



The Summit
Green Campus of Canton Baptist Temple

Resources for Your Life

Exodus
33 Sessions

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Resource Guide

This resource was compiled from the personal Bible study and blog entries created by Tom Hogsed, pastor of the Summit in Green. You can find the original blog entries at www.tomhogsed.com.

The **introduction** to this book has been written so the reader has a better understanding of the Biblical author, his purpose in writing, and important points to understand before reading.

Following the introduction, each new page represents a **verse by verse overview** of the Scripture passage. The best way to study is to first read the Scripture verses from your Bible relying on the Holy Spirit to provide understanding and then to support your understanding with the commentary written below.

At the end of each Scripture commentary, there is a short **prayer** written so the reader can personally apply what has been discovered; however, it is suggested that you also pray from your heart in response to God's Word.

Feel free to make your own personal notes in your Bible, on this page, or even in a journal.

If this resource has helped you or you have further questions, please send an e-mail to tomhogsed@gmail.com.

Introduction to Exodus

Exodus is the second book written by Moses and the sequel to the book of Genesis. The timeline of Genesis ended with Joseph's death in 1804 BC and the storyline of Exodus begins its narrative somewhere around 1525 BC. This means that there were nearly 280 years of silence before the events of Exodus began. On his deathbed, Joseph had spoken concerning the Israelites departing from Egypt (Genesis 50:24; Hebrews 11:22) and Exodus became the historical record of their "exodus" from Egypt in 1445 BC, led by God's chosen leader, Moses. The story of Moses is an important part of this book because it follows God's relationship with Moses and how He called him out as the one who would bring deliverance to the nation of Israel. Although not all of the details are given regarding Moses' early years, the reader is engaged by understanding the events surrounding Moses' birth (Exodus 1:1-2:10), his fleeing to Midian (Exodus 2:11-25), and God's appearance to him at the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-4:31). God's call for Moses to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage was in keeping with the promise which had been made to Abraham. More than 500 years had passed since God told Abraham that his descendants would inhabit the land of Canaan and grow to become a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3, 7). The book of Exodus reveals the rapid growth of Israel and the establishing of a nation. God's plan in delivering Israel is revealed in Exodus 2:23-25, "Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged *them*."

The book of Exodus can be divided into three parts of Israel's history:

- The Israelites escape from Egyptian oppression (Exodus 1-12:36)
- The Israelites wandering in the wilderness for 40 years (Exodus 12:37-18:27)
- The Israelites 11 month encampment in Sinai where they received God's law (Exodus 19:1-40:38)

Dear God, give me understanding and application as I read through the book of Exodus.

Exodus 1:1-22

Jacob and his family had come to Egypt somewhere around 1875 BC in order to be spared from the great famine which had plagued the land of Canaan (Genesis 46). They were providentially brought to Egypt through God using Joseph, Jacob's son, to preserve the nation of Israel (Genesis 49-50). When Joseph died in 1804 BC, the nation of Israel consisted of 70 men (1:1-6) and had favor with Egypt; however, after Joseph and his generation passed away, the relationship between Israel and Egypt began to change (1525 BC). The children of Israel had become a growing nation of approximately 2 million people (1:7; see also Numbers 1:46) and the new king over Egypt began to fear Israel saying, "Look, the people of the children of Israel *are* more and mightier than we; come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land" (1:9-10). In response to the rapid growth of Israel and fear of being overtaken, the king of Egypt implemented intense, forced labor on the Israelites and required them to build supply cities for Egypt (1:11). The intense slavery did not stop the population from growing so the Egyptian king "...made the children of Israel serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage..." (1:13-14). No matter how intense the bondage, Israel continued to grow because of God's supernatural protection over them. The king of Egypt became frustrated and resorted to another way of keeping the Israelite population from expanding. "Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one *was* Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah; and he said, 'When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see *them* on the birthstools, if it *is* a son, then you shall kill him; but if it *is* a daughter, then she shall live'" (1:15-16). The Hebrew midwives feared God and therefore ignored the king's command to kill all male children being born (1:17). When the king found out that the Hebrew midwives had disobeyed his order, he confronted them (1:18) but they said, "Because the Hebrew women *are* not like the Egyptian women; for they *are* lively and give birth before the midwives come to them" (1:19). Their statement to the king should not be understood as a lie, but rather that God was supernaturally involved in helping the Israelite women to experience smooth deliveries. The Hebrew midwives were blessed by God for their courage and faithfulness to Him (1:20-21). Pharaoh, king of Egypt, became even more desperate to control the population of the Israelites so he commanded the Egyptians saying, "Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive" (1:22). His command to exterminate the newborn, male children exposed the hatred and fear in his heart against God's people.

Dear God, thank You for being involved in the affairs of men. Thank You for Your protection and care over those who belong to You.

Exodus 2:1-10

The Israelites, God's chosen people, had made their way to Egypt (Genesis 46) because a severe famine (Genesis 41) had struck the land of Canaan (1875 BC). God had given them divine protection through Joseph, son of Jacob, in order to fulfill the promise that He would make a great nation from Abraham descendants (Genesis 12:1-3, 7); however, the nation of Israel's future was being threatened by the king of Egypt. Israel had experienced tremendous growth since Jacob had traveled to Egypt (from 70 men to approximately 2 million people), but Pharaoh began to fear that their growth would lead to them joining an enemy nation to overtake Egypt (Exodus 1:8-9). Pharaoh attempted to control Israel's population and power by placing them under intense slavery, but God continued to bless them with more power and people (1:10-14). When Pharaoh's first plan didn't work, he commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill any males being born (1:15-16), but they refused and God blessed Israel with more growth (1:17-21). Finally in desperation Pharaoh demanded that his people seek out newborn males and kill them by throwing them into the river (1:22).

In the midst of this chaotic time for Israel, the reader is introduced to a child who is born to parents of the house of Levi (2:1-2a). After seeing that this child was beautiful, she hid him for three months, but when he could no longer be hidden his mother made a small ark and hid him in the river in order to protect those seeking to kill the child (2:2b-3). The child's sister stood at the river and watched what would happen to the child (2:4). One day the daughter of Pharaoh came to the river to bathe and discovered the child hidden in the river (2:5-6a). She immediately knew he was a child of the Hebrews, but she had compassion on him and decided to raise him as her own son, whom she named Moses (2:6b-10). Not many details are given concerning Moses being raised in the house of Pharaoh, but one can assume that he was given many privileges; however, Hebrews 11:24-26 reveals that "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward." Although Moses was formally educated and had a royal "family" he never lost sight of being a part of the Israelite nation. God supernaturally protected Moses and would eventually turn this seemingly bad circumstance into good for the nation of Israel.

Dear God, may I always remember that You are at work even when it may not be evident with my eyes.

Exodus 2:11-25

Moses had been born into a very chaotic time in Israel's history (Exodus 2). His people had been under intense slavery to the Egyptians, who were attempting to stop the Israelites' rapid population growth in case they would join together with an enemy nation to defeat Egypt (Exodus 1:7-14). When putting Israel under extreme bondage did not prevent their growth, Pharaoh (king of Egypt) commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill all newborn males (1:15-21); however, his plan failed so he demanded that the citizens of Egypt seek out newborn males and put them to death by drowning them in the river (1:22). Moses' mother hid him away in a basket and placed him in the river, but he was soon discovered by Pharaoh's daughter, who ended up raising him as her own son (2:1-10). Although Moses was raised in an Egyptian home, he never forgot his real identity as an Israelite. This reality is evident in an incident which transpired in his early years of adulthood (40 years old, 1485 BC). "Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand" (2:11-12). Acts 7:24-25 speaks concerning this incident, "And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand."

The very next day Moses sees two Israelites fighting and asks the one who was in the wrong why he was hitting his friend (2:13). The Israelite man responded to Moses saying, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" (2:14). Moses, unaware that someone had seen him murder the Egyptian, became fearful and when Pharaoh found out about Moses' actions, he sought to kill him (2:15a). Moses fled to Midian where he sat down by a well and there met the seven daughters of the priest of Midian, who were watering their father's flock (2:15b-16). The shepherds also came to the same well where they were gathered, but drove the daughters away until Moses "stood up and helped them, and watered their flock" (2:17). The daughters returned home earlier than usual because Moses had helped them and upon hearing about Moses' kindness their father, Reuel, demanded that they bring him to their home (2:18-20). Moses came to the house of Reuel where he was given Zipporah, Reuel's daughter, to take as a wife (2:21-22). Moses dwelt in Midian for the next 40 years. While Moses was dwelling in Midian, the king of Egypt died and the "...children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage" (2:23). In response to Israel's groaning, "...God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged *them*" (2:24-25). God had not forgotten about His promise.

Dear God, thank You for keeping Your promises.

Exodus 3:1-22

Moses was born into an Israelite nation (Exodus 2:1-10) who had been experiencing tremendous persecution from the Egyptians because of Israel's uncontrollable growth and power (Exodus 1). Pharaoh, king of Egypt, attempted to slow down their prosperity but they could not be stopped. Through a series of circumstances, Moses fled from Egypt to Midian where he took a wife and settled down as a shepherd (Exodus 2:11-25). After Moses had been living in Midian for 40 years, God remembered Israel's hardship in Egypt and decided to take action to relieve their suffering (Exodus 2:23-25). The first step God took in releasing Israel from her bondage was to raise up a deliverer, so the following instance in Exodus 3 puts God's plan in motion. Moses was tending to Jethro's (also known as Reuel) flock in the desert when the Angel of the Lord (God Himself) supernaturally appears in the midst of a burning bush, although the bush was not consumed by the fire (3:1-2). Out of the bush God clearly spoke to Moses saying, "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey..." (3:3-9). The news of God's deliverance of Israel must have been welcomed by Moses until God revealed that Moses would become the spokesman for Israel before Pharaoh (3:10). Moses immediately objected to God's call to be the deliverer of Israel saying that he was inadequate to carry out this mission (3:11). In response to Moses' objection, God promised His presence and power to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (3:12); however, Moses was fearful that the Israelites would ask, "What is His name?" (3:13). Moses knew that the Israelites would not ask for the identification of the One who sent him, but rather what His name had to do with their circumstances; in other words, they wanted to know if this One who sent him cared about their hardship. "And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you'" (3:14). This title for God would have demonstrated to the Israelites that their God would be with them in time of trouble as He had been with their fathers such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (3:15).

God commanded Moses to gather the elders of Israel to inform them of their upcoming deliverance from Egyptian bondage (3:16-17) and then he was to take the elders of Israel and approach Pharaoh saying, "The Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now, please, let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God" (3:18). God revealed that Pharaoh would not respond to Moses' request to let the Israelites go, so He promised to demonstrate His power against the nation of Egypt (3:19-20a). His display of power and might would cause Pharaoh to let the Israelites go (3:20b) and they would also plunder the Egyptians (3:21-22). Although the Israelites had remained in bondage to Egypt for 400 years, God was about to deliver them through his servant, Moses.

Dear God, thank You for never abandoning Your people.

Exodus 4:1-31

God revealed to Moses (Exodus 3:1-9) that He would soon deliver the Israelites from their 400 year bondage to the Egyptians (Exodus 1). Although the news of deliverance was welcomed by Moses, he was fearful about God using him as the one to lead the people from Egypt to the land God had promised to give Abraham's descendants (Exodus 3:10-22; Genesis 12:1-3). Even though God guaranteed that Israel would be freed through his leadership (Exodus 3:16-22), Moses still questioned his own ability to lead (Exodus 3:11, 13). God's promise of victory did not seem to satisfy Moses' fears so he said to God, "But suppose they [Israel] will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you'" (4:1). After listening to Moses' other two objections (3:11, 13), this third objection caused God to demonstrate His supernatural power. First, He turned Moses' rod into a snake, commanded him to pick it up by the tail, and then it turned back into a rod (4:2-4). God told Moses that by performing this miraculous act it would authenticate him as God's servant and after seeing this miracle, the people would believe that God had appeared to him (4:5). The next sign involved making Moses' hand leprous and then making it whole again (4:6-7). If the people would not believe these two signs, Moses was to perform a third miracle by taking water from the river, pouring it out on the dry land, and it would turn to blood (4:8-9). These miraculous signs did not empower Moses to believe; in fact, he objects again by focusing on his speech impediment, "O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I *am* slow of speech and slow of tongue (4:10). Obviously frustrated with Moses' lack of faith, God responds by asking, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? *Have* not I, the Lord? Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say" (4:11-12). God's questions finally exposed that Moses simply wanted God to choose someone else to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage (4:13). Moses' reaction aroused God's anger against him so He compromised and told him that He would make his brother, Aaron, the spokesman (4:14-17).

After finally submitting to God's appointment as being the leader over Israel, Moses returned to Midian and told his father-in-law that he would be departing to Egypt (4:18). As Moses gathers his family, God assures him that he will be safe in his return (4:19-20). He also reminded Moses to do all the signs before Pharaoh, even though God would harden Pharaoh's heart and he would refuse to free the Israelites (4:21-23). The fact that God hardened Pharaoh's heart must be balanced with all the times that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. The reader must embrace the sovereignty of God as well as the personal responsibility of man in this instance. During Moses' journey back to Egypt, God sought to kill him because he had refused to circumcise his own son, which was a sign of God's covenant with Abraham and all his descendants (4:24; see also Genesis 17:10-14). Moses' wife, Zipporah, quickly circumcised her son and God spared him (4:25-26). Following this incident, Aaron met Moses in the wilderness and they gathered the elders of Israel together and spoke the words of God as well as demonstrated the miraculous signs given to Moses (4:27-30). "So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped" (4:31).

Dear God, give me faith in You even when I don't understand.

Exodus 5:1-23

After 400 years of slavery to Egypt (Exodus 1), Israel finally received hope of a future deliverance through God's chosen servant, Moses (Exodus 2:1-3:9). Although Moses initially objected to God's appointment of him as the deliverer of Israel (3:10-4:17), he finally submitted and began the journey to Egypt with his family (4:18-26). When they arrived in Egypt, Moses and Aaron (Moses' brother) gathered the elders of Israel and told them that God had "...visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction..." (Exodus 4:29-31). The Israelites rejoiced and worshiped at the news of God hearing their cries and sending help (Exodus 2:23-25). The time had finally come for Moses and Aaron to approach Pharaoh and ask for the release of the children of Israel (5:1); however, their request was met with opposition from Pharaoh who said, "Who *is* the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go" (5:2). Moses and Aaron kindly responded saying, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword" (5:3). Pharaoh became angry at the words of the two men and accused them of attempting to reduce the number of hours the Israelites worked (5:4-5); furthermore, Pharaoh increased their amount of work (5:6-9). The Israelites could not keep up with the increased daily workload/quota imposed by Pharaoh and the officers of the children of Israel were beaten as punishment (5:10-14). The officers of Israel pleaded before Pharaoh for fair treatment, but he accused them of being lazy and demanded that they keep up their daily quota (5:15-19).

As the officers of Israel left the presence of Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron and said to them, " Let the Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us" (5:20-21). The reaction of the officers of the children of Israel discouraged Moses. Even though he knew Pharaoh would refuse to free Israel from bondage (4:21), Moses did not realize that the Israelites would experience greater bondage and persecution as a result of his interaction with Pharaoh. All hope seemed to be lost for Israel. Their belief (4:31) had now turned to anger and hopelessness. Moses did not know what to do so he poured out his heart to God saying, "Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why *is* it You have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all" (5:22-23). The opposition Moses was facing was a test of his faith. Did he believe God would keep His promise to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage (3:7-10)?

Dear God, may I have faith in Your promises even when the fulfillment seems distant.

Exodus 6:1-7:13

God's promise to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 2:23-25; 3:7-9) seemed unlikely considering the opposition Moses had already experienced from the king of Egypt (Exodus 5). Moses' first encounter with Pharaoh resulted in an increased workload for the Israelites (Exodus 5:1-19) and they blamed Moses and Aaron for their plight (Exodus 5:20-21). In a moment of desperation Moses cried out to God saying, "Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why *is* it You have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all" (5:22-23). Moses' questions evoked a response from the Lord who said, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land" (6:1). God was aware of the opposition Moses was experiencing, but He guaranteed him that Israel would be delivered. To support His claim, God reminded Moses about the covenant He had made with the patriarchs regarding their inheritance of the land of Canaan, which meant that the Israelites would soon be released from Egyptian bondage (6:2-5). After reminding Moses of His everlasting covenant, God commanded him to also remind the children of Israel that He would keep His promise and personally be involved in bringing them safely to Canaan (6:6-8); however, when Moses stood before the Israelites and told them the words of the Lord "...they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage" (6:9). The Lord then told Moses to approach Pharaoh again to ask for the release of the Israelites, but Moses objected saying, "The children of Israel have not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me, for I *am* of uncircumcised lips?" (6:10-12). God seemed to ignore Moses' fears and gave him a stern command to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt (6:13). Following the interaction between Moses and the Lord, there is a slight break in the narrative as Moses provides the genealogy record of his family as well as the family of Aaron (6:14-25). This information is provided in order to confirm the identity of these two men, Moses and Aaron, as the ones appointed by God to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt (6:26-27).

The narrative resumes with God repeating Moses' mission to confront Pharaoh and ask for the release of the Israelites (6:28-7:2). Although Pharaoh would not heed the voice of Moses, God promised to send great judgments upon Egypt for Pharaoh's refusal to listen (7:3-4). God told Moses that through these judgments "...the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them" (7:5). Moses and Aaron obeyed the voice of the Lord and spoke to Pharaoh (7:6-7) and to authenticate their message Aaron threw down his rod before Pharaoh and it became a serpent (7:8-10); however, Pharaoh's magicians replicated this sign, which was obviously an act of Satan (7:11-12a). Even though the magicians of Egypt had mimicked the sign, "Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods" which demonstrated God's superior power (7:12b). Upon seeing these events take place, "Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said" (7:13). The fierce battle between Moses and Pharaoh had begun, but God had already guaranteed the victory and Moses would just need to follow God's instructions.

Dear God, keep me faithful when all hope seems lost.

Exodus 7:14-10:29

God had called out Moses as the leader (Exodus 3:1-4:17) who would deliver the Israelites from their nearly 400 years of Egyptian bondage (Exodus 1-2). So far, Moses' confrontations with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, had not resulted in his freeing the children of Israel; in fact, Moses' requests had caused Israel to fall into a more intense slavery and they blamed it on him (Exodus 4:18-6:13). Moses was desperate for God to intervene so at the appointed time God unleashed a series of plagues (judgments) upon Pharaoh and Egypt (7:14-12:30). Nine of the plagues would only cause Pharaoh's heart to grow harder (7:14-10:29), but the final plague (11:1-30) would get his attention and result in Israel's exodus from Egypt (12:31-51). Each of these plagues not only put God's power on display, but also evidenced His superiority over the Egyptian gods who were connected to many of these natural elements. It is quite possible that these plagues occurred over the course of nine months. The following is a brief summary of the first nine plagues:

1. **Nile River turns to blood (7:14-25)** - The Nile River was the main source of water and its' contamination would have caused widespread thirst and damage to the crops throughout the land. Pharaoh ignored the plague and hardened his heart before Moses (7:22-23).
2. **Frogs covered Egypt (8:1-15)** - Pharaoh's refusal to let the children of Israel go free resulted in frogs covering the land which would have caused unsanitary living conditions (8:1-7). Pharaoh called for Moses to stop this plague and promised to let Israel go, but when the judgment had ceased he hardened his heart again (8:8-15).
3. **Lice/Gnats covered Egypt (8:16-19)** - This severe plague resulted in extreme annoyance and inconvenience. Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let Israel go (8:19).
4. **Swarms of Flies (8:20-32)** - These flies caused corruption of the land (8:24) and Pharaoh told Moses that he would allow the Israelites go if they stayed nearby (8:25-28); however, Pharaoh ended up hardening his heart and not allowing the children of Israel go free (8:32)
5. **Livestock diseased/dead (9:1-12)** - All types of Egyptian livestock got sick then died, which affected their food supply, farming ability, transportation and worship. Pharaoh still hardened his heart and refused to let Israel go (9:7).
6. **Boils affect Egyptians/animals (9:8-12)** - This is the first judgment involving human health and it caused severe pain for the Egyptians, but Pharaoh hardened his heart against Israel once more and would not free them (9:12).
7. **Hail mingled with Fire (9:13-35)** - This lightening from heaven delivered fireballs causing widespread destruction of crops and some livestock, terrible physical pain for people, and destruction of property. Pharaoh calls for Moses telling him that he had sinned (9:27), but his "confession" is short lived and he hardens his heart and will not free Israel (9:34-35).
8. **Locusts cover Egypt (10:1-20)** - Right before this plague strikes, Pharaoh agrees to let them go, but when he summons Moses, he gets angry, and then drives him out of the palace (10:8-11). God unleashes this horribly destructive plague so that no vegetation remained in Egypt (10:15). The LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart (10:20).
9. **Darkness across the land (10:21-29)** - This claustrophobic darkness lasted three days before Pharaoh summoned Moses. Pharaoh committed to allow the men, women, and children leave Egypt, but he would not allow them to take their livestock with them (10:24). The LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart and Pharaoh commands Moses to never come before him again (10:27-28).

Nine judgments were sent to get Pharaoh's attention, but each time he hardened his heart. Although the first nine plagues did not cause Pharaoh to allow the children of Israel to go free, the tenth and final judgment would finally break him.

Dear God, help me to see that nothing good comes when I harden my heart against You.

Exodus 11:1-10

God had unleashed nine plagues (Exodus 7:14-10:29) on Pharaoh and Egypt as judgments for their failure to release the Israelites, God's people, from nearly 400 years of bondage (Exodus 1). God had sent Moses (Exodus 2-4) as His representative to request that Pharaoh, king of Egypt, let the nation of Israel go free; however, Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to obey the voice of Moses (Exodus 5-10). The nine plagues, although annoying and crippling, only resulted in more anger and resentment toward Moses and Israel, but the next plague would finally get Pharaoh's attention. It is likely that nine months had passed since the first plague struck Egypt and it may have seemed as if Israel would remain in bondage to Egypt, but then God announced that He would "...bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt," which would cause Pharaoh to let Israel go free (11:1). In fact, God told Moses that the Israelites should be ready to ask for silver and gold from their Egyptian neighbors in anticipation of their release (11:2; see also Exodus 3:22); furthermore, it appears that the plagues had made a tremendous impact on the Egyptian citizens because they greatly esteemed Moses for his leadership over Israel (11:3).

Moses then spoke the words of the Lord concerning the final plague which would befall Egypt, "About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who *is* behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals. Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it *before*, nor shall be like it again" (11:4-6). The death of the firstborn in every Egyptian home would result in great sorrow and serve as the judgment which would finally get Pharaoh's attention. There was no need for the Israelites to fear this plague because God promised that all in Israel would be preserved so "...that you [Israel] may know that the Lord does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel" (11:7). In contrast, the Egyptian officials would come before Moses saying, "Please leave! Hurry! And take all your followers with you" (11:8, NLT). They would be in great fear of what may happen if the Israelites were not released. Before the last plague descended on Egypt, Moses summarized what had occurred up to this point, "So Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land" (11:8-10).

Dear God, thank You for protecting Your people and guarding them from their enemies.

Exodus 12:1-28

Nine plagues (Exodus 7:14-10:29) had already been sent by God upon Pharaoh and Egypt for their refusal to let God's people go from bondage (Exodus 1). Nearly 400 years of intense slavery finally caused God to act through Moses (Exodus 2-4), whom He designated as the one who would lead the people out of Egypt and to the Promised Land. Although Moses' initial encounter with Pharaoh did not result in Israel's freedom (Exodus 5-6), God had promised to free Israel from Egypt by sending a series of extreme judgments (Exodus 7:14-10:29). These nine plagues resulted in Pharaoh hardening his heart against Moses and Israel, but God told Moses that the tenth judgment would cause Pharaoh to free Israel from slavery (Exodus 11). In this final plague, every firstborn of the Egyptians would be put to death (Exodus 11:5) and bring great anguish upon the families of Egypt (Exodus 11:6). In preparation for this final plague, "...the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt" and instituted what would become known as the Passover, which would take place yearly in the month of Abib (March/April) and serve as the beginning of Israel's religious calendar (12:1-2). On the tenth day of Abib (12:3a), the Israelites were to take a male lamb without blemish (12:3b-5), kill it on the fourteenth day (12:6), spread the blood on the two doorposts of their houses (12:7), and then eat the lamb (12:8-11). The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the Lord" (12:12). How would the Israelites be spared from this judgment? The Lord revealed to Moses and Aaron that, "...the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt" (12:13). Therefore, the death of the spotless lamb and the shed blood on the Israelites' house would cause the Lord to "pass over" that home and provide divine protection for the firstborn. As the shed blood of the lamb allowed the firstborn to escape death, the shed blood of Jesus Christ would allow those who believe in Him to escape death. Jesus Christ would become the Passover Lamb for those who believed in His death for their sin. Paul would write in Romans 5:9, "Much more then, having now been justified by His [Jesus'] blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." This Passover Day was to be celebrated each year and the instructions for observing it were given to the people (12:14-20) and repeated to the Israelite elders (12:21-28). These special instructions in observing the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread would ensure that Israel would never forget that the Lord had brought them out of the land of Egypt.

Dear God, I am grateful for Jesus Christ who became my Passover Lamb and spared me from death.

Exodus 12:29-51

After nearly 400 years of slavery to Egypt (Exodus 1), God promised Moses that this tenth plague would cause Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to let the children of Israel go free (Exodus 11). In preparation for the final judgment on Egypt, God instituted the Passover so that the firstborn of every Israelite family would be spared (Exodus 12:1-28). The Passover established by God simply commanded the Israelites to kill a spotless lamb and spread the blood over the doorposts of their house (Exodus 12:1-7). Later in the evening, God would "pass over" Egypt and put to death the firstborn in any home where the blood was not found (Exodus 12:12-13). The Passover and feast of unleavened bread (Exodus 12:14-20) would then be celebrated yearly as a remembrance of God bringing Israel out of Egypt.

Nine months had passed since the first plague was unleashed on Egypt and God had prepared the Israelites for the tenth and final plague. "And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who *was* in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock. So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for *there was* not a house where *there was* not one dead" (12:29-30). Fearing that more people would die, Pharaoh and the Egyptians commanded Moses and Aaron to take all the Israelites and leave Egypt quickly (12:31-33). The Israelites gathered all their belongings as well as the silver and gold they had collected from the Egyptians (12:34-36; see also Exodus 11:1-3) and "...journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children" (12:37). Joining the Israelites on their exodus from Egypt was a "mixed multitude," which was a host of people from other races and maybe even some Egyptians who desired to be identified with Israel (12:38).

The four hundred and thirty years of bondage to Egypt was finally over and the Israelites departed (12:39-41). Abraham had revealed that his descendants would remain in bondage in a land that was not their own (Genesis 15:13), but now these years of hard slavery were past and God had judged that nation. Moses then writes the following words concerning Israel's exodus from Egypt and their celebration of the first Passover, "It *is* a night of solemn observance to the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This *is* that night of the Lord, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations" (12:42). Moses also provides some additional rules for future celebrations of the Passover, especially concerning the participation of foreigners (12:43-49). "Thus all the children of Israel did; as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. And it came to pass, on that very same day, that the Lord brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies" (12:50-51).

Dear God, when I am in bondage, I will wait for Your deliverance.

Exodus 13:1-22

After the tenth and final plague (Exodus 11:1-10) was unleashed on Pharaoh and all of Egypt, the king of Egypt finally commanded the children of Israel to leave Egypt and depart into the wilderness (Exodus 12:31-42). The Israelites' 430 year bondage (Exodus 12:40-41) to Egypt had finally concluded (Exodus 12:51) when God caused the firstborn in every Egyptian home to be put to death (Exodus 12:29-30); however, He spared the firstborn in every Israelite family through their careful observation of the Passover (Exodus 12:1-28). The Passover and feast of unleavened bread (13:3-10) celebrated God delivering Israel from bondage and He commanded that it be observed yearly as a reminder to all generations of what He had accomplished (Exodus 12:14-20). The Lord also spoke to Moses saying, "Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and beast; it is Mine" (13:1-2). Considering that the Israelite's firstborn children had been protected from the tenth plague, God set them aside as special unto Him. Moses provided further instruction concerning the law of the firstborn in Exodus 13:11-16 and declared that once the Israelites inhabited the Promised Land, every male firstborn of man and beast was to be set apart to the Lord (13:11-12). Each firstborn (male) human being was to be redeemed or bought back at a price and every firstborn animal was to be sacrificed unless it was a donkey, since they were unclean animals (13:13). In this case, a lamb was to be redeemed for a donkey. When the firstborn males saw an animal being sacrificed in his place, the father was to tell his son all the details concerning Israel's deliverance out of Egypt by the powerful hand of God (13:14-16).

Not only was the consecration of the firstborn a reminder of God delivering Israel from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 13:1-2, 11-16), but also Israel's celebration of the seven-day feast of unleavened bread. Moses provided the details concerning this feast and how it was to be a reminder of Israel's exodus from Egypt to all generations (13:3, 8-10). Much like the consecration of the firstborn, this feast was to be celebrated annually when the Israelites inhabited the Promised Land (13:5). For seven days in the month of Abib (13:4) they would eat unleavened bread and on the seventh day there was to be a feast to the Lord (13:6-7).

"Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them *by* way of the land of the Philistines, although that *was* near; for God said, 'Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt.' So God led the people around *by* way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt" (13:17-18). Moses also carried the bones of Joseph with him as had been sworn and was an indication of Joseph's faith that Israel would inherit the land of Canaan one day (13:19; see Genesis 50:24-26). Israel then journeyed to the edge of the wilderness and camped at Etham (13:20). "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night *from* before the people" (13:21-22). By this supernatural occurrence, Israel could look up at any time and see God personally leading them through the wilderness.

Dear God, help me to look back and remember the times You have delivered me and may those times of past deliverance give me faith of future deliverance.

Exodus 14:1-31

Four hundred thirty years had passed since Israel had become enslaved to the nation of Egypt (Exodus 12:40-41), but now they had been released from bondage through God sending a series of ten judgments (Exodus 7:14-12:30) upon Pharaoh and Egypt. The final plague, death of the firstborn (Exodus 11:1-10), finally got Pharaoh's attention and caused him to send the Israelites away into the wilderness (Exodus 13:29-51). With over two million people now comprising the nation of Israel, Moses and Aaron led them out of Egypt, but it was God who supernaturally led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:20-22). After the children of Israel had traveled a few days outside of Egypt and encamped in Etham (Exodus 13:20), God commanded Moses to turn the people around and camp at Pi Hahiroth, which made Pharaoh think that they were lost in the wilderness (14:1-3). God then revealed to Moses that He would harden the heart of Pharaoh, who would attempt to enslave the Israelites once again; however, God revealed that this would allow Him another opportunity to "...gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I *am* the Lord" (14:4).

As God had said, Pharaoh's heart as well as the hearts of the Egyptians were hardened against the Israelites, so Pharaoh gathered his armies and they "...overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon" (14:5-9). When the Israelites saw that the Egyptians had pursued them into the wilderness, they were very afraid and cried out to God (14:10). In fear, the Israelites accused Moses of dragging them into the wilderness to be killed by the Egyptians (14:11); furthermore, they said to him, "*Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness*" (14:12). Apparently, the Israelites had forgotten the severe bondage they had experienced over the last 430 years. Moses then stood before the people and said, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace" (14:13-14). The lack of faith in Moses' early calling (Exodus 3-4) had been replaced with a great faith in God's ability to deliver Israel through him. God then revealed to Moses that Israel was to move forward to the Red Sea and that he was to lift up his rod over the sea and it would divide allowing the Israelites to cross on dry land (14:15-16). Although the Egyptians would follow Israel into the divided sea, God promised that he would gain honor over Pharaoh and the Egyptians (14:17-18). When the right time had come, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and the waters divided, which permitted the Israelites to cross over on dry ground (14:19-22). As God had said, the Egyptians pursued the Israelites (14:23), but when all of Israel arrived on the other side God caused the sea walls to come crashing down on all of the Egyptians (14:24-29). Moses writes the following words concerning this miraculous event, "So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses" (14:30-31). Once again, God had proven Himself to be faithful.

Dear God, thank You for being faithful to Your people even when we doubt.

Exodus 15:1-27

Israel's 430 years of bondage to Egypt was finally over and they miraculously escaped after God sent 10 plagues upon Pharaoh and all of Egypt (Exodus 7:14-12:30). The tenth judgment (Exodus 11:1-10), death of the firstborn, resulted in Pharaoh demanding that the Israelites leave, so they departed into the wilderness (Exodus 12:31-51). Their departure was soon met with another obstacle as Pharaoh decided to pursue the children of Israel; however, God supernaturally parted the Red Sea and Israel walked across on dry ground (Exodus 14:1-31). Egypt's pursuit ended in destruction as God caused the walls of water in the Red Sea to crash down on the Egyptian armies. Following this miraculous event, "...the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses" (Exodus 14:31). In response to God giving Israel protection and victory over Egypt, Moses and the children of Israel sang a song to the Lord. Moses records the words to this song in Exodus 15:1-18. The song includes phrases such as, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (15:11). Throughout this song Israel declared their confidence in the Lord to protect them as well as His ability to bring them into the land of Canaan which had been promised to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3, 7) 700 years before their exodus from Egypt (15:16-17). Miriam, sister of Aaron, then "...took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them: 'Sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!'" (15:20-21).

After crossing the Red Sea Moses led the people into the wilderness of Shur, but when their three day journey left them without water the people complained against Moses (15:22-24). Israel's faith in God soon turned to doubt. If the Lord could deliver them from their enemies and evidence power over nature, could He not also provide them with water for their journey? Upon hearing their complaints, Moses cried out to the Lord and He showed him a tree which he cast into the bitter waters at Marah and they were made sweet (15:25). This incident was a test of faith for Israel to see if they would trust the Lord at all times, but they miserably failed even though He had already brought them through so much. The Lord then spoke to Israel and gave them a simple principle to live by, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I *am* the Lord who heals you" (15:26). Simply put, if Israel obeyed God they would experience His blessing and protection, but if they disobeyed God's commands they would experience God's judgment. Although the promise of protection from disease was limited to Israel, the principle is relevant for all generations.

Dear God, may Your past faithfulness give me faith for present fears.

Exodus 16:1-36

Moses led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage as God had promised (Exodus 3:10). After 430 years of slavery to Egypt (Exodus 12:40-41), approximately two million Israelites departed and God led the people by the way of the Red Sea (Exodus 13:18); however, the Red Sea became an obstacle to them when Pharaoh decided to pursue them (Exodus 14:8-10). God miraculously delivered the nation of Israel from the pursuing Egyptians when He parted the Red Sea and allowed them to cross over on dry ground (Exodus 14:21-25). After the last Israelite made it across, God caused the walls of water to crash over the Egyptian armies and they were destroyed (Exodus 14:26-28). The Israelites "...feared the Lord and believed the Lord and His servant Moses" (Exodus 14:31). They expressed their praise to God for His deliverance through song (Exodus 15:1-21), but their celebration soon turned to complaining when their three day journey into the wilderness left them without water (Exodus 15:22-24). God supernaturally provided water for the Israelites, but He wanted them to trust Him with all of their needs (Exodus 15:25-27).

Thirty days later the Israelites had traveled to the Wilderness of Sin, but a lack of food caused them to complain again saying, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat *and* when we ate bread to the full! For you [Moses] have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (16:1-3). In response to Israel's complaints, the Lord said, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily" (16:4-5). Moses and Aaron revealed to Israel that God would give them meat (quail) in the evening and manna (Exodus 16:31) in the morning to provide for their needs (16:6-12). God did provide food for the Israelites as He had promised (16:13-15), but Moses detailed further instructions concerning the gathering of the manna (16:16-36). Every man was commanded to gather a specified amount, one omer (about two quarts), of bread (manna) for each person in his home, but some Israelites took more and some less (16:16-17). Those who gathered more than an omer had nothing left over and those who gathered less did not lack anything (16:18). Moses also commanded that no one leave extra in their home overnight, but a few Israelites who lacked faith that God could daily provide kept some until morning (16:19). The leftover bread "...bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them" (16:20). Since the seventh day of the week was the Sabbath, the Lord commanded them to gather twice as much on the sixth day so they would not have to gather the following day (16:22-26); however, some of the Israelites went out to gather on the seventh day, which caused God to become angry with Moses concerning the people's disobedience (16:27-30). God had given these instructions so that the Israelites would learn to trust Him *daily* for their needs. In order to commemorate God's provision of bread for Israel in the wilderness, He commanded Moses to fill a pot with an omer of manna and keep it in the ark of the covenant so that future generations would know of God's goodness to His people (16:32-34). "And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan" (16:35).

Dear God, help me to trust in You for my daily needs.

Exodus 17:1-16

Israel's celebration (Exodus 15) regarding their exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12:29-51) was halted as they entered into the wilderness (Exodus 13:17-21) where they encountered a pursuing Egyptian army (Exodus 14), lack of water (Exodus 15:22-27), and lack of food (Exodus 16). God overcame each obstacle, but the Israelites were struggling to trust in Him for protection and provision. Even though God had already provided water for the children of Israel once before (Exodus 15:22-27), God gave them another chance to trust His daily provision in the wilderness. Israel left their camp in the Wilderness of Sin and journeyed to Rephidim, "...but there was no water for the people to drink" (17:1). Rather than asking God to provide for their needs, they fought against Moses saying, "Give us water, that we may drink" (17:2a). Moses quickly responded to their complaints by asking, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?" (17:2b). Moses' words warned the people against evoking God's anger for their obvious lack of faith; however, they did not seem to care about his warning because they continued to complain saying, "Why *is* it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" (17:3). The continued complaints of the Israelites caused Moses to cry out to the Lord saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me" (17:4). God heard the prayer of Moses and told him to go with his staff and strike the rock, which would result in water coming out of it so that the people could drink (17:5-6). Moses obeyed God's instructions and water miraculously flowed from the rock as God had promised. Moses called the place Massah and Meribah, meaning "testing" and "contending" (17:7). Israel was still not convinced that God would be faithful to them.

While Israel was encamped in Rephidim, Amalek (leader of the Amalekites) came to battle with them so Moses told Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand" (17:8-9). Joshua obeyed Moses and an army of Israel went out to fight against Amalek; furthermore, Moses took Aaron and Hur to the top of the hill to watch the battle (17:10). "And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed" (17:11). The outcome of this battle was being controlled by Moses lifting up the staff, which came to signify the personal presence of God. When Moses' hands became tired from lifting up the staff, Aaron and Hur "...took a stone and put *it* under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun" (17:12). This is a wonderful picture of the importance of supporting one another during times of testing. With the help of Aaron and Hur, Moses was able to keep the rod of God lifted up and the Israelites defeated the Amalekites (17:13). God wanted Joshua to remember this victory so He commanded that Moses write that Amalek would be remembered no more (17:14). Also in celebration of the victory, Moses built an altar and named it "The Lord is My Banner" (17:15-16). God was evidencing His faithfulness to Israel, but they would need to learn to trust Him.

Dear God, may my trust always be in You.

Exodus 18:1-27

When Israel escaped their 430 year bondage from Egypt (Exodus 12:29-51) the population had probably grown to over two million people; in fact, their explosive growth (Exodus 1) is one of the major reasons Pharaoh hated the Israelites. Following their exodus from Egypt, the nation of Israel met several obstacles (lack of water and lack of food) which tested their faith in God who had delivered them out of bondage, but thus far they had failed each testing. God was attempting to prove that He would provide for them and protect them through every circumstance, but their fears were greater than their faith. God proved Himself to Israel once again when He provided water in Rephidim (Exodus 17:1-7) and also gave them a miraculous victory over the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16).

When Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, heard of Israel's escape from Egypt and what God had done for them, he came to talk with Moses who was encamped at Mount Sinai (18:1-7). "And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way, and *how* the Lord had delivered them (18:8). When Jethro heard the news, he rejoiced and gave praise to God for His faithfulness to the people of Israel (18:9-12). The next day Moses took up his regular duties judging the matters of the people from morning until evening (18:13), but when Jethro observed Moses' workload he asked, "What *is* this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" (18:14). Moses responded saying, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws" (18:15-16). Moses was simply helping people discern between right and wrong, which was a necessary role, but the population of Israel was too great for one man to handle all the problems of the nation. Jethro told Moses, "The thing that you do *is* not good. Both you and these people who *are* with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing *is* too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself (18:17-18). Jethro then provided Moses with two pieces of advice. First, he told Moses to publicly teach the people God's laws so that they would know how to obey Him on their own (18:19-20). Secondly, Jethro advised Moses to select able men who fear God and place them over groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens (18:21). Instead of Moses judging every incident, these men would judge small matters and leave only the major circumstances to Moses (18:22). Teaching the people and delegating responsibility to other men would take some of the burden off of Moses. Jethro told Moses that if he obeyed these two things he would be able to endure (18:23). Moses obeyed the voice of his father-in-law in all that he had said (18:24-27). The advice Jethro gave to Moses thousands of years ago is still relevant to leaders in this generation. Those who are responsible for overseeing others must teach them the right ways and also empower others to lead.

Dear God, may I teach and empower others to do what is right.

Exodus 19:1-25

Three months after their exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12:29-51) the nation of Israel camped in the Wilderness of Sinai before the mountain (19:1-2). The first few months of their journey had been characterized by a lack of faith in God (Exodus 15:22-17:7). They complained against God for lack of water and lack of food, but He provided for them in each instance. The Israelites needed to learn to rely on God for protection and provision. During Israel's encampment at Sinai, the Lord called to Moses from the mountain and told him to speak the following words to the Israelites, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (19:3-6). God's past faithfulness in delivering Israel from Egypt was to be a reminder that He deeply cared for them and desired for Israel to become a special nation to Him. This special designation was to be characterized by Israel's obedience to the words of God. When Moses communicated these words to the people, they answered saying, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do" (19:7-8). Moses reported Israel's positive response to the Lord who told him that He would appear to him in a thick cloud so "...that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever" (19:9). God's appearance to Moses in a cloud would ensure that the people knew that the words spoken were from God and not from Moses.

The event which was to follow was such an important one that God commanded Moses to spend the next two days preparing Israel's hearts as well as their outward appearance for God's arrival in their midst (19:10). On the third day, God promised to come down from the mountain "in the sight of all the people" (19:11). Although God would appear to the people, He demanded that Moses set boundaries for the people so they would not approach Him in an improper manner (19:12). Anyone crossing the set boundaries would be put to death (19:12-13). Moses spoke these words of the Lord to the Israelites and prepared them for God's appearance on the mountain (19:14-15). "Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain" (19:16-17). Moses goes on to explain that the entire mountain was covered by smoke because the Lord's descent was by fire (19:18). After these happenings, Moses spoke to the Lord who then called him to the top of the mountain and he went up (19:19-20). The Lord warned Moses that the people should not gaze at Him or they would perish (19:21); furthermore, the Lord added that the approaching priests, probably the firstborn of each home, should consecrate themselves "...lest the Lord break out against them" (19:22). God then commanded Moses to descend the mountain and bring Aaron back up with him to receive the words of God (19:23-25). God's detailed instructions concerning this encounter instilled in the Israelites that God expected them to approach Him with fear and reverence. There was an obvious separation of the human and the divine, but God willingly communicated with Moses and the people, which reveals a holy but personal God.

Dear God, thank You for communicating with Your people.

Exodus 20:1-21

Israel had escaped Egyptian bondage (Exodus 12:29-51) by the powerful hand of the Lord and He had brought them into the wilderness (Exodus 14-18); however, they faced many obstacles which exposed their lack of faith in God. While the Israelites were encamped at Mount Sinai, Moses prepared the people for an encounter with God (Exodus 19), who had promised that Israel would become a holy nation and a special treasure to Him (Exodus 19:5-6). In Exodus 20 one of the biggest events in history takes place - the giving of the Law. The Law was not given so that Israel could inherit righteousness through obeying it, but rather expose their sinfulness before a holy God (see Romans 3:20). Righteousness has always come by faith in God (Ephesians 2:8-9). Although the Law exposed a person's sin, God gave the Law in order to teach the nation of Israel how to love God and love others. The Law was made up of three parts: the Ten Commandments/Decalogue (20:1-21), civil/religious ordinances (20:22-24:11), and ceremonial regulations (24:12-31:18).

The first part of the Law, the Ten Commandments, are direct commands given by God to the people. Keeping these commands would result in true worship of God and meaningful relationships with others. God gave the following commands to the Israelites:

First Commandment: No other gods before God (Exodus 20:3) - Israel was to worship the one, true God and reject any other foreign gods.

Second Commandment: No idols (Exodus 20:4-6) - Israel was not to worship idols. False worship or idol worship would result in generations to follow suffering for the sins of their fathers.

Third Commandment: Do not take God's name in vain (Exodus 20:7) - The name of God was to be honored and respected; therefore, His name must never be used in a way that would bring His character or deeds into question.

Fourth Commandment: Keep the Sabbath day holy (Exodus 20:8-11) - The seventh day of the week would be reserved for rest and worship. This is the only commandment not repeated in the New Testament (see Colossians 2:16-17).

Fifth Commandment: Honor mother and father (Exodus 20:12) - Children were to honor and obey their parents. Rebellious disobedience would not be tolerated in Israel and would be punished severely (see Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

Sixth Commandment: Do not murder (Exodus 20:13) - Taking the life of another was not acceptable.

Seventh Commandment: Do not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14) - This command protected a marriage relationship and helped it remain committed.

Eighth Commandment: Do not steal (Exodus 20:15) - Protecting personal property is important to any society and promotes respect for the things of others.

Ninth Commandment: Do not lie (Exodus 20:16) - Keeping this commandment protects the well-being of individuals as well as a nation. Lying causes unnecessary hurt and confusion.

Tenth Commandment: Do not covet (Exodus 20:17) - Longing to have what is not yours is a sin. A person must be content.

After hearing these commandments, "...the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, 'You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die'" (20:18-19). Moses told the people not to fear because God was only testing them and wanted their reverence of Him to turn into obedience (20:20-21). God's commandments were not given to restrict His people, but to provide them a life filled with blessing and satisfaction.

Dear God, help me to love and obey Your commandments.

Exodus 20:22-21:36

God had miraculously delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 12:29-51) and promised to bring them into the land of Canaan; however, their initial exodus from Egypt tested their faith in God and they failed miserably (Exodus 16-17). Although God was disappointed in their lack of trust in Him, He gently tried to strengthen their confidence in Him by protecting and providing for them on their journey. Three months after leaving Egypt Israel encamped at Mount Sinai and God commanded Moses to prepare the people for an encounter with Him (Exodus 19). God's words to the people established what is known as the Mosaic Law and can be divided into three parts: the Ten Commandments/Decalogue (20:1-21), civil/religious ordinances (20:22-24:11), and ceremonial regulations (24:12-31:18). The first part of the Law, the Ten Commandments, are direct commands given by God to the people. Keeping these commands would result in true worship of God and meaningful relationships with others.

In the second part of the Law God established the civil and religious ordinances (Exodus 20:22-24:11). It is often referred to as the Book of Covenants and these words expand on the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 24:7). Here are the Laws described in Exodus 20:22-21:36: laws regarding worship (20:22-26), laws regarding the treatment of servants (21:1-11), laws regarding capital punishment (21:12-17), laws regarding violence (21:18-27), and laws regarding animal control (21:28-36).

The laws regarding worship (20:22-26). Referencing the first and second commandments (20:2-6), God commanded Israel not to make any idols (including silver and gold images) to dwell with Him (20:23). Although an altar would be used in worshiping God, He commanded that a stone or earthen altar not be adorned or shaped to represent anything else (20:24-25). The altar used in worship was also prohibited from using steps so that the priests would not be exposed in any way (20:26). **The laws regarding the treatment of servants (21:1-11).** Servants were to be released after serving their master for six years (21:1-2) and the slave was permitted to choose if he wanted to stay or go (21:11). **The laws regarding capital punishment (21:12-17).** Punishment by death was prescribed when a person committed premeditated murder (21:12, 14), exhibited physical violence toward parents (21:15), kidnapped (21:16), or verbally abused his parents (21:17). If a person accidentally killed another person, they would not be put to death but sent away to a city of refuge (21:13). **The laws regarding violence (21:18-27).** An injured person involved in a physical fight should be compensated accordingly by the one who caused the injury (21:18-19). Slaves were not to be treated with cruelty and any master who caused the death of a slave would be punished; however, he would probably not be punished by death since slaves were considered property (21:20-21). If a physical fight between two men caused a nearby woman to have a premature birth, compensation was required even if no injury took place and the punishment was to fit the crime (21:22-25). A master who injured a servant causing permanent damage was commanded to let that servant go free (21:26-27). **The laws regarding animal control (21:28-36).** Since many of the Israelites owned animals, God set up laws to protect and compensate those whose animals caused death or injury through negligence.

All of these laws were not given to restrict the Israelites, but to provide a foundation for true worship of God and maintaining proper relationships with others. These laws would provide guidelines for this young nation and separate them from many of the pagan people surrounding them.

Dear God, thank You for establishing boundaries to keep Your people in a right relationship with You and others.

Exodus 22:1-31

In order to provide structure and stability for the nation of Israel, God gave them the Mosaic Law, which also taught them concerning proper worship of God and proper relationships with others. There are three parts that comprise the Law: The Ten Commandments (20:1-21), civil/religious ordinances (20:22-24:11), and ceremonial regulations (24:12-31:18). In Exodus 20:22-21:36 God gave some practical civil/religious laws such as laws regarding worship (20:22-26), laws regarding the treatment of servants (21:1-11), laws regarding capital punishment (21:12-17), laws regarding violence (21:18-27), and laws regarding animal control (21:28-36). These laws were not given to restrict the Israelites, but to help them live in accordance with God's ways which would bring blessing. In Exodus 22:1-31 God continues to expand on the details of the civil/religious laws and covers the following areas: laws regarding thieves (22:1-4), laws regarding damage to property (22:5-6), laws regarding safekeeping of property (22:7-13), laws regarding borrowing (22:14-15), laws regarding sexuality (22:16-17, 19), laws regarding idolatrous practices (22:18, 20), laws regarding treatment of the poor and needy (22:21-27), and laws regarding respect and reverence (22:28-31).

Laws regarding thieves (22:1-4). This law was an expansion of the eighth commandment. An individual caught stealing was required to repay more than he had stolen (22:1). Thieves who stole during the night were subject to the retaliation of the homeowner and if the thief was killed the owner would not be held responsible; however, if the thief was killed during the day, the owner would be guilty of murder (22:2-3). The difference between night and day thievery concerned the ability of the homeowner to see what was happening. **Laws regarding damage to property (22:5-6).** If a fire or animal destroyed another man's field, the responsible individual was required to make restitution. **Laws regarding safekeeping of property (22:7-13).** In this culture, property or possessions were given to others for safekeeping and the loss of any entrusted items were to be restored double (22:7-9) or if it was an animal the one responsible would pay for the loss (22:10-13). **Laws regarding borrowing (22:14-15).** A borrower was responsible for an item borrowed. If anything happened to the item while in his possession, he was required to pay for the loss (22:14); however, if the owner was present when the item was damaged or lost, the borrower was not required to pay (22:15). **Laws regarding sexuality (22:16-17, 19).** Any unmarried male who sleeps with a virgin is required to compensate the father for her loss of value (22:16-17). This law also prohibited bestiality (22:19). **Laws regarding idolatrous practices (22:18, 20).** A woman who practiced sorcery (occultism) was to be put to death (22:18); furthermore, anyone who worshiped other gods would be put to death (22:20). **Laws regarding treatment of the poor and needy (22:21-27).** Foreigners (22:21), widows, (22:22) and orphans (22:22) were never to be mistreated and God would punish anyone who treated them wrongly (22:21-24). The poor were not to be charged interest and any down payment (such as a garment) made should be returned to him by evening (22:25-27). **Laws regarding respect and reverence (22:28-31).** The name of God nor a ruler was to be cursed (22:28). God should also be respected by dedicating the first fruits of crops, sons, and animals (22:29-30). Israel was to abstain from eating animals killed by another animal because God considered the meat to be unclean (22:31).

God desired the people of Israel to be holy and this holiness could be accomplished when their conduct was distinct from the pagan nations surrounding them. Obedience to these regulations and laws would help Israel become a "special treasure...a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6).

Dear God, I desire to obey Your ways so help me to walk in them.

Exodus 23:1-24:11

After delivering His chosen people out of Egyptian bondage (Exodus 12:29-51), God desired His people to separate themselves from other nations in their worship and conduct. In order to guide His people, God gave Moses the Law which he communicated to the people of Israel. The Law was comprised of three parts: The Ten Commandments (20:1-21), civil/religious ordinances (20:22-24:11), and ceremonial regulations (24:12-31:18). Obedience to these regulations and laws would help Israel become a "special treasure...a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). In this passage, Moses continues giving civil and religious ordinances. The first nine verses of Exodus 23 provide a list of several miscellaneous laws such as abstaining from giving false testimony (23:1, 7), avoiding the influence of evil crowds (23:2), abstaining from favoritism (23:3), returning lost property (23:4), showing kindness to animals (23:5), allowing the poor to experience justice (23:6), accepting a bribe (23:8), and not oppressing strangers (23:9).

Following this list of various laws, God gives the people the law of Sabbaths (23:10-13) and instructions for the three annual feasts (23:14-19). The Sabbatical year was each seventh year. The Israelites were to sow and harvest the land for six years and let the land rest on the seventh year (23:10-11a). During the seventh year, the poor were allowed to eat of the fields and the leftovers from the poor were to be given to the animals (23:11b). The law of the Sabbath day was also given and it commanded the Israelites to work for six days and rest on the seventh (23:12). In the midst of this law, God reminded the people that they were not to mention the names of false gods (23:13). God gave a list of the three feasts that the nation of Israel was to celebrate: Feast of Unleavened Bread, an expression of thankfulness for Israel's exodus from Egypt (23:14-15); Feast of Harvest (also known as Feast of Weeks or Firstfruits), an offering of the firstfruits to the Lord (23:16a); and the Feast of Ingathering (also known as the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths), a giving of thanks for the final harvest of the year (23:16b).

After these laws were given God promised to send an Angel, most likely the pre-incarnate Christ, to protect and guide the people on their journey into the land of Canaan (23:20). Obedience to His voice would result in blessing and a safe arrival into the Promised Land (23:21-23). Although they would soon encounter pagan nations, they were not to bow down to any other gods or serve them (23:24). Continuance in worship of God would bring blessings such as provision of food/water (23:25a), good health (23:25b-26), and defeat of their enemies (23:27-31). When an enemy nation was defeated God commanded them not to make a "...covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For *if* you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you" (23:32-33).

The children of Israel had now received the Ten Commandments (20:1-21) and the civil/religious ordinances (20:22-24:11) from God and they would determine whether or not they would agree to it. After hearing the entire Law given by God through His servant, Moses, the people of Israel agreed to obey (24:1-3). Moses then wrote down all of the Law (24:4a), built an altar where sacrifices were offered (24:4b-6), and read the Law to the people (24:7a). The people agreed to follow the Law and the covenant was confirmed between God and Israel (24:8-11).

Dear God, may my life be characterized by obedience to Your words.

Exodus 24:12-25:40

After the Mosaic Covenant had been given by God and confirmed by the Israelites (Exodus 24:1-11), they were placed under the leadership of God and became a theocracy. The laws of God would now govern this young nation and help them maintain a proper relationship with God as well as each other. Following the giving of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-21) and the civil/religious ordinances (Exodus 20:22-24:11), Moses was called to Mount Sinai to meet with God, who would give him the laws written on tablets of stone so Moses could teach the people (24:12). Moses took Joshua with him to the mountain and left Aaron and Hur to watch over the people (24:13-14). "So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights" (24:13-18). During that forty days, God communicated to Moses that the tabernacle would become the central place of worship and all the details of its' construction are found in Exodus 25:1-31:18. The tabernacle would be constructed from the voluntary offerings of the Israelites who would be provided with a list of materials needed to build the worship center (25:1-8). The tabernacle would become the sanctuary where God would dwell with His people (25:8). God then provided Moses the details concerning the furnishings of the tabernacle (25:9): the ark of the testimony (25:10-22), the table of showbread (25:23-30), and the gold lampstand (25:31-40).

The Ark of the Testimony (25:10-22). Also known as the Ark of the Covenant, this rectangular chest was to be constructed with one piece of acacia wood and overlaid inside and out with gold (25:10-11). A ring would also be attached to each corner of the ark so it could be carried by golden poles, which were never to be taken out (25:12-15). Moses would soon place the two stone tablets with the Law written on them into the ark of the testimony (25:16, 21; see also Exodus 31:18). The chest was to be covered by a golden mercy seat (lid) with a cherub at each end whose wings stretched to cover the seat (25:17-20). The Ark of the Covenant was designed to be the place where God would meet and speak with His people (25:22). On the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1-20) the high priest would sprinkle blood on the mercy seat and the blood symbolized Israel's sin being covered. The blood of the sacrifice bridged the gap between the presence of God and the broken law of God. This blood atonement made for the sins of Israel would later take on new meaning when Jesus Christ shed His blood to atone for the sins of the world (Hebrews 9:11-15).

The Table of Showbread (25:23-30). The table of showbread was to be constructed with one piece of acacia and overlaid with gold all around (25:23-24). This table was to be carried in the same manner as the ark of the testimony (25:25-28). The dishes, pans, pitchers, and bowls were to be made of pure gold (25:29). Bread was always to be set out on this table before God (25:30). Leviticus 24:5-9 reveals that 12 loaves of bread were to be set in two piles of six and replaced on each Sabbath. The bread was referred to as the bread of presence and symbolized God's personal fellowship with His people.

The Gold Lampstand (25:31-40). This furnishing was to be placed opposite the table of showbread and looked similar to a flowering almond tree (25:31-40). The lampstand (menorah) gave light for the priests who were performing their duties in the Holy Place and symbolized Jesus Christ, the One who brought light to the world (John 1:6-9; 8:12).

Dear God, thank You for Your ever abiding presence.

Exodus 26:1-37

Moses had gone up into Mount Sinai with Joshua where they remained forty days while God provided them with two tablets of stone with the law written on them (Exodus 24:12). The Mosaic Law written on stone tablets included the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-21) and civil/religious ordinances (Exodus 20:22-24:11) which, if obeyed, would help Israel maintain a right relationship with God and others. God also gave very specific instructions regarding the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings such as the ark of the testimony (Exodus 25:10-22), the table of showbread (Exodus 25:23-30), and the gold lampstand (Exodus 25:31-40). The tabernacle would become symbolic of God's presence dwelling among the people (Exodus 25:8) and served as the center of worship for the Israelites. Although the tabernacle was portable and accompanied Israel on their journey to Canaan, God gave specific instructions to Moses concerning the construction of the tabernacle.

The contents of the tabernacle were to be surrounded by ten linen curtains woven with blue, purple, and scarlet thread with cherubim embroidered on them (26:1). Each curtain was to measure 6 feet wide and 42 feet long (26:2). Five curtains were to be joined together to make one long curtain and the other five curtains were also to be joined together to make another long curtain (26:3). When the five curtains were joined together they measured 30x42 and joined to the other set of curtains it would measure 60x42 (26:4-6). The sixty foot width covered the top of the tabernacle as well as the back making the length 45 feet and the height 15 feet. The 42 foot part of the curtain extended over the top of the tabernacle and would have come within 18 inches of the ground on either side. Over top of the linen curtains were placed eleven curtains made of goat hair in order to protect the inside from the weather (26:7-13). These curtains were three feet longer so that they would touch the ground and hide the contents of the tabernacle from outside view. These two layers were to be covered by two more layers - a layer of ram skin dyed red and a badger skin on top of the ram skin (26:14). In total there were four layers covering the tabernacle. Exodus 26:15-30 describes the construction of the tabernacle frame. The walls were not to be solid but constructed with upright frames so that the layers of curtains could be draped over it and the inner curtains could be seen from the inside. This type of construction would also allow for quick disassembly and set up along their journey. God also provided very specific instructions for forming the veil, which would separate the holy place and the Most Holy Place, where the Ark of the Covenant was housed (26:31-35). The Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies was the location where God would descend when He wanted to meet with His people. The high priest could only enter the Most Holy Place once a year on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1-20). The tabernacle was also to have an entrance point made of the same curtains as the inner, but without the embroidery (26:36-37). God had given Moses very specific instructions concerning the construction of the tabernacle and He expected them to be followed precisely (26:30). Following these instructions each time they started and stopped their journey would remind Israel that God is holy and He was to be revered. Worship of God was never to be on their own terms, but on the conditions He had commanded.

Dear God, You are holy and deserving of all my worship.

Exodus 27:1-28:43

The tabernacle would soon become the center of worship for the Israelites and the place where God would dwell among His people. Since the children of Israel were still on their journey from Egypt (Exodus 12) to the land of Canaan, the tabernacle was portable and would accompany them through their wilderness wanderings. God provided very specific instructions to Moses concerning the tabernacle and its furnishings which included the ark of the covenant (Exodus 25:10-22), the table of showbread (Exodus 25:23-30), and the golden lampstand (Exodus 25:31-40; 27:20-21). All of these items were contained inside the tabernacle (Holy Place and Holy of Holies), but God also described two furnishings which were to be placed in the outer court of the tabernacle (Exodus 27:9-19): the altar of burnt offering/bronze altar (Exodus 27:1-8) and the bronze basin (Exodus 30:17-21). The altar of burnt offering was used for animal sacrifice and the bronze basin was used by the priests to cleanse their hands and feet before performing their duties in the tabernacle. Failure to use the bronze basin would result in the death of the priest (30:20-21).

God also instructed Moses to make Aaron and his sons priests and clothe them with priestly garments which are described in Exodus 28. The priests were to wear the ephod (Exodus 28:5-14), the breastplate of judgment (Exodus 28:15-30), and other priestly garments (Exodus 28:31-43). The **ephod** was a two-piece outer garment which covered the priest's upper body and was fastened together at the shoulders by straps as well as onyx stones. The two onyx stones were to be engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel - six names on one stone and six names on the other stone in order of their birth (28:9-10). The **breastplate of judgment** was to contain twelve stones with each one engraved with the name of a tribe from Israel (28:15-30). This garment would symbolize the priest's intercession on behalf of Israel. The breastplate was folded in half and contained the Urim and the Thummim. Although the Urim and Thummim's material cannot be identified, the objects helped determine matters which needed great discernment (see Numbers 27:21; 1 Samuel 30:7-8; Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65). The other priestly garments included a robe (28:31-35), a turban (28:36-38), a tunic/sash (28:39-42). God declared that these garments "...shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they come into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy *place*, that they do not incur iniquity and die. *It shall be* a statute forever to him and his descendants after him" (28:43). These words emphasize the importance of the priestly duties before God and the people of Israel. The priests were to practice their duties with preciseness and be certain that their approach to God was reverent.

Dear God, may I always approach You with reverence and fear knowing that You are holy and worthy of my worship.

Exodus 29:1-46

The tabernacle would become the center of worship for the nation of Israel and God provided very specific instructions concerning the furnishings of the tabernacle (Exodus 24:12-25:40), construction of the tabernacle (Exodus 26:1-37), and the attire of the priests (Exodus 27:1-28:43). Moses was receiving these instructions directly from God during their 40 day encounter on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:18) and He wrote on tablets of stone the Ten Commandments (20:1-21), civil/religious ordinances (20:22-24:11), and ceremonial regulations (24:12-31:18). Obedience to these regulations and laws would help Israel become a "special treasure...a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). Since the presence of God would inhabit the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle, those who served in it were to be consecrated to the Lord. In Exodus 29 God details the ceremony for installing priests for service in the tabernacle. A young bull and two rams were to accompany a basket filled with unleavened bread, unleavened cakes, and unleavened wafers to the tabernacle courtyard where Aaron and his sons would also meet (29:1-4). Aaron was to be dressed in the priestly garments described in Exodus 28 and then anointed with oil (29:5-7). This anointing symbolized God's consecration of him for priestly service in the tabernacle. Although Aaron's sons were not to be anointed, they were dressed in priestly garments including tunics, sashes, and head coverings (29:8-9). These rituals would solidify them as the ones who possessed the right of the priesthood.

The young bull was brought to the entrance of the tabernacle where Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head which symbolized their sinfulness and the priests' identification with the animal being sacrificed in their place (29:10). The bull was then sacrificed on the altar of burnt offering (Exodus 27:1-8) and some of the blood was to be placed on the horns of the altar and in its base (29:11-12). The insides of the bull were to be burned on the altar and the remaining outer parts were to be burned outside the camp as a **sin offering** (29:13-14). Another sacrifice was then to take place with the two rams. Aaron and his sons were to lay their hands on the head of the first ram, slaughter it, and then splatter the blood on all sides of the altar (29:15-16). The ram was to be cut in pieces, washed, and then burned as a **burnt offering** to the Lord (29:17-18). The other ram would also be slaughtered, but the blood was to be placed on the right earlobe, the thumb of their right hand, and the big toe of their right foot (29:19-20). Blood and oil was to be sprinkled on Aaron and his sons and on their garments (29:21). Blood on the earlobe illustrated the hearing of God's word. Blood on the thumb illustrated doing the work of God and blood on the toe symbolized walking in the ways of God. Blood on the priests and their garments set them apart as holy in their service to God. The insides of the second ram were to be offered with the bread, cake, and wafers as a **wave offering** to the Lord (29:22-28; 31-34). The wave offering was to be waved back and forth between the priest and the altar which symbolized that the offering was being given to God. The elements waved as an offering to God were to be burned on the altar; however, the breast of the ram was to be eaten by Aaron and his sons (29:26-27).

The priestly garments for Aaron and his sons were to be passed down to future generations and be worn for seven days, which probably symbolized completeness (29:29-30). God repeats instructions for eating parts of the second ram (29:22-28) that the priests alone were permitted to eat (29:31-33). Any parts left over from the meal were to be burned because it was a holy meal (29:34). This ordination ceremony lasted seven days and the sacrifice of the young bull was to be repeated each day (29:35-36). The altar was to be purified each day following the sacrifice (29:37). Furthermore, God gives instructions to Moses concerning the daily offerings in the tabernacle (29:38-41). One lamb was to be sacrificed in the morning and one in the evening (29:42). As Israel obeyed God's commands for offerings and blood sacrifice, He would meet with them and speak with them in order to fellowship with His people (29:43-46).

Dear God, I desire to meet with You daily so that I can know and follow Your ways.

Exodus 30:1-31:18

During Moses' 40 day encounter with God on Mount Sinai, God provided him with the law and commandments so that Moses could teach the nation of Israel and lead them in obedience to God (Exodus 24:12). These tablets of stone recorded the Ten Commandments (20:1-21), civil/religious ordinances (20:22-24:11), and ceremonial regulations for the tabernacle, the center of worship for the Israelites (24:12-31:18). The ceremonial regulations included instructions concerning the tabernacle (Exodus 25-27), instructions concerning the priesthood (Exodus 28-29), and instructions concerning priestly service in the tabernacle (Exodus 30-31). Although some of the tabernacle furnishings were already discussed in Exodus 25:23-40, God provided the details of the **altar of incense** in Exodus 30:1-10. The discussion of the altar of incense here highlights the rituals surrounding this item in the tabernacle. The altar of incense was to be carefully constructed (30:1-5) and placed before the veil, which was before the Ark of the Covenant where God would meet with the priest (30:6). Aaron was commanded to burn incense on the altar twice a day, morning and evening (30:7-8). The **recipe for making the incense** was given in Exodus 30:34-38 (30:9). Once a year Aaron was to cleanse the altar with the blood from an atonement offering (30:10).

God also gave Moses instructions regarding **money for the tabernacle** often referred to as **ransom money** (30:11-16). Each time a census was taken, every male 20 years or older was to pay a tax which would help maintain the tabernacle. This offering would protect them from any plagues (30:12) and serve as an atonement for sin (30:16). Details are given for the use of the **bronze basin** (30:17-21) which stood between the tabernacle and the altar. This basin or washbasin was to be used by the priests to cleanse their hands and feet prior to performing the priestly duties. Failure to cleanse themselves would result in death (30:20-21). God then provides the recipe for making the **holy anointing oil** (30:22-25) used to purify the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the priests (30:26-30). After providing all of these instructions concerning the construction and furnishings of the tabernacle, God commanded Moses to enlist two men (Bezalel and Aholiab) to construct everything He had described (31:1-11). These two men were described as "gifted artisans" who would be able to construct everything according to God's design (31:6). After assigning these two men to constructing the tabernacle, God reminded Moses about the Sabbath law (31:12-17). This reminder was placed here so that the people would remember that they were to work six days and rest on the seventh (see Exodus 20:8). Observing the Sabbath day would protect Israel from God's judgment (31:14-16) and remind them that God had created the heavens and the earth in six days but rested on the seventh day (31:17). When God finished speaking all of these instructions found written in Exodus 25-31, "He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God" (31:18). God's law had been written and now the nation of Israel was expected to obey it. Obedience would bring blessing while disobedience would bring God's judgment upon the nation.

Dear God, thank You for the revelation of God through Moses concerning the law of God.

Exodus 32:1-35

When God had finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him two stone tablets with the Law written on them (Exodus 31:18). This Law would govern the nation of Israel in a proper relationship with God and in maintaining healthy relationships with others. Obeying God's Law would ensure God's blessing on Israel, but disobedience would invite the judgment of God on the nation. In the 40 days Moses was meeting with God on the mountain he received the Ten Commandments (20:1-21), civil/religious ordinances (20:22-24:11), and ceremonial regulations for the tabernacle (24:12-31:18); however, the people became concerned about Moses being gone for so long so they said to Aaron, "Make us some gods who can lead us. We don't know what happened to this fellow Moses, who brought us here from the land of Egypt" (32:1, NLT). More than a month before they had promised to obey all of God's commands (Exodus 24:7), but their commitment to obey God soon turned to outright rebellion. In an apparent move to be similar to the other pagan nations surrounding them, Israel asked Aaron to fashion false gods so that they could worship them and receive guidance from these false deities. Without the slightest bit of hesitation, Aaron commanded that the people bring their gold to him and from that gold he fashioned a golden calf saying, "This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" (32:2-4). Aaron also built an altar before the golden calf and the people "...rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play" (32:5-6). These words indicate that the nation had engaged in idol worship as well as immoral activities in an effort to honor God.

God made Moses aware of Israel's sinful actions (32:7-8) and told him that they would be consumed (32:9-10), but Moses pleaded for God's mercy on the people (32:11-13) and He granted it (32:14). Moses descended from the mountain to find the people engaged in false worship, so he became angry and threw down the tablets of stone, which broke in two (32:15-19). Moses' action was symbolic of Israel breaking the law of God. Moses then "...took the calf which they had made, burned *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder; and he scattered *it* on the water and made the children of Israel drink *it*. And Moses said to Aaron, 'What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?'" (32:20-21). Aaron accused the people of being prone to evil (32:22) saying that he had simply taken their gold and thrown it into the fire (32:23-24a); furthermore, Aaron said that the golden calf miraculously appeared out of the fire (32:24b). Aaron shifted all the blame upon Israel without taking any responsibility himself. His actions showed a lack of leadership and a deceitful heart.

Sickened by the Israelites' unrestrained actions (32:25), Moses stood in the entrance of the camp and said, "'Whoever *is* on the Lord's side— *come* to me!' And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him" (32:26). Moses then commanded the tribe of Levi to administer judgment on all who persisted in idolatry and about 3,000 people were killed by the sword that day (32:27-29). On the next day Moses told Israel that he was going to attempt to make atonement for their sin before God so he returned to the Lord and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written" (32:30-31). Although Israel was a disobedient people, Moses had a great love for them. He was even willing for his own life to be taken prematurely so that the nation could be spared. God rejected Moses' offer and promised to put to death those who had sinned (32:33). Eventually, all those who sinned were put to death by a plague (32:35) and through other means. Only the younger generation would be permitted to enter the Promised Land in the future (see Deuteronomy 2:14). Obedience brings blessing and disobedience brings judgment.

Dear God, give me an overwhelming desire to obey You.

Exodus 33:1-23

God had given the Law to Moses in order to govern the nation of Israel in maintaining their relationship with God and others. The details of this Law were given to Moses on Mount Sinai and included the Ten Commandments (20:1-21), civil/religious ordinances (20:22-24:11), and ceremonial regulations for the tabernacle (24:12-31:18). Obedience to these regulations and commandments would result in Israel's proper worship of God. Although the people had agreed to obey the Law (Exodus 24:7), they quickly rebelled when a golden calf was created and worshiped (Exodus 32). Moses begged for mercy on behalf of Israel, but God's wrath was poured out on Israel for their disobedience and thousands died (Exodus 32:30-35). God commanded Moses to lead the people to the Promised Land, but His presence would not accompany them on the journey (33:1). Instead of God's presence leading the children of Israel, an angel would go before them and drive out their enemies (33:2). When the people heard that God's presence would no longer accompany them on the journey, they mourned (33:3-6).

In response to God's presence being removed, Moses withdrew from the camp and met with the Lord in his tent, which was the place where they met prior to the construction of the tabernacle (33:7-11). Moses approached the Lord and begged for His presence to lead them into the Promised Land (33:12-13). God responded to Moses' request saying, "My Presence will go *with you*, and I will give you rest" (33:14). Moses wanted to be certain of God's presence so he again said to the Lord, "If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who *are* upon the face of the earth" (33:15-16). Moses and Israel were nothing without the presence of God. The Lord granted Moses' request for His presence (33:17). Since Moses had a unique relationship with God (see Exodus 33:11), he also asked for God to show him his glory (33:18). Moses' request to see God's glory was a confession of his desire to see more of God's character and nature. The Lord granted Moses' request to see more of His glory, but he would not be permitted to see God's face because no man could glimpse God's face and live (33:19-20). The Lord then said to Moses, "Look, stand near me on this rock. As my glorious presence passes by, I will hide you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and let you see me from behind. But my face will not be seen" (33:21-23, NLT). Although God is not human, He is described here with human parts so that mankind can understand the reality of this encounter between the Lord and Moses. Even this experience is unique to Moses, all those who love and follow God should have a growing desire to know the Lord in a more intimate manner.

Dear God, show me Your glory!

Exodus 34:1-35

God loved the nation of Israel. They were His chosen people and God desired them to become a "special treasure...a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). In order to establish them as a nation, God gave His Law to Moses and expected the people to obey. Although Israel agreed to obey God's Law (Exodus 24:7), they quickly broke the covenant by worshiping a golden calf (Exodus 32) which resulted in God withdrawing His presence from the Israelites (Exodus 33:1-6). Moses begged God not to remove His presence, so the Lord honored Moses' request and promised to accompany Israel on their journey to Canaan (Exodus 33:7-23). After granting His forgiveness, the Lord commanded Moses to cut two tablets of stone so that the Law could be written again (34:1). Moses then brought the stone tablets to Mount Sinai where the Lord descended in a cloud to meet with him (34:2-5). This second encounter between God and Moses lasted 40 days and during this time the Law was renewed. Upon his arrival on the mountain the Lord declared to Moses, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation" (34:6-7). When Moses heard these words he bowed in worship saying, "If now I have found grace in Your sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we *are* a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance" (34:8-9).

God responded to Moses' prayer and promised to renew the covenant between Himself and the nation of Israel (34:10). As a part of this covenant, God promised to drive their enemies out of the land, but the Israelites were not to make any covenants with pagan nations (34:12). Making a covenant with a pagan nation would bring judgment on Israel. Rather than adapting to the idolatrous culture of the pagans, Israel was to "...destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their wooden images" (34:13). These actions would ensure that Israel would not engage in worship of other gods (34:13-17). The Lord also reminded them to keep the religious ordinances such as the Feast of Unleavened Bread (34:18-20, 25), the Sabbath Day (34:21), the Feast of Weeks (34:22a, 26), and the Feast of Ingathering (34:22b). The three feasts were to be celebrated each year (34:23) and God promised to protect their land while Israel was observing these feasts (34:24). The covenant was given to Moses and he wrote it on the stone tablets as he met with the Lord 40 days and 40 nights (34:27-28).

After receiving the covenant from the Lord, Moses descended from the mountain and his face was shining because he had been in the presence of God (34:29). Moses did not know his face was glowing but when he approached Aaron and the children of Israel, they were afraid to come near to him (34:30). Moses then called for the people to come near him and he talked with them and declared the commandments that the Lord had spoken to him on Mount Sinai (34:31-32). Moses later became aware of the glow on his face because he covered it with a veil. When Moses spoke with the people he put the veil on his face, but when he spoke with God he removed the veil (34:33-34). Time in the presence of God changed the countenance of Moses and was also a visible reminder that Moses had spent time with God.

Dear God, may time spent with You change me so that others would know that I've been in Your presence.

Exodus 35:1-39:43

Israel's exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12:31-42) had led them into the wilderness where they struggled to have faith in the God who had miraculously delivered them from bondage. Rather than trusting Him, Israel often turned their back on God and questioned Moses' leadership; however, God repeatedly proved Himself by providing for and protecting the nation of Israel. In order to establish Israel as a nation, God gave them the Law which detailed how they could maintain a proper relationship with God and others. The Mosaic Law included the Ten Commandments (20:1-21), civil/religious ordinances (20:22-24:11), and ceremonial regulations for the tabernacle (24:12-31:18). Although Israel promised to obey God's Law (Exodus 24:7), they quickly broke that promise by creating and worshiping a golden calf (Exodus 32). God was extremely angry and threatened to withdraw His presence from Israel (Exodus 33:1-6), but Moses' prayer for mercy (Exodus 33:7-23) resulted in the Lord promising to journey with them. Moses made new tablets (see Exodus 32:19) and God wrote the Law on them once again (Exodus 34:1-9). The covenant between God and Israel was renewed.

After the Law had been rewritten and renewed, Moses gathered the people to remind them about the Sabbath regulations (35:1-3). Work on the tabernacle was to be limited to six days a week and the seventh day should be reserved for rest. Moses then spoke to the children of Israel, saying, "This *is* the thing which the Lord commanded, saying: 'Take from among you an offering to the Lord. Whoever *is* of a willing heart, let him bring it as an offering to the Lord...'" (35:4-9). The items gathered for this offering would be used by the gifted artisans (35:10-19, 30-35; 36:1) to construct the tabernacle, which would become the center of worship for the Israelites. "Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, *and* they brought the Lord's offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments. They came, both men and women, as many as had a willing heart" (35:20-22). Israel's heart had truly changed. Days earlier they were worshiping the golden calf, but now they had repented of sin and were giving of their own possessions to construct the tabernacle (35:23-29). The two artisans, Bezalel and Aholiab (see Exodus 31:1-11), received the offering of the people from Moses and began the construction on the tabernacle; in fact, the offerings received from the people were more than enough to construct the tabernacle (36:2-7). According to the instructions given by God to Moses, the people built the tabernacle (36:8-38), the ark of the testimony/covenant (37:1-9; see also 25:10-22), the table for showbread (37:10-16; see also 25:23-30), the golden lampstand (37:17-28; see also 25:31-40), the oil and incense (37:29; see also 30:22-38), the altar of burnt offering (38:1-7; see also 27:1-8), the bronze laver/basin (38:8; see also 30:17-21), the court of the tabernacle (38:9-20; see also 27:9-19), the materials for the tabernacle (38:21-31), and the priestly garments (39:1-31; see also 28:1-43).

When all of the work had been completed by the nation of Israel (39:32-41), "Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, just so they had done it. And Moses blessed them" (39:42-43). Moses' blessing on the work of the tabernacle was his seal of approval on every detail. Israel had now evidenced their commitment to God's design and had created a place for Him to dwell. Israel's center for worship had been completed and designed according to God's plan.

Dear God, thank You for the example of Your forgiveness and restoration of Israel.

Exodus 40:1-38

The nation of Israel had finally completed the tabernacle according to the design God had given to Moses (Exodus 35:1-39:43). This endeavor was completed nearly one year following Israel's exodus from Egypt. Moses blessed the people for their hard work and attention to every detail concerning the tabernacle (Exodus 39:42-43), which would become the center of religious worship for the Israelites. Since the children of Israel were on a journey to the Promised Land, the tabernacle was designed to be portable so that they could easily set it up and tear it down. After all the items of the tabernacle were built, the Lord spoke to Moses and commanded him to set up the tabernacle for the very first time (40:1-2). The Lord detailed the arrangement of the interior and exterior of the tabernacle (40:3-8), the consecration of the items used in the tabernacle (40:9-11), and the anointing of the priesthood who would be involved in the daily duties of the tabernacle (40:12-16). Moses obeyed and did everything according to God's command and they erected the tabernacle in the first month of the second year of their journey (40:16-33).

When the tabernacle was set up as God commanded, "...the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (40:34-35). God's glory filling the tabernacle was a visible sign that God was pleased with the tabernacle and that everything had been done according to His word. God's promise to "...dwell among the children of Israel and...be their God" (Exodus 29:45) had finally been fulfilled. The cloud that had initially led the children of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 13:20-22) now dwelt amongst the people. "Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys" (40:36-38).

This event in the history of Israel was a glorious time as they looked to the Lord as the One who was leading them to the land of Canaan. Israel had endured great persecution in Egypt (Exodus 1:1-12:36), but God delivered His people and set them on a journey toward the Promised Land with Moses as their leader (Exodus 12:37-15:21). Israel's first year of freedom from bondage was plagued with many growing pains because God wanted them to trust Him fully with their lives (Exodus 15:22-18:27). In order to establish them as a nation, God gave a written Law which provided Israel with commands and ordinances to ensure that they would maintain a proper relationship with Him and others (Exodus 19:1-24:18); furthermore, God also established the tabernacle as the center of worship for Israel (Exodus 25:1-31:18). Although Israel quickly strayed away from worshiping the Lord (Exodus 32), they were restored and eventually built the tabernacle which inhabited the presence of God (Exodus 33:1-40:38). The nation of Israel is much like mankind. God seeks those who will worship Him with a pure heart, but oftentimes man selfishly walks in his own ways. God restores and forgives those who turn back to Him. The story of Israel is a messy story, but a picture of God's mercy and love for His people.

Dear God, may I learn much in my own life by reading about Your relationship with the nation of Israel.