

The Francis Asbury Society

Exodus Bible Study Packet

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FRANCIS ASBURY SOCIETY SPRING 2012 BIBLE STUDY – EXODUS

Outline

- I. In Egypt – A Revelation of Yahweh’s Power: 1:1 – 15:21
 - A. The need for deliverance: chapter 1
 - B. The preparation of the deliverer: chapter 2
 - C. The call of the deliverer chapters: 3-4
 - D. The events of deliverance chapters: 5-14
 1. The plagues: 5:1 – 12:36
 - a. The deliverance rejected: chapters 5-6
 - b. Plagues one – nine: chapters 7-10
 - c. Tenth plague and Passover: 11:1 – 12:36
 2. The journey to the sea: 12:37 – 13:22
 - a. Additional Passover and firstborn directives: 12:37 – 13:16
 - b. Through the wilderness: 13:17 – 22
 - E. Crossing the sea: chapter 14
 - F. The song of the sea: 15:1-21
- II. From the sea to Sinai – A Revelation of Yahweh’s Providence: 15:22 – 18::27
 - A. Water: 15:22-27 (see also 17:1-7)
 - B. Food: chapter 16
 - C. Protection: 17:8-16
 - D. Organization: chapter 18
- III. At Sinai – A Revelation of Yahweh’s Principles and Presence: chapters 19 – 40
 - A. Giving of the covenant – Yahweh’s Principles
 1. Preparation: chapter 19
 2. Presentation: chapters 20 – 23
 3. Participation: chapter 24
 - B. The tabernacle – Yahweh’s Presence
 1. Instructions for building: chapters 25 – 31
 2. The golden calf: chapters 32 – 34
 3. Report of building: chapters 35-40

FRANCIS ASBURY SOCIETY SPRING 2012 BIBLE STUDY – EXODUS

Chapters 1 and 2

Background: *The Semitic pharaohs who would have been friendly to the Hebrews were expelled about 1550 B. C. and native Egyptians took over. This would have been a likely time for “the Pharaoh who knew not Joseph.” This period in Egyptian history known as the New Kingdom lasted until about 1200. The pharaohs of this period were military dictators whose major policy was to gain control over Canaan. All of them sponsored large building projects.*

- *The date of the Exodus is a source of major controversy. Using Biblical numbers and working backward from the death of Solomon, which can be dated, we arrive at 1440 B. C. which would place Moses from 1520-1400.*

However, Biblical numbers do not have the strict quantitative values we apply, and there is no clear evidence of Israel’s presence in Israel before 1225. This has caused many scholars to place the Exodus about 1275. On this basis, Moses’ dates would be 1355-1235.

- *There were certainly more than two midwives, but these two represent the rest.*

- *The Egyptians thought of the Nile River as the mother of Egypt.*

- *Midian was located in and on both sides of the valley leading from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba.*

Chapter 1: The need for deliverance

1:1-7

1. What do these verses presuppose? What does this tell us about the Bible’s understanding of human experience?
2. How does v. 7 relate to Genesis 12:1, etc. What does this tell us about God?

1:8-14

1. According to v. 10, what were the two things that the Egyptians were afraid might happen? Given the history above why were they concerned about the first?
2. According to v. 11, why were they concerned about the second?
3. What then is the first problem that the Hebrew have? How does this relate to the promises of Genesis?

1:15-22

1. Notice who is named in v. 15 and who is not. What is the significance of this?
2. Why did the midwives not obey Pharaoh? What are the lessons for us? Cf. Ps 56.
3. What did God do for the midwives? What is the significance of that?
4. According to v. 22 what is the second problem? How does it relate to Genesis?
5. What questions do Israel’s condition raise about God?

Chapter 2: Preparation of a deliverer

2:1-4

Why this strange strategy?

2:5-6

Why did Pharaoh’s daughter defy her father’s command?

2:7-10

1. What do the arrangements of vv. 7-9 tell us about God and his providence?
2. V. 10 **her son**. Why might God wanted Moses to be raised in the Egyptian palace? What does this tell us about God?

2:11-15

1. What does this incident tell us about Moses? (See also 2:16-17)
2. What was Moses’ idea of deliverance for his people? What is missing?
3. What does v. 14 suggest to us about Hebrew attitudes and character?

2:16-22

What do these verses tell us about Moses at this point in his life? Note especially v. 21.

2:23-25

1. What do vv. 24-25 tell us about God?
2. What does the presence of these verses at this place in this chapter tell us about deliverance?

FRANCIS ASBURY SOCIETY SPRING 2012 BIBLE STUDY – EXODUS

Chapters 3 and 4

Background: “Horeb” and “Sinai” are the same mountain. There is no simple explanation for the two different names.

- Was it “the Angel of Yahweh” (v. 2), Yahweh, or God (v. 4) who was in the bush? The answer seems to be “yes.” “The Angel of Yahweh (or “of God”) seems to be used commonly to introduce an event where God is appearing on earth.

- In Hebrew “name” can refer to a label and/or a character.

- The actual Hebrew word that God identifies himself with is ‘ehyeh, which means “I am” as a continuing action.

Chapters 3 and 4: The Call of the Deliverer

3:1-6

1. What is the symbolism of a bush that burns but is not consumed? What might that say to Moses?
2. Compare v. 4 to Gen 22:11. Insights?
3. What made the ground holy? Why? What does this tell us about God? Why doesn’t “holy” appear in Genesis with respect to God? Why introduce it here?
4. Why does Moses only hide his face after God identifies himself as God of Abraham, etc.?

3:7-10

1. Notice the action verbs with God as the subject in this passage. What do they tell us about God?
2. Why doesn’t God just deliver them himself?

3:11-12

1. What is Moses saying about himself in this first objection?
2. How might we expect God to answer, and how does he actually answer?

3:13-14

1. What is Moses saying about himself in his second objection?
2. What are the implications for the nature of God in his saying his “name” is “I Am.”
3. What exactly does Yahweh say in his second answer? List what he says. What does the answer say about Moses’ real question?

4:1-9

1. What is Moses saying about himself in his third objections?
2. How does Yahweh respond to this objection? What does it say about Moses’ real question?
3. What connotations do serpents and leprosy have in the OT? What is God saying about himself?

4:10-17

1. What is Moses saying about himself in this final objection?
2. How does Yahweh respond to this objection? What does it say about Moses’ real question?
3. Why do you think God accommodated his call to include Aaron?

4:18-20

Why no narrative about Moses’ final surrender to God’s will?

4:21-23

On the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, cf. 3:19; 5:2; 7:13; etc.

4:24-26

What does Moses’ failure to circumcise his son (cf. Gen 17) say about his commitment? What does Zipporah’s immediate reaction say about their awareness of the command?

4:27-31

What was the people’s response?

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Chapters 5 and 6

Background: *The pharaohs were considered to be divine – the living image of the great god Amon-Re.*

- “Hebrews” is used only in Egyptian and Philistine settings. It appears to be a word relating to social status and not ethnicity. “Scum of the earth” might translate it pretty closely.

- English translations soften what the overseers said to Moses and Aaron (5:21). It is very close to the English curse, “God damn you!”

- “trouble” (5:22-23) is an appropriate translation, but the word also has the connotation of “evil, wrong” in it.

- “I am the Lord” (6:2, etc.) can be very misleading. It is not an affirmation of sovereignty, as it appears. Literally, it is “I am Yahweh.” As such, it is an affirmation that he is the ground of everything that is.

Chapters 5 and 6: Deliverance Rejected

5:1-14

1. Was the request to go and hold a festival to Yahweh deceptive? Consider chapters 19-24. Recall the discussion about “the Way Out.” Besides a deliverance from bondage, what else did the people need?
2. Pharaoh’s question (v. 2) helps us to understand the reason for the plagues. If merely getting Israel out of Egypt was the issue, how many miracles would that take? So what are the plagues designed to do?
3. What is the connection between “knowing Yahweh” and obeying him?
4. What does Pharaoh’s response (vv. 4-9) to Moses’ statement in v. 3 tell us about Pharaoh’s judgment concerning the sincerity of that statement? Why would he think that? How do secular people explain our spiritual concerns? How should we respond?

5:15-21

1. What did the overseers not do?
2. Why did the overseers blame Moses and Aaron? What human tendency does this reflect?

5:22-23

1. Pharaoh questioned Yahweh’s identity; what does Moses question about him? See **Background** above.
2. The offer of deliverance has actually made the situation worse. Why did God permit this? Compare this to what often happens after an initial profession of faith in Christ.

6:1-8

1. How does what God says in 6:1 relate to the previous question? Is this good of God? How?
2. While 6:3 could be saying that the Israelites has never heard the label “Yahweh” before, think about the meaning of “name” in the OT and suggest another possibility that would relate to this very situation. Look at the statement in v. 7.
3. What is God going to reveal about his nature and character according to 6:1, - according to 6:2-3, - according to 6:4-5, - according to 6:7, - according to 6:8?

6:9-12

1. What is the people’s response? Have you ever been in this state?
2. What is Moses’ response? What is the significance of his final statement in v. 12

6:13-27

Why is this genealogy included here, especially sandwiched between vv. 10-12 and 28-30? Consider vv. 3 and 8.

FRANCIS ASBURY SOCIETY SPRING 2012 BIBLE STUDY – EXODUS

Chapters 7 and 8

Background: *In this country, we have been protected from black magic for a long time. This is not true in other parts of the world. The works of the magicians here certainly involved sleight of hand, but that is not all that was taking place.*

- the plagues were an attack on the Egyptian gods (see 12:12; 18:11), so the each one has a specific god or set of gods in mind.

- if it were not for the Nile Egypt would be of no more consequence in history than Tunisia or Libya. The Nile was truly the mother of Egypt as each year with absolute predictability it brought in new soil and washed away the debris of the previous year.

- amphibians were worshipped because it appeared they could live in two environments at once.

- insects (particularly flies and scarab beetles) appeared to be able to turn death and decay into life.

- “a three-day journey” (8:27) would take the people beyond the borders of Egypt, as the Pharaoh well knew.

Chapters 7 and 8: Events of Deliverance: Plagues 1-4

6:28 – 7:7

1. Compare 6:11 and 6:29. What is the difference? What do you think is the significance? See 7:1-2.
2. What is the purpose of the plagues and the deliverance according to 7:5? Why is that important? Why not just get the people out of Egypt? What is the purpose of God’s activities in our lives?

7:8-13

1. What does the action of the magicians (see also vv. 22 and 8:7) tell us about miracles and their reception? Why does God permit this? (Look up Mark 10:13-16).
2. What would the swallowing up of the other snakes have suggested to the Egyptian magicians.

7:14-24

1. If the Nile was thought to be the source of life (see **Background** above), what is this plague saying about the source of life?
2. Note v. 17. Why is it so important to “know” that this God is the I AM?

7:25 – 8:14

1. Note that Pharaoh asks Moses to have Yahweh (not the magicians) to remove the frogs (v. 8). He is impressed in spite of himself. What is the lesson?
2. What is the significance of the time setting? Compare v. 10 to 7:5, and 17.

8:16-19

What is the significance of the magicians’ response in v. 19? Why did this not make an impact on Pharaoh (don’t say it was because God made it impossible!)? What does this say about the rarity of “deathbed conversions”? What does it say to us about our responses? (See Heb. 3:8, 15.)

8:20-32

1. According to v. 22, what was the reason for making a distinction between Goshen and the rest of the land? Compare to the previous occurrences of “know.” What is Yahweh demonstrating here?
2. What is Pharaoh attempting to do in vv. 25-28? Have you ever done this? What is the danger? Compare Ps 106:15.

FRANCIS ASBURY SOCIETY SPRING 2012 BIBLE STUDY – EXODUS

Chapters 9 and 10

Background: *Not only did the Egyptians worship amphibians and insects, they also worshipped animals, especially the bull, the ram, and the goat, which represented reproductive power. Plague 5 and to some degree 6 are aimed at the animals.*

- the Egyptians also worshipped the plants which had the power to return from the dead. The god Osiris was thought to have been chopped down with a scythe and beaten to pieces with a flail. But when his broken body parts were put in a mummy-case full of watered sand, he sprang up again. Plagues 7 and 8 are on the plants.

-typically it only rains two or three times a year in Egypt, and great storms are unusual.

-the greatest god of Egypt was the Sun.

Chapters 9 and 10: Events of Deliverance: Plagues 5-9

9:1-7

1. Many people have spent a lot of time trying to find natural explanations for miracles. In this plague look for three elements that distinguish clearly between natural event and miracle.
2. Compare v. 7 to v. 12, and recall the discussion from two weeks ago. Did Pharaoh harden his heart or did God harden Pharaoh's heart?

9:8-12

1. Compare v. 10 with v. 7. What do you learn about the meaning of "all" in Hebrew narrative?
2. What are the three stages in the relation of the Egyptian magicians with Moses and Aaron. What lessons do we learn about magic and God?

9:13-26

1. Notice the purpose of the plague in v. 14. Go back through the previous "know" passages, beginning with 6:7; what does Yahweh want us to know thus far? Leave room to add to the list.
2. What do verses 15 and 16 tell about the purpose of the plagues? What determines whether v. 16 happens because of us or in spite of us?
3. What are at least two reasons (look at vv. 20 and 21) why Yahweh said what he did in v. 19.

9:27-35

1. What changes have occurred in Pharaoh's thinking since chapter 5?
2. What is the difference between "belief" and "faith" as illustrated by Pharaoh here?
3. Add v. 29 to your list.
4. How do you think that Moses knew that they did not "fear Yahweh God?" (v. 30). What might vv. 31-32 have to do with it?
5. Have you ever acted as Pharaoh did? Sometimes it is called "fox-hole religion."

10:1-7

1. What does v. 3 tell us about the real issue in all of this? How do we reflect this kind of behavior?

10:8-20

1. Pharaoh tried to bargain with God in order not to lose his labor force (see also v. 24). Why do we try to bargain with God?

10:21-29

1. Notice that there is no warning prior to this plague. Why not?
2. It is dangerous to dictate to God (v. 28). Why? What was going to happen?

FRANCIS ASBURY SOCIETY SPRING 2012 BIBLE STUDY — EXODUS

Chapters 11:1 - 12:42 Events of Deliverance: Plague 10, Passover, and the Outset of the Journey

Background: *In many ways the god which the Egyptians worshipped most was life. All of the elaborate funerary rituals were aimed at preserving life at all costs. It began with the first pharaohs about 3000 B.C. and spread to the people as a whole in the following three millennia.*

-The firstborn son is the guarantee that life will continue in this family line into another generation.

-notice that Moses had already received the announcement of the final plague before the last encounter with Pharaoh reported in 10:27-29.

-the Hebrew calendar is lunar ("moon and "month " are the same word), so every year it loses five and a quarter days on the solar year. So every few years they have to add an extra month to get the calendar back in "synch with the solar year. But their months typically begin and end about the middle of the Julian months. This first month is Nisan, which typically begins in the middle of March and ends in the middle of April.

-the "quorum" for a Passover meal (or a synagogue) is ten males; not difficult in multi-generational families.

-Passover is on the first day of the week-long Festival of Unleavened Bread.

-whenever dealing with numbers in the Bible, it is important to remember that for ancients the quality of a numeral was at least as important as its precise quantity, sometimes even moreso.

—the Gk. translation says they were 430 years in Canaan and Egypt, e. including the patriarchs (cf. Gal 3:17)

11:1-3

1. What is the significance of Yahweh's statement in v. 1? Relate this to everything that has gone on in the contest between Yahweh and Pharaoh to this point.
2. On v. 2, look back to 3:21-22 and look ahead to 12:35-36). Why did God tell this in advance, and why did he command them to do it? (Consider chaps 25ff. and think what that says about the purpose of the Exodus.)

11:4-10

1. When thinking about this plague, consider 1:16 and 22, and 4:22-23. What are your reflections?
2. Now reflect on Matthew 2: 16 and John 3 :16. What are your further reflections?
3. Add v. 7 to your list on "know." Why is it important to know that God makes a distinction? Think about the criteria for recognizing genuine miracle.

12:1-11

1. Why didn't Yahweh merely exempt the Hebrews from this plague as he did several of the others?
2. The lambs (or kids) must be "without defect" (lit. "perfect", v. 5). Why?
3. Why are all members of the household to participate in the slaughter (V. 6)?
4. What is the significance of putting the blood on the doorposts (compare Deut 6:9)?

12:12-20

1. What does v. 12 say about the purpose of the plagues?
2. What is the importance of the blood (V. 13; see also W. 22-23)?
3. One reason for unleavened bread is historical. Flatbread will not get moldy on a journey (see W. 34, 39). But W. 14-20 seem to make much more of it than that. Why? (See 1 Cor. 5:6-8). Why is this important in the context of Passover?

12:21-42

1. Who is doing the "striking down" — Yahweh or "the destroyer" (V. 23)?
2. Look carefully at v. 27; what is Passover a celebration of? What is not mentioned here? What does this say about the reason for the Crucifixion occurring during the Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread celebration?
3. 600,000 men translates to about 2.5 million people (V. 37). Think carefully about the logistics here. How much land area would this many people cover when settled in one place, etc.?
4. On W. 40-41 see the background note above.

FRANCIS ASBURY SOCIETY SPRING 2012 BIBLE STUDY – EXODUS

Chapters 12:43 - 14:31 Events of Deliverance: Passover, Firstborn; Crossing the Sea

Background: *note that the text does not say they crossed the “Red Sea” but the “Reed Sea.” The Red Sea proper is south of Sinai. The Reed Sea seems to have referred to the so-called Bitter Lakes in the Isthmus of Suez, many of which were drained when the Suez Canal was created. If the people were hemmed in by the Egyptian army of the shore of one of these lakes, the situation would have been hopeless.*

- Aviv (13:4) seems to have been the Canaanite name for the first month (known as Nisan in the Babylonian calendar).

- the precise location of the places named in 14:2 is uncertain. The explains the variety found in many Bible maps.
-at this time in history, the horse and light chariot were “the ultimate weapon.” Egypt probably had the largest chariot corps in the world.

- the statements of 14:21-22 do not require something like “The Prince of Egypt” or “The Ten Commandments” to be historically accurate.

-14:25 is unclear. It may mean that the chariot wheels clogged with sand on the sea bottom.

12:43-50

1. Why wasn't this information included with the rest in 12:21-28?
2. What is the common element here? Why is this important?

13:1-16

1. Why do you think the sacrifice of the firstborn (1-2; 11-16) has a repetition of the commands for the Feast of Unleavened Bread (3-10) in the middle of it?
2. How are these commands different from those in chap. 12? Note vss. 5 and 9.
3. What is the connection between the sacrifice of the firstborn and what God did in Egypt? Didn't the blood really cover them? Note vss. 14-16.
4. What does all this say about the importance of history to theological truth?

13:17-22

1. Suppose the Israelites has been permitted to take “the easy way” up the coast road. What would they never have experienced? Share some of your similar experiences.
2. Surely God could have delivered them from war (v. 17). Why do you think he did not want them to encounter it at this point? Note also v. 18. Think about some ways this might apply to your life.
3. Why does the mention of Joseph's bones (v. 19) occur at this place in the narrative?
4. What is the significance of the pillar of cloud and fire at this place in the narrative?

14:1-9

1. Here is a further reason for leading the people “the wrong way.” What is it?
2. Notice the description of Israel in v. 8 and cf. 12:51, and 13:18. What is being said, and what is its significance?

14:10-14

1. What is the difference between the people's response and Moses?

14:15-18

1. Think of some ways God can “gain glory” through our lives.

14:19-20

1. See Isaiah 58:8

14:21-31

1. What is the symbolic significance of God acting in the early hours of the morning (v. 24)?
2. When has God fought for you against the “Egyptians” of your life?
3. Look back at vss. 4:30-31, and 6:8-9. Now look at v. 31 and think about the Israelites' behavior in the future. What lessons should we learn?

FRANCIS ASBURY SOCIETY SPRING 2012 BIBLE STUDY – EXODUS

Chapters 15 -16

Background: *Apart from Mt. Sinai, and Kadesh-Barnea, none of the other sites mentioned in the wilderness journey have been identified.*

- “Manna” is a transliteration of the Heb. mah-na, which means “what is it”? Many attempts have been made to find a naturalistic explanation for manna. None have really succeeded.

15:1-3

1. Look at the pronouns in this stanza. What is the significance, especially in view of the immediately preceding event?
2. Look up the following references: Ps 18:1-2; 118:14; Isa 12:2; Hab 3:18-19. What are your reflections on these? What shall we make of the three key words: song, strength, salvation? What do they tell us about Yahweh and our relationship to him?

15:4-12

1. Look at the pronouns in this stanza. Note that there are two contrasting ones. What is the point being made?
2. Compare 14:21 and 15:8. Is one correct and the other false? What is the principle of interpretation we should learn from this comparison?
3. Pick out a key verse in this stanza that would express the key point.
4. Relate our study of “know” to what is being said by this stanza.

15:13-18

1. Contrast the perspective of this stanza with that of the preceding one.
2. What impact will the news of the crossing of the sea have? Look up Joshua 2:9-10.
3. Look at v. 13 for a key word about Yahweh’s reason for acting as he has.
4. Compare vss. 13 and 17. Where is it that God is going to take his people? What does this tell us about the purpose of the exodus?

15:19-21

1. What is the function of these verses?

15:22 – 18:27 From the Sea to Sinai: a Revelation of Yahweh’s Providence

15:22-27

1. In v. 24 we have the first instance of behavior that was to become all too common (see 16:2, 8, 12). Why is our first inclination to complain? What is the cure?
2. What is the connection between obedience to God’s commands and health (v. 26)?

16:1-12

1. Note vss. 6 and 12. Add them to your “know” list.
2. What was the purpose of the particular features of the giving of the manna according to v. 4? How does obedience in smaller things train us for larger things?

16:13-31

1. What lessons do we learn from the giving of the manna?
2. Look at vss. 20 and 27. Why do we do these kinds of things?
3. Notice that while the Sabbath day is a commandment, we are also told that God has “given” it to us (v. 29; cf. Mark 2:27). What does that mean?

16:32-36

1. What was the point of doing this? Why is memory important to our faith?

FRANCIS ASBURY SOCIETY SPRING 2012 BIBLE STUDY – EXODUS

Chapters 17 -18

Background: *the Amalekites were a nomadic group who lived in the far northern part of the Sinai peninsula. Apparently they thought that a rag-tag group of former slaves from Egypt with all their Egyptian plunder would be an easy mark, and so made a long-distance raid on them.*
-apparently Moses had sent Zipporah and their two sons back to be with their father and grandfather at some point. Perhaps Pharaoh had made threats against them.
-“Eliezer” means “my God is a helper.”
- “Yahweh” (“the LORD) is the personal name, while “God” is the more generic term for deity.
-to date no Egyptian law codes have been found. It is believed that this is because the Pharaoh’s word was absolute and that he could change his mind from day to day as he wished.
-remember that “to judge” is not merely to decide legal issues, but to see that Yahweh’s creation order for the world is preserved and followed.

17:1-7

1. Why do you think they did not learn the lesson of Marah and Elim (15:22-27)? Why don’t we?
2. What important principle do we learn from v. 4? Why is that so hard for us to emulate?
3. What are the two elements in God’s instructions to Moses in v. 5? What is their importance?
4. Compare to Num. 20:1-13. What is the issue there? Look especially at vv. 10-11.

17:8-13

1. Why did it matter whether Moses’ hands were raised or not? What is the principle? (Notice v. 16, as well.)
2. What is the danger in this kind of thing?

17:14-15

1. The Israelites fought with many other peoples, and God did not put this kind of a ban on them. Why the Amalekites? (Notice the background discussion above.)
2. Why does it matter whether “a hand is raised against the throne of Yahweh” in this context? Through the centuries many have rebelled against him. What makes this setting different?

18:1-12

1. Look at v. 1 and think about the implications. Suppose Israel had had no difficulties and had just walked out? What insights does this open up when we think about the difficulties in our own lives?
2. Apparently Eliezer was born after Moses and Zipporah returned to Egypt, and before Zipporah returned to her father. What do you think is the significance of Moses giving that particular name to his son at that time (see v. 4)?
3. Notice the particular content of what Moses’ told his father-in-law in v. 10. What is significant about it?
4. Here is another “know” (v. 10) to be added to your list. How is this one different from all the preceding ones? What is the significance? Look up John 20:29 and relate it to this incident.
5. Compare v. 11 to v. 12. What is the significance of the two different terms for deity?

18:13-27

1. See the background note above and relate this to Moses’ behavior in vss. 13-16. What model was he following? What was the potential danger?
2. According to vss. 17-18, what problem did Jethro see in this behavior (see also v. 23)?
3. What model does Jethro propose? What is its value? What is the distinction between the role of Moses and that of the officials?
4. What are to be the four characteristics of the officials (v. 21)? What is the significance of these?

What four things had Yahweh provided for his people in the wilderness, and how had he provided them? What does this tell us about the nature of Yahweh?

FRANCIS ASBURY SOCIETY SPRING 2012 BIBLE STUDY – EXODUS

Chapters 19-20

Background: *originally the Feast of Weeks (or Firstfruits, Lev. 23:15-21; Num 26-31; Deut 16:9-12) occurred in the middle of the grain harvest, when the barley harvest was being completed and the wheat harvest was beginning. It expressed gratitude for what had been harvested and trust for what would be. Later, when the population was somewhat more urbanized, the festival, called Pentecost (because it occurred 50 days after Passover) came to celebrate the giving of the Torah.*

- the Biblical covenant follows the format of covenants made elsewhere in the ancient Near East between a great king and a subject people. Typically there is an introduction (20:1); a historical prologue (20:2); the stipulations (20:3-17; 20:22 – 23:33); and a sealing ceremony involving divine witnesses (24:1-8). Lawcodes promulgated by a king are also known in the aNE. What is unique here is that the lawcode is put inside a covenant and that the covenant is with God. A covenant involves mutual commitment and obedience growing out of relationship.

- the so-called “10 Commandments” function as a general summary of the more particular commands in chs. 21-23. It is significant that they are stated as absolute commands, and not in terms of cases. Thus they provide the enduring principles on which the cases rest. In a polytheistic world, no such absolute principles are possible.

19:1 – 24:33 A revelation of Yahweh’ principles: his character and nature

19:1-25 Preparation for receiving the Covenant

19:1-9

1. Note the date. How long after Passover?
2. On v. 2, cf. 3:12. What do you think Moses felt? Have you had any experiences like this?
3. According to 19:4-5; why did Yahweh deliver the people from Egypt? Cf. Eph 2:15b-22.
4. What are the implications of v. 6 for Israel’s purpose in the world? Note that it is conditional.
5. This is the second occurrence of “holy” in the book, the first having occurred in 3:5. Compare these two. What insights emerge?
6. How do these verses prepare the people to accept the Covenant?

19:10-15

1. What are the three things the people were to do?
2. What is the significance of these activities?
3. How do they prepare the people to accept the Covenant?

19:16-19

1. How does what takes place here prepare the people to accept the Covenant?
2. What do we learn from this chapter about God’s approach to human nature?

19:20-25

1. At least on the surface, this seems like over-reaction on God’s part. What do you think is the point?

20:1 – 23:33 Presentation of the Covenant

20:1-17

1. Notice what the first four commandments are about, and what the last six are about. This is a covenant with God: what is the significance of this proportion? (Remember the teaching function.)
2. What principle does the 1st commandment teach? The 2nd? The 3rd? The 4th? Summarize these principles in a sentence.
3. What principle does the 5th commandment teach? The 6th? The 7th? The 8th? The 9th? Then 10th? Summarize these principles in a sentence.
4. Two commandments, the 2nd and 4th, have extended discussion. What is the motivation for the 2nd and what is its significance?
5. What is the motivation for the 4th and what is its significance? Compare this to Deut 5:12-5. What is the difference between the two? Why do you think there is a difference?

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Chapters 20:18 – 22:31

Background: *it is interesting that there is an interlude like this (20:18-26) between the Ten Commandments and the rest of the covenant stipulations in Deuteronomy as well, although much longer there (Deut 5:23-11:32). - in ancient Near Eastern law codes, the commands were always stated in cases such as are found here (If so and so happens, then this is what you must do). What makes the Bible different is that the law code is put into a relational setting (a covenant) with God, and grows out of ten absolute principles that express the attitudes and nature of the covenant Lord – the Creator. They are not the arbitrary demands of a king, enforced by coercion. - people who could not pay their debts could become “indentured servants.” But the indenture had strict limits. -in general, there are three types of laws: moral - absolute commands and prohibitions - death; civil - case-laws - variety of punishments; ceremonial – commands and prohibitions – exclusion from community.*

20:18-21

1. Why didn't the people want to hear God's voice? Why would they think that? (Look up Deut 4:12, 33; 5:23-27.)
2. What was Yahweh's purpose in doing this? How does the fear of the Lord prevent us from sinning? How does this function together with the love of God (cf. Deut 10:12-13)?

20:22-26

1. Overall, what is the point of these verses? They are not part of the 10 Commandments, but not really part of the stipulations that follow either. Why are they here?
2. Given vss. 22-24, why do you suppose the particular restrictions of vss. 25-26 are here?

21 – 23 The Stipulations of the Covenant (What the parties of the covenant agree to do.)

21:1-11

1. What is the focus of these commands? Why do you think this section comes first among the covenant stipulations?
2. What is the importance of the commands in 1-3?
3. What is the key word in vss. 4-6? Why is it important?

21:12-17

1. What is the common focus of these commands? Why is it second most-important in the order?
2. What is the key point in vss. 12-13?
3. Why is v. 17 included with the others? What is so important about this?

21:18-36

1. What do these commands have in common?
2. What is the fundamental principle being established? Why is that important?

22:1-17

1. What do these commands have in common? What is the fundamental principle?
2. What is the point of vss. 2-3?
3. Why the difference between vss. 12 and 13?

22:18-31

1. What do vss. 18-20 and 28-31 have in common? How are they different in form from the preceding? What is the significance of this? (See the types of laws in Background above.)
2. What do vss. 21-27 have in common? What is the fundamental principle?
3. What is the significance of inserting 21-27 in the middle of 18-31? Accident? Formal similarity? Or?
4. V. 31 contains a very important summary injunction. What is its importance? (Remember 19:6.)

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Chapters 23-24

Background: *covenants were to be publically read and agreed to. They were witnessed to by all the gods of both parties. The sealing ceremony often involved dividing a sacrificial animal in two and having the two parties stand between the halves when they agreed to the covenant (see Gen 15:9-11; 17-20) calling upon themselves the same fate if either of them broke the covenant.*

- after the covenant sealing ceremony, the parties to the covenant sometimes shared a ceremonial meal (see Gen 31:54).

-24:12-18 seem to be transitional: they are not really part of the sealing ceremony, but do not deal with the Tabernacle instructions either. They seem to close the one and prepare the reader for what is to come.

23:1-9

1. What do these laws have in common?
2. What is the principle in all of these? How might this principle apply to us today? What does it tell us about the character of Yahweh?

23:10-19

1. What do these laws have in common? List the various topics. Do you find any common thread (beyond the general common theme)?
2. Why do you think the more specific commands concerning sacrifices (cf. Lev. 1-9) are not included here?
3. What is the purpose of the sabbatical year here(10-11)? How would this work?

Look back over the stipulations in 21:1 – 23:19. What are your reflections?

23:20-33

1. If 21:1 – 23:19 is what the people agree to do in the covenant, what are verses 23:20-33?
2. What does Yahweh commit himself to do for the people if they keep their side of the covenant?
3. Why do you think the promises are so narrowly focused here?
4. What is God's primary concern for them as they enter the land (vss. 24, 32-33)? Why is that a problem? How does it translate to our time and our relationship with the Lord?

24:1-11 The Sealing of the Covenant

1. Vss. 1-3 are not in chronological order (see v. 9). Why do you think they are not?
2. Why do you think Moses "told" the people the terms of the covenant first?
3. What was the function of the twelve pillars in v. 4 (notice the background comments above). What is the significance of doing this?
4. What is the significance of throwing half the blood on the altar (notice the background comments above)?
5. Why read the covenant to the people after they have already heard it and agreed to it?
6. What is the point of throwing half the blood on the people?
7. Compare Moses' word in v. 8 to Jesus' words in Mark 14:24. What is the significance?
8. Who are Nadab and Abihu (look up Lev. 10:1-3)? How could these men do what they did later after having had an experience like this?
9. Verses 10 and 11 both make a point that these men saw God? But what description of God's appearance is given here? Compare to Isaiah 6. What is the point?

24:12-18

1. Look at the progress from v. 9 -18: Moses; Joshua, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and the elders; Moses and Joshua; Moses. What is the point?
2. Compare the tone of 19:16-20 with that of 24:15-18. What are your reflections?

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Chapters 25-31

Background: *there are examples of moveable shrines like this known in Egypt. Thus we have another of the myriad instances of “incarnation” in the Bible, in which God takes something that is not unknown to his people and fills it with new meaning. The ultimate example of this is the Lord Jesus. He was fully human, and yet he was far more than merely human.*

- the general structure of courtyard, outer room, and inner room is typical of temples and worship centers in Canaan and elsewhere at this time. Typically the idol stood in the inner room.

-there is some confusion between “the Tent of Meeting” and the Tabernacle. In Exodus 33:7ff. the Tent of Meeting was in use before the Tabernacle was set up, but later on the Tabernacle is sometimes called the Tent of Meeting.

Chapters 25-40 A Revelation of the Presence of God

1. Notice that the Tabernacle actually took eight months to construct and was not actually erected until the Israelites had been at Sinai nine months (see Ex. 40:1). At least some of the content of the book of Leviticus was given to Moses before the Tabernacle was set up (see Lev. 1:1; 7:38, etc.) Why is the report of its setting-up (and the coming of “the glory of Yahweh”) included in the book of Exodus? See 29:46.

25-31

1. Skim these chapters rapidly several times looking for the overall organization. What are the three or four main topics?
2. What would you say is the common theme?

25-27

1. What is the direction of movement of these commands? What do you think is the significance of this?
2. What colors are involved? Why so many different colors? What is the significance of these colors?
3. What do you think is the significance of putting the ark of the covenant where the idol would normally go (see Background above)?
4. In pagan temples, the table was for the food which the god was considered to eat. Since Yahweh did not actually live here (see I Kings 8:27; Isaiah 66:1-2), and did not eat (Ps 50:9-13), what do you think is the meaning of this table?

28-29

1. Why are garments for the priests included with the instructions for the building of the tabernacle?
2. Notice that the priest carried with him in two places (28:12, 21, 29) the names of each of the twelve tribes. What is the significance of this? (Notice the repetition of the word “bear” in vss. 12 and 29. Compare Isa. 53:4 and Heb. 7:26-28)
3. What is the significance of the Urim and Thummim being over the priest’s heart (28:30)?
4. Notice the message engraved on the plate on the front of the priest’s turban (28:36). What is the significance of this? In this regard, how many times has the word “holy” appeared in chapters 25-28?
5. Notice the key word in 28:41; 29:1, 9, 21, 34, 36, 43, 44. In view of the kinds of things that take place in this chapter, what does “sanctifying,” or “consecrating” mean?

30-31

1. Notice that chap. 31 seems to contain some rather miscellaneous elements. Do you find anything that unites them? (Don’t force it!)
2. Prior to this, only Joseph has been referred to as having the Spirit of God (and is not said to be “filled” with the Spirit). Why do you think the point is made so specifically here (31:3)? And what does this say about the nature of Spirit-filling?
3. Why end with commands about the Sabbath?

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Exodus 32

Background: *one of the features of pagan religion is the attempt to control the forces of reproduction in the cosmos. Different religions do this in various ways, but the intent is the same. Thus the exercise of sexuality was very much a religious thing. The bull was worshipped because it seemed to sum up the power and reproductive energy that paganism is so determined to plug into. Sexual fecundity is the antidote to death. Thus the “play” after the feast was **not** volleyball or horseshoes!*

- by their action in breaking the first two commandments, the people have broken the covenant and have brought their own blood-oath down on themselves. If Yahweh is just, he must now destroy them.

- as has been frequently stated, Biblical Hebrew utilizes a very small vocabulary list. For that reason one Hebrew word will cover meanings covered by several different English words. So in 32:14 the KJV says that God “repented of the evil” he had planned. “Repent” in the sense of turning away from moral evil is one meaning of the Hebrew word, but it also means simply to change ones mind, as here. So also “evil” in the sense of intentional moral wickedness is one meaning of the Hebrew word, but so also is “calamity” as here. What Yahweh had proposed to do was not moral evil, and it did not need to be “repented” of.

- one of the misfortunes of Christian history is not to make a distinction between what was appropriate behavior for the unique people of God through whom divine revelation was coming, and all the rest of us followers of God since.

32:1-6

1. Why did the people want Aaron to make gods for them? How is this attitude the opposite of trust? Where are the lines between fear, trust, and “blind” faith?
2. What was happening on the mountain at this very minute? Why did God not tell them in advance what he was going to do for them? How does this relate to us?
3. What was the involvement of the people in the process? Who did the work? What is the lesson here?
4. Look carefully at vs. 4b and 5. What do you think was going on in Aaron’s mind? (Try putting the best “spin” on it, and then the worst.) What are some of the ways we do these same kinds of things?
5. Sum up some of the things that happen when we refuse to wait trustfully for God’s provision.

32:7-14

1. Note the background above. By even discussing the matter with Moses, what is Yahweh displaying?
2. Compare v. 7 with v. 1. What is wrong with both statements? Why does Yahweh say this?
3. Now compare v. 11 with the previous. What light does this shed on Yahweh’s purpose in this entire interchange?
4. What does it matter whether Moses “lets God alone” (v. 10) or not? Again, what seems to be going on here?
5. Now look at the final statement of v. 10? What is God offering to Moses? Why would he do that?
6. In vs. 11-13 what is Moses’ concern? What would you say he has learned about Yahweh from the events recorded in the previous chapters (6-31)?

32:15-24

1. Why is so much attention given to the tablets in vv. 15-19?
2. What are the appropriate and inappropriate attitudes toward sin in vv. 20 and 21-24?

32:25-29

1. See the background note above. Why did Moses give these bloodthirsty directions? What was at stake here? What is the lesson for us?
2. Note v. 29. Who did the Levites kill? Who was apparently leading the apostasy? Why was Aaron not killed?

32:30-35

1. How do you understand what Moses is doing in vv. 30-32? Is it a positive or a negative thing? Can a human atone for the sin of another before God?
2. What does Yahweh’s sending of the plague teach us? Did he really not forgive them? Think about forgiveness vs. consequences.

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Chapters 33-34

Background: *the difference between Yahweh himself and The Angel (or Messenger) of Yahweh is not easy to define. Clearly there is a difference, as 33:1-3 seems to show. However, there are numerous passages that start out referring to The Angel of Yahweh as the one present that shortly transition to simply talking of Yahweh as the one present. So there is clearly some degree of identity between the two, but what it is remains unclear.*

-the various –ite peoples were all ones living in the land of Canaan.

-there is some confusion between The Tent of Meeting and the Tabernacle because the Tabernacle is sometimes called The Tent of Meeting. (Critical scholars have used this lack of clarity to argue for conflicting editions of the text that have been rather poorly put together to form our present text.) But the solution is not too difficult: Moses erected a temporary tent outside the camp while the Tabernacle itself was being constructed. He called this temporary tent The Tent of Meeting. Later, when the Tabernacle was completed the name of the temporary tent was also given to it.

- there is no word for “presence” in Hebrew. The actual Hebrew word means “face.”

- Ex 34:6-7a is the most quoted OT passage in the OT(Num 14:18; Dt 4:31; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:5, 15; Jonah 4:2; Joel 2:13, etc.. Clearly this statement was thought to sum up the unique character of Yahweh.

33:1-3

1. What do vss. 1 and 2 tell us about God?
2. What does v. 3 tell us about God? How does this relate to us and the way in which God might deal with us?

33:4-6

1. What attitude might removing the ornaments represent? What does this say about the appropriate attitude toward sin?
2. What was used to make the Golden Calf? How might that relate to this action? What is the difference between the two actions?

33:7-11

1. What is the focus of this paragraph? What does this say about both the effect of sin and its antidote?
2. What do vss. 8 and 10 and the repetitions in them tell us?
3. What does v. 11 tell us about Yahweh and his eventual goal in all of this?

33:12-17

1. What is Moses saying in vss. 12-13, particularly in relation to vss. 1-3?
2. If God knows everything, then he knew he would go with the people (v. 14). Then why did he say he wouldn't in v. 3?
3. What do vss. 15-16 say about the Christian life?

33:18-23

1. What is the difference between “glory” (v. 18) and “goodness” (v. 19)? What is Moses asking to “see” and what will Yahweh actually show him (look at 34:5-7, and see the background statement above).
2. What is the significance of v. 19? Compare to Jesus parable (Matt. 20:1-16).

34:1-9

1. What does the making of the second set of stones tell us about what is taking place here? Why is Yahweh doing this?
2. V. 7b must always be read in the context of 6 and 7a. In that context, what is 7b saying?

34:10-17

1. What is the central thrust of this passage? What is the great danger for us humans?

34:18-26

1. What is the central thrust of this passage? Why here in this reaffirmation of the covenant?

34:27-35

1. Compare 33:20 with 34:29:ff. What is the goal of experience with Yahweh? (Cf. Acts 4:13)

FRANCIS ASBURY SOCIETY SPRING 2012 BIBLE STUDY – EXODUS

Chapters 35-40

Background: *the Sabbath requirement could be called one of the ceremonial laws that are no longer required after Christ has come and fulfilled the object lessons they contain. However, it is one of the Ten Commandments. -if the issues regarding the Golden Calf were finally resolved about 6 weeks after the Israelites arrived at Sinai (4 ½ months after leaving Egypt, and the Tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month of the second year (40:2), then work on the Tabernacle took about 7 ½ months.*

35-40

1. Compare the order of events here to the instructions in chaps. 25-31. What are the differences? What might the explanation be?
2. Think again about the overall structure of chaps. 25-40. What is the overarching lesson being taught?
3. Reflect again on the importance of ending the book with this information. What is the most serious human problem, and what is the solution to it?

35:1-3

1. Compare 31:12-18. Why this emphasis at the end of the instructions and again at the beginning of the report? Why do you think the Sabbath is not given the same degree of emphasis in the New Testament as in the Old? (See Background above.)

35:4-9

1. Compare what the people could bring here with what they were to give in 32:2. What is the lesson to be learned?
2. Compare in v. 5 with 32:2. What is the lesson to be learned here?

35:10:19

1. Compare v. 10 with 31:1-6 and 35:30-35 and then look at 32:4. What is the lesson to be learned?

35:20-29

1. What is the repeated phrase concerning motivation throughout this paragraph? What is the lesson?
2. What is the repeated phrase concerning the purpose of giving in this paragraph? What is the lesson?

36:1-7

1. What was the result of the request Moses had made? What is the lesson here?

36:8 – 39:43

1. Notice the phraseology in 38:21-22 that is repeated in 39:32, 42-23 and in 40:16, 21, 25, 26, 29 32. What is the significance of this statement in the overall context of chapters 25-40?
2. If Yahweh is so eager to live in his people's presence, why the repeated emphasis on his holiness? (Note that in both accounts "holy" is repeated numerous times, and that in this report the last thing said is about the medallion on the front of the priest's turban.) Shouldn't the radical transcendence of his essence and his character be played down to make him more accessible to them (and us)?
3. Think about the various materials of the Tabernacle and its layout as symbolic of the character and ministry of Jesus. What all is being symbolized?

40:1-33

1. Since the Aaronic priesthood ended with the final destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, how can the statement in 40:15 be true? (See Hebrews 10:19-22).

40:34-38

1. Many commentators consider 40:34-35 to be the climax of the book. In what sense would that be true?
2. Compare vss. 36-38 with 32:1. How did the Tabernacle address the people's concerns?
3. We have talked about what happens when we try to solve our problems for ourselves. Reflect back over chaps 35-40 and suggest the various things that happen when we wait for God's solutions.