

Exodus

*An Overview of the Scriptures, by
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Exodus opens with an accounting of the sons of Jacob (renamed Israel) who had come to Egypt. There were originally seventy souls,^{1:5} but after a time in Egypt **the sons of Israel had become fruitful, numerous and staunch.**^{1:7}

Joseph had enjoyed the support and trust of the Pharaoh in his day, but now a new king reigns ... and he knows nothing about Joseph.^{1:8} He fears the sons of Israel and **assigns heavy work** to them. But they continue to multiply nonetheless.^{1:12} Midwives are told to kill all Hebrew males as they are born, but they fear Elohim and do not comply with Pharaoh's directive.^{1:17} So "*Elohim dealt well with the midwives.*"^{1:20}

The sons of Israel **continue to multiply**, and are very **staunch.**^{1:20} So Pharaoh instructs all of his people to kill every male child born to the Hebrews by flinging them into the waters. This sets the stage for the fate of one Hebrew child in particular ... Moses.

MOSES^{2:1}

Moses is born a Levite.^{2:1} His mother keeps him hidden for three months, but then she places him in a papyrus ark, sheltered in the weeds on the shore of a waterway. Pharaoh's daughter finds the child and spares him. Moses' sister, watching from nearby, suggests calling a wet-nurse from among the Hebrews. Thus Moses' own mother becomes his wet-nurse. As Moses grows he is brought to Pharaoh's daughter and becomes her son.^{2:10} It is Pharaoh's daughter that names him Moses.

After Moses had grown he sees an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, and he kills the Egyptian. Upon hearing of this Pharaoh seeks to kill Moses, causing him to **flee to the land of Midian.**^{2:15} There Moses dwells with the Midianites, marries Zipporah,^{2:21} and has a son (Gershom).^{2:22}

Meanwhile, **back in Egypt, the sons of Israel cry out.** Elohim hears their moaning, and is mindful of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.^{2:24}

MOSES COMMISSIONED BY ELOHIM^{3:1}

In Midian, Moses had become a shepherd of his father-in-law's flock. When leading the flock he comes to Mount Horeb where a messenger of Yahweh appears to him in a burning bush. Yahweh informs Moses that He had "*descended to rescue (the sons of Israel) from the land of Egypt and to bring them up from that land to a land good and wide...*"^{3:8} Then Yahweh tells Moses how He intends to accomplish this: "*Now go, **I am sending you to Pharaoh**. Bring forth My people, the sons of Israel, from Egypt.*"^{3:10} But Moses responds with a series of **objections**, each of which is answered in turn by Yahweh.

Who am I to do this?^{3:11}
I will be with you.^{3:12}

What if they ask your name?^{3:13}
You shall say "I-Shall-Come-to-Be" has sent me.^{3:14}
Yahweh, the Elohim of your fathers.^{3:15}
This is my name for the eon.^{3:15}

Yahweh tells Moses in advance that Pharaoh will not release the people.^{3:19} Yahweh has foreknowledge that this would be the case, and He shares this foreknowledge with Moses. Yahweh explains that this stubbornness on Pharaoh's part **will lead to certain "marvels,"** after which Pharaoh will dismiss the people. But Moses expresses **more objections**.

They will not believe me or listen to me.^{4:1}
I will cause your rod to become a serpent.^{4:2}
I will cause your hand to become leprous.^{4:6}
I will cause water to turn to blood.^{4:9}

I am not a man of words.^{4:10}
I will tell you what to speak.^{4:11}

Send another.^{4:13}
 At this point Yahweh's anger grows hot against Moses.^{4:14}
Aaron, your brother, will speak for you.^{4:14}

So despite Moses' many objections and resistance, Yahweh does not simply turn to another to accomplish His purpose. **He has chosen Moses, and Moses it will be.**

In the 16th verse we gain some insight into the title, **elohim**. Yahweh says that **Moses shall become an elohim for Aaron**. Aaron will do the talking, but Moses will be an elohim ... the one directing Aaron, and the one to whom Aaron is **subjected**. The title “elohim” denotes subjection.

As Moses journeys toward Egypt with his wife and sons, Yahweh reveals that as the miracles are performed before Pharaoh, **Yahweh “shall make his heart steadfast, and he shall not dismiss the people.”**^{4:21} What purpose would Yahweh have in making Pharaoh stubborn? Why would Yahweh not want Pharaoh to release the people immediately upon request, or perhaps after the first sign? It is one thing for Yahweh to have foreknowledge that Pharaoh would not release the people, but here we are told that Yahweh will actually **make Pharaoh’s heart steadfast**. Let us keep this in mind as we read on, for a bit later we will see that **Yahweh has a purpose that is served by Pharaoh’s stubbornness**.

Yahweh tells Moses he will say to Pharaoh, “*My son, My firstborn, is Israel.*”^{4:22} **So Israel is not to be the only son ... but the firstborn**. This implies there will be other peoples that God is concerned with beyond the sons of Israel. Remember that in Genesis God expressed His plan to bless all nations and peoples through Abraham and his seed.

MOSES RETURNS TO EGYPT^{4:24}

On the way to Egypt, “**a messenger of Yahweh encountered him and sought to put him to death.**”^{4:24} So Zipporah circumcises her son, and the messenger relents. It is unclear from the use of pronouns who the messenger had planned to kill ... Moses or his son. But the cause is quite apparent. The fact that Moses’ son had not been circumcised is what created the crisis. Had Moses forgotten the directive requiring circumcision?^{Gen 17:1-14} Had he been an Egyptian and a Midianite for so long that he neglected the requirements placed upon the sons of Israel?

As Moses approaches Egypt, Yahweh directs Aaron to go out to meet him, whereupon Moses tells Aaron all that Yahweh had said to him.^{4:28} They then gather all the elders of the sons of Israel, and Aaron relays to them all that Moses had said.

MOSES & AARON ADDRESS PHARAOH^{5:1}

As Moses and Aaron first approach Pharaoh, they say to him: “*Thus says Yahweh the Elohim of Israel, Dismiss My people that they may celebrate to Me in the wilderness.*”^{5:1} But Pharaoh refuses to dismiss the people, and

replies, **"I do not know Yahweh."**^{5:2} Yahweh is the Elohim of Israel, but has not been recognized as the Elohim of Egypt. So it makes sense that Pharaoh does not know Yahweh. We will learn that this will be **at least a part of the purpose served by Pharaoh's hardened heart**; that the series of miracles are displayed before the sons of Israel and the people of Egypt, **that all will recognize Yahweh.**

Pharaoh is concerned because **the people of Israel "are now more numerous than the people of the land."**^{5:5} Were the people to be released, they could become a formidable enemy to Egypt. And if the people are not released, there could be a revolt if they are not kept busy and exhausted. So in response to the visit from Moses and Aaron, **Pharaoh increases the workload.**^{5:7} The superintendents of the sons of Israel complain to Moses and Aaron,^{5:20} and Moses complains to Yahweh.^{5:22} Yahweh reassures Moses: "*Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh, for under a steadfast hand he shall dismiss them...*"^{6:1} Yahweh then speaks of the covenant He had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the fact that he had heard the moanings of the people in Egypt.

Despite the promises made by Yahweh to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it is interesting to read: "*I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as the El-Who-Suffices; as to My name Yahweh, I was not fully realized by them.*"^{6:3} Here we see the **progressive revelation** of God. Yahweh had appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but He was **not fully realized by them.** But now, as Yahweh indicates His intentions to bring forth the people, to rescue them, to redeem them, and to take them as His people,^{6:6-7} ... **"I will become to you as Elohim, and you will realize that I am Yahweh your Elohim, Who brought you forth from beneath the burdens of the Egyptians."**^{6:7} So while Yahweh had not been fully realized by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, **He will be more fully realized by Moses and the sons of Israel.** And the miracles they will witness, facilitated by the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, will enable this greater realization of Yahweh. All that will take place is playing a part in the revealing of Yahweh to His people, and to the Egyptians.

But for now, the sons of Israel do not hearken to Moses **"because of shortness of spirit and hard service."**^{6:9} Note the two factors that prevent them from believing Moses. All they know is what they can see and feel ... their hard service. How can Moses be right if they are still experiencing hard service under the Egyptians? They have a shortness of spirit that prevents them from believing what Yahweh has promised, as their belief is totally consumed by their hard labors. Let us keep this in mind when the trials of life

have us so burdened that we have difficulty seeing God in the midst of these trials. In the coming chapters Yahweh will act in a powerful way, demonstrating to the sons of Israel and to the Egyptians that He is indeed Yahweh Elohim.

But now **Moses has renewed doubt**. If the sons of Israel will not hearken to him, how will Pharaoh hearken?^{6:12}

Yahweh announces to Moses, “***I appoint you as elohim to Pharaoh; and Aaron, your brother, shall come to be your prophet.***”^{7:1} Remember from our Genesis study that “**elohim**” (plural) appears to signify those appointed by God, and at times God Himself, with the charge of bringing others into **subjection**. This seems to fit exactly what Moses is appointed to do. As God acts thru Moses we will see powerful demonstrations that will accomplish His purposes for Pharaoh, the Egyptians and the sons of Israel. So we note once again that “**elohim**” **does not always refer to God**, as it is generally translated. In this case Moses is an “elohim,” appointed as such by Yahweh.

We also see that Aaron is designated as Moses’ prophet. He will speak on behalf of Moses, as Moses instructs him to speak. He will be the mouthpiece of Moses. So **here we see the function of a prophet**. He is one who speaks on behalf of an elohim.

PHARAOH’S HEART HARDENED^{7:3}

Before the plagues begin, Yahweh again tells Moses, “***I Myself shall harden the heart of Pharaoh and increase My signs and My miracles in the land of Egypt.***”^{7:3} Did Pharaoh harden his own heart, of his own free will? Here we see Yahweh saying very directly, “I will harden his heart.” It would seem that while Pharaoh possessed a human will and made decisions based upon that will, Yahweh had a purpose in hardening him and causing him to refuse release of the people. Had Pharaoh released the people immediately, none would have witnessed the powerful signs and miracles. **The fact that Pharaoh was hardened enabled Yahweh to “increase” the signs and miracles.**^{7:3} And through these signs and miracles, “***all the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh when I stretch out My hand over Egypt and bring forth the sons of Israel from their midst.***”^{7:5} None will be able to claim it was the decision of Pharaoh to release the people. All will understand it was the work of Yahweh. And thus Pharaoh’s hardening will have served a great purpose. **This is not to say that man cannot exercise his will.** Certainly we do have a will, and make decisions based upon that will. But we must acknowledge that our will is influenced by many factors that are under God’s

ultimate control, such as our genetic makeup, our environment, and at times the direct influence of God Himself ... as we see in Pharaoh's case.

SIGNS AND MIRACLES^{7:8}

Moses and Aaron appear before Pharaoh as Yahweh had instructed, and perform signs and miracles.

Rod becomes a snake ^{7:8}	Egyptian occultists duplicate, but Aaron's rod swallows up theirs.
Water turns to blood ^{7:14}	Egyptian occultists duplicate.
Plague of frogs ^{8:1}	Egyptian occultists duplicate. Pharaoh asks Moses to remove frogs, and thereafter hardens.
Plague of lice ^{8:16}	Occultists cannot duplicate and tell Pharaoh "this is the finger of Elohim." ^{8:19}
Plague of flies ^{8:20}	Goshen is distinguished. Pharaoh agrees to dismiss the people, but once the flies are removed he hardens.
Plague on livestock ^{9:1}	Israel's livestock is distinguished, but all cattle of the Egyptians dies.
Plague of boils ^{9:8}	Even the occultists are affected. Yahweh hardens Pharaoh.
Plague of hail ^{9:18}	Pharaoh agrees to dismiss the people, but hardens once the hail is stopped.
Plague of locusts ^{10:1}	Pharaoh's servants counsel him to dismiss the people. Pharaoh asks Moses to entreat Yahweh. Once the locusts depart, Pharaoh hardens.
Darkness over Egypt ^{10:21}	Israel is distinguished. Pharaoh agrees to release the people, but not the flocks. Yahweh made him steadfast so he will not dismiss them.

Moses is told to say to Pharaoh, "Thus says Yahweh, Elohim of the Hebrews..."^{9:1} The Egyptians had their own elohim, and would recognize Yahweh not as their Elohim, but as Elohim of the Hebrews. In the midst of the plague of locusts, Pharaoh refers to Yahweh as, "Yahweh your Elohim."^{10:16}

But **the signs and miracles are taking place, at least in part, so that Pharaoh "may know that the earth is Yahweh's."**^{9:29} So while the Egyptians presently recognize Yahweh as the Elohim of the Hebrews, they will ultimately come to see Him as the Elohim of the entire earth.

PHARAOH'S HARDENING

Let us examine more closely a few passages that appear in the midst of the plague accounts.

Yet Yahweh made the heart of Pharaoh steadfast, so that he did not hearken to them just as Yahweh had spoken to Moses. ^{9:12}

... for this sake I keep you (Pharaoh) standing, in order to make you see My vigor, and that My name may be related in the entire earth. ^{9:16}

... that you may know that the earth is Yahweh's. ^{9:29}

... I have made his (Pharaoh's) heart glory and the hearts of his servants that I may set these My signs among them, and that you may relate in the ears of your son, and your son's son ... that you will know that I am Yahweh. ^{10:1-2}

Yet Yahweh made the heart of Pharaoh steadfast, and he did not comply so as to dismiss them. ^{10:27}

Pharaoh shall not hearken to you so that My miracles may increase in the land of Egypt. Hence Moses and Aaron did all these miracles before Pharaoh. And Yahweh made the heart of Pharaoh steadfast, so that he did not dismiss the sons of Israel from the land. ^{11:9-10}

Some say it is the way of the Hebrews to say that God hardened Pharaoh, when in fact he chose to harden himself. But here we see that God had a purpose to accomplish that would not have been accomplished had Pharaoh not been hardened. Through his hardening:

- The miracles would increase (there would not be just one, but a number of miracles)
- Pharaoh would come to see Yahweh's vigor
- Yahweh's name would be made known in the entire earth
- Pharaoh would come to know that the earth is Yahweh's
- Signs would be set forth for the sons of Israel, and for their sons to follow, that the people would know this is Yahweh that had released the people

With these purposes to be accomplished, it would not seem that Yahweh simply left it to Pharaoh to make up his own mind as to how he would react to the miracles. Yahweh hardened Pharaoh so that he would not dismiss the people ... so that the miracles would be increased ... so that all would know this was Yahweh at work and that the entire earth was Yahweh's.

This does not mean that Yahweh **forces** mankind to act in the ways in which we act. But certainly He is sovereign, and He influences us, directly or indirectly, to **lead** us to the point He wants us to be. And there are times in history when he appears to use stronger means to influence as deemed necessary and appropriate to accomplish His purposes ... as in the case here with Pharaoh, and much later with the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus.

DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN – PASSOVER^{11:1}

Yahweh announces the final plague ... that every firstborn of the land of Egypt will die. Special instructions are given to the sons of Israel in what would be “the passover to Yahweh.”^{12:11} A lamb would be killed on a specific day, its blood would be placed on the jambs and lintels of their houses, and they were to eat the lamb in a state of readiness to leave. This day was to become a memorial to celebrate throughout the generations of the sons of Israel.^{12:14} It will be observed on specific days each year, with detailed instructions given for its observance. All of Israel will be required to participate in the observance,^{12:47} as well as those choosing to sojourn with Israel and who are circumcised.^{12:48} But anyone who is not circumcised ... including foreigners, uncircumcised servants, settlers or hirelings ... is not to participate.

So death strikes the firstborn in Egypt, and **Pharaoh finally dismisses the people.**^{12:31} Yahweh gives the people favor with the Egyptians, and anything they ask for is given to them, including silver, gold and garments.^{12:35} Leaving Egypt are **600,000 men.**^{12:37}

The **firstborn of Egypt had been killed**, and now Yahweh instructs Moses that **every firstborn of Israel is to be “hallowed”** to Him.^{13:2} Remember that hallow means to set apart, or to distinguish in some manner, and this is the terminology used a few verses later: “... *you will set apart for Yahweh every male opening up the womb.*”^{13:12} We see the relationship between the final plague that struck Egypt and the hallowing of the firstborn of Israel. Yahweh killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt ... therefore the Israelites would **sacrifice** to Yahweh all the males opening up the womb; yet

ransoming every firstborn of their sons.^{13:15} The firstborn of the animals would be sacrificed, but there was to be no human sacrifice. The firstborn of the sons of Israel would be “ransomed.”

It is interesting that **before “The Law”** is yet given, **the “law of Yahweh” is referred to:** “... *that the law of Yahweh may be in your mouth; for with a steadfast hand Yahweh brought you forth from Egypt.*”^{13:9} It appears from this instance that the law of Yahweh is a term used to describe all that Yahweh has said to His people. The “law of Yahweh” is the word of Yahweh.

THE JOURNEY OUT OF EGYPT^{13:17}

When leaving Egypt, the people are told not to go by way of the Philistines, even though that way would be shorter, “*Lest the people should regret when they see war, and return to Egypt.*”^{13:17} Despite the signs and miracles the people had witnessed, Yahweh knows of their weakness.

Yahweh goes before and guides the people by day in a column of cloud, and by night in a column of fire. In this way Yahweh would cause the people to remain when He would have them remain, and go when He would have them go.

Even after the people had been dismissed by Pharaoh, there was to be one more miracle. “*I will make the heart of Pharaoh steadfast, so he will pursue after them. Then I will be glorified in Pharaoh and in all his army; and the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh.*”^{14:4} So **again we see Yahweh hardening Pharaoh** that the Egyptians would know of Him, and that Yahweh would be glorified over Pharaoh and his armies.^{14:17}

And so we read that **Yahweh saved Israel** on that day from the hand of Egypt,^{14:30} and as a result “*the people feared Yahweh and believed in Yahweh and in Moses His servant.*”^{14:31} Thus far at least, Yahweh’s signs and miracles have had the desired effect upon the people of Israel. And chapter 15 is a **song to Yahweh**^{15:1} in response to His mighty works.

In the midst of the song to Yahweh we read: “*He shall reign **for the eon and further.***”^{15:18} The KJV records this as “forever and ever,” but “olam” in the Hebrew (and “aion” in the Greek) is a finite period of time that comes to an end. Yahweh shall reign not just for the olam (eon), but even longer.

Yahweh promises to prevent illnesses among the people if they follow his instructions: “*If you shall hearken, yea hearken to the voice of*

Yahweh your Elohim and do what is upright in His eyes, and give ear to His instructions and observe all His statutes, then all the illnesses which I placed on the Egyptians I shall not place on you, for I am Yahweh your Healer."^{15:26}

Let us consider the scope of this promise. Is it a promise for all people of all nations, that if they will live in obedience to Yahweh's instructions then there would be no illness? No ... this promise is made specifically to Israel. Is this passage speaking to present-day Believers (Christians) who obey the instructions of Yahweh? No ... this promise is made specifically to Israel, and Christians have no basis for claiming these words as their own. Furthermore, this promise was given to Israel at the time they journeyed toward the promised land. Does this mean the promise is valid indefinitely? I do not think we can make that assumption. We have already seen that God has chosen to work with humanity in different ways as times goes on. All we know for certain from this passage is that the promise made by Yahweh, conditioned upon obedience by the sons of Israel, was valid in that day.

Three days into the wilderness, after leaving their encampment by the sea, the people grumble against Moses because there is no water to drink.^{15:24} **Yahweh provides water**, causing bitter water to become sweet (drinkable). A bit later we read that **bread is provided** from the heavens each morning,^{16:4} and **quail** in the evenings.^{16:13} This bread is called "**manna**."^{16:31} Only enough for the day is to be gathered, for to gather more would be an indication that the people did not trust Yahweh to deliver a new supply the following day. Still, some tried to store it nonetheless, and found it to be spoiled on the following day.^{16:20} Manna will be provided by Yahweh for forty years, until the people arrive in the land.^{16:35}

Now we see the **sabbath observation commanded for the first time**: "*A cessation, a holy sabbath to Yahweh is tomorrow.*"^{16:23} On the sixth day the people are to gather enough manna for two days, for there would be no gathering on the seventh day (sabbath). When some try to gather manna on the seventh day, contrary to Yahweh's instructions, they find none.^{16:27} Yahweh replies to Moses, "*How long will you refuse to observe My instructions and My laws?*"^{16:28} Note the **progressive nature of Yahweh's instructions and laws**. Prior to this time the sabbath had been mentioned by Yahweh and "hallowed." Here the observance of the sabbath is instructed. More specifics relating to the sabbath observance will be provided later, but for now there is to be no gathering of manna on this day.

As the journey continues, Yahweh provides **water from a rock**.^{17:5} Amalek attacks, and Moses instructs Joshua to choose men to fight,^{17:9} whereupon **Amalek is defeated**.

MOSES SELECTS CHIEFS TO JUDGE^{18:1}

Moses sits to judge the people from morning until evening.^{18:13} It can be imagined how many disputes there must have been among so many people. In Egypt there had been a hierarchy of leadership to administer law, but now in the wilderness there was no such hierarchy. The sons of Israel were not yet a nation, but a people on the move. They had received instructions from Yahweh, but perhaps had many questions and disagreements as to the implementation of those instructions upon the matters of everyday life.

When Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brings Zipporah and sons, he gives good counsel to Moses.^{18:19} Moses would warn the people with the statutes and laws made known to them, but qualified men would be chosen as "*chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, chiefs of fifties and chiefs of tens.*"^{18:21} **These chiefs would judge the people, and only great matters of dispute would be brought before Moses.**

YAHWEH SPEAKS FROM MOUNT SINAI^{19:1}

In the third month after leaving Egypt, the people enter the wilderness of Sinai. As Israel encamps in front of the mountain, Moses ascends and Yahweh speaks to him. " **If you shall hearken, yea hearken to My voice and observe My covenant then you will become Mine, a special possession, above all the peoples, for Mine is all the earth. As for you, you shall become Mine, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the sons of Israel.**"^{18:5-6} Again we note that these words are spoken only to Israel, and none other can claim the words are spoken to them. (We will consider the letters of Peter in the New Testament when the time comes, but for now we will simply say that Peter's words were also directed to the sheep of Israel and not to all nations.)

Why would Yahweh choose Israel? Here we must keep in mind the oft repeated words found in Genesis, each time Yahweh chose someone ... "that all peoples are blessed." He said this to Abraham,^{Gen 12:3} to Isaac,^{Gen 26:4-5} and to Jacob.^{Gen 28:14} **We must continually keep in mind God's objective: to bless all people.** And within this context we see His method ... choosing certain individuals, and now an entire people (the sons of Israel) who will serve as His instrument ... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

When Moses calls together the elders of the people and tells them what Yahweh has said, all the people respond: “*All that Yahweh speaks we shall do.*”^{19:8} Someone once observed that the people seriously overestimated their own strength, while time and again they will seriously underestimate the strength of God. Man has always displayed the tendency to think more highly of his abilities than he ought.

When Yahweh speaks with Moses, He comes in a thick cloud so the people will hear.^{19:9} It seems that the people do not understand the words being spoken to Moses, but they can perceive that Yahweh is in fact speaking with Moses. This will cause the people to believe in Moses.^{19:9}

Moses is told to “hallow” the people,^{19:10} and to prepare for Yahweh to descend on Mount Sinai on the third day.^{19:11} Moses is to set a boundary for the people to stay behind, lest they touch the mountain and are put to death.^{19:12} Yahweh is not to be approached except by those He has chosen to approach Him.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS^{20:1}

Yahweh speaks to Moses the words we have come to know as the “Ten Commandments.” As we will see there are many further instructions given by Yahweh beyond these “ten words” as they are referred to elsewhere.^{34:28}

1. No other elohim in preference^{20:3}
2. No images^{20:4}
3. Not to take the name of Yahweh for futility^{20:7}
4. Remember the sabbath day to hallow it^{20:8}
5. Glorify father and mother^{20:12}
6. No murder^{20:13}
7. No adultery^{20:14}
8. No stealing^{20:15}
9. No false testimony^{20:16}
10. No coveting^{20:17}

Yahweh instructs the people to make an altar for **ascent offerings** and **peace offerings**. Again we see an example of God’s progressive revelation. Very limited instructions are provided here relative to these offerings. Further instructions will be provided by Yahweh at a later time, with much great detail.

MORE INSTRUCTIONS FROM YAHWEH^{21:1}

Yahweh tells Moses, “Now these are the **judgments** which you shall place before them.”^{21:1} We see that the word “judgments” is not a negative term, as to “judge the wicked.” These “judgments” will simply be a **distinguishing** between right and wrong. Yahweh provides a series of instructions, or “judgments,” so the people can distinguish between right and wrong behavior.^{21:1}

- Treatment of servants^{21:1}
- Murder and injury^{21:12}
- Property^{22:1}
- Personal actions^{22:16}
- Sabbath (including sabbath for the land)^{23:10}
- Idolatry^{23:13}

Three celebrations are also commanded, to be observed each year.

- Celebration of unleavened cakes^{23:15}
- Celebration of the harvest of the firstfruits^{23:16}
- Celebration of ingathering^{23:16}

We are reminded once again in 21:6 and 22:8-9 that “**elohim**” can at times refer to men, and is translated “**judges**” in the KJV.

The people are to be guided to the promised land by a messenger with Yahweh’s “name within him.”^{23:21} The occupiers of the land will be driven out little by little, so the land does not become desolate.^{23:28} But the people are warned that **none of these occupiers can be allowed to dwell in the land**, “lest they should make you sin against Me so that you serve their elohim, and that it should come to be a trap for you.”^{23:33} Knowing the importance of placing no other elohim before Yahweh, and knowing the weakness of the people, it is crucial that none are permitted to remain in the land.

As **Moses relates to the people all the words of Yahweh**, the people respond, “All the words which Yahweh has spoken we shall do.”^{24:3} Moses writes all the words of Yahweh, makes offerings, reads the scroll of the covenant to the people, and sprinkles blood on the people saying, “Behold the blood of the covenant which Yahweh contracts with you concerning all these matters.”^{24:8}

Now Moses ascends with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and “**they saw the Elohim of Israel...**”^{24:10} Yahweh instructs Moses to ascend to the mountain where Yahweh will give him the stone tablets, the law and the instructions.^{24:12} So Moses ascends, entering the midst of the cloud. He remains on the mountain for forty days and nights.^{24:18}

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TABERNACLE^{25:1}

The people are to gather a **heave offering** of items required to build a **tabernacle** ... so called because Yahweh will “tabernacle in their midst.”^{25:8} Precise instructions are provided to Moses as to the construction and furnishing of the tabernacle, which is to include a coffer^{25:10} (“ark” in the KJV), a table,^{25:23} a lampstand,^{25:31} and an altar.^{27:1}

The tabernacle is to be setup as Moses is “shown” on the mount,^{26:30} so it appears that Moses may have been given a visual representation of the tabernacle while on the mount for forty days. We read a bit later, “*just as one shows you on the mount, so shall they do.*”^{27:8} Could there have been messengers, or Elohim other than Yahweh, providing instruction to Moses while on the mount?

The tabernacle will be a holy place, but the coffer is to be placed inside a curtain which will separate between the holy place and the holy of holies.^{26:33} Remembering that the word “holy” means set apart or distinguished, Yahweh is choosing to distinguish the tabernacle itself, but He will distinguish the coffer (“ark”) in a more special way.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PRIESTS^{28:1}

We see special mention being given to “Aaron and his sons” in the final verse of chapter 27. This is immediately followed by an instruction to bring Aaron and his sons, Nadab and Abihu, to serve as priests for Yahweh.^{28:1} At least in part, certain garments which are described in great detail will be used “*to hallow him (Aaron) to serve as priest for Me.*”^{28:3} Again, to “hallow” means to set apart or distinguish, and Yahweh has prescribed special clothing, described in great detail, to set Aaron apart.

Yahweh further instructs that once the priestly garments are created and Aaron and his sons are dressed in this attire, they are to be anointed, and **this act will hallow them.**^{28:41} A complete procedure is outlined in chapter 29, including offerings of various kinds. The procedures outlined are done “*so that he (Aaron) will be holy, he and his garments, and his sons and the garments of his sons with him.*”^{29:21} Again we note that **to be holy** does not

mean a person or an item (clothing) is inherently better than others. It is **simply something God has deemed to be set apart or distinct**, and He prescribes certain details that will display this distinction (special clothing, anointing, etc).

“PROPITIATORY SHELTER”

Let us take a few minutes to consider the Hebrew “kphr” which has appeared a number of times in Genesis and Exodus. In Exodus 29 we see the first instance where “kphr” is translated “atonement” in the KJV. The Concordant Version reads:

*You will eat them (animals used in the sacrifice) by which a **propitiatory shelter** was made to fill their hands to hallow them.*^{29:33}

Let us look at a few other instances where this same “kphr” is used. As Noah is instructed to build the ark:

*Make for yourself an ark of sulphur wood. With nests shall you make the ark. And **shelter** it from the inside and from the outside with a **sheltering coat**.*^{Gen 6:14}

As Jacob returns to face his brother Esau after having been apart for many years, and fearing Esau, he sends ahead gifts to precede him.

*And say, moreover, ‘Behold! Your servant Jacob comes after us.’ For, said he, ‘a **propitiatory shelter** am I making before his face with the present offering which is going before me.’*^{Gen 32:20}

When Moses is instructed how to construct the tabernacle which would contain the coffer (“ark” in the KJV), it would be covered with “a **propitiatory shelter** of pure gold”^{Exod 25:17} This is translated “mercy seat” in the KJV.

As the priests are consecrated, a part of the procedure is:

*A young bull as a sin offering shall you offer day by day for **propitiatory shelters** ...*^{29:36}

We will see a bit later in Exodus, when the sons of Israel sin, Moses tells them he will go up to Yahweh, and:

*Perhaps I may make a **propitiatory shelter** about your sin.* ^{32:30}

In all of these instances, “kphr” carries the common idea of a “shelter” of some kind. With the ark, this shelter was a substance spread on the wood to “shelter” it from the waters. With the coffer it was a cover that would either shelter the contents from that which is outside the coffer, or shelter those outside from its contents. In Esau’s case the gifts he sent were to act as a shelter from Esau’s anticipated anger. In the other cases certain acts (offerings, for example) would act as a sheltering of the people from God.

The dictionary definition of **propitious** is “favorable, favorably inclined, kindly, gracious.” We see that at times certain acts are prescribed to cause an individual (a priest, or perhaps another) to be favorable or acceptable to others. Thus we see in the Concordant Version “propitiatory shelter.” One final passage that may help our understanding in this matter ...

*Being justified gratuitously in His grace, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus (Whom God purposed for a **Propitiatory Shelter**, through faith in His blood, for a display of His righteousness **because of the passing over of the penalties of sins** which occurred before in the forbearance of God) toward the display of His righteousness in the current era, for Him to be just and the Justifier of the one who is of the faith of Jesus...* ^{Rom 3:25}

So as we read of a “propitiatory shelter” in the Old Testament, we see it was a temporary sheltering to “cover” or “shelter” the sons of Israel from God in light of their sin, which was being passed over for the time being. This brings light to a passage we will encounter shortly ... “*in the day of My visitation, then I will visit on them their sin.*”^{32:34}

MORE ABOUT THE TABERNACLE^{29:45}

Once completed, the tabernacle will serve a very important purpose. Yahweh will tabernacle in their midst.^{29:45} Within the tabernacle a few additional furnishings are prescribed ... an altar of incense,^{30:1} a bronze laver for washing,^{30:17} holy anointing oil to be used only to hallow the priests,^{30:22} and a special incense to be used only in the affairs of the tabernacle.^{30:34} **The items used within the tabernacle are to be hallowed** ... *so that they become a holy of holies. All that touches them shall be holy.*^{30:29} Even the anointing oil itself is holy,^{30:32} simply meaning it had been set apart or

distinguished from other oils and was to be used exclusively in the manner prescribed by Yahweh. **It was not better oil, but different oil that had been particularly prescribed by Yahweh for His purposes.** This is what it means to be holy or hallowed.

We learn, too, that certain **workmen** will be filled with the spirit and given wisdom so as to make the tabernacle and all that has been instructed.^{31:3,6}

THE SABBATH^{31:12}

Just before Moses concludes his forty days on the mount, Yahweh repeats the sabbath requirement.

My sabbaths shall you keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations to know that I, Yahweh, am hallowing you. Hence you will keep the sabbath, for it is holy to you ... Hence the sons of Israel will keep the sabbath so as to make the sabbath an eonian covenant throughout their generations. Between Me and the sons of Israel it shall be a sign for the eon.^{31:12-17}

Here we see that the sabbath is **a sign between Yahweh and the sons of Israel, to show that they have been set apart by Yahweh.**

The observation of the sabbath is not commanded to any other nations, but only Israel ... because they alone have been set apart. We note that today the Body of Christ has been set apart by God, but we have not been given the sabbath as a sign of that setting apart. This sign is especially given to the sons of Israel, and none other.

THE TABLETS^{31:18}

At the conclusion of Moses' time on the mount, Yahweh gives him *"two tablets of testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of Elohim."*^{31:18} I find it interesting that in nearly every instance in the past few chapters, Yahweh is identified as "Yahweh." But as for the writer of the tablets, it was the finger of "Elohim." We see this repeated as Moses descends from the mount ... *"And the tablets, they were the handiwork of Elohim; and the writing, it was the writing of Elohim, chiseled on the tablets."*^{32:16}

Could it be that Yahweh Himself did not perform the writing, but there were other Elohim with Him on the mount that did so? Remember that Moses was instructed to assemble the tabernacle *"just as one shows you on the*

mount.^{27:8} Regardless, that which was written is the word of Yahweh and the writing had been instructed by Yahweh. But being aware of differences found in the original languages (such as El, Eloah, Elohim, Yahweh) may help our understanding as we read on.

When Moses had been away for a time, the people go to Aaron and ask him to “*make for us elohim who shall go before us.*”^{32:1} So Aaron crafts a **golden calf**, saying to the people, “*These are your elohim, Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.*”^{32:4} Could the people have so quickly forgotten it was Yahweh that brought them out of Egypt? Could they really have thought this golden calf had anything to do with their release from bondage?

Aaron builds an altar before the calf and announces, “*A celebration to Yahweh tomorrow.*”^{32:5} So the calf is simply a symbol representing Yahweh, Whom the people still recognized as the one who brought them out of Egypt. Still, the creation of this visible representation which was deemed to be an elohim^{32:1} was sinful, and prompts Yahweh to tell Moses He would “finish them” and start over again with Moses to create a great nation.^{32:10} **Moses intercedes for the people**, suggesting that to destroy the people would cause the Egyptians to see a failure in Yahweh ... bringing forth the Israelites only to kill them.^{32:12} So Yahweh shows mercy. Now let us consider ... **Did Yahweh really intend to kill the people until Moses talks Him out of that plan?** Or did Yahweh intend to show mercy all along, simply wanting Moses to talk thru these possible repercussions against Yahweh’s character? Certainly Yahweh knew, even from the days of Noah, that “*the form of the human heart is evil from its youth.*”^{Gen 8:21} Did Yahweh not know what the people were capable of, with Moses being absent for an extended period of time? Could Moses understand the meaning of mercy had he not first faced destruction? I ask these questions simply to have you consider the possibilities. Is it possible for man to change God’s mind and His plans, or does God know beforehand what will transpire and how man will react to various events, allowing man to stumble along the way as a learning and growing process?

When Moses returns to the people, he **breaks the tablets** in his anger and pulverizes the golden calf, forcing the sons of Israel to mix it with water and drink it. The sons of Levi serve as Yahweh’s instrument in killing 3,000 men for their sin ... probably those who continued to side against Moses after his return. As for the remainder of the people, Moses tells them he will return to Yahweh, and “*perhaps I may make a **propitiatory shelter** about your sin.*”^{32:30} Yahweh instructs Moses to guide the people to the land, and “**in**

the day of My visitation, then I will visit on them their sin.^{32:34} So this sin will not be dealt with at present, with the exception of the 3,000 who were slain and who were probably not repentant of their actions. Instead the people had a “*propitiatory shelter*” from the consequences of their sin, until a later time when their sin would be dealt with ... “*in the day of My visitation.*”

LEAVING SINAI^{33:1}

Yahweh tells Moses to take the people to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Yahweh will send His messenger before them, and will drive out the inhabitants of the land.^{33:1-2} But because they are a stiff-necked people, **Yahweh will not go among them,** lest He should “finish them” on the way. When the people hear this, they mourn.^{33:3} Moses stretches out a tent outside the camp, and this is the “tent of appointment” where **Yahweh will speak with Moses face to face.**^{33:7-11}

Moses reasons with Yahweh: “*Is it not by Your going with us that we may be distinguished, I and Your people, from all the peoples who are on the surface of the ground?*”^{33:16} Following this pleading, Yahweh agrees to go with the people, saying: “*This matter of which you have spoken I shall do, for you find **grace** in My eyes, and I know you by name.*”^{33:17} So **again we have a case of Moses appearing to change Yahweh’s mind.** Or was it for Moses’ benefit that he has gone thru this discussion, with Yahweh knowing all along He would accompany the people? Could this conversation ... with Yahweh saying at first He will not go with the people, and later agreeing to go ... have been used to teach Moses and the people something about this **grace** He has shown them? After all, this giving of grace is not about Moses or the people at all, but is entirely something given by Yahweh. “*I will be gracious to whom I am being gracious, and will have compassion for whom I am having compassion.*”^{33:19} But despite the fact that Yahweh would go with these stiff-necked people, there would be consequences. “*You cannot see My face, for no human shall see Me and live.*”^{33:20} Whereas in the past Yahweh has appeared to Abraham^{Gen 18:1} and Moses,^{Exod 33:11} this could no longer be the case.

Yahweh instructs Moses to carve two **new stone tablets,** so that He (Yahweh) can write on the tablets the words that were on the first set of tablets.^{34:1} And He announces **a covenant with the people,** whereby He would do **marvels** that have not been seen before, so **the people will see the handiwork of Yahweh.**^{34:10} But there is not to be intermarriage with other peoples, as this would lead the sons of Israel to prostitute after their elohim.^{34:16} And there is to be no molten elohim.^{34:17} **Three celebrations** are to be observed each year ... the celebration of unleavened cakes,^{34:18} the

celebration of weeks,^{34:22} and the celebration of the ingathering.^{34:22} Also mentioned in this meeting with Moses is the **firstborn** belonging to Yahweh,^{34:19} the **weekly sabbath**,^{34:21} and a few requirements relating to **sacrifices** made to Yahweh.^{34:25}

Then Yahweh tells Moses: ***“Write for yourself these words, for at the bidding of these words I contract with you a covenant and with Israel. And he came to be there before Yahweh, forty days and forty nights. Bread he did not eat and water he did not drink. Thus he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten words.”***^{34:27-28} While Yahweh had initially told Moses that He (Yahweh) would write on the tablets,^{34:1} it now appears that it is Moses who does the actual writing on the tablets.^{34:27-28} We saw earlier in Exodus that Moses was appointed as an elohim,^{7:1} and there are times when other men are noted as elohim.^{21:6; 22:8,9,28} When the first set of tablets was created, they were written by the finger of Elohim.^{31:18} When Yahweh said He would write on this second set of tablets, could He have done so thru Moses, His chosen instrument and an elohim? Once again we stress ... ultimately it is the word of Yahweh that is written upon the tablets, so who actually did the writing is a secondary issue. But it is important to pay close attention to details in God’s Word as we study, as details can at times affect the meaning of what God has revealed.

BUILDING OF THE TABERNACLE^{35:1}

When Moses returns to the people and assembles the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, he begins by instructing them concerning the **weekly sabbath**. Anyone doing work on the sabbath would be put to death.^{35:2} Moses then calls for a **heave offering** to be brought, consisting of items necessary for the building and furnishing of the tabernacle.^{35:4} And everyone “wise of heart” is to come and **make all that Yahweh had instructed**.^{35:10} Soon more than enough offerings are brought, and the heave offering is stopped.^{36:6}

The components for the tabernacle are assembled following the precise instructions provided by Yahweh.^{36:8} This includes the coffer,^{37:1} the table,^{37:10} the lampstand,^{37:17} the altar,^{37:25} and the court.^{38:9} All the materials used are itemized.^{38:21-31} The garments for the priests are also made.^{39:1} **All the work is completed**^{39:32} and the tabernacle is setup.^{40:1-33} And upon completion: “ *The cloud covered the tent of appointment, then the **glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle** ...*”^{40:34}

We have seen the highly detailed specifications provided by Yahweh for the tabernacle, the priests, the offerings and the celebration days. Why the great detail? What is the significance of every individual component? On a general basis, we will see in the New Testament that Christ fulfills that which has been shadowed by these Old Testament objects. But does each individual detail, as prescribed by Yahweh, have significance? Much has been written by many different commentators explaining the significance of the details. But unless explanations are provided in the Scriptures themselves, we must remember they are simply opinions and speculations. We are a curious people, but God has not chosen to tell us every detail concerning all things. Still, as we continue our study of the Scriptures, let us pay close attention to God's progressive revelation, and light will be given to us at least for some of the specifics typified by the tabernacle, the priests, the offerings, and the celebration days. For now let us simply see that at this point in God's progressive revelation, the tabernacle has been prescribed by Yahweh, and it will be the place where He dwells in the presence of His chosen people.

FOLLOWING THE CLOUD^{40:36}

And so the sons of Israel begin their trek toward the promised land, led by Yahweh. As long as the cloud (or fire at night) remains, the people will remain encamped. And whenever the cloud (or the fire at night) ascends, the people will journey.

This overview contains the thoughts and opinions of the author, and is considered by the author to be a work in progress and subject to change as his study of the Scriptures continues. Some things that God has revealed are very clear. The gospel, for example ... that Christ died for our sins ... that He was entombed ... and that He was roused^{1 Cor 15:3} ... this is very plain. That all are to be ultimately reconciled to God thru the work of Christ is also very plain.^{1 Cor 15:20-28} But on many specifics in the Scriptures there are a variety of interpretations and opinions, and none should conclude they have the complete and final understanding on these matters that are less clear. The reader is encouraged to consider various opinions, but to study and to think for himself. Within the Body of Christ we should study and discuss our various understandings so as to reach a more complete understanding of that which God has revealed.

*Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the Concordant Literal New Testament and the Concordant Version of the Old Testament.
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