

STUDIES IN THE BIBLE



The Wilderness Wanderings

Lesson 5

The Flight From Egypt

We left the children of Israel in our last lesson about to leave Egypt to begin 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. After the ten plagues, Pharaoh agreed to let them depart. Before leaving, they ate a final feast called the Passover and then began their march out of Egypt, 600,000 men plus families. Coming to the Red Sea, they looked back. To their dismay they saw that Pharaoh had changed his mind and had sent his army to return them to bondage. Seeing their distress, God instructed Moses to stretch forth his hand over the sea. As he did so, the water divided and Israel marched through on dry land with water on both sides. Paul says they were also under a cloud and that they "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (1 Cor. 10:2.) Their baptism unto Moses was thus a complete immersion in the cloud and in the sea. Thus it was a type of the baptism commanded by Christ which is an immersion or burial in water. (See Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12.)

Israel Forgets God

The Egyptians tried to follow Israel, but when the Israelites reached the other side, Moses stretched forth his hand once more, the sea closed up and destroyed the Egyptians. After 400 years of bondage, the children of Israel were at last free. For several weeks they marched southeast through the desert. During this period they murmured against Moses for want of food and water. In response God gave them quails and a kind of bread called manna to satisfy their hunger. (Exodus 16.) To quench their thirst Moses struck a rock from which water came forth. (Exodus 17.) In this we have an example of God's providence in caring for His children.

Finally, the people reached Mt. Sinai at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula. Moses climbed the mountain to receive from God the law which was to guide the Israelites until the death of Christ. God gave Moses two tables of stone upon which He wrote with His own hand the ten commandments. Forty days after Moses had ascended the mountain he returned to discover that his brother Aaron had, at the insistence of the people, made a golden calf for them to worship! How short our memories sometimes are! Here was a people who turned to idolatry only a few weeks after their God had delivered them from slavery. So angry was Moses that he broke the tables of stone and forced the people to drink the water into which he cast the ground-up powder of the golden calf. Three thousand of the Israelites were slain that day for their idolatry.

Once more Moses climbed Mt.



Sinai to commune with Jehovah for another 40 days. The tables of stone were renewed and further portions of God's law for Israel were revealed to Moses. Moses, in turn, communicated to the people this law which we know as **The Law of Moses**.

The Law Of Moses

The Law of Moses was to govern Israel for 1500 years from its proclamation to the death of Jesus Christ. This period of time is known as the **Mosaic Age**, (sometimes Jewish Age), taking its name from the great lawgiver. The age before Moses is the **Patriarchal Age**; that after the death of Christ is the **Christian Age**. All of man's history falls into one of these three periods.

The law, which is recorded in portions of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, covered virtually every phase of the life of the Israelites. It had civil, criminal, and judicial regulations. It governed the religious activities of the priests and the people, and set the moral standards by which they were to live.

Underlying the entire law of Moses were the ten commandments. These moral precepts dealt with (1) man's duties to God and (2) man's duties to his fellowmen. All of them, except for the fourth commandment ("Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy") are repeated in some form in the teachings of Christ and His apostles. We are to keep those nine that have been repeated, not because they were a part of Moses' law, but because they have been made a part of Christ's. The Law of Moses as such has been done away by the death of Christ (see Col. 2:14) and we are not obliged to keep it today. The command to keep the sabbath or seventh day (Saturday) has not been repeated in the New Testament. Instead, we are to worship on the Lord's day or first day (Sunday). (See Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10.)

The Law of Moses provided for three annual feasts. They were (1) **Feast of Passover or Unleavened Bread** which came at the beginning of the grain harvest, about April – a memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt; (2) **Feast of Weeks or Pentecost**, kept on the 50th day after the Passover at the end of the grain harvest; (3) **Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering** which came in the fall at the final harvest and which lasted seven days during which the Israelites lived in booths made of tree limbs in memory of their wilderness wandering.

God commanded the erection of a tabernacle, a small portable tent, to be used as a place of worship during the wanderings. It had two parts—the holy place and the most holy place or holy of holies. Into the former only the priests might enter and into the latter only the high priest on the **Day of Atonement** to offer a sacrifice on behalf of his own sins and those of the people.

Priests were selected from the tribe of Levi and their duties were prescribed. These included the offering of animal sacrifices for the people's sins. Chief of these were (1) burnt offerings, symbolic of entire dedication to God; (2) peace offerings, an expression of thanksgiving to God; (3) sin offerings, an acknowledgement of man's defilement by sin.



Forty Years Of Wandering

After the institution of the law, Moses sent twelve spies into the land of Canaan. This was the former home of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the land which God had promised to their seed. The twelve reported that it was a land flowing with "milk and honey", but that the inhabitants were so strong that it was unwise to try to conquer it. Only Caleb and Joshua filed a minority report, urging the people to believe that with God's help they could conquer the land. But the majority prevailed

and for its disbelief God compelled Israel to wander for 40 years in the wilderness. Of all the men who left Egypt, only Caleb and Joshua reached the promised land.

We do not know much about the rest of this forty-year period. Israel wandered nomadically from place to place in the Sinai Peninsula. It is during this period that we have such stories as the rebellion of Aaron and Miriam (Moses' sister) against Moses, and the leprosy of Miriam as a result (Numbers 12); the biting of the people by serpents and their healing when they looked upon the brazen serpent (Number 21); and the account of the effort of King Balak of the Moabites to get the prophet Baalam to curse Israel. (Numbers 22-24.)

During the wilderness wandering Moses committed his great sin—smiting the rock instead of speaking to it as commanded by God, and in doing, assuming personal credit for the miracle of water which poured forth. For this he was not allowed to enter the promised land. Shortly before Israel crossed the Jordan River to enter Canaan. Moses climbed Mt. Nebo to look into the promised land. His mission completed, he died at the age of 120 and was buried by the Lord. The entire story of the wilderness wanderings may be found starting with Exodus 13 and concluding with the book of Deuteronomy.

“Seek and Ye Shall Find”

Fill in the blanks:

1. When the Israelites murmured for food, God gave them _____ and _____ to eat.
2. Moses went up on Mt. _____ to receive the Law from God.
3. When he returned after 40 days he found the people worshipping a golden _____.
4. The period from the giving of the Law of Moses to the death of Christ is known as the _____ Age.
5. The three annual feasts which Israel was to observe were (1) _____, (2) _____, and (3) _____.
6. The two parts of the tabernacle were the _____ and the _____.

Read Exodus 20:1-17 (the ten commandments). After each of these commandments write the verse in which it is found:

1. The 1st commandment – Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Verse _____.
2. The 4th commandment – Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Verse _____.
3. The 8th commandment – Thou shalt not steal. Verse _____.
4. The 9th commandment – Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Verse _____.
5. The 6th commandment – Thou shalt not kill. Verse _____.

Read Exodus 14. Write true or false before each statement:

- _____ 1. Moses said to the people, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."
- _____ 2. Pharaoh's army caught and destroyed many Israelites.
- _____ 3. The children of Israel passed through the sea with water on both sides.
- _____ 4. The Egyptians did not try to follow Israel into the sea.
- _____ 5. When Israel was across, the sea closed up again.

Read Exodus 32. Write true or false before each statement:

- _____ 1. The people asked Aaron to make them gods to worship.
- _____ 2. As Moses came down from the mountain he was carrying five tables of stone.
- _____ 3. Aaron tried to place the blame for the idol on the people.
- _____ 4. When Moses asked those on the Lord's side to stand by him the sons of Levi took their place by him.
- _____ 5. The Levites killed 10,000 men that day.

Read Numbers 13. Write true or false before each statement:

- _____ 1. One man was selected as a spy from each tribe of Israel.
- _____ 2. They brought back peaches, apples, and corn.
- _____ 3. They told Moses it was a land flowing with "milk and honey"
- _____ 4. Geuel was the man who said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it."
- _____ 5. The majority said, "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of giants: and we were in our own sight as bumblebees."

Name _____

Grade _____

Address _____

Date _____

City _____

By _____