meeting" was that God's word might be revealed, so that the people could walk with Him in His ways. He was like a king, who came out of His throne room to meet with His people. It was an awesome invitation, to be able to meet with the God who only otherwise met with His people in the glory of the most holy place, over the ark. He as it were came out of that most holy place and met with them at the door of the tabernacle. But they weren't interested. Just as so many today.

Exo 30:37 The incense which you shall make, according to its composition you shall not make for yourselves: it shall be to you holy for Yahweh-

There was to be a clear distinction between the spiritual and the secular. Secular life was not to be passed off as spiritual life; and that is the abiding principle. It means that being a Christian is not a case of being a secular person, acting and smelling like them, but claiming that that secular life is in fact a life devoted to God.

Exo 30:38 Whoever shall make any like that, to smell of it, he shall be cut off from his people-

Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church ex-

communication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

EXODUS CHAPTER 31

Exo 31:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

Moses may well at this point have been wondering however he as an individual was going to achieve all this work. And his unspoken fear and question, as ours, was now addressed and answered.

Exo 31:2 Behold, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah-

To be called by name meant that this man had a special purpose intended for him ahead of time; "name" in Hebrew suggests a personality and character. But we too are called by name as Jeremiah was. There were good works intended for us to do, designed before the world was. But like Bezalel, we must accept the gift of God's Spirit in order to fulfil those intentions and potentials (Acts 15:18; Eph. 2:10).

Bezaleel means shelter of / for God, appropriate for a man who built His tent / tabernacle. This reinforces the idea that God prefers to dwell in a tent, and not in a physical brick building. David and Solomon willfully ignored this in their obsession with building a temple. It's possible (although see my commentary on 1 Chron. 2:18) that Bezaleel was little more than a child. For 1 Chron. 2:19,20 says that Caleb was the father of Hur. Caleb was only 40 when he first spied out the land (Josh. 14:7). "The son of..." is not a precise term in Hebrew and can simply mean a relative, but there is still the idea of a relative in a younger generation than the 'father'.

Bezaleel was a generation or two older than Bezaleel; and when Caleb was 40, Bezaleel made the tabernacle that same year. This would be typical of how God works through the weak and those considered inappropriate by men. He gave His Spirit to the young Bezaleel, who may have been only 12 years old, and through him built His dwelling place. We can be sure there would have been many older and experienced builders, who had worked for the Egyptian building projects, who would have been far more qualified in secular terms.

Exo 31:3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all kinds of workmanship-

As in Ex. 28:3, the wise were given wisdom, in keeping with God's principle of confirming people in the way in which they themselves choose to go. This is how God's Spirit also works today on human hearts. "That they *may* make..." (Ex. 28:3 AV) hints at the way in which God's Spirit is given, but people must still respond to it. Thus the Corinthians were given the Spirit (1 Cor. 1), but didn't use it; and so Paul couldn't speak to them as spiritual people (1 Cor. 3:1).

Wisdom and knowledge were what God created the world with (Prov. 3:19,20), so the idea may be that this tabernacle was a new creation.

Exo 31:4 to devise skilful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass-

The Divine commands about the tabernacle likewise allude to the ideas of the surrounding nations, and yet bring out significant differences. In the same way as the

Babylonians believed that the temple of Marduk in Babylon was a reflection of the Heavenly temple, so the tabernacle was also a reflection of the pattern of Yahweh's Heavenly temple. The Canaanites spoke of their god El as living in a tent- just as Yahweh dwelt in a tent. The Ugaritic epic of King Keret speaks of how "The gods proceed to their tents, the family of El to their tabernacles" (Tablet 2 D, 5, 31-33). El's tabernacle was thought to be constructed of boards- just as Yahweh's tabernacle was. Both had a veil, just as the Moslem shrine in Mecca has one. But there were significant differences. The Canaanite legends speak of the gods building their temples themselves; Cassuto points out that the very terms used about Bezaleel's skill and talent in building the tabernacle are used in Canaanite legends about the skill and talent of the gods in supposedly building their own temples. Perhaps the Exodus record so labours the point that Moses and the Israelites built Yahweh's tabernacle is in order to highlight the difference between the one true God and the pagan gods, who had to build their own tabernacles.

Exo 31:5 and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all kinds of workmanship-

The stones in the breastplate and shoulder pieces would have had to be of the same size, and yet the jewels given to Israel on leaving Egypt would have been of different sizes. They would have had to be cut, and also cut in order to reflect the light in an optimal way.

Exo 31:6 I, behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the

heart of all who are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded you-

What God did at creation, He can do at any time. When Moses "finished the work" of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:33), there is clear allusion to God 'finishing the work' of creation (Gen. 2:2). The whole phrase "Behold I have given you..." (Gen. 1:28) occurs later when the Priests are told what God has given them (Ex. 31:6; Lev. 6:10; Num. 18:8,21; Dt. 11:14).

The wise were made more wise- an idea we often encounter in the opening chapters of Proverbs. God confirms men and women in the way they wish to go, through the work of His Spirit; if they wish to do His work and build up His dwelling place, He will confirm them in their natural talents and give them new ones.

Exo 31:7 the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the testimony, the mercy seat that is on it, all the furniture of the Tent-

We are given the distinct impression again that the "mercy seat" was a separate, detachable part distinct from the ark. "Tent of meeting" is LXX "tabernacle of witness", and the NT seems to prefer this reading (Acts 7:44). God met with man in that He spoke His word of witness, as a King coming out of His throne room in the most holy place, to meet with and speak to His people. Our hearing of God's word is to this day a meeting with God.

Exo 31:8 the table and its vessels, the pure lampstand with all its vessels, the altar of incense-

GNB reads in the possible ellipsis: "the lampstand of pure gold".

Exo 31:9 the altar of burnt offering with all its vessels, the basin and its base-

"Base" is literally "foot", again presenting the inanimate features of the tabernacle in human language; because all of them looked ahead to the Lord Jesus.

Exo 31:10 the finely worked garments-

These appear different to the priestly garments which are described afterwards, so they may refer to coverings for the tabernacle furniture whilst it was on the move in the wilderness.

The holy garments for Aaron the priest—the garments of his sons to minister in the priest's office-

We note that these garments were specifically "for Aaron" when we might have expected a more generic statement about clothing for the High Priest. We have the sense that so many of these commandments were specifically for that time, and were not specific about how things were to be once the people were in the land. The law of Moses was not therefore intended as a rigid system for all time; because God is open and flexible, and always has possible new directions in view for His people. I discussed elsewhere (Ex. 30:31) the possibility that the set of clothes made for Aaron were intended to be miraculously preserved for later generations.

Exo 31:11 the anointing oil, and the incense of sweet spices for the holy place, according to all that I have commanded you they shall do-

Literally, 'the oil of Messiah.' There is the constant hint that these things were all pointing forward to Messiah.

Exo 31:12 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The following command about the Sabbath was perhaps inserted at this point to remind Israel that they were not to get so caught up in the work of making all these things that they thought they could skip Sabbath observance. We too are not to become so obsessed with working to obey Divine commandments that we fail to remember that we must "rest" in order to show our faith in grace rather than works. This ceasing from trust in their own works was because they were to reflect upon how it was God's grace and not their works which sanctified them (:13).

Exo 31:13 Speak also to the children of Israel, saying, 'Most certainly you shall keep my Sabbaths: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that you may know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies you-

The Sabbath was between God and Israel- not the Gentile world. It is therefore not required to be kept now that the body of God's people had been redefined under the new covenant.

Israel stood at Sinai and were told that if they were obedient, then they would be God's people. But then they were told that actually, God accepted them anyway as His people. And only *then* was the Law given to Moses- with the message that it was to be kept out of gratitude for what God had *already* done by grace in saving them just "simply so", because He loved them and had chosen their ancestors by grace (Dt. 4:34-40). Likewise it was *because* God sanctified Israel that they were to keep the Sabbath (Ex. 31:13,14; Dt. 5:15). It wasn't that

any human obedience made them holy- the laws were simply an opportunity to respond to the grace shown them. For God's salvation of them from Egypt, like ours from this world, was nothing but grace.

Exo 31:14 You shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people-

Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for

doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

Exo 31:15 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to Yahweh. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall surely be put to death-

This is not necessarily parallel to being cut off from the people; see on :14. In addition to that, Israel were to put to death those who were so addicted to works that they refused to keep the Sabbath. This was how earnestly God wished to impress upon them the need for salvation by grace rather than works. It was because God's people had been sanctified or made holy (:13) that they were to sanctify or set apart / make holy the seventh day for God's service. We are to respond to God's setting of us apart- by setting apart what we have for Him. That is the essential take away from this, even though we are no longer required to keep the Sabbath.

Exo 31:16 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant-

The Sabbath is described as a perpetual, eternal ordinance between God and His people (Ex. 31:16). Yet in the New Testament we read that the Old Covenant has been done away; and the Old Covenant clearly included the ten commandments (Dt. 4:13), one of which was concerning the Sabbath. For this reason the New Testament is at pains to explain that Sabbath keeping is not now required of God's people (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 14:1-3). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be "an everlasting statute unto you" (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood" (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but "the priesthood being changed (by Christ's work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). There was an "everlasting covenant" between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This "everlasting covenant" evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase "everlasting covenant" is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David's throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olam*, which is translated "eternal", "perpetual", "everlasting" in the Old Testament? James

Strong defines *olahm* as literally meaning “the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity”. It was God’s purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn’t grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of “practically eternity”. For all of us, the spectre of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God’s eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

Exo 31:17 It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed’-

How are we to understand the ‘language of limitation’ which Scripture abounds with- e.g. Gen. 2:2; Ex. 31:17; Dt. 32:20,27? God is almighty and doesn’t need refreshment. One explanation is that such language refers to God’s manifestation through His Angels, who aren’t almighty although they are sinless (Mt. 24:36). Another take on this is that as God worked creatively for

six days and then 'breathed in' on the seventh, the Hebrew *naphash* being a form of *nephesh*, to breathe / receive spirit / breath- so God's people were to see their workaday lives as actually creative. The curse of working in the sweat of their faces was thus partly ameliorated by the thought that their labour was in fact creative. And on the seventh day, they were to breathe in the things of the Spirit, in anticipation of the Kingdom which the day of rest symbolized, the end result of all truly creative labour (Heb. 4:9).

Exo 31:18 When He finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave to Moses the two tablets of the testimony, stone tablets, written with God's finger-

The commands to build the tabernacle are repeated in Exodus, and there is the record of Israel's golden calf apostasy set in the middle of them. Ex. 25:1-31:18 give the tabernacle building commands, then there's the golden calf incident, and then the commands are repeated in Ex. 35-40. Surely this was edited in this manner to give encouragement to the exiles- the commands to rebuild the temple had been given in detail in Ez. 40-48, but the exiles failed- and yet, the implication runs, God was still willing to work again with His people in the building of His sanctuary despite their failure. There is good internal reason to think that the Pentateuch likewise was re-written in places to bring out the relevance of Israel's past to those in captivity.

The tables themselves were made by God, and were written on both sides (Ex. 32:15,16). As they were small enough to be carried, we assume they contained the ten

commandments and not the rest of the laws given to Moses. They were the tables of the covenant, and so the letter of the law which was to give way to the spirit of the new covenant therefore includes the command about the Sabbath. For that was one of the ten commandments.

EXODUS CHAPTER 32

Exo 32:1 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain-

"Delayed" is more commonly translated 'to be ashamed'. They may have gotten the impression that Moses was ashamed of them, and he and Yahweh were now going to make a new people. The very opposite was to be the case. This is what God proposed, and it was only the selfless pleading of Moses which changed it.

The Lord's warnings about the unfaithful believers who misbehave because their Lord delays His coming is clearly based upon this (Mt. 24:48; 25:5). Moses' return from the mountain (cp. Heaven) is therefore understood by the Lord as a type of His second coming.

The people gathered themselves together to Aaron, and said to him, Come, make us gods, which shall go before us-

God had 'gone before' Israel through the Angel which was to lead them through the desert (s.w. Ex. 23:23). But as with all religious but not spiritual people, they wanted a visible leader. And so when Moses apparently disappeared in the mountain, they demanded that gods be made to "go before us". It was only by grace that God responded that despite their apostasy, He would still "go before you" through the Angel (Ex. 32:34; 33:14). Even the Gentile world had more faith than Israel in this; they believed that Yahweh "went before" His people in an Angel (Num. 14:14). But Israel themselves at the time of the golden calf didn't believe that.

Moses in his final speech therefore urges the people to believe that indeed the Angel was going before them (Dt. 1:30,33; 31:6,8).

For as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him-

This terrible apostasy was performed with the fire of God's glory and judgment burning above them (Dt. 9:15). Clearly enough, visible manifestation of God in miracles is not enough to inculcate faith. Pentecostalism has so misunderstood this. The people likewise were getting manna daily at this time. But still they wanted to make visible "gods" to lead them back to where their hearts were, Egypt. We note they never formally abrogated their connection to Yahweh, their apparent issue was with Moses. But he was God's representative.

Stephen in Acts 7 stresses the way in which Moses was rejected by Israel as a type of Christ. At age 40, Moses was "thrust away" by one of the Hebrews; and on the wilderness journey the Jews "thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Acts 7:27,35,39). This suggests that there was far more antagonism between Moses and Israel than we gather from the Old Testament record- after the pattern of Israel's treatment of Jesus. It would seem from Acts 7:39 that after the golden calf incident, the majority of Israel cold shouldered Moses. Once the point sank in that they were not going to enter the land, this feelings must have turned into bitter resentment. They were probably unaware of how Moses had been willing to offer his eternal destiny for their salvation; they would not have entered

into the intensity of Moses' prayers for their salvation. The record seems to place Moses and "the people" in juxtaposition around 100 times (e.g. Ex. 15:24; 17:2,3; 32:1 NIV; Num. 16:41 NIV; 20:2,3; 21:5). They accused Moses of being a cruel cult leader, bent on leading them out into the desert to kill them and steal their wealth from them (Num. 16:13,14)- when in fact Moses was delivering them from the house of bondage, and was willing to lay down his own salvation for theirs. The way Moses submerged his own pain is superb; both of their rejection of him and of God's rejection of him from entering the Kingdom. The style of Moses' writing in Num. 20:12-14 reveals this submerging of his own pain. He speaks of himself in the third person, omitting any personal reflection on his own feelings: "The Lord spake unto Moses... Because you believed me not... you shall not bring the congregation into the land... and Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom...". Likewise all the references to "the Lord spake unto Moses" (Lev. 1:1). Moses submerged his own personality in writing his books.

Exo 32:2 Aaron said to them, Take off the golden rings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them to me-

When Gideon received the golden earrings of the Ishmaelites (Jud. 8:24-27), his mind should have flown back to how golden earrings were turned into the golden calf (Ex. 32:2). He was potentially given the strength to resist the temptation to turn them into an idol. But

he must have blanked out that Biblical precedent in his heart; he ignored his spiritual potential.

Exo 32:3 All the people took off the golden rings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron-

Ps. 106:20 says that they changed or altered (Heb.) their glory into a mere ox. The glory of God was visible to them on Sinai at the time. God's glory was in His invisible leading of them through the Angel (:1). But they changed that into the visible and secular. They were not totally rejecting Yahweh, but making an ox / calf similar to one facet of the cherubim. This is classic apostasy, mixing truth with error.

Exo 32:4 He received what they handed him, and fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it a molten calf; and they said-

The mention of the tool and fashioning it is in order to point up the lie which Aaron later tells- that he put the gold in the fire, and out popped a golden calf.

These are your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt-

The human desire to believe in a god rather than a man is demonstrated in Israel's attitude to Moses. They complained about "this Moses, the *man* that brought us up out of the land of Egypt"; and therefore made the golden calf. Note in passing how they created *one* calf, but worshipped it as *gods* plural. They committed the trinity fallacy of many centuries later. They couldn't handle a saviour who was human, like them, and so they decided that a god had been their saviour, who existed as a plurality, gods, within a unity, i.e. the golden calf. I will

note on :18 that they were to praise the calf with "antiphonal singing", of the kind in Ex. 15:21 when they praised Yahweh for delivering them from Egypt. But it wasn't that they had totally abrogated Yahweh, just as we probably won't become atheists. But they worshipped idols, with all the associated immorality, in the name of Yahweh worship. And this is our abiding temptation, to mix the flesh and Spirit.

Exo 32:5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation, and said, Tomorrow shall be a feast to Yahweh-

As noted on :4, this was not a rejection of Yahweh in so many words, but rather a justification of idolatry in the name of Yahweh worship. We note the emphasis on what Aaron did. No wonder God wanted to slay him at this time (Dt. 9:20), and he was only saved by grace thanks to Moses' intercession.

Exo 32:6 They rose up early on the next day, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play-

It appears that Israel identified the golden calf with the Egyptian goddess Hathor. "The Egyptian goddess Hathor came in the form of a cow, a woman with a cow's head, or a woman with cows horns and / or cows ears. She bore several other titles including The Golden One and Mistress of Music. She was the patron of love, motherhood, drunkenness, fun, dance and music. The worship of Hathor degenerated into immorality and she is depicted in some scenes and statues as a sensual young woman. Hathor was the protector of travellers from

Egypt to various areas including Sinai". So Israel so quickly forgot the lesson so artlessly taught them – that the idols / demons of Egypt were of no power at all, seeing they had all been targetted by the plagues.

The following references to Hathor provide further insight; supporting references are to be found in my book "The Real Devil" section 4-2-3:

Hathor had several forms including, a cow, a women with a cow's head, or a woman with cows horns and or ears.

Hathor was also known as 'The Golden One'

Hathor was the protector of travellers from Egypt to various areas including Sinai

Patron of drunkenness

Hathor had the title 'Mistress of Music'

The worship of Hathor included playing on all kinds of musical instruments together with dancing

The worship of Hathor was for the joy and pleasure of those who took part

Hathor is also the goddess of love

The worship of Hathor degenerated into immorality.

Exo 32:7 Yahweh spoke to Moses, Go, get down; for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves!-

"Themselves" is added to the text. They had "corrupted" not just themselves, but their understanding of Yahweh. As explained on :4-6, they were worshipping an idol in the name of Yahweh worship. They had corrupted or turned the glory of God into the form of an ox

which eats grass (Ps. 106:20). And this is the abiding temptation for us all. "Corrupted" is the word used about the corruption of the people which resulted in the flood (Gen. 6:11-13,17). We are therefore to expect a "flood" of destruction. But thanks to grace and Moses' intercession, this didn't come. But it is the same word used of the threatened destruction of everyone in Sodom, which Abraham's intercession avoided (s.w. Gen. 18:28,31). That incident surely motivated Moses to rise up to the same possibility of dialogue with God in order to change His intended purpose. We too are to be motivated by Biblical examples of intercession. There is a gap between God's statement of judgment, and His carrying it out. And in that gap, we can ask God to change His intended purpose of judgment; and He is willing to. Understanding God this way gives such intensity and significance to our prayers and intercession.

"Corrupted" is s.w. "destroyed" or "perish". All judgment is finally self inflicted. Sin is its own judgment; hence the Hebrew word for "corruption" also means "destruction", for moral corruption is its own destruction. God Himself does judge, but always prefers men to judge themselves.

Exo 32:8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them-

As explained on Ex. 32:4-6, the people considered that their idolatry was a form of Yahweh worship. But Yahweh makes it clear that it was in fact a rejection of Him.

They have made themselves a molten calf-

"Molten" is literally 'covered'. They had presumably made the calf of the common acacia wood, and covered it with gold- just as the tabernacle furniture was to be constructed in a similar way. Again we see that they were mixing Yahweh worship with idolatry.

And have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt'

The calf was likely an imitation of the Egyptian calf god Apis, despite the fact the plagues had targetted the gods of Egypt and shown them to be nothing. They mixed the worship of Yahweh with that of idols, and this is the abiding temptation for God's people.

Exo 32:9 Yahweh said to Moses, I have seen these people, and behold, they are a stiff-necked people-

Pharaoh was condemned and Egypt overthrown because of his hard heart- but the very word is used to describe the hardness of Israel's heart at the time (Ex. 32:9; 33:3-5; 34:9). Israel were really no better than Egypt- just as Egypt was plagued "so that they could not drink the water" (Ex. 7:24), so we find Israel in the same situation right after leaving Egypt (Ex. 15:23). As the Egyptians were stripped of their jewellery, so Israel stripped themselves of it before the golden calf (Ex. 12:36; 33:6). Although the people were "stiff-necked", refusing to bow their necks in obedience, and thereby liable to destruction if God was amongst them (Ex. 32:9; 33:3,15), God was willing to give this stiff-necked people a place in God's Kingdom (Dt. 9:6). And so although God had said that He would not go in the midst of a stiff-necked

people, yet Moses asks Him to do so (Ex. 34:9)- for He senses God's desire to save them by grace despite their hardened disobedience. We contrast this with the God who demands respect, the God who slew Uzzah and insists upon loyalty to Him.

Exo 32:10 Now therefore leave Me alone-

This seems to suggest that God knew both Himself and Moses well enough to know that Moses could well persuade Him to change His mind, against His ideal intention. And Moses doesn't leave God alone, and does persuade Him. We marvel at the humility and humanity of God, and His extreme openness to human intercession.

Think of God's bitter disappointment with Israel when He invites Moses into the mount as their representative, in order to enter into further covenant with them. Down below, they started worshipping other gods. When God says to Moses "Leave me alone..." (Ex. 32:10), He may well refer to the desire for isolation / solitude which a person in extreme grief desires. And of course we are aware of how Moses reasons with God, and asks God to consider His own future and how it might turn out, and how that can be avoided. And God takes Moses seriously, with integrity, and appears to even acquiesce to his arguments. It's amazing. This God is our God.

That My wrath may burn hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of you a great nation-

Note how God's anger "burned hot" and so did that of Moses. But Moses asks God not to wax hot in anger

(Ex. 32:10,11,19). What are we to make of this? Surely, positively, Moses was totally in tune with the feelings of God. And yet he does himself what he asks God not to do.

There is almost a pattern with God- to devise His purpose, and then in the 'gap' until its fulfillment, be open to the persuasion of His covenant people to change or amend those plans. This could be what Am. 3:7 is speaking of: "Surely the Lord God does nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets". It's as if He reveals His plans to them so that they can then comment upon them in prayer. And maybe this is why God tells Jeremiah not to pray to Him to change His stated plans against Israel (Jer. 7:16 cp. Jer. 11:14; 14:11; 15:1), and why He asks Moses to 'leave Me alone' and not try to persuade Him to change His mind (Ex. 32:10). He didn't want, in these cases, His stated plans to be interrupted by the appeals of His people to change them. Interestingly, in both these examples, Moses and Jeremiah know God well enough, the relationship is intimate enough, for them to still speak with Him- and change His mind. Those who've prayed to God in cases of terminal illness [and countless other situations] will have sensed this 'battle', this 'struggle' almost, between God and His friends, His covenant people, and the element of 'persuasion' which there is going on both ways in the dialogue between God and ourselves. The simple fact that God really can change- there are over 40 references to His 'repentance' in Scripture- is vital to un-

derstand- for this is the basis of the prayer that changes things, that as it were wrestles with God.

Exo 32:11 Moses begged Yahweh his God, and said, Yahweh, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, that you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?-

See on Ex. 34:9; 33:1. If God's wrath burns hot against people, it means death for them (s.w. Ex. 22:24; Num. 11:1,33; 22:22; 25:3; Dt. 6:15; 31:17). But Moses averted this at the time of Ex. 32:10 by his intercession. He does so because God's wrath had burned hot against him personally (Ex. 4:14 s.w.), but he had been saved from death by grace. And so he reflects this in appealing for the salvation of others, against whom God's wrath burned hot (Ex. 32:10.11). But Moses at the end of his life warns them not to make God's wrath burn hot against them again- because he will not be around to intercede for them (Dt. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17).

When God told Moses to leave Him alone to destroy them, and go back down to the people immediately (Dt. 9:12), Moses stayed on to plead with God not to destroy them. And God listened (Ex. 32:7-14). He repented of the evil He had thought to do. He changed His mind, because Moses stayed on. There is an element of striving with God in prayer, knowing that His mind is open to change (Rom. 15:30). This is what stimulates me to what intensity in prayer I can muster. That God is open to hearing and even changing His holy mind about something. Such is His sensitivity to us. Such is His love, that God changing His mind becomes really

feasible as a concept. And such is the scary implication of the total freewill which the Father has afforded us. This is why God could reason with Moses as a man speaks to his friend and vice versa. It was a dynamic, two way relationship in thought and prayer and being. Jacob likewise changed God's intentions with him in his night of wrestling in prayer with the Angel; and Jacob is a symbol of us all. He became Israel, he who struggles with God. And this is a key feature of all those who comprise the true Israel.

The manifestation of God in a person leads to a mutuality between them. There's a nice example of the mutuality between God and Moses in Ex. 33:1, where God says that Moses brought up Israel out of Egypt; but in Ex. 32:11, Moses says [as frequently] that God brought Israel out of Egypt. And we too can experience this mutuality in relationship with the Father. Through Moses allowing himself to become part of God manifestation, he found a confidence to achieve that which felt impossible to him. He asks God: "Who am I...?" to do the great things God required... and the answer was "I will be who I will be" (Ex. 3:11-13). Moses' sense of inadequacy was met by the principle of God's manifestation in him; and so will ours be, if we participate in it.

Exo 32:12 Why should the Egyptians speak, saying-

Moses seems to have shared the primitive idea that a god rose or fell according to the fortunes of his worshippers, when he asks God to not cut off Israel in case the nations mock Yahweh. Yahweh could have responded that this was far too primitive and limited a view. But

no, He apparently listens to Moses and goes along with his request!

'He brought them forth for evil, to kill them in the mountains-

The mountains around Sinai.

*And to consume them from the surface of the earth?'
Turn from Your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against
Your people-*

This turning of Yahweh from His wrath was inspirational even generations later, for the Ninevites repeat this phrase and cling onto it in hope (Jonah 3:9 s.w.). David and the restoration Psalmists likewise allude to it, and ask for it to be repeated in their context (s.w. Ps. 85:3,4), and so can we be likewise inspired.

*Exo 32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel,
Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and
said to them, 'I will multiply your seed as the stars of the
sky, and all this land that I have spoken of I will give to
your seed, and they shall inherit it forever'-*

God could have given legitimate answers to each of Moses' objections; for there were indeed times when He did not turn from the fierceness of His wrath (:12)- such as Jer. 4:8; 2 Kings 23:26. He intended to fulfil the promises to Abraham, but through Moses. But such is His sensitivity and pure pity that He accepted Moses' pleas.

*Exo 32:14 Yahweh changed His mind of the evil
which He said He would do to His people-*

Due to Moses' prayer, "the Lord repented of the evil which he had said he would do unto his people" (Ex.

32:14 RV). Yet these are the very words of Jer. 18:8- if a *nation* repents, then God will repent. But in this case, God accepted the singular prayer of Moses. This opens up the question of the degree to which our spiritual effort can affect the eternal outcomes for third parties (see on Mk. 2:5).

The LXX uses the word translated "propitiation" in the NT with reference to how God forgave / propitiated for Israel's sins for His Name's sake (Ex. 32:14; Ps. 79:9). That propitiation was only for the sake of the Lord's future death, which would be the propitiation God ultimately accepted. Having no past or future with Him, Yahweh could act as if His Son's death had already occurred. But that death and forgiveness for "His name's sake" were one and the same thing. The Son's death was the expression of the Father's Name.

We are told that God "hearkened" to Moses' prayers for them (Dt. 9:19; 10:10). He prayed for them with an intensity they didn't appreciate, he prayed for *and gained* their forgiveness before they had even repented, he pleaded *successfully* for God to relent from His plans to punish them, even before they knew that God had conceived such plans (Ex. 32:10,14; 33:17 etc.). The fact we will, at the end, be forgiven of some sins without specifically repenting of them (as David was in Ps. 19:12) ought to instill a true humility in us. This kind of thing is in some ways a contradiction of God's principles that personal repentance is required for forgiveness, and that our own effort is required if we are to find accept-

ability with Him. Of course ultimately these things are still true, and were true with respect to Israel.

Exo 32:15 Moses turned, and went down from the mountain, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand; tablets that were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other they were written-

Dt. 9:15 says that Moses carried one in each hand. They were likely very small, which is why they were written on both sides. There is double emphasis upon this, perhaps because this was unheard of on Egyptian tablets.

Exo 32:16 The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tables-

This seems to lead up to the tragedy of Moses breaking them. They were the most exquisite artwork, God's own handwriting. This was how intimately He was engaged with the covenant He offered Israel, and the tragedy of it being broken. The Hebrew for "engraved" is *haruth*, the same consonants as *heruth*, freedom / liberty. This connection between law and freedom is played on in James 1:25; 2:12. The law, therefore, is not a leash, a chore to be performed, but as David often observes, God's law is the way to run free. Divine law is the way to help man find his true identity and spiritually blossom. This of course is the opposite to human law, which seeks to constrain and 'keep the loonies on the path'. A comparison of God's law with other legal codes of the time, such as the laws of Hammurabi, reveals how God seeks to value the human person. His law was the same for all, unlike the contemporary human laws which excused the higher classes from obedience. Human life always

trumped material issues; the death penalty was used very sparingly in God's laws. And above all, the Divine laws are always positioned in relation to the fact that "I am Yahweh your God". Obedience was part of a personal covenant relationship with God, and an act of gratitude for His personal salvation. There is constant connection between law and covenant relationship; hence Hos. 8:1 "they have broken My covenant, and rebelled against My law". Related to this is the constant repetition that the law was given by God, and "You shall be holy, for I am holy"- and not arrived at from human consultation and development of legal tradition. This is why God's law begins with the statement "I am the Yahweh your God" (Ex. 20:2). Thus the Sabbath rest was because God had rested on the seventh day; and the ten "He said..." statements of the Genesis creation can be connected with the ten commandments, which were aimed at a new spiritual creation of people.

Exo 32:17 When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, There is the noise of war in the camp-

It has been noted that the people must have been camped in the plain near Sinai known as Er-Raheh, which was not visible from the peak of Sinai known as Jebel Musa. The path up the mountain to that point would have gone around the mountain, rather than straight up from the plain. This explains why they first heard rather than saw what was going on, and is another internal evidence for Biblical inspiration.

This incident could be read as an example of Joshua's genuine naivety- thinking that Israel were far stronger than they were. He mistook the sound of their idolatrous partying for the sound of a battle; and Moses almost rebukes him for his naivety. He allowed the leaders of Israel to lead him into wrong decisions about the initial attack on Ai, and also into being deceived by the Gibeonites. And yet as a younger man, he had boldly stood up to the peer pressure of the princes of Israel in faithfully declaring that Israel could and should go up into Canaan; when the other princes must have put huge pressure upon him to agree with them. He is described as maintaining "another spirit" to theirs (Num. 14:24). The resolution of youth seems to have been somewhat lost as he grew older. The character presentation of Joshua is absolutely psychologically credible.

Exo 32:18 He said, It isn't the voice of those who shout for victory, neither is it the voice of those who cry for being overcome-

The Lord alludes to this: "You shall weep and lament, but the (Jewish) world shall rejoice" (Jn. 16:20). Israel rejoiced in the works of their own hands (Acts 7:41), the golden calf, while Moses was absent- cp. Christ's absence in the grave, with the Jews rejoicing and the disciples lamenting. In another sense, the return of Moses from the mountain may look ahead to Christ's return from Heaven- to find the majority of the new Israel apostate, although thinking they are being especially obedient to Yahweh (Ex. 32:5). The peak of selfless love for Israel which Moses showed at this time therefore

points forward to the zeal of Christ for our forgiveness and salvation at his return (Ex. 32:32). Moses at his finest hour of intercession and willing self sacrifice thus typifies Christ at his return. And after the golden calf incident, Israel are encouraged to enter the Kingdom (Ex. 33:1)- as at the second coming.

But the noise of those who sing that I hear-

The Hebrew implies "antiphonal singing", of the kind in Ex. 15:21, and s.w. Ps. 88:1. This is a classic case of mixing the flesh and the spirit; for they were worshipping the golden calf as a form of Yahweh worship, praising the golden calf for their deliverance from Egypt just as they had praised Yahweh for this in Ex. 15:21.

Exo 32:19 It happened, as soon as he came near to the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger grew hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mountain-

His anger growing hot was exactly the feeling of God. But unlike God, he immediately broke the symbols of the covenant with Israel. Again, God is revealed as more gracious and patient than man. As Moses had pleaded with Yahweh not to be so angry, so Aaron was to do so with the furiously angry Moses. Aaron in all his weakness therefore becomes as Moses, who was also weak before God's presence.

Exo 32:20 He took the calf which they had made-

This is emphasized. Aaron's claim it just popped out of the fire was a lie (:24).

And burnt it with fire, ground it to powder, and scattered it on the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it-

They were forced to drink / eat dust, just as Adam had to; for he was dust and had to eat the fruit of the dust in punishment. His sin was the essence of every man's sin, including Israel's at this time. The reference to their being made naked (:25) is another allusion to Adam. Israel had been an unfaithful wife to Yahweh, and so they were punished as the woman tested for adultery was (Num. 5:24). Dt. 9:21 says that "grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust". As gold is so heavy, this would be necessary for it to float on the surface on the water.

Exo 32:21 Moses said to Aaron, What did these people do to you, that you have brought a great sin on them?-

Aaron's excuse was pathetic and untruthful, and Moses doesn't even engage with it. There are times when we too are wise not to engage with evident untruth and self justification, but to cut to the essence of the situation. It was only thanks to Moses' intercession for Aaron that Aaron's life was spared at this point (Dt. 9:20). We see here how intercession even for the impenitent can be effective (for Aaron in Ex. 32:24 was impenitent, claiming the calf had jumped out of the fire ready made). This has huge pastoral implications for our ministry and prayer life, recalling how for the sake of the faith of the friends, the Lord pronounced the paralyzed man forgiven (Mk. 2:5; also James 5:20).

"A great sin" is the phrase used of Jeroboam's golden calf, which was based upon this calf (2 Kings 17:21). Again, people can be made to sin by others- a sober reminder to watch our behaviour.

Exo 32:22 Aaron said, Don't let the anger of my lord grow hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil-

Aaron reasons with Moses, surely unconsciously, just as Moses had reasoned with God. And we have these situations in our lives too- where others beg us for mercy and understanding (even if not in so many words), just as we have asked God to show us. But the man who is so arrogant and insensitive to his own sins that he has never done this before God... will not be inclined to be merciful and understanding to those whose situations beg him to do likewise.

Dt. 9:20 must be given its full weight: "Yahweh was very angry with Aaron to destroy him, and I prayed for Aaron also at the same time". Aaron comes over in Ex. 32:22 as more worried about the wrath of Moses his brother than that of God: "Don't let the anger of my lord grow hot". And so it can easily be with us. We can forget God's feelings and worry only about our image with our family and brethren.

Exo 32:23 For they said to me, 'Make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him'-

Aaron quotes their words of :1 absolutely verbatim, careful to be truthful. But then in :24 he tells a pathetic lie. This is totally psychologically credible; that a man

prefaces a point blank lie with a careful and strict statement of truth. The Biblical records, unlike the histories of other nations at the time, have total credibility.

Exo 32:24 I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them take it off;' so they gave it to me; and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf-

The mention of the tool and fashioning of it in :4 is in order to point up the lie which Aaron later tells- that he put the gold in the fire, and out popped a golden calf.

The Jewish interpreters go to great lengths to rework the narrative here in order to justify Aaron and Israel, blaming the event on "Satan" rather than Israel. The targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel asks us to read Aaron's words as: "I cast it into the fire, and Satan entered into it, and it came out in the form of this calf!". But the Biblical record is clear that the sin was Aaron's fault, and Israel's (:21,22,31,35); he engraved the calf with a tool. There is no mention of any "Satan" figure. We see again how humans prefer to wriggle out of responsibility for sin by blaming their failure upon a cosmic "Satan" figure, of which the Bible says nothing- and indeed, deconstructs by placing the blame for sin squarely upon human beings and their hearts (:22).

Exo 32:25 When Moses saw that the people were naked, (for Aaron had made them naked, for a shame among their enemies)-

The Assyrians led Israel away into captivity [s.w. to make naked], "they discovered her nakedness" (Ez. 23:10), and yet in their sin Israel made themselves naked (2 Chron. 28:19 cp. Ex. 32:25; Gen. 3:10). The day of

Yahweh's judgment upon them through their invaders was only a reflection of their own self-condemnation. Eli's sons *made themselves* accursed, and were only therefore [and thereby] judged by God (1 Sam. 3:13 AVmg.).

They were forced to drink / eat dust (:20), just as Adam had to; for he was dust and had to eat the fruit of the dust in punishment. His sin was the essence of every man's sin, including Israel's at this time. The reference to their being made naked is another allusion to Adam.

Exo 32:26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp-

They appeared to have made a fence around themselves with gates in it (:27 "from gate to gate").

And said, Whoever is on Yahweh's side, come to me!-

Literally, "Who unto Yahweh?". The phrase is only used in Jer. 30:21, where we read that under the new covenant, this will be true of all God's people.

All the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him-

This doesn't have to mean that the Levites hadn't sinned in this, because these loyal Levites were asked to kill their own brothers and neighbours in their tribal encampment area (:27). But their motive may have been that they were loyal to Moses because he was of their tribe, and they could foresee that there was a rebellion against Moses as the people didn't want him as their leader. All human motivation is so sadly mixed.

Exo 32:27 He said to them, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'Every man put his sword on his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp,

and every man kill his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour'-

These loyal Levites were asked to kill their own brothers and neighbours in their tribal encampment area. So we are wrong to think that all the Levites were loyal to Moses and spurned the golden calf. Indeed it could be that those slain were the unfaithful amongst the tribe of Levi.

Exo 32:28 The sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men-

I suggested on :27 that these 3000 may have been the apostate amongst the tribe of Levi (Dt. 33:9).

There is "a remarkable correlation between the signs recorded in John, and the plagues Moses brought upon Egypt. There cannot be a complete match as the numbers are unequal, but the differing types of miraculous signs all find their counterpart in the plagues". The purpose of all these allusions to the time of Moses' return from Sinai was surely to make the following point: As Moses disappeared into Sinai to attain the old covenant, so Christ died for three days to attain the new covenant. The majority of Israel, egged on by their high priest, turned to apostacy. On Moses' return, only some of the Levites were faithful; they sacrificed all their natural relationships in order to defend the Faith (Dt. 33:9). Likewise, the majority of Israel turned to apostacy in the first century, mixing the desires of the flesh with their keeping of the Law of Moses, just as they did with the golden calf. The 'little of both' syndrome is one of our most

common enemies. Moses' return was like Christ's resurrection. The Levites represent the disciples who went on to become the teachers of Israel, a new priesthood. Those Levites represent us (1 Pet. 2:5), a minority who stand alone, both in the world and perhaps also among the covenant people, motivated by the word, yet like the disciples at the time of Christ's resurrection- rather unsure, struggling within their own faith, yet going on to be the teachers of the world.

Exo 32:29 Moses said, Consecrate yourselves today to Yahweh, yes, every man against his son, and against his brother; that He may bestow on you a blessing this day-

This could as well be: "You have consecrated yourselves today". They had slain their own Levitical relatives, even their own sons and brothers; encouraging us to see the 3000 they slew as actually a purge of the tribe of Levi. By this they had demonstrated their loyalty to Yahweh as being greater than what they felt towards their own families. And this was highly significant, in an age when family meant absolutely everything. And so having purged their tribe, they had consecrated themselves to Yahweh, and He therefore consecrated them to Himself as His special servants. Previously, the intention had been that all Israel would be a nation of priests. But now that had been adjusted, so that only a self-cleansed tribe would do that work.

Exo 32:30 It happened on the next day, that Moses said to the people, You have sinned a great sin. Now I will go up to Yahweh. Perhaps I shall make atonement for your sin-

See on Rom. 9:3; Dt. 1:37. Moses is called up into Sinai and speaks with God. While there, Israel turn away from God, and God wants to make Moses' family His people and reject Israel. But Moses argues with God against this, again showing his humility and his appreciation of God manifestation in Israel, and his earnest desire that God would save Israel. "He said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath". This was only months after his weak faith and reluctance to lead Israel out of Egypt. He says that he will "go up (and) make an atonement" (Ex. 32:30). And yet he knew the principle that atonement was impossible without shedding blood. Yet he goes further than that: "Blot me, I *pray thee* (he really wanted to do this) out of thy book" (Ex. 32:32) AV- i.e. the book of salvation (Ez. 13:9; Dan. 12:2; Lk. 10:20; Rev. 20:12). Moses is willing to give his physical life and also his eternal salvation so that Israel can enter the land. Surely he reached matchless heights of selflessness. And he begged Yahweh to accept this for 40 days and nights, fasting without food or water (Dt. 9:17; 10:10). It wasn't just a once off, emotional outburst of a moment.

To be blotted out of the book God had written may have been understood by Moses as asking for him to be excluded from an inheritance in the promised land; for later, a 'book' was written describing the various por-

tions (Josh. 18:9). The connection is made explicit in Ez. 13:9: "...neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel". To be blotted out of the book meant to not enter the land (surely Ezekiel is alluding to Moses' experience). If Israel were to be blotted out there and then in the wilderness, then Moses wanted to share this experience. God had just spoken of 'blotting out' Israel from before Him (Dt. 9:14), and making a nation of Moses; but now Moses is asking to share in their condemnation rather than experience salvation without them. This was the extent of his devotion. On the last day of his life, Moses reeled off the great speech of Deuteronomy, knowing full well that he was to die without entering the land. In Dt. 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 *was heard*- in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them to go ahead and enter the land- to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. On account of Moses' temporary rashness of speech, he was excluded; Moses didn't enter the land. And yet by this, his prayer was heard. He was temporarily blotted out of the book, so that they might enter the land. Moses' fleeting requests to enter the land must be read as a flagging from the height of devotion he reached, rather like the Lord's request to escape the cross in Gethsemane. But ultimately he did what he intended- he gave his place in the Kingdom / land so that they might enter [although of course he will be in the future Kingdom]. This is why Moses stress-

es on the last day of his life that he wouldn't enter the land *for Israel's sake* (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). He saw that his sin had been worked through, and the essential reason for him not entering was because of the offer he had made. It "went ill with him *for their sakes*" (Ps. 106:32). In all this, Moses was typifying the death of the Lord. Is. 53:8 describes His cross as being "cut off [Strong: 'excluded'] from the land of the living" (s.w. 'the congregation' - of Israel), for the transgression of His people. This is undoubtedly reference to the self-sacrificial exclusion of Moses from the land, that Israel might enter. The Lord died the death of a sinner, He chose like Moses to suffer affliction with us, that we might be saved. The intense prayer of Moses for Israel's salvation inspired David in prayer (Ps. 25:11 = Ex. 32:30,31).

Paul in 2 Tim. 2:24,25 makes a series of allusions to Moses, which climax in an invitation to pray like Moses for the salvation of others:

"The servant of the Lord [A very common title of Moses] must not strive [As Israel did with him (Num. 26:9)] but be gentle unto all [The spirit of Moses] apt to teach [As was Moses (Ex. 18:20; 24:12; Dt. 4:1,5,14; 6:1; 31:22)], patient [As was Moses], in meekness [Moses was the meekest man (Num. 12:3)] instructing those that oppose themselves [at the time of Aaron and Miriam's self-opposing rebellion] if God peradventure will give them repentance [i.e. forgiveness] ["Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30)]"- and he prayed 40 days and nights for it. And note too: 2 Tim. 2:19 = Num. 16:5,26; 2 Tim. 2:20 =

Num. 12:7; 2:21 = Num. 16:37; 2 Tim. 2:22 = Num. 12:2; 16:3; 2 Tim. 2:26 = Num. 16:33. This is quite something. The height of Moses' devotion for His people, the passion of his praying, shadowing as it did the matchless intercession and self-giving of the Lord, really is our example. It isn't just a height to be admired. It means that we will not half-heartedly ask our God to 'be with' brother x and sister y and the brethren in country z, as we lie half asleep in bed. This is a call to sustained, on our knees prayer and devotion to the salvation of others. For the Judaists, an appeal to be like Moses, to emulate him in teaching, was blasphemous; for they considered Moses at such a level that he could never be imitated. Yet Paul urges timid Timothy and all teachers to realistically be Moses to our audience.

"Perhaps I shall make atonement..." reflects how God's forgiveness and salvation can never be presumed upon; even if we are genuinely repentant. For the wages of sin has always been death (Rom. 6:23); we as sinners have no right to life. This is a theme stamped right across the Old Testament. Consider: "You have sinned a great sin. Now I will go up to Yahweh. Perhaps I shall make atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30). "Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the courts. It may be that Yahweh, the God of Armies, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (Am. 5:15). "Rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious... Who knows whether He will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him?" (Joel 2:13,14). "Let them turn each one from his evil way... Who knows

whether God will not turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we might not perish?" (Jonah 3:8,9). Possibly we could add Esther 4:14 to this list: "Who knows if you haven't come to the kingdom for such a time as this?". This is why Daniel's friends can reason: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods" (Dan. 3:17,18). They believed in Yahweh's salvation, but were quite prepared not to receive it. They knew that His ability to dramatically save them at that moment was not at all certain of fulfilment for them. The same words "is able" and "save" are used by Darius in Dan. 6:21 when he again expresses a doubt as to whether God is able to save in this case: "Was the God whom you served so regularly able to deliver you from the lions?". Against all this we must balance the fact that those in Christ have been given the "right" to be God's children (Jn. 1:12). But the bold confidence we have in the Lord Jesus must somehow never fail to be nuanced by an awareness of our total unworthiness and inability to presume upon God's forgiveness.

Exo 32:31 Moses returned to Yahweh, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made themselves gods of gold-

Moses was willing to give his physical life and also his eternal salvation so that Israel can enter the land. Surely he reached matchless heights of selflessness. And he begged Yahweh to accept this for 40 days and nights,

fasting without food or water (Dt. 9:17; 10:10). It wasn't just a once off, emotional outburst of a moment.

Exo 32:32 Yet now, if You will, forgive their sin- and if not, please blot me out of Your book which You have written-

It is simply fantastic that Moses could love those people so intensely, despite their aggression and indifference towards him. He was prepared to give his place in the Kingdom so that they might enter; he *prayed* God to accept his offer. He knew that atonement could only be by sacrifice of blood (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22; and see the similarity with Phinehas making an atonement for Israel's forgiveness through the slaying of Zimri and Cozbi in Num. 25:8,13); and yet he climbed the Mount with the intent of making atonement himself for Israel's sin (Ex. 32:30); he intended to give his life for them. And he didn't make such a promise in hot blood, as some men might. He made the statement, and then made the long climb to the top of the mount. He climbed that mountain (nearly a day's work), and at the top he made an even finer and altogether higher offer to the Angel: "If thou wilt forgive their sin... blot me, I pray thee (notice the earnestness of his desire) out of thy book" (Ex. 32:32 AV). And he begged Yahweh to accept this for 40 days and nights, fasting without food or water (Dt. 9:17; 10:10). It wasn't just a once off, emotional outburst of a moment. And during that climb, it seems he came to an even higher spiritual level; he was prepared not only to offer his physical life, but also his place in the Kingdom

(Ex. 32:32 cp. Ez. 13:9; Dan. 12:2; Lk. 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 20:12).

Now although hopefully we are not rejecting Christ as they did, the fact still stands that the love of Moses for Israel typifies the love of Christ towards us. The degree, the extent of Moses' love, is but a dim foretaste of the *degree* of the love of Christ for us. Now in this is something wonderful, something we really need to go away and meditate about. And the wonder of it all is that Israel did not realize the extent of Moses' love at the time. At the end of his life he recounts how God has threatened to destroy the people, and then "I turned and came down from the mount" (Dt. 9:15). He doesn't record his 40 days of pleading with the Father, and how he turned down the offer of having himself made into a great nation. In this we see tremendous spiritual culture, pointing forward to the Lord's own self-perception of His sacrifice.

We'll all be like Moses was at the end, in essence; we'll share his finest hours. Our names will not be blotted out of the book of life (Rev. 3:5), as Moses' wasn't (Ex. 32:32).

Moses was willing to sacrifice his place in the Kingdom for the sake of Israel, and this impressed Paul deeply. For he alludes to it often. "Neither count I my life dear unto myself" (Acts 20:24). "I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3). Paul is here rising up to imitate Moses at perhaps his finest hour—willing, at least in principle, to give up his eternal life for the

sake of Israel's salvation. The extent of Paul's love for natural Israel does not come out that strongly in the Acts and epistles; but this allusion to Moses says it all. The RVmg. renders Rom. 9:3: "I could pray...", more clearly alluding to Moses' prayer that the people might enter and he be rejected. Yet Paul perceived that God would not accept a substitute offering like that; and hence he says he *could* pray like this. In essence, he had risen to the same level. Likewise he wrote in 1 Thess. 2:8 RV that he was "well pleased [i.e. theoretically willing] to impart unto, you not the gospel of God only, but our own souls, because ye were dear unto us". He perceived the difference between mere imparting of the Gospel in preaching, and being willing to give ones' soul, ones salvation, because of a heart that bleeds for others. No wonder Paul was such a convincing preacher, with such love behind his words.

Exo 32:33 Yahweh said to Moses, Whoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book-

All substitutionary models of the atonement are here declared null and void. Moses saved the people by being their representative, and offering to not enter the land for their sakes, so that they might enter. And in a way this was accepted by God. God didn't accept Moses' offer to die as a *substitute* for Israel, for each must be judged for their own sins. But He did accept Moses as a *representative* of Israel and accepted his mediation for their salvation on this basis; just as He accepted the work of Christ on the same basis. Paul learnt the lesson when he says that he *could wish* himself condemned and Israel

saved (Rom. 9:1-3); but he recognized God didn't accept Moses' offer of dying for them as a substitute.

Exo 32:34 Now go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My angel shall go before you-

As explained on :1, they had disbelieved this. They wanted visible gods to "go before" them. They are again being bidden accept invisible Divine leadership rather than visible secular leadership. It is the struggle between religion and spirituality.

Ex. 33:11,12 show Moses talking to the LORD "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend"- i.e. in a relaxed, friendly way. Thus the identity of the 'LORD' is clearly an Angel. This Angel says in Ex. 33:20 that His face cannot be seen by any man, but His back parts may be seen by Moses. The fact He could be seen at all shows He was not God Himself. Perhaps we are hearing another Angel speak, more mighty than the one with whom Moses spoke face to face. Or the Angel with whom Moses spoke started to manifest God to a different degree. The 'LORD'- the Angel- then says, Ex. 33:14, "My presence shall go with you". This "presence" was another Angel, as Ex. 32:34 makes clear. This would suggest there were two Angels involved.

Nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin-

That God 'visits' or punishes sin is a fundamental part of God's Name (Ex. 34:7 s.w.). The question is when and how. Israel's sin of rejecting Yahweh for an idol (Ex. 32:34 s.w.) need not have been 'visited' or 'punished'-

had they repented. But there is no evidence that they did, neither in that immediate generation nor in subsequent ones. And so finally, God 'visited' His people's sins in the destructions at the hands of the Babylonians and Assyrians (s.w. Jer. 14:10; Hos. 8:13; 9:9).

Exo 32:35 Yahweh struck the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made-

The Biblical record highlights the sin of Aaron and the people; the Jewish literature excuses it by blaming it on Satan / "mastema". Time and again, the Jewish apocryphal literature wrongly sought to distance God from doing anything negative in human life. Gen. 22:1 clearly states that it was *God* who put Abraham to the test by asking him to kill his son Isaac; Jubilees retells the story with "Prince Mastema", the Satan figure, telling Abraham to do this (Jub. 17:15-18). Likewise Ex. 4:24 recounts how "the Lord", presumably as an Angel, met Moses and tried to kill him for not circumcising his son; but Jubilees again claims that Mastema / Satan did this (Jub. 48:1-3). Indeed, several times the Hebrew word *mastema* ['hostility, enmity'] occurs, it is in the context of urging Israel to see that *they* and their internal desires to sin are the true *mastema*. Hos. 9:7 is an example: "Because your sins are so many and your hostility [*mastema*] so great".

EXODUS CHAPTER 33

Exo 33:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, Depart, go up from here, you and the people that you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your seed'-

"Go up... but I will not go up in the midst of you" (:3) was what triggered Moses' desire for God to change and instead come with him personally. He hankers for some physical manifestation of God to himself, in order to assure him that God indeed was going to empower him for the work as promised. God promised to send an Angel before them to lead them (:2), but Moses feels this isn't enough- he wants Yahweh to go "with me". He starts to feel the need to even see Yahweh's face and to at least have some amazing revelation of Divine glory. He will be shown that this is unnecessary, as the abiding presence and glory of God isn't so much anything physical, but the experience of God's grace and salvation inherent in His very Name. That's a brief outline of what's going on here in Ex. 33,34.

This is God showing sensitivity and recognition of Moses' prayer in Ex. 32:13 "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them...". God could have given legitimate answers to each of Moses' objections; for He intended to fulfil the promises to Abraham, but through

Moses. But such is His sensitivity and pure pity that He accepted Moses' pleas.

The manifestation of God in a person leads to a mutuality between them. There's a nice example of the mutuality between God and Moses here, where God says that *Moses* brought up Israel out of Egypt; but in Ex. 32:11, Moses says [as frequently] that *God* brought Israel out of Egypt. And we too can experience this mutuality in relationship with the Father.

Exo 33:2 I will send an angel before you; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite-

LXX "I will send at the same time my angel before thy face" implies that as Moses led the people onward from Sinai, so the Angel would move in to Canaan to drive out the tribes. But this potential didn't happen. The people were to wander 40 years, and the tribes weren't driven out before their arrival. God instead amended His purpose to drive them out slowly, to allow the people battle experience. We see how God is constantly amending His purpose as He ever seeks to take into account human responses.

There are different levels of fellowship between men and God. Thus God's original intention was that His presence in the Angel should go up to Canaan in the midst of Israel; but because of their weakness, He went in front of them, somewhat separate from them. Likewise the glory of God progressively distanced itself from the temple and people of God in Ezekiel's time.

God's argument is that "I will send My Angel to go with you as (:3) I Myself will not go with you". His intention had been to personally go with them but they clearly didn't want that intimacy. Moses' later request to himself see God's face (:20) was not therefore out of mere curiosity. He figured that if he at least could see God Himself, then this would be a kind of compromise position between God Himself going with them [the initial intended position] and 'just' His Angel going with them. He felt that his intimacy with God would lead to the peoples' salvation; just as is the case with the Lord.

Exo 33:3 to a land flowing with milk and honey-

The promised land was to flow with milk and honey to those who kept covenant. And yet Saul later precluded the people from experiencing the blessings of the covenant by petty legalism and a desire for personal control. The people were obedient to his word, but then totally disobeyed Yahweh's command about not eating blood as a result of it (1 Sam. 14:25,33).

For I will not go up in the midst of you, for you are a stiff-necked people, lest I consume you in the way-

Moses seems to have pleaded with the Angel to change His stated purpose of not going up with the children of Israel through reminding the Angel of the mockery this would bring Him into among the nations around. Thus Ex. 34:9 shows Moses pleading for this "O LORD, let my Lord (the Angel) I pray thee, go amongst us" after the clear statement in Ex. 33:3 "I will not go up in the midst of thee". So let us not be afraid to ask God

to change what seems like His purpose in our lives, no matter how hard it seems, if we truly feel that another way would give Him more glory. Moses would not have tried if he did not think success in that prayer was possible. But he not only tried, he succeeded.

It was because of the physical presence of the Angel in the tabernacle that when the Angel located Himself outside the camp, the tabernacle was set up again in that same location outside the camp- "I will not go up in the midst of thee (said the angel). . . and Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp. . . as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended (the Angel). . . and the Lord spake unto Moses face to face" (Ex. 33:3,7,9,11). In passing, note that it was because Joshua lived in this tent (he "departed not out of the tabernacle") that he is said in Ps. 91 to have made his habitation with the Angel, who therefore protected him in the subsequent wanderings. The Septuagint tells us that Moses "pitched his own tent" and called it the tabernacle (Ex. 33:7 LXX); similarly, "the tent" may be a synonym for Moses' own tent (see Ex. 18:7). Does this mean that the mighty Angel of Israel was Moses' personal guardian, seeing that "the Angel of the Lord encampeth (tent language again) around about them that fear Him" (Ps. 34:7)? See on Ps. 78:60

Exo 33:4 When the people heard this evil news, they mourned; and no one put on his jewellery-

LXX "mourned in mourning apparel". They clearly had plenty of jewellery, taken from Egypt; they had given some of it to make the golden calf, and would respond

generously to the appeal for precious metals and stones in order to build the tabernacle. They clearly liked wearing their expensive Egyptian jewellery, and much of it would have had pagan associations.

This removal of jewellery is because of the command to do so in :5. For a husband to ask his wife to remove her jewellery was at best a demotion of her marital status, if not a threat of divorce, as in Hos. 2:5. Ezekiel and Jeremiah record how God had placed jewellery upon the otherwise naked and forlorn Israel at Sinai. Now He asks them to remove it (:5). We think of the woman with the ten dowry coins in the Lord's parable- the sign of her marriage. It could be the people did this themselves even before God asked them to. They realised they had acted unworthy of His wife and it was an admission of unfaithfulness.

Another option to bear in mind is that "Rather than reading "none put on his finery" we should read instead "none took off his finery". The introduction of the single letter mem before the final word in v. 4 reverses the entire meaning of the clause". This would then present Israel as impenitent and they are asked to be more penitent by removing their jewellery.

Exo 33:5 Yahweh said to Moses, Tell the children of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go up into your midst for one moment, I would consume you. Therefore now take off your jewellery from you, that I may know what to do to you'

God told Moses that because Israel were stiffnecked, therefore He could not go up with them (Ex. 33:5).

Moses agrees the people are stiffnecked, but he knows God well enough to ask Him to still go up in the midst of them (Ex. 34:9 *"If now I have found favour in Your sight, Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us; although this is a stiff-necked people"*). And God did! He acted according to how broad was Moses' conception of God's grace. If Abraham's conception of grace had been even broader, perhaps Sodom would've been saved... Moses' achievement is all the more remarkable because he himself struggled with grace.

Although the people were "stiff-necked", refusing to bow their necks in obedience, and thereby liable to destruction if God was amongst them (Ex. 32:9; 33:3,15), God was willing to give this stiff-necked people a place in God's Kingdom (Dt. 9:6). And so although God had said that He would not go in the midst of a stiff-necked people, yet Moses asks Him to do so (Ex. 34:9)- for He senses God's desire to save them by grace despite their hardened disobedience. We contrast this with the God who demands respect, the God who slew Uzzah and insists upon loyalty to Him.

It is possible that Israel only temporarily removed their jewellery in :4, but God is telling them to permanently remove it. Because temporal, external, ritualistic motions of repentance are not enough, including muttering a kind of automated prayer when we sin and then playing on like nothing happened.

"That I may know what to do to you" is a phrase pregnant with possible meaning. Later in the chapter, Moses persuades Yahweh to at least on one level "go

with them". We are invited to see God's internal struggle, His "repentings kindled together" as Hosea later records, not knowing what to do, considering them without their jewellery, considering Moses' intercession... We note the difference with the more decisive spirit of Ex. 2:24,25: "God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant... God saw the children of Israel, and God was concerned about them", "concerned" is s.w. "know" as here "That I may know what to do with you". God is presented as having varying feelings and struggling towards a conclusion as to how to act.

Exo 33:6 The children of Israel stripped themselves of their jewellery from Mount Horeb onward-

See on 1 Sam. 18:4. The idea may be that the jewellery taken from Egypt had pagan associations, and from then on they didn't wear it. At least, that was the idea. But they carried their idols with them through the wilderness, the star of Remphan and the tabernacle of Moloch, as well as other Egyptian idols they took with them through the Red Sea, cp. baptism (Ez. 20:7,8). The total weight of all the gold, silver and brass donated to the tabernacle comes to 10.4 tones or 10,400 kg. (Ex. 38:24). In addition to this there was the gold used and destroyed in the destruction of the golden calf. They did indeed spoil the Egyptians, but we can assume that they gave nearly all their wealth to the tabernacle project; perhaps that is the intention of the note here that they stopped wearing jewellery from then onwards.

But the idea may be that they *had stripped* themselves of their jewellery there (for Hebrew tenses aren't precise), in order to make the golden calf. As the Egyptians were stripped of their jewellery, so Israel stripped themselves of it before the golden calf (Ex. 12:36; 33:6). Pharaoh was condemned and Egypt overthrown because of his hard heart- but the very word is used to describe the hardness of Israel's heart at the time (Ex. 32:9; 33:3-5; 34:9). Israel were really no better than Egypt- just as Egypt was plagued "so that they could not drink the water" (Ex. 7:24), so we find Israel in the same situation right after leaving Egypt (Ex. 15:23). **Israel stripped or spoiled themselves of their jewellery just as they had spoiled [s.w.] the Egyptians of that jewellery. All material acquisition ultimately ends up being given to the Lord. It could be speculated that soon they were required to give that jewellery for the construction of the tabernacle. And the tabernacle itself was a kind of concession to their weakness. God was not going to go up in their midst personally and visibly, but He therefore allowed them the tabernacle to meet their need for religion. Thus the commands about altars being made of earth and without steps, or the ban on any graven image [cp. the cherubim], were somewhat ameliorated in the tabernacle construction. The temple was a further concession to their religious weakness and need for the visible rather than the spiritual.**

Exo 33:7 Now Moses used to take the tent and to pitch it outside the camp, far away from the camp, and he called

it The Tent of Meeting. It happened that everyone who sought Yahweh went out to the Tent of Meeting, which was outside the camp-

This was before the tabernacle was built. Presumably this was Moses' personal tent, or a tent personally associated with him, where the people went to meet with God. Yahweh promised He would meet His people over the ark, and then come forward from the most holy place to meet with His people in the courts of the tabernacle. But before then, He met with His people through meetings with Moses, and they met with God through meeting with Moses. See on :8.

God had initially refused to personally go with Israel "in their midst", and the material in :7-11 perhaps shows how God intended to appear to them at a tent of meeting outside the camp. The grammar here could suggest that this was a one-off command to Moses at this time to remove the tent of meeting outside the camp, to represent God's withdrawal and distancing from Israel. Moses begs God to go in their midst, and then follows the subsequent encounter with the back parts of God Himself, and God's explanation and correction about the significance of His physical presence. The summary is that God explains that He does forgive Israel and will continue in covenant relationship with them. But that His physical glory and presence are somewhat misunderstood by Moses, and His real glory and presence are in forgiveness and grace, which is what His Name and personality are all about. His request for someone to go

with him and show Israel the way (:12-14) is met by God's declaration of His forgiveness, grace and mercy. This is the essence of things, rather than the more literal, physical assurances Moses was seeking for. And this really is God's answer to our own concerns for material, visible guidance through life. His face / presence, the equivalent of the communion of the Holy Spirit, would go with Israel and give them "rest" in the promised land. But this would not involve literally seeing God. Is. 63:9,10 alludes to all this: "the angel of His presence [s.w. "face"] saved them: in His love and in His pity he redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His holy spirit ['spirit' and 'angel' are the same word]". This in turn is quoted of our experience with the Holy Spirit.

As God manifested Himself through the Angel who lived in the tent of meeting, so God did supremely through His Son. This is not to say that the Angel was Jesus- for the Lord Jesus was and is not an Angel nor did He exist at that time: "And the Word was made flesh and tented among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). The glory which John and all Christians behold is not so much a physical bright light, as Moses wished to see; but the Name and character of God, His saving grace, revealed to us in the face of the Lord Jesus with whom we are in relationship (2 Cor. 3). To see that glory is not a matter of seeing anything physical, rather do we see the glory of

His saving nature and grace through our faith in it: "If you believe, you will see [as Moses did] the glory of God" (Jn. 11:40). And that glory was supremely manifest in the blood, spittle and gross darkness of the Lord's death: "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once" (Jn. 13:31,32). "For this very purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name" (Jn. 12:27,28).

Exo 33:8 It happened that when Moses went out to the Tent, that all the people rose up, and stood, each one at their tent door, and watched Moses, until he had gone into the Tent-

This tent pitched outside the camp, where Yahweh met with His people, is to be associated with how the Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorosa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17;

9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Exo 33:9 It happened, when Moses entered into the Tent, that the pillar of cloud descended, stood at the door of the Tent, and spoke with Moses-

The pillar of cloud is put by metonym for the Angel within it. The Angel was so closely identified with the pillar of cloud. It was as if a smaller version of the same awesome cloud of Sinai was now to be seen right outside the camp. God's fellowship was not therefore with Israel as a whole, but with those who sought Him and went outside the camp to meet Him there (:7).

Exo 33:10 All the people saw the pillar of cloud stand at the door of the Tent, and all the people rose up and worshiped, everyone at their tent door-

We see a difference between these people, and those who went outside the camp to meet with Yahweh there (:7). It is one thing to acknowledge God, and stand up in acceptance of Him. It is another to go forth without the camp and seek Him. The scene is similar to how it was God's initial intention that Israel would ascend Sinai and meet with Him in the cloud. But they stood and worshipped afar off, and wanted Moses alone to go to Him (Ex. 20:18,21). Intimacy with God may sound a great idea, but sinful man shies away from it when it is offered as a reality.

Exo 33:11 Yahweh spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. He turned again into the camp, but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, didn't depart out of the Tent-

We are told in Ex. 33:20 that no man can see the face of God and live; but in Ex. 33:11 we read that "The LORD (Yahweh) spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend" - i.e. directly. It could not have been the LORD, Yahweh, Himself in person, who spoke to Moses face to face, because no man can see God Himself. It was the angel who carried God's name who is in view; and so we read of the LORD speaking face to face with Moses when it was actually an angel who did so (Acts 7:30-33).

God spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. God knew Moses by name (Ex. 33:12,17) and so He shows Moses *His* Name (Ex. 33:17,19)- there developed a mutuality between the two. See on Ps. 90:8; Ps. 90:1. God spoke to Moses "mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of Yahweh shall he behold" (Num. 12:8) is the basis of 1 Cor. 13:12: "Now (in the period of the Spirit gifts) we see through a glass darkly; but then (in the dispensation of the completed word) face to face: now I know in part (from the ministry of the gifts); but then shall I know, even as also I am known". The point of this connection is simply this: The close relationship between God and Moses is now available to us through the word. But do we feel God speaking to us face to face, as a man speaks

to his friend (Ex. 33:11)? For this is how close God and Moses came through the word. Yet it is possible.

The idea of "face to face" is explained in Prov. 27:19, where we learn that as face to face is reflected in water, so a man's heart is reflected in the heart of his friend by the telepathy and mutuality that exists between friends. This was how close God was with Moses, albeit through the Angel. This is the work of the Spirit, to produce such mutuality with God. As only a man knows his own spirit, so we know the mind of the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. 2:11: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. After the Lord Jesus, Moses got to an intimacy with God unequalled by any man: "My servant Moses – he is the faithful one in all My house. With him I talk face to face, directly and in all reality, not in riddles, and he sees God's face" (Num. 12:7,8). But he arrived at this intimacy through interceding for Israel, from a heart that bled for others. We too are led to intimacy with God through our struggles with Him on behalf of others, rather than our pestering Him for our personal salvation.

Joshua is consciously set up as our example. When Paul says that we *each* with unveiled face have beheld the glory that shines from the face of the Lord Jesus, just as the glory to a lesser extent shone from the face of Moses (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). Yet the only person to behold Moses' unveiled glory was Joshua, who alone lived in the taber-

nacle where Moses received the glory (Ex. 33:11). And it was he who alone accompanied Moses up the mount to meet with God (Ex. 24:13). When Moses left Joshua and went out to the people, he veiled his face. But Joshua would have seen the glory shining off Moses' unveiled face.

Joshua needed to be constantly told "fear not". His fear is all the more reprehensible when we consider the testimony of Ps. 91. Here Moses speaks about Joshua, the one who dwelt in the secret place or tabernacle of God (Ps. 91:1 = Ex. 33:11), and who therefore was miraculously preserved throughout the wilderness wanderings. Thousands of Joshua's generation died at his side from the various plagues which wasted out his generation during those wanderings; but they never came near him (Ps. 91:5-8). As a result of this, he was commanded by Moses to "not be afraid" (Ps. 91:5), perhaps Moses was thinking specifically about peer pressure, with the assurance that truly God would hear Joshua's prayers (Ps. 91:14,15). His amazing preservation during the wilderness years ought to have instilled a faith and lack of fearfulness within him; and yet the implication is that he did very often fall prey to fearfulness in later life. Just as with us, the circumstances of earlier life are controlled by the Father to give us faith with which to cope with later crises; but we don't always learn the lessons we are intended to.

The Soncino Commentary on Ex. 33:11 suggests that Joshua being described as a "young man" devoted to the service of the tabernacle implies in Hebrew that

he was an unmarried man, devoted to the things of the Kingdom. For Joshua was not literally a young man at this time. **Joshua was 56 years old at this point.**

Exo 33:12 Moses said to Yahweh, Behold, You tell me, 'Bring up this people' and yet You haven't let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight' -

"Yet You have said" begs the question, Where and when? We assume it was when Yahweh told Moses that He would destroy Israel and make of Moses a great nation (Ex. 32:10). And Moses is apparently sceptical of this.

God assures Moses that he has found grace in His eyes [i.e. before the Angel with whom Moses met?]. And yet Moses says: "If I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way that I may know thee, to the end that I may find grace in thy sight" (Ex. 33:12,13 RV). Despite having been told that he had found grace, Moses still wanted confirmation... as if the voice of God wasn't enough! And maybe there is even the implication that he mistakenly thought that he needed more *knowledge* of God before he could find that grace... as if it depended upon his own mental faculties. And yet God patiently assures Moses yet again: "Thou *hast* found grace in my sight", and goes on to proclaim His Name to Moses. "I *will be gracious* to whom I will be gracious" (Ex. 33:19) was surely said specifically to Moses, given the context of Moses' doubts about his receipt of God's grace. "Kill me, I pray, if I have [indeed] found grace in Your eyes" (Num. 11:15) would therefore appear to be a very inappropriate

sarcasm by Moses- against the God of all grace. The coming down of Yahweh to pronounce His Name was, in the context, to show how far God would go to assure Moses that yes, His grace towards Moses was real. We too struggle with grace, and are given, also by grace, this undeserved assurance upon assurance. **He was to be shown that even the back of God was full of saving grace.**

Moses had been promised that the Angel would go with him (:2; Ex. 32:34: 23:20) but despite conversing with the Angel, he now asks God to explain more about the Angel. But this request, along with the request to see God's face, was not mere curiosity. I suggest it is all part of the intercession for Israel's forgiveness which he had made in Ex. 32. Moses above all wanted Israel to be saved and to be right with God. So I suggest his motives in asking for this greater personal intimacy with God were not mere curiosity. He wanted to be assured that God's grace and acceptance of Israel was for real, and so He as it were tested God by asking for greater personal intimacy towards himself personally- because he clearly perceived that for his sake, for the sake of *his* intimacy with God, Israel would be saved. However, Moses takes Yahweh's statement that Moses has found grace in His eyes as meaning he can ask God to see His face. That request is refused; but rather he is shown that standing before God's eyes accepted by grace is actually far more meaningful, and more awesome, than any physical sighting of God's face. Perhaps the idea of seeing God's back parts was that even this amazing grace is

only His back parts. His face itself is gracious to an extent none can fathom in this nature.

Exo 33:13 Now therefore, if I have found grace in Your sight, please show me now Your ways, that I may know You, so that I may find grace in Your sight; and consider that this nation is Your people-

Moses states that "I have *not* found grace in Your eyes" (Num. 11:11) when God had specifically said that Moses had (Ex. 33:12). At that time too, Moses had questioned this Divine assurance (Ex. 33:13); he had the same struggle to believe God's grace as we have. He wanted more assurance that Yahweh really did consider Israel His people; for their apostasy with the golden calf had elicited His condemnation of them. Moses had interceded successfully for them, but now he wonders whether that prayer had really been answered. God had repeatedly assured Moses that "you *have* found grace in My eyes" (Ex. 33:17; 34:9); but still Moses doubts it. "Kill me, I pray, if I have [indeed] found grace in Your eyes" (Num. 11:15) would therefore appear to be a very inappropriate sarcasm by Moses- against the God of all grace. And we too are given, also by grace, this undeserved assurance upon assurance.

Moses understood that if he personally found grace in Yahweh's eyes, then Yahweh would consider Israel as His people. I suggest that he wanted to see Yahweh's face as a guarantee of his own relationship with Yahweh, which would thereby guarantee Israel being accepted as God's people despite the apostasy of the golden calf. Moses was seeking to again per-

suade God against His plan of Ex. 32:10, to not consider Israel His people but rather Moses' descendants. His request therefore was not from mere curiosity. We see how the Lord's intimacy with the Father is a guarantee of our collective salvation, as He reasons in John 17. In :15 Moses says that if Yahweh is not personally with him, then He will be with Israel. Heb. 11 understood this too in commenting that it was by Moses' personal faith that Israel were brought out of Egypt and to Canaan. See on :16.

Exo 33:14 He said, My presence will go with you-

God had 'gone before' Israel through the Angel which was to lead them through the desert (s.w. Ex. 23:23). But as with all religious but not spiritual people, they wanted a visible leader. And so when Moses apparently disappeared in the mountain, they demanded that gods be made to "go before us". It was only by grace that God responded that despite their apostasy, He would still "go before you" through the Angel (Ex. 32:34; 33:14). Even the Gentile world had more faith than Israel in this; they believed that Yahweh "went before" His people in an Angel (Num. 14:14). But Israel themselves at the time of the golden calf didn't believe that. Moses in his final speech therefore urges the people to believe that indeed the Angel was going before them (Dt. 1:30,33; 31:6,8).

This is the same construction as in Hushai's advice to Absalom in 2 Sam. 17:11, "You yourself shall go to battle in your own person". It means that Yahweh Himself would go with Moses. But in :15 Moses still

appears to doubt God's promise. God's very presence / face did go with them, but His face / presence was redefined here away from the literal to the experience of grace and forgiveness.

And I will give you rest-

See on Is. 63:9. But they did not enter that rest (Heb. 4:8,10). The Kingdom was given them, but they didn't enter it. "Rest" was defined as the land being subdued before God with all the tribes driven out (Josh. 1:13,15; Num. 32:21,22; 1 Chron. 22:18). This being conditional on Israel's faithfulness, we conclude that when the Angel said "I will give you rest" He was speaking of what was possible in prospect; or perhaps He over-estimated Israel's obedience, or was unaware of the degree to which their entering the rest was conditional on their obedience.

When Yahweh met Moses, it was as if He met with Israel (Ex. 3:18). God promised to go with Moses, but Moses re-quotes this as God going with "us" (Ex. 33:14-16). This is how inextricably linked were Moses and his people, even in their condemnation. And so it is, thankfully, with us and the Lord.

Exo 33:15 He said to Him, If Your presence doesn't go with me, don't carry us up from here-

The idea is that if God's presence didn't go with Moses, then Moses asked God not to lead Israel further. For Moses knew they would sin again and God would destroy them. He sees his personal intimacy with God as the only way they could be saved and

have fellowship with God. In this he so pointed forward to the Lord.

Moses later is depressed by Israel complaining at how boring the manna was. He doubts God's earlier promises to him: "Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight (God said he had, in Ex. 33:17)... have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto them, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers (not "our" - notice the uncharacteristic separation between Moses and Israel). Whence should I give flesh unto all this people... if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in the sight (as God had earlier promised him that he had)" (Num. 11:12). God was the father and conceiver of Israel, the one who would carry them to the land (Ex. 19:4; 33:15; Dt. 32:11,12; Hos. 11:1); it is as if Moses is saying: They're your children, you look after them, don't dump them on me. Although compare this with his earlier love for them, willing to sacrifice himself for them. God then says that He will provide more food for Israel. But Moses almost mocks God: "Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them?". And the Angel angrily replied: "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not". If he had faith, Moses surely would have realized that if God could provide manna, he could provide any

food. Moses seems to have suffered from fits of depression and also high spirituality.

Exo 33:16 For how would people know that I have found favour in Your sight, I and Your people? Isn't it in that You go with us, so that we are separated, I and Your people, from all the people who are on the surface of the earth?-

"And how will it be truly known that I have found grace with you, both I and your people, other than if you go along with us? And we shall be glorified, both I and your people, above all the nations that are on the earth". God's grace was His glory, and this was revealed to Moses not so much as a bright light nor a physical sighting of God's face, but in the characteristics of God experienced by Israel. Contrary to what Moses initially wanted, there was to be no physical sign of God's unique involvement with Israel, but rather he was to perceive that it was the experience of amazing grace and forgiveness that was unique to Israel. Mic. 7:18 marvels that there is no God like Yahweh who forgives and passes over sin. His grace to His people is unheard of (Jonah reflects the same). These were the wonders no other nation had ever seen from their god (Ex. 34:10). And we see this glory in the face of Jesus Christ; therefore to see / experience Him is to see the Father (Jn. 14:9).

Twice Moses speaks of "I and Your people". He was seeking to still dissuade God of the distinction between Moses and His people which He had earlier posited, in saying He would destroy His people and

make of Moses a new people. Hence His desire for ultimate personal intimacy with God was because he so wanted to save the people. See on :13. Our salvation by the Lord Jesus is likewise because of His connection with us who are "in Him", and His refusal in the wilderness temptations to merely seek His own eternity without ours.

Moses here continues to doubt whether really his intercession for Israel had 'worked' as God had said it would. Moses felt that God's unwillingness to go directly in Israel's midst implied that in fact God hadn't really heard his pleas. But God said that He had, and He was not going up in their midst for the sakes, lest He destroy them for their continued stiff-necked attitude to Him. We see Moses, like us, struggling to believe in the extent of grace shown and promised. This is why Moses is making such an issue about Yahweh not going up in their midst.

The 'setting apart' of Israel from Egypt is a major theme (Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 11:7 "put a difference"). It was part of a 'sanctifying' of Israel for priestly service to Yahweh as a nation, as well as a lesson for Egypt that the only way to salvation was through separation from their own people and culture, and joining the people of God. We marvel at the multi functional way in which God works. The same word is used to describe how God "has set apart him that is Godly for Himself" (Ps. 4:3); even though Israel were far from being Godly. And it is used of God's special grace, 'set apart', a grace known by no other people (Ps. 17:7). The word is used in this sense in

Ex. 33:16, where Moses reasons that it is God's grace and the visible presence of that grace which is what sets apart Israel from all other peoples. And that is true to this day. God's grace is what is the lead and distinguishing characteristic of His way from all other religions. It is the experience of that grace which makes us distinct from all others who have not claimed it for themselves. And it all began with God 'setting apart' a sinful, idolatrous Israel from the Egyptians around them, all by grace, seeing they were largely no better than Egypt.

Exo 33:17 Yahweh said to Moses, I will do this thing also that you have spoken; for you have found favour in My sight, and I know you by name-

God could have given legitimate answers to each of Moses' objections and fears about whether God really loved them as much as He said. He could have repeated that He was not going up in their midst lest He destroy them. But such is His sensitivity and pure pity that He accepted Moses' pleas. We are told that God "hearkened" to Moses' prayers for them (Dt. 9:19; 10:10). He prayed for them with an intensity they didn't appreciate, he prayed for *and gained* their forgiveness before they had even repented, he pleaded *successfully* for God to relent from His plans to punish them, even before they knew that God had conceived such plans (Ex. 32:10,14; 33:17 etc.). The fact we will, at the end, be forgiven of some sins without specifically repenting of them (as David was in Ps. 19:12) ought to instill a true humility in us. This kind of thing is in some ways a contradiction of God's principles that personal repentance is required for for-

givenness, and that our own effort is required if we are to find acceptability with Him. Of course ultimately these things are still true, and were true with respect to Israel.

Exo 33:18 He said, Please show me Your glory-

See on Jn. 14:1. Moses asked to see the face of the Angel (Ex. 33:18 cp. :20); presumably it was a different Angel to whom he spoke face to face (Ex. 33:11), or perhaps the same Angel but manifesting God to a different degree or alternatively a different, more powerful Angel. The fact Moses saw the back parts of this 'LORD' **might show** that the 'LORD' was not God Himself in person- no man has ever seen Him, or even started to approach the light in which He dwells (1 Tim. 6:16); this must include Moses. This conclusion chimes in with the type of statements about 'the LORD' which we read in these chapters, which suggest reference to the Angel rather than to God Himself:

33:1 "The LORD said. . the land which I sware unto Abraham. . ". We have seen that it was the Angel which made these promises.

33:2 "I will drive out the Canaanite. . "; this was done by the Angel of the LORD sent before to do this.

33:3 "I will not go up in the midst of thee (i. e. the Angel was saying He would no longer dwell in the Holiest): lest I consume thee"- the consuming of Israel for their sins on the journey was done by the 'destroyer' Angel. We can therefore suggest that the Angel was manifest in some way, perhaps through two separate Angels, both in the pillar of fire going before them, and also in the Holy of Holies. See on Ez. 20:17.

Moses knew his closeness to God through manifestation, and yet he yearned to see God physically, he struggled with his distance from God (Ex. 33:18,20).

There are many references in the Upper Room discourse to Moses- without doubt, Moses was very much in the Lord's mind as He faced His end. Consider at your leisure how Jn. 14:1 = Ex. 14:31; Jn. 14:11 = Ex. 14:8. When the Lord speaks in the Upper Room of manifesting the Father and Himself unto the disciples (Jn. 14:21,22), he is alluding to the way that Moses asked God to "manifest thyself unto me" (Ex. 33:18 LXX). The Lord's allusion makes Himself out to be God's representatives, and all those who believe in Him to be as Moses, receiving the vision of God's glory. Note that it was that very experience above all others which marks off Moses in Rabbinic writings as supreme and beyond all human equal. And yet the Lord is teaching that that very experience of Moses is to be shared to an even higher degree by all His followers. It would've taken real faith and spiritual ambition for those immature men who listened to the Lord that evening to really believe it... And the same difficult call comes to us too.

Moses' request to see God's glory was met by God's promise to proclaim His Name, His characteristics. And God goes on to warn Moses that he cannot see His face. I suggest that Moses had an overly physical view of God; He wanted to see "glory", and God's literal face. But he was shown that God's basic characteristics, of loving grace and mercy towards His people, are actually more important than

any physical sighting of God or His glory. The response to Moses' request to see God's face was to be told in Ex. 34:5-7 that it was part of God's most essential nature and character to forgive sin and love His people. Experiencing that is to see God's face, it is as good as and even better than any physical experience of bright light glory or literal encounter with God. It is His glory to forgive and overlook sin... that is His glory, rather than any bright light or blinding vision. It is this glory that we have seen and experienced in the face of the Lord Jesus. For Moses at this point is every man in Christ, according to 2 Cor. 3:18. And clearly Moses' experience is also in view when we read that "we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only son" (Jn. 1.14). We too cannot see God, but in place of seeing Him, He has been made known to us through His Son: "no one has ever seen God, it is the only son who has made him known" (Jn. 1.18).

Exo 33:19 He said, I will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy-

"To whom I will be gracious" doesn't mean that God in a random sense decides to be gracious to some but not others. He will be gracious to whom He has said He will be gracious- and that, clearly, referred at this time to Israel. He had earlier proclaimed His

Name to them as the guarantee that He desired to save them. This statement was therefore a hint that He was going to save Israel after all, despite having told them in :5,6 to remove their jewellery, the sign of covenant with Him, and to let Him make His mind up about what He would do to them. And He comes down on the side of continued grace.

It has been argued that the very name of God, YH-WH, is related to the Hebrew root *hwy*, passionate love. He is the one who was and is and will be the passionate one. See S.D. Goitein, *Vetus Testamentum* Vol. 6 pp. 1-9. Whether or not this is the case linguistically, the declaration of God's Name in Ex. 33:19 defines the Name as primarily concerning God's grace and mercy. "I *will*" is in answer to Moses' doubts as to whether his intercession for the people has really worked. He is a man struggling with accepting a level of grace which seemed too huge, although God's direct word to him had assured him that it was indeed so. We are in that same position.

John's Gospel contains several references to the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ 'shows' the Father to those who believe in him, and that it is possible to "see the Father" and his glory through seeing or accurately believing in him as the Son of the Father (Jn. 11:40; 12:45; 14:9; 16:25). Moses earnestly wished to see the Father fully, but was unable to do so. The height which Moses reached as he cowered in that rock cleft and heard God's Name declared is hard to plumb. But we have been enabled to *see* the Father, through our appreciation of the Lord Jesus. But does an appropriate sense of *wonder* fill

us? Do we really make time to *know* the Son of God? Or do we see words like "glory" as just cold theology?

Moses was not only a type of Christ, but representative of us all: "If you would believe, you would see (like Moses) the glory of God" (Jn. 11:40). "The word was made flesh... we beheld his (Christ's) glory... full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). Philip asks Jesus to "show us the Father" (Jn. 14:8), and Jesus replies that He is the manifestation of the Father. Israel had asked that "the word" be not spoken to them any more; only Moses saw God's glory. But we are being invited to be equal to Moses, seeing from the cleft in the rock the awesome majesty of the perfection of Christ's character; the full glory of God. Paul likewise invites us to behold with unveiled face, as Moses did (2 Cor. 3:18 RV), and thereby, just from appreciating the glory of Christ's character, be changed into the same glory. Note too how in Rom. 11 we are each bidden "behold the goodness and severity of God"- a reference to Moses beholding all the goodness of Yahweh. We are in essence in his position right now (Ex. 33:19). Moses likewise asks God "show yourself to me" (Ex. 33:18 LXX). The answer was in the theophany on Sinai, with the Name of Yahweh declared, as full of grace and truth. This, according to Philip's allusion to it, is what we see in Jesus. And this is why Jn. 1 speaks of Jesus in terms of the theophany of Exodus, that in His personality the full glory of the Father dwelt.

Moses is an example of the mutuality between God and man. God said that because He knew Moses by name, He would show Moses *His* Name (Ex.

33:12,17,19). Daniel is another example. He heard the voice of God's words, and then the Angel comes and tells him that God has heard the voice of his (Daniel's) words (Dan. 10:9,12). "Proclaim the Name" (Ex. 33:19; 34:5) is the same phrase used about 'calling upon the Name' (e.g. Dt. 28:10). The calling out / proclamation of Yahweh's Name, in the Gospel and ultimately in the declaration of the Name on the cross (Jn. 17:26), elicits a desire to call that Name upon us, which we initially do through baptism into that Name. And like Moses, we in turn proclaim the Name to others (Dt. 32:3 s.w.).

Exo 33:20 He said, You cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live-

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (Jn. 1:18). John here makes clear allusion to Moses. This alludes to Moses being unable to see God, whereas Christ now is cuddled in the bosom of the Father- such closeness, such a soft image, even now in his heavenly glory! Christ declared God's character (alluding to the Angel declaring God's Name at the same time as Moses was unable to see God) in his perfect life and above all on the cross (Jn. 17:26).

Moses' request to see God's glory (:18) could be understood therefore as a request to see God's face. God saw that this was what Moses was secretly wanting and was the request underlying Moses' words. To have the same face to face relationship with Yahweh Himself, as Moses had with His representative, the Angel. We note Moses' maturity and growth, since

earlier covering his face so that he might not look upon God in the Angel at the burning bush (Ex. 3:6). When God created man, He breathed into His nostrils the breath of life and Adam's dead body became a living soul or body at that moment, implying the first thing he saw on opening his eyes was the face of God over his face (Gen. 2:7). How much he lost through sin... And that is why Revelation concludes with so many allusions to Eden restored, not least that we shall see God's face as Adam did in Eden.

Later Scripture reflects this more mature understanding that Moses is now being taught. To see God's face is to experience His grace, acceptance and relationship with Him. Psalm 27 records David responding to God's invitation to "Seek My face". "Your face, Lord, I will seek" was his response. Israel fled from God's face / presence [the same word in Hebrew], just as at the last day, some will not want to seek His face, saying "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Rev. 6:16,17 NIV). The basic question, therefore, is whether or not we actually want intimacy with God, whether we want to see His face, or whether we shy away from this and want a Moses to do our religion for us and leave us free to worship our idols. "As a deer yearns for running streams, so I

yearn for you, my God. I thirst for God, the living God;

when shall I go to see the face of God? (Ps. 42:1,2 NJB). The point was, that seeing God's literal face was not of the essence; rather His abiding blessing, acceptance and grace, which is the lead characteristic of His declared attributes in response to Moses' request to see His glory, was all that man needs. God's comment that "You can't see My face" is perhaps because He understood that Moses had a desire for the physical vision of it, just as Moses had been seeing the face of the Angel. Although we can't see God's face now, that face is towards us: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Num. 6:24-26). "Let your face smile on us, LORD" (Ps. 4:6 NLT). And we think of the many Biblical statements about God hiding His face from sinners. To be acceptably in God's presence is therefore to see His face. In this same context, Ex. 34:20 speaks of how "No one is to appear before Me [Heb. 'see My face'] empty handed". Prayer is a coming before God's face: "Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year. And David sought the face of the LORD" (2 Sam. 21:1 ESV). To see God's face therefore doesn't have to mean to literally see His face; God's answer to Moses is therefore picking up on his over literalism at this point. In Dt. 5, he appears to have grasped this. For Moses reflects that when God appeared to Israel on Mount Sinai, they did not see God or even His form, but only heard His voice (Dt 3:12;

5:22–26). But he describes this as Israel seeing God “face to face” (Dt. 5:4). And even now, we can do likewise: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18 ESV). In allusion to Moses’ experience, we read that The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is in Jesus’ face. “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6 NIV).

Exo 33:21 Yahweh also said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock-

God through the Angel had earlier stood upon a rock in Sinai with Moses next to Him (Ex. 17:6). Later, Yahweh asks Moses to stand upon a rock in Sinai next to Him (Ex. 33:21 s.w.). We see how God gently and progressively leads His people closer to Him, using every experience He gives us to prepare for the next one, on an ever more intimate level with Him.

Exo 33:22 It will happen, while My glory passes by-

Moses had earlier experienced the Angel passing by on Passover night (s.w. Ex. 12:12,23). He was to realize that he was only being spared from death by grace, as happened at Passover. He had been so confident that he could see God’s glory, but now he is being shown that he needed to appreciate more his own sinfulness.

Prov. 19:11 says that it is glory to pass over transgression. God passed over Moses in the cleft of the

rock and revealed His glory. Even His back side, shown because the sin of the golden calf had not really been repented of, revealed His glory in passing over their sin.

That I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand until I have passed by-

There is a connection between Moses hiding in the "cleft of the rock" and Elijah hiding in a similar place to witness a theophany whose aim was to *humble* him. Is. 2:10-12 makes a similar connection. At the day of judgment, we will all go through the Moses experience; hiding in the rock in the presence of God's glory (Is. 2:10 cp. Ex. 33:22). And our vision of that glory in the face of the Lord Jesus *even now* should have the same humbling effect.

Even a righteous man must realize his sinfulness if he is to truly comprehend the essential perfection of God. Moses was brought to cower in the rocks, just as the unworthy will do (Ex. 33:22 = Is. 2:21); and he only saw the back, not the face of God, which is the attitude God adopts to those He rejects (Jer. 18:17). And only in this position could Moses see the vision of God's moral glory.

Exo 33:23 then I will take away My hand, and you will see-

The same phrase for turning aside [s.w. "take away"] to "see" was used earlier when Moses turned aside ["take away" s.w.] to 'see' God at the burning bush (Ex. 3:3,4). Now God does this to Moses. Here again we see the mutuality between God and Moses.

My back; but My face shall not be seen.

Moses had asked to see God's glory, but God senses that he wants to see His face. Moses had spoken face to face with the Angel as a man speaks to his friend, and we showed above that this refers to intuitively knowing what the other is thinking. God is showing that He knows Moses in this way.

At the time when Moses doubts whether he and Israel really have found grace, the God who speaks to Moses face to face then turns and shows Moses only His back parts (Ex. 33:11,20,22). I suggest this is to be read negatively. This is alluded to in Jer. 18:17 and there interpreted as being a sign of God's anger- to turn away His face and show His back parts, **in response to how Israel had shown God their back and not their face** (Jer. 2:27; 32:33). God was so angry with Moses' disbelief in His grace. **Or we can read this as God saying that He would not look upon Israel's sin, He turned His back upon it.** His "passing by" would then refer to His characteristic of passing over human sin, overlooking it (Is. 31:5 "defending also He will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it"; God "*passed over* former sins" (Rom. 3:25); Acts 17:30¹, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent"). And the huge grace they were experiencing was only His back parts. His face was far more glorious. The connection with the Jeremiah passages, it is inevitable really that the turning of God's back was a sign of His displeasure; for

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/Acts%2017.30>

the sin with the golden calf had not really been dealt with, and the people had still not quit the idols of Egypt which they carried with them throughout the wilderness journey. But even at the place of God's back parts there was amazing grace and acceptance.

Moses never comments on seeing God's back parts, it had no abiding value to him. The idea was that intimacy with God and the experience of forgiveness is so much more than that. A man praying at a bus stop and knowing forgiveness and restored communion with God has more than seen God. Likewise, the transfiguration was clearly allusive to the theophany to Moses on Sinai, "we beheld His glory" (Jn. 1:14) is surely John's version of the synoptics' account of the transfiguration. But the disciples who witnessed it are presented as confused, dazed, and responding inappropriately. The experience had no lasting moral effect upon them- but salvation by grace did.

"The Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape (Gk. form, view). And ye have not his word abiding in you... I am come in my Father's Name, and ye receive me not... there is one that accuseth you, even Moses... for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me" (Jn. 5:37-46) Nearly all these statements were true of Moses, but untrue of the Jews. Yet there was one glaring contrast: Moses earnestly desired to see God's shape, to view Him, to completely understand Him. This was denied him- but not Jesus. The sim-

ilarity and yet difference between Moses and Jesus is really brought out here. And again, Moses is shown to be representative of sinful Israel; as he lifted up the serpent, so they would lift up Christ; as he failed to see the Father's "shape", so they did too.

EXODUS CHAPTER 34

Exo 34:1 Yahweh said to Moses, Chisel two stone tablets like the first: and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets-

The tables were the "tables of the covenant", which had been broken by the apostasy with the golden calf. God now assures Moses that the covenant relationship has been restored. This must be read in the context of the previous verses, where Moses has doubted whether his intercession for Israel has in fact "worked". He struggles to believe that God can be that gracious as His word had stated. Just like ourselves. And so just as Aaron had used a chisel to fashion the golden calf, Moses is asked to chisel out two stone tablets, upon which the covenant will be reaffirmed by God. Dt. 10:1,3 adds that at this time, God asked Moses to also make the ark, into which the tables were to be put. This was to be the sign that His presence was really to abide with His people as promised.

Which you broke-

"Which you broke" is emphasized by God. Moses in Ex. 33 had been doubting whether his intercession for Israel had really "worked", even though God assured him that it had. Moses is being reminded that his anger had burned hot just as God's anger had; but it was he and not God who had smashed the symbols of the covenant in that wrath. The idea is that God is kinder and more pa-

tient than man- even than a man as patient and loving as Moses.

"Broke" is s.w. in Ex. 34:13; Dt. 12:3 used of breaking covenant relationship with idols. By doing so, Moses had purposefully sought to break Israel's relationship with Yahweh, despite having earlier prayed for it to be restored. When he saw the apostasy with his own eyes, he wanted God to revert to His 'plan A', to destroy Israel. He realizes in Ex. 33 that he was wrong in this and therefore probes God as to whether indeed His relationship with Israel is indeed intact, despite his having broken the symbols of covenant. And God is assuring him that indeed it is.

Exo 34:2 Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain-

"Present" is the word for "stand" in Ex. 33:21. The idea is that Moses had too confidently asked to see Yahweh's glory, so he was asked to stand on the rock, knowing that he would humble himself and hide in a cleft of the rock when the glory passed by (:8). For no man can stand before the devouring fire which was "on the top of the mountain" (Ex. 19:20; 24:17 cp. Nah. 1:6).

Exo 34:3 No one shall come up with you; neither let anyone be seen throughout all the mountain; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mountain-

The contrast with the earlier, similar commands seem to be that even Joshua wasn't allowed to come even part way up the mountain. Just as the Lord Jesus was absolutely alone in obtaining and restoring covenant rela-

tionship for His sinful people, so was Moses to be. **The renewing of the covenant slightly differs from the giving of the first covenant. Moses alone was there, nobody else could come up the mountain; and Moses himself had to chisel the tables of stone (:4) whereas God carved the first tables. The impression is that the covenant was being restored solely for the sake of one man, Moses. And how much more was achieved for sinners by one man, the Lord Jesus.**

Exo 34:4 He chiselled two tablets of stone like the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up to Mount Sinai, as Yahweh had commanded him, and took in his hand two stone tablets-

There is a difference between the first tables, which were "tables of [a singular] stone", carved by God from the same stone (Ex. 24:12; 31:18); whereas the second were "tables of stones" (Heb.), made from two different stones. The idea was perhaps that God was indeed inviting Moses and Israel into a mutual, two sided covenant relationship with Him.

There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God

Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

Exo 34:5 Yahweh descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Yahweh-

The ultimate pattern for mission is in God Himself. His Name, YHWH, means 'I will be who I will be / am who I am'. And the declaration of His Name is followed by statements of how He 'will be' grace, love, justice, judgment etc. (Ex. 34:5-7). He will work out His purpose of glorifying the characteristics of His Name. If we align ourselves with this aim of glorifying God's Name, then our lives become focused, our aims and goals are clearer. Our baptism into the Name means that His mission, His restless, 24/7 working towards the goal of His glory filling the earth, becomes ours.

"Proclaim the Name" (Ex. 33:19; 34:5) is the same phrase used about 'calling upon the Name' (e.g. Dt. 28:10). The calling out / proclamation of Yahweh's Name, in the Gospel and ultimately in the declaration of the Name on the cross (Jn. 17:26), elicits a desire to call that Name upon us, which we initially do through

baptism into that Name. And like Moses, we in turn proclaim the Name to others (Dt. 32:3 s.w.).

The overriding desire of the Lord Jesus was for the glorification of Yahweh's Name, not proving others wrong. God's Name is His characteristics (Ex. 34:5-7). We glorify that Name when due to us, those characteristics are manifested somehow- maybe through others, or through ourselves. The fruits of the Spirit glorify those characteristics / the Name of Yahweh. When the Lord saw faith, or joy, or repentance, or even the possibility of these things in men, He worked to develop them. He didn't give up because they were also selfish or unloving or not joyful... And so with us, as the petty selfishness and weaknesses so evident in the flesh of our fellows presses upon our consciousness, focus instead on what is good, on what potential is there, and work on that. Abound in the life of grace, of outgiving when there is no response and no appreciation; and rejoice to live it, and see the honour of being called to live the life of the Saviour in *your* little life. John Thomas rightly observed that God manifestation rather than individual human salvation is the essential aim of the preaching of God's word. The Lord Jesus struggled in Gethsemane between "save *me*..." and "Father, glorify Your Name". The glorifying of the Father's Name meant more to Him than His personal salvation. Likewise Moses and Paul [in spirit] were prepared to sacrifice their personal salvation for the sake of Yahweh's Name being glorified in the saving of His people (Ex. 32:30-34 cp. Rom. 9:1-3).

Exo 34:6 Yahweh passed by before him, and proclaimed, Yahweh! Yahweh! A merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness and truth-

The Angelic 'passing by' recalled Passover (s.w.), where the mercy and saving grace of God was revealed to His people. There is a clear connection between the idea of the fullness of God, and Ex. 34:6, where God proclaims His Name to be "Yahweh, a God full of ["abundant in"] compassion", grace and His other characteristics (see R.V.). So by bearing God's Name, we have His fullness counted to us. As Christ had the fullness of God dwelling in Him in a bodily form (Col. 2:9), so the church, as the body of Christ, "is (Christ's) body, the fullness of him (God) that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22,23).

We read of God being slow to anger (Ex. 34:6), at others, of Him not restraining His anger, or restraining it (Ps. 78:38; Is. 48:9; Lam. 2:8; Ez. 20:22), and holding His peace (Is. 57:11; Ps. 50:21), and being provoked to anger by the bad behaviour of His covenant people (Dt. 32:21; Ps. 78:58; Is. 65:3; Jer. 8:19). God clearly has emotions of a kind which are not unrelated to the emotions we experience, as beings made in His image. But those emotions involve a time factor in order to be emotions. We read of the anger of God "for a moment" (Ps. 30:5; Is. 54:7,8), and of His wrath coming and going, leaving Him "calm" and no longer angry (Ez. 16:42). When we sin, we provoke God to anger- i.e. at a point in time, God sees our sin, and becomes angry. This is attested many times in Scripture. But it's meaningless if God

is somehow outside of our time and emotions. **God has just become angry with Israel (Ex. 32:10), and that is the immediate context. Again we see that the revelation of the Name had an immediate local context. Israel had provoked God to anger although He is slow to anger. But grace and mercy, His number one characteristics, even then still trump that anger.**

The transfiguration is full of allusion to Yahweh's coming down on Sinai. The equivalent of declaring the characteristics of the Name is "This is My Son, hear him". The Son of God reveals all God's characteristics, He came in His Father's Name, declared it in His perfect life, and then supremely on the cross. "In the past God spoke... but in these last days He has spoken to us in His Son" (Heb. 1:1,2). Philip like Moses asked to be shown the Father, thinking this would "suffice". The answer was in essence what Moses was told- to see the Son, the perfect, living embodiment of the Father's character, was to see the Father. And the Lord had in view that He was about to die on the cross, and that would be the supreme showing of the Father.

The Name was declared on the cross, as the Lord had foreseen (Jn. 17:26). It was as if the Lord suffered as He did with a placard above Him which effectively said: 'This is Yahweh.' The declaration of Yahweh's Name to Moses in Ex. 34:6 thus becomes a foretaste of the Lord's crucifixion. Some texts render Ex. 34:6 as 'Yahweh, Yahweh, a man full of mercy....'. In the crucifixion of the man Christ Jesus, the essence of Yahweh was declared. And

we, John says with reference to the cross, saw that glory, as it were cowering in the rock like Moses, full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14 cp. Ex. 34:6 RV).

God's Name is essentially His characteristics and personality; this declaration of the Name is in response to the request to reveal His glory (Ex. 33:18). How we pronounce or transliterate God's Name isn't so important; the essence of God's Name is who He is and what He does by grace in the lives of people. Jesus alludes here when He predicted that His death would be a declaration of God's Name; in the cross we see the quintessence of God's mercy, grace, judgment etc. (Jn. 17:26). We are baptized into the Name, whereby all God's perfect character is counted to us.

The declaration of the Name had been summarized in Ex. 33:19,20: "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious [i.e. Israel], and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy". The characteristics here are summarized then in grace and mercy. But that is not all; there is also the dimension of judgment. But curses for sin extend to three or four generations, whilst blessings for righteousness to a thousand. Clearly God's grace is a larger part of His total character than judgment, but the wonder of His grace is only perceived once we recognize His judgment of sin. The context of all this is His response to the sin of the golden calf; He had spread His cloud over them in love and marriage, and yet Israel had committed adul-

tery on their wedding night. This pronunication of the Yahweh Name is His response to that great sin, and He demonstrates it in practice by restoring covenant relationship with Israel, after having told her to strip herself of her jewels and await His judgment. That was clearly a sign of His suspension of the marriage covenant. But because of His Name, He restores it. Even without their very credible repentance. And without their quitting the idols of Egypt which they carried with them.

All this reveals God as extraordinarily gracious to sinners; and this colossally impacts our worldview and attitude to others. This is how God is, all the time. It is Him. His Name Yahweh is not so much a noun as a verb [and a verb in the hiphil, the causative form, and not in the qal, the simple tense form], He is / was / will be and *will cause to be* all this grace and forgiveness, triumphing over judgment in His desire to save. For Jonah it was too much. This list of wonderful attributes was not all good news to him because it required him to accept that his enemies and those he disliked would also be saved. These were the very words which led him to run away from God rather than to Him. Clearly alluding to Ex. 34, he says: "That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live".

Exo 34:7 keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and disobedience and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the children's children, on the third and on the fourth generation-

The Hebrew for "forgiving" signifies a lifting it up, and taking it away. This looks forward to the way God ultimately did this through the Lord's death / lifting up on the cross. The NT repeatedly states that sin was taken away by the Lord's body, lifted up on the cross as was the serpent, the symbol of sin. The declaration of the Yahweh Name spoke of God's absolute grace in saving His sinful people; but it would be declared in its fullness through the Lord's death on the cross.

That God 'visits' or punishes sin is a fundamental part of God's Name. The question is when and how. Israel's sin of rejecting Yahweh for an idol (Ex. 32:34 s.w.) need not have been 'visited' or 'punished'- had they repented. But there is no evidence that they did, neither in that immediate generation nor in subsequent ones. And so finally, God 'visited' His people's sins in the destructions at the hands of the Babylonians and Assyrians (s.w. Jer. 14:10; Hos. 8:13; 9:9).

The fact punishment was not always given until the third or fourth generation may simply reflect God's characteristic grace in relenting upon His threatened judgments. But it may also be because the judgment is carried

out by the Angels, who changed their decreed intentions with Israel, Moses and others.

We note that Ex. 34 doesn't describe the actual passing by of God and Moses' seeing God's back, as promised in Ex. 33. The record reflects the focus God wanted Moses and all of us to have- that getting a physical peek at God is neither here nor there. And as explained on Ex. 33, these wonders are all just the back side of God, and He shows His back rather than His face because of displeasure with human sin, as Jeremiah makes clear.

Psalms 145 is David's reflection upon Yahweh's declaration of His Name here. And it inspires him to praise, and to share with others the news of the God who so glories in forgiving and saving the weak. David's reflections on the implications of Ex. 34 are worth thinking through:

"Every day I will praise You, I will extol Your name forever and ever.

Psa 145:3 Great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised! His greatness is unsearchable [the grace shown here is indeed unsearchable especially given the context, of God's grace to an Israel who had as it were committed adultery on their wedding night]

Psa 145:4 One generation will commend Your works to another, and will declare Your mighty acts [this refers to how Yahweh had said that His grace continues to 1000 generations of those who fear Him]

Psa 145:5 Of the glorious majesty of Your honour, of Your wondrous works, I will meditate [the wondrous works and awesome acts (:6) were in His grace to Israel and all men, rather than miracles]

Psa 145:6 Men will speak of the might of Your awesome acts; I will declare Your greatness.

Psa 145:7 They will utter the memory of Your great goodness and will sing of Your righteousness [Yahweh had said that instead of Moses seeing His face, He would make His "goodness" pass before Moses].

Psa 145:8 Yahweh is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and of great grace [an exact quotation from Ex. 34].

Psa 145:9 Yahweh is good to all, His tender mercies are over all His works ["All" implies that the declaration of who God essentially is therefore applies to all men, not just Israel at the point of their shameful adultery against their God. Jonah got this when he quoted Ex. 34 as applying to the Ninevites, and said he felt repulsed by it- whereas David marvels at the global scale of God's grace. Hence the Psalm concludes with an appeal for "all flesh" to praise Yahweh for His Name].

... make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, the glory of the majesty of His kingdom [knowing Yahweh is like this motivates us to share the news with all men]

Psa 145:13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, Your dominion endures throughout all genera-

tions. Yahweh is faithful in all His words, and loving in all His deeds. [This alludes to His mercy lasting to 1000 generations, and may hint that the eternity of God's Kingdom is implied in His being so saving, gracious and forgiving]

Psa 145:14 Yahweh upholds all who fall, and raises up all those who are bowed down [Those bowed down by sin, the spiritually fallen, are those who will be comforted by this declaration of how God's grace triumphs over the side of His necessary judgment].

.... Psa 145:17 Yahweh is righteous in *all His ways*, and gracious in all His works [the declaration of the Name was in response to Moses' request to know *Yahweh's ways*, Ex. 33:13, in response to how at the golden calf sin, Israel had turned out of *His way* "They have turned aside quickly *out of the way* that I commanded them" (Ex. 32:8 ESV)]

Psa 145:18 Yahweh is near to all those who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.

Psa 145:19 He will fulfil the desire of those who fear Him, He will also hear their cry and save them". [This again is comfort for all who seek God but feel their sin and weakness is a barrier].

Exo 34:8 Moses hurried and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped-

Moses had specifically been asked to "stand" there (Ex. 33:21; 34:2), because it was God's intention that he be humbled, and perceive that his insistent, bold requests to see the glory of God were not completely appropriate for sinful man. **This worship is in gratitude.**

The statement of God's Name meant that Israel were accepted back into covenant with God. He had asked them to remove their jewellery as a man asked his wife to remove the jewellery he had given her at their wedding, as a sign of their divorce. And this restoration of relationship was thanks to Moses' intercession. This is the language of gratitude for a granted request. Uppermost in Moses' mind was Israel's salvation and the forgiveness of the golden calf. And the statement and assurance of God's grace was enough for him. He was deeply grateful.

Exo 34:9 He said, If now I have found favour in Your sight, Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us; although this is a stiff-necked people; pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Your inheritance-

See on Ps. 90:8. God had already given Moses this assurance, but as discussed on Ex. 33, Moses was slow to grasp the reality of grace. The declaration of the Yahweh Name had assured him that indeed God "will" pardon sin. And yet he still feels the need to plead for it. We note that God had assured Moses of personally giving him an inheritance, but here he begs Go to "take *us* for Your inheritance", as for him, personal salvation was bound up with that of God's sinful people. This is a strong challenge to those who think they can walk to God's Kingdom with no care for their brethren and wider community of believers.

Moses asks for their forgiveness and for God to still go up in their midst because he personally had found favour in Yahweh's eyes. "Pardon" is LXX "take

away", and John makes another allusion to these events when he records that the Lord Jesus "takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29 s.w.). The grace and acceptance Moses craved for on Israel's behalf was granted by God in terms of His essential character, but that Name and character came to full term in the person and work of the Lord Jesus.

Moses was motivated to ask this, knowing God had previously said He would not go in their midst without punishing them, because of his belief in the Name just declared. This is what it is, to know the Name of Yahweh. It's nothing to do with pronunciation.

God told Moses that because Israel were stiff-necked, therefore He could not go up with them (Ex. 33:5). Moses agrees the people are stiffnecked, but he knows God well enough to ask Him to still go up in the midst of them (Ex. 34:9 *"If now I have found favour in Your sight, Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us; although this is a stiff-necked people"*).

We note Moses speaks of pardoning "us" and taking "us" as God's people. He is again showing his non acceptance of God's desire to destroy the people and make a nation out of Moses. He considers himself inseparable from Israel and bears their sin, just as the Lord does. It was on this basis that he believed God could go up in their midst and save them.

"And take us for Your inheritance" may be another appeal for God to not disinherit His people as He had threatened, and instead to chose Moses' descendants as His people. He recalled how God had earlier threatened in Num 14:12 "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they". Although God has restored covenant with Israel, Moses clearly has a niggling doubt that God may at some future point disinherit Israel. His passion for Israel's acceptance with God is amazing, and looks forward to the Lord's passion and work for us.

Moses seems to have pleaded with the Angel to change His stated purpose of not going up with the children of Israel through reminding the Angel of the mockery this would bring Him into among the nations around. Thus Ex. 34:9 shows Moses pleading for this "please let the Lord go in the midst of us" - after the clear statement in Ex. 33:3 "I will not go up in the midst of you". So let us not be afraid to ask God to change what seems like His purpose in our lives, no matter how hard it seems, if we truly feel that another way would give Him more glory. Moses would not have tried if he did not think success in that prayer was possible. But he not only tried, he succeeded. Also consider Ex. 32:11: "Moses besought the face of the LORD (A.V.mg- i.e. the Angel) and said, LORD, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt (the Angel did this)... turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy

people". Thus Ez. 20:17 says that God's eye (the Angel) "spared them... in the wilderness" when they provoked Him. Psalm 90 is Moses meditations on the fact that his generation were slowly dying in the wilderness, and on the vapidty of life at that stage. And yet he is bold enough to plead with God to change His purpose- "Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants. O satisfy us early with Thy mercy (i.e. don't leave it till some distant point in the future when Messiah is here to show me Thy mercy- do it early, do it now)... make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us... " (:13-15). So from his previous experience of changing God's purpose , Moses was not afraid to try and do so again. This possibility of God changing His mind about this is shown by the Hebrew of Ps. 95:11: "That they should not (Heb. 'If they enter', as AVmg.) enter My rest". The ambiguity here nicely shows the possibility of them entering.

The Angel's eagerness to repent and willingness to accept even the slightest sign of repentance in His charges, explains why Moses was so willing to strive to make the Angel repent by his prayers. Thus in Ex. 34:9 Moses asks the Angel to forgive the peoples' sin, although it was one of the Angel's stated principles not to do so (Ex. 23:21). Moses had had personal experience of such repenting; the Angel "sought" to kill him, but God changed his mind due to Moses' repentance (Ex. 4:24).

Despite God's evident pleasure with Moses personally, manifest in the revelation He gave him, Moses still fumbled around in his recognition of his own humanity:

"If now I have found grace in Your sight... pardon *our* iniquity and *our* sin" (Ex. 34:9). Moses was always so aware of his connection with God's people, and was not at all interested in personal glory and even salvation, compared to the overall purpose of God's saving of His people.

Although he spoke to God as a friend, with an open-faced relationship, he still took upon himself the sin of Israel, he felt as condemned as they felt (Ex. 34:9 cp. 33:11); when he pleaded for God's sentence on him to be lifted, he pleaded for the same sentence on Israel to be lifted too (Ps. 90:8). When Yahweh met Moses, it was as if He met with Israel (Ex. 3:18). God promised to go with Moses, but Moses re-quotes this as God going with "us" (Ex. 33:14-16). This is how inextricably linked were Moses and his people, even in their condemnation. And so it is, thankfully, with us and the Lord. Moses manifested / represented both God and Israel, superbly pre-figuring the nature of the Lord's work and mission far later.

Although the people were "stiff-necked", refusing to bow their necks in obedience, and thereby liable to destruction if God was amongst them (Ex. 32:9; 33:3,15), God was willing to give this stiff-necked people a place in God's Kingdom (Dt. 9:6). And so although God had said that He would not go in the midst of a stiff-necked people, yet Moses asks Him to do so (Ex. 34:9)- for He senses God's desire to save them by grace despite their hardened disobedience. We contrast this with the God

who demands respect, the God who slew Uzzah and insists upon loyalty to Him.

Exo 34:10 He said, Behold, I make a covenant-

This is presented as a one sided covenant of grace, as was that of Gen. 15. There are no immediate demands made upon Israel regarding their side of it; just the request that having such a covenant relationship, they should therefore not seek to enter any other covenant (:12).

Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been worked in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among which you are shall see the work of Yahweh; for it is an awesome thing that I do with you-

Israel refused to be obedient, were stiffnecked, because they were "not mindful of your wonders" (Neh. 9:17). Ps. 78:32 likewise: "For all this they sinned still, and believed not in his wondrous works". Our perception of God's wonder is intended to inspire us not to sin, to be obedient to Him at whom we marvel / wonder (:11). The marvel of what God was to do was that He would grant His Kingdom to a thoroughly underserving people, by grace alone.

As discussed on Ex. 33:16, contrary to what Moses initially wanted, there was to be no physical sign of God's unique involvement with Israel, but rather he was to perceive that it was the experience of amazing grace and forgiveness that was unique to Israel. These were the wonders no other nation had ever seen from their god. No other god would have forgiven and shown such grace to a disobedient people.

The wonders were greater works than what God had already performed for Israel. And the allusion is naturally to the plagues. But on the level of miracle, God didn't do greater than these. So the wonders and great things refer in the context to His ongoing forgiveness of them.

Exo 34:11 Observe that which I command you this day. Behold, I drive out before you the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite-

Already the process had started. But these fine words of assurance were forgotten by Israel when they heard the reports of the unfaithful spies. They were assured that in fact these nations were far stronger than them, and all God's assurances about having already begun to drive them out were therefore fake. They believed the word of men rather than that of God. **The tribes were specifically driven out by the Angel sent before them (Ex. 33:2), "the hornet" sent before them (Ex. 23:28). Our Angels may likewise have opened roads of conquest ahead of us, but we fail to make good on the huge potential opened up.**

The subsequent appeals to not form any covenant with anyone else are based on the fact God had by grace renewed the covenant with them. The wonder of the grace of covenant relationship with Him means we will not seek covenant with others. We won't ever want to go near the idea of idols after perceiving how awful had been the sin with the golden calf.

Exo 34:12 Be careful, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be for a snare in the midst of you-

Yahweh's covenant in :10 is presented as a one sided covenant of grace, as was that of Gen. 15. There are no immediate demands made upon Israel regarding their side of it; just the request that having such a covenant relationship, they should therefore not seek to enter any other covenant (:12).

The prohibition of marriage with unbelievers in Ex. 34:12 was made straight after the awesome declaration of God's holiness on Sinai. It was as if God was telling Moses: 'See, this is your God, so wondrous in grace and determination to save you. So please, be mine, don't unite yourselves in marriage to this world that doesn't know Me. If I, in all My moral and physical glory, am your God, how can you intermarry?'. There is a kind of juxtaposition between the heights of God's moral revelation in Ex. 34:1-8, and then the 'down to earth' prohibition against marriage out of the Faith

Exo 34:13 but you shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and you shall cut down their Asherim-

Israel were told to "throw down", "break in pieces" and "utterly destroy" the idols and altars of Canaan. There were times during their history when they obeyed this command by purging themselves from their apostasy in this. The Hebrew words used scarcely occur elsewhere, except very frequently in the context of how God "broke down", "threw down" and "destroyed" Israel at the

hands of their Babylonian and Assyrian invaders as a result of their not 'breaking down' (etc.) the idols. "Throw down" in Ex. 34:13; Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 is the same word in 2 Chron. 36:19; Jer. 4:26; 31:28; 33:4; 39:8; 52:14; Ez. 16:39; Nah. 1:6. "Cut down" in Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 later occurs in Is. 10:33; Jer. 48:25; Lam. 2:3. So Israel faced the choice: either cut down your idols, or you will be cut down in the day of God's judgment. Those who worshipped idols were like unto them. The stone will either fall on us and destroy us, or we must fall on it and become broken men and women (Mt. 21:44). For the man untouched by the concept of living for God's glory, it's a hard choice. God will conquer sin, ultimately. When a man dies, it isn't just a biological, clockwork process. It is God's victory over sin in that individual. Either we must be slain by God; or with His gracious help, we must put sin to death in our members through association with the only One who really did this- and thereby rise to life eternal.

Exo 34:14 for you shall worship no other god; for Yahweh, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God-

Jealousy is a lead feature within Yahweh's personality (Ex. 20:5; 34:14). It speaks specifically of the jealousy of a man concerning the faithfulness of his wife (Num. 5:14). God was the passionate lover and husband of His people, and it is inevitable therefore that the extent of that love would produce jealousy when they spurned Him and went after other men, the idols.

Exo 34:15 Don't make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, lest they play the prostitute after their

gods, and sacrifice to their gods, and one call you and you eat of his sacrifice-

Israel is so often set up as the bride of God (Is. 54:5; 61:10; 62:4,5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; Hos. 2:19,20). This is why any infidelity to God is spoken of as adultery (Mal. 2:11; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Dt. 31:16; Jud. 2:17; 8:27,33; Hos. 9:1). The language of Israel 'selling themselves to do iniquity' uses the image of prostitution. This is how God feels our even temporary and fleeting acts and thoughts of unfaithfulness. This is why God is jealous for us (Ex. 20:15; 34:14; Dt. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15)- because His undivided love for us is so exclusive. He expects us to be totally His. Just as Israel were not to be like the Egyptians they were leaving, nor like the Canaanites into whose land they were going (Lev. 18:1-5; 20:23,24). We are to be a people separated unto Him.

"Call you", literally 'call out to you', is s.w. "proclaim" in :5. The calling out to us of the idols of this world is eclipsed by the calling out to us of Yahweh's grace and truth in His Name.

Exo 34:16 and you take of their daughters to your sons, and their daughters play the prostitute after their gods, and make your sons prostitute themselves to their gods-

The logic is powerful. To marry their women would be as foolish as a man marrying a prostitute. Yet this is what God did with Israel, as exemplified in the tragic marriage between Hosea and Gomer.

Exo 34:17 You shall make no cast idols for yourselves-

This clearly alludes to the golden calf which they had made. They were not to ever do this again. And yet we know from Ez. 20:7,8 that they took the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea, and carried the tabernacle and star of their idols throughout the wilderness journey. Even by Joshua's time, he had to urge them to cast away the idols of Egypt. Perhaps they justified them by arguing that they had not cast them themselves. Our flesh is so able to justify sin. And we must beware of that.

Exo 34:18 You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib; for in the month Abib you came out from Egypt-

The law was based around regular rituals. God knew that this was what His people needed, and although under the new covenant we don't have such structure, the true Christian life is really one of having the right habits.

These commands are given at this point because they have just been warned in :17 not to repeat the sin of the golden calf. They had claimed that this had brought them up out of Egypt. They are now told to keep the feasts, reminding them that it was Yahweh and not any molten god that had brought them out of Egypt. And obedience to Yahweh would bring about blessing and not molten gods.

Exo 34:19 All that opens the womb is Mine; and all your livestock that is male, the firstborn of cow and sheep-

I suggested on Ex. 13:2 that it was God's initial intention that all the firstborn males should be sanctified to His service, from whatever tribe. And the sacrificial animals would be provided by the firstborn of every animal. But this plan didn't work, and so He called one tribe to be His sanctified priests, and all Israel were to provide animals for sacrifice. And they also didn't really do their ministry, and so under the new covenant, all are priests. We marvel at how God continually seeks to forge ahead with His plans for relationship with man.

Exo 34:20 The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb: and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem-

The redemption of unclean devoted animals was to be at the basis of the animals value plus one fifth (Lev. 27:27). But the firstborn of donkeys were to be redeemed with a lamb, and a lamb would have been of less value than a newborn donkey. The firstborn of the donkey was to be redeemed by a lamb (Ex. 13:13) as a ritual reminder of the power of the Passover lamb's redemption. The value of its blood was far greater than its commercial value. And this was to point forward to the value of the blood of the Lord Jesus, far more precious than of any gold or silver (1 Pet. 1:18). The donkey was the most common domestic animal, and it was an unclean animal. It was therefore representative of common people, in their unclean state. Firstborn donkeys were to be redeemed because they were to be understood as representative of God's people, redeemed by the Passover lamb.

No one shall appear before Me empty-

"Empty" may mean that they were to not attend without bringing a sacrifice, with empty hands. But "empty" is s.w. "without cause", "in vain". Following this commandment was not be an appearing before Yahweh for no purpose. The meaning of the ritual was to be allowed to have the spiritual results intended. And this is a challenge to all whose Christian lives involve regular attendance at meetings. We can so easily slip into a rut of ritual observance, just going through motions "without cause". **It is the same concern as not taking on Yahweh's Name "in vain", without cause.**

Exo 34:21 Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest: in ploughing time and in harvest you shall rest-

We are to understand not working when it was most critically needed as a resignation of human works, in order to trust in God's gracious provision; the Sabbath year sought to teach the same. Living in the spirit of this meant that daily work was no longer simply the result of the curse in Eden; the work was done "as unto the Lord", and for Him rather than as merely for self preservation.

Exo 34:22 You shall observe the feast of weeks with the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of harvest at the year's end-

The feast of weeks is here defined as the first fruits of wheat harvest, the two loaves of Lev. 23:17. The "weeks" were the seven weeks of harvest (Dt. 16:9,10,16).

Exo 34:23 Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord Yahweh, the God of Israel-

The Pentateuch uses the term "before Yahweh" or 'to see the face of God', usually translated as 'to come into God's presence'; this was a pagan term used at the time to describe seeing an image of a god (R.E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 152). But Israel were being taught that their God had no image, but all the same, they could come into His presence.

Exo 34:24 For I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither shall any man desire your land when you go up to appear before Yahweh your God three times in the year-

The Mosaic Law required that Israel leave their homes undefended in order to go to the sanctuary to "appear before Yahweh". This was intended to be feasible because the Lord would drive out all the nations in the land. Yet Israel failed to drive out the nations; and thus made it far harder for themselves to obey the command to leave their homes and go to the sanctuary. Failure to obey one command made obedience to others far harder; and the same principle operates today.

The command to come three times a year to see God's face must be understood in the context of all the dialogue about God's face in the preceding chapter. Moses had been taught that the experience of grace was the essence of seeing God's face. But God here concedes to the human desire for religion and to feel they have in a ritual sense come into God's presence. The pagan religions required worshippers to daily come into the presence of the god, hence the presence of idols in homes. But Yahweh minimises

this because the essence of His presence is the experience of forgiveness and grace.

Exo 34:25 You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover be left to the morning-

The parallel Ex. 23:18 has: "neither shall the fat of My feast remain all night until the morning". Perhaps this was to remove the temptation to go back and take part of the sizzling fat for themselves; for this was seen as the most tasty and desirable part of the animal. We are not to place fences around the law in the legalistic way Judaism has done, but we are to be aware of our own liability to spiritual failure, our weakness in the face of temptation; and to arrange our lives appropriately.

Exo 34:26 You shall bring the first of the first fruits of your ground to the house of Yahweh your God-

God was to be honoured with "the first of the first". Yahweh was "one", or "the first [and only]", and so all was to be devoted to Him.

You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk-

The laws in the "Book of the Covenant" abruptly end with this, as if it summed up the spirit of all the others (Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Dt. 14:21). Kid goats were thought to be most tasty when boiled in their mother's milk. It seems that God considered this narcissistic and absolutely over indulgent, and without thought to the feelings of the mother goat; even though goats (rather than sheep) are at times a symbol of sinners and the unclean. The Mosaic law sought to inculcate a culture of kindness and extreme sensitivity to all, even animals. Read like this, it

is similar to the prohibitions of killing on the same a cow and a calf, or a ewe and her lamb (Lev. 22:28). It is likely that this was also related to a pagan fertility ritual, performed at harvest time (which is the immediate context of the prohibition); and God didn't want His people to even remotely be associated with that. For He alone was the source of all fertility.

Exo 34:27 Yahweh said to Moses, Write you these words; for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel-

The commands which constituted the covenant were given to Moses personally (Neh. 1:7,8), insofar as he represented Israel. Thus there is a parallel drawn in Ps. 103:7: He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel". In the context of describing Israel's deliverance from Egypt, they are said to have been delivered from "the basket" (Ps. 81:6 RV)- clearly associating them with Moses' deliverance. Is. 63:11 (Heb.) is even more explicit: " He remembered... *Moses his people*". Moses seems to have appreciated fully his representative role on that last glorious day of life when he addressed Israel: "The Lord said unto *me*... I will deliver [Og] into *thy* hand... so the Lord our God delivered into *our* hands Og" (Dt. 3:2,3). David recognized this unity between Moses and Israel; David describes both Israel and Moses as God's chosen (Ps. 16:5,23). Moses is described as encamping in the wilderness, when the reference clearly is to all Israel (Ex. 18:5). Moses recalled how "the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have delivered up Sihon and his land before thee [you singular- i.e. Moses];

begin to possess it, that thou [you singular again!] mayest inherit his land". Yet Moses then comments that therefore God "delivered" Sihon "before *us*" (Dt. 31,33 RV). The land and victory that Moses personally could have had- for it was God's wish to destroy Israel and make of him a new nation- he shared with Israel. Ex. 7:16 brings out the unity between them by a play on words: "The LORD God of the Hebrews hath *sent me* [lit. 'let me go'] unto thee, saying, *Let my people go*". "Let go" translates the same Hebrew word as "sent me". Just as Moses had been let go by Yahweh, so Israel were to be.

"With you and with Israel" reflects how God saw Israel as Moses. Because he would keep the covenant, they would be counted as keeping it. For Moses had reasoned in Ex. 33 that because of his personal relationship with God, Israel could be saved and have God amongst them. And God accepted that, as He does with His Son.

Exo 34:28 He was there with Yahweh forty days and forty nights-

Ex. 24:16 says that Moses was six and a half days on the mountain waiting for the call to meet God, so he was with God for 33 and a half days. This perhaps looks forward to the 33 and a half years ministry of the Lord Jesus.

This verse is a summary statement. Moses was there 40 days throwing himself down before God (Dt. 9:25), begging for forgiveness for the golden calf. And now we read his work is successful, in that God writes the covenant tables again.

He neither ate bread, nor drank water-

It could be argued that this is not speaking of absolutely not eating nor drinking (it would be hard not to drink for 40 days), but rather that He didn't eat bread nor drink water. The implication is that He had food to eat from God, associated with the word given him, which others weren't aware of. The Lord may allude to this in Jn. 4:32. This is the third period of 40 days which Moses was there, and the Rabbis calculate that he would have therefore returned from the mountain (cp. the Lord's second coming from Heaven) on the Day of Atonement.

He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments-

The Old Covenant is defined here and elsewhere as the ten commandments, which include the Sabbath. The New Testament teaches that the Old Covenant has been replaced by the New Covenant in Christ- and He never commanded us to keep the Sabbath.

Exo 34:29 It happened, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mountain, that Moses didn't know that the skin of his face shone by reason of His speaking with him-

The Lord's transfiguration on the mountain, with Moses present and the disciples 'coming up' to view, is clearly allusive to the theophany to Moses on Sinai. Mt. 17:1 speaks of a six day period beforehand, alluding to the six days when the cloud covered Sinai (Ex. 24:16). The focus of both Matthew and Luke is that

the Lord's *face* shone. We are being shown that the real seeing of Yahweh's face is in the face of Jesus Christ. Luke stresses that His clothes were whiter than any launderer on earth could whiten. This may refer to the same truth taught to Moses- that God's forgiveness of His people is unparalleled. The disciples' fumbled offer to make tabernacles [s.w.] reflects how they saw the similarities, and recalled that after the theophany, a tabernacle was made. Instead of the voice proclaiming the Yahweh Name, there is the voice of God directing attention to His beloved Son, and the command to "hear Him". Not, therefore, so much 'be obedient to Him', but rather to perceive in Him and His words the essence of the Yahweh Name, full of grace and salvation for the undeserving- just as Yahweh's Name had been proclaimed in the same context. Moses and Elijah spoke with the Lord about the 'exodus' He was to perform in His death- that was the basis upon which God's people would be brought out from sin [Egypt] to salvation. And He there crucified is the essence of the Yahweh Name as declared in Ex. 34. This is all saying in a more oblique way what John says, that Yahweh's Name was declared in the cross.

We are described in 2 Cor. 3:18 as also like Moses beholding the glory of God, in terms of His moral perfection as it is in the face of Jesus (see on :6), and as the physical glory reflected off Moses' face, so the more we are in the presence of Jesus, meditating upon His character, the more that glory in a moral sense will increasingly shine off our faces. Paul uses the metaphor of looking in

a mirror, until we find that the image in the mirror is no longer our face but the face of Jesus.

I explained earlier that Moses' speech impediment may well have been from a cleft palate. And yet from this deformity there shone the glory of Yahweh, and we are invited to see ourselves as Moses in this regard.

Exo 34:30 When Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come near him-

The eyes of Israel had seen Yahweh's glory in Ex. 24:17, and it seems the first time they did in fact come up the first part of the mountain even when told not to. But the effect of sin, in this case with the golden calf, is to make man shy of God's glory. But that was only because they had not deeply enough believed in their forgiveness. Perhaps Moses' face only shone now, and not after the previous ascents of the mount, because he needed this extra authority added to him. And yet despite this, Israel still despised and disobeyed him. Clearly enough, visible evidence for God such as this, the manna, the Angel in the pillar of cloud and fire, didn't deeply persuade Israel.

Exo 34:31 Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them-

This calling was surely in the form of words assuring them of God's acceptance of them, and that they need

not fear Yahweh and His glory, despite His holiness and their sinfulness. For He wanted to meet with them in fellowship and acceptance. It was the essence of the Gospel.

Exo 34:32 Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them all of the commandments that Yahweh had spoken with him on Mount Sinai-

We think of Joseph urging his sinful brothers to "come near" to him, to believe in his grace to them, even though they were far from fully penitent (Gen. 45:4 s.w.). It was the same here. It was the priests who "came near" (Ex. 19:22), but we see here how all Israel were bidden "come near". God wanted the all to have intimacy with Him, and not leave it to the religious leaders. And it is the same with us in church life today.

Exo 34:33 When Moses was done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face-

See on 2 Cor. 3:15-18. This was apparently the regular experience of Israel with Moses. Throughout 2 Cor. 3:15-4:6, Paul comments on how Moses' face shone with God's glory, and yet he spoke to Israel through a veil, with the result that Israel did not appreciate God's glory. He speaks of him and all preachers of the true Christian Gospel as "able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6)- clear allusion to Moses as the minister of the old, inferior covenant. Paul uses this to explain why Israel did not respond to his preaching; "if our preaching be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (2 Cor. 4:3). Paul therefore saw himself and his fellow preachers as like Moses, radiating forth the glory of God

in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to an Israel which had the veil upon their heart. This allusion must have so angered the Jews- to suggest that Christian preachers were like Moses!

Moses face didn't shine with glory before, despite his meetings with God. I suggest this was to reflect the fact that God had indeed accepted Moses, and according to his wish, would accept Israel for his sake. All looking forward to the Lord's work.

When a [Jewish] man turns to the Lord Jesus, the veil of obedience to the Law is taken away (2 Cor. 3:16 RVmg.). Yet the Law also led men to Christ; and yet it also veils Him from them- depending whether they read it as God intended. But the "it" which turns to the Lord could refer to the hearts of Jewish people. The veil is the Law; the veil is not taken away by intellectual purity of understanding. It is taken away when the heart turns to the Lord Jesus, and this is the realm of the spirit or heart. *Epistrepho*, "turn to", is a form of *strepho* which is the usual word for conversion. But it is often used of what is done to a person by the Lord- we are converted by Him. 'To be converted' suggests the conversion is done to us. The Lord's wish is to heal and convert human hearts (Mt. 13:15); that they might be healed and converted. John the Baptist's mission was to convert hearts to Jesus as Christ, to turn or convert Israel to the Lord (Lk. 1:16,17). When a heart is turned to the Lord by the Lord, then the veil is taken away. But the person must allow the process to happen, and not harden their hearts against it. If they do, then they shall be confirmed in that

by being hardened the more- as 2 Cor. 3:14 has just stated. It is an openness to the leading of the Lord in the spirit which is so important. It is response to that leading which brings about conversion, rather than decades of poring over ancient Hebrew and Greek words. 2 Cor. 3:17 will go on to speak explicitly about the work of the Lord Jesus as the work of the Spirit.

Exo 34:34 But when Moses went in before Yahweh to speak with Him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and he came out, and spoke to the children of Israel that which he was commanded-

We *each*, with unveiled face, have like Moses seen the glory of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). When Moses saw the glory, he was immediately given a ministry to preach to Israel, to share that glory with them (Ex. 34:34). And Paul drives home the similarity; we *each* have had the experience of Moses, and so “therefore seeing *we* (too, like Moses) have this ministry”, “we each” are to exercise it to Israel. Moses was and is seen in the Jewish world as a larger than life figure. Theologically, Judaism has placed Moses greater even than Messiah. It was the purpose of John's Gospel to correct this. The idea that ordinary believers can in any sense be equal to or even greater than Moses was (and is) absolute anathema to the Jewish mind. And yet through allusion and almost explicit statement, the Lord Jesus and the New Testament writers invite us to see ourselves as equal to or greater than Moses, on account of the spiritual riches made available to us in Christ, with the light of a greater glory shining from our faces too. How radical this was to

the first century mind is extremely hard for us to enter into. The point is, God intellectually stretches us to an extent which may be almost unacceptable to us; as with our first century brethren, we too are challenged to radically turn against many of the concepts and attitudes which are fundamental to our upbringing.

Paul's point is that the "the sons of Israel could not stare intently into the face of Moses"(2 Cor. 3:7), implying that the Christian, by contrast, does stare intently into the face of the Lord Jesus. This is what it is to be a Christian. And to be transformed into His image and reflect His glory.

Exo 34:35 The children of Israel saw Moses' face, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him-

In the same way as Moses spoke to the Angel without a veil on his face, and thereby came to reflect the glory which shone from the Angel's face (Ex. 34:33-35), so we are bidden look at the glory of God in the face of Jesus, to consider his character, and be changed into that same glory by reflecting his character in our lives. By simply beholding the glory of Christ's righteousness, truly appreciating it, we will be changed (2 Cor. 3:15-18 RV). Paul seems to be arguing that whenever a Jew turns to the Lord Jesus and fellowships with Him, then he is living out the pattern of Moses. And further, 2 Cor. 4:3 speaks of our Gospel being 'veiled' to those who are lost-as if *we* are as Moses, the Gospel we preach being as the glory of God which shone from Moses' face. Let's keep remembering how huge and radical was the challenge of

this to a first century Jewish readership for whom Moses was an almost untouchable hero.

Moses couldn't see the direct glory / face of God, he was covered by God's hand and only saw God's back. Perhaps this in turn is reflected by how God hid His glory from Israel through the veil on Moses' face. But thereby they were encouraged to aspire to the place of Moses on the mountain, hidden from God's full glory but nonetheless seeing some of it. It cannot be that the High Priestly blessing lacks reference to Moses' shining face: "May Yahweh make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you" (Num. 6:25). The shining of His face spoke of the experience of grace, just as the revelation of God's Name and physical glory to Moses had spoken of His grace to Israel, forgiving the impenitent, those who had committed adultery on their wedding night to Yahweh. And He thereby gave them peace, the peace from knowing His grace and forgiveness. Ps. 80:4 connects the shining of God's face with restoration and salvation- which is the exact context here, where the covenant has been restored by grace and Israel saved from destruction as God's people: "O God, restore us! And make your face shine that we might be saved!". But the vision of that face, that grace, was veiled to them. The High Priestly blessing was therefore a wish that they would see beyond the veil to Yahweh's actual glory, and not be scared by grace. This wish and intention comes to full term in our behold-

ing with unveiled face the glory of the Lord Jesus, far greater than the glory Moses saw.

In Psalm 90 Moses pleads for his rejection and that of his people to be reversed. He says that the reason for their rejection was God setting their "secret sins" in the light of His countenance (Ps. 90:8). He felt his rejection was due to his secret sins- not the one painfully public failure. The Hebrew for "secret" means 'that behind the veil'; it is from the same root as the Hebrew for 'young girl', i.e. a veiled one. He felt the sins he had committed behind the veil had been exposed in the light of the Angel's face. Remember that Moses always appeared to Israel with a veil (Ex. 34:33-35; 2 Cor. 3:16-18 RV), only removing it when he spoke face to face with the Angel, radiating the light of God's glory to him. It seems Moses is alluding to this in Ps. 90:8; he felt that he had many secret sins, hidden to Israel, but completely open to the Angel when he met with him. Likewise Israel were rejected because of the sins of their heart rather than their grosser failures (Acts 7:39; and see the reason for their condemnation given in many other passages). "You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your face" (Ps. 90:8) is not Moses reproaching God; rather is it him soberly recognizing why they were barred from the land. Notice "our iniquities... our sins"- Moses was completely at one with condemned Israel, he knew exactly how they felt- just as the Lord Jesus with us.

"But we, with an unveiled face and reflecting the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). "Beholding as in a mirror" (RV). In the same way as Moses spoke to the Angel with-

out a veil on his face, and thereby came to reflect the glory which shone from the Angel's face (Ex. 34:33-35), so we are bidden look at the glory of God in the face of Jesus, to consider his character, and be changed into that same glory by reflecting his character in our lives. By simply beholding the glory of Christ's righteousness, truly appreciating it, we will be changed (2 Cor. 3:15-18 RV). Christ-centeredness, regularly thinking of Him, grabbing a few verses from the Gospel records in the course of the day- this is the essence of the Christian life, of beholding Him with unveiled face. Paul seems to be arguing that whenever a Jew turns to the Lord Jesus and fellowships with Him, then he is living out the pattern of Moses. And further, 2 Cor. 4:3 speaks of our Gospel being 'veiled' to those who are lost- as if we are as Moses, the Gospel we preach being as the glory of God which shone from Moses' face. Let's keep remembering how huge and radical was the challenge of this to a first century Jewish readership for whom Moses was an almost untouchable hero.

2 Cor. 3 speaks of our beholding the glory of the Lord Jesus in a mirror; and this process slowly transforms us into that same image of Him which we see. The "glory" of God was revealed to Moses at Sinai in Ex. 34 as the declaration of His character. In this sense, the Lord Jesus could speak of having in His mortal life "that glory which was with [the Father]" when the [Jewish] world came into existence at Sinai (Jn. 17:5 Ethiopic and Western Text). It was that same glory which, like Moses, He reflected to men. But according to 2 Cor.

3:18, the very experience of gazing upon the glory of His character will change us into a reflection of it. There is something transforming about the very personality of Jesus. And perhaps this is why we have such a psychological barrier to thinking about Him deeply. We know that it has the power to transform and intrude into our innermost darkness. I have given reason elsewhere for believing that the Gospel records are in fact transcripts of the Gospel message preached by the four evangelists. The 'Gospel according to Matthew' is therefore the Gospel message which he usually preached. And it's significant that at least three of them start and end where many of us would- starting with the promises to the Jewish fathers, and concluding with an appeal for baptism. Actually John's Gospel does this too, if you decode the language he uses. This is surely the explanation of the Lord's otherwise strange remark that wherever the Gospel is preached, the anointing of His feet by Mary would be part of that message. And this is one of the few incidents that all four Gospel writers each mention. What this shows is that the Gospel message is in its quintessence, the account of the man Christ Jesus- with all that involves. It has truly been commented that "the central message of the gospels is not the teaching of Jesus but Jesus himself". This is true insofar as Jesus is the word made flesh.

A mirror by its very nature, because of what it is, reflects the light which falls upon it to others. If we have really seen the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will inevitably reflect it to others. Jesus didn't say 'Do good

works so that men may see the light'. He said "let your light shine" - and then men will see your good works and glorify the Father. Paul puts the same principle another way when he says that we're all mirrors (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). We naturally reflect to others what has been reflected into us by the Lord Jesus. A mirror by its very nature, because of what it is, reflects the light which falls upon it to others. If we have really seen the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will inevitably reflect it to others. Many of the Lord's parables portray the [preaching of] the Gospel of the Kingdom of God as a kind of secret force: treasure hidden in a field, the tiniest seed in the garden, wheat growing among weeds, a pinch of yeast worked into dough, salt on meat... these are all images of something which works from within, changing other people in an ongoing, regular manner.

EXODUS CHAPTER 35

Exo 35:1 Moses assembled all the congregation of the children of Israel, and said to them, These are the words which Yahweh has commanded, that you should do them-

The commands to build the tabernacle are repeated twice in Exodus, and there is the record of Israel's golden calf apostasy set in the middle of them. Ex. 25:1-31:18 give the tabernacle building commands, then there's the golden calf incident, and then the commands are repeated in Ex. 35-40. Surely this was edited in this manner to give encouragement to the exiles- the commands to rebuild the temple had been given in detail in Ez. 40-48, but the exiles failed- and yet, the implication runs, God was still willing to work again with His people in the building of His sanctuary despite their failure. There is good internal reason to think that the Pentateuch likewise was re-written in places to bring out the relevance of Israel's past to those in captivity.

Exo 35:2 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of solemn rest to Yahweh: whoever does any work in it shall be put to death-

Israel were to put to death those who were so addicted to works that they refused to keep the Sabbath. This was how earnestly God wished to impress upon them the need for salvation by grace rather than works. It was because God's people had been sanctified or made holy (Ex. 31:13) that they were to sanctify or set apart / make

holy the seventh day for God's service. We are to respond to God's setting of us apart- by setting apart what we have for Him. That is the essential take away from this, even though we are no longer required to keep the Sabbath.

Exo 35:3 You shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day.'

It has been widely noted that many elements of the ten commandments are to be found in the legislation of Mesopotamia. Thus there are references to the Sabbath being kept as a monthly festival; and later "the name Shabattu was applied by the Babylonians and Assyrians to the day of the full moon, the fifteenth of the month, which was especially dedicated to the worship of the moon-god... the days of the full moon were considered days of ill luck... the Israelite Sabbath was instituted, it seems, in antithesis to the Mesopotamian system" (Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary On The Book Of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997) p. 244). Thus most pagan festivals of the time were begun by the lighting of a candle in the home; but a candle was not to be kindled on the Sabbath (Ex. 35:3). Yahweh *blessed* the Sabbath (Ex. 20:11). Work was not to be done so as to rest and remember God's creative grace; whereas in pagan thought, work wasn't done because 'Sabbath' was an unlucky day on which it was best to do as little as possible in case some 'Satan' figure struck. Such belief was being deconstructed in the Sabbath law.

Exo 35:4 Moses spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which Yahweh commanded, saying-

"All the congregation" rather than "the princes" is stressed because the entire people were invited to donate.

Exo 35:5 'Take from among you an offering to Yahweh. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, Yahweh's offering: gold, silver, brass-

Willing hearted giving to God is important- the giving must never be from a sense of unavoidable obligation. In appealing for generosity to our poorer brethren, Paul uses this idea- speaking of how a willing heart in a cheerful giver is so loved by God (2 Cor. 8:19; 9:7).

Paul pleads with Corinth to see the similarities between them and the ecclesia in the wilderness; he wants them to personalize it all. He sees their gathering and redistribution of wealth as exactly analogous to Israel's gathering of manna (2 Cor. 8:15)- and he so wishes his Corinthians to think themselves into Israel's shoes. For then they would realize that as Israel had to have a willing heart to give back to God the wealth of Egypt which He had given them, so they were to have a willing heart in being generous to their poorer brethren (Ex. 35:5 = 2 Cor. 8:12). And they would have realized that as "last year" they had made this offer (2 Cor. 8:10 Gk.), so the year before, Israel had received Egypt's wealth with a similar undertaking to use it for the Lord's cause. As Moses had to remind them a second time of their obligations in Ex. 35, so Paul had to bring it again before Corinth. And if they had seen these similarities, they

would have got the sense of Paul's lament that there was not one wise hearted man amongst them- for the "wise hearted" were to convert Israel's gold and silver into tools for Yahweh's service (Ex. 35:10 = 1 Cor. 6:5; 2 Cor. 10:12).

Exo 35:6 blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goats' hair-

These were the things which Israel had taken with them from Egypt (Ex. 12:36); we likewise should use whatever resources we have taken from this world [cp. Egypt] in order to do God's work and build and enhance His dwelling place amongst His people. There is an apparent juxtaposition between the scarlet, the clothing of kings and rulers, and goats' hair. They had taken the scarlet clothing from Egypt when they left, but the goats' hair was what they had shorn from their own animals which they had with them. So God was asking them to bring their own small offerings along with the more valuable things they had taken from Egypt / the world. This all speaks of our attitude to giving and wealth on our wilderness journey.

Exo 35:7 rams' skins dyed red, sea cow hides-

The sea cow hides were what they had picked up whilst camped on the shores of the Red Sea. Likewise what we pick up along the way in our wilderness journey is to be given to God.

Acacia wood-

Acacia was plentiful in the wilderness, but it is little more than brushwood; a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common,

weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and broken in order to do His work (as also in Ez. 15:2-5).

Exo 35:8 oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense-

Ex. 27:20 had commanded "that they bring to you pure olive oil beaten for the light". But here we read that they only brought "oil". "Pure olive oil" apparently refers to olive juice which bursts naturally from the first ripe olives. But we enquire where Israel obtained olive oil from in the wilderness, especially such "pure" olive oil to such great amounts as required here? Perhaps they had been given lots of it as they left Egypt and gave it to the priests. But that would not have been this fresh, "pure" oil. So I think they simply brought ordinary olive oil, as stated here. And they did this for 40 years? I suggest as on Ex. 27:8 that this was God's ideal intention, and many of these laws were applicable only in contexts when obedience to them was possible. God's law is not therefore at all a reflection of a God who is a literalist or legalist. For by its nature, the law of Moses shows that He was not like that.

Exo 35:9 onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod and for the breastplate-

The precious stones were donated by the princes or elders (Ex. 35:27). Yet they are listed along with com-

mon acacia wood and goats' hair. There was to be a culture of giving, from the wealthiest to the poorest, which was to characterize the community of God's people.

Exo 35:10 Let every wise-hearted man among you come, and make all that Yahweh has commanded-

As in Ex. 28:3, the wise were given wisdom, in keeping with God's principle of confirming people in the way in which they themselves choose to go. This is how God's Spirit also works today on human hearts. "That they *may* make..." (Ex. 28:3 AV) hints at the way in which God's Spirit is given, but people must still respond to it. Thus the Corinthians were given the Spirit (1 Cor. 1), but didn't use it; and so Paul couldn't speak to them as spiritual people (1 Cor. 3:1). Perhaps only Bezaleel and Aholiab were wise hearted, although it was God's intention that there should be many such- which would mean Paul may be alluding here in lamenting that there was not a wise hearted man in Corinth (1 Cor. 6:5).

Exo 35:11 the tabernacle, its outer covering, its roof, its clasps, its boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets-

The ark was covered in the tabernacle by the various layers of the tent detailed in Ex. 26:1-6: sea cows' skins, red rams skins, goats hair, blue, purple, scarlet and linen. These would form a kind of rainbow over the ark, and above that there was the Angel in the pillar of cloud or fire. This "pattern of things in the Heavens" (Heb. 9:23,24) replicated the visions of a throne (the ark) over-arched by a rainbow and the glory of God.

When David says in 2 Sam. 7:2 that he doesn't want Yahweh to have to dwell in "curtains", this doesn't mean

that David was concerned that God's ark was under a tent, whilst he lived in a house. Rather is the reference to the ten curtains which comprised the tabernacle. David was assuming that he could change the Mosaic commandments about the tabernacle, and move God's purpose forward to something more permanent. We see here how he didn't consider the laws of Moses [of which the commands about the tabernacle were part] to be static. He saw them as open to interpretation and development. This was not a position he came to lightly, seeing he had been terribly punished for thinking he could flout the legislation about how the ark was to be transported.

Exo 35:12 the ark, and its poles, the mercy seat, the veil of the screen-

"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold.

Exo 35:13 the table with its poles and all its vessels, and the show bread-

The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, sta-

ble closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God.

Exo 35:14 the lampstand also for the light, with its vessels, its lamps, and the oil for the light;-

We read in 1 Jn. 2:20,27 that we have each been anointed. The idea of anointing was to signal the initiation of someone. I'd therefore be inclined to see 1 Jn. 2:20,27 as alluding to baptism; when we become in Christ, in the anointed, then as 2 Cor. 1:21 says, we too are anointed in a sense. We're given a specific mission and purpose. "The anointing that you received" would therefore refer to our commissioning at baptism. It seems to imply a one time act of being anointed / commissioned / inaugurated for service. Baptism isn't therefore merely an initiation into a community; it's a specific commissioning for active service, in ways which are unique to us. We do well to bring this point out to those we prepare for baptism. The words for 'anointing' are unique to 1 John but they occur in the LXX to describe the anointing / initiation of the priests, and of the tabernacle / dwelling place of God (e.g. Ex. 29:7; 35:14,28). John sees us as the dwelling place / tabernacle of the Father.

Exo 35:15 and the altar of incense with its poles, the anointing oil, the sweet incense, the screen for the door, at the door of the tabernacle-

The structure of the tabernacle pointed ahead to man's approach to God under the Christian dispensation. First, a man had to bow his head in order to pass through the gate. Humility is essential. Then there was acceptance of the principle of sacrifice, the large altar; followed by the laver or washing basin, speaking of baptism. Beyond that is the table of shewbread (breaking of bread), the candlestick (church life) and the incense altar (prayer). After this is the veil, through which we can pass in Christ into the most holy place, and the presence of God Himself.

Exo 35:16 the altar of burnt offering, with its grating of brass, its poles, and all its vessels, the basin and its base-

For "poles" see on :13. For the basin / laver and altar, see on :15.

Exo 35:17 the hangings of the court, its pillars, their sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court-

As discussed on :15, the entrance to the court was of such a height that a man would need to bow his head to enter- a sign that humility was and remains the initial and crucial requirement for a person who wishes to come to God, and begin the journey which ends in fellowship with God Himself, His very presence [cp. the ark in the most holy].

Exo 35:18 the pins of the tabernacle, the pins of the court, and their cords-

The "pins" are the tent pegs.

Exo 35:19 the finely worked garments, for ministering in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest,

and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office'-

The first group of garments were not the same as the "holy garments", and likely refer to aprons, towels and the coverings for the tabernacle items whilst they were transported.

Exo 35:20 All the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses-

The departing and coming back with the gifts (:22) applies to both men and women (:22). So "all the congregation" included women- in a society where religion was largely a male preserve, Yahweh's call involved both men and women.

Exo 35:21 They came, everyone whose heart stirred him up, and everyone whom his spirit made willing, and brought Yahweh's offering, for the work of the Tent of Meeting, and for all of its service, and for the holy garments-

The "everyone" who had material gave it for the construction of the tabernacle, according to Ex. 35:23; although this "every man" is elsewhere defined as "every one whom his spirit made willing" to donate (Ex. 35:21). "Every knee shall bow to me... every tongue shall confess... so then every one *of us* shall give account" (Rom. 14:11,12) is another example- 'all men', 'every man' means 'every one of God's people'.

Exo 35:22 They came, both men and women-

The rabbis claim that this means that the men followed the women, as if the women were more enthusiastic. LXX "And the men, even every one to whom it seemed good in his heart, brought from the women...". It

is observable that Aaron asked the women to bring their earrings and jewellery to make the golden calf, but it is only recorded that the men responded. Which is why the women now provided their jewellery for the tabernacle. There might possibly be a hint that the women were generally more spiritually committed than the men at this point. it could be that the items now listed are more appropriate to female jewellery. And in this context, :25,26 stress the work of the women in making the tabernacle materials.

As many as were willing-hearted, and brought brooches, earrings, signet rings, and armlets, all jewels of gold; even every man who offered an offering of gold to Yahweh-

2 Cor. 8:12 alludes here: "If there be first (i.e. most importantly) a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" . Every man was to contribute to the building of the tabernacle (cp. the ecclesia) with a willing heart (Paul surely alludes here). They weren't told: 'Whoever is willing and able to contribute, please do so'. And yet the majority of us have at least something materially; and as we have been blessed, so let us give.

Willing hearted giving to God is important- the giving must never be from a sense of unavoidable obligation. In appealing for generosity to our poorer brethren, Paul uses this idea- speaking of how a willing heart in a cheerful giver is so loved by God (2 Cor. 8:19; 9:7).

Exo 35:23 Everyone, with whom was found blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red-

We wonder whether literally "everyone" made these offerings. Because it was a vast congregation, and the tabernacle items were all very small scale. This may be an example of the generally positive language used by God at this time- for He did not behold iniquity in Israel at this time because he was as it were in love with them.

And sea cow hides, brought them-

The sea cow hides were what they had picked up whilst camped on the shores of the Red Sea. Likewise what we pick up along the way in our wilderness journey is to be given to God.

Exo 35:24 Everyone who offered an offering of silver and brass brought Yahweh's offering; and everyone, with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service, brought it-

The acacia wood was just the common bush wood found in the desert. It is juxtaposed against offering of silver. See on :23. The generous response of the Israelites in giving towards the tabernacle was surely because it was not demanded of them but merely their assistance was invited (Ex. 35:24).

Exo 35:25 All the women who were wise-hearted spun with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, the blue, the purple, the scarlet, and the fine linen-

This and :26 stresses the work of the women in making the tabernacle materials. I discussed on :22 how there might possibly be a hint in the record that the women were generally more spiritually committed than the men at this point.

Exo 35:26 All the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun the goats' hair-

See on :25. The wise hearted were given the Spirit of God's wisdom in confirmation of this (Ex. 36:2). We read here of a mental, psychological stirring up; the Spirit of God thus works in harmony with the human spirit. And this is how God works in willing human hearts to this day. It is part of the gift of the Spirit involved in the new covenant (Ez. 20; Jer. 31,32) that God can directly revive or stir up human hearts (Is. 57:15). He works directly upon human minds and psychologies.

Exo 35:27 The rulers brought the onyx stones, and the stones to be set, for the ephod and for the breastplate-

The precious stones were donated by the princes or elders. Yet in Ex. 25:4-7 they are listed along with common acacia wood and goats' hair. There was to be a culture of giving, from the wealthiest to the poorest, which was to characterize the community of God's people.

Exo 35:28 and the spice, and the oil for the light, for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense-

The incense was "sweet" in that it smelled sweet to God. But that depended upon the components being brought to Him. "A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means

strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Exo 35:29 The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to Yahweh; every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all the work, which Yahweh had commanded to be made by Moses-

The Hebrew word here and in Ex. 36:3 for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as

part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Exo 35:30 Moses said to the children of Israel, Behold, Yahweh has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah-

To be called by name meant that this man had a special purpose intended for him ahead of time; "name" in Hebrew suggests a personality and character. But we too are called by name as Jeremiah was. There were good works intended for us to do, designed before the world was. But like Bezalel, we must accept the gift of God's Spirit in order to fulfil those intentions and potentials (Acts 15:18; Eph. 2:10).

Bezaleel means shelter of / for God, appropriate for a man who built His tent / tabernacle. This reinforces the idea that God prefers to dwell in a tent, and not in a physical brick building. David and Solomon willfully ignored this in their obsession with building a temple. It's possible (although see my commentary on 1 Chron. 2:18) that Bezaleel was little more than a child. For 1 Chron. 2:19,20 says that Caleb was the father of Hur. Caleb was only 40 when he first spied out the land (Josh. 14:7). "The son of..." is not a precise term in Hebrew and can simply mean a relative, but there is still the idea of a relative in a younger generation than the 'father'. Bezaleel was a generation or two older than Bezaleel;

and when Caleb was 40, Bezaleel made the tabernacle that same year. This would be typical of how God works through the weak and those considered inappropriate by men. He gave His Spirit to the young Bezaleel, who may have been only 12 years old, and through him built His dwelling place. We can be sure there would have been many older and experienced builders, who had worked for the Egyptian building projects, who would have been far more qualified in secular terms.

Exo 35:31 He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of workmanship-

As in Ex. 28:3, the wise were given wisdom, in keeping with God's principle of confirming people in the way in which they themselves choose to go. This is how God's Spirit also works today on human hearts. "That they *may* make..." (Ex. 28:3 AV) hints at the way in which God's Spirit is given, but people must still respond to it. Thus the Corinthians were given the Spirit (1 Cor. 1), but didn't use it; and so Paul couldn't speak to them as spiritual people (1 Cor. 3:1).

Wisdom and knowledge were what God created the world with (Prov. 3:19,20), so the idea may be that this tabernacle was a new creation. These men could have refused to do what God asked them. This passage appears to be the basis upon which Paul tells us that each of us have "good works" which God has in mind for us to do, and we must exercise our freewill to perceive them and go do them (Eph. 2:10).

Exo 35:32 and to make skilful works, to work in gold, in silver, in brass-

The Divine commands about the tabernacle likewise allude to the ideas of the surrounding nations, and yet bring out significant differences. In the same way as the Babylonians believed that the temple of Marduk in Babylon was a reflection of the Heavenly temple, so the tabernacle was also a reflection of the pattern of Yahweh's Heavenly temple. The Canaanites spoke of their god El as living in a tent- just as Yahweh dwelt in a tent. The Ugaritic epic of King Keret speaks of how "The gods proceed to their tents, the family of El to their tabernacles" (Tablet 2 D, 5, 31-33). El's tabernacle was thought to be constructed of boards- just as Yahweh's tabernacle was. Both had a veil, just as the Moslem shrine in Mecca has one. But there were significant differences. The Canaanite legends speak of the gods building their temples themselves; Cassuto points out that the very terms used about Bezaleel's skill and talent in building the tabernacle are used in Canaanite legends about the skill and talent of the gods in supposedly building their own temples. Perhaps the Exodus record so labours the point that Moses and the Israelites built Yahweh's tabernacle is in order to highlight the difference between the one true God and the pagan gods, who had to build their own tabernacles.

Exo 35:33 in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all kinds of skilful workmanship-

The stones in the breastplate and shoulder pieces would have had to be of the same size, and yet the jewels

given to Israel on leaving Egypt would have been of different sizes. They would have had to be cut, and also cut in order to reflect the light in an optimal way.

Exo 35:34 He has put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan-

The whole phrase "Behold I have given you..." (Gen. 1:28) occurs later when the Priests are told what God has given them (Ex. 31:6; Lev. 6:10; Num. 18:8,21; Dt. 11:14). What God did at creation, He can do at any time. When Moses "finished the work" of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:33), there is clear allusion to God 'finishing the work' of creation (Gen. 2:2).

The wise were made more wise- an idea we often encounter in the opening chapters of Proverbs. God confirms men and women in the way they wish to go, through the work of His Spirit; if they wish to do His work and build up His dwelling place, He will confirm them in their natural talents and give them new ones.

Exo 35:35 He has filled them with wisdom of heart, to work all kinds of workmanship, of the engraver, of the skilful workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of those who do any workmanship, and of those who make skilful works-

"The skilful workman" [singular] of Ex. 28:15 and elsewhere may specifically refer to Aholiab (Ex. 35:35; 38:23). Perhaps Paul saw in this man a representation of us all- for he urged us likewise to be careful workmen

when it comes to the understanding and teaching of God's word (2 Tim. 2:15).

EXODUS CHAPTER 36

Exo 36:1 Bezalel and Oholiab shall work with every wise-hearted man, in whom Yahweh has put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all the work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that Yahweh has commanded-

As in Ex. 28:3, the wise were given wisdom, in keeping with God's principle of confirming people in the way in which they themselves choose to go. This is how God's Spirit also works today on human hearts. "That they *may* make..." (Ex. 28:3 AV) hints at the way in which God's Spirit is given, but people must still respond to it. Thus the Corinthians were given the Spirit (1 Cor. 1), but didn't use it; and so Paul couldn't speak to them as spiritual people (1 Cor. 3:1).

Exo 36:2 Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab, and every wise-hearted man, in whose heart Yahweh had put wisdom, even everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to the work to do it-

There is a careful parallel between Yahweh's action upon the human heart by His Spirit, and the freewill stirrings of the human heart. And yet the work of the Holy Spirit is not simply to confirm the state of the human spirit; it also places ideas within the human heart, according to a schema and equilibrium currently unknowable by us. But we can be assured that grace, and the Divine initiative, is uppermost in that final equation.

Bezaleel means shelter of / for God, appropriate for a man who built His tent / tabernacle. This reinforces the idea that God prefers to dwell in a tent, and not in a physical brick building. David and Solomon willfully ignored this in their obsession with building a temple. It's possible (although see my commentary on 1 Chron. 2:18) that Bezaleel was little more than a child. For 1 Chron. 2:19,20 says that Caleb was the father of Hur. Caleb was only 40 when he first spied out the land (Josh. 14:7). "The son of..." is not a precise term in Hebrew and can simply mean a relative, but there is still the idea of a relative in a younger generation than the 'father'. Bezaleel was a generation or two older than Bezaleel; and when Caleb was 40, Bezaleel made the tabernacle that same year. This would be typical of how God works through the weak and those considered inappropriate by men. He gave His Spirit to the young Bezaleel, who may have been only 12 years old, and through him built His dwelling place. We can be sure there would have been many older and experienced builders, who had worked for the Egyptian building projects, who would have been far more qualified in secular terms.

Exo 36:3 and they received from Moses all the offering which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, with which to make it. They brought yet to him freewill offerings every morning-

The Hebrew word here and in Ex. 35:29 for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense

of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Exo 36:4 All the wise men, who performed all the work of the sanctuary, each came from his work which they did-

These "wise" were from all tribes of Israel. The phrase "performed all the work of the sanctuary" appears to consciously reflect the language of the Levites and priests. Repeatedly we find the hint that it was God's wish that all His people would do the work He had given to the Levites.

Exo 36:5 and they spoke to Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which Yahweh commanded to make-

The size of the tabernacle and the items within it was very small. There was no need for a huge volume of donations; what was required was wise hearted workers, filled with the Spirit. And as ever, these were in deficit; it's far easier to donate material things than to be a worker with a Spirit filled heart.

Exo 36:6 Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make anything else for the offering for the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing-

Israel were extremely generous to God's work, whilst at the same time carrying with them the idols of Egypt and in their hearts wanting to return there (Ez. 20:7,8; Acts 7:42,43). We too can be externally supportive of God's work whilst in our hearts being far from Him; this is the nature of our human condition which we must battle against. God above all seeks our hearts and not our external works.

Exo 36:7 For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.

"Stuff" translates the same Hebrew translated "work" later in the sentence. There may be the hint that the donors saw their generosity as an opportunity for justification by works; hence their great enthusiasm to 'do' it.

Exo 36:8 All the wise-hearted men among those who did the work made the tabernacle with ten curtains; of fine twined linen, blue, purple, and scarlet, with cherubim, the work of the skilful workman, they made them-

The ark was covered in the tabernacle by the various layers of the tent detailed in Ex. 26:1-6: sea cows' skins, red rams skins, goats hair, blue, purple, scarlet and linen. These would form a kind of rainbow over the ark, and above that there was the Angel in the pillar of cloud or fire. This "pattern of things in the Heavens" (Heb.

9:23,24) replicated the visions of a throne (the ark) over-arched by a rainbow and the glory of God.

When David says in 2 Sam. 7:2 that he doesn't want Yahweh to have to dwell in "curtains", this doesn't mean that David was concerned that God's ark was under a tent, whilst he lived in a house. Rather is the reference to the ten curtains which comprised the tabernacle. David was assuming that he could change the Mosaic commandments about the tabernacle, and move God's purpose forward to something more permanent. We see here how he didn't consider the laws of Moses [of which the commands about the tabernacle were part] to be static. He saw them as open to interpretation and development. This was not a position he came to lightly, seeing he had been terribly punished for thinking he could flout the legislation about how the ark was to be transported.

Many of the commands within the "law of Moses" were clearly only intended for the wilderness generation, indeed they could only have been obeyed by them then; and David wondered whether the entire commands about the tabernacle were in that category. Those today who claim that Mosaic legislation is eternally binding need to give this due weight. It's not just that the Mosaic law was abrogated by the Lord's death; but the whole nature of that law was that it was never intended to all be literally applied to every subsequent generation. And that meant that it was the spirit of it which was to be discerned and followed.

Exo 36:9 The length of each curtain was twenty-eight cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits. All the curtains had one measure-

28 cubits is 42 feet (12.8 meters), and 4 cubits is 6 feet (1.8 meters). "Curtain" in Hebrew is literally a thing which hang and shakes, and the essential word is used for "fear". The impression is of man trembling before Yahweh's holiness.

Exo 36:10 He coupled five curtains to one another, and the other five curtains he coupled one to another-

"Coupled together" is s.w. "have fellowship with" (Ps. 94:20), and often of men 'joining together'. Clearly we are to sense that the curtains represented God's people. The theme of coupling and joining together occurs throughout the record of the tabernacle. Unity amongst believers is to be the outcome of the indwelling of God's glory. Disunity results from simply not having perceived His glory. For before that, all disunity disappears as we are awed by His grace and convicted of our own smallness and unworthiness.

Exo 36:11 He made loops of blue on the edge of the one curtain from the edge in the coupling. Likewise he made in the edge of the curtain that was outmost in the second coupling-

See on :9. "Blue" may refer to a mussel they had picked up on the shores of the Red Sea, which was used for dying things blue. If we wish to attach symbolic meaning to everything- and that isn't necessarily the right way to read the tabernacle account- then we could think of "blue" as representing the sky, heaven. It is of

God that we are bound together, linked together by His Spirit in a unity which can only come from Him. For the human tendency is naturally to disagreement and disunity rather than to unity.

Exo 36:12 He made fifty loops in the one curtain, and he made fifty loops in the edge of the curtain that was in the second coupling. The loops were opposite one to another-

The record loves to stress the interlocking nature of the tabernacle. This points forward to our unity between each other, linked together by the blue loops of Heaven; God's unity. See on :11.

Exo 36:13 He made fifty clasps of gold, and coupled the curtains one to another with the clasps: so the tabernacle was a unit-

There is great emphasis that the tabernacle was "one", joined together in such a way that taught the lesson of unity. The spiritual tabernacle, the believers, was "pitched" by the Lord- translating a Greek word which suggests 'crucifixion' (Heb. 8:2). Through the cross, the one, united tabernacle was pitched. To tear down that structure by disuniting the body is to undo the work of the cross.

Exo 36:14 He made curtains of goats' hair for a covering over the tabernacle. He made them eleven curtains-

"Covering" is literally 'a tent'. There was to be a tent over the tent, as if a vertical expression of the horizontal division of the tabernacle into the holy and most holy places. The external appearance of the tabernacle would therefore have been rough; and beauty was on the inside. This contrasts with the pagan way of attaching value to

external beauty, whilst inside, the places of worship were not so attractive. God looks upon the internal, upon the heart; and leaves the external as unattractive to secular eyes.

Exo 36:15 The length of each curtain was thirty cubits, and four cubits the breadth of each curtain. The eleven curtains had one measure-

Comparing this with the size of the actual tabernacle, which is far smaller, it is clear that the tent which covered it must have been sloped, and also probably extended to each side of the tabernacle. Hence the mention of an overhang in Ex. 26:12.

Exo 36:16 He coupled five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves-

"By themselves" is s.w. "pole" or "stave", and this makes better sense. The idea is 'curtains on poles' or curtain rods.

Exo 36:17 He made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that was outmost in the coupling, and he made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain which was outmost in the second coupling-

The tabernacle represents God's dwelling place. He now no longer lives in any physical structure, but in the hearts of His people, who between them comprise His new dwelling place. We can however learn lessons from the principles behind the tabernacle construction. Great emphasis was placed on how the components were all interlocking- the curtains coupled together, the boards were joined by bars etc. It is by our unity and connection

with each other that God will dwell amongst us. Christianity can't be lived in isolation- we need each other.

Exo 36:18 He made fifty clasps of brass to couple the tent together, that it might be a unit-

The account of the tabernacle labours the point that the whole house of God, this huge but delicate structure, was held together by "clasps of brass to couple the tent together, that it might be one" (Ex. 36:18 and often). "That it might be one" is alluded to by the Lord when He prayed for His people, "that they might be one" (Jn. 17:11,21-23). The tabernacle system was based around a mass of boards, tenons, curtain couplings etc. God's dwelling place, His house, hangs together by millions of inter-personal connections. "Out of church Christians", in the sense of those who think they can go it alone in splendid isolation, are totally missing the point- just as much as those churches who refuse to meaningfully accept others as being in the body of Christ despite acknowledging that they have been baptized into the body.

Exo 36:19 He made a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of sea cow hides above-

See on :15. The "part that remains" is the half-breadth by which the rough outer tent would overlap the linen covering.

Exo 36:20 He made the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing up-

"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from

this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

"Standing up" seems to mean that the boards were not to merely sink into the dust of the earth, but to hold together in such a way that they would be stable, because the outer tent would keep the wind from blowing over the structure. This detail may be significant if we follow through the idea that the boards represent God's people. They are not to sink into the dust, but to take strength and stability from connection with each other, and to trust in God's protection from the wind.

Exo 36:21 Ten cubits was the length of a board, and a cubit and a half the breadth of each board-

Acacia bushes don't grow so long nor straight. These boards would have been very difficult to construct (see on :20), and would have involved much joining together of pieces of wood which were difficult to work with. It was an appropriate symbol for the kind of human material which goes to make up God's dwelling place. For God dwells in the community of His people, and not within wood and stone. The materials of the tabernacle therefore represent us His people. See on :22.

Exo 36:22 Each board had two tenons, joined one to another. He made all the boards of the tabernacle this way-

"Tenons" is the word for "hands", again encouraging us to see the boards as God's people, joined together by as it were holding hands. See on :21.

Exo 36:23 He made the boards for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the south side southward-

Heb. "on the south side, to the right". Semitic thought is often expressed from the perspective of a person facing east. See on :25.

Exo 36:24 He made forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for its two tenons, and two sockets under another board for its two tenons-

If each socket weighed a talent (Ex. 38:27), the forty silver sockets would have been really big and solid. The connection between the boards was critical, because according to Ex. 26:15 they were "standing up". This seems to mean that the boards were not to merely sink into the

dust of the earth, but to hold together in such a way that they would be stable. So the large size and weight of the sockets is appropriate. The internal cohesion and corroboration within the account of the tabernacle is such that it is a profound reflection of the Divine inspiration of the record.

Exo 36:25 For the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, he made twenty boards-

"The north side" is literally "the left side". As noted on Ex. 36:23, the south side was "to the right". Semitic thought is often expressed from the perspective of a person facing east. The left hand side was considered the side of lesser favour (Gen 48:13-20). This perhaps was why the candlestick was placed on the right or south side of the tent (Ex. 40:24).

Exo 36:26 and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board-

Sockets, *eden*, is related to *adon*, "Lord", in that the word carries the same idea of strength. Again, language appropriate to persons is used of the tabernacle components; for the whole thing pointed forward to the body of believers, in whom God walks and dwells.

Exo 36:27 For the far part of the tabernacle westward he made six boards-

"Westward" is LXX "the back". These six boards would have given a breadth of only nine cubits. We can therefore conclude that the corner post boards of :28 on each side were half a cubit broad, to account for the extra cubit.

Exo 36:28 He made two boards for the corners of the tabernacle in the far part-

As explained on :27, these corner posts were half a cubit broad.

Exo 36:29 They were double beneath, and in the same way they were all the way to its top to one ring. He did this to both of them in the two corners-

The Hebrew of the commandment in Ex. 26:24 is unclear. GNB, which uses "frames" instead of NEV "boards", offers: "These corner frames are to be joined at the bottom and connected all the way to the top. The two frames that form the two corners are to be made in this way".

Exo 36:30 There were eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; under every board two sockets-

The LXX gives "posts" instead of "boards", suggesting there may have been other material in between those posts. "Sockets" is rendered "bases" by some. The idea was that the boards did not sink down into the dust of the earth (see on :15), but the whole structure was kept upright by the tight connection between the boards / posts. These "eight boards" are the six and two of :27,28.

Exo 36:31 He made bars of acacia wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle-

As noted often, acacia wood is very weak. The bars themselves would likely have been made from various parts of this weak bush wood being joined together. The boards likewise were made of this very weak material which it was difficult to join together. But the overall design enabled the whole system to stand strongly, with-

out sinking into the earth (Ex. 26:15), because of the strength of the interconnections. It is a profound picture of the strength of the overall body of believers thanks to the working of God's Spirit and His design; at least potentially. And the strength is only possible if the interconnections are made and not broken by petty arguments about "fellowship".

There is an exact symmetry between the commands to make the tabernacle items- e.g. "You shall make bars..." (Ex. 26:26) - and the record of the fulfilment of the work: "He made... bars". This is to demonstrate how strictly obedient Moses was to all the commands, hence the comment that he was faithfully obedient in all the work of God's house (Heb. 3:2,5). In all this, Moses was a type of the perfect obedience of Christ to God. However, we also note that earlier in his life, Moses tended to argue back with God and find every reason *not* to be obedient. As he grew spiritually, he became more naturally and enthusiastically obedient to God's demands rather than trying to find ways around them, and as such he becomes a pattern for our spiritual growth too.

Exo 36:32 and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle for the hinder part westward-

We are left to assume that these bars would have passed through rings made on the boards for this purpose.

Exo 36:33 He made the middle bar to pass through in the midst of the boards from the one end to the other-

This middle bar would therefore have been 30 cubits / 45 feet long. It would have had to be constructed of bits of acacia, which is no more than a common thorn bush. This singular middle bar, which held the boards in shape and close to each other, looks forward to the Lord Jesus.

Exo 36:34 He overlaid the boards with gold, and made their rings of gold for places for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold-

The weak acacia wood was to be overlaid with gold. "Overlay" in Hebrew carries the idea of to be seen, to be looked at. This was how God looked at that weak acacia wood, as if it was the finest gold. This was an Old Testament anticipation of what the New Testament calls imputed righteousness; we the weak acacia wood, the thorn bush, are looked at as pure gold. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, and one outcome of love is to consider the beloved as far more glorious than they are.

Exo 36:35 He made the veil of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cherubim. He made it the work of a skilful workman-

The veil symbolized the flesh of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 10:20); and yet into it was woven scarlet, a symbol of His blood and sacrifice which permeated His mortal life. The lesson is that the cross is a daily way of life. The Lord taught this when He asked us to take up the cross daily: to live each day in the exercise of the same principles which He lived and died by. Let's not see spiritual life as a survival of a few crises, as and when they present themselves. It's a way of life, and the principles which lead us

to the little victories (when we scald ourselves with hot water, when we dirty a newly washed shirt...) will give us the greater ones also, when (e.g.) we stand before a tribunal, or face death in whatever form.

The veil represented the flesh of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 10:20), and also the fact that the way into the most holy place, representing God Himself in Heaven, was somehow barred. But when the Lord died, the veil was torn from top [by God] to bottom (Mt. 27:51), and thus the way into direct personal fellowship with God was permanently opened for all- not just the high priest once a year (Heb. 9:8,24; 10:19). This understanding was so radical for Jewish minds. For the high priest could only nervously enter the most holy place briefly, once every year on the day of atonement. But now the believer in Christ can enter into full and permanent fellowship with God Himself. This was all achieved through the Lord's flesh being torn. The fine linen speaks of His righteousness (Rev. 19:8), the blue of His association with God in Heaven, the crimson of His blood, and the purple of His Kingship (Jn. 19:2). All this was worked into the veil, and the overall product of it was glory to God, represented by the image of cherubim superimposed upon all this.

Exo 36:36 He made four pillars of acacia for it, and overlaid them with gold. Their hooks were of gold. He cast four sockets of silver for them-

At this point we may note that the LXX usually gives "incorruptible wood" for "acacia". Yet as noted on :20, "acacia" is s.w. "thorn". It was the common thorn bush of the desert, a result of the curse in Eden; and yet there

is this sense of incorruption and eternity associated with it by the LXX. The LXX has Ex 30:1-10 coming after Ex. 26:32, and this may well be correct.

Exo 36:37 He made a screen for the door of the tent, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of an embroiderer-

The New Testament therefore speaks of "the second veil" (Heb. 9:3) which screened the most holy place. This was of the same material as the veil which covered the door into the holy place, but was more elaborate, including the cherubim motif whereas the first veil didn't. Perhaps the idea is that it is through the Lord Jesus, represented by the veil, that we enter into the community of believers; He is the door and by Him alone a sheep can enter the fold. But it is likewise also through Him, displaying an even greater glory and beauty, that we shall enter into the presence of God Himself. By entering into Him we in prospect enter into the salvation presence of God personally; we are saved in prospect, we live the eternal life, as John's Gospel stresses.

The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined linen from Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made from yarn of which each thread was composed of many delicate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work.

Exo 36:38 and the five pillars of it with their hooks. He overlaid their capitals and their fillets with gold, and their five sockets were of brass-

We contrast this gold and brass with the gold and silver fittings for the veil which screened the most holy place. It is easy to over interpret, to see significance never intended, in our European obsession with a 'this = that' schema or hermeneutic. Probably the simple idea was that there was to be an increasing sense of glory as one approached closer to the most holy place. We may note that the expense, beauty and intricacy of the tabernacle grew greater the closer one got to the most holy. There was no natural light in the tabernacle; it had no windows. And only the high priest could enter the most holy once / year. The progressive beauty of God's tabernacle was revealed to fewer and fewer people, the further one progressed. This is in total contrast to the religious ways of the surrounding religions, which made the greatest display of glory and beauty on the outside, in the eyes of as many as possible; and progressively decreased in detail and beauty within them.

EXODUS CHAPTER 37

Exo 37:1 Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood. Its length was two and a half cubits, and its breadth a cubit and a half, and a cubit and a half its height-

Ex. 25:10 "They shall make an ark" becomes "I made an ark" in Moses' autobiography (Dt. 10:3), although apparently Bezaleel made the ark (Ex. 37:1). The people were generous when asked, but were not real workers. Perhaps Moses himself had to make the ark because they didn't get to it. Or maybe his work was counted as theirs, as happens between the Lord Jesus and ourselves.

A cubit is about 18 inches (45 cm.). The ark was not at all large, for God's glory doesn't require grandiose human artistry nor anything large scale. His glory is manifested in the small and humble things. This was a lesson which David and Solomon failed to learn in their obsession about building a grandiose building for God's glory to dwell in.

Bezaleel means shelter of / for God, appropriate for a man who built His tent / tabernacle. This reinforces the idea that God prefers to dwell in a tent, and not in a physical brick building. David and Solomon willfully ignored this in their obsession with building a temple. It's possible (although see my commentary on 1 Chron. 2:18) that Bezaleel was little more than a child. For 1 Chron. 2:19,20 says that Caleb was the father of Hur. Caleb was only 40 when he first spied out the land (Josh. 14:7). "The son of..." is not a precise term in Hebrew

and can simply mean a relative, but there is still the idea of a relative in a younger generation than the 'father'. Bezaleel was a generation or two older than Bezaleel; and when Caleb was 40, Bezaleel made the tabernacle that same year. This would be typical of how God works through the weak and those considered inappropriate by men. He gave His Spirit to the young Bezaleel, who may have been only 12 years old, and through him built His dwelling place. We can be sure there would have been many older and experienced builders, who had worked for the Egyptian building projects, who would have been far more qualified in secular terms.

Exo 37:2 He overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside, and made a moulding of gold for it around it.

The weak acacia wood was to be overlaid with gold. "Overlay" in Hebrew carries the idea of to be seen, to be looked at. This was how God looked at that weak acacia wood, as if it was the finest gold. This was an Old Testament anticipation of what the New Testament calls imputed righteousness; we the weak acacia wood, the thorn bush, are looked at as pure gold. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, and one outcome of love is to consider the beloved as far more glorious than they are. The mention of a "crown" or "moulding of gold" is as if it represented a person, a King- the Lord Jesus.

Exo 37:3 He cast four rings of gold for it, in its four feet-

The ark had feet, literally "walking feet", feet bent as if walking, to symbolize how the ark was always moving on. We recall that God spoke of how He had "walked" in

the tabernacle and therefore didn't want a fixed temple (2 Sam. 7:6).

Even two rings on its one side, and two rings on its other side-

The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God. See on Ex. 25:27.

Exo 37:4 He made poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold-

"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how

He uses *us*. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

Exo 37:5 He put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to bear the ark-

This was a deconstruction of the Egyptian religious arks, which were displayed and carried in processions. God's ark was concealed, and only carried when it was without religious significance, being moved between sanctuaries.

Exo 37:6 He made a mercy seat of pure gold. Its length was two and a half cubits, and a cubit and a half its breadth-

This was the cover or lid of the ark, with the wings of the cherubim overshadowing it, and upon this the blood of atonement was sprinkled each year at the day

of atonement. The blood would have built up over the years. Paul interprets this as symbolic of the blood of the Lord Jesus on the cross. It is a seat or throne in that it is upon that that God's glory is enthroned. But we note the small size of it. God doesn't need anything large scale by human standards. "Mercy seat" is a form of the Hebrew word for 'covering' which is usually used for the covering of sins; literally "the means of propitiation". The LXX word used here is directly applied to the Lord Jesus in Rom. 3:25. It was the blood which was the basis of atonement (Lev. 17:11), but the actual mercy seat, the slab of gold which was the cover of the ark, was put by metonymy for the blood. It is upon this that God's glory dwells and is revealed. His forgiveness is Yahweh at His most glorious, and it is in this that God meets with man (Ex. 25:22). We note that the mercy seat or cover was of pure gold, not acacia wood overlaid with gold. It may have been a literal cover over the ark which was detachable.

The mercy seat is clearly stated in Rom. 3:25 to represent the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom has been set forth for all to see the salvation of God in Christ. But note that only the High Priest once / year was able to view the mercy seat covered in the blood of atonement. It's as if we are each now the High Priest, if we are in Christ. We can now with boldness, not as the fearful High Priest, enter the Most Holy place (Heb. 10:29). The veil has been opened. We can enter, in order to gain atonement for others. The "seat" implies someone sat upon it- there God was enthroned in all the glory of His forgiveness

of men through the blood of Christ. He "dwelt between the cherubim" (Ps. 80:1; 99:1). There was the impression held by Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:15) and David (2 Sam. 6:2) that God dwelt between the cherubim, over the mercy seat. "Justice and judgment" are where God was enthroned (Ps. 89:14), and this refers to the blood sprinkled mercy seat where God was especially enthroned in glory on the day of Atonement. His forgiveness and salvation has integrity, it's not a turning of a blind eye, a waiving of principle. In this is the wonder of our salvation. Note that the cherubim peered down upon the blood- alluded to in 1 Pet. 1:11,12, which says that the Angels earnestly look into the things of the blood of Christ. The cherubim were of gold, of one piece with the mercy seat, but Jesus was not an Angel by nature (see Heb. 1)- which warns us not to over-interpret tabernacle types.

Exo 37:7 He made two cherubim of gold. He made them of beaten work, at the two ends of the mercy seat-

The cherubim had wings (:9) and could have human and animal forms, according to Ez. 1,10. In this sense they could be said to resemble the sphinx forms which were such a common part of Egyptian religion. The similarity is in the fact that God was deconstructing Egyptian religion, just as the plagues were aimed at the gods of Egypt. Instead of openly displayed sphinx like creatures memorializing the dead, these were the hidden symbols of God's living presence amongst His people, hidden away in the holiest place, and only briefly seen once every year by the high priest.

Exo 37:8 one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end. He made the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends-

The cherubim represented those through whom God was manifested, be it Angels or His people. For this is how the cherubim are used in Ezekiel. But they are of one part with the mercy seat, which represented the Lord Jesus (Rom. 3:25). This speaks of His deep unity with us, shown in His life by His being of our nature, and now through the presence of His Spirit within those who are "in" Him.

Exo 37:9 The cherubim spread out their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces toward one another. The faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy seat-

Speaking of the things of the blood of the Lord Jesus, Peter comments: "Which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12), as if he saw in the cherubim some representation of the Angels looking down at the blood of atonement sprinkled upon the mercy seat. And yet Peter implies that we too "look into" those things. And thus we note that the cherubim were looking down at the blood, not at each other; as our focus should be upon the Lord's blood, and not each other.

The pagan god tabernacles all feature some kind of throne, upon which the god visibly sits. The cherubim of the Israelite tabernacle are similar to the Mesopotamian *karibu*, cherubim, upon which their gods sat. Phoenician and Egyptian art uncovered by archaeologists shows they believed in cherubim very similar in form to

those described in Ezekiel's visions of Yahweh's cherubim. The throne of Yahweh was the ark, covered by the cherubim. There, above the blood spattered lid of the ark (or "mercy seat"), supported by the cherubim, the pagan mind expected to see Israel's God enthroned. The similarities to the pagan shrines were intentional- to set up this expectation. But there was nothing there. It was, to their eyes, an empty throne- just as God appears to be absent to so many people today. There was no visible image resting upon the wings of the cherubim, nothing on the throne / lid of the ark but the blood of atonement (which pointed forward to that of God's Son).

Exo 37:10 He made the table of acacia wood. Its length was two cubits, and its breadth was a cubit, and its height was a cubit and a half-

The Ugaritic poems speak of the furniture in Baal's heavenly temple, and it's very similar to that in the Most Holy Place. But the poems especially focus upon Baal's bed and chests of drawers for his clothing. These are noticeably absent in Yahweh's tabernacle furniture.

The table of show bread was to be made of acacia wood, which was effectively the weak wood from a thorn bush; but David planned to make it of pure gold, and even worked out the weight of gold required for it (1 Chron. 28:16). And Solomon indeed made it of gold (1 Kings 7:48), leading to it being known as "the pure table" (2 Chron. 13:11). Religion had overtaken spirituality, form had eclipsed content. Likewise the "tables of silver" David ordered to be made (1 Chron. 28:16) do not feature in the tabernacle. He was missing the point-

that God wanted His holiest symbols made of common, weak things like acacia wood. For His strength and glory is made perfect in weakness. David claims these plans were from God (1 Chron. 28:19), although as discussed on 1 Chron. 28:12, they were in fact from his own mind. The way these things were taken into captivity, with no record of this golden table ever being returned, surely reflects God's judgment upon this kind of religious show. He prefers a humble house church in an inner city room, rather than a gold plated cathedral. The way some exclusive churches speak of 'maintaining a pure table' suggests they have made the same essential mistake as David did.

Exo 37:11 He overlaid it with pure gold, and made a gold moulding around it-

The table of shewbread looked ahead to the breaking of bread in the Christian experience. It had a crown (NEV "moulding") around it, as if it were the king's table. And indeed it is. We sit there as guests at the king's table, and it is not for us to use it as "our" table, excluding or ejecting others from it.

Exo 37:12 He made a border of a handbreadth around it, and made a golden moulding on its border around it-

The golden moulding or crown is twice stressed (:24), as if it really was the king's table. The purpose of the rim was for the rings for carrying it (:27).

Exo 37:13 He cast four rings of gold for it, and put the rings in the four corners that were on its four feet-

The ark had feet, literally "walking feet", feet bent as if walking, to symbolize how the ark was always moving

on. We recall that God spoke of how He had "walked" in the tabernacle and therefore didn't want a fixed temple (2 Sam. 7:6). See on :5.

Exo 37:14 The rings were close by the border, the places for the poles to carry the table-

"Places" is the Hebrew word usually used for a house. A different word would have been used if the idea was merely a "place". There is a purposeful juxtaposition between the image of stability carried by the idea of a "house", and the fact that the rings and poles were in order that this furniture could be carried and moved on. God's permanent, characteristic way is the way of dynamism, moving on.

Exo 37:15 He made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold, to carry the table-

The need to be mobile and always moving on is stressed throughout the record of the tabernacle. There could have been some blanket statement like "All the tabernacle equipment had rings on it so that poles could be put in the rings, and it could be carried". But the record labours this mobile nature of the whole system; see on :14.

Exo 37:16 He made the vessels which were on the table, its dishes, its spoons, its bowls, and its pitchers with which to pour out, of pure gold-

Yahweh had a "table". The Mesopotamian gods likewise had a table (*passuru*) upon which food was placed as a meal for the god (as in Is. 65:11). But the beakers, cups and vessels on Yahweh's table remained empty; the wine was poured out onto the sacrifices and vaporized;

the priests ate the shewbread. There was no pretence that Yahweh was a hungry god who needed to be fed by His worshippers. To the pagan mind, this would've meant that if He didn't eat, He wasn't actually around nor powerful. Again, the difference and similarities were intentional, in order to point up the need for faith in the power and existence of Yahweh.

Ex. 25:30 adds: "You shall set bread of the presence on the table before me always". "The bread of the presence" doesn't simply mean that it was bread which was in God's presence; for that is the meaning covered by "before Me always". Rather the idea is that God's especial presence was there in the eating of the bread. The God who dwelt the other side of the veil, over the mercy seat, as it were came out from there and was present when the bread was eaten. We may have here some hint that there is a special presence of the Father and Son at the breaking of bread, which is the Christian equivalent of this table (Mt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 11:10).

Exo 37:17 He made the lampstand of pure gold. He made the lampstand of beaten work. Its base, its shaft, its cups, its buds, and its flowers were of one piece with it-

"The candlestick" or menorah is only ever spoken of in the law of Moses in the singular, but in 1 Chron. 28:15 David decided there were to be multiple such candlesticks. By doing so, he ignored the symbolism of the one candlestick, the one people of God; such was his obsession with mere religion. See on :10.

The candlestick represents the assembly of believers (Rev. 1:20). It was made of beaten work, representing

how all those in the true church will be beaten into a shape through which they can be lights for God. "Hammered" or "beaten" suggests that through blow by blow on material heated in the furnace of affliction (Is. 48:10), God works out a place where His glory may be revealed. And that place is our lives.

Exo 37:18 There were six branches going out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of its one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of its other side-

The lampstand represents God's people (Rev. 1:20), and it had seven lamps; the six branches and the central stem, upon which there was also a lamp. Seven is the number of wholeness and completion. Perhaps the idea is that there is to be a complete manifestation of God through the witness of His people, burning the oil of the Spirit. Each component member witnesses to Him in a slightly different way, not only in this life but throughout the generations of God's people. Likewise the body of Christ in the same way manifests Christ to the world.

Exo 37:19 three cups made like almond blossoms in one branch, a bud and a flower, and three cups made like almond blossoms in the other branch, a bud and a flower: so for the six branches going out of the lampstand-

The almond is the first tree in Palestine to bud, so it means literally the watching tree, as if it were alive and eager to come to life. So it is appropriate for the candlestick, which represented God's people. Jeremiah sees the branch of an almond tree and is comforted that "I watch over My word to perform it" (Jer. 1:11,12). The word translated 'hasten' or "watch over" is very similar to the

word for 'almond'. Almonds are associated with God's eyes; the bowls of the lampstands were almonds (Ex. 25:33,34). Zech. 4:2 talks about these almond bowls on the candlestick, and Zech. 4:10 interprets them as the "eyes of the LORD which run to and fro through the whole earth". 2 Chron. 16:9 talks about the Angels in the same way; "the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him". Similarly in Rev. 4:5 the lamps in the bowls of almond are equated with the "seven spirits (or Angels) of God". Rev. 5:6 equates the seven eyes with the seven spirits. Thus the almond rod which Jeremiah saw represented God's eyes or Angels who would watch over the word of God which Jeremiah was to speak to perform it. And He does likewise with the witness of all those represented within the candlestick.

Israel was one nation under God; they were represented by one seven-branched candlestick. But in the New Testament vision of Rev. 1:20, each church is represented by an individual candlestick, and the body of Christ as a whole is represented by seven candlesticks, seven being the number of completion. This suggests that each local congregation is seen as autonomous by Christ; no other candlestick can dictate to another what they should do. If they fail to give light as they should, then this is dealt with by Christ Himself, the One who walks amongst the seven candlesticks and is in their midst (Rev. 1:13); He alone can remove a candlestick (Rev. 2:5).

Exo 37:20 In the lampstand were four cups made like almond blossoms, its buds and its flowers-

The menorah or "candlestick" is from a root meaning to yoke. In the Christian context, the yoke, the uniting power, is the Lord Jesus (Mt. 11:30). He is the unique power which binds together His otherwise disparate people into one candlestick. Thereby Christian unity becomes a witness to the world, at least that is the intention. All disunity between believers therefore causes the candlestick not to function, and the light of witness is thereby the less.

Exo 37:21 and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of it-

The language of buds, flowers and branches invites us to see the candlestick as a tree of life giving light in the darkness of the tabernacle, which had no natural light. The candlestick represents the local church in our times (Rev. 1:20); we as communities of believers are to be as the tree of life, offering eternity to a dark world; hence Prov. 11:30 likens the fruit of the righteous to the tree of life, which results in winning people for eternity. In this sense the ecclesia, the community of believers, is to be as the tree of life to others by their words (Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 15:4).

Exo 37:22 Their buds and their branches were of one piece with it. The whole thing was one beaten work of pure gold-

The fact the candlestick was made from one piece of gold is emphasized; it speaks of the unity of the local church, achieved through much patient beating out of the material which comprises it. The candlestick represents the assembly of believers (Rev. 1:20). It was made of beaten work, representing how all those in the true church will be beaten into a shape through which they can be lights for God. "Hammered" suggests that through blow by blow on material heated in the furnace of affliction (Is. 48:10), God works out a place where His glory may be revealed. And that place is our lives.

Exo 37:23 He made its seven lamps, and its snuffers, and its snuff dishes, of pure gold-

The mention of seven lamps confirms that there was a central stem with a lamp, and six branches coming out of it with a total of six lamps on them- making seven lamps. Ex. 25:37 adds: "And they shall light its lamps to give light to the space in front of it". The candlestick was on the south end of the holy place, shedding light "opposite" (Heb., NEV "in front of it"), i.e. towards the northern end where the veil was, and where the table of shewbread was, symbolizing fellowship with God. This is the purpose of our witness; to direct people towards fellowship with God and entry to the most holy place.

Gold wasn't the strongest or most practical material for these instruments. But it represents faith (1 Pet. 1:7). We aren't the best instruments for God to use in His house, but He prefers to use the soft and those who aren't humanly qualified for His work- because He

works by faith in us, and by our faith in Him rather than our human strength.

Exo 37:24 He made it of a talent of pure gold, with all its vessels-

A talent was 94 pounds or 42.6 kg. This was a huge amount of gold, but all the same, due to the dense weight of gold, the candlestick would have been quite small if it were solid. 42 kg. of solid gold is about the size of two standard size books. This fits the theme that everything in the tabernacle was small scale, not large. The ecclesia of God, represented by the candlestick (Rev. 1:20), is small but gives huge light in a dark place, pointing towards the entrance to the most holy place. It is depicted as large and a source of particular glory in the famous depiction of the capture of Jerusalem by Titus, but either the candlestick of those times was only gold plated, or the size was exaggerated.

Exo 37:25 He made the altar of incense of acacia wood. It was square: its length was a cubit, and its breadth a cubit. Its height was two cubits. Its horns were of one piece with it-

Man first had to bow his head to enter the court, referring to humility. Then there was accepting the principle of sacrifice at the altar, followed by baptism in the laver- and then entry to the holy place, where there was the incense altar [prayer- Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3,4], the table of shewbread [the breaking of bread] and candlestick [church life], shining light towards the entrance to the most holy place where God dwelt between the cherubim.

GNB "18 inches long and 18 inches wide, and it is to be 36 inches high". Again we note the small scale of the tabernacle and its furniture. God doesn't need grandiose religious symbols.

Exo 37:26 He overlaid it with pure gold, its top, its sides around it, and its horns. He made a gold moulding around it-

The mention of a "crown" or "moulding of gold" is as if it represented a person, a King- the Lord Jesus.

Exo 37:27 He made two golden rings for it under its moulding crown, on its two ribs, on its two sides, for places for poles with which to carry it-

"Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God. See on :3.

Exo 37:28 He made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold-

"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold.

Exo 37:29 He made the holy anointing oil and the pure incense of sweet spices, after the art of the perfumer-

The specific perfumer in view was Bezaleel.

EXODUS CHAPTER 38

Exo 38:1 He made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood. It was square. Its length was five cubits, its breadth was five cubits, and its height was three cubits-

In 2 Chron. 4:1, David and Solomon replaced this with "An altar of brass, twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and ten cubits in height". This was far larger than the altar of the tabernacle, which was 5 x 5 x 3. 5 cubits is 7.5 feet (225 cm.), 3 cubits is 1.5 feet (45 cm.) Clearly the idea was that far more animals were going to be offered. And yet David and Solomon were forgetting the lesson taught through the sin with Bathsheba, Solomon's mother; God doesn't want sacrifice, but rather broken, contrite hearts (Ps. 40:6-8). Just as God didn't want a physical house built to Him, but rather wanted to build a house of people with humble hearts open to the working of His Spirit. The altar was of brass, whereas that of the tabernacle was of common, weak acacia wood (Ex. 27:1,2). This taught that the basis of acceptable sacrifice and approach to God is the recognition of our common weak humanity, and sacrifice is offered to God upon that basis. But Solomon had no recognition of his own moral frailty and humanity, and was convinced that as David's son and the Messianic seed [as he imagined], he was therefore perfect. And it seems David too somehow rationalized his sin with Bathsheba by the end of his life, and lacked grace and humility.

Exo 38:2 He made its horns on its four corners. Its horns were of one piece with it, and he overlaid it with brass-

Whilst there are similarities with the concept of religion which Israel had been used to in Egypt, there were significant differences. The altars of Egypt tended to have the horns of previously sacrificed animals attached to them. But the horns of Yahweh's altar were in order to bind the sacrifices (Ps. 118:27), they had practical function; and were a symbol of Yahweh's salvation (1 Kings 1:50)- not the triumph of secular man over an impressive animal.

Exo 38:3 He made all the vessels of the altar, the pots, the shovels, the basins, the forks, and the fire pans. He made all its vessels of brass-

Jewish tradition has it that the fire which came down from Heaven in Lev. 9:24 remained burning; and this fire was preserved burning all night and day. Hence the need for "fire pans" (Ex. 27:3) to keep the fire burning whilst the altar was being cleaned or the remains of sacrifices removed from it.

Exo 38:4 He made for the altar a grating of a network of brass, under the ledge around it beneath, reaching halfway up-

This implies that the altar was a brass plated box, with a grating on the top to feed air to the fire with air. Through this the ashes would have fallen into a pan below.

Exo 38:5 He cast four rings for the four ends of brass grating, to be places for the poles-

The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God.

Exo 38:6 He made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with brass-

"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works,

their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

Exo 38:7 He put the poles into the rings on the sides of the altar, with which to carry it. He made it hollow with planks-

"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold.

Exo 38:8 He made the basin of brass, and its base of brass, out of the mirrors of the ministering women who ministered at the door of the Tent of Meeting-

Perhaps this suggests that their devotion to God led them to no longer be so concerned with their own image and appearance.

Exo 38:9 He made the court: for the south side southward the hangings of the court were of fine twined linen, one hundred cubits-

The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined

linen from Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made from yarn of which each thread was composed of many delicate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work. It perhaps appropriately designated the boundary between the believer and the world, represented by the linen fence which marked the enclosure of the tabernacle. 100 cubits is 58 yards or 53 meters.

Exo 38:10 their pillars were twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver-

"Fillets" is rendered "connecting rods" by some, and "sockets" as "bases".

Exo 38:11 For the north side one hundred cubits, their pillars twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver-

Nearly all the features of the tabernacle suggest parts of the body. The girl in Solomon's song portrays her lover as having "legs as pillars [s.w. "pillars" here] set upon sockets [s.w. "sockets" here, meaning "bases"] of gold" (Song 5:15). The pillars therefore correspond to legs, and the bases / "sockets" to feet. It was as if the tabernacle was surrounded by men's legs and feet, holding hands with each other.

Exo 38:12 For the west side were hangings of fifty cubits, their pillars ten, and their sockets ten; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver-

GNB "with ten posts and ten bases".

Exo 38:13 For the east side, eastward fifty cubits-

LXX adds "their pillars ten, and their sockets ten".

Exo 38:14 The hangings for the one side were fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three-

Summed up in GNB: "On each side of the entrance there are to be 7 1/2 yards of curtains, with three posts and three bases". Fifteen cubits is 6.8 meters, or 7.5 yards. But LXX gives "fifty cubits".

Exo 38:15 and so also for the other side: on this hand and that hand by the gate of the court were hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three-

See on :14. But LXX gives "fifty cubits".

Exo 38:16 All the hangings around the court were of fine twined linen-

For "linen" see on :9. "Hangings" is literally 'covering', and covering is a major theme of the tabernacle (Ex. 25:20; 26:36,37; 35:12; 37:9; 39:34; 40:3,21). For the message was of the atonement or covering which is in the Lord Jesus.

Exo 38:17 The sockets for the pillars were of brass. The hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver; and the overlaying of their heads, of silver; and all the pillars of the court were filleted with silver-

GNB "All the posts around the enclosure are to be connected with silver rods, and their hooks are to be made of silver and their bases of bronze". Silver rods seems another feature of the tabernacle which might appear at first blush to not at all be how man would have designed things.

Exo 38:18 The screen for the gate of the court was the work of the embroiderer, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine

twined linen. Twenty cubits was the length, and the height in the breadth was five cubits, like to the hangings of the court-

This describes the curtain over the door of the tabernacle in similar language to how the veil hiding the Most Holy is described. Entrance to both the court and to the most holy place was through a veil made of the same design. The Lord Jesus alludes to this in teaching that "I am the door". The only way to get on the path to God is through Him. This rules out all non-Christian paths to God. Christ is the door of the tabernacle through which we enter at our conversion and baptism (Jn. 10:9). By doing so we also enter, in prospect, through the veil into the Most Holy of eternity and Divine nature. The height of the curtains was such that a man would have to bow his head in order to pass underneath it, teaching the humility required to approach God's presence.

Exo 38:19 Their pillars were four, and their sockets four, of brass; their hooks of silver, and the overlaying of the heads, and their fillets, of silver-

"Sockets" is GNB "bases", and "fillets" is "rods".

Exo 38:20 All the pins of the tabernacle, and around the court, were of brass-

The "pins" are the tent pegs.

Exo 38:21 This is the amount of material used for the tabernacle, even the Tabernacle of the Testimony, as they were counted, according to the commandment of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest-

GNB is clearer: "Here is a list of the amounts of the metals used in the Tent of the LORD's presence, where the two stone tablets were kept on which the Ten Commandments were written. The list was ordered by Moses and made by the Levites who worked under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest". We note that the work of accounting was given to Ithamar rather than to Nadab or Abihu, who were later to show themselves apostate. Perhaps they already showed signs of lack of integrity at this stage. Time and again we note the internal corroboration within the inspired record.

Exo 38:22 Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that Yahweh commanded Moses-

Bezaleel means shelter of / for God, appropriate for a man who built His tent / tabernacle. This reinforces the idea that God prefers to dwell in a tent, and not in a physical brick building. David and Solomon willfully ignored this in their obsession with building a temple. It's possible (although see my commentary on 1 Chron. 2:18) that Bezaleel was little more than a child. For 1 Chron. 2:19,20 says that Caleb was the father of Hur. Caleb was only 40 when he first spied out the land (Josh. 14:7). "The son of..." is not a precise term in Hebrew and can simply mean a relative, but there is still the idea of a relative in a younger generation than the 'father'. Bezaleel was a generation or two older than Bezaleel; and when Caleb was 40, Bezaleel made the tabernacle that same year. This would be typical of how God works through the weak and those considered inappropriate by men. He gave His Spirit to the young Bezaleel, who may

have been only 12 years old, and through him built His dwelling place. We can be sure there would have been many older and experienced builders, who had worked for the Egyptian building projects, who would have been far more qualified in secular terms.

Exo 38:23 With him was Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver and a skilful workman, and an embroiderer in blue, in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen-

This seems to imply that Aholiab was already a master craftsman; but he could only do the work because God blessed and developed the 'natural' talent which Aholiab was willing to present to God's service. God sometimes gives us the opportunity to develop our 'natural' talents for use in His service- other times, He asks us to do that which is for us a taking up on the cross.

"The skilful workman" of Ex. 28:15 and elsewhere may specifically refer to Aholiab (Ex. 35:35; 38:23). Perhaps Paul saw in this man a representation of us all- for he urged us likewise to be careful workmen when it comes to the understanding and teaching of God's word (2 Tim. 2:15).

Exo 38:24 All the gold that was used for the work in all the work of the sanctuary, even the gold of the offering, was twenty-nine talents, and seven hundred thirty shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary-

The total weight of all the gold, silver and brass comes to 10.4 tones or 10,400 kg. In addition to this there was the gold used and destroyed in the destruction of the golden calf. This would however only make a very

small amount per person, if indeed two million of them left Egypt. But see on Ex. 12:37. They did indeed spoil the Egyptians, but we can assume that they gave nearly all their wealth to the tabernacle project; perhaps that is the intention of the note in Ex. 33:6 that they stopped wearing jewellery from then onwards. And yet they continued worshipping idols all through the wilderness journey, despite their stellar generosity to Yahweh's tabernacle. We also can reflect that transporting this tabernacle on poles was a major exercise.

Exo 38:25 The silver of those who were numbered of the congregation was one hundred talents, and one thousand seven hundred seventy-five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary-

The census of Ex. 30:16 required each man of military age to pay a half shekel of silver. It was used for the silver sockets in the boards of the tabernacle etc. There were 600,000 men of military age who left Egypt (Ex. 12:37); if they each paid a half shekel, this would have been 300,000 shekels of silver. 3000 shekels make one talent, so this would have made 1000 talents of silver. Which is exactly the amount of silver mentioned in Ex. 38:27. However, there were actually 603,550 men (Ex. 38:26). And we wonder whether each man actually paid what was asked. We see here the way in which the Biblical record often doesn't worry about literal exactitude, but presents an overall picture.

Exo 38:26 a beka a head, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for each one who passed over to those who were numbered, from twenty years old and

upward, for six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men-

"Beka" is literally 'that which is divided', a divided shekel or half shekel. See the discussion of whether this number is literal on Ex. 12:37.

Exo 38:27 The one hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil; one hundred sockets for the one hundred talents, a talent for a socket-

If each socket weighed a talent (Ex. 38:27), the forty silver sockets connecting the boards would have been really big and solid. The connection between the boards was critical, because according to Ex. 26:15 they were "standing up". This seems to mean that the boards were not to merely sink into the dust of the earth, but to hold together in such a way that they would be stable. So the large size and weight of the sockets is appropriate. The internal cohesion and corroboration within the account of the tabernacle is such that it is a profound reflection of the Divine inspiration of the record.

Exo 38:28 From the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels he made hooks for the pillars, overlaid their capitals, and made fillets for them-

The weak acacia wood was to be overlaid with silver. "Overlay" in Hebrew carries the idea of to be seen, to be looked at. This was how God looked at that weak acacia wood, as if it was the finest silver. This was an Old Testament anticipation of what the New Testament calls imputed righteousness; we the weak acacia wood, the thorn bush, are looked at as pure silver. Beauty is indeed in the

eye of the beholder, and one outcome of love is to consider the beloved as far more glorious than they are.

Exo 38:29 The brass of the offering was seventy talents, and two thousand four hundred shekels-

God remembers to this day how much everyone gave of what material, and has preserved the record in His written word. This is encouragement to us that no sacrifice for God's house is ever forgotten, but He eternally remembers it.

Exo 38:30 From this he made the sockets to the door of the Tent of Meeting, the bronze altar, the bronze grating for it, all the vessels of the altar-

"Vessels" is the same Hebrew word translated "jewels" when we read that the Hebrews were to 'borrow' "jewels" from the Egyptians (Ex. 3:22; 11:2; 12:35). All they took from Egypt / the world was to be used in the Lord's work, and that is an abiding principle.

Exo 38:31 the sockets around the court, the sockets of the gate of the court, all the pins of the tabernacle, and all the pins around the court-

The amount of brass was enough for us to assume that the tent pegs and sockets or GNB "bases" were very solid. They would have had to be very strong to hold up the tabernacle against desert winds.

EXODUS CHAPTER 39

Exo 39:1 Of the blue, purple, and scarlet, they made finely worked garments, for ministering in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron; as Yahweh commanded Moses-

Scarlet and purple were the colours of royalty or rulership, yet it was intertwined with the priestly garments. There was always the theme of king-priests. It was perhaps God's initial intention that the leadership of Israel should be by the priests, and their choice of a human king and the subsequent ruling dynasty through David and the tribe of Judah was not His ideal intention.

Exo 39:2 He made the ephod of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen-

The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined linen from Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made from yarn of which each thread was composed of many delicate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work. We also see that the religious style which they had been used to in Egypt was being alluded to but deconstructed. They were being given a system of religion not completely foreign to them, but also radically different to all systems they had previously used or encountered. This is why the Pentateuch alludes to things like the laws of

Hammurabi, or the existing creation myths- to deconstruct them.

Exo 39:3 They beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, in the purple, in the scarlet, and in the fine linen, the work of the skilful workman-

This may refer to one specific "skilful workman", Bezaleel or Aholiab.

Exo 39:4 They made shoulder straps for it, joined together. At the two ends it was joined together-

LXX "It shall have two shoulder-pieces joined together, fastened on the two sides". "Joined / Coupled together" is s.w. "have fellowship with" (Ps. 94:20), and often of men 'joining together'. The theme of coupling and joining together occurs throughout the record of the tabernacle, and is used e.g. of the joining together of the curtains (Ex. 26:3). Unity amongst believers is to be the outcome of the indwelling of God's glory. Disunity results from simply not having perceived His glory. For before that, all disunity disappears as we are awed by His grace and convicted of our own smallness and unworthiness.

Exo 39:5 The skilfully woven band that was on it, with which to fasten it on, was of the same piece, like its work; of gold, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen; as Yahweh commanded Moses-

The significance of the colours should not be over emphasized. Israel in the wilderness only had a limited range of things with them, and as with the use of the acacia wood for the tabernacle construction, God was [and

is] in a sense limited by the material He choses to have available to work with. But see on :1.

Exo 39:6 They worked the onyx stones, enclosed in settings of gold, engraved with the engravings of a signet, according to the names of the children of Israel-

LXX "emerald". The LXX is the version quoted repeatedly in the New Testament, often preferring its renderings to that of the Masoretic text. And yet the LXX differs from the Hebrew in the description of the precious stones, and their order in the breastplate. It is unwise therefore to seek to find meaning in the actual stones. These precious stones would have been extracted from the amulets or jewellery given to Israel by the Egyptians when they left Egypt. The significant thing is that the names of God's people were engraved upon them. God's people were carried before God by the High Priest, looking forward to how we are personally represented by name before God, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus in Heaven itself. Man is not alone, none are forgotten or unknown. That is the simple take away.

The names of God's people were engraved upon the stones which were on the High Priest's clothing. God's people were carried before God by the High Priest, looking forward to how we are personally represented by name before God, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus in Heaven itself. Man is not alone, none are forgotten or unknown. That is the simple take away. But "engraved" is the word usually translated "open", "to make appear". We are revealed before God, our life situation and per-

sonality type is openly made to appear before God, by our great High Priest.

Exo 39:7 He put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod, to be stones of memorial for the children of Israel, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

The idea wasn't that God might forget His people and so He needed to be reminded by the Priest wearing these stones with their names on; rather they were a reminder to Israel that they were each personally remembered by God all the time.

Bearing on the shoulders by the High Priest in order to gain atonement surely looks forward to the Lord bearing the cross on His shoulders. Yet He bore our sins. The cross is presented as symbolic of the weight of our sins. This is symbolic of how Christ, our High Priest, carries the names of all God's people on His shoulders and over His heart (:8) as He stands for us in God's presence. The preciousness of the stones reflects our high value in God's sight.

Ex. 28:10 adds: "six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the six that remain on the other stone, in the order of their birth". The names of the tribes were to be written on the two shoulder stones of the High Priest "in the order of their birth" (Ex. 28:10). Seeing that Reuben was deposed from being the first born, we may wonder why there is this curious requirement. And the answer is perhaps just very practical. For if we take the tribes in the order of their birth, the list is: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali upon one stone, and Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin up-

on the other stone. There are then exactly 25 Hebrew letters on each stone. This kind of perfect symmetry would be impossible to arrange by any uninspired hand. It is this kind of internal corroboration which to me is the most powerful argument for a Divinely inspired Bible.

Exo 39:8 He made the breastplate, the work of a skilful workman, like the work of the ephod; of gold, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen-

"Breastplate" is LXX "oracle", as if the judgment flashed out from the urim and thummim associated with the breastplate was God's word or oracle to His people. For "linen" see on :2. "The skilful workman" may specifically refer to Aholiab (Ex. 38:23). Perhaps Paul saw in this man a representation of us all- for he urged us likewise to be careful workmen when it comes to the understanding and teaching of God's word (2 Tim. 2:15).

Exo 39:9 It was square. They made the breastplate double. Its length was a span, and its breadth a span, being double-

GNB "9 inches long and 9 inches wide". 23 x 23 cm. Again we note the small size of the things associated with the tabernacle, compared with the grandiose surface level religion of the other peoples. David and Solomon's obsession with building a large scale temple reflects how they failed to grasp this. The breastplate was quite small, compared to the grandiose religious clothing of other religions.

Exo 39:10 They set in it four rows of stones: a row of ruby, topaz, and beryl was the first row-

The faithful believers are likened to a stone with a unique name written on it (Rev. 2:17). We are each called to uniquely reflect and refract the light of God's glory in a way slightly different to anyone else, just as the stones on the breastplate all glimmered with their own unique beauty. Unity isn't the same as uniformity. LXX "a sardius, a topaz, and emerald". See on :6 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text.

Exo 39:11 and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald-

LXX "a carbuncle, a sapphire, and a jasper". See on :6 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text.

Exo 39:12 and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst-

LXX has "a ligure" for "jacinth". See on :6 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text.

Exo 39:13 and the fourth row, a chrysolite, an onyx, and a jasper. They were enclosed in gold settings-

LXX "chrysolite, and a beryl, and an onyx stone". See on :6 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text. "Chrysolite" is Hebrew 'tarshish', from the idea of long endurance. "Ships of tarshish" therefore refer to long distance trading vessels, not a specific location called Tarshish.

Exo 39:14 The stones were according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, everyone according to his name, for the twelve tribes-

The long sentence here belabours the point several times over that the names of Israel were engraved or 'opened up' upon the stones. The idea is that the people of God were individually represented by name before God by the High Priest / the Lord Jesus.

Exo 39:15 They made on the breastplate chains like cords, of braided work of pure gold-

LXX calls "the breastplate" "the oracle", see on :8. The attachment of the breastplate to the inner clothes of the High Priest is emphasized. The impression is of careful connection of the precious stones to the person of the High Priest- all looking forward to our connection with the Lord Jesus.

Exo 39:16 They made two settings of gold, and two gold rings, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate-

As noted on :15, the impression is of careful connection of the precious stones to the person of the High Priest- all looking forward to our connection with the Lord Jesus. LXX is quite different: "And Aaron shall take the names of the children of Israel, on the oracle of judgment on his breast; a memorial before God for him as he goes into the sanctuary".

Exo 39:17 They put the two braided chains of gold in the two rings at the ends of the breastplate-

The almost monotonous stress continues- that the chains connected the breastplate to the ephod. The lesson from all this is that God's people are indeed truly connected to their High Priest. And that connection,

like they themselves, is all supremely precious- the most valuable metal and stones are used to represent it.

Exo 39:18 The other two ends of the two braided chains they put on the two settings, and put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod, in its front-

As noted on :16,17, the cameraman of Divine inspiration is zoomed in very close up here. The connection of God's people to their High Priest is being laboured.

Exo 39:19 They made two rings of gold, and put them on the two ends of the breastplate, on its edge, which was toward the side of the ephod inward-

GNB "make two rings of gold and attach them to the lower corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod".

Exo 39:20 They made two rings of gold, and put them on the two shoulder straps of the ephod underneath, in its front, close by its coupling, above the skilfully woven band of the ephod-

GNB "attach them to the lower part of the front of the two shoulder straps of the ephod, near the seam and above the finely woven belt". There is nowhere that we have more detail about a piece of clothing in the Bible. The attachment of the symbols of God's people to the High Priest is clearly of the utmost importance to Him.

Exo 39:21 They bound the breastplate by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it might be on the skilfully woven band of the ephod, and that the breastplate might not come loose from the ephod, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

GNB "so that the breastpiece rests above the belt and does not come loose". Again we note the constant emphasis upon the connection between the breastplate and the ephod, looking ahead to the unbreakable connection between God's people and the Lord Jesus in His work of mediation for us before God.

Exo 39:22 He made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue-

This plain single colour [perhaps indigo] would have thrown into contrast the variegated patterns of the ephod and breastplate.

Exo 39:23 The opening of the robe in its midst was like the opening of a coat of mail, with a binding around its opening, that it should not be torn-

The Lord having His own clothes put back on Him meant that He would have been dressed in blood sprinkled garments for the walk to Golgotha. Again His holy mind would have been on the Messianic prophecies of Is. 63:3 about a Messiah with blood sprinkled garments lifted up in glorious victory. Or perhaps He saw the connection to Lev. 8:30, where the priests had to have blood sprinkled garments in order to begin their priestly work. This would have sent His mind to us, for whom He was interceding. Likewise when He perceived that His garment would not be rent, He would have joyfully perceived that He was indeed as the High Priest whose garment was not to be rent (Ex. 39:23).

The Lord's robe He wore to the cross was without seam and not torn (Jn. 19:23,24). There He acted as High Priest, with the names of God's people on His

shoulders, upon which He carried the cross; and in His heart. "Now is the judgment of this world", He predicted of the cross; and the cross was indeed the judgment of the world. This was matched by the urim and thummim being on the breastplate, flashing out judgment.

Christ died as the supreme High Priest, and the soldiers decided not to rend His garment but instead to throw dice to see which of them should get it (Jn. 19:24). As He hung on the cross, looking down and noticing what they were doing, He would have remembered this teaching about the High Priest's garment, and taken encouragement that He was indeed doing the High Priestly work to its ultimate term. His blood stained, dirty outer garment- perhaps woven by his social outcast of a mother- was equivalent of the High Priest's robe of "glory and beauty" (Ex. 28:2).

Exo 39:24 They made on the skirts of the robe pomegranates of blue, purple, scarlet, and twined linen-

The golden bells on the High Priest's garments were familiar in local religions as charm to ward off demons by their noise. But they are used in the Divine scheme of things to remind of God's holiness and the danger of human sin impinging upon this and thus leading to death. And thereby fear of demons was to be replaced by fear of God's holiness and human sin.

LXX "pomegranates of a flowering pomegranate tree".

Exo 39:25 They made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates around the skirts of the robe, between the pomegranates-

The pomegranate was full of seeds. The suggestion was that the mediation of the High Priest was to produce a multitudinous seed, in fulfilment of the promises to Abraham. Hebrew tradition claims there were 12 pomegranates on the hem, appropriate to the 12 tribes of Israel. All this came to full term in the priestly work of the Lord Jesus. As noted on :23, the robe looked ahead to that of the Lord Jesus, and so we note how He healed those who took hold of the hem of His robe (Mt. 9:20; 14:36). Perhaps they perceived His High Priestly nature.

Exo 39:26 a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, around the skirts of the robe, to minister in, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

The bells can be understood as meaning that there was to be an element of proclamation in the work of the priest. Ex. 28:35 adds: "It shall be on Aaron to minister; and his sound shall be heard when he goes in to the holy place before Yahweh, and when he comes out, so that he will not die".

"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16) may be alluding to how the High Priest had to have bells so that "his sound may be heard... that he die not" (Ex. 28:35; this idea of the sound being heard is picked up in Ps. 19 concerning the spread of the Gospel).

Exo 39:27 They made the coats of fine linen of woven work for Aaron, and for his sons-

Ex. 28:40 adds that these clothes were "for glory and for beauty". The idea is not that the clothes should be beautiful and glorious; they were "for" the manifestation

of the glory and beauty of God's saving ways, once their significance was perceived. The naked flesh of man was to be covered over with a glory and beauty which was to come from God, looking forward to the idea of imputed righteousness which Paul explains in Romans. Glory and beauty were to be the features of all Israel in their role as priests / teachers of the Gentile world (Dt. 26:19 s.w.). Again we see repeated the ideal intention that all Israel were to be a nation of priests, and not just resign the work of witness to the priestly tribe.

Exo 39:28 and the turban of fine linen, and the linen headbands of fine linen, and the linen breeches of fine twined linen-

"The fine linen is the righteousness of the saints" (Rev. 19:8) suggests that the entire body of believers ["saints"] are seen as indeed they are, a priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). This is how we will be presented to the Lord, as priests now equipped for eternal service. This is what eternity will be about- serving in the spirit of priests. And we are to train for this now, and at least develop the desire to do that work.

Exo 39:29 and the sash of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, the work of the embroiderer, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

"Sash" is AV "girdle". "The embroiderer" was specifically Bezaleel or Aholiab (Ex. 38:23), and the word is more commonly translated "needlework". This was typically women's work, but a theme of the construction of the tabernacle is that the work was done by God's Spirit using people for His purpose. We may connect this

with how the likes of chemists and goldsmiths were used for the rough work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's time. On one hand, our natural talents are used by God; and yet we are also called to step out against the wind of our natural inclination in God's service.

Exo 39:30 They made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote on it a writing, like the engravings of a signet: HOLY TO YAHWEH-

Most of the surrounding tabernacles featured quite a lot of noise- especially incantations and spoken formulas regarding the holiness of the god and shrine. There were few spoken words in the Mosaic rituals; "Holy to the Lord" was written upon the forehead of the High Priest rather than stated by incantations (GNB 'Dedicated to the LORD', LXX has "holiness of the Lord"). We could maybe go so far as to say that we see here the exaltation of God's written word, with all the faith and understanding which this requires, as opposed to the incantations of other worship systems. The plate or rosette on the High Priest's turban would've recalled pagan plates which warded off supposed demons; but this one spoke of "Holiness to Yahweh", again replacing the negative with the positive.

Exo 39:31 They tied to it a lace of blue, to fasten it on the turban above, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

"Lace" is s.w. "wire", "ribband", "line"; we note it was not a golden chain but a lace. That the Priest's crown was to be made of linen rather than solid gold or some other precious metal could appear some kind of anticlimax-

most leaders of other religions had something solid on their heads. White linen represents righteousness (Rev. 19:8); it's as if the intention was to highlight the fact that simple righteousness is of such great value and power in God's sight rather than any visible ostentation.

Exo 39:32 Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting was finished. The children of Israel did according to all that Yahweh commanded Moses; so they did-

There is huge emphasis upon the exact obedience to the commandments given before the apostacy with the golden calf. But it was really Moses, Bezaleel and Aholiab who did most of the work. Their obedience and work was counted to all Israel. The idea of imputed righteousness is found throughout the Bible, and not just in the New Testament letter to the Romans.

Exo 39:33 They brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent, with all its furniture, its clasps, its boards, its bars, its pillars, its sockets-

The interconnected nature of the tabernacle construction is continually stressed. For this is the nature of God's system of manifestation amongst His people to this day- various aspects and individuals linking in with each other, according to His design. There is no way an individual can reach God's Kingdom alone.

Exo 39:34 the covering of rams' skins dyed red, the covering of sea cow hides, the veil of the screen-

The sea cow hides would have been picked up by them whilst camped by the Red Sea. Whatever we pick up along the way in our wilderness journey- is to be used by God, and devoted to Him by us.

Exo 39:35 the ark of the testimony with its poles, the mercy seat-

"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold.

Exo 39:36 the table, all its vessels, the show bread-

"The bread of the presence" (Ex. 25:30) doesn't simply mean that it was bread which was in God's presence; for that is the meaning covered by "before Me always". Rather the idea is that God's especial presence was there in the eating of the bread. The God who dwelt the other side of the veil, over the mercy seat, as it were came out from there and was present when the bread was eaten. We may have here some hint that there is a special presence of the Father and Son at the breaking of bread, which is the Christian equivalent of this table (Mt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 11:10).

Exo 39:37 the pure lampstand, its lamps, even the lamps to be set in order, all its vessels, the oil for the light-

GNB reads in the possible ellipsis: "the lampstand of pure gold". As the gold for it weighed around 40 kg., it would have been quite small, given the density of gold. "The candlestick" or menorah is only ever spoken of in the law of Moses in the singular, but in 1 Chron. 28:15 David decided there were to be multiple such candlesticks. By doing so, he ignored the symbolism of the one candlestick, the one people of God; such was his obsession with mere religion.

Exo 39:38 the golden altar, the anointing oil, the sweet incense, the screen for the door of the Tent-

Man first had to bow his head to enter the court, referring to humility. Then there was accepting the principle of sacrifice at the altar, followed by baptism in the laver- and then entry to the holy place, where there was the incense altar [prayer- Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3,4], the table of shewbread [the breaking of bread] and candlestick [church life], shining light towards the entrance to the most holy place where God dwelt between the cherubim.

Exo 39:39 the bronze altar, its grating of brass, its poles, all of its vessels, the basin and its base-

The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God.

Exo 39:40 the hangings of the court, its pillars, its sockets, the screen for the gate of the court, its cords, its pins, all

the instruments of the service of the tabernacle, for the Tent of Meeting-

The tent of meeting is here defined as the tabernacle. The reference is to the tent which included the holy place and the most holy place (Ex. 29:11; 30:20). But the actual place of meeting between God and His people was over the mercy seat, the lid of the ark of the covenant, which was in the most holy place and only seen by the high priest briefly once / year. But it was as if God as a king left His throne and came forth to meet His people, represented by the priests, at the door of the holy place, the "tent of meeting".

Exo 39:41 the finely worked garments for ministering in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office-

AV "the cloths of service" [NEV "finely worked garments"] may refer to the cloths used for covering the various items as they were transported around.

Exo 39:42 According to all that Yahweh commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work-

But it was really Moses, Bezaleel and Aholiab who did most of the work. Their obedience and work was counted to all Israel. The idea of imputed righteousness is found throughout the Bible, and not just in the New Testament letter to the Romans.

Exo 39:43 Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it as Yahweh had commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them-

Moses' personal blessing of the people was that of God (Dt. 33); and when he looked with pleasure upon the completed tabernacle and blessed Israel, he was imitating God's inspection and blessing of the completed natural creation (Ex. 39:43). Yet Israel tragically failed to appreciate the degree to which God was manifest in the words of Moses, as they did with Christ. This is shown by them asking for Moses to speak with them, not God; they failed to realize that actually his voice was God's voice. They failed to see that commandments given 'second hand' really are the voice of God (Ex. 20:19). Perhaps our appreciation of inspiration is similar; we know the theory, but do we really see the wonder of the fact that what we read is the awesome voice of God Himself?

When Moses looked with pleasure upon the completed tabernacle and blessed Israel, he was imitating God's inspection and blessing of the completed natural creation (Gen. 1:31); as if now a new creation had been begun in the lives of Israel, just as it is in us through baptism into Christ (cp. the Red Sea crossing)- 2 Cor. 5:17.

EXODUS CHAPTER 40

Exo 40:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

We must remember in interpreting what follows that this was all spoken personally to Moses.

Exo 40:2 On the first day of the first month you shall raise up the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting-

The components of the tabernacle had been made and brought to Moses, and he was to assemble it by hand. Jewish tradition has it that Moses was Divinely empowered in assembling it all in one day, and therefore didn't do it with his own hands. Heb. 9:11 appears to allude to this and deconstruct it: "Christ having become a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands". The tabernacle was indeed made or assembled with hands, unlike the spiritual tabernacle of the house of believers which is being put together by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. Moses pitched the tent, but the spiritual tabernacle has been pitched without hands, by the Spirit of Jesus (Heb. 8:2). The Lord Jesus alluded to these things by saying that He could raise up a new temple through His death and resurrection, without hands (Jn. 2:19-21). "Raise up", used here of raising or assembling the tabernacle, was interpreted by the Lord as implying resurrection. The idea was that the tabernacle looked ahead to the new system of believers which the Lord was to bring about through His sacrifice.

Exo 40:3 You shall put the ark of the testimony in it, and you shall screen the ark with the veil-

The "testimony" refers to the tables of the covenant, the ten commandments, which were within the ark; the connection between the ark and the "testimony" is very strong in the record. The ark was symbolic of Christ, in whom dwelt the word and covenant of God.

Exo 40:4 You shall bring in the table, and set in order the things that are on it. You shall bring in the lampstand, and light its lamps-

The candlestick was on the south end of the holy place, shedding light "opposite" (Heb., NEV "in front of it"), i.e. towards the northern end where the veil was, and where the table of shewbread was, symbolizing fellowship with God. This is the purpose of our witness; to direct people towards fellowship with God and entry to the most holy place.

Exo 40:5 You shall set the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the screen of the door to the tabernacle-

Man first had to bow his head to enter the court, referring to humility. Then there was accepting the principle of sacrifice at the altar, followed by baptism in the laver- and then entry to the holy place, where there was the incense altar [prayer- Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3,4], the table of shewbread [the breaking of bread] and candlestick [church life], shining light towards the entrance to the most holy place where God dwelt between the cherubim.

Exo 40:6 You shall set the altar of burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting-

Sacrifice is necessary before we can enter God's presence. Sacrifice doesn't simply mean giving material things to God; it refers to giving up to God that which is personal and valuable to us. We're not involved with God simply in order to get from Him; in this case, spirituality would be purely selfish, as it is in many religions. Authentic relationship with God depends upon our having the spirit of sacrifice; not in the sense that we can only get to God if we give something, for that too would be too primitive and a denial of grace as the basis of our relationship with God. But His grace and the wonder of fellowship with Him cannot be accepted by us passively nor with indifference; our natural response, if we believe it, is to want to give to Him.

Exo 40:7 You shall set the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and shall put water therein-

This would imply a change of perspective in the description, which so far has been from the most holy place and outwards, whereas this is now from the perspective of someone approaching from the outside. Either that, or the mention of the basin / laver is not placed in order. Possibly the idea is to emphasize the critical importance of washing the priests before entering the holy place, pointing forward to the importance of baptism.

Exo 40:8 You shall set up the court around it, and hang up the screen of the gate of the court-

For Moses alone to do this all in one day would have perhaps required superhuman help; see on :1,2. The

weight of some of the items would have surely been too much for him to carry or manipulate alone.

Exo 40:9 You shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is in it, and shall make it holy, and all its furniture; and it will be holy-

The anointing process takes our Christian minds to the Christ, the anointed one, and we who are anointed through being in Him (2 Cor. 1:21).

Exo 40:10 You shall anoint the altar of burnt offering, with all its vessels, and sanctify the altar; and the altar will be most holy-

We wonder why the altar is here called "most holy" although it stood outside of the tent of meeting. All the tabernacle was called "most holy" (Ex. 30:29), but here there seems an especial note made that the altar was to be made "most holy". It was in the court, not in the holy place nor most holy place. The idea may be that the God who dwells in the most holy place between the cherubim is so pleased with sacrifice, that He accepts even the place outside the tabernacle as most holy.

Exo 40:11 You shall anoint the basin and its base, and sanctify it-

This may represent the need for the washing of baptism in order to come to Christ, the altar (Heb. 13:10). This was required if they didn't want to die (Ex. 30:20). It is baptism which is the washing or "laver" of regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5). The fact we are to wash in this laver suggests that all baptized are all priests; we are a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). It is for us to take seriously the work of priestly service, it falls to all who

are baptized; and we must therefore overcome the typical human tendency to leave such work to others.

Exo 40:12 You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and shall wash them with water-

The laver was situated just in front of the door of the tent, so presumably this was done in the laver.

Exo 40:13 You shall put on Aaron the holy garments; and you shall anoint him, and sanctify him, that he may minister to Me in the priest's office-

It is hard to imagine how Moses could have erected the tabernacle and done all this on one day. It confirms the suggestion on :2 that he could only have done this with Divine help. However it could be that this anointing of Aaron and his sons was deferred and not done until the time of Lev. 8:1 ff.

Exo 40:14 You shall bring his sons, and put coats on them-

See on :13. Ex. 28:40 adds that these clothes were "for glory and for beauty". The idea is not that the clothes should be beautiful and glorious; they were "for" the manifestation of the glory and beauty of God's saving ways, once their significance was perceived. The naked flesh of man was to be covered over with a glory and beauty which was to come from God, looking forward to the idea of imputed righteousness which Paul explains in Romans. Glory and beauty were to be the features of all Israel in their role as priests / teachers of the Gentile world (Dt. 26:19 s.w.). Again we see repeated the ideal

intention that all Israel were to be a nation of priests, and not just resign the work of witness to the priestly tribe.

Exo 40:15 You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to Me in the priest's office. Their anointing shall be to them for an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations-

The Levitical priesthood was “the covenant of an everlasting priesthood” (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but “the priesthood being changed (by Christ’s work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12). There was an “everlasting covenant” between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This “everlasting covenant” evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase “everlasting covenant” is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David’s throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olahm*, which is translated “eternal”, “perpetual”, “everlasting” in the Old Testament? James Strong defines *olahm* as literally meaning “the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity”. It was God’s purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn’t grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of “practically eternity”. For all of us, the spectre of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God’s eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really

come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

Likewise the Sabbath is described as a perpetual, eternal ordinance between God and His people (Ex. 31:16). Yet in the New Testament we read that the Old Covenant has been done away; and the Old Covenant clearly included the ten commandments (Dt. 4:13), one of which was concerning the Sabbath. For this reason the New Testament is at pains to explain that Sabbath keeping is not now required of God's people (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 14:1-3). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be "an everlasting statute unto you" (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7).

Exo 40:16 Moses did so. According to all that Yahweh commanded him, so he did-

There is huge emphasis upon the exact obedience of Moses to the commandments. And yet his careful obedience to the letter regarding the "house" or tabernacle is commented upon in Heb. 3:2-5. The idea is that all that obedience to commandment was still nothing com-

pared to that of the Lord Jesus. For He was not only obedient to commandment, but more positively achieved a personality and character which was to be the basis of an eternal spiritual house.

Exo 40:17 It happened in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was raised up-

As discussed on :1,2, this meant that Moses assembled the tabernacle alone in one day- and surely required Divine help to do so.

Exo 40:18 Moses raised up the tabernacle, and laid its sockets, and set up its boards, and put in its bars, and raised up its pillars-

The rabbis like to note that there are three references to Moses' assembly of the tabernacle (:2,17,18), which they see as pointing forward to the three temples [the third yet to be built by Messiah].

Exo 40:19 He spread the covering over the tent, and put the roof of the tabernacle above on it, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

"As Yahweh commanded Moses" is a phrase runs as a refrain throughout the chapter, as an appropriate ending to the book. See on Ex. 36:31.

Exo 40:20 He took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the poles on the ark, and put the mercy seat above on the ark-

The ark was always ready to be moved on. The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of

Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God.

Exo 40:21 He brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the veil of the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

There may be a reference here to the two veils (cp. Heb. 9:3 "the second veil"), one over the entrance to the holy place, and the other over the entrance to the most holy

Exo 40:22 He put the table in the Tent of Meeting, on the side of the tabernacle northward, outside of the veil-

"Side" is literally "thigh", and constantly we find language appropriate to the human body used in describing the tabernacle. It was all a hint that it was looking ahead to a greater and more perfect tabernacle (Heb. 9:11) in a person, Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

Exo 40:23 He set the bread in order on it before Yahweh, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

"Before Yahweh" may imply that by this point, there was some presence of God already in the most holy place

beyond the veil. Or perhaps an Angel was standing with Moses as he assembled the tabernacle.

Exo 40:24 He put the lampstand in the Tent of Meeting, opposite the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward-

"The north side" is literally "the left side". As noted on Ex. 26:18, the south side was "to the right". Semitic thought is often expressed from the perspective of a person facing east. The left hand side was considered the side of lesser favour (Gen 48:13-20). This perhaps was why the candlestick was placed on the right or south side of the tent (Ex. 40:24).

Exo 40:25 He lit the lamps before Yahweh, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

"Before Yahweh" may imply that by this point, there was some presence of God already in the most holy place beyond the veil. Or perhaps an Angel was standing with Moses as he assembled the tabernacle. Ex. 27:20 recorded that "You shall command the children of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil beaten for the light". "Pure olive oil" apparently refers to olive juice which bursts naturally from the first ripe olives. But we enquire where Israel obtained olive oil from in the wilderness, especially such "pure" olive oil to such great amounts as required here? I suggest that this was God's ideal intention, and many of these laws were applicable only in contexts when obedience to them was possible. God's law is not therefore at all a reflection of a God who is a literalist or legalist. For by its nature, the law of Moses shows that He was not like that.

Exo 40:26 He put the golden altar in the Tent of Meeting before the veil-

The incense altar is called "the golden altar" because the incense represents prayer, and gold is the symbol of faith. And prayer "works" by faith. It was before the veil which screened the most holy place, because the smell of the incense would have entered there, even if man cannot. Just as our prayers enter heaven itself.

Exo 40:27 and he burnt incense of sweet spices on it, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

"A pleasant / sweet aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him.

Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Exo 40:28 He put up the screen of the door to the tabernacle-

The New Testament therefore speaks of "the second veil" (Heb. 9:3) which screened the most holy place. This was of the same material as the veil which covered the door into the holy place, but was more elaborate, including the cherubim motif whereas the first veil didn't. Perhaps the idea is that it is through the Lord Jesus, represented by the veil, that we enter into the community of believers; He is the door and by Him alone a sheep can enter the fold. But it is likewise also through Him, displaying an even greater glory and beauty, that we shall enter into the presence of God Himself. By entering into Him we in prospect enter into the salvation presence of God personally; we are saved in prospect, we live the eternal life, as John's Gospel stresses.

Exo 40:29 He set the altar of burnt offering at the door of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the meal offering, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

This may refer specifically to the offerings Moses was to make during the seven days of the rituals for the consecration of Aaron and his sons. The daily burnt offering was from then on to be offered by Aaron.

Exo 40:30 He set the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water therein, with which to wash-

Before we can come to offer acceptable sacrifice and do God's work, we must firstly wash in baptism. The water may have come from the stream from the smitten rock. This is used in the New Testament to represent the spirit of Christ. It is this which we are washed in by water baptism; we must therefore be born of water-and-spirit (Jn. 3:3-5).

Exo 40:31 Moses, Aaron, and his sons washed their hands and their feet there-

The Lord alludes to this in Jn. 13:10 and implies it applies to all His people. Baptism is in essence ongoing, as the Lord progressively sanctifies us for His service in practice.

Exo 40:32 When they went into the Tent of Meeting, and when they came near to the altar, they washed, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

The altar of sacrifice would have therefore been walked passed in order to wash in the laver, and then they would have returned to offer at the altar. 'Coming near' the altar is therefore used to refer to offering sacrifice, rather than in any literal sense.

Exo 40:33 He raised up the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work-

Jesus had this in mind when just before His death He said that He had finished the work God had given Him to do (Jn. 17:4); and He died saying "It is finished"

(Jn. 19:30). He felt His work had been to build a dwelling place for God- not in a literal tabernacle, but in the hearts of willing men and women whose weakness and sin He had enabled to be overcome through His sacrifice. See on :2. Moses "reared up" the tabernacle, representing us (2 Cor. 6:16); "So Moses finished the work" God had given him to do. Dt. 31:24 likewise speaks of Moses finishing the work. The Hebrew for "reared up" is also used in the context of resurrection and glorification / exaltation. As our Lord sensed His final, ultimate achievement of the Father's glory in His own character, He could look ahead to our resurrection and glorification. He adopted God's timeless perspective, and died with the vision of our certain glorification in the Kingdom. This fits in with the way Psalms 22 and 69 (which evidently portray the thoughts of our dying Lord) conclude with visions of Christ's "seed" being glorified in the Kingdom. There are a number of passages which also speak of the temple (also representative of the ecclesia) being a *work* which was *finished* (e.g. 2 Chron. 5:1). In His moment of agonized triumph as He died, the Lord Jesus saw us as if we were perfect.

What God did at creation, He can do at any time. When Moses "finished the work" of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:33), there is clear allusion to God 'finishing the work' of creation (Gen. 2:2). The whole phrase "Behold I have given you..." (Gen. 1:28) occurs later when the Priests are told what God has given them (Ex. 31:6; Lev. 6:10; Num. 18:8,21; Dt. 11:14).

Exo 40:34 Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle-

This was "the cloud" which had covered Sinai (s.w. Ex. 24:15,16). Both holy place and most holy were filled. The glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle when it was erected (Ex. 40:34), as it would later fill the temple (2 Chron. 7:1). But it was God's intention that His glory should fill all the earth; the same words are used in Num. 14:21. The apparently intense manifestation of Himself in a specific place was only a foretaste of what He wished to bring about in "all the earth". And yet Judaism misread this as meaning that His glory was there alone in a specific holy place. They failed to perceive that it was merely a localized foretaste of His intention to make this a universal experience, and the tearing down of the veil at the Lord's death was evidence enough of the progression of this plan. When exiled from the sanctuary, David in his Psalms often perceives that God's glory fills and shall fill all the earth (Ps. 72:19; Hab. 2:14).

Exo 40:35 Moses wasn't able to enter into the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud stayed on it, and Yahweh's glory filled the tabernacle-

This implied that Moses wished to enter but couldn't, perhaps preparing him for his later experience of being unable to enter the promised land as he wished. But typically these things look ahead to how Moses and the legal system associated with him created a desire to enter into God's glory, and into the Kingdom- but failed to achieve it. And so they looked ahead to the achievement of the Lord Jesus. Likewise the glory in the later

temple precluded the priests from entering it (1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chron. 5:14; 7:2).

Exo 40:36 When the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward, throughout all their journeys-

"Onward" is Heb. 'to pull up', alluding to the pulling up of tent pegs. The process of moving onward would have been a major, regular upheaval. They would've preferred to stay where they were. And this is a feature of our wilderness journey after our Red Sea baptism; we are always being moved on further, in various ways. And this goes right against the conservatism which is such a major part of the human condition.

Exo 40:37 but if the cloud wasn't taken up, then they didn't travel until the day that it was taken up-

They didn't know their itinerary ahead of time, each day and night they would've wondered whether they'd be called to move on or not. Their lives in this sense had no stability. If the Red Sea crossing represents our baptisms (1 Cor. 10:1,2) then this speaks of our lives afterwards being under God's leadership and guidance, we in that sense cannot map out how we would wish our journey to be. There was no prior warning how long they were to remain in any one place; sometimes they stayed a year in one place, at other times they had to travel even by night. This was all at the commandment or word of the Lord. If the Red Sea deliverance represents our baptism, the wilderness journey is like our journey through

life towards the promised land of God's Kingdom. We are led by an Angel, and the path we take is determined by God. Sometimes we are suddenly and unexpectedly asked to move forward; sometimes quickly, travelling by night, as it were; other periods of our lives can appear static and leading nowhere. But in all these situations we are still being led- if we remain obedient to the word of God.

Exo 40:38 For the cloud of Yahweh was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys-

Practically this meant that they were shielded from the desert heat in the day time, and kept warm at night. Such was (and is) Yahweh's sensitivity to His people in their wilderness journey towards the Kingdom.

Ex. 13:21 also says that there was a pillar of cloud in the day time and a pillar of fire by night. But at the time of the Exodus, there was a pillar of cloud for the Egyptians and a pillar of fire to give light in the night for the Israelites (Ex. 14:20,24). Could this mean that the meaning of time was collapsed at this time? It was night for the Israelites but daytime for the Egyptians? Is. 42:16, amidst many exodus / Red Sea allusions, speaks of how God makes the darkness light before His exiting people. The many Johanne references to the Lord Jesus being a light in the darkness for His followers would then be yet more elaborations of the idea that the Lord Jesus is the antitype of the Angel that led Israel out of Egypt (Jn. 8:12; 12:35,46). Num. 9:21 says that the pil-

lar of cloud was with the Israelites at *night*, and sometimes it was taken up in the night and they therefore had to move on. Does this mean that there were times when the meaning of time was collapsed during their journey, and the night was made as the day (perhaps Ps. 139:12 alludes to this experience)? When Yahweh came down on Sinai, He was enveloped in a *cloud of fire*- suggesting that there was no day and night for Him (Ex. 24:15-17; Dt. 5:22).



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About the Publisher

