

## THE SECOND BOOK OF MOSES CALLED.

# EXODUS

Commentary by **ROBERT JAMIESON**

## CHAPTER 1

### EXODUS 1:1-22.

#### INCREASE OF THE ISRAELITES.

1. *Now these are the names* — (See <sup><0468</sup>Genesis 46:8-26).

7. *children of Israel were fruitful* — They were living in a land where, according to the testimony of an ancient author, mothers produced three and four sometimes at a birth; and a modern writer declares “the females in Egypt, as well among the human race as among animals, surpass all others in fruitfulness.” To this natural circumstance must be added the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham.

8. *Now there arose up a new king* — About sixty years after the death of Joseph a revolution took place — by which the old dynasty was overthrown, and upper and lower Egypt were united into one kingdom. Assuming that the king formerly reigned in Thebes, it is probable that he would know nothing about the Hebrews; and that, as foreigners and shepherds, the new government would, from the first, regard them with dislike and scorn.

9, 10. *he said ... Behold, the ... children of Israel are more and mightier than we* — They had risen to great prosperity — as during the lifetime of Joseph and his royal patron, they had, probably, enjoyed a free grant of the land. Their increase and prosperity were viewed with jealousy by the

new government; and as Goshen lay between Egypt and Canaan, on the border of which latter country were a number of warlike tribes, it was perfectly conformable to the suggestions of worldly policy that they should enslave and maltreat them, through apprehension of their joining in any invasion by those foreign rovers. The new king, who neither knew the name nor cared for the services of Joseph, was either Amosis, or one of his immediate successors [OSBURN].

**11. *Therefore they did set over them taskmasters*** — Having first obliged them, it is thought, to pay a ruinous rent and involved them in difficulties, that new government, in pursuance of its oppressive policy, degraded them to the condition of serfs — employing them exactly as the laboring people are in the present day (driven in companies or bands), in rearing the public works, with taskmasters, who anciently had sticks — now whips — to punish the indolent, or spur on the too languid. All public or royal buildings, in ancient Egypt, were built by captives; and on some of them was placed an inscription that no free citizen had been engaged In this servile employment.

***they built for Pharaoh treasure cities*** — These two store-places were in the land of Goshen; and being situated near a border liable to invasion, they were fortified cities (compare <sup>4100</sup>2 Chronicles 11:1-12:16). Pithom (*Greek, Paturnos*), lay on the eastern Pelusiac branch of the Nile, about twelve Roman miles from Heliopolis; and Raamses, called by the *Septuagint* Heroopolis, lay between the same branch of the Nile and the Bitter Lakes. These two fortified cities were situated, therefore, in the same valley; and the fortifications, which Pharaoh commanded to be built around both, had probably the same common object, of obstructing the entrance into Egypt, which this valley furnished the enemy from Asia [HENGSTENBERG].

**13, 14. *The Egyptians ... made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick*** — Ruins of great brick buildings are found in all parts of Egypt. The use of crude brick, baked in the sun, was universal in upper and lower Egypt, both for public and private buildings; *all* but the temples themselves were of crude brick. It is worthy of remark that more bricks bearing the name of Thothmes III, who is supposed to have been the king of Egypt at the time of the Exodus, have been discovered than of any other

period [WILKINSON]. Parties of these brickmakers are seen depicted on the ancient monuments with “taskmasters,” some standing, others in a sitting posture beside the laborers, with their uplifted sticks in their hands.

**15. *the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives*** — Two only were spoken to — either they were the heads of a large corporation [LABORDE], or, by tampering with these two, the king designed to terrify the rest into secret compliance with his wishes [CALVIN].

**16. *if it be a son, then ye shall kill him*** — Opinions are divided, however, what was the method of destruction which the king did recommend. Some think that the “stools” were low seats on which these obstetric practitioners sat by the bedside of the Hebrew women; and that, as they might easily discover the sex, so, whenever a boy appeared, they were to strangle it, unknown to its parents; while others are of opinion that the “stools” were stone troughs, by the river side — into which, when the infants were washed, they were to be, as it were, accidentally dropped.

**17. *But the midwives feared God*** — Their faith inspired them with such courage as to risk their lives, by disobeying the mandate of a cruel tyrant; but it was blended with weakness, which made them shrink from speaking the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

**20, 21. *God dealt well with the midwives*** — This represents God as rewarding them for telling a lie. This difficulty is wholly removed by a more correct translation. To “make” or “build up a house” in *Hebrew* idiom, means to have a numerous progeny. The passage then should be rendered thus: “God protected the midwives, and the people waxed very mighty; and because the midwives feared, the Hebrews grew and prospered.”

## CHAPTER 2

### EXODUS 2:1-10.

#### BIRTH AND PRESERVATION OF MOSES.

1. *there went a man of the house of Levi*, etc. Amram was the husband and Jochebed the wife (compare <sup>QRP</sup>Exodus 6:2 <sup>QCS</sup>Numbers 26:59). The marriage took place, and two children, Miriam and Aaron, were born some years before the infanticidal edict.

2. *the woman ... bare a son*, etc. Some extraordinary appearance of remarkable comeliness led his parents to augur his future greatness. Beauty was regarded by the ancients as a mark of the divine favor.

*hid him three months* — The parents were a pious couple, and the measures they took were prompted not only by parental attachment, but by a strong faith in the blessing of God prospering their endeavors to save the infant.

3. *she took for him an ark of bulrushes* — papyrus, a thick, strong, and tough reed.

*slime* — the mud of the Nile, which, when hardened, is very tenacious.

*pitch* — mineral tar. Boats of this description are seen daily floating on the surface of the river, with no other caulking than Nile mud (compare <sup>QRP</sup>Isaiah 18:2), and they are perfectly watertight, unless the coating is forced off by stormy weather.

*flags* — a general term for sea or river weed. The chest was not, as is often represented, committed to the bosom of the water but laid on the bank, where it would naturally appear to have been drifted by the current and arrested by the reedy thicket. The spot is traditionally said to be the Isle of Rodah, near Old Cairo.

4. *his sister* — Miriam would probably be a girl of ten or twelve years of age at the time.

5. *the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river* — The occasion is thought to have been a religious solemnity which the royal family opened by bathing in the sacred stream. Peculiar sacredness was attached to those portions of the Nile which flowed near the temples. The water was there fenced off as a protection from the crocodiles; and doubtless the princess had an enclosure reserved for her own use, the road to which seems to have been well known to Jochebed.

*walked along* — in procession or in file.

*she sent her maid* — her immediate attendant. The term is different from that rendered “maidens.”

6-9. *when she had opened it, she saw the child* — The narrative is picturesque. No tale of romance ever described a plot more skilfully laid or more full of interest in the development. The expedient of the ark, the slime and pitch, the choice of the time and place, the appeal to the sensibilities of the female breast, the stationing of the sister as a watch of the proceedings, her timely suggestion of a nurse, and the engagement of the mother herself — all bespeak a more than ordinary measure of ingenuity as well as intense solicitude on the part of the parents. But the origin of the scheme was most probably owing to a divine suggestion, as its success was due to an overruling Providence, who not only preserved the child’s life, but provided for his being trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Hence it is said to have been done by faith (<sup>89123</sup>Hebrews 11:23), either in the general promise of deliverance, or some special revelation made to Amram and Jochebed — and in this view, the pious couple gave a beautiful example of a firm reliance on the word of God, united with an active use of the most suitable means.

10. *she brought him unto Pharaoh’s daughter* — Though it must have been nearly as severe a trial for Jochebed to part with him the second time as the first, she was doubtless reconciled to it by her belief in his high destination as the future deliverer of Israel. His age when removed to the palace is not stated; but he was old enough to be well instructed in the

principles of the true religion; and those early impressions, deepened by the power of divine grace, were never forgotten or effaced.

*he became her son* — by adoption, and his high rank afforded him advantages in education, which in the Providence of God were made subservient to far different purposes from what his royal patroness intended.

*she called his name Moses* — His parents might, as usual, at the time of his circumcision, have given him a name, which is traditionally said to have been Joachim. But the name chosen by the princess, whether of Egyptian or Hebrew origin, is the only one by which he has ever been known to the church; and it is a permanent memorial of the painful incidents of his birth and infancy.

## EXODUS 2:11-25.

### HIS SYMPATHY WITH THE HEBREWS.

**11. *in those days, when Moses was grown*** — not in age and stature only, but in power as well as in renown for accomplishments and military prowess (<sup><4172></sup>Acts 7:22). There is a gap here in the sacred history which, however, is supplied by the inspired commentary of Paul, who has fully detailed the reasons as well as extent of the change that took place in his worldly condition; and whether, as some say, his royal mother had proposed to make him coregent and successor to the crown, or some other circumstances, led to a declaration of his mind, he determined to renounce the palace and identify himself with the suffering people of God (<sup><4812></sup>Hebrews 11:24-29). The descent of some great sovereigns, like Diocletian and Charles V, from a throne into private life, is nothing to the sacrifice which Moses made through the power of faith.

*he went out unto his brethren* — to make a full and systematic inspection of their condition in the various parts of the country where they were dispersed (<sup><4173></sup>Acts 7:23), and he adopted this proceeding in pursuance of the patriotic purpose that the faith, which is of the operation of God, was even then forming in his heart.

***he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew*** — one of the taskmasters scourging a Hebrew slave without any just cause (<sup><402></sup>Acts 7:24), and in so cruel a manner, that he seems to have died under the barbarous treatment — for the conditions of the sacred story imply such a fatal issue. The sight was new and strange to him, and though pre-eminent for meekness (<sup><403></sup>Numbers 12:3), he was fired with indignation.

**12. *he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand*** — This act of Moses may seem and indeed by some has been condemned as rash and unjustifiable — in plain terms, a deed of assassination. But we must not judge of his action in such a country and age by the standard of law and the notions of right which prevail in our Christian land; and, besides, not only is it not spoken of as a crime in Scripture or as distressing the perpetrator with remorse, but according to existing customs among nomadic tribes, he was bound to avenge the blood of a brother. The person he slew, however, being a government officer, he had rendered himself amenable to the laws of Egypt, and therefore he endeavored to screen himself from the consequences by concealment of the corpse.

**13, 14. *two men of the Hebrews strove together*** — His benevolent mediation in this strife, though made in the kindest and mildest manner, was resented, and the taunt of the aggressor showing that Moses' conduct on the preceding day had become generally known, he determined to consult his safety by immediate flight (<sup><302></sup>Hebrews 11:27). These two incidents prove that neither were the Israelites yet ready to go out of Egypt, nor Moses prepared to be their leader (<sup><303></sup>James 1:20). It was by the staff and not the sword — by the meekness, and not the wrath of Moses that God was to accomplish that great work of deliverance. Both he and the people of Israel were for forty years more to be cast into the furnace of affliction, yet it was therein that He had chosen them (<sup><304></sup>Isaiah 48:10).

**15. *Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh*** — His flight took place in the second year of Thothmes I.

***dwelt in the land of Midian*** — situated on the eastern shore of the gulf of the Red Sea and occupied by the posterity of Midian the son of Cush. The territory extended northward to the top of the gulf and westward far across the desert of Sinai. And from their position near the sea, they early

combined trading with pastoral pursuits (<sup><137B></sup>Genesis 37:28). The headquarters of Jethro are supposed to have been where Dahab-Madian now stands; and from Moses coming direct to that place, he may have traveled with a caravan of merchants. But another place is fixed by tradition in Wady Shuweib, or Jethro's valley, on the east of the mountain of Moses.

*sat down by a well* — (See on <sup><123B></sup>Genesis 29:3).

**16-22. *the priest of Midian*** — or, “prince of Midian.” As the officers were usually conjoined, he was the ruler also of the people called Cushites or Ethiopians, and like many other chiefs of pastoral people in that early age, he still retained the faith and worship of the true God.

*seven daughters* — were shepherdesses to whom Moses was favorably introduced by an act of courtesy and courage in protecting them from the rude shepherds of some neighboring tribe at a well. He afterwards formed a close and permanent alliance with this family by marrying one of the daughters, Zipporah, “a little bird,” called a Cushite or Ethiopian (<sup><111B></sup>Numbers 12:1), and whom Moses doubtless obtained in the manner of Jacob by service [see <sup><113B></sup>Exodus 3:1]. He had by her two sons, whose names were, according to common practice, commemorative of incidents in the family history [<sup><113B></sup>Exodus 18:3,4].

**23. *the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage*** — The language seems to imply that the Israelites had experienced a partial relaxation, probably through the influence of Moses' royal patroness; but in the reign of her father's successor the persecution was renewed with increased severity.



## CHAPTER 3

### EXODUS 3:1-22.

#### DIVINE APPEARANCE AND COMMISSION TO MOSES.

1. *Now Moses kept the flock* — This employment he had entered on in furtherance of his matrimonial views (see on <sup><122></sup>Exodus 2:21), but it is probable he was continuing his service now on other terms like Jacob during the latter years of his stay with Laban (<sup><138></sup>Genesis 30:28).

*he led the flock to the backside of the desert* — that is, on the west of the desert [GESENIUS], assuming Jethro's headquarters to have been at Dahab. The route by which Moses led his flock must have been west through the wide valley called by the Arabs, Wady-es-Zugherah [ROBINSON], which led into the interior of the wilderness.

*Mountain of God* — so named either according to *Hebrew* idiom from its great height, as “great mountains,” *Hebrew*, “mountains of God” (<sup><120></sup>Psalms 36:6); “goodly cedars,” *Hebrew*, “cedars of God” (<sup><130></sup>Psalms 80:10); or some think from its being the old abode of “the glory”; or finally from its being the theater of transactions most memorable in the history of the true religion to Horeb — rather, “Horeb-ward.”

*Horeb* — that is, “dry,” “desert,” was the general name for the mountainous district in which Sinai is situated, and of which it is a part. (See on <sup><129></sup>Exodus 19:2). It was used to designate the region comprehending that immense range of lofty, desolate, and barren hills, at the base of which, however, there are not only many patches of verdure to be seen, but almost all the valleys, or *wadys*, as they are called, show a thin coating of vegetation, which, towards the south, becomes more luxuriant. The Arab shepherds seldom take their flocks to a greater distance than one day's journey from their camp. Moses must have gone at least two days' journey, and although he seems to have been only following his pastoral course, that region, from its numerous springs in the

clefts of the rocks being the chief resort of the tribes during the summer heats, the Providence of God led him thither for an important purpose.

**2, 3. *the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire*** — It is common in Scripture to represent the elements and operations of nature, as winds, fires, earthquakes, pestilence, everything enlisted in executing the divine will, as the “angels” or messengers of God. But in such cases God Himself is considered as really, though invisibly, present. Here the preternatural fire may be primarily meant by the expression “angel of the Lord”; but it is clear that under this symbol, the Divine Being was present, whose name is given (<sup>CHRO</sup>Exodus 3:4,6), and elsewhere called the angel of the covenant, Jehovah-Jesus.

***out of the midst of a bush*** — the wild acacia or thorn, with which that desert abounds, and which is generally dry and brittle, so much so, that at certain seasons, a spark might kindle a district far and wide into a blaze. A fire, therefore, being in the midst of such a desert bush was a “great sight.” It is generally supposed to have been emblematic of the Israelites condition in Egypt — oppressed by a grinding servitude and a bloody persecution, and yet, in spite of the cruel policy that was bent on annihilating them, they continued as numerous and thriving as ever. The reason was “God was in the midst of them.” The symbol may also represent the present state of the Jews, as well as of the Church generally in the world.

**4. *when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see*** — The manifestations which God anciently made of Himself were always accompanied by clear, unmistakable signs that the communications were really from heaven. This certain evidence was given to Moses. He saw a fire, but no human agent to kindle it; he heard a voice, but no human lips from which it came; he saw no living Being, but One was in the bush, in the heat of the flames, who knew him and addressed him by name. Who could this be but the Divine Being?

**5. *put off thy shoes*** — The direction was in conformity with a usage which was well known to Moses, for the Egyptian priests observed it in their temples, and it is observed in all Eastern countries where the people take off their shoes or sandals, as we do our hats. But the Eastern idea is not precisely the same as the Western. With us, the removal of the hat is an

expression of reverence for the place we enter, or rather of Him who is worshipped there. With them the removal of the shoes is a confession of personal defilement and conscious unworthiness to stand in the presence of unspotted holiness.

**6-8. *I am the God ... come down to deliver*** — The reverential awe of Moses must have been relieved by the divine Speaker (see <sup><022></sup>Matthew 22:32), announcing Himself in His covenant character, and by the welcome intelligence communicated. Moreover, the time, as well as all the circumstances of this miraculous appearance, were such as to give him an illustrious display of God's faithfulness to His promises. The period of Israel's journey and affliction in Egypt had been predicted (<sup><015></sup>Genesis 15:13), and it was during the last year of the term which had still to run that the Lord appeared in the burning bush.

**10-22. *Come now therefore, and I will send thee*** — Considering the patriotic views that had formerly animated the breast of Moses, we might have anticipated that no mission could have been more welcome to his heart than to be employed in the national emancipation of Israel. But he evinced great reluctance to it and stated a variety of objections [<sup><011></sup>Exodus 3:11,13 <sup><014></sup>4:1,10] all of which were successfully met and removed — and the happy issue of his labors was minutely described.

# CHAPTER 4

## ◀▶ EXODUS 4:1-31.

### MIRACULOUS CHANGE OF THE ROD, ETC.

1. ***But, behold*** — *Hebrew*, “If,” “perhaps,” “they will not believe me.” — What evidence can I produce of my divine mission? There was still a want of full confidence, not in the character and divine power of his employer, but in His presence and power always accompanying him. He insinuated that his communication might be rejected and he himself treated as an impostor.

2. ***the Lord said, ... What is that in thine hand?*** — The question was put not to elicit information which God required, but to draw the particular attention of Moses.

***A rod*** — probably the shepherd’s crook — among the Arabs, a long staff, with a curved head, varying from three to six feet in length.

6. ***Put now thine hand into thy bosom*** — the open part of his outer robe, worn about the girdle.

9. ***take of the water of the river*** — Nile. Those miracles, two of which were wrought then, and the third to be performed on his arrival in Goshen, were at first designed to encourage him as satisfactory proofs of his divine mission, and to be repeated for the special confirmation of his embassy before the Israelites.

10-13. ***I am not eloquent*** — It is supposed that Moses labored under a natural defect of utterance or had a difficulty in the free and fluent expression of his ideas in the Egyptian language, which he had long disused. This new objection was also overruled, but still Moses, who foresaw the manifold difficulties of the undertaking, was anxious to be freed from the responsibility.

**14. *the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses*** — The Divine Being is not subject to ebullitions of passion; but His displeasure was manifested by transferring the honor of the priesthood, which would otherwise have been bestowed on Moses, to Aaron, who was from this time destined to be the head of the house of Levi (<sup><LEVI></sup>1 Chronicles 23:13). Marvellous had been His condescension and patience in dealing with Moses; and now every remaining scruple was removed by the unexpected and welcome intelligence that his brother Aaron was to be his colleague. God knew from the beginning what Moses would do, but He reserves this motive to the last as the strongest to rouse his languid heart, and Moses now fully and cordially complied with the call. If we are surprised at his backwardness amidst all the signs and promises that were given him, we must admire his candor and honesty in recording it.

**18. *Moses ... returned to Jethro*** — Being in his service, it was right to obtain his consent, but Moses evinced piety, humility, and prudence, in not divulging the special object of his journey.

**19. *all the men are dead which sought thy life*** — The death of the Egyptian monarch took place in the four hundred and twenty-ninth year of the Hebrew sojourn in that land, and that event, according to the law of Egypt, took off his proscription of Moses, if it had been publicly issued.

**20. *Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass*** — *Septuagint*, “asses.” Those animals are not now used in the desert of Sinai except by the Arabs for short distances.

***returned*** — entered on his journey towards Egypt.

***he took the rod of God*** — so called from its being appropriated to His service, and because whatever miracles it might be employed in performing would be wrought not by its inherent properties, but by a divine power following on its use. (Compare <sup><HEB></sup>Acts 3:12).

**24. *inn*** — *Hebrew*, “a halting place for the night.”

***the Lord met him, and sought to kill him*** — that is, he was either overwhelmed with mental distress or overtaken by a sudden and dangerous malady. The narrative is obscure, but the meaning seems to be, that, led during his illness to a strict self-examination, he was deeply pained and

grieved at the thought of having, to please his wife, postponed or neglected the circumcision of one of his sons, probably the younger. To dishonor that sign and seal of the covenant was criminal in any Hebrew, peculiarly so in one destined to be the leader and deliverer of the Hebrews; and he seems to have felt his sickness as a merited chastisement for his sinful omission. Concerned for her husband's safety, Zipporah overcomes her maternal feelings of aversion to the painful rite, performs herself, by means of one of the sharp flints with which that part of the desert abounds, an operation which her husband, on whom the duty devolved, was unable to do, and having brought the bloody evidence, exclaimed in the painful excitement of her feelings that from love to him she had risked the life of her child [CALVIN, BULLINGER, ROSENMULLER].

**26. *So he let him go*** — Moses recovered; but the remembrance of this critical period in his life would stimulate the Hebrew legislator to enforce a faithful attention to the rite of circumcision when it was established as a divine ordinance in Israel, and made their peculiar distinction as a people.

**27. *Aaron met him in the mount of God, and kissed him*** — After a separation of forty years, their meeting would be mutually happy. Similar are the salutations of Arab friends when they meet in the desert still; conspicuous is the kiss on each side of the head.

**29-31. *Moses and Aaron went*** — towards Egypt, Zipporah and her sons having been sent back. (Compare <sup><128></sup>Exodus 18:2).

***gathered ... all the elders*** — Aaron was spokesman, and Moses performed the appointed miracles — through which “the people” (that is, the elders) believed (<sup><1172></sup>1 Kings 17:24 <sup><668></sup>Joshua 3:2) and received the joyful tidings of the errand on which Moses had come with devout thanksgiving. Formerly they had slighted the message and rejected the messenger. Formerly Moses had gone in his own strength; now he goes leaning on God, and strong only through faith in Him who had sent him. Israel also had been taught a useful lesson, and it was good for both that they had been afflicted.

# CHAPTER 5

## EXODUS 5:1-23.

### FIRST INTERVIEW WITH PHARAOH.

**1. *Moses and Aaron went in*** — As representatives of the Hebrews, they were entitled to ask an audience of the king, and their thorough Egyptian training taught them how and when to seek it.

***and told Pharaoh*** — When introduced, they delivered a message in the name of the God of Israel. This is the first time He is mentioned by that national appellation in Scripture. It seems to have been used by divine direction (<sup>OLD</sup>Exodus 4:2) and designed to put honor on the Hebrews in their depressed condition (<sup>SH16</sup>Hebrews 11:16).

**2. *And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord*** — rather “Jehovah.” Lord was a common name applied to objects of worship; but Jehovah was a name he had never heard of. Pharaoh estimated the character and power of this God by the abject and miserable condition of the worshippers and concluded that He held as low a rank among the gods as His people did in the nation. To demonstrate the supremacy of the true God over all the gods of Egypt, was the design of the plagues.

***I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go*** — As his honor and interest were both involved he determined to crush this attempt, and in a tone of insolence, or perhaps profanity, rejected the request for the release of the Hebrew slaves.

**3. *The God of the Hebrews hath met with us*** — Instead of being provoked into reproaches or threats, they mildly assured him that it was not a proposal originating among themselves, but a duty enjoined on them by their God. They had for a long series of years been debarred from the privilege of religious worship, and as there was reason to fear that a continued neglect of divine ordinances would draw down upon them the judgments of offended heaven, they begged permission to go three days’

journey into the desert — a place of seclusion — where their sacrificial observances would neither suffer interruption nor give umbrage to the Egyptians. In saying this, they concealed their ultimate design of abandoning the kingdom, and by making this partial request at first, they probably wished to try the king's temper before they disclosed their intentions any farther. But they said only what God had put in their mouths (<sup><OR></sup>Exodus 3:12,18), and this “legalizes the specific act, while it gives no sanction to the general habit of dissimulation” [CHALMERS].

**4. *Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works?***

etc. — Without taking any notice of what they had said, he treated them as ambitious demagogues, who were appealing to the superstitious feelings of the people, to stir up sedition and diffuse a spirit of discontent, which spreading through so vast a body of slaves, might endanger the peace of the country.

**6. *Pharaoh commanded*** — It was a natural consequence of the high displeasure created by this interview that he should put additional burdens on the oppressed Israelites.

***taskmasters*** — Egyptian overseers, appointed to exact labor of the Israelites.

***officers*** — Hebrews placed over their brethren, under the taskmasters, precisely analogous to the Arab officers set over the Arab Fellahs, the poor laborers in modern Egypt.

**7. *Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick*** — The making of bricks appears to have been a government monopoly as the ancient bricks are nearly all stamped with the name of a king, and they were formed, as they are still in Lower Egypt, of clay mixed with chopped straw and dried or hardened in the sun. The Israelites were employed in this drudgery; and though they still dwelt in Goshen and held property in flocks and herds, they were compelled in rotation to serve in the brick quarries, pressed in alternating groups, just as the *fellaheen*, or peasants, are marched by press gangs in the same country still.

***let them go and gather straw for themselves*** — The enraged despot did not issue orders to do an impracticable thing. The Egyptian reapers in the corn



harvest were accustomed merely to cut off the ears and leave the stalk standing.

**8. *tale*** — an appointed number of bricks. The materials of their labor were to be no longer supplied, and yet, as the same amount of produce was exacted daily, it is impossible to imagine more aggravated cruelty — a perfect specimen of Oriental despotism.

**12. *So the people were scattered*** — It was an immense grievance to the laborers individually, but there would be no hindrance from the husbandmen whose fields they entered, as almost all the lands of Egypt were in the possession of the crown (<sup>(447)</sup>Genesis 47:20).

**13-19. *And the taskmasters hastened them ... officers ... beaten*** — As the nearest fields were bared and the people had to go farther for stubble, it was impossible for them to meet the demand by the usual tale of bricks. “The beating of the officers is just what might have been expected from an Eastern tyrant, especially in the valley of the Nile, as it appears from the monuments, that ancient Egypt, like modern China, was principally governed by the stick” [TAYLOR]. “The mode of beating was by the offender being laid flat on the ground and generally held by the hands and feet while the chastisement was administered” [WILKINSON]. (<sup>(428)</sup>Deuteronomy 25:2). A picture representing the Hebrews on a brick field, exactly as described in this chapter, was found in an Egyptian tomb at Thebes.

**20, 21. *they met Moses ... The Lord look upon you, and judge*** — Thus the deliverer of Israel found that this patriotic interference did, in the first instance, only aggravate the evil he wished to remove, and that instead of receiving the gratitude, he was loaded with the reproaches of his countrymen. But as the greatest darkness is immediately before the dawn, so the people of God are often plunged into the deepest affliction when on the eve of their deliverance; and so it was in this case.

# CHAPTER 6

## EXODUS 6:1-13.

### RENEWAL OF THE PROMISE.

1. *the Lord said unto Moses* — The Lord, who is long-suffering and indulgent to the errors and infirmities of His people, made allowance for the mortification of Moses as the result of this first interview and cheered him with the assurance of a speedy and successful termination to his embassy.

2. *And God spake unto Moses* — For his further encouragement, there was made to him an emphatic repetition of the promise (<sup><OR></sup>Exodus 3:20).

3. *I ... God Almighty* — All enemies must fall, all difficulties must vanish before My omnipotent power, and the patriarchs had abundant proofs of this.

*but by my name*, etc. — rather, interrogatively, by My name Jehovah was I not known to them? Amos not I, the Almighty God, who pledged My honor for the fulfillment of the covenant, also the self-existent God who lives to accomplish it? Rest assured, therefore, that I shall bring it to pass. This passage has occasioned much discussion; and it has been thought by many to intimate that as the name Jehovah was not known to the patriarchs, at least in the full bearing or practical experience of it, the honor of the disclosure was reserved to Moses, who was the first sent with a message in the name of Jehovah, and enabled to attest it by a series of public miracles.

9-11. *Moses spake so unto the children of Israel* — The increased severities inflicted on the Israelites seem to have so entirely crushed their spirits, as well as irritated them, that they refused to listen to any more communications (<sup><OR></sup>Exodus 14:12). Even the faith of Moses himself was faltering; and he would have abandoned the enterprise in despair had he not received a positive command from God to revisit the people without

delay, and at the same time renew their demand on the king in a more decisive and peremptory tone.

**12. *how then shall ... who am of uncircumcised lips?*** — A metaphorical expression among the Hebrews, who, taught to look on the circumcision of any part as denoting perfection, signified its deficiency or unsuitableness by uncircumcision. The words here express how painfully Moses felt his want of utterance or persuasive oratory. He seems to have fallen into the same deep despondency as his brethren, and to be shrinking with nervous timidity from a difficult, if not desperate, cause. If he had succeeded so ill with the people, whose dearest interests were all involved, what better hope could he entertain of his making more impression on the heart of a king elated with pride and strong in the possession of absolute power? How strikingly was the indulgent forbearance of God displayed towards His people amid all their backwardness to hail His announcement of approaching deliverance! No perverse complaints or careless indifference on their part retarded the development of His gracious purposes. On the contrary, here, as generally, the course of His providence is slow in the infliction of judgments, while it moves more quickly, as it were, when misery is to be relieved or benefits conferred.

## EXODUS 6:14-30.

### THE GENEALOGY OF MOSES.

**14, 15. *These be the heads of their fathers' houses*** — chiefs or governors of their houses. The insertion of this genealogical table in this part of the narrative was intended to authenticate the descent of Moses and Aaron. Both of them were commissioned to act so important a part in the events transacted in the court of Egypt and afterwards elevated to so high offices in the government and Church of God, that it was of the utmost importance that their lineage should be accurately traced. Reuben and Simeon being the oldest of Jacob's sons, a passing notice is taken of them, and then the historian advances to the enumeration of the principal persons in the house of Levi [<sup>16-19</sup>Exodus 6:16-19].

**20. *Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife*** — The *Septuagint* and *Syriac* versions render it “his cousin.”

**23. *Elisheba*** — that is, Elizabethan. These minute particulars recorded of the family of Aaron, while he has passed over his own, indicate the real modesty of Moses. An ambitious man or an impostor would have acted in a different manner.

# CHAPTER 7

## EXODUS 7:1-25.

### SECOND INTERVIEW WITH PHARAOH.

1. *the Lord said unto Moses* — He is here encouraged to wait again on the king — not, however, as formerly, in the attitude of a humble suppliant, but now armed with credentials as God’s ambassador, and to make his demand in a tone and manner which no earthly monarch or court ever witnessed.

*I have made thee a god* — “made,” that is, set, appointed; “a god”; that is, he was to act in this business as God’s representative, to act and speak in His name and to perform things beyond the ordinary course of nature. The Orientals familiarly say of a man who is eminently great or wise, “he is a god” among men.

*Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet* — that is, “interpreter” or “spokesman.” The one was to be the vicegerent of God, and the other must be considered the speaker throughout all the ensuing scenes, even though his name is not expressly mentioned.

3. *I will harden Pharaoh’s heart* — This would be the *result*. But the divine message would be the *occasion*, not the *cause* of the king’s impenitent obduracy.

4, 5. *I may lay mine hand upon Egypt*, etc. — The succession of terrible judgments with which the country was about to be scourged would fully demonstrate the supremacy of Israel’s God.

7. *Moses was fourscore years old* — This advanced age was a pledge that they had not been readily betrayed into a rash or hazardous enterprise, and that under its attendant infirmities they could not have carried through the work on which they were entering had they not been supported by a divine hand.

**9. *When Pharaoh shall speak unto you***, etc. — The king would naturally demand some evidence of their having been sent from God; and as he would expect the ministers of his own gods to do the same works, the contest, in the nature of the case, would be one of miracles. Notice has already been taken of the rod of Moses (<sup>(NUM)</sup>Exodus 4:2), but rods were carried also by all nobles and official persons in the court of Pharaoh. It was an Egyptian custom, and the rods were symbols of authority or rank. Hence God commanded His servants to use a rod.

**10. *Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh***, etc. — It is to be presumed that Pharaoh had demanded a proof of their divine mission.

**11. *Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers***, etc. — His object in calling them was to ascertain whether this doing of Aaron's was really a work of divine power or merely a feat of magical art. The magicians of Egypt in modern times have been long celebrated adepts in charming serpents, and particularly by pressing the nape of the neck, they throw them into a kind of catalepsy, which renders them stiff and immovable — thus seeming to change them into a rod. They conceal the serpent about their persons, and by acts of legerdemain produce it from their dress, stiff and straight as a rod. Just the same trick was played off by their ancient predecessors, the most renowned of whom, Jannes and Jambres (<sup>(2)</sup>Timothy 3:8), were called in on this occasion. They had time after the summons to make suitable preparations — and so it appears they succeeded by their “enchantments” in practising an illusion on the senses.

**12. *but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods*** — This was what they could not be prepared for, and the discomfiture appeared in the loss of their rods, which were probably real serpents.

**14. *Pharaoh's heart is hardened*** — Whatever might have been his first impressions, they were soon dispelled; and when he found his magicians making similar attempts, he concluded that Aaron's affair was a magical deception, the secret of which was not known to his wise men.

**15. *Get thee unto Pharaoh*** — Now began those appalling miracles of judgment by which the God of Israel, through His ambassadors, proved His sole and unchallengeable supremacy over all the gods of Egypt, and which were the natural phenomena of Egypt, at an unusual season, and in

a miraculous degree of intensity. The court of Egypt, whether held at Rameses, or Memphis, or Tanis in the field of Zoan (<sup><1980></sup>Psalm 78:12), was the scene of those extraordinary transactions, and Moses must have resided during that terrible period in the immediate neighborhood.

*in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water* — for the purpose of ablutions or devotions perhaps; for the Nile was an object of superstitious reverence, the patron deity of the country. It might be that Moses had been denied admission into the palace; but be that as it may, the river was to be the subject of the first plague, and therefore, he was ordered to repair to its banks with the miracle-working rod, now to be raised, not in demonstration, but in judgment, if the refractory spirit of the king should still refuse consent to Israel's departure for their sacred rites.

**17-21. Aaron lifted up the rose and smote the waters**, etc. — Whether the water was changed into real blood, or only the appearance of it (and Omnipotence could effect the one as easily as the other), this was a severe calamity. How great must have been the disappointment and disgust throughout the land when the river became of a blood red color, of which they had a national abhorrence; their favorite beverage became a nauseous draught, and the fish, which formed so large an article of food, were destroyed. [See on <sup><0411></sup>Numbers 11:5.] The immense scale on which the plague was inflicted is seen by its extending to “the streams,” or branches of the Nile — to the “rivers,” the canals, the “ponds” and “pools,” that which is left after an overflow, the reservoirs, and the many domestic vessels in which the Nile water was kept to filter. And accordingly the sufferings of the people from thirst must have been severe. Nothing could more humble the pride of Egypt than this dishonor brought on their national god.

**22. And the magicians ... did so with their enchantments**, etc. — Little or no pure water could be procured, and therefore their imitation must have been on a small scale — the only drinkable water available being dug among the sands. It must have been on a sample or specimen of water dyed red with some coloring matter. But it was sufficient to serve as a pretext or command for the king to turn unmoved and go to his house.

# CHAPTER 8

## ◀~~HEB~~ EXODUS 8:1-15.

### PLAGUE OF FROGS.

1. *the Lord spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh* — The duration of the first plague for a whole week must have satisfied all that it was produced not by any accidental causes, but by the agency of omnipotent power. As a judgment of God, however, it produced no good effect, and Moses was commanded to wait on the king and threaten him, in the event of his continued obstinacy, with the infliction of a new and different plague. As Pharaoh's answer is not given, it may be inferred to have been unfavorable, for the rod was again raised.

2. *I will smite all thy borders with frogs* — Those animals, though the natural spawn of the river, and therefore objects familiar to the people, were on this occasion miraculously multiplied to an amazing extent, and it is probable that the ova of the frogs, which had been previously deposited in the mire and marshes, were miraculously brought to perfection at once.

3. *bedchamber ... bed* — mats strewed on the floor as well as more sumptuous divans of the rich.

*ovens* — holes made in the ground and the sides of which are plastered with mortar.

*kneading-troughs* — Those used in Egypt were bowls of wicker or rush work. What must have been the state of the people when they could find no means of escape from the cold, damp touch and unsightly presence of the frogs, as they alighted on every article and vessel of food!

5, 6. *Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams*, etc. The miracle consisted in the reptiles leaving their marshes at the very time he commanded them.



**7. *the magicians did so with their enchantments*** — required no great art to make the offensive reptiles appear on any small spot of ground. What they undertook to do already existed in abundance all around. They would better have shown their power by removing the frogs.

**8-15. *Pharaoh called, ... Intreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me*** — The frog, which was now used as an instrument of affliction, whether from reverence or abhorrence, was an object of national superstition with the Egyptians, the god Ptha being represented with a frog's head. But the vast numbers, together with their stench, made them an intolerable nuisance so that the king was so far humbled as to promise that, if Moses would intercede for their removal, he would consent to the departure of Israel, and in compliance with this appeal, they were withdrawn at the very hour named by the monarch himself. But many, while suffering the consequences of their sins, make promises of amendment and obedience which they afterwards forget; and so Pharaoh, when he saw there was a respite, was again hardened [<sup><0185</sup>Exodus 8:15].

## <0186>EXODUS 8:16-19.

### PLAGUE OF LICE.

**16. *smite the dust of the land***, etc. — Aaron's rod, by the direction of Moses, who was commanded by God, was again raised, and the land was filled with gnats, mosquitoes — that is the proper meaning of the original term. In ordinary circumstances they embitter life in Eastern countries, and therefore the *terrible* nature of this infliction on Egypt may be imagined when no precautions could preserve from their painful sting. The very smallness and insignificance of these fierce insects made them a dreadful scourge. The magicians never attempted any imitation, and what neither the blood of the river nor the nuisance of the frogs had done, the visitation of this tiny enemy constrained them to acknowledge “this is the finger of God” — properly “gods,” for they spoke as heathens.

## EXODUS 8:20-32.

### PLAGUE OF FLIES.

**20-24. *Rise up early ... Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water,*** etc. — Pharaoh still appearing obdurate, Moses was ordered to meet him while walking on the banks of the Nile and repeat his request for the liberation of Israel, threatening in case of continued refusal to cover every house from the palace to the cottage with swarms of flies — while, as a proof of the power that accomplished this judgment, the land of Goshen should be exempted from the calamity. The appeal was equally vain as before, and the predicted evil overtook the country in the form of what was not “flies,” such as we are accustomed to, but divers sorts of flies (<sup>1985</sup>Psalm 78:45), the gad fly, the cockroach, the Egyptian beetle, for all these are mentioned by different writers. They are very destructive, some of them inflicting severe bites on animals, others destroying clothes, books, plants, every thing. The worship of flies, particularly of the beetle, was a prominent part of the religion of the ancient Egyptians. The employment of these winged deities to chastise them must have been painful and humiliating to the Egyptians while it must at the same time have strengthened the faith of the Israelites in the God of their fathers as the only object of worship.

**25-32. *Pharaoh called for Moses, ... Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land,*** etc. — Between impatient anxiety to be freed from this scourge and a reluctance on the part of the Hebrew bondsmen, the king followed the course of expediency; he proposed to let them free to engage in their religious rites within any part of the kingdom. But true to his instructions, Moses would accede to no such arrangement; he stated a most valid reason to show the danger of it, and the king having yielded so far as to allow them a brief holiday *across the border*, annexed to this concession a request that Moses would entreat with Jehovah for the removal of the plague. He promised to do so, and it was removed the following day. But no sooner was the pressure over than the spirit of Pharaoh, like a bent bow, sprang back to its wonted obduracy, and, regardless of his promise, he refused to let the people depart.

## CHAPTER 9

### EXODUS 9:1-7.

#### MURRAIN OF BEASTS.

**3-5. *Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle*** — A fifth application was made to Pharaoh in behalf of the Israelites by Moses, who was instructed to tell him that, if he persisted in opposing their departure, a pestilence would be sent among all the flocks and herds of the Egyptians, while those of the Israelites would be spared. As he showed no intention of keeping his promise, he was still a mark for the arrows of the Almighty's quiver, and the threatened plague of which he was forewarned was executed. But it is observable that in this instance it was not inflicted through the instrumentality or waving of Aaron's rod, but directly by the hand of the Lord, and the fixing of the precise time tended still further to determine the true character of the calamity (<sup>240B</sup>Jeremiah 12:4).

**6. *all the cattle of Egypt died*** — not absolutely every beast, for we find (<sup>240B</sup>Exodus 9:19,21) that there were still some left; but a great many died of each herd — the mortality was frequent and widespread. The adaptation of this judgment consisted in Egyptians venerating the more useful animals such as the ox, the cow, and the ram; in all parts of the country temples were reared and divine honors paid to these domesticated beasts, and thus while the pestilence caused a great loss in money, it also struck a heavy blow at their superstition.

**7. *Pharaoh sent ... there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead*** — The despatch of confidential messengers indicates that he would not give credit to vague reports, and we may conclude that some impression had been made on his mind by that extraordinary exemption, but it was neither a good nor a permanent impression. His pride and obstinacy were in no degree subdued.

## EXODUS 9:8-17.

### PLAGUE OF BOILS.

8. *Take to you handfuls of ashes*, etc. — The next plague assailed the persons of the Egyptians, and it appeared in the form of ulcerous eruptions upon the skin and flesh (<sup><BEBD></sup>Leviticus 13:20 <sup><CIBD></sup>2 Kings 20:7 <sup><BIBD></sup>Job 2:7). That this epidemic did not arise from natural causes was evident from its taking effect from the particular action of Moses done in the sight of Pharaoh. The attitude he assumed was similar to that of Eastern magicians, who, “when they pronounce an imprecation on an individual, a village, or a country, take the ashes of cows’ dung (that is, from a common fire) and throw them in the air, saying to the objects of their displeasure, such a sickness or such a curse shall come upon you” [ROBERTS].

10. *Moses took ashes from the furnace* — *Hebrew*, “brick-kiln.” The magicians, being sufferers in their own persons, could do nothing, though they had been called; and as the brick-kiln was one of the principal instruments of oppression to the Israelites [<sup><BIBD></sup>Deuteronomy 4:20 <sup><IBSD></sup>1 Kings 8:51 <sup><BIBD></sup>Jeremiah 11:4], it was now converted into a means of chastisement to the Egyptians, who were made to read their sin in their punishment.

## EXODUS 9:18-35.

### PLAGUE OF HAIL.

18. *I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail*, etc. — The seventh plague which Pharaoh’s hardened heart provoked was that of hail, a phenomenon which must have produced the greatest astonishment and consternation in Egypt as rain and hailstones, accompanied by thunder and lightning, were very rare occurrences.

*such as hath not been in Egypt* — In the Delta, or lower Egypt, where the scene is laid, rain occasionally falls between January and March — hail is not unknown, and thunder sometimes heard. But a storm, not only

exhibiting all these elements, but so terrific that hailstones of immense size fell, thunder pealed in awful volleys, and lightning swept the ground like fire, was an unexampled calamity.

**20, 21. *He that feared the word of the Lord ... regarded not***, etc. — Due premonition, it appears, had been publicly given of the impending tempest — the cattle seem to have been sent out to graze, which is from January to April, when alone pasturage can be obtained, and accordingly the cattle were in the fields. This storm occurring at that season, not only struck universal terror into the minds of the people, but occasioned the destruction of all — people and cattle — which, in neglect of the warning, had been left in the fields, as well as of all vegetation [<sup>402</sup>Exodus 9:25]. It was the more appalling because hailstones in Egypt are small and of little force; lightning also is scarcely ever known to produce fatal effects; and to enhance the wonder, not a trace of any storm was found in Goshen [<sup>403</sup>Exodus 9:26].

**27-35. *Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned*** — This awful display of divine displeasure did seriously impress the mind of Pharaoh, and, under the weight of his convictions, he humbles himself to confess he has done wrong in opposing the divine will. At the same time he calls for Moses to intercede for cessation of the calamity. Moses accedes to his earnest wishes, and this most awful visitation ended. But his repentance proved a transient feeling, and his obduracy soon became as great as before.

**31, 32. *the flax and the barley was smitten***, etc. — The peculiarities that are mentioned in these cereal products arise from the climate and physical constitution of Egypt. In that country flax and barley are almost ripe when wheat and rye (spelt) are green. And hence the flax must have been “bolloed” — that is, risen in stalk or podded in February, thus fixing the particular month when the event took place. Barley ripens about a month earlier than wheat. Flax and barley are generally ripe in March, wheat and rye (properly, spelt) in April.

# CHAPTER 10

## EXODUS 10:1-20.

### PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS.

1. *show these my signs*, etc. — Sinners even of the worst description are to be admonished even though there may be little hope of amendment, and hence those striking miracles that carried so clear and conclusive demonstration of the being and character of the true God were performed in lengthened series before Pharaoh to leave him without excuse when judgment should be finally executed.

2. *And that thou mayest tell ... of thy son, and of thy son's son*, etc. — There was a further and higher reason for the infliction of those awful judgments, namely, that the knowledge of them there, and the permanent record of them still, might furnish a salutary and impressive lesson to the Church down to the latest ages. Worldly historians might have described them as extraordinary occurrences that marked this era of Moses in ancient Egypt. But we are taught to trace them to their cause: the judgments of divine wrath on a grossly idolatrous king and nations.

4. *to-morrow will I bring the locusts* — Moses was commissioned to renew the request, so often made and denied, with an assurance that an unfavorable answer would be followed on the morrow by an invasion of locusts. This species of insect resembles a large, spotted, red and black, double-winged grasshopper, about three inches or less in length, with the two hind legs working like hinged springs of immense strength and elasticity. Perhaps no more terrible scourge was ever brought on a land than those voracious insects, which fly in such countless numbers as to darken the land which they infest; and on whatever place they alight, they convert it into a waste and barren desert, stripping the ground of its verdure, the trees of their leaves and bark, and producing in a few hours a degree of desolation which it requires the lapse of years to repair.

**7-11. *Pharaoh's servants said*** — Many of his courtiers must have suffered serious losses from the late visitations, and the prospect of such a calamity as that which was threatened and the magnitude of which former experience enabled them to realize, led them to make a strong remonstrance with the king. Finding himself not seconded by his counsellors in his continued resistance, he recalled Moses and Aaron, and having expressed his consent to their departure, inquired who were to go. The prompt and decisive reply, “all,” neither man nor beast shall remain, raised a storm of indignant fury in the breast of the proud king. He would permit the grown-up men to go away; but no other terms would be listened to.

**11. *they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence*** — In the East, when a person of authority and rank feels annoyed by a petition which he is unwilling to grant, he makes a signal to his attendants, who rush forward and, seizing the obnoxious suppliant by the neck, drag him out of the chamber with violent haste. Of such a character was the impassioned scene in the court of Egypt when the king had wrought himself into such a fit of uncontrollable fury as to treat ignominiously the two venerable representatives of the Hebrew people.

**13-19. *the Lord brought an east wind*** — The rod of Moses was again raised, and the locusts came. They are natives of the desert and are only brought by an east wind into Egypt, where they sometimes come in sun-obscuring clouds, destroying in a few days every green blade in the track they traverse. Man, with all his contrivances, can do nothing to protect himself from the overwhelming invasion. Egypt has often suffered from locusts. But the plague that followed the wave of the miraculous rod was altogether unexampled. Pharaoh, fearing irretrievable ruin to his country, sent in haste for Moses, and confessing his sin, implored the intercession of Moses, who entreated the Lord, and a “mighty strong west wind took away the locusts.”

Ⓢ EXODUS 10:21-29.

PLAGUE OF DARKNESS.

**21-23. *Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness*** — Whatever secondary means were employed in producing it, whether thick clammy fogs and vapors, according to some; a sandstorm, or the *chamsin*, according to others; it was such that it could be almost perceived by the organs of touch, and so protracted as to continue for three days, which the *chamsin* does [HENGSTENBERG]. The appalling character of this calamity consisted in this, that the sun was an object of Egyptian idolatry; that the pure and serene sky of that country was never marred by the appearance of a cloud. And here, too, the Lord made a marked difference between Goshen and the rest of Egypt.

**24-26. *Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the Lord*** — Terrified by the preternatural darkness, the stubborn king relents, and proposes another compromise — the flocks and herds to be left as hostages for their return. But the crisis is approaching, and Moses insists on every iota of his demand. The cattle would be needed for sacrifice — how many or how few could not be known till their arrival at the scene of religious observance. But the emancipation of Israel from Egyptian bondage was to be complete.

**28. *Pharaoh said, ... Get thee from me*** — The calm firmness of Moses provoked the tyrant. Frantic with disappointment and rage, with offended and desperate malice, he ordered him from his presence and forbade him ever to return. “Moses said, Thou hast spoken well” (Ⓢ Exodus 10:29).



# CHAPTER 11

## EXODUS 11:1-10.

### DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN THREATENED.

1. *the Lord said* — rather, “*had said* unto Moses.” It may be inferred, therefore, that he had been apprised that the crisis had now arrived, that the next plague would so effectually humble and alarm the mind of Pharaoh, that he would “thrust them out thence altogether”; and thus the word of Moses (<sup>10:29</sup>Exodus 10:29), must be regarded as a prediction.

2, 3. *Speak now in the ears of the people* — These verses, describing the communication which had been made in private to Moses, are inserted here as a parenthesis, and will be considered (<sup>12:35</sup>Exodus 12:35).

4. *Thus saith the Lord, About midnight* — Here is recorded the announcement of the last plague made in the most solemn manner to the king, on whose hardened heart all his painful experience had hitherto produced no softening, at least no permanently good effect.

*will I go out into the midst of Egypt* — language used after the manner of men.

5. *And all the first-born in the land ... shall die* — The time, the suddenness, the dreadful severity of this coming calamity, and the peculiar description of victims, among both men and beasts, on whom it was to fall, would all contribute to aggravate its character.

*the maid-servant that is behind the mill* — The grinding of the meal for daily use in every household is commonly done by female slaves and is considered the lowest employment. Two portable millstones are used for the purpose, of which the uppermost is turned by a small wooden handle, and during the operation the maid sits behind the mill.

6. *shall be a great cry throughout all the land* — In the case of a death, people in the East set up loud wailings, and imagination may conceive

what “a great cry” would be raised when death would invade every family in the kingdom.

**7. *against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue***

— No town or village in Egypt or in the East generally is free from the nuisance of dogs, who prowl about the streets and make the most hideous noise at any passers-by at night. What an emphatic significance does the knowledge of this circumstance give to this fact in the sacred record, that on the awful night that was coming, when the air should be rent with the piercing shrieks of mourners, so great and universal would be the panic inspired by the hand of God, that not a dog would move his tongue against the children of Israel!

**8. *all these thy servants shall come down themselves unto me*** — This would be the effect of the universal terror; the hearts of the proudest would be humbled and do reverential homage to God, in the person of His representative.

***went out ... in a great anger*** — Holy and righteous indignation at the duplicity, repeated falsehood, and hardened impenitence of the king; and this strong emotion was stirred in the bosom of Moses, not at the ill reception given to himself, but the dishonor done to God (<sup>409</sup>Matthew 19:8 <sup>400</sup>Ephesians 4:26).

# CHAPTER 12

## EXODUS 12:1-10.

### THE PASSOVER INSTITUTED.

1. *the Lord spake unto Moses* — rather, “*had* spoken unto Moses and Aaron”; for it is evident that the communication here described must have been made to them on or before the tenth of the month.
  2. *this month shall be unto you the beginning of months* — the first not only in order but in estimation. It had formerly been the seventh according to the reckoning of the civil year, which began in September, and continued unchanged, but it was thenceforth to stand first in the national religious year which began in March, April.
  3. *Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel* — The recent events had prepared the Israelitish people for a crisis in their affairs, and they seem to have yielded implicit obedience at this time to Moses. It is observable that, amid all the hurry and bustle of such a departure, their serious attention was to be given to a solemn act of religion.
- a lamb for an house* — a kid might be taken (<sup>12:5</sup>Exodus 12:5). The service was to be a domestic one, for the deliverance was to be from an evil threatened to every house in Egypt.
4. *if the household be too little for the lamb*, etc. — It appears from JOSEPHUS that ten persons were required to make up the proper paschal communion.
- every man according to his eating* — It is said that the quantity eaten of the paschal lamb, by each individual, was about the size of an olive.
5. *lamb ... without blemish* — The smallest deformity or defect made a lamb unfit for sacrifice — a type of Christ (<sup>7:26</sup>Hebrews 7:26 <sup>1:19</sup>1 Peter 1:19).

***a male of the first year*** — Christ in the prime of life.

**6. *keep it up until the fourteenth day***, etc. — Being selected from the rest of the flock, it was to be separated four days before sacrifice; and for the same length of time was Christ under examination and His spotless innocence declared before the world.

***kill it in the evening*** — that is, the interval between the sun's beginning to decline, and sunset, corresponding to our three o'clock in the afternoon.

**7. *take of the blood, and strike it on the two side-posts***, etc. — as a sign of safety to those within. The posts must be considered of tents, in which the Israelites generally lived, though some might be in houses. Though the Israelites were sinners as well as the Egyptians, God was pleased to accept the substitution of a lamb — the blood of which, being seen *sprinkled* on the doorposts, procured them mercy. It was to be on the sideposts and upper doorposts, where it might be *looked* to, not on the threshold, where it might be trodden under foot. This was an emblem of the blood of sprinkling (<sup><302></sup>Hebrews 12:24 <sup><319></sup>10:29).

**8. *roast with fire*** — for the sake of expedition; and this difference was always observed between the cooking of the paschal lamb and the other offerings (<sup><483></sup>2 Chronicles 35:13).

***unleavened bread*** — also for the sake of despatch (<sup><566></sup>Deuteronomy 16:3), but as a kind of corruption (<sup><211></sup>Luke 12:1) there seems to have been a typical meaning under it (<sup><418></sup>1 Corinthians 5:8).

***bitter herbs*** — literally, “bitters” — to remind the Israelites of their affliction in Egypt, and morally of the trials to which God's people are subject on account of sin.

**9. *Eat not of it raw*** — that is, with any blood remaining; a caveat against conformity to idolatrous practices. It was to be roasted whole, not a bone to be broken, and this pointed to Christ (<sup><488></sup>John 19:36).

**10. *let nothing of it remain until the morning*** — which might be applied in a superstitious manner, or allowed to putrefy, which in a hot climate would speedily have ensued; and which was not becoming in what had been offered to God.

## EXODUS 12:11-14.

### THE RITE OF THE PASSOVER.

**11. *thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet*** — as prepared for a journey. The first was done by the skirts of the loose outer cloth being drawn up and fastened in the girdle, so as to leave the leg and knee free for motion. As to the other, the Orientals never wear shoes indoors, and the ancient Egyptians, as appears from the monuments, did not usually wear either shoes or sandals. These injunctions seem to have applied chiefly to the first celebration of the rite.

*it is the Lord's passover* — called by this name from the blood-marked dwellings of the Israelites being *passed* over figuratively by the destroying angel.

**12. *smite ... gods of Egypt*** — perhaps used here for princes and grandees. But, according to Jewish tradition, the idols of Egypt were all on that night broken in pieces (see <sup><0604></sup>Numbers 33:4 <sup><2901></sup>Isaiah 19:1).

**14. *for a memorial*** — The close analogy traceable in all points between the Jewish and Christian passovers is seen also in the circumstance that both festivals were instituted before the events they were to commemorate had transpired.

## EXODUS 12:15-51.

### UNLEAVENED BREAD.

**15. *Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread***, etc. — This was to commemorate another circumstance in the departure of the Israelites, who were urged to leave so hurriedly that their dough was unleavened (<sup><0129></sup>Exodus 12:39), and they had to eat unleavened cakes (<sup><0505></sup>Deuteronomy 16:3). The greatest care was always taken by the Jews to free their houses from leaven — the owner searching every corner of his dwelling with a lighted candle. A figurative allusion to this is made (<sup><4011></sup>1 Corinthians 5:7). The exclusion of leaven for seven days would not be attended with

inconvenience in the East, where the usual leaven is dough kept till it becomes sour, and it is kept from one day to another for the purpose of preserving leaven in readiness. Thus even were There none in all the country, it could be got within twenty-four hours [HARMER].

***that soul shall be cut off*** — excommunicated from the community and privileges of the chosen people.

**16. *there shall be an holy convocation*** — literally, *calling* of the people, which was done by sound of trumpets (<sup><4810></sup>Numbers 10:2), a sacred assembly — for these days were to be regarded as Sabbaths — excepting only that meat might be cooked on them (<sup><4923></sup>Exodus 16:23).

**17. *ye shall observe***, etc. — The seven days of this feast were to commence the day after the passover. It was a distinct festival following that feast; but although this feast was instituted like the passover *before* the departure, the observance of it did not take place till *after*.

**19. *stranger*** — No foreigner could partake of the passover, unless circumcised; the “stranger” specified as admissible to the privilege must, therefore, be considered a Gentile *proselyte*.

**21-25. *Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel***, etc. — Here are given special directions for the observance.

**22. *hyssop*** — a small red moss [HASSELQUIST]; the caper-plant [ROYLE]. It was used in the sprinkling, being well adapted for such purposes, as it grows in bushes — putting out plenty of suckers from a single root. And it is remarkable that it was ordained in the arrangements of an all-wise Providence that the Roman soldiers should undesignedly, on their part, make use of this symbolical plant to Christ when, as our Passover, He was sacrificed for us [<sup><4829></sup>John 19:29].

***none ... shall go out at the door of his house until the morning*** — This regulation was peculiar to the first celebration, and intended, as some think, to prevent any suspicion attaching to them of being agents in the impending destruction of the Egyptians; there is an allusion to it (<sup><2321></sup>Isaiah 26:20).

**26. *when your children shall say, ... What mean ye by this service*** —

Independently of some observances which were not afterwards repeated, the usages practiced at this yearly commemorative feast were so peculiar that the curiosity of the young would be stimulated, and thus parents had an excellent opportunity, which they were enjoined to embrace, for instructing each rising generation in the origin and leading facts of the national faith.

**27, 28. *the people bowed the head, and worshipped*** — All the preceding directions were communicated through the elders, and the Israelites, being deeply solemnized by the influence of past and prospective events, gave prompt and faithful obedience.

**29. *at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt*** — At the moment when the Israelites were observing the newly instituted feast in the singular manner described, the threatened calamity overtook the Egyptians. It is more easy to imagine than describe the confusion and terror of that people suddenly roused from sleep and enveloped in darkness — none could assist their neighbors when the groans of the dying and the wild shrieks of mourners were heard everywhere around. The hope of every family was destroyed at a stroke. This judgment, terrible though it was, evinced the equity of divine retribution. For eighty years the Egyptians had caused the male children of the Israelites to be cast into the river [<sup>[~~2181~~]</sup>Exodus 1:16], and now all their own first-born fell under the stroke of the destroying angel. They were made, in the justice of God, to feel something of what they had made His people feel. Many a time have the hands of sinners made the snares in which they have themselves been entangled, and fallen into the pit which they have dug for the righteous [<sup>[~~2182~~]</sup>Proverbs 28:10]. “Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth” [<sup>[~~2183~~]</sup>Psalms 58:11].

**30. *there was not a house where there was not one dead*** — Perhaps this statement is not to be taken absolutely. The Scriptures frequently use the words “all,” “none,” in a comparative sense — and so in this case. There would be many a house in which there would be no child, and many in which the first-born might be already dead. What is to be understood is, that almost every house in Egypt had a death in it.

**31. *called for Moses and Aaron*** — a striking fulfillment of the words of Moses (<sup>2118</sup>Exodus 11:8), and showing that they were spoken under divine suggestion.

**32. *also take your flocks***, etc. — All the terms the king had formerly insisted on were now departed from; his pride had been effectually humbled. Appalling judgments in such rapid succession showed plainly that the hand of God was against him. His own family bereavement had so crushed him to the earth that he not only showed impatience to rid his kingdom of such formidable neighbors, but even begged an interest in their prayers.

**34. *people took ... their kneading-troughs*** — Having lived so long in Egypt, they must have been in the habit of using the utensils common in that country. The Egyptian kneading-trough was a bowl of wicker or rush work, and it admitted of being hastily wrapped up with the dough in it and slung over the shoulder in their *hykes* or loose upper garments.

**35. *children of Israel borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver*** — When the Orientals go to their sacred festivals, they always put on their *best jewels*. The Israelites themselves thought they were only going three days' journey to hold a feast unto the Lord, and in these circumstances it would be easy for them to *borrow* what was necessary for a sacred festival. But *borrow* conveys a wrong meaning. The word rendered *borrow* signifies properly to *ask, demand, require*. The Israelites had been kept in great poverty, having received little or no wages. They now insisted on full remuneration for all their labor, and it was paid in light and valuable articles adapted for convenient carriage.

**36. *the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians*** — Such a dread of them was inspired into the universal minds of the Egyptians, that whatever they asked was readily given.

***spoiled the Egyptians*** — The accumulated earnings of many years being paid them at this moment, the Israelites were suddenly enriched, according to the promise made to Abraham (<sup>1514</sup>Genesis 15:14), and they left the country like a victorious army laden with spoil (<sup>1457</sup>Psalms 105:37 <sup>590</sup>Ezekiel 39:10).



**37. *The children of Israel journeyed from Rameses*** — now generally identified with the ancient Heroopolis, and fixed at the modern *Abu-Keisheid*. This position agrees with the statement that the scene of the miraculous judgments against Pharaoh was “in the field of Zoan” [<sup><3982></sup>Psalm 78:12,43]. And it is probable that, in expectation of their departure, which the king on one pretext or another delayed, the Israelites had been assembled there as a general rendezvous. In journeying from Rameses to Palestine, there was a choice of two routes — the one along the shores of the Mediterranean to El-Arish, the other more circuitous round the head of the Red Sea and the desert of Sinai. The latter Moses was directed to take (<sup><1237></sup>Exodus 13:17).

***to Succoth*** — that is, booths, probably nothing more than a place of temporary encampment. The Hebrew word signifies a covering or shelter formed by the boughs of trees; and hence, in memory of this lodgment, the Israelites kept the feast of tabernacles yearly in this manner.

***six hundred thousand ... men*** — It appears from <sup><1003></sup>Numbers 1:3 that the enumeration is of men above twenty years of age. Assuming, what is now ascertained by statistical tables, that the number of males above that age is as nearly as possible the half of the total number of males, the whole male population of Israel, on this computation, would amount to 1,200,000; and adding an equal number for women and children, the aggregate number of Israelites who left Egypt would be 2,400,000.

**38. *a mixed multitude went with them*** — literally, “a great rabble” (see also <sup><1010></sup>Numbers 11:4 <sup><6231></sup>Deuteronomy 29:11); slaves, persons in the lowest grades of society, partly natives and partly foreigners, bound close to them as companions in misery, and gladly availing themselves of the opportunity to escape in the crowd. (Compare <sup><3182></sup>Zechariah 8:23).

**40. *the sojourning of the children of Israel ... four hundred and thirty years*** — The *Septuagint* renders it thus: “The sojourning of the children and of their fathers, which they sojourned in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt.” These additions are important, for the period of sojourn in Egypt did not exceed two hundred fifteen years; but if we reckon from the time that Abraham entered Canaan and the promise was made in which the sojourn of his posterity in Egypt was announced, this makes up the time to four hundred thirty years.

**41. *even the selfsame day*** — implying an exact and literal fulfillment of the predicted period.

**49. *One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger*** — This regulation displays the liberal spirit of the Hebrew institutions. Any foreigner might obtain admission to the privileges of the nation on complying with their sacred ordinances. In the Mosaic equally as in the Christian dispensation, privilege and duty were inseparably conjoined.

## CHAPTER 13

### EXODUS 13:1,2.

#### THE FIRST-BORN SANCTIFIED.

2. *Sanctify unto me all the first-born* — To “sanctify” means to “consecrate,” to “set apart” from a common to a sacred use. The foundation of this duty rested on the fact that the Israelites, having had their first-born preserved by a distinguishing act of grace from the general destruction that overtook the families of the Egyptians, were bound in token of gratitude to consider them as the Lord’s peculiar property (compare <sup>1823</sup>Hebrews 12:23).

### EXODUS 13:3-10.

#### MEMORIAL OF THE PASSOVER.

3. *Moses said unto the people, Remember this day* — The day that gave them a national existence and introduced them into the privileges of independence and freedom, deserved to live in the memories of the Hebrews and their posterity; and, considering the signal interposition of God displayed in it, to be held not only in perpetual, but devout remembrance.

*house of bondage* — literally, “house of slaves” — that is, a servile and degrading condition.

*for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place* — The emancipation of Israel would never have been obtained except it had been wrung from the Egyptian tyrant by the appalling judgments of God, as had been at the outset of his mission announced to Moses (<sup>1186</sup>Exodus 3:19).

***There shall no leavened bread,*** etc. — The words are elliptical, and the meaning of the clause may be paraphrased thus: — “For by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place, in such haste that there could or should be no leavened bread eaten.”

**4. *month Abib*** — literally, “a green ear,” and hence the month Abib is the month of green ears, corresponding to the middle of our March. It was the best season for undertaking a journey to the desert region of Sinai, especially with flocks and herds; for then the winter torrents had subsided, and the wadies were covered with an early and luxuriant verdure.

**5-7. *when the Lord shall bring thee*** — The passover is here instituted as a permanent festival of the Israelites. It was, however, only a prospective observance; we read of only one celebration of the passover during the protracted sojourn in the wilderness [<sup>-041E</sup>Numbers 9:5]; but on their settlement in the promised land, the season was hallowed as a sacred anniversary [<sup>-0450</sup>Joshua 5:10], in conformity with the directions here given.

**8. *thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying*** — The establishment of this and the other sacred festivals presented the best opportunities of instructing the young in a knowledge of His gracious doings to their ancestors in Egypt.

**9. *it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand,*** etc. — There is no reason to believe that the Oriental tattooing — the custom of staining the hands with the powder of Henna, as Eastern females now do — is here referred to. Nor is it probable that either this practice or the phylacteries of the Pharisees — parchment scrolls, which were worn on their wrists and foreheads — had so early an existence. The words are to be considered only as a figurative mode of expression.

***that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth,*** etc. — that is, that it may be the subject of frequent conversation and familiar knowledge among the people.

## EXODUS 13:11-16.

### FIRSTLINGS OF BEASTS.

**12, 13.** *every firstling*, etc. — the injunction respecting the consecration of the first-born, as here repeated, with some additional circumstances. The firstlings of clean beasts, such as lambs, kids, and calves, if males, were to be devoted to God and employed in sacrifice. Those unclean beasts, as the ass's colt, being unfit for sacrifice, were to be redeemed (<sup>Q1815</sup> Numbers 18:15).

## EXODUS 13:17-21.

### JOURNEY FROM EGYPT.

**17.** *God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near*, etc. — The shortest and most direct route from Egypt to Palestine was the usual caravan road that leads by Belbeis, El-Arish, to Ascalon and Gaza. The Philistines, who then possessed the latter, would have been sure to dispute their passage, for between them and the Israelites there was a hereditary feud (<sup>Q1821</sup> 1 Chronicles 7:21,22); and so early a commencement of hostilities would have discouraged or dismayed the unwarlike band which Moses led. Their faith was to be exercised and strengthened, and from the commencement of their travels we observe the same careful proportion of burdens and trials to their character and state, as the gracious Lord shows to His people still in that spiritual journey of which the former was typical.

**18.** *God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea*, etc. — This wondrous expanse of water is a gulf of the Indian ocean. It was called in Hebrew “the weedy sea,” from the forest of marine plants with which it abounds. But the name of the Red Sea is not so easily traced. Some think it was given from its contiguity to the countries of Edom (“red”); others derive it from its coral rocks; while a third class ascribe the origin of the name to an extremely red appearance of the water in some parts, caused by a numberless multitude of very small mollusca.

This sea, at its northern extremity, separates into two smaller inlets — the eastern called anciently the Elanitic gulf, now the gulf of Akaba; and the western the Heroopolite gulf, now the gulf of Suez, which, there can be no doubt, extended much more to the north anciently than it does now. It was toward the latter the Israelites marched.

**went up harnessed** — that is, girded, equipped for a long journey. (See <sup><4935></sup>Psalm 105:37). The *Margin* renders it “five in a rank,” meaning obviously five large divisions, under five presiding officers, according to the usages of all caravans; and a spectacle of such a mighty and motley multitude must have presented an imposing appearance, and its orderly progress could have been effected only by the superintending influence of God.

**19. Moses took the bones of Joseph with him** — in fulfillment of the oath he exacted from his brethren (<sup><4935></sup>Genesis 50:25,26). The remains of the other patriarchs (not noticed from their obscurity) were also carried out of Egypt (<sup><4075></sup>Acts 7:15,16); and there would be no difficulty as to the means of conveyance — a few camels bearing these precious relics would give a true picture of Oriental customs, such as is still to be seen in the immense pilgrimages to Mecca.

**20. encamped in Etham** — This place is supposed by the most intelligent travelers to be the modern Ajrud, where is a watering-place, and which is the third stage of the pilgrim-caravans to Mecca. “It is remarkable that either of the different routes eastward from Heliopolis, or southward from Heroopolis, equally admit of Ajrud being Etham. It is twelve miles northwest from Suez, and is literally on the edge of the desert” [*Pictorial Bible*].

**21, 22. the Lord went before them** — by a visible token of His presence, the Shekinah, in a majestic cloud (<sup><5784></sup>Psalm 78:14 <sup><602></sup>Nehemiah 9:12 <sup><601></sup>1 Corinthians 10:1), called “the angel of God” (<sup><2149></sup>Exodus 14:19; <sup><1231></sup>23:20-23 <sup><9910></sup>Psalm 99:6,7 <sup><2518></sup>Isaiah 63:8,9).

## CHAPTER 14

### EXODUS 14:1-41.

#### GOD INSTRUCTS THE ISRAELITES AS TO THEIR JOURNEY.

**2. *Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp*** — The Israelites had now completed their three days' journey, and at Etham the decisive step would have to be taken whether they would celebrate their intended feast and return, or march onwards by the head of the Red Sea into the desert, with a view to a final departure. They were already on the borders of the desert, and a short march would have placed them beyond the reach of pursuit, as the chariots of Egypt could have made little progress over dry and yielding sand. But at Etham, instead of pursuing their journey eastward with the sea on their right, they were suddenly commanded to diverge to the south, keeping the gulf on their left; a route which not only detained them lingering on the confines of Egypt, but, in adopting it, they actually turned their backs on the land of which they had set out to obtain the possession. A movement so unexpected, and of which the ultimate design was carefully concealed, could not but excite the astonishment of all, even of Moses himself, although, from his implicit faith in the wisdom and power of his heavenly Guide, he obeyed. The object was to entice Pharaoh to pursue, in order that the moral effect, which the judgments on Egypt had produced in releasing God's people from bondage, might be still further extended over the nations by the awful events transacted at the Red Sea.

***Pi-hahiroth*** — the mouth of the defile, or pass — a description well suited to that of Bedea, which extended from the Nile and opens on the shore of the Red Sea.

***Migdol*** — a fortress or citadel.

***Baal-zephon*** — some marked site on the opposite or eastern coast.

**3. *the wilderness hath shut them in*** — Pharaoh, who would eagerly watch their movements, was now satisfied that they were meditating flight, and he naturally thought from the error into which they appeared to have fallen by entering that defile, he could intercept them. He believed them now entirely in his power, the mountain chain being on one side, the sea on the other, so that, if he pursued them in the rear, escape seemed impossible.

**5. *the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people,*** etc. — Alas, how soon the obduracy of this reprobate king reappears! He had been convinced, but not converted — overawed, but not sanctified by the appalling judgments of heaven. He bitterly repented of what he now thought a hasty concession. Pride and revenge, the honor of his kingdom, and the interests of his subjects, all prompted him to recall his permission to reclaim those runaway slaves and force them to their wonted labor. Strange that he should yet allow such considerations to obliterate or outweigh all his painful experience of the danger of oppressing that people. But those whom the Lord has doomed to destruction are first infatuated by sin.

**6, 7. *he made ready his chariot*** — His preparations for an immediate and hot pursuit are here described: A difference is made between “the chosen chariots” and “the chariots of Egypt.” The first evidently composed the king’s guard, amounting to six hundred, and they are called “chosen,” literally, “third men”; three men being allotted to each chariot, the charioteer and two warriors. As to “the chariots of Egypt,” the common cars contained only two persons, one for driving and the other for fighting; sometimes only one person was in the chariot, the driver lashed the reins round his body and fought; infantry being totally unsuitable for a rapid pursuit, and the Egyptians having had no cavalry, the word “riders” is in the grammatical connection applied to war chariots employed, and these were of light construction, open behind, and hung on small wheels.

**10. *when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes*** — The great consternation of the Israelites is somewhat astonishing, considering their vast superiority in numbers, but their deep dismay and absolute despair at the sight of this armed host receives a satisfactory explanation from the fact that the civilized state of Egyptian society



required the absence of all arms, except when they were on service. If the Israelites were entirely unarmed at their departure, they could not think of making any resistance [WILKINSON and HENGSTENBERG].

**13, 14. *Moses said, ... Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord*** — Never, perhaps, was the fortitude of a man so severely tried as that of the Hebrew leader in this crisis, exposed as he was to various and inevitable dangers, the most formidable of which was the vengeance of a seditious and desperate multitude; but his meek, unruffled, magnanimous composure presents one of the sublimest examples of moral courage to be found in history. And whence did his courage arise? He saw the miraculous cloud still accompanying them, and his confidence arose solely from the hope of a divine interposition, although, perhaps, he might have looked for the expected deliverance in every quarter, rather than in the direction of the sea.

**15-18. *the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me?*** etc. — When in answer to his prayers, he received the divine command to go forward, he no longer doubted by what kind of miracle the salvation of his mighty charge was to be effected.

**19. *the angel of God*** — that is, the pillar of cloud [see on <sup><0121></sup>Exodus 13:21]. The slow and silent movement of that majestic column through the air, and occupying a position behind them must have excited the astonishment of the Israelites (<sup><2810></sup>Isaiah 58:8). It was an effectual barrier between them and their pursuers, not only protecting them, but concealing their movements. Thus, the same cloud produced light (a symbol of favor) to the people of God, and darkness (a symbol of wrath) to their enemies (compare <sup><0112></sup>2 Corinthians 2:16).

**21. *Moses stretched out his hand***, etc. — The waving of the rod was of great importance on this occasion to give public attestation in the presence of the assembled Israelites, both to the character of Moses and the divine mission with which he was charged.

***the Lord caused ... a strong east wind all that night*** — Suppose a mere ebb tide caused by the wind, raising the water to a great height on *one side*, still as there was not only “dry land,” but, according to the tenor of the sacred narrative, a wall on the right hand and on the left (<sup><0142></sup>Exodus 14:22),

it would be impossible on the hypothesis of such a natural cause to rear the wall on the *other*. The idea of divine interposition, therefore, is imperative; and, assuming the passage to have been made at Mount Attakah, or at the mouth of Wady Tawarik, an *east* wind would cut the sea in that line. The Hebrew word *kedem*, however, rendered in our translation, “east,” means, in its primary signification, *previous*; so that this verse might, perhaps, be rendered, “the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong *previous* wind all that night”; a rendering which would remove the difficulty of supposing the host of Israel marched over on the sand, in the teeth of a rushing column of wind, strong enough to heap up the waters as a wall on each side of a dry path, and give the intelligible narrative of divine interference.

**22. *the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea***, etc. — It is highly probable that Moses, along with Aaron, first planted his footsteps on the untrodden sand, encouraging the people to follow him without fear of the treacherous walls; and when we take into account the multitudes that followed him, the immense number who through infancy and old age were incapable of hastening their movements, together with all the appurtenances of the camp, the strong and steadfast character of the leaders’ faith was strikingly manifested (<sup>1000</sup>Joshua 2:10 <sup>1002</sup>4:23 <sup>1000</sup>Psalm 66:6 <sup>1043</sup>74:13 <sup>1049</sup>106:9 <sup>1003</sup>136:13 <sup>2611</sup>Isaiah 63:11-13 <sup>1601</sup>1 Corinthians 10:1 <sup>1812</sup>Hebrews 11:29).

**23. *the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea*** — From the darkness caused by the intercepting cloud, it is probable that they were not aware on what ground they were driving: they heard the sound of the fugitives before them, and they pushed on with the fury of the avengers of blood, without dreaming that they were on the bared bed of the sea.

**24, 25. *Lord looked ... through ... the cloud, and troubled them*** — We suppose the fact to have been that the side of the pillar of cloud towards the Egyptians was suddenly, and for a few moments, illuminated with a blaze of light, which, coming as it were in a refulgent flash upon the dense darkness which had preceded, so frightened the horses of the pursuers that they rushed confusedly together and became unmanageable. “Let us flee,”

was the cry that resounded through the broken and trembling ranks, but it was too late; all attempts at flight were vain [BUSH].

**27. *Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea***, etc. — What circumstances could more clearly demonstrate the miraculous character of this transaction than that at the waving of Moses' rod, the dividing waters left the channel dry, and on his making the same motion on the opposite side, they returned, commingling with instantaneous fury? Is such the character of any ebb tide?

**28. *there remained not so much as one of them*** — It is surprising that, with such a declaration, some intelligent writers can maintain there is no evidence of the destruction of Pharaoh himself (<sup>(-BAGB)</sup>Psalm 106:11).

**30. *Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore***, etc. — The tide threw them up and left multitudes of corpses on the beach; a result that brought greater infamy on the Egyptians, but that tended, on the other hand, to enhance the triumph of the Israelites, and doubtless enriched them with arms, which they had not before. The locality of this famous passage has not yet been, and probably never will be, satisfactorily fixed. Some place it in the immediate neighborhood of Suez; where, they say, the part of the sea is most likely to be affected by “a strong east wind” (<sup>(-BIB)</sup>Exodus 14:21); where the road from the defile of Migdol (now Muktala) leads directly to this point; and where the sea, not above two miles broad, could be crossed in a short time. The vast majority, however, who have examined the spot, reject this opinion, and fix the passage, as does local tradition, about ten or twelve miles further down the shore at Wady Tawarik. “The time of the miracle was the whole night, at the season of the year, too, when the night would be about its average length. The sea at that point extends from six and a half to eight miles in breadth. There was thus ample time for the passage of the Israelites from any part of the valley, especially considering their excitement and animation by the gracious and wonderful interposition of Providence in their behalf” [WILSON].

# CHAPTER 15

## EXODUS 15:1-27.

### SONG OF MOSES.

**1. *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel*** — The scene of this thanksgiving song is supposed to have been at the landing place on the eastern shore of the Red Sea, at Ayoun Musa, “the fountains of Moses.” They are situated somewhat farther northward along the shore than the opposite point from which the Israelites set out. But the line of the people would be extended during the passage, and one extremity of it would reach as far north as these fountains, which would supply them with water on landing. The time when it was sung is supposed to have been the morning after the passage. This song is, by some hundred years, the oldest poem in the world. There is a sublimity and beauty in the language that is unexampled. But its unrivalled superiority arises not solely from the splendor of the diction. Its poetical excellencies have often drawn forth the admiration of the best judges, while the character of the event commemorated, and its being prompted by divine inspiration, contribute to give it an interest and sublimity peculiar to itself.

***I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously*** — Considering the state of servitude in which they had been born and bred, and the rude features of character which their subsequent history often displays, it cannot be supposed that the children of Israel generally were qualified to commit to memory or to appreciate the beauties of this inimitable song. But they might perfectly understand its pervading strain of sentiment; and, with the view of suitably improving the occasion, it was thought necessary that all, old and young, should join their united voices in the rehearsal of its words. As every individual had cause, so every individual gave utterance to his feelings of gratitude.

**20. *Miriam the prophetess*** — so called from her receiving divine revelations (<sup>4123</sup>Numbers 12:1 <sup>3306</sup>Micah 6:4), but in this instance

principally from her being eminently skilled in music, and in this sense the word “prophecy” is sometimes used in Scripture (<sup><B20></sup>1 Chronicles 25:1 <sup><B10></sup>1 Corinthians 11:5).

***took a timbrel*** — or “tabret” — a musical instrument in the form of a hoop, edged round with rings or pieces of brass to make a jingling noise and covered over with tightened parchment like a drum. It was beat with the fingers, and corresponds to our tambourine.

***all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances*** — We shall understand this by attending to the modern customs of the East, where the dance — a slow, grave, and solemn gesture, generally accompanied with singing and the sound of the timbrel, is still led by the principal female of the company, the rest imitating her movements and repeating the words of the song as they drop from her lips.

**21. *Miriam answered them*** — “them” in the *Hebrew* is masculine, so that Moses probably led the men and Miriam the women — the two bands responding alternately, and singing the first verse as a chorus.

**22. *wilderness of Shur*** — comprehending all the western part of Arabia-Petr&aelig;a. The desert of Etham was a part of it, extending round the northern portion of the Red Sea, and a considerable distance along its eastern shore; whereas the “wilderness of Shur” (now Sudhr) was the designation of all the desert region of Arabia-Petr&aelig;a that lay next to Palestine.

**23. *when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters*** — Following the general route of all travelers southward, between the sea and the tableland of the Tih (“valley of wandering”), Marah is almost universally believed to be what is now called Howarah, in Wady Amarah, about thirty miles from the place where the Israelites landed on the eastern shore of the Red Sea — a distance quite sufficient for their march of three days. There is no other perennial spring in the intermediate space. The water still retains its ancient character, and has a bad name among the Arabs, who seldom allow their camels to partake of it.

**25. *the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet*** — Some travelers have pronounced this to be

the Elvah of the Arabs — a shrub in form and flower resembling our hawthorn; others, the berries of the Ghurkhud — a bush found growing around all brackish fountains. But neither of these shrubs are known by the natives to possess such natural virtues. It is far more likely that God miraculously endowed some tree with the property of purifying the bitter water — a tree employed as the medium, but the sweetening was not dependent upon the nature or quality of the tree, but the power of God (compare <sup>4306</sup>John 9:6). And hence the “statute and ordinance” that followed, which would have been singularly inopportune if no miracle had been wrought.

*and there he proved them* — God now brought the Israelites into circumstances which would put their faith and obedience to the test (compare <sup>4271</sup>Genesis 22:1).

**27. *they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water*** — supposed to be what is now called Wady-Ghurandel, the most extensive watercourse in the western desert — an oasis, adorned with a great variety of trees, among which the palm is still conspicuous, and fertilized by a copious stream. It is estimated to be a mile in breadth, but stretching out far to the northeast. After the weary travel through the desert, this must have appeared a most delightful encampment from its shade and verdure, as well as from its abundant supply of sweet water for the thirsty multitude. The palm is called “the tree of the desert,” as its presence is always a sign of water. The palms in this spot are greatly increased in number, but the wells are diminished.

# CHAPTER 16

## EXODUS 16:1-36.

### MURMURS FOR WANT OF BREAD.

1. *they took their journey from Elim* — where they had remained several days.

*came unto the wilderness of Sin* — It appears from <sup>(~~1261~~)</sup>Numbers 32:1-42, that several stations are omitted in this historical notice of the journey. This passage represents the Israelites as advanced into the great plain, which, beginning near El-Murkah, extends with a greater or less breadth to almost the extremity of the peninsula. In its broadest part northward of Tur it is called El-Kaa, which is probably the desert of Sin [ROBINSON].

2. *the whole congregation ... murmured against Moses and Aaron* — Modern travelers through the desert of Sinai are accustomed to take as much as is sufficient for the sustenance of men and beasts during forty days. The Israelites having been rather more than a month on their journey, their store of corn or other provisions was altogether or nearly exhausted; and there being no prospect of procuring any means of subsistence in the desert, except some wild olives and wild honey (<sup>(~~1262~~)</sup>Deuteronomy 32:13), loud complaints were made against the leaders.

3. *Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt* — How unreasonable and absurd the charge against Moses and Aaron! how ungrateful and impious against God! After all their experience of the divine wisdom, goodness, and power, we pause and wonder over the sacred narrative of their hardness and unbelief. But the expression of feeling is contagious in so vast a multitude, and there is a feeling of solitude and despondency in the desert which numbers cannot dispel; and besides, we must remember that they were men engrossed with the *present* — that the Comforter was not then given — and that they were destitute of all visible means of sustenance and cut off from every visible comfort, with only the promises of an *unseen* God to look to as the ground of their hope.

And though we may lament they should tempt God in the wilderness and freely admit their sin in so doing, we can be at no loss for a reason why those who had all their lives been accustomed to walk by *sight* should, in circumstances of unparalleled difficulty and perplexity, find it hard to walk by *faith*. Do not even *we* find it difficult to walk by faith through the wilderness of this world, though in the light of a clearer revelation, and under a nobler leader than Moses? [FISK]. (See <sup>4611</sup>1 Corinthians 10:11,12).

**4. *Then said the Lord unto Moses*** — Though the outbreak was immediately against the human leaders, it was indirectly against God: yet mark His patience, and how graciously He promised to redress the grievance.

***I will rain bread from heaven*** — Israel, a type of the Church which is from above, and being under the conduct, government, and laws of heaven, received their food from heaven also (<sup>4583</sup>Psalm 78:24).

***that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no*** — The grand object of their being led into the wilderness was that they might receive a religious training directly under the eye of God; and the first lesson taught them was a constant dependence on God for their daily nourishment.

**13-31. *at even the quails came up, and covered the camp*** — This bird is of the gallinaceous kind [that is, relating to the order of heavy-bodied, largely terrestrial birds], resembling the red partridge, but not larger than the turtledove. They are found in certain seasons in the places through which the Israelites passed, being migratory birds, and they were probably brought to the camp by “a wind from the Lord” as on another occasion (<sup>4013</sup>Numbers 11:31).

***and in the morning ... a small round thing ... manna*** — There is a gum of the same name distilled in this desert region from the tamarisk, which is much prized by the natives, and preserved carefully by those who gather it. It is collected early in the morning, melts under the heat of the sun, and is congealed by the cold of night. In taste it is as sweet as honey, and has been supposed by distinguished travelers, from its whitish color, time, and place of its appearance, to be the manna on which the Israelites were fed: so that, according to the views of some, it was a production indigenous to



the desert; according to others, there was a miracle, which consisted, however, only in the preternatural arrangements regarding its supply. But more recent and accurate examination has proved this gum of the tarfa-tree to be wanting in all the principal characteristics of the Scripture manna. It exudes only in small quantities, and not every year; it does not admit of being baked (<sup><04118></sup>Numbers 11:8) or boiled (<sup><01623></sup>Exodus 16:23). Though it may be exhaled by the heat and afterwards fall with the dew, it is a medicine, not food it is well known to the natives of the desert, while the Israelites were strangers to theirs; and in taste as well as in the appearance of double quantity on Friday, none on Sabbath, and in not breeding worms, it is essentially different from the manna furnished to the Israelites.

**32-36. *Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations*** — The mere fact of such a multitude being fed for forty years in the wilderness, where no food of any kind is to be obtained, will show the utter impossibility of their subsisting on a natural production of the kind and quantity as this tarfa-gum [see on <sup><01613></sup>Exodus 16:13]; and, as if for the purpose of removing all such groundless speculations, Aaron was commanded to put a sample of it in a pot — a golden pot (<sup><03004></sup>Hebrews 9:4) — to be laid before the Testimony, to be kept for future generations, that they might see the bread on which the Lord fed their fathers in the wilderness. But we have the bread of which that was merely typical (<sup><0103></sup>1 Corinthians 10:3 <sup><01632></sup>John 6:32).

# CHAPTER 17

## EXODUS 17:1-7.

### THE PEOPLE MURMUR FOR WATER.

1. *the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin* — In the succinct annals of this book, those places only are selected for particular notice by the inspired historian, which were scenes memorable for their happy or painful interest in the history of the Israelites. A more detailed itinerary is given in the later books of Moses, and we find that here two stations are omitted (Numbers 33:1-56).

*according to the commandment of the Lord*, etc. — not given in oracular response, nor a vision of the night, but indicated by the movement of the cloudy pillar. The same phraseology occurs elsewhere (Numbers 9:18,19).

*pitched in Rephidim* — now believed, on good grounds, to be Wady Feiran, which is exactly a day's march from Mount Sinai, and at the entrance of the Horeb district. It is a long circuitous defile about forty feet in breadth, with perpendicular granite rocks on both sides. The wilderness of Sin through which they approached to this valley is very barren, has an extremely dry and thirsty aspect, little or no water, scarcely even a dwarfish shrub to be seen, and the only shelter to the panting pilgrims is under the shadow of the great overhanging cliffs.

2, 3. *the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink*, etc. — The want of water was a privation, the severity of which we cannot estimate, and it was a great trial to the Israelites, but their conduct on this new occasion was outrageous; it amounted even to “a tempting of the Lord.” It was an opposition to His minister, a distrust of His care, an indifference to His kindness, an unbelief in His providence, a trying of His patience and fatherly forbearance.

**4. *Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people?***

— His language, instead of betraying any signs of resentment or vindictive imprecation on a people who had given him a cruel and unmerited treatment, was the expression of an anxious wish to know what was the best to be done in the circumstances (compare <sup><4154></sup>Matthew 5:44 <sup><5122></sup>Romans 12:21).

**5. *the Lord said unto Moses,*** etc. — not to smite the rebels, but the rock; not to bring a stream of blood from the breast of the offenders, but a stream of water from the granite cliffs. The cloud rested on a particular rock, just as the star rested on the house where the infant Savior was lodged (<sup><4129></sup>Matthew 2:9). And from the rod-smitten rock there forthwith gushed a current of pure and refreshing water. It was perhaps the greatest miracle performed by Moses, and in many respects bore a resemblance to the greatest of Christ's: being done without ostentation and in the presence of a few chosen witnesses (<sup><5104></sup>1 Corinthians 10:4).

**7. *called the name of the place*** — Massah (“temptation”); Meribah (“chiding,” “strife”): the same word which is rendered “provocation” (<sup><5188></sup>Hebrews 3:8).

## <sup><0278></sup>EXODUS 17:8-16.

### ATTACK OF AMALEK.

**8. *Then came Amalek*** — Some time probably elapsed before they were exposed to this new evil; and the presumption of there being such an interval affords the only ground on which we can satisfactorily account for the altered, the better, and former spirit that animated the people in this sudden contest. The miracles of the manna and the water from the rock had produced a deep impression and permanent conviction that God was indeed among them; and with feelings elevated by the conscious experience of the Divine Presence and aid, they remained calm, resolute, and courageous under the attack of their unexpected foe.

***fought with Israel*** — The language implies that no occasion had been furnished for this attack; but, as descendants of Esau, the Amalekites

entertained a deep-seated grudge against them, especially as the rapid prosperity and marvellous experience of Israel showed that the blessing contained in the birthright was taking effect. It seems to have been a mean, dastardly, insidious surprise on the rear (<sup><084></sup>Numbers 24:20 <sup><157></sup>Deuteronomy 25:17), and an impious defiance of God.

**9. *Moses said unto Joshua*** — or, “Jesus” (<sup><475></sup>Acts 7:45 <sup><308></sup>Hebrews 4:8). This is the earliest notice of a young warrior destined to act a prominent part in the history of Israel. He went with a number of picked men. There is not here a wide open plain on which the battle took place, as according to the rules of modern warfare. The Amalekites were a nomadic tribe, making an irregular attack on a multitude probably not better trained than themselves, and for such a conflict the low hills and open country around this wady would afford ample space [ROBINSON].

**10-12. *Moses ... went up ... the hill ... held up his hand*** — with the wonder-working rod; Moses acted as the standard bearer of Israel, and also their intercessor, praying for success and victory to crown their arms — the earnestness of his feelings being conspicuously evinced amid the feebleness of nature.

**13. *Joshua discomfited Amalek*** — Victory at length decided in favor of Israel, and the glory of the victory, by an act of national piety, was ascribed to God (compare <sup><170></sup>1 John 5:4).

**14-16. *Write this for a memorial*** — If the bloody character of this statute seems to be at variance with the mild and merciful character of God, the reasons are to be sought in the deep and implacable vengeance they meditated against Israel (<sup><133></sup>Psalms 83:4).

# CHAPTER 18

## EXODUS 18:1-27.

### VISIT OF JETHRO.

**1-5. *Jethro ... came ... unto Moses***, etc. — It is thought by many eminent commentators that this episode is inserted out of its chronological order, for it is described as occurring when the Israelites were “encamped at the mount of God.” And yet they did not reach it till the third month after their departure from Egypt (<sup>1801</sup>Exodus 19:1,2; compare <sup>1800</sup>Deuteronomy 1:6,9-15).

**6. *and thy wife, and her two sons*** — See <sup>1800</sup>Exodus 4:20.

**7. *Moses went out to meet his father-in-law***, etc. — Their salutations would be marked by all the warm and social greetings of Oriental friends (see on <sup>1802</sup>Exodus 4:27) — the one going out to “meet” the other, the “obeisance,” the “kiss” on each side of the head, the silent entrance into the tent for consultation; and their conversation ran in the strain that might have been expected of two pious men, rehearsing and listening to a narrative of the wonderful works and providence of God.

**12. *Jethro ... took a burnt offering*** — This friendly interview was terminated by a solemn religious service — the *burnt offerings* were consumed on the altar, and the *sacrifices* were *peace offerings*, used in a feast of joy and gratitude at which Jethro, as priest of the true God, seems to have presided, and to which the chiefs of Israel were invited. This incident is in beautiful keeping with the character of the parties, and is well worthy of the imitation of Christian friends when they meet in the present day.

**13-26. *on the morrow ... Moses sat to judge the people*** — We are here presented with a specimen of his daily morning occupations; and among the multifarious duties his divine legation imposed, it must be considered

only a small portion of his official employments. He appears in this attitude as a type of Christ in His legislative and judicial characters.

***the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening***, etc. — Governors in the East seat themselves at the most public gate of their palace or the city, and there, amid a crowd of applicants, hear causes, receive petitions, redress grievances, and adjust the claims of contending parties.

**17. *Moses' father-in-law said unto him, The thing ... is not good*** — not good either for Moses himself, for the maintenance of justice, or for the satisfaction and interests of the people. Jethro gave a prudent counsel as to the division of labor [<sup>(182)</sup>Exodus 18:21,22], and universal experience in the Church and State has attested the soundness and advantages of the principle.

**23. *If thou shalt do this thing***, etc. — Jethro's counsel was given merely in the form of a suggestion; it was not to be adopted without the express sanction and approval of a better and higher Counsellor; and although we are not informed of it, there can be no doubt that Moses, before appointing subordinate magistrates, would ask the mind of God, as it is the duty and privilege of every Christian in like manner to supplicate the divine direction in all his ways.

# CHAPTER 19

## EXODUS 19:1-25.

### ARRIVAL AT SINAI.

1. *In the third month* — according to Jewish usage, the *first* day of that month — “same day.” — It is added, to mark the time more explicitly, that is, forty-five days after Egypt — one day spent on the mount (<sup>129B</sup>Exodus 19:3), one returning the people’s answer (<sup>129E</sup>Exodus 19:7,8), three days of preparation, making the whole time fifty days from the first passover to the promulgation of the law. Hence the feast of pentecost, that is, the fiftieth day, was the inauguration of the Old Testament church, and the divine wisdom is apparent in the selection of the same reason for the institution of the New Testament church (<sup>130I</sup>John 1:17 <sup>130E</sup>Acts 2:1).

2. *were come to the desert of Sinai* — The desert has its provinces, or divisions, distinguished by a variety of names; and the “desert of Sinai” is that wild and desolate region which occupies the very center of the peninsula, comprising the lofty range to which the mount of God belongs. It is a wilderness of shaggy rocks of porphyry and red granite, and of valleys for the most part bare of verdure.

*and there Israel camped before the mount* — Sinai, so called from Seneh, or acacia bush. It is now called Jebel Musa. Their way into the interior of the gigantic cluster was by Wady Feiran, which would lead the bulk of the hosts with their flocks and herds into the high valleys of Jebel Musa, with their abundant springs, especially into the great thoroughfare of the desert — the longest, widest, and most continuous of all the valleys, the Wady-es-Sheikh, while many would be scattered among the adjacent valleys; so that thus secluded from the world in a wild and sublime amphitheatre of rocks, they “camped before the mount.” “In this valley — a long flat valley — about a quarter of a mile in breadth, winding northwards, Israel would find ample room for their encampment. Of all the wadys in that

region, it seems the most suitable for a prolonged sojourn. The ‘goodly tents’ of Israel could spread themselves without limit” [BONAR].

**3-6. *Moses went up unto God*** — the Shekinah — within the cloud  
(<sup><1033></sup>Exodus 33:20 <sup><1018></sup>John 1:18).

***Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob***, etc. — The object for which Moses went up was to receive and convey to the people the message contained in these verses, and the purport of which was a general announcement of the terms on which God was to take the Israelites into a close and peculiar relation to Himself. In thus negotiating between God and His people, the highest post of duty which any mortal man was ever called to occupy, Moses was still but a servant. The only Mediator is Jesus Christ [<sup><5115></sup>1 Timothy 2:5 <sup><8124></sup>Hebrews 12:24].

**6. *ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests*** — As the priestly order was set apart from the common mass, so the Israelites, compared with other people, were to sustain the same near relation to God; a community of spiritual sovereigns.

***an holy nation*** — set apart to preserve the knowledge and worship of God.

**7, 8. *Moses came and called for the elders of the people*** — The message was conveyed to the mighty multitude through their elders, who, doubtless, instructed them in the conditions required. Their unanimous acceptance was conveyed through the same channel to Moses, and by him reported to the Lord. Ah! how much self-confidence did their language betray! How little did they know what spirit they were of!

**9-15. *The Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come ... in a thick cloud***, etc. — The deepest impressions are made on the mind through the medium of the senses; and so He who knew what was in man signaled His descent at the inauguration of the ancient church, by all the sensible tokens of august majesty that were fitted to produce the conviction that He is the great and terrible God. The whole multitude must have anticipated the event with feelings of intense solemnity and awe. The extraordinary preparations enjoined, the ablutions and rigid abstinence they were required to observe, the barriers erected all round the base of the mount, and the stern penalties



annexed to the breach of any of the conditions, all tended to create an earnest and solemn expectation which increased as the appointed day drew near.

**16. *on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings***, etc. — The descent of God was signaled by every object imagination can conceive connected with the ideas of grandeur and of awe. But all was in keeping with the character of the law about to be proclaimed. As the mountain burned with fire, God was exhibited as a consuming fire to the transgressors of His law. The thunder and lightning, more awful amid the deep stillness of the region and reverberating with terrific peals among the mountains, would rouse the universal attention; a thick cloud was an apt emblem of the dark and shadowy dispensation (compare <sup>4076</sup>Matthew 17:5).

***the voice of a trumpet*** — This gave the scene the character of a miraculous transaction, in which other elements than those of nature were at work, and some other than material trumpet was blown by other means than human breath.

**17. *Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God*** — Wady-er-Raheh, where they stood, has a spacious sandy plain; immediately in front of Esther Suksafeh, considered by ROBINSON to be the mount from which the law was given. “We measured it, and estimate the whole plain at two geographical miles long, and ranging in breadth from one-third to two-thirds of a mile, or as equivalent to a surface of one square mile. This space is nearly doubled by the recess on the west, and by the broad and level area of Wady-es-Sheikh on the east, which issues at right angles to the plain, and is equally in view of the front and summit of the mount. The examination convinced us that here was space enough to satisfy all the requisitions of the Scripture narrative, so far as it relates to the assembling of the congregation to receive the law. Here, too, one can see the fitness of the injunction to set bounds around the mount, that neither man nor beast might approach too near, for it rises like a perpendicular wall.” But Jebel Musa, the old traditional Sinai, and the highest peak, has also a spacious valley, Wady Sebaiyeh, capable of holding the people. It is not certain on which of these two they stood.

**21. *the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people*** — No sooner had Moses proceeded a little up the mount, than he was suddenly ordered to return, in order to keep the people from breaking through to gaze — a course adopted to heighten the impressive solemnity of the scene. The strict injunctions renewed to all, whatever their condition, at a time and in circumstances when the whole multitude of Israel were standing at the base of the mount, was calculated in the highest degree to solemnize and awe every heart.

# CHAPTER 20

## EXODUS 20:1-26.

### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

**1. *And God spake all these words*** — The Divine Being Himself was the speaker (<sup>[12]</sup>Deuteronomy 5:12,32,33), in tones so loud as to be heard — so distinct as to be intelligible by the whole multitude standing in the valleys below, amid the most appalling phenomena of agitated nature. Had He been simply addressing rational and intelligent creatures, He would have spoken with the still small voice of persuasion and love. But He was speaking to those who were at the same time fallen and sinful creatures, and a corresponding change was required in the manner of God's procedure, in order to give a suitable impression of the character and sanctions of the law revealed from heaven (<sup>[13]</sup>Romans 11:5-9).

**2. *I am the Lord thy God*** — This is a preface to the ten commandments — the latter clause being specially applicable to the case of the Israelites, while the former brings it home to all mankind; showing that the reasonableness of the law is founded in their eternal relation as creatures to their Creator, and their mutual relations to each other.

**3. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*** — in My presence, beside, or except Me.

**4, 5. *Thou shalt not make ... any graven image ... thou shalt not bow down thyself to them*** — that is, “make in order to bow.” Under the auspices of Moses himself, figures of cherubim, brazen serpents, oxen, and many other things in the earth beneath, were made and never condemned. The mere making was no sin — it was the making with the intent to give idolatrous worship.

**8. *Remember the sabbath day*** — implying it was already known, and recognized as a season of sacred rest. The first four commandments [<sup>[14]</sup>Exodus 20:3-11] comprise our duties to God — the other six

[<sup><4212</sup>Exodus 20:12-17] our duties to our fellow men; and as interpreted by Christ, they reach to the government of the heart as well as the lip (<sup><4157</sup>Matthew 5:17). “If a man do them he shall live in them” (<sup><4181</sup>Leviticus 18:5 <sup><4129</sup>Nehemiah 9:29). But, ah! what an *if* for frail and fallen man. Whoever rests his hope upon the law stands debtor to it all; and in this view every one would be without hope were not “the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” [<sup><2316</sup>Jeremiah 23:6 <sup><2316</sup>33:16] (<sup><4117</sup>John 1:17).

**18-21. *all the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings*** — They were eye and ear witnesses of the awful emblems of the Deity’s descent. But they perceived not the Deity Himself.

**19. *let not God speak with us, lest we die***, etc. — The phenomena of thunder and lightning had been one of the plagues so fatal to Egypt, and as they heard God speaking to them now, they were apprehensive of instant death also. Even Moses himself, the mediator of the old covenant, did “exceedingly quake and fear” (<sup><3821</sup>Hebrews 12:21). But doubtless God spake what gave *him* relief — restored him to a frame of mind fit for the ministrations committed to him; and hence immediately after he was enabled to relieve and comfort them with the relief and comfort which he himself had received from God (<sup><4104</sup>2 Corinthians 1:4).

**22, 23. *the Lord said unto Moses*** — It appears from <sup><4044</sup>Deuteronomy 4:14-16, that this injunction was a conclusion drawn from the scene on Sinai — that as no similitude of God was displayed then, they should not attempt to make any visible figure or form of Him.

**24. *An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me*** — a regulation applicable to special or temporary occasions.

**25. *thou shalt not build it of hewn stone***, etc. — that is, carved with figures and ornaments that might lead to superstition.

**26. *by steps*** — a precaution taken for the sake of decency, in consequence of the loose, wide, flowing garments of the priests.

# CHAPTER 21

## EXODUS 21:1-6.

### LAWS FOR MENSERVANTS.

**1. *judgments*** — rules for regulating the procedure of judges and magistrates in the decision of cases and the trial of criminals. The government of the Israelites being a theocracy, those public authorities were the servants of the Divine Sovereign, and subject to His direction. Most of these laws here noticed were primitive usages, founded on principles of natural equity, and incorporated, with modifications and improvements, in the Mosaic code.

**2-6. *If thou buy an Hebrew servant*** — Every Israelite was free-born; but slavery was permitted under certain restrictions. An Hebrew might be made a slave through poverty, debt, or crime; but at the end of six years he was entitled to freedom, and his wife, if she had voluntarily shared his state of bondage, also obtained release. Should he, however, have married a female slave, she and the children, after the husband's liberation, remained the master's property; and if, through attachment to his family, the Hebrew chose to forfeit his privilege and abide as he was, a formal process was gone through in a public court, and a brand of servitude stamped on his ear (<sup>4916</sup>Psalm 40:6) for life, or at least till the Jubilee (<sup>6517</sup>Deuteronomy 15:17).

## EXODUS 21:7-36.

### LAWS FOR MAIDSERVANTS.

**7-11. *if a man sell his daughter*** — Hebrew girls might be redeemed for a reasonable sum. But in the event of her parents or friends being unable to pay the redemption money, her owner was not at liberty to sell her elsewhere. Should she have been betrothed to him or his son, and either

change their minds, a maintenance must be provided for her suitable to her condition as his intended wife, or her freedom instantly granted.

**23-25. *eye for eye*** — The law which authorized retaliation (a principle acted upon by all primitive people) was a civil one. It was given to regulate the procedure of the public magistrate in determining the amount of compensation in every case of injury, but did not encourage feelings of private revenge. The later Jews, however, mistook it for a moral precept, and were corrected by our Lord (<sup>4153</sup>Matthew 5:38-42).

**28-36. *If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die*** — For the purpose of sanctifying human blood, and representing all injuries affecting life in a serious light, an animal that occasioned death was to be killed or suffer punishment proportioned to the degree of damage it had caused. Punishments are still inflicted on this principle in Persia and other countries of the East; and among a rude people greater effect is thus produced in inspiring caution, and making them keep noxious animals under restraint, than a penalty imposed on the owners.

**30. *If there be laid on him a sum of money***, etc. — Blood fines are common among the Arabs as they were once general throughout the East. This is the only case where a money compensation, instead of capital punishment, was expressly allowed in the Mosaic law.

## CHAPTER 22

### EXODUS 22:1-31.

#### LAWS CONCERNING THEFT.

**1-4. *If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep*** — The law respects the theft of cattle which constituted the chief part of their property. The penalty for the theft of a sheep which was slain or sold, was fourfold; for an ox fivefold, because of its greater utility in labor; but, should the stolen animal have been recovered alive, a *double* compensation was all that was required, because it was presumable he (the thief) was not a practiced adept in dishonesty. A robber breaking into a house at *midnight* might, in self-defense, be slain with impunity; but if he was slain after *sunrise*, it would be considered murder, for it was not thought likely an assault would then be made upon the lives of the occupants. In every case where a thief could not make restitution, he was sold as a slave for the usual term.

**6. *If fire break out, and catch in thorns*** — This refers to the common practice in the East of setting fire to the dry grass before the fall of the autumnal rains, which prevents the ravages of vermin, and is considered a good preparation of the ground for the next crop. The very parched state of the herbage and the long droughts of summer, make the kindling of a fire an operation often dangerous, and always requiring caution from its liability to spread rapidly.

***stacks*** — or as it is rendered “shocks” (<sup>1715</sup>Judges 15:5 <sup>1815</sup>Job 5:26), means simply a bundle of loose sheaves.

**26, 27. *If thou at all take thy neighbour’s raiment to pledge***, etc. — From the nature of the case, this is the description of a poor man. No Orientals undress, but, merely throwing off their turbans and some of their heavy outer garments, they sleep in the clothes which they wear during the day. The bed of the poor is usually nothing else than a mat; and, in winter, they cover themselves with a cloak — a practice which forms the ground or reason of the humane and merciful law respecting the pawned coat.

**28. *gods*** — a word which is several times in this chapter rendered “judges” or magistrates.

***the ruler of thy people*** — and the chief magistrate who was also the high priest, at least in the time of Paul (<sup>4231</sup>Acts 23:1-5).



## CHAPTER 23

### EXODUS 23:1-33.

#### LAWS CONCERNING SLANDER, ETC.

1. *put not thine hand* — join not hands.

2. *decline* — depart, deviate from the straight path of rectitude.

3. *countenance* — adorn, embellish — thou shalt not varnish the cause even of a poor man to give it a better coloring than it merits.

10. *six years thou shalt sow thy land* — intermitting the cultivation of the land every seventh year. But it appears that even then there was a spontaneous produce which the poor were permitted freely to gather for their use, and the beasts driven out fed on the remainder, the owners of fields not being allowed to reap or collect the fruits of the vineyard or oliveyard during the course of this sabbatical year. This was a regulation subservient to many excellent purposes; for, besides inculcating the general lesson of dependence on Providence, and of confidence in His faithfulness to His promise respecting the triple increase on the sixth year (<sup>(121)</sup>Leviticus 25:20,21), it gave the Israelites a practical proof that they held their properties of the Lord as His tenants, and must conform to His rules on pain of forfeiting the lease of them.

12. *Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest* — This law is repeated (<sup>(121)</sup>Exodus 20:9) lest any might suppose there was a relaxation of its observance during the sabbatical year.

13. *make no mention of the name of other gods*, etc. — that is, in common conversation, for a familiar use of them would tend to lessen horror of idolatry.

14-18. *Three times ... keep a feast ... in the year* — This was the institution of the great religious festivals — “The feast of unleavened bread,” or the passover — “the feast of harvest,” or pentecost — “the

feast of ingathering,” or the feast of tabernacles, which was a memorial of the dwelling in booths in the wilderness, and which was observed in the seventh month (<sup><1211></sup>Exodus 12:2). All the males were enjoined to repair to the tabernacle and afterwards the temple, and the women frequently went. The institution of this national custom was of the greatest importance in many ways: by keeping up a national sense of religion and a public uniformity in worship, by creating a bond of unity, and also by promoting internal commerce among the people. Though the absence of all the males at these three festivals left the country defenseless, a special promise was given of divine protection, and no incursion of enemies was ever permitted to happen on those occasions.

**19. *Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk*** — A prohibition against imitating the superstitious rites of the idolaters in Egypt, who, at the end of their harvest, seethed a kid in its mother's milk and sprinkled the broth as a magical charm on their gardens and fields, to render them more productive the following season. [See on <sup><1512></sup>Deuteronomy 14:21].

**20-25. *Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way*** — The communication of these laws, made to Moses and by him rehearsed to the people, was concluded by the addition of many animating promises, intermingled with several solemn warnings that lapses into sin and idolatry would not be tolerated or passed with impunity.

**21. *my name is in him*** — This angel is frequently called Jehovah and Elohim, that is, God.

**28. *I will send hornets before thee***, etc. (See on <sup><1212></sup>Joshua 24:12) — Some instrument of divine judgment, but variously interpreted: as hornets in a literal sense [BOCHART]; as a pestilential disease [ROSENMULLER]; as a terror of the Lord, an extraordinary dejection [JUNIUS].

**29, 30. *I will not drive ... out ... in one year; lest the land become desolate*** — Many reasons recommend a gradual extirpation of the former inhabitants of Canaan. But only one is here specified — the danger lest, in the unoccupied grounds, wild beasts should inconveniently multiply; a clear proof that the promised land was more than sufficient to contain the actual population of the Israelites.

## CHAPTER 24

### EXODUS 24:1-18.

#### DELIVERY OF THE LAW AND COVENANT.

**3, 4. *Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord*** — The rehearsal of the foregoing laws and the ten commandments, together with the promises of special blessings in the event of their obedience, having drawn forth from the people a unanimous declaration of their consent, it was forthwith recorded as the conditions of the *national* covenant. The next day preparations were made for having it (the covenant) solemnly ratified, by building an altar and twelve pillars; the altar representing God, and the pillars the tribes of Israel — the two parties in this solemn compact — while Moses acted as typical mediator.

**5. *young men*** — priests (<sup><1241></sup>Exodus 19:22), probably the oldest sons of particular families, who acted under the direction of Moses.

***oxen*** — Other animals, though not mentioned, were offered in sacrifice (<sup><3109></sup>Hebrews 9:18-20).

**6. *Moses took half of the blood ... sprinkled*** — Preliminary to this was the public reading of the law and the renewed acceptance of the terms by the people; then the sprinkling of the blood was the sign of solemn ratification — half on each party in the transaction.

**8. *Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people*** — probably on the twelve pillars, as representing the people (also the book, <sup><3109></sup>Hebrews 9:19), and the act was accompanied by a public proclamation of its import. It was setting their seal to the covenant (compare <sup><4125></sup>1 Corinthians 11:25). It must have been a deeply impressive, as well as instructive scene, for it taught the Israelites that the covenant was made with them only through the sprinkling of blood — that the divine acceptance of themselves and services, was only by virtue of an atoning sacrifice, and that even the blessings of the *national* covenant were promised and

secured to them only through grace. The ceremonial, however, had a further and higher significance, as is shown by the apostle (see as above).

**9. *Then went up Moses, and Aaron*** — in obedience to a command given (<sup><124></sup>Exodus 24:1,2; also <sup><125></sup>Exodus 19:24), previous to the religious engagement of the people, now described.

***Nadab, and Abihu*** — the two oldest sons of Aaron (<sup><126></sup>Exodus 6:23).

***seventy of the elders*** — a select number; what was the principle of selection is not said; but they were the chief representatives, the most conspicuous for official rank and station, as well as for their probity and weight of character in their respective tribes.

**10. *And they saw the God of Israel*** — That there was no visible form or representation of the divine nature, we have expressly intimated (<sup><127></sup>Deuteronomy 4:15). But a symbol or emblem of His glory was distinctly, and at a distance, displayed before those chosen witnesses. Many think, however, that in this private scene was discovered, amid the luminous blaze, the faint adumbrated form of the humanity of Christ (<sup><128></sup>Ezekiel 1:26; compare <sup><129></sup>Galatians 3:24).

***sapphire*** — one of the most valuable and lustrous of the precious gems — of a sky-blue or light azure color and frequently chosen to describe the throne of God (see <sup><130></sup>Ezekiel 1:26 10:1).

**11. *upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand*** — The “nobles,” that is, the elders, after the sprinkling of the blood, were not inspired with terror in presence of the calm, benign, radiant symbol of the divine majesty; so different from the terrific exhibitions at the giving of the law. The report of so many competent witnesses would tend to confirm the people’s faith in the divine mission of Moses.

***eat and drink*** — feasted on the peace offering — on the remnants of the late sacrifices and libations. This feast had a prophetic bearing, intimating God’s dwelling with men.

**12. *I will give thee tables of stone*** — The ten commandments, which had already been spoken, were to be given in a permanent form. Inscribed on stone, for greater durability, by the hand of God Himself, they were thus

authenticated and honored above the judicial or ceremonial parts of the law.

**13. *Moses went up into the mount of God*** — He was called to receive the divine transcript. Joshua was taken a little higher, and it would be a great comfort for the leader to have his company during the six days he was in patient waiting for the call on the seventh or sabbath day.

**14. *he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us*** — There is a circular valley or hollow a good way up on the brow of Jebel Musa, which was their halting place, while he alone was privileged to ascend the highest peak. The people stood below, as in the “outer court,” the elders in the “holy place,” Moses, as a type of Christ, in “the holy of holies.”

**18. *Moses went into the midst of the cloud*** — the visible token of God’s presence. Divine grace animated and supported him to enter with holy boldness.

***Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights*** — The six days spent in waiting are not included. During that protracted period he was miraculously supported (<sup>(399)</sup>Deuteronomy 9:9), on a peak scarcely thirty paces in compass.

# CHAPTER 25

## EXODUS 25:1-40.

### CONCERNING AN OFFERING.

1. *the Lord spake unto Moses*, etc. — The business that chiefly occupied Moses on the mount, whatever other disclosures were made to him there, was in receiving directions about the tabernacle, and they are here recorded as given to him.

2. *bring me an offering of every man that giveth it willingly*, etc. — Having declared allegiance to God as their sovereign, they were expected to contribute to His state, as other subjects to their kings; and the “offering” required of them was not to be imposed as a tax, but to come from their own loyal and liberal feelings.

3. *this is the offering which ye shall take of them* — the articles of which the offerings should consist.

*brass* — rather copper, brass being a composite metal.

4. *goats' hair* — or leather of goats' skin.

5. *badgers' skins* — The badger was an unclean animal, and is not a native of the East — rather some kind of fish, of the leather of which sandals are made in the East. [See on <sup>Exodus</sup> Exodus 39:34 and <sup>Ezekiel</sup> Ezekiel 16:10.]

*shittim wood* — or *Shittah* (<sup>Isaiah</sup> Isaiah 41:19), the acacia, a shrub which grows plentifully in the deserts of Arabia, yielding a light, strong, and beautiful wood, in long planks.

7. *ephod* — a square cloak, hanging down from the shoulders, and worn by priests.

8. *a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them* — In one sense the tabernacle was to be a palace, the royal residence of the King of Israel, in which He was to dwell among His people, receive their petitions, and

issue His responses. But it was also to be a place of worship, in which God was to record His name and to enshrine the mystic symbols of His presence.

**9. *According to all that I show thee, [after] the pattern of the tabernacle*** — The proposed erection could be, in the circumstances of the Israelites, not of a fixed and stable but of a temporary and movable description, capable of being carried about with them in their various sojournings. It was made after “the pattern” shown to Moses, by which is now generally understood, not that it was an unheard-of novelty, or an entirely original structure, for it is ascertained to have borne resemblance in form and arrangements to the style of an Egyptian temple, but that it was so altered, modified, and purified from all idolatrous associations, as to be appropriated to right objects, and suggestive of ideas connected with the true God and His worship.

**10. *an ark*** — a coffer or chest, overlaid with gold, the dimensions of which, taking the cubit at eighteen inches, are computed to be three feet nine inches in length, two feet three inches in breadth.

**11. *a crown*** — a rim or cornice.

**12. *rings*** — staples for the poles, with which it was to be carried from place to place.

**15. *staves shall be in the rings of the ark*** — that is, always remain in the rings, whether the ark be at rest or in motion.

**16. *the testimony*** — that is, the two tables of stone, containing the ten commandments, and called “the testimony,” because by it God did testify His sovereign authority over Israel as His people, His selection of them as the guardians of His will and worship, and His displeasure in the event of their transgressing His laws; while on their part, by receiving and depositing this law in its appointed place, they testified their acknowledgment of God’s right to rule over them, and their submission to the authority of His law. The superb and elaborate style of the ark that contained “the testimony” was emblematic of the great treasure it held; in other words, the incomparable value and excellence of the Word of God,

while its being placed in this chest further showed the great care which God has ever taken for preserving it.

**17. *thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold*** — to serve as a lid, covering it exactly. It was “the propitiatory cover,” as the term may be rendered, denoting that Christ, our great propitiation [<sup><31P></sup>1 John 2:2 4:10], has fully answered all the demands of the law, covers our transgressions, and comes between us and the curse of a violated law.

**18. *two cherubim*** — The real meaning of these figures, as well as the shape or form of them, is not known with certainty — probably similar to what was afterwards introduced into the temple, and described in <sup><31P></sup>Ezekiel 10:8-22. They stretched out their wings, and their faces were turned towards the mercy seat [<sup><31P></sup>Exodus 25:20], probably in a bowing attitude. The prevailing opinion now is, that those splendid figures were symbolical not of angelic but of earthly and human beings — the members of the Church of God interested in the dispensation of grace, the redeemed in every age — and that these hieroglyphic forms symbolized the qualities of the true people of God — courage, patience, intelligence, and activity.

**22. *there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat*** — The Shekinah, or symbol of the Divine Presence, rested on the mercy seat, and was indicated by a cloud, from the midst of which responses were audibly given when God was consulted on behalf of His people. Hence God is described as “dwelling” or “sitting” between the cherubim.

**23. *table of shittim wood*** — of the same material and decorations as the ark [see on <sup><31P></sup>Exodus 25:5], and like it, too, furnished with rings for the poles on which it was carried [<sup><31P></sup>Exodus 25:26]. The staves, however, were taken out of it when stationary, in order not to encumber the priests while engaged in their services at the table. It was half a cubit less than the ark in length and breadth, but of the same height. [See on <sup><31P></sup>Exodus 25:10.]

**24. *crown*** — the moulding or ornamental rim, which is thought to have been raised above the level of the table, to prevent anything from falling off.

**29. *dishes*** — broad platters.



**spoons** — cups or concave vessels, used for holding incense.

**covers** — both for bread and incense.

**bowls** — cups; for though no mention is made of wine, libations were undoubtedly made to God, according to JOSEPHUS and the rabbins, once a week, when the bread was changed.

**to cover withal** — rather, “to pour out withal.”

**30. showbread** — literally, *presence bread*, so called because it was constantly exhibited before the Lord, or because the bread of His presence, like the angel of His presence, pointed symbolically to Christ. It consisted of twelve unleavened loaves, said traditionally to have been laid in piles of six each. This bread was designed to be a symbol of the full and never-failing provision which is made in the Church for the spiritual sustenance and refreshment of God’s people.

**31. candlestick** — literally, “a lamp bearer.” It was so constructed as to be capable of being taken to pieces for facility in removal. The shaft or stock rested on a pedestal. It had seven branches, shaped like reeds or canes — three on each side, with one in the center — and worked out into knobs, flowers, and bowls, placed alternately [<sup>4023</sup>Exodus 25:32-36]. The figure represented on the arch of Titus gives the best idea of this candlestick.

**33. knops** — old spelling for “knobs” — bosses.

**37. they shall light the lamps ... that they may give light** — The light was derived from pure olive oil, and probably kept continually burning (compare <sup>4207</sup>Exodus 30:7 <sup>4304</sup>Leviticus 24:2).

**38. tongs** — snuffers.

**39. a talent of pure gold** — in weight equivalent to one hundred twenty-five pounds, troy.

**40. look that thou make them after their pattern** — This caution, which is repeated with no small frequency in other parts of the narrative, is an evidence of the deep interest taken by the Divine King in the erection of His palace or sanctuary; and it is impossible to account for the circumstance of God’s condescending to such minute details, except on the

assumption that this tabernacle was to be of a typical character, and eminently subservient to the religious instruction and benefit of mankind, by shadowing forth in its leading features the grand truths of the Christian Church.

## CHAPTER 26

### EXODUS 26:1-37.

#### TEN CURTAINS

1. *cunning work* — that is, of elegant texture, richly embroidered. The word “cunning,” in *old* English, is synonymous with “skillful.”
2. *length* — Each curtain was to be fifteen yards in length and a little exceeding two in breadth.
3. *The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another*, etc. — so as to form two grand divisions, each eleven yards wide.
6. *taches* — clasps; supposed in shape, as well as in use, to be the same as hooks and eyes.
- 7-13. *curtains of goats’ hair* — These coarse curtains were to be one more in number than the others, and to extend a yard lower on each side, the use of them being to protect and conceal the richer curtains.
14. *a covering ... of rams’ skins dyed red* — that is, of Turkey red leather. [See on <sup>123B</sup>Exodus 39:34.]
- 15-30. *thou shalt make boards ... rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion ... which was showed thee* — The tabernacle, from its name as well as from its general appearance and arrangements, was a tent; but from the description given in these verses, the boards that formed its walls, the five (cross) bars that strengthened them, and the middle bar that “reached from end to end,” and gave it solidity and compactness, it was evidently a more substantial fabric than a light and fragile tent, probably on account of the weight of its various coverings as well as for the protection of its precious furniture.
36. *an hanging for the door of the tent* — Curtains of rich and elaborate embroidery, made by the women, are suspended over the doors or

entrances of the tents occupied by Eastern chiefs and princes. In a similar style of elegance was the hanging finished which was to cover the door of this tabernacle — the chosen habitation of the God and King of Israel. It appears from <sup>(23)</sup>Exodus 26:12,22,23, that the ark and mercy seat were placed in the west end of the tabernacle, and consequently the door or entrance fronted the east, so that the Israelites in worshipping Jehovah, turned their faces towards the west; that they might be thus figuratively taught to turn from the worship of that luminary which was the great idol of the nations, and to adore the God who made it and them [HEWLETT].

# CHAPTER 27

## EXODUS 27:1-21.

### ALTAR FOR BURNT OFFERING.

**1, 2. *altar of shittim wood*** — The dimensions of this altar which was placed at the entrance of the sanctuary were nearly three yards square, and a yard and a half in height. Under the wooden frame of this chest-like altar the inside was hollow, and each corner was to be terminated by “horns” — angular projections, perpendicular or oblique, in the form of horns. The animals to be sacrificed were bound to these (<sup>1820</sup>Psalm 118:27), and part of the blood was applied to them.

**3. *shovels*** — fire shovels for scraping together any of the scattered ashes.

***basons*** — for receiving the blood of the sacrifice to be sprinkled on the people.

***fleshhooks*** — curved, three-pronged forks (<sup>9123</sup>1 Samuel 2:13,14).

***fire-pans*** — A large sort of vessel, wherein the sacred fire which came down from heaven (<sup>1821</sup>Leviticus 9:24) was kept burning, while they cleaned the altar and the grate from the coals and ashes, and while the altar was carried from one place to another in the wilderness [PATRICK, SPENCER, LE CLERC].

**4. *a grate of network of brass*** — sunk latticework to support the fire.

***four brazen rings*** — by which the grating might be lifted and taken away as occasion required from the body of the altar.

**5. *put it under the compass of the altar beneath*** — that is, the grating in which they were carried to a clean place (<sup>1842</sup>Leviticus 4:12).

**6, 7. *staves ... rings*** — Those rings were placed at the side through which the poles were inserted on occasions of removal.

**9-19. *the court of the tabernacle*** — The enclosure in which the edifice stood was a rectangular court, extending rather more than fifty yards in length and half that space in breadth, and the enclosing parapet was about three yards or half the height of the tabernacle. That parapet consisted of a connected series of curtains, made of fine twined linen yarn, woven into a kind of network, so that the people could see through; but that large curtain which overhung the entrance was of a different texture, being embroidered and dyed with variegated colors, and it was furnished with cords for pulling it up or drawing it aside when the priests had occasion to enter. The curtains of this enclosure were supported on sixty brazen pillars which stood on pedestals of the same metal, but their capitals and fillets were of silver, and the hooks on which they were suspended were of silver also.

**19. *pins*** — were designed to hold down the curtains at the bottom, lest the wind should waft them aside.

**20, 21. *pure oil olive beaten*** — that is, such as runs from the olives when bruised and without the application of fire.

***for the light ... Aaron and his sons*** — were to take charge of lighting it in all time coming.

**21. *shall order it from evening to morning*** — The tabernacle having no windows, the lamps required to be lighted during the day. JOSEPHUS says that in his time only three were lighted; but his were degenerate times, and there is no Scripture authority for this limitation. But although the priests were obliged from necessity to light them by day, they might have let them go out at night had it not been for this express ordinance.

# CHAPTER 28

## EXODUS 28:1-43.

### APPOINTMENT TO THE PRIESTHOOD.

**1. *take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him*** — Moses had hitherto discharged the priestly functions (<sup>3996</sup>Psalm 99:6), and he evinced the piety as well as humility of his character, in readily complying with the command to invest his brother with the sacred office, though it involved the perpetual exclusion of his own family. The appointment was a special act of God's sovereignty, so that there could be no ground for popular umbrage by the selection of Aaron's family, with whom the office was inalienably established and continued in unbroken succession till the introduction of the Christian era.

**2-5. *holy garments*** — No inherent holiness belonged either to the material or the workmanship. But they are called "holy" simply because they were not worn on ordinary occasions, but assumed in the discharge of the sacred functions (<sup>3849</sup>Ezekiel 44:19).

***for glory and for beauty*** — It was a grand and sumptuous attire. In material, elaborate embroidery, and color, it had an imposing splendor. The tabernacle being adapted to the infantine aid of the church, it was right and necessary that the priests' garments should be of such superb and dazzling appearance, that the people might be inspired with a due respect for the ministers as well as the rites of religion. But they had also a further meaning; for being all made of linen, they were symbolical of the truth, purity, and other qualities in Christ that rendered Him such a high priest as became us.

**6-14. *ephod*** — It was a very gorgeous robe made of byssus, curiously embroidered, and dyed with variegated colors, and further enriched with golden tissue, the threads of gold being either originally interwoven or afterwards inserted by the embroiderer. It was short — reaching from the breast to a little below the loins — and though destitute of sleeves,

retained its position by the support of straps thrown over each shoulder. These straps or braces, connecting the one with the back, the other with the front piece of which the tunic was composed, were united on the shoulder by two onyx stones, serving as buttons, and on which the names of the twelve tribes were engraved, and set in golden encasements. The symbolical design of this was, that the high priest, who bore the names along with him in all his ministrations before the Lord, might be kept in remembrance of his duty to plead their cause, and supplicate the accomplishment of the divine promises in their favor. The ephod was fastened by a girdle of the same costly materials, that is, dyed, embroidered, and wrought with threads of gold. It was about a handbreadth wide and wound twice round the upper part of the waist; it fastened in front, the ends hanging down at great length (<sup>AMP</sup>Revelation 1:13).

**15-29. *thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work*** — a very splendid and richly embroidered piece of brocade, a span square, and doubled, to enable it the better to bear the weight of the precious stones in it. There were twelve different stones, containing each the name of a tribe, and arranged in four rows, three in each. The Israelites had acquired a knowledge of the lapidary's art in Egypt, and the amount of their skill in cutting, polishing, and setting precious stones, may be judged of by the diamond forming one of the engraved ornaments on this breastplate. A ring was attached to each corner, through which the golden chains were passed to fasten this brilliant piece of jewelry at the top and bottom tightly on the breast of the ephod.

**30. *thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and Thummim*** — The words signify "lights" and "perfections"; and nothing more is meant than the precious stones of the breastplate already described (compare <sup>CEB</sup>Exodus 39:8-21 <sup>CEB</sup>Leviticus 8:8). They received the name because the bearing of them qualified the high priest to consult the divine oracle on all public or national emergencies, by going into the holy place — standing close before the veil and putting his hand upon the Urim and Thummim, he conveyed a petition from the people and asked counsel of God, who, as the Sovereign of Israel, gave response from the midst of His glory. Little, however, is known about them. But it may be remarked that Egyptian judges wore on the breast of their official robes a



representation of Justice, and the high priest in Israel long officiated also as a judge; so that some think the Urim and Thummim had a reference to his judicial functions.

**31-33. *the robe of the ephod all of blue*** — It was the middle garment, under the ephod and above the coat. It had a hole through which the head was thrust, and was formed carefully of one piece, such as was the robe of Christ (<sup>GEN</sup>John 19:23). The high priest's was of a sky-blue color. The binding at the neck was strongly woven, and it terminated below in a fringe, made of blue, purple, and scarlet tassels, in the form of a pomegranate, interspersed with small bells of gold, which tinkled as the wearer was in motion.

**34. *a golden bell and a pomegranate*** — The bells were hung between the pomegranates, which were said to have amounted to seventy-two, and the use of them seems to have been to announce to the people when the high priest entered the most holy place, that they might accompany him with their prayers, and also to remind himself to be attired in his official dress, to minister without which was death.

**36-38. *plate*** — literally, a petal of a flower, which seems to have been the figure of this golden plate, which was tied with a ribbon of blue on the front of the mitre, so that every one facing him could read the inscription.

**37. *mitre*** — crown-like cap for the head, not covering the entire head, but adhering closely to it, composed of fine linen. The Scripture has not described its form, but from JOSEPHUS we may gather that it was conical in shape, as he distinguishes the mitres of the common priests by saying that they were not conical — that it was encircled with swathes of blue embroidered, and that it was covered by one piece of fine linen to hide the seams.

**39. *coat of fine linen*** — a garment fastened at the neck, and reaching far down the person, with the sleeves terminating at the elbow.

***girdle of needlework*** — a piece of fine twined linen, richly embroidered, and variously dyed. It is said to have been very long, and being many times wound round the body, it was fastened in front and the ends hung down, which, being an impediment to a priest in active duty, were usually

thrown across the shoulders. This was the outer garment of the common priests.

**40. *bonnets*** — turbans.

**42. *linen breeches*** — drawers, which encompassed the loins and reached half way down the thighs. They are seen very frequently represented in Egyptian figures.

# CHAPTER 29

## EXODUS 29:1-35.

### CONSECRATING THE PRIESTS AND THE ALTAR.

**1. *hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office*** — The act of inaugurating the priests was accompanied by ceremonial solemnities well calculated not only to lead the people to entertain exalted views of the office, but to impress those functionaries themselves with a profound sense of its magnitude and importance. In short, they were taught to know that the service was for them as well as for the people; and every time they engaged in a new performance of their duties, they were reminded of their personal interest in the worship, by being obliged to offer for themselves, before they were qualified to offer as the representatives of the people.

***this is the thing that thou shalt do*** — Steps are taken at the beginning of a society, which would not be repeated when the social machine was in full motion; and Moses, at the opening of the tabernacle, was employed to discharge functions which in later periods would have been regarded as sacrilege and punished with instant death. But he acted under the special directions of God.

**4-9. *Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle*** — as occupying the intermediate space between the court where the people stood, and the dwelling-place of Israel's king, and therefore the fittest spot for the priests being duly prepared for entrance, and the people witnessing the ceremony of inauguration.

***wash them with water. And ... take the garments*** — The manner in which these parts of the ceremonial were performed is minutely described, and in discovering their symbolical import, which indeed, is sufficiently plain and obvious, we have inspired authority to guide us. It signified the necessity and importance of moral purity or holiness ( <sup><2521></sup>Isaiah 52:11 <sup><4330></sup>John 13:10 <sup><4002></sup>2 Corinthians 7:1 <sup><4121></sup>1 Peter 3:21). In like manner, the investiture with

the holy garments signified their being clothed with righteousness (<sup><698></sup>Revelation 19:8) and equipped as men active and well-prepared for the service of God; the anointing the high priest with oil denoted that he was to be filled with the influences of the Spirit, for the edification and delight of the church (<sup><800></sup>Leviticus 10:7 <sup><987></sup>Psalms 45:7 <sup><2600></sup>Isaiah 61:1 <sup><6127></sup>1 John 2:27), and as he was officially a type of Christ (<sup><3026></sup>Hebrews 7:26 <sup><4184></sup>John 3:34; also <sup><4186></sup>Matthew 3:16 11:29).

**10-22. *And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle*** — This part of the ceremonial consisted of three sacrifices:

- (1) The sacrifice of a bullock, as a sin offering; and in rendering it, the priest was directed to put his hand upon the head of his sacrifice, expressing by that act a consciousness of personal guilt, and a wish that it might be accepted as a vicarious satisfaction.
- (2) The sacrifice of a ram as a burnt offering (<sup><1236></sup>Exodus 29:15-18). The ram was to be wholly burnt, in token of the priest's dedication of himself to God and His service. The sin offering was first to be presented, and *then* the burnt offering; for until guilt be removed, no acceptable service can be performed.
- (3) There was to be a peace offering, called "the ram of consecration" (<sup><1236></sup>Exodus 29:19-22).

And there was a marked peculiarity in the manner in which this other ram was to be disposed of. The former was for the glory of God — this was for the comfort of the priest himself; and as a sign of a mutual covenant being ratified, the blood of the sacrifice was divided — part sprinkled on the altar round about, and part upon the persons and garments of the priests. Nay, the blood was, by a singular act, directed to be put upon the extremities of the body, thereby signifying that the benefits of the atonement would be applied to the whole nature of man. Moreover, the flesh of this sacrifice was to be divided, as it were, between God and the priest — part of it to be put into his hand to be waved up and down, in token of its being offered to God, and then it was to be burnt upon the altar; the other part was to be eaten by the priests at the door of the tabernacle — that feast being a symbol of communion or fellowship with

God. These ceremonies, performed in the order described, showed the qualifications necessary for the priests. (See <sup><302></sup>Hebrews 7:26,27 <sup><304></sup>10:14).

**35. *seven days shalt thou consecrate them*** — The renewal of these ceremonies on the return of every day in the seven, with the intervention of a Sabbath, was a wise preparatory arrangement, in order to afford a sufficient interval for calm and devout reflection (<sup><301></sup>Hebrews 9:1 <sup><304></sup>10:1).

## <sup><128></sup>EXODUS 29:36, 37.

### CONSECRATION OF THE ALTAR.

**36. *and thou shalt cleanse the altar*** — The phrase, “when thou hast made an atonement for it,” should be, *upon* it; and the purport of the direction is, that during all the time they were engaged as above from day to day in offering the appointed sacrifices, the greatest care was to be taken to keep the altar properly cleansed — to remove the ashes, and sprinkle it with the prescribed unction that, at the conclusion of the whole ceremonial, the altar itself should be consecrated as much as the ministers who were to officiate at it (<sup><129></sup>Matthew 23:19). It was thenceforth associated with the services of religion.

## <sup><128></sup>EXODUS 29:38-46.

### INSTITUTION OF DAILY SERVICE.

**38. *two lambs of the first year day by day continually*** — The sacred preliminaries being completed, Moses was instructed in the end or design to which these preparations were subservient, namely, the worship of God; and hence the institution of the morning and evening sacrifice. The institution was so imperative, that in no circumstances was this daily oblation to be dispensed with; and the due observance of it would secure the oft-promised grace and blessing of their heavenly King.

## CHAPTER 30

### EXODUS 30:1-38.

#### THE ALTAR OF INCENSE.

1. *thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon*, etc. — Its material was to be like that of the ark of the testimony, but its dimensions very small [<sup>(125)</sup>Exodus 25:10].

2-4. *foursquare* — the meaning of which is not that it was to be entirely of a cubical form, but that upon its upper and under surface, it showed four equal sides. It was twice as high as it was broad, being twenty-one inches broad and three feet six inches high. It had “horns”; its top or flat surface was surmounted by an ornamental ledge or rim, called a crown, and it was furnished at the sides with rings for carriage. Its only accompanying piece of furniture was a golden censer or pan, in which the incense was set fire to upon the altar. Hence it was called the altar of incense, or the “golden altar” [<sup>(128)</sup>Exodus 39:38 <sup>(129)</sup>40:26], from the profuse degree in which it was gilded or overlaid with the precious metal. This splendor was adapted to the early age of the church, but in later times, when the worship was to be more spiritual, the altar of incense is prophetically described as not of gold but of wood, and double the size of that in the tabernacle, because the church should be vastly extended (<sup>(311)</sup>Malachi 1:11).

6. *thou shalt put it before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony* — which separated the holy from the most holy place. The altar was in the middle between the table of showbread and the candlestick next the holy of holies, at equal distances from the north and south walls; in other words, it occupied a spot on the outside of the great partition veil, but directly in front of the mercy seat, which was within that sacred enclosure; so that although the priest who ministered at this altar could not behold the mercy seat, he was to look towards it, and present his incense in that direction. This was a special arrangement, and it was designed to teach the important lesson that, though we cannot with the eye of sense, see the

throne of grace, we must “direct our prayer to it and look up” [<sup>497</sup>Psalm 5:3] (compare <sup>478</sup>2 Corinthians 3:14 <sup>500</sup>Hebrews 10:20 <sup>600</sup>Revelation 4:1).

**7, 8. *Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense*** — literally, “incense of spices” — Strong aromatic substances were burnt upon this altar to counteract by their odoriferous fragrance the offensive fumes of the sacrifices; or the incense was employed in an offering of tributary homage which the Orientals used to make as a mark of honor to kings; and as God was Theocratic Ruler of Israel, *His* palace was not to be wanting in a usage of such significancy. Both these ends were served by this altar — that of fumigating the apartments of the sacred edifice, while the pure lambent flame, according to Oriental notions, was an honorary tribute to the majesty of Israel’s King. But there was a far higher meaning in it still; for as the tabernacle was not only a palace for Israel’s King, but a place of worship for Israel’s God, this altar was immediately connected with a religious purpose. In the style of the sacred writers, incense was a symbol or emblem of prayer (<sup>497</sup>Psalm 141:2 <sup>600</sup>Revelation 5:8 <sup>600</sup>8:3). From the uniform combination of the two services, it is evident that the incense was an emblem of the prayers of sincere worshippers ascending to heaven in the cloud of perfume; and, accordingly, the priest who officiated at this altar typified the intercessory office of Christ (<sup>400</sup>Luke 1:10 <sup>502</sup>Hebrews 7:25).

***every morning ... at even*** — In every period of the national history this daily worship was scrupulously observed.

**8. *Aaron shall burn incense*** — seemingly limiting the privilege of officiating at the altar of incense to the high priest alone, and there is no doubt that he and his successors exclusively attended this altar on the great religious festivals. But “Aaron” is frequently used for the whole priestly order, and in later times, any of the priests might have officiated at this altar in rotation (<sup>400</sup>Luke 1:9).

**9. *Ye shall offer no strange incense*** — that is, of a different composition from that of which the ingredients are described so minutely.

**11-16. *When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel***, etc. — Moses did so twice, and doubtless observed the law here prescribed. The tax was not levied from women, minors, old men (<sup>400</sup>Numbers 1:42,45), and the

Levites (<sup><604></sup>Numbers 1:47), they being not numbered. Assuming the shekel of the sanctuary to be about half an ounce troy, though nothing certain is known about it, the sum payable by each individual was fifty cents. This was not a voluntary contribution, but a ransom for the soul or lives of the people. It was required from all classes alike, and a refusal to pay implied a wilful exclusion from the privileges of the sanctuary, as well as exposure to divine judgments. It was probably the same impost that was exacted from our Lord (<sup><472></sup>Matthew 17:24-27), and it was usually devoted to repairs and other purposes connected with the services of the sanctuary.

**18-21. *Thou shalt ... make a laver of brass*** — Though not actually forming a component part of the furniture of the tabernacle, this vase was closely connected with it; and though from standing at the entrance it would be a familiar object, it possessed great interest and importance from the baptismal purposes to which it was applied. No data are given by which its form and size can be ascertained; but it was probably a miniature pattern of Solomon's — a circular basin.

***his foot*** — supposed not to be the pedestal on which it rested, but a trough or shallow receptacle below, into which the water, let out from a cock or spout, flowed; for the way in which all Eastern people wash their hands or feet is by pouring upon them the water which falls into a basin. This laver was provided for the priests alone. But in the Christian dispensation, all believers are priests, and hence the apostle exhorts them how to draw near to God (<sup><630></sup>John 13:10 <sup><502></sup>Hebrews 10:22).

**23-33. *Take thou also ... principal spices***, etc. — Oil is frequently mentioned in Scripture as an emblem of sanctification, and anointing with it a means of designating objects as well as persons to the service of God. Here it is prescribed by divine authority, and the various ingredients in their several proportions described which were to compose the oil used in consecrating the furniture of the tabernacle.

***myrrh*** — a fragrant and medicinal gum from a little known tree in Arabia.

***sweet cinnamon*** — produced from a species of laurel or sweet bay, found chiefly in Ceylon, growing to a height of twenty feet: this spice is extracted from the inner bark, but it is not certain whether that mentioned by Moses is the same as that with which we are familiar.



*sweet calamus* — or sweet cane, a product of Arabia and India, of a tawny color in appearance; it is like the common cane and strongly odoriferous.

**24. *cassia*** — from the same species of tree as the cinnamon — some think the outer bark of that tree. All these together would amount to one hundred twenty pounds, troy weight.

*hin* — a word of Egyptian origin, equal to ten pints. Being mixed with the olive oil — no doubt of the purest kind — this composition probably remained always in a liquid state, and the strictest prohibition issued against using it for any other purpose than anointing the tabernacle and its furniture.

**34-38. *the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices*** — These were:

*stacte* — the finest myrrh;

*onycha* — supposed to be an odoriferous shell;

*galbanum* — a gum resin from an umbelliferous plant.

*frankincense* — a dry, resinous, aromatic gum, of a yellow color, which comes from a tree in Arabia, and is obtained by incision of the bark. This incense was placed within the sanctuary, to be at hand when the priest required to burn on the altar. The art of compounding unguents and perfumes was well known in Egypt, where sweet-scented spices were extensively used not only in common life, but in the ritual of the temples. Most of the ingredients here mentioned have been found on minute examination of mummies and other Egyptian relics; and the Israelites, therefore, would have the best opportunities of acquiring in that country the skill in pounding and mixing them which they were called to exercise in the service of the tabernacle. But the recipe for the incense as well as for the oil in the tabernacle, though it receives illustration from the customs of Egypt, was peculiar, and being prescribed by divine authority, was to be applied to no common or inferior purpose.

# CHAPTER 31

## EXODUS 31:1-18.

### BEZALEEL AND AHOLIAB.

**2. See, I have called** — Though the instructions about the tabernacle were privately communicated to Moses, it was plainly impossible that he could superintend the work in person, amid the multiplicity of his other duties. A head director or builder was selected by God Himself; and the nomination by such high authority removed all ground of jealousy or discontent on the part of any who might have thought their merits overlooked (compare <sup><1801></sup>Matthew 18:1).

**by name Bezaleel** — signifying “in the shadow or protection of God”; and, as called to discharge a duty of great magnitude — to execute a confidential trust in the ancient Church of God, he has his family and lineage recorded with marked distinction. He belonged to the tribe of Judah, which, doubtless for wise and weighty reasons, God all along delighted to honor; and he was the grandson of Hur, a pious patriot (<sup><1872></sup>Exodus 17:12), who was associated, by a special commission, with Aaron in the government of the people during the absence of Moses. Moreover, it may be noticed that a Jewish tradition affirms Hur to be the husband of Miriam; and if this tradition may be relied on, it affords an additional reason for the appointment of Bezaleel emanating from the direct authority of God.

**3-5. I have filled him with the spirit of God** — It is probable that he was naturally endowed with a mechanical genius, and had acquired in Egypt great knowledge and skill in the useful, as well as liberal, arts so as to be a first-class artisan, competent to take charge of both the plain and ornamental work, which the building of the sacred edifice required. When God has any special work to be accomplished, He always raises up instruments capable of doing it; and it is likely that He had given to the son of Uri that strong natural aptitude and those opportunities of gaining

mechanical skill, with an ultimate view to this responsible office. Notwithstanding that his grand duty was to conform with scrupulous fidelity to the pattern furnished, there was still plenty of room for inventive talent and tasteful exactness in the execution; and his natural and acquired gifts were enlarged and invigorated for the important work.

**6. *I have given with him Aholiab*** — He belonged to the tribe of Dan, one of the least influential and honorable in Israel; and here, too, we can trace the evidence of wise and paternal design, in choosing the colleague or assistant of Bezaleel from an inferior tribe (compare <sup><4124></sup>1 Corinthians 12:14-25; also <sup><4165></sup>Mark 6:7).

***all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom*** — At that period, when one spirit pervaded all Israel, it was not the man full of heavenly genius who presided over the work; but all who contributed their skill, experience, and labor, in rendering the smallest assistance, showed their piety and devotedness to the divine service. In like manner, it was at the commencement of the Christian Church (<sup><4165></sup>Acts 6:5 <sup><4182></sup>18:2).

**12-17. *Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep*** — The reason for the fresh inculcation of the fourth commandment at this particular period was, that the great ardor and eagerness, with which all classes betook themselves to the construction of the tabernacle, exposed them to the temptation of encroaching on the sanctity of the appointed day of rest. They might suppose that the erection of the tabernacle was a sacred work, and that it would be a high merit, an acceptable tribute, to prosecute the undertaking without the interruption of a day's repose; and therefore the caution here given, at the commencement of the undertaking, was a seasonable admonition.

**18. *tables of stone, written with the finger of God*** — containing the ten commandments (<sup><12312></sup>Exodus 24:12), called "tables of testimony," because God testified His will in them.

## CHAPTER 32

### EXODUS 32:1-35.

#### THE GOLDEN CALF.

1. *when the people saw that Moses delayed* — They supposed that he had lost his way in the darkness or perished in the fire.

*the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron* — rather, “against” Aaron in a tumultuous manner, to compel him to do what they wished. The incidents related in this chapter disclose a state of popular sentiment and feeling among the Israelites that stands in singular contrast to the tone of profound and humble reverence they displayed at the giving of the law. Within a space of little more than thirty days, their impressions were dissipated. Although they were still encamped upon ground which they had every reason to regard as holy; although the cloud of glory that capped the summit of Sinai was still before their eyes, affording a visible demonstration of their being in close contact, or rather in the immediate presence, of God, they acted as if they had entirely forgotten the impressive scenes of which they had been so recently the witnesses.

*said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us* — The Hebrew word rendered “gods” is simply the name of God in its plural form. The image made was single, and therefore it would be imputing to the Israelites a greater sin than they were guilty of, to charge them with renouncing the worship of the true God for idols. The fact is, that they required, like children, to have something to strike their senses, and as the Shekinah, “the glory of God,” of which they had hitherto enjoyed the sight, was now veiled, they wished for some visible material object as the symbol of the divine presence, which should go before them as the pillar of fire had done.

2. *Aaron said, ... Break off ... earrings* — It was not an Egyptian custom for young men to wear earrings, and the circumstance, therefore, seems to point out “the mixed rabble,” who were chiefly *foreign* slaves, as the

ringleaders in this insurrection. In giving direction to break their earrings, Aaron probably calculated on gaining time; or, perhaps, on their covetousness and love of finery proving stronger than their idolatrous propensity. If such were his expectations, they were doomed to signal disappointment. Better to have calmly and earnestly remonstrated with them, or to have preferred duty to expediency, leaving the issue in the hands of Providence.

**3. *all the people brake off the golden earrings*** — The Egyptian rings, as seen on the monuments, were round massy plates of metal; and as they were rings of this sort the Israelites wore, their size and number must, in the general collection, have produced a large store of the precious metal.

**4. *fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf*** — The words are transposed, and the rendering should be, “he framed with a graving tool the image to be made, and having poured the liquid gold into the mould, he made it a molten calf.” It is not said whether it was of life size, whether it was of solid gold or merely a wooden frame covered with plates of gold. This idol seems to have been the god Apis, the chief deity of the Egyptians, worshipped at Memphis under the form of a live ox, three years old. It was distinguished by a triangular white spot on its forehead and other peculiar marks. Images of it in the form of a whole ox, or of a calf’s head on the end of a pole, were very common; and it makes a great figure on the monuments where it is represented in the van of all processions, as borne aloft on men’s shoulders.

***they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*** — It is inconceivable that they, who but a few weeks before had witnessed such amazing demonstrations of the true God, could have suddenly sunk to such a pitch of infatuation and brutish stupidity, as to imagine that human art or hands could make a god that should go before them. But it must be borne in mind, that though by election and in name they were the people of God, they were as yet, in feelings and associations, in habits and tastes, little, if at all different, from Egyptians. They meant the calf to be an image, a visible sign or symbol of Jehovah, so that their sin consisted not in a breach of the FIRST [<sup>(21)</sup>Exodus 20:3], but of the SECOND commandment [<sup>(22)</sup>Exodus 20:4-6].

**5, 6. *Aaron made proclamation, and said, To-morrow is a feast to the Lord*** — a remarkable circumstance, strongly confirmatory of the view that they had not renounced the worship of Jehovah, but in accordance with Egyptian notions, had formed an image with which they had been familiar, to be the visible symbol of the divine presence. But there seems to have been much of the revelry that marked the feasts of the heathen.

**7-14. *the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down*** — Intelligence of the idolatrous scene enacted at the foot of the mount was communicated to Moses in language borrowed from human passions and feelings, and the judgment of a justly offended God was pronounced in terms of just indignation against the gross violation of the so recently promulgated laws.

**10. *make of thee a great nation*** — Care must be taken not to suppose this language as betokening any change or vacillation in the divine purpose. The covenant made with the patriarchs had been ratified in the most solemn manner; it *could* not and never was intended that it *should* be broken. But the manner in which God spoke to Moses served two important purposes — it tended to develop the faith and intercessory patriotism of the Hebrew leader, and to excite the serious alarm of the people, that God would reject them and deprive them of the privileges they had fondly fancied were so secure.

**15-18. *Moses turned, and went down from the mount*** — The plain, Er-Raheh, is not visible from the top of Jebel Musa, nor can the mount be descended on the side towards that valley; hence Moses and his companion, who on duty had patiently waited his return in the hollow of the mountain's brow, heard the shouting some time before they actually saw the camp.

**19. *Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands*** — The arrival of the leader, like the appearance of a specter, arrested the revellers in the midst of their carnival, and his act of righteous indignation when he dashed on the ground the tables of the law, in token that as they had so soon departed from their covenant relation, so God could withdraw the peculiar privileges that He had promised them — that act, together with the rigorous measures that followed, forms one of the most striking scenes recorded in sacred history.

**20. *he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire***, etc. —

It has been supposed that the gold was dissolved by *natron* or some chemical substance. But there is no mention of solubility here, or in <sup><RB2></sup>Deuteronomy 9:21; it was “burned in the fire,” to cast it into ingots of suitable size for the operations which follow — “grounded to powder”; the powder of malleable metals can be ground so fine as to resemble dust from the wings of a moth or butterfly; and these dust particles will float in water for hours, and in a running stream for days. These operations of grinding were intended to show contempt for such worthless gods, and the Israelites would be made to remember the humiliating lesson by the state of the water they had drunk for a time [NAPIER]. Others think that as the idolatrous festivals were usually ended with great use of sweet wine, the nauseous draught of the gold dust would be a severe punishment (compare <sup><RB2></sup>2 Kings 23:6,15 <sup><456></sup>2 Chronicles 15:16 <sup><487></sup>34:7).

**22. *And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot*** — Aaron cuts a poor figure, making a shuffling excuse and betraying more dread of the anger of Moses than of the Lord (compare <sup><RB2></sup>Deuteronomy 9:20).

**25. *naked*** — either unarmed and defenseless, or ashamed from a sense of guilt. Some think they were literally naked, as the Egyptians performed some of their rites in that indecent manner.

**26-28. *Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said*** — The camp is supposed to have been protected by a rampart after the attack of the Amalekites.

***Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me*** — The zeal and courage of Moses was astonishing, considering he opposed an intoxicated mob. The people were separated into two divisions, and those who were the boldest and most obstinate in vindicating their idolatry were put to death, while the rest, who withdrew in shame or sorrow, were spared.

**29. *Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord*** — or, “Ye have consecrated yourselves to-day.” The Levites, notwithstanding the dejection of Aaron, distinguished themselves by their zeal for the honor of God and their conduct in doing the office of executioners on this occasion; and this was one reason that they were appointed to a high and honorable office in the service of the sanctuary.

**30-33. *Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin*** — Moses labored to show the people the heinous nature of their sin, and to bring them to repentance. But not content with that, he hastened more earnestly to intercede for them.

**32. *blot me ... out of thy book*** — an allusion to the registering of the living, and erasing the names of those who die. What warmth of affection did he evince for his brethren! How fully was he animated with the true spirit of a patriot, when he professed his *willingness* to die for them. But Christ actually died for His people ( ~~see~~ Romans 5:8).

**35. *the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf*** — No immediate judgments were inflicted, but this early lapse into idolatry was always mentioned as an aggravation of their subsequent apostasies.



## CHAPTER 33

### EXODUS 33:1-23.

#### THE LORD REFUSES TO GO WITH THE PEOPLE.

1. *the Lord said* — rather “had” said unto Moses. The conference detailed in this chapter must be considered as having occurred prior to the pathetic intercession of Moses, recorded at the close of the preceding chapter; and the historian, having mentioned the fact of his earnest and painful anxiety, under the overwhelming pressure of which he poured forth that intercessory prayer for his apostate countrymen, now enters on a detailed account of the circumstances.

3. *I will not go up ... lest I consume thee* — Here the Lord is represented as determined to do what He afterwards did not. (See on <sup>1230</sup>Exodus 32:7).

4. *when the people heard these evil tidings* — from Moses on his descent from the mount.

5. *put off thy ornaments* — In seasons of mourning, it is customary with Eastern people to lay aside all gewgaws and divest themselves of their jewels, their gold, and every thing rich and splendid in their dress. This token of their sorrow the Lord required of His offending people.

*that I may know what to do unto thee* — The language is accommodated to the feeble apprehensions of men. God judges the state of the heart by the tenor of the conduct. In the case of the Israelites, He cherished a design of mercy; and the moment He discerned the first symptoms of contrition, by their stripping off their ornaments, as penitents conscious of their error and sincerely sorrowful, this fact added its weight to the fervency of Moses’ prayers, and gave them prevalence with God in behalf of the people.

7. *Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp* — Not the tabernacle, of which a pattern had been given him, for it was not yet

erected, but his own tent — conspicuous as that of the leader — in a part of which he heard cases and communed with God about the people's interests; hence called “the tabernacle of the congregation,” and the withdrawal of which, in abhorrence from a polluted camp, was regarded as the first step in the total abandonment with which God had threatened them.

**8. *all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door*** — Its removal produced deep and universal consternation; and it is easy to conceive how anxiously all eyes would be directed towards it; how rapidly the happy intelligence would spread, when a phenomenon was witnessed from which an encouraging hope could be founded.

**9-11. *the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle*** — How would the downcast hearts of the people revive — how would the tide of joy swell in every bosom, when the symbolic cloud was seen slowly and majestically to descend and stand at the entrance of the tabernacle!

***as Moses entered*** — It was when he appeared as their mediator, when he repaired from day to day to intercede for them, that welcome token of assurance was given that his advocacy prevailed, that Israel's sin was forgiven, and that God would again be gracious.

**18-23. *I beseech thee, show me thy glory*** — This is one of the most mysterious scenes described in the Bible: he had, for his comfort and encouragement, a splendid and full display of the divine majesty, not in its unveiled effulgence, but as far as the weakness of humanity would admit. The face, hand, back parts, are to be understood figuratively.

## CHAPTER 34

### EXODUS 34:1-35.

#### THE TABLES ARE RENEWED.

1. *the like unto the first* — God having been reconciled to repentant Israel, through the earnest intercession, the successful mediation of Moses, means were to be taken for the restoration of the broken covenant.

Intimation was given, however, in a most intelligible and expressive manner, that the favor was to be restored with some memento of the rupture; for at the former time God Himself had provided the materials, as well as written upon them. Now, Moses was to prepare the stone tables, and God was only to retrace the characters originally inscribed for the use and guidance of the people.

2. *present thyself ... to me in the top of the mount* — Not absolutely the highest peak; for as the cloud of the Shekinah usually abode on the summit, and yet (<sup><0234E</sup>Exodus 34:5) it “descended,” the plain inference is that Moses was to station himself at a point not far distant, but still below the loftiest pinnacle.

3. *no man shall come up with thee ... neither ... flocks nor herds* — All these enactments were made in order that the law might be a second time renewed with the solemnity and sanctity that marked its first delivery. The whole transaction was ordered so as to impress the people with an awful sense of the holiness of God; and that it was a matter of no trifling moment to have subjected Him, so to speak, to the necessity of re-delivering the law of the ten commandments.

4. *Moses ... took in his hand the two tables of stone* — As Moses had no attendant to divide the labor of carrying them, it is evident that they must have been light, and of no great dimensions — probably flat slabs of shale or slate, such as abound in the mountainous region of Horeb. An additional proof of their comparatively small size appears in the circumstance of their being deposited in the ark of the most holy place (<sup><0230E</sup>Exodus 25:10).

**5. *the Lord descended in the cloud*** — After graciously hovering over the tabernacle, it seems to have resumed its usual position on the summit of the mount. It was the shadow of God manifest to the outward senses; and, at the same time, of God manifest in the flesh. The emblem of a cloud seems to have been chosen to signify that, although He was pleased to make known much about himself, there was more veiled from mortal view. It was to check presumption and engender awe and give a humble sense of human attainments in divine knowledge, as now man sees, but darkly.

**6. *the Lord passed by before him*** — in this remarkable scene, God performed what He had promised to Moses the day before.

***proclaimed, The Lord ... merciful and gracious*** — At an earlier period He had announced Himself to Moses, in the glory of His self-existent and eternal majesty, as “I am” [<sup>(1314)</sup>Exodus 3:14]; now He makes Himself known in the glory of His grace and goodness — attributes that were to be illustriously displayed in the future history and experience of the church. Being about to republish His law — the sin of the Israelites being forgiven and the deed of pardon about to be signed and sealed by renewing the terms of the former covenant — it was the most fitting time to proclaim the extent of the divine mercy which was to be displayed, not in the case of Israel only, but of all who offend.

**8-26. *Moses bowed ... and worshipped*** — In the East, people bow the head to royalty, and are silent when it passes by, while in the West, they take off their hats and shout.

**9, 10. *he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us*** — On this proclamation, he, in the overflowing benevolence of s heart, founded an earnest petition for the Divine Presence being continued with the people; and God was pleased to give His favorable answer to Moses’ intercession by a renewal of His promise under the form of a covenant, repeating the leading points that formed the conditions of the former national compact.

**27, 28. *And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words*** — that is, the ceremonial and judicial injunctions comprehended above (<sup>(1314)</sup>Exodus 34:11-26); while the rewriting of the ten commandments on the newly

prepared slabs was done by God Himself (compare <sup><6511></sup>Deuteronomy 10:1-4).

**28. *he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights*** — as long as formerly [<sup><1218></sup>Exodus 24:18], being sustained for the execution of his special duties by the miraculous power of God. A special cause is assigned for his protracted fast on this second occasion (<sup><1185></sup>Deuteronomy 9:18).

**29. *Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him*** — It was an intimation of the exalted presence into which he had been admitted and of the glory he had witnessed (<sup><4185></sup>2 Corinthians 3:18); and in that view, it was a badge of his high office as the ambassador of God. No testimonial needed to be produced. He bore his credentials on his very face; and whether this extraordinary effulgence was a permanent or merely temporary distinction, it cannot be doubted that this reflected glory was given him as an honor before all the people.

**30. *they were afraid to come nigh him*** — Their fear arose from a sense of guilt — the beaming radiance of his countenance made him appear to their awe-struck consciences a flaming minister of heaven.

**33. *he put a veil on his face*** — That veil was with the greatest propriety removed when speaking with the Lord, for every one appears unveiled to the eye of Omniscience; but it was replaced on returning to the people — and this was emblematic of the dark and shadowy character of that dispensation (<sup><4183></sup>2 Corinthians 3:13,14).

# CHAPTER 35

## EXODUS 35:1-35.

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TABERNACLE.

1. *Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel*, etc. — On the occasion referred to in the opening of this chapter, the Israelites were specially reminded of the design to erect a magnificent tabernacle for the regular worship of God, as well as of the leading articles that were required to furnish that sacred edifice [<sup>1851</sup>Exodus 35:11-19]. (See on <sup>1850</sup>Exodus 25:1-40; <sup>1852</sup>Exodus 27:1-21; <sup>1853</sup>Exodus 30:1-31:18).

20, 21. *all the congregation of Israel departed from the presence of Moses* — No exciting harangues were made, nor had the people Bibles at home in which they could compare the requirements of their leader and see if these things were so. But they had no doubt as to his bearing to them the will of God, and they were impressed with so strong a sense of its being their duty, that they made a spontaneous offer of the best and most valuable treasures they possessed.

21. *they came, every one whose heart stirred him up* — One powerful element doubtless of this extraordinary open-hearted liberality was the remembrance of their recent transgression, which made them “zealous of good works” (compare <sup>1854</sup>2 Corinthians 7:11). But along with this motive, there were others of a higher and nobler kind — a principle of love to God and devotedness to His service, an anxious desire to secure the benefit of His presence, and gratitude for the tokens of His divine favor: it was under the combined influence of these considerations that the people were so willing and ready to pour their contributions into that exchequer of the sanctuary.

*every one whom his spirit made willing* — Human nature is always the same, and it is implied that while an extraordinary spirit of pious liberality reigned in the bosoms of the people at large, there were exceptions — some who were too fond of the world, who loved their possessions more

than their God, and who could not part with these; no, not for the service of the tabernacle.

**22. *they came, both men and women***, etc. — literally, “the men over and above the women”; a phraseology which implies that the women acted a prominent part, presented their offerings *first*, and then were followed by as many of their male companions as were similarly disposed.

***brought bracelets***, etc. — There was in that early age no money in the form of coins or bullion. What money passed current with the merchant consisted of rings which were weighed, and principally of ornaments for personal decoration. Astonishment at the abundance of their ornaments is at an end when we learn that costly and elegant ornaments abounded in proportion as clothing was simple and scarce among the Egyptians, and some, entirely divested of clothing, yet wore rich necklaces [HENGSTENBERG]. Among people with Oriental sentiments and tastes, scarcely any stronger proof could have been given of the power of religion than their willingness not only to lay aside, but to devote those much-valued trinkets to the house of God; and thus all, like the Eastern sages, laid the best they had at the service of God.

**30. *See, the Lord hath called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri***, etc. — Moses had made this communication before [see <sup>EXD</sup>Exodus 31:2-5; also see on <sup>EXD</sup>Exodus 31:2]. But now that the collection had been made, the materials were contributed, and the operations of building about to be commenced, it was with the greatest propriety he reminded the people that the individuals entrusted with the application of their gold and silver had been nominated to the work by authority to which all would bow.

**35. *Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart*** — A statement which not only testifies that skill in art and science is a direct gift from God, but that weaving was especially the business of men in Egypt (see <sup>EXD</sup>Exodus 38:22 39:22,27). And in perfect harmony with the testimony of the monuments is the account given by Moses to the artists who were divinely taught the arts necessary for the embellishment of the tabernacle. Others, whose limited means did not admit of these expensive contributions, offered their gratuitous services in fabricating such articles of tapestry as were needed; arts which the Israelitish females learned as bondwomen, in the houses of Egyptian princes.

# CHAPTER 36

## EXODUS 36:1-38.

### OFFERINGS DELIVERED TO THE WORKMEN.

#### 1. *Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man*, etc.

— Here is an illustrious example of zeal and activity in the work of the Lord. No unnecessary delay was allowed to take place; and from the moment the first pole was stuck in the ground till the final completion of the sacred edifice, he and his associates labored with all the energies both of mind and body engaged in the work. And what was the mainspring of their arduous and untiring diligence? They could be actuated by none of the ordinary motives that give impulse to human industry, by no desire for the acquisition of gain; no ambition for honor; no view of gratifying a mere love of power in directing the labors of a large body of men. They felt the stimulus — the strong irresistible impulse of higher and holier motives — obedience to the authority, zeal for the glory, and love to the service of God.

#### 3. *they* (the workmen)

*received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought*, etc. — It appears that the building was begun after the first few contributions were made; it was progressively carried on, and no necessity occurred to suspend operations even for the shortest interval, from want of the requisite materials.

*they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning*, etc. — Moses, in common with other Oriental magistrates, had his morning levees for receiving the people (see on <sup>EXODUS</sup> Exodus 18:13); and it was while he was performing his magisterial duties that the people brought unto him freewill offerings every morning. Some who had nothing but their manual labor to give would spend a great part of the night in hastening to complete their self-imposed task before the early dawn; others might find their hearts constrained by silent meditations on their beds to open their coffers and



give a part of their hoarded treasure to the pious object. All whose hearts were touched by piety, penitence, or gratitude, repaired with eager haste into the presence of Moses, not as heretofore, to have their controversies settled, but to lay on his tribunal their contributions to the sanctuary of God (<sup>4002</sup>2 Corinthians 9:7).

**5. *they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough***, etc. — By the calculations which the practiced eyes of the workmen enabled them to make, they were unanimously of the opinion that the supply already far exceeded the demand and that no more contributions were required. Such a report reflects the highest honor on their character as men of the strictest honor and integrity, who, notwithstanding they had command of an untold amount of the most precious things and might, without any risk of human discovery, have appropriated much to their own use, were too high principled for such acts of peculation. Forthwith, a proclamation was issued to stop further contributions [<sup>4006</sup>Exodus 36:6].

**35. *he made a veil of blue*** — the second or inner veil, which separated the holy from the most holy place, embroidered with cherubim and of great size and thickness.

**37. *made an hanging for the ... door*** — Curtains of elaborately wrought needlework are often suspended over the entrance to tents of the great nomad sheiks, and throughout Persia, at the entrance of summer tents, mosques, and palaces. They are preferred as cooler and more elegant than wooden doors. This chapter contains an instructive narrative: it is the first instance of donations made for the worship of God, given from the wages of the people's sufferings and toils. They were acceptable to God (<sup>4008</sup>Philippians 4:18), and if the Israelites showed such liberality, how much more should those whose privilege it is to live under the Christian dispensation (<sup>4012</sup>1 Corinthians 6:20 16:2).

# CHAPTER 37

## EXODUS 37:1-29.

### FURNITURE OF THE TABERNACLE.

**1. *Bezaleel made the ark*** — The description here given of the things within the sacred edifice is almost word for word the same as that contained in <sup><1270></sup>Exodus 25:1-40. It is not on that account to be regarded as a useless repetition of minute particulars; for by the enumeration of these details, it can be seen how exactly everything was fashioned according to the “pattern shown on the mount” [<sup><1250></sup>Exodus 25:40]; and the knowledge of this exact correspondence between the prescription and the execution was essential to the purposes of the fabric.

**6-10. *made the mercy seat of pure gold*** — To construct a figure, whether the body of a beast or a man, with two extended wings, measuring from two to three feet from tip to tip, with the hammer, out of a solid piece of gold, was what few, if any, artisans of the present day could accomplish.

**17-22. *he made the candlestick of pure gold*** — Practical readers will be apt to say, “Why do such works with the hammer, when they could have been cast so much easier — a process they were well acquainted with?” The only answer that can be given is, that it was done according to order. We have no doubt but there were reasons for so distinctive an order, something significant, which has not been revealed to us [NAPIER]. The whole of that sacred building was arranged with a view to inculcate through every part of its apparatus the great fundamental principles of revelation. Every object was symbolical of important truth — every piece of furniture was made the hieroglyphic of a doctrine or a duty — on the floor and along the sides of that movable edifice was exhibited, by emblematic signs addressed to the eye, the whole remedial scheme of the gospel. How far this spiritual instruction was received by every successive generation of the Israelites, it may not be easy to determine. But the tabernacle, like the law of which it was a part, was a schoolmaster to

Christ [<sup><812></sup>Galatians 3:24,25]. Just as the walls of schools are seen studded with pictorial figures, by which the children, in a manner level to their capacities and suited to arrest their volatile minds, are kept in constant and familiar remembrance of the lessons of piety and virtue, so the tabernacle was intended by its furniture and all its arrangements to serve as a “shadow of good things to come” [<sup><801></sup>Hebrews 10:1]. In this view, the minute description given in this chapter respecting the ark and mercy seat, the table of showbread, the candlestick, the altar of incense, and the holy oil, were of the greatest utility and importance; and though there are a few things that are merely ornamental appendages, such as the knops and the flowers, yet, in introducing these into the tabernacle, God displayed the same wisdom and goodness as He has done by introducing real flowers into the kingdom of nature to engage and gratify the eye of man.

# CHAPTER 38

## EXODUS 38:1-31.

### FURNITURE OF THE TABERNACLE.

1. *the altar of burnt offering* — The repetitions are continued, in which may be traced the exact conformity of the execution to the order.

8. *laver of brass ... of the looking glasses of the women* — The word *mirrors* should have been used, as those implements, usually round, inserted into a handle of wood, stone, or metal, were made of brass, silver, or bronze, highly polished [WILKINSON]. It was customary for the Egyptian women to carry mirrors with them to the temples; and whether by taking the looking glasses of the Hebrew women Moses designed to put it out of their power to follow a similar practice at the tabernacle, or whether the supply of brass from other sources in the camp was exhausted, it is interesting to learn how zealously and to a vast extent they surrendered those valued accompaniments of the female toilet.

*of the women assembling ... at the door* — not priestesses but women of pious character and influence, who frequented the courts of the sacred building (<sup>4025</sup>Luke 2:37), and whose parting with their mirrors, like the cutting the hair of the Nazarites, was their renouncing the world for a season [HENGSTENBERG].

9. *the court* — It occupied a space of one hundred and fifty feet by seventy-five, and it was enclosed by curtains of fine linen about eight feet high, suspended on brazen or copper pillars. Those curtains were secured by rods fastened to the top, and kept extended by being fastened to pins stuck in the ground.

10. *hooks* — The hooks of the pillars in the court were for hanging up the carcasses of the sacrificial beasts — those on the pillars at the entry of the tabernacle were for hanging the sacerdotal robes and other things used in the service.

11. *sockets* — mortices or holes in which the end of the pillars stood.

17. *chapters* — or capitals of the pillars, were wooden posts which ran along their top, to which were attached the hooks for the hangings.

18. *the height in the breadth* — or, “in the measure.” The sense is that the hangings of the court gate, which was twenty cubits wide, were of the same height as the hangings all round the court [WALL].

21. *This is the sum of the tabernacle* — Having completed his description of the component parts of the tabernacle, the inspired historian digresses into a statement respecting the gold and silver employed in it, the computation being made according to an order of Moses — by the Levites, under the direction of Ithamar, Aaron’s youngest son.

24. *twenty and nine talents, and seven hundred and thirty shekels* — equivalent to approximately \$450,000.

25. *the silver of them that were numbered* — 603,550 men at fifty cents each would contribute \$301,775. It may seem difficult to imagine how the Israelites should be possessed of so much wealth in the desert; but it should be remembered that they were enriched first by the spoils of the Egyptians, and afterwards by those of the Amalekites. Besides, it is highly probable that during their sojourn they traded with the neighboring nations who bordered on the wilderness [HEWLETT].

# CHAPTER 39

## EXODUS 39:1-43.

### GARMENTS OF THE PRIESTS.

**1, 2. *cloths of service*** — official robes. The ephod of the high priest, the robe of the ephod, the girdle of needlework, and the embroidered coat were all of fine linen; for on no material less delicate could such elaborate symbolical figures have been portrayed in embroidery, and all beautified with the same brilliant colors. (See on <sup><1230></sup>Exodus 28:1-43).

**3. *cut the gold into wires to work it*** — that is, the metal was beaten with a hammer into thin plates, cut with scissors or some other instrument into long slips, then rounded into filaments or threads. “Cloth of golden tissue is not uncommon on the monuments, and specimens of it have been found rolled about mummies; but it is not easy to determine whether the gold thread was originally interwoven or subsequently inserted by the embroiderer” [TAYLOR].

**30. *a writing, like to the engravings of a signet*** — The seal-ring worn both by ancient and modern Egyptians on the little finger of the right hand, contained, inscribed on a cornelian or other precious stone, along with the owner’s name, a religious sentiment or sacred symbol, intimating that he was the servant of God, or expressive of trust in Him. And it was to this practice the inscription on the high priest alludes (compare <sup><1231></sup>Exodus 28:11).

**34. *the covering of rams’ skin dyed red*** — (See on <sup><1232></sup>Exodus 25:5). It was probably red morocco leather and “badgers’ skins,” rather “the skins of the “tahash,” supposed to be the dugong, or dolphin of the Red Sea, the skin of which is still used by the Arabs under the same appellation.” [Goss].

**43. *Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded*** — A formal inspection was made on the

completion of the tabernacle, not only with a view to have the work transferred from the charge of the workmen, but to ascertain whether it corresponded with “the pattern.” The result of a careful and minute survey showed that every plank, curtain, altar, and vase had been most accurately made of the form, and in the place designed by the Divine Architect — and Moses, in accepting it of their hands, thanked God for them, and begged Him to bless them.

# CHAPTER 40

## EXODUS 40:1-38.

### THE TABERNACLE REARED AND ANOINTED.

**2. *On the first day of the first month*** — From a careful consideration of the incidents corded to have happened after the exodus (<sup>(Q12P)</sup>Exodus 12:2 <sup>(Q13)</sup>13:4 <sup>(Q19)</sup>19:1 <sup>(Q18)</sup>20:18 <sup>(Q13)</sup>34:28, etc.), it has been computed that the work of the tabernacle was commenced within six months after that emigration; and consequently, that other six months had been occupied in building it. So long a period spent in preparing the materials of a movable pavilion, it would be difficult to understand, were it not for what we are told of the vast dimensions of the tabernacle, as well as the immense variety of curious and elaborate workmanship which its different articles of furniture required.

***the tabernacle*** — the entire edifice.

***the tent*** — the covering that surmounted it (<sup>(Q19)</sup>Exodus 40:19).

**15. *anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father*** — The sacred oil was used, but it does not appear that the ceremony was performed exactly in the same manner; for although the anointing oil was sprinkled over the garments both of Aaron and his sons (<sup>(Q20)</sup>Exodus 29:21 <sup>(Q18)</sup>Leviticus 8:30), it was not poured over the heads of the latter. This distinction was reserved for the high priest (<sup>(Q20)</sup>Exodus 29:7 <sup>(Q18)</sup>Leviticus 8:12 <sup>(Q18)</sup>Psalms 133:2).

**16. *Thus did Moses: according to all that the Lord commanded him*** — On his part, the same scrupulous fidelity was shown in conforming to the “pattern” in the disposition of the furniture, as had been displayed by the workmen in the erection of the edifice.

**33. *So Moses finished the work*** — Though it is not expressly recorded in this passage, yet, from what took place on all similar occasions, there is



reason to believe that on the inauguration day the people were summoned from their tents — were all drawn up as a vast assemblage, yet in calm and orderly arrangement, around the newly erected tabernacle.

**34. *a cloud*** — literally, “*The cloud*,” the mystic cloud which was the well-known symbol of the Divine Presence. After remaining at a great distance from them on the summit of the mount, it appeared to be in motion; and if many among them had a secret misgiving about the issue, how the fainting heart would revive, the interest of the moment intensely increase, and the tide of joy swell in every bosom, when that symbolic cloud was seen slowly and majestically descending towards the plain below and covering the tabernacle. The entire and universal concealment of the tabernacle within the folds of an impervious cloud was not without a deep and instructive meaning; it was a protection to the sacred edifice from the burning heats of the Arabian climate; it was a token of the Divine Presence; and it was also an emblem of the Mosaic dispensation, which, though it was a revelation from heaven, yet left many things hid in obscurity; for it was a dark cloud compared with the bright cloud, which betokened the clearer and fuller discoveries of the divine character and glory in the gospel (<sup><4005</sup>Matthew 17:5).

***the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*** — that is, light and fire, a created splendor, which was the peculiar symbol of God (<sup><3005</sup>1 John 1:5). Whether this light was inherent in the cloud or not, it emanated from it on this occasion, and making its entry, not with the speed of a lightning flash as if it were merely an electric spark, but in majestic splendor, it passed through the outer porch into the interior of the most holy place (<sup><1000</sup>1 Kings 8:10 <sup><2005</sup>John 1:14). Its miraculous character is shown by the fact, that, though “it filled the tabernacle,” not a curtain or any article of furniture was so much as singed.

**35. *Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation*** — How does this circumstance show the incapacity of man, in his present state, to look upon the unveiled perfections of the Godhead! Moses could not endure the unclouded effulgence, nor the sublimest of the prophets (<sup><2005</sup>Isaiah 6:5). But what neither Moses nor the most eminent of God’s messengers to the ancient church through the weakness of nature could endure, we can all now do by an exercise of faith; looking unto Jesus, who

reflected with chastened radiance the brightness of the Father's glory; and who, having as the Forerunner for us, entered within the veil, has invited us to come boldly to the mercy seat. While Moses was compelled, through the influence of overwhelming awe, to stand aloof and could not enter the tabernacle, Christ entered into the holy place not made with hands; nay, He is Himself the true tabernacle, filled with the glory of God, ever with the grace and truth which the Shekinah typified. What great reason we have to thank God for Jesus Christ, who, while He Himself was the brightness of the Father's glory, yet exhibited that glory in so mild and attractive a manner, as to allure us to draw near with confidence and love into the Divine Presence!

**36. *when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle*** — In journeying through the sandy, trackless deserts of the East, the use of torches, exhibiting a cloud of smoke by day and of fire by night, has been resorted to from time immemorial. The armies of Darius and Alexander were conducted on their marches in this manner [FABER]. The Arab caravans in the present day observe the same custom; and materials for these torches are stored up among other necessary preparations for a journey. Live fuel, hoisted in chafing dishes at the end of long poles, and being seen at a great distance, serves, by the smoke in the daytime and the light at night, as a better signal for march than the sound of a trumpet, which is not heard at the extremities of a large camp [LABORDE]. This usage, and the miracle related by Moses, mutually illustrate each other. The usage leads us to think that the miracle was necessary, and worthy of God to perform; and, on the other hand, the miracle of the cloudy pillar, affording double benefit of shade by day and light at night, implies not only that the usage was not unknown to the Hebrews, but supplied all the wants which they felt in common with other travelers through those dreary regions [FABER, HESS, GRANDPIERRE]. But its peculiar appearance, unvarying character, and regular movements, distinguished it from all the common atmospheric phenomena. It was an invaluable boon to the Israelites, and being recognized by all classes among that people as the symbol of the Divine Presence, it guided their journeys and regulated their encampments (compare <sup>1911</sup>Psalm 29:1-11 <sup>1911</sup>Psalms 105:1-45).

**38. *the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle***, etc. — While it had hitherto appeared sometimes in one place, sometimes in another, it was

now found on the tabernacle only; so that from the moment that sanctuary was erected, and the glory of the Lord had filled the sacred edifice, the Israelites had to look to the place which God had chosen to put His name there, in order that they might enjoy the benefit of a heavenly Guide (<sup>OLD</sup>Numbers 9:15-23). In like manner, the church had divine revelation for its guide from the first — long before the WORD of God existed in a written form; but ever since the setting up of that sacred canon, it rests on that as its tabernacle and there only is it to be found. It accompanies us wherever we are or go, just as the cloud led the way of the Israelites. It is always accessible and can be carried in our pockets when we walk abroad; it may be engraved on the inner tablets of our memories and our hearts; and so true, faithful, and complete a guide is it, that there is not a scene of duty or of trial through which we may be called to pass in the world, but it furnishes a clear, a safe, and unerring direction (<sup>NEW</sup>Colossians 3:16).