

# THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

VOLUME TWO

Herbert W. Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God (formerly The Radio Church of God until 1968) until his death in 1986. Hundreds of millions heard his voice and read his literature. God called him in the fall of 1926 and he was converted in the spring of 1927. Over the course of Mr. Armstrong's ministry, God revealed through him a great many true biblical doctrines, which had been lost to the Church through the centuries. After his death, his successors ceased to believe and teach these doctrines. Although copyright law prohibits the reproduction and distribution of *literature* produced while he led the Worldwide Church of God, The Restored Church of God is committed to the preservation and teaching of all of these truths!

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# THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

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## VOLUME TWO

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# INTRODUCTION

by David C. Pack

This is the second volume of a special series. These books truly represent “THE STORY OF THE BIBLE.” Many have attempted to write various kinds of “Bible Story Books,” but they are usually written only for children, and are primarily designed to entertain instead of *educate* or *inspire*. The reader will see that the wonderful style and artwork of this series capture the spirit of God’s Word, with its intended lessons and vital meaning.

Most children’s versions of the Bible terribly misrepresent important stories that it contains—and they are written with wrong emphasis—and wrong *meaning*! Instead of leading children to the true God, and to the true doctrines of His Word, children are left with the impression that the Bible only contains a *few* stories, and is mostly a book about war, violence, blood, thunder and death.

This is terribly wrong!

In keeping with the modern generation’s obsession with graphic violence, most efforts to reflect the teachings of the Bible “play” to this interest. Youth are given what they *want* to read, not what they *need* to understand. The many stories of the Bible are intended to teach VITAL LESSONS to people of *all* ages. Modern writers miss the mark when they *cater to* children, rather than properly *teach* them what God intends.

If young people learn the Bible in a *wrong* way—with emphasis on the *wrong* things, while ignoring the enormous number of lessons that the Bible contains—at least two bad things result.

First, all these wrong concepts and approaches must be unlearned and replaced by right knowledge and understanding of what the Bible *really* says. Unlearning error is a most difficult thing to do, and is actually far harder than learning the truth correctly the first time, leaving no need to sweep the mind clean of what has been wrong or misunderstood.

Second, young people will later find the stories of the Bible have been trivialized and made irrelevant, and they may find themselves turned off by its message rather than being excited and thrilled about what they are learning.

The modern system of education is morally and spiritually bankrupt! Deluded educators have been biased against God and His Word by the atheistic teaching of evolution poured into them from childhood. They have taught young people for decades that there are “no absolutes” and that they must follow “situation ethics.” They have led the world into a kind of secular humanism—where people are driven by how they *feel* rather than clear definitions of *right* and *wrong*! But there is right and wrong in life—and those who are teaching the children of this world have cut themselves off from this knowledge (Isaiah 59:1-2). They cannot teach what they were never taught!

Also, this world's churches keep young people steeped in traditional pagan philosophies and teachings that have deceived the world for millennia. They have ignored the great spiritual principle of CAUSE and EFFECT that governs *every* aspect of life. They have neglected to teach true *spiritual* values. They have defaulted their responsibility in all the critical areas of leadership—and have utterly failed in their greatest responsibility, which should have been to instill in young minds the marvelous truths of God's Word—to teach youth how to live, not just how to earn a living.

This is a tragic state of affairs!

Many who attempt to study the Bible become confused, frustrated and disillusioned, believing that it is too difficult to understand. As a result, many who *would* seek to teach their children true Christian standards and values, either give up altogether or leave such education to the *many* theological “experts,” who offer no end of differing—and conflicting—views.

Such an approach only serves to further confuse young people about the Bible, thus, in many cases, alienating them from it. But those who truly seek to understand God's Word, without adding their own interpretation (II Peter 1:20), will find that there *is* simplicity in it (II Corinthians 11:3).

Children need to be taught this simplicity! They need to know who and what they are—and why they were born—that they are future sons of God in the making!

You were born for a *reason*. Your life has a SUPREME PURPOSE! The Bible reveals how to be in harmony with the true God—and His purpose for life. The world is ignorant of this. So are most parents. They have no idea how or what to teach their children. No one is guiding parents, because no one knows *how* to guide them. Sadly, though the Bible is a gripping, interesting—even *fascinating*—book of true stories (all part of one great story), most find it dull, dry and boring.

This series is written to completely change this misconception in the minds of people of all ages! It uses language designed to expand your mind through the use of word pictures. Our goal has been to make the Bible *real*—to make it talk directly to parents and children. With only a little explanation, parents will be able to read these volumes to children as young as age three.

In today's world, youth are universally misguided, abused, neglected and ignored and this fuels a variety of rampant, escalating social problems. This is because society as a whole has rejected the SOURCE of true happiness, success, peace and fulfillment—GOD'S WORD. As King Solomon admonished, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

How many are even *attempting* to do this today?

Many true doctrines of God were restored to His Church in the middle of the 20th century. By the 1990s, they had largely been discarded by its new leaders. Part of our commission is to once again “restore what was restored” and to continue to “turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” (Malachi 4:6). The Restored Church of God *has* completely restored *all* God's doctrines to the Church!

Under the faithful leadership of Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986), vari-

ous Church youth programs were established as part of the fulfillment of this important responsibility. These included the Y.O.U. program (Youth Opportunities United—for teens), and the Y.E.S. program (Youth Educational Services—for young children). There was also a *Summer Educational Program* (S.E.P.), providing teenagers with the opportunity to fellowship with other teens and develop many skills and talents in a camp environment.

There was also much youth-oriented *literature*, offered to the young people of God's Church. These included a *Youth* magazine for teenagers, *Youth Bible Lessons* for children from kindergarten through sixth grade—and *The Bible Story* series.

Children are far too precious to ignore or neglect. While parents *must utilize* the tools that are available to them, they cannot do this if these tools have not been created.

As the only true extension of Mr. Armstrong's ministry, The Restored Church of God is re-creating these same written tools—as well as the magazines, books, booklets, articles and letters that once taught the full truth of God to millions around the world.

This series is being rewritten—with new volumes to appear on a regular basis—to once again make the Bible *simple*, so that the stories in it come to life! But these volumes are *not* just for children! It is our hope that parents and children alike will enjoy and benefit from them. Its forerunner was a six-volume work, once described as “written for children 5 to 105.” The original series is no longer available—but this new one is!

## CHAPTER TWENTY

# THE LESSON OF JOB

**A**t the end of Volume One, we saw that God used Joseph to provide a place for his father, brothers and their families to escape a seven-year famine. Because he had found favor with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, Joseph's relatives were allowed to settle in the land of Goshen. Its rich, fertile pastures were perfect for raising their large flocks of sheep and other livestock.

In all, 70 members of Jacob's family came to settle in Egypt. This included Jacob (also called Israel) and his sons—Joseph, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher—and their families (Genesis 46:27).

For a few generations, the family of Israel prospered there.

### **A Righteous Man**

The oldest book of the Bible is named after a righteous man named Job. Most people are not aware that Job lived during the time when Joseph reigned over Egypt under Pharaoh. Very little is written about his background, but it appears that Job may have been the son of Issachar, and a grandson of Israel (Genesis 46:13).

The Bible records that Job lived in the land of Uz, and that he and his wife had a large family of seven sons and three daughters.

Job was also a very wealthy man. In those days, wealth was measured by the livestock and servants a man owned. Job owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 oxen, and 500 donkeys. He also had a large staff of household servants.

Job was different from most rich people. He knew that his wealth came from God. He feared and obeyed his Creator, and did his best to remove evil thoughts and actions from his life.

Because of his great wealth and loyalty to the Almighty God, Job was well known and highly respected by others.

Though Job feared and obeyed God, his children did not follow his example. When Job's sons and daughters grew up and had households

of their own, they got involved with pagan festivals, such as birthdays. They each held birthday parties in their homes.

Job knew that God did not like this. So whenever his children celebrated their birthdays or other pagan holidays, Job would offer burnt offerings to God, asking Him to forgive them (Job 1:1-5).

### **Satan the Accuser**

One day, Satan the devil came before God's throne. Satan came to do what he always does—accuse God's people of doing wrong. The devil hates it whenever anyone decides to obey God, so he looks for ways to accuse and attack. The Bible calls him the “accuser of...the brethren” (Revelation 12:10). The name Satan means “adversary”—he is the adversary or enemy of God. That makes him the enemy of anyone who seeks to obey God.

God knew that Satan wanted to accuse Job of sin—breaking God's laws. However, the devil could not find Job doing anything of which he could accuse him.

God said to Satan, “I know why you are here. Have you considered My servant Job? No one on earth is like him. He has set his heart to fear and obey Me, and to reject evil.”

The devil said, “Does Job fear You for nothing? You have shielded him with Your protection. Because of You, no harm can come to Job, his household or his great wealth. Plus, You bless him with success in everything that he does!

“Now suppose You were to stop protecting Job. I bet that if You take away all of his great wealth, Job will curse You to Your face!”

God was not fooled. He knew that Satan wanted to destroy Job, and then mock God by saying, “See, I told You so.”

But the Creator had a plan to build godly character in Job, and help him to become an even better servant.

God said to Satan, “Very well. I now remove My protection from Job's family and possessions. They are now in your power to do with as you wish. But do not try to harm Job himself. He still has My protection.”

Like a spoiled little child, the devil grinned, then raced back to earth to do evil (Job 1:6-12).

### **Great Losses**

Satan unleashed his rage upon Job's family and vast possessions. He inspired the Sabeans to raid Job's 500 oxen and 500 donkeys, which



were out in the fields. Killing the servants tending the animals, the raiders stole the oxen and donkeys, and led them away. Only one servant survived to tell Job the bad news.

Then God allowed Satan to rain bolts of fire down upon Job's sheep. All 7,000 were destroyed. Even the servants tending the sheep died. Only one survived to tell Job the bad news.

Then the devil sent three bands of Chaldeans to steal Job's 3,000 camels. They killed his servants as they tried to escape. Only one survived to tell Job what happened.

And then Satan struck again. Job's oldest son held a birthday party for himself at his home. Job's other sons and daughters were there celebrating, too. As they laughed and danced, stuffing themselves with food and wine, the devil struck the house with a powerful tornado. All four corners of the house buckled and shook, until the walls finally caved in on Job's seven sons and three daughters. They died instantly. Only one servant escaped to tell Job about his great loss.

When he heard that he had lost his family and great wealth in a single day, Job mourned. As was the custom in those days, he ripped and tore the clothes he was wearing and shaved his head. Then he threw himself to the ground and worshipped God.

In his prayer, Job said, "When I was born, I came into this world naked. And when I die, I shall take nothing with me. All things come from God—He is the One who gives, and He is the One who takes away. That is God's right. Blessed be God's name."

Job did not blame God for his great loss. He did not curse Him and sin, like Satan thought he would (Job 1:13-22).

### **Another Challenge**

Satan came before God again, angry that Job did not sin against His Creator.

God said to Satan, "As you can see, I was right about Job. He is unlike any other man on earth. He has set himself to faithfully fear and obey Me, and to reject all evil. Even though I allowed you to strike Job's family and great wealth without cause, he still maintains his integrity—his innocence. He has not sinned against Me."

The devil wanted so much to show God He was wrong about His servant Job.

Satan said, "Skin for skin! A man will give up everything—even family and riches—to save his own skin. As long as he's not under physical pain, Job will obey You. But if You were to let me strike his body, I bet he will curse You to Your face!"

“Very well,” God said. “I now allow you to strike Job’s body. But you will not take his life.”

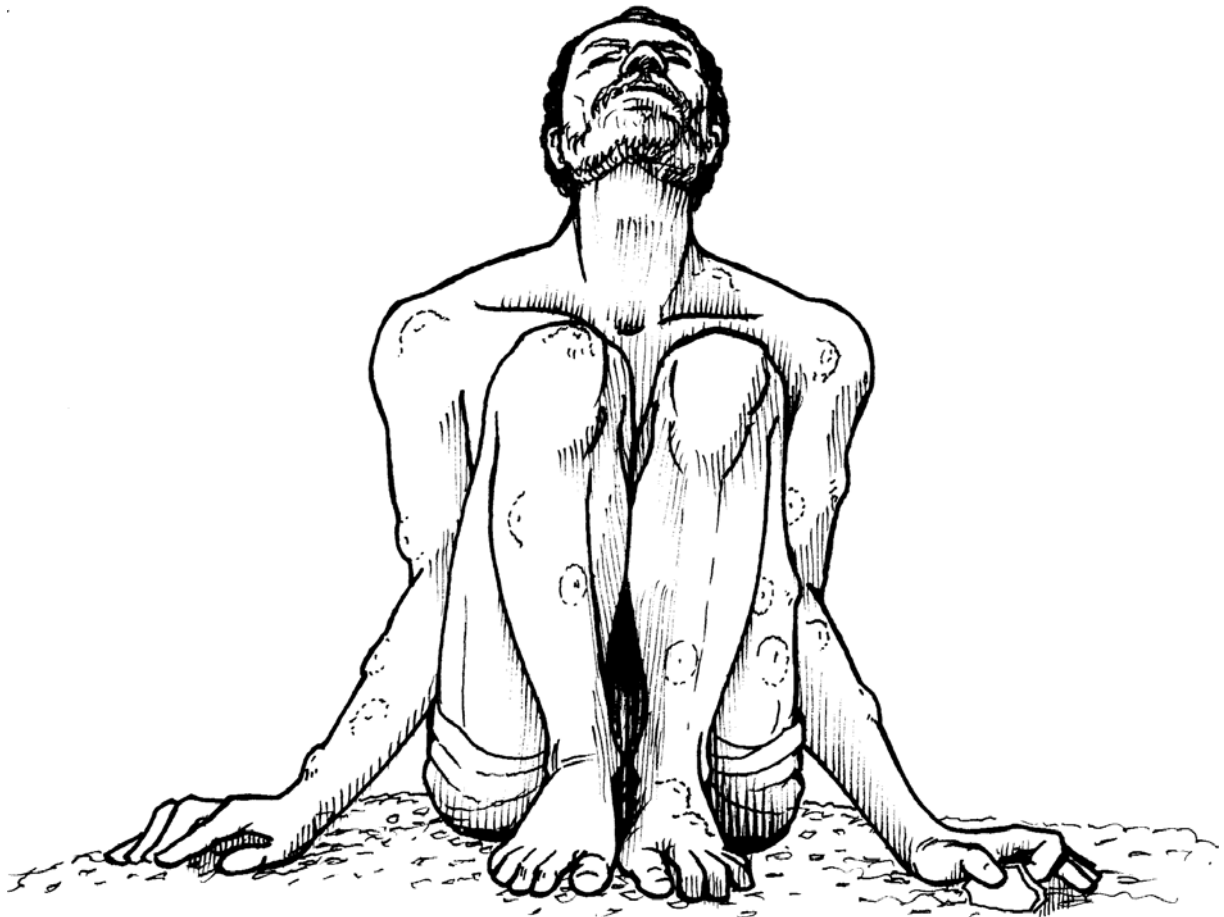
Satan grinned with glee. “I’ll turn Job against God yet,” he thought. Then he raced away to do his evil on the earth (Job 2:1-6).

### **Boils!**

Satan struck hard and fast—and Job’s skin broke out with painful boils. From head to toe, his body was covered with puffy blotches of sore spots. Each boil made Job feel as though his skin was on fire. And there was nothing he could do to ease the pain. Nothing, except scrape his skin with a piece of broken pottery to break open the infection. This gave him a little relief—but not much.

Though Satan took the lives of Job’s children, he spared his wife. He did not do this out of mercy. Satan tried to use her to get Job to sin against God.

Looking down at him as he sat in ashes and mourned, Job’s wife said, “Why do you still hold fast to your integrity? You should just



curse God so that He will kill you and take away your suffering!”

Job could hardly believe his ears. He said, “You speak as though you are a foolish woman who doesn’t know the one true God. Should we expect only good things to happen to us while worshipping God, and not bad things, too?”

Satan waited and waited for Job to curse God. But the devil waited in vain. Job refused to speak against His Creator (Job 2:7-10).

### **Friends Come to Grieve**

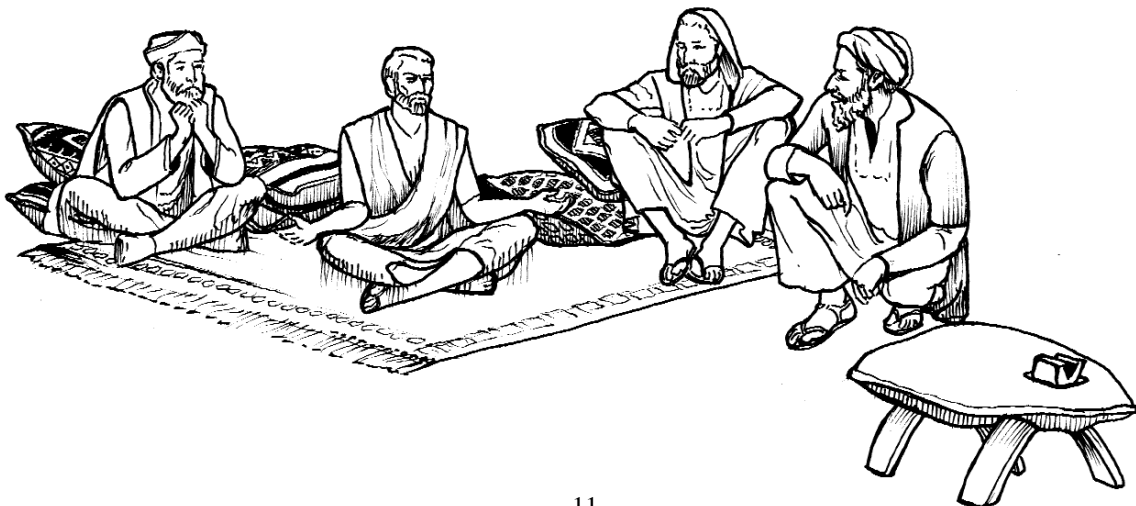
Since Job’s upright character and great wealth were known throughout the land, news of his suffering soon spread. When three of his friends—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite—heard what had happened to him, they immediately came to Job’s side. They wanted to mourn with him, comfort him, and let Job know that he was not alone. They were striving to live God’s way of love and outgoing concern for others.

At first, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar did not recognize their friend when they saw him. They were used to seeing Job laughing and smiling, and wearing the finest clothes in the land. Now he was sad, covered with boils, and wearing sackcloth—clothes even unworthy of a slave (Job 16:15).

At the sight of him, the three men cried, ripping their robes and sprinkling dust on their heads, just as Job had. Then they sat down next to him. For seven days and nights, Job’s friends grieved but didn’t say anything (Job 2:11-13).

### **Friends Attack**

Then Job opened his mouth, and said, “I curse the day I was born.” Though he continued to trust in God, Job wished he had never existed.



Eliphaz said, “Turn to God, Job. Just admit your sins, repent, and your troubles will go away” (Job 4-5).

Job replied, “I thought you were here to comfort me, not attack me! I have not sinned. And even if I have, I haven’t committed such a sin as to deserve all this. Look at me! My children are dead. My wealth is gone. My skin is hideous to look at and my whole body feels like it’s about to explode. What have I done to deserve this? All I want to do is die and end my suffering” (Job 6-7).

Bildad said, “God is just. He would never allow one of His servants to suffer so much if that person did not sin. Your suffering is proof of your sin. Follow Eliphaz’s advice, Job. Turn to God, and repent” (Job 8).

“But I haven’t sinned,” said Job. “I’m innocent. I haven’t done anything wrong, yet God still punishes me. If only I was never born” (Job 9-10).

Zophar said to Job, “How can you sit there and justify yourself? Your punishment is far less than you deserve! Job, you are standing in the way of your own happiness. All you have to do is admit your sins—then all your suffering will go away. Everything you once had—godly protection, success and happiness—will return to you. Stop being so stubborn” (Job 11).

“Leave me alone, all of you!” Job shouted. “It’s obvious that God lets the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer. What good is life, then?” (Job 12-14). Job complained that everyone had turned against him—his friends, his wife, even young children despised the sight of him (Job 19).

Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar argued back and forth with Job. They believed that the reason people suffered is that they sinned—they broke God’s laws. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar reasoned that suffering was God’s way of punishing those who sinned. These three men thought that the more a person suffers, the more he must have sinned. So when they saw Job suffer so many bad things, they thought he must have committed a great sin. That is why they tried so hard to get Job to admit his sin.

### **Job Proclaims His Righteousness**

But the more they argued with him, the more Job spoke about his own righteousness. Job knew that he had always obeyed God. “Therefore,” he thought, “if God is causing me to suffer, it must be His fault, not mine.”

Again and again, Job proclaimed his own righteousness.

To Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, he said, “I am not inferior to you”

and “My righteousness still stands” (Job 6:29; 12:3; 13:3).

In wondering why God had allowed so much misery to overtake his life, Job said, “Have I sinned? What have I done to You, God? Why have you set me as Your target?” (Job 7:20).

“I will say to God, ‘Do not condemn me; show me why You contend with me. Does it seem good to You that You should oppress, that You should despise me, the work of Your hands, and yet smile on the counsel of the wicked?’” (Job 10:2-3).

“Though God slay me, I will trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him” (Job 13:15).

“Why do the wicked live and become old, even becoming mighty in power? Their herds and flocks prosper. Their houses are safe from fear. Neither does God punish them. Their children dance and play, and never suffer. They spend all their days in wealth. Yet they say to God, ‘Depart from us! We don’t desire the knowledge of your ways. Who is the Almighty that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?’” (21:8-15).

“God knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than food” (Job 23:10-12). “Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. I will hold fast to my righteousness, and will not let it go. My heart shall not reprove me as long as I live” (Job 27:5-6).

“If only my life was back to normal, when God protected and watched over me. I was rich and powerful. I was filled with God’s great wisdom and understanding. When I took my seat among other powerful leaders, the young men who saw me hid. The elderly stood up when I entered the room. Princes stopped talking, even putting their hands over their mouths. They all wanted to hear what I had to say. They knew that I was righteous—I helped the poor and the fatherless. I turned the sorrow of widows into joy. I put on righteousness like clothing; justice was my robe and turban. I was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the poor. I broke the fangs of the wicked, plucking their victims from his teeth. My glory was fresh with me” (Job 29).

In Job’s mind, he could do no wrong.

### **A Case of Self-Righteousness**

Another friend, Elihu, came to visit Job. He was much younger and less experienced in life than Job, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. He wisely chose to listen because he assumed that he could learn from their

wisdom. But Elihu was amazed at how much the four men argued; he could not remain silent any longer. He knew that Job was relying on his own righteousness, instead of God's. And Elihu was angry with Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar because they failed to see this (Job 32-37).

With God's Holy Spirit active in their minds, God's people have the unlimited strength and power to defeat any sin, problem or attitude, no matter how large (II Timothy 1:7). And they can strive to keep God's Law perfectly, without sin.

Righteousness is keeping God's laws and commandments (Psalms 119:172), walking God's way of life, and putting His will first. No human being can do this on his own strength. All slip and make mistakes; all people sin (Romans 3:23).

But with God's Spirit, they can walk perfectly before God. They can be righteous—but this righteousness comes from God, not from men.

But no matter how good a person might seem to be, no human being can ever match God's righteousness. God is not impressed with the righteousness of men, which He says is like "filthy rags" to Him (Isaiah 64:6).

Job had forgotten this. He had done so many good things in his life—keeping God's laws, giving offerings, helping the poor and needy—he began to take credit for these things himself. He forgot that his knowledge of God's laws and his ability to keep them really came from God. Job came to rely on his own righteousness; he became self-righteous. The trials and losses he suffered revealed this.

### **God Speaks—and Job Listens!**

God was angry with Job. From a mighty whirlwind, He said, "Job, who are you to give counsel without knowledge? Prepare yourself like a man. I will question you—and you will answer Me!

"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who maintains the oceans and seas, keeping their waters from flooding the earth? Have you commanded the morning sun and caused its light to shine upon all? Who causes it to rain or snow? Can you bind together clusters of stars and galaxies?

"Who provides prey for lions and gives food to ravens? Who has given the horse its strength? Does the hawk fly by your wisdom? Does the eagle make its nest on the highest mountain at your command?

"Do you have an arm like God? Can you thunder with a voice like His? Then clothe yourself with majesty and splendor, with glory and beauty. Humble the proud, put the wicked in their place. If you can do



Once Job saw himself as  
he really was, he repented.

these things, then I will confess to you that your own right hand can save you” (Job 38-40).

Job admitted to God, “I know that You can do everything. You asked, ‘Who are you to give counsel without knowledge?’ I admit, I said things that I didn’t understand, things too wonderful for me to know. God, I thought I knew You—but now I understand that I was wrong. Now that I see You—and understand You better—I hate myself. Compared to You, I am less than nothing. I repent. I will no longer think the way that I did” (Job 42:1-6).

Job did not suffer all these bad things because God was punishing him. God allowed him to suffer because He wanted to see what kind of person Job really was. God desires to build His holy, righteous character in His people. To do that, He must know their strengths and weaknesses. When things go wrong in a person’s life, he will show what he is truly made of—whether he will trust in God or in himself. Suffering, trials and setbacks reveal character. Knowing what people’s weaknesses are helps God to develop His character strengths in them.

### **A Happy Ending**

After Job had repented, God spoke to Eliphaz: “My wrath is aroused on you and your friends Bildad and Zophar. You three have accused Job of sinning, which he did not do. And you have misrepresented Me and My purpose. I want you to go and offer sacrifices for your sin, lest I deal with you according to your foolishness.”

Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar did as God commanded. Meanwhile, Job prayed that the Eternal would forgive them.

God then restored everything Job had lost—even doubling it. Now Job had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 oxen, and 1,000 donkeys!

Plus, Job was blessed to have seven more sons and three more daughters. When they grew up, his daughters were known to be the most beautiful women in all the land.

All of Job’s brothers and sisters, and people he called friends—those who had turned their backs on him in his suffering—visited him. They ate with Job, comforting him. Then each gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

Job lived to the ripe old age of 140 years. He lived long enough to see his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and even great-great-grandchildren.

God had showered Job with more blessings after his great trial than he had before it (Job 42:7-16).



God blessed Job with  
three beautiful daughters.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

# A MAN CALLED MOSES

**B**ack in Egypt, Pharaoh and his people had become a powerful and wealthy nation. This was mostly due to God blessing Joseph with success in handling Egypt's business affairs. God always blesses those who fear and obey Him.

After a couple of generations of Pharaohs and Egyptians, Joseph's success was eventually forgotten. People no longer remembered how God had used him to save Egypt during the seven-year famine. Or how God used Joseph to make Egypt into a great and powerful nation. Instead, the Egyptians gave the credit to their many idols and false gods. As a result, the Egyptians no longer saw Joseph's people, the Israelites, as their friends. In fact, they began to fear them.

### Guests Become Slaves

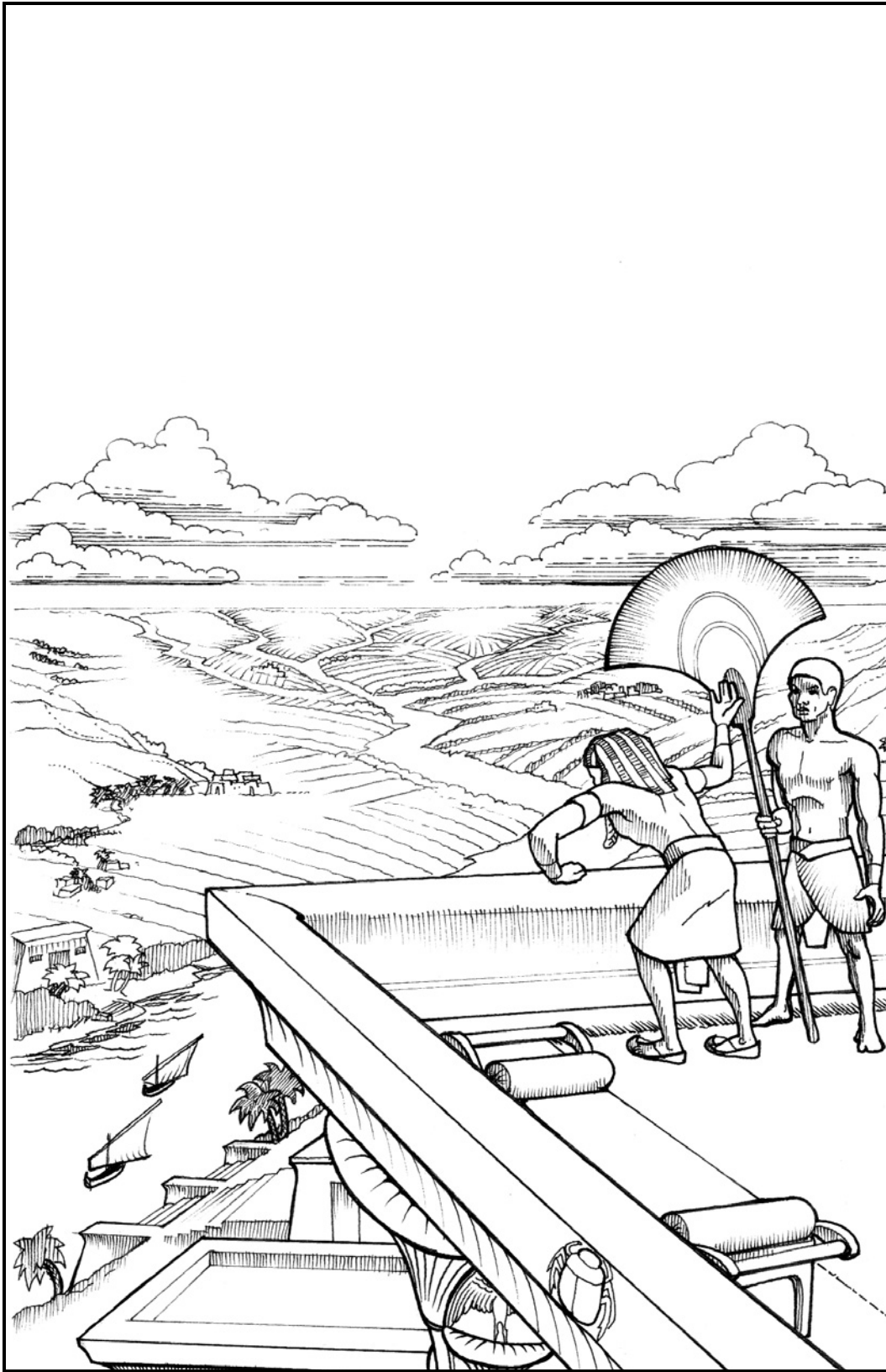
One day, a new Pharaoh came to power—one who did not know how important Joseph had been to Egypt. This Pharaoh did not trust the Israelites.

From a palace balcony, the Egyptian king looked down on the land of Goshen and watched the Israelites. He pointed to their many homes and to their ever-growing flocks of sheep, goats and other animals, and said, "Look at these Hebrews. Why do they live here among us? Why do they possess such rich pastures?"

Turning to his servants, he said, "Have we fallen asleep to have allowed these foreigners to grow so large while living in our land? If the Israelites become any larger, they may even become mightier than us!"

A servant said, "My lord, what shall we do?"

"We will deal shrewdly with them. If we allow the Israelites to increase, it could end badly for us. What if we were at war and the Israelites joined with our enemies? Egypt would easily be conquered. Or what if these Hebrews grow so large that they decide to try and conquer us? We would be attacked from within our own land. We must do something about the people of Israel before it's too late!" (Exodus 1:8-10).



So Pharaoh ordered taskmasters to be set over the Israelites. Dividing the people into small, easier to control groups, these cruel overseers forced the Israelites to do all the hard labor in Egypt. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had become slaves!

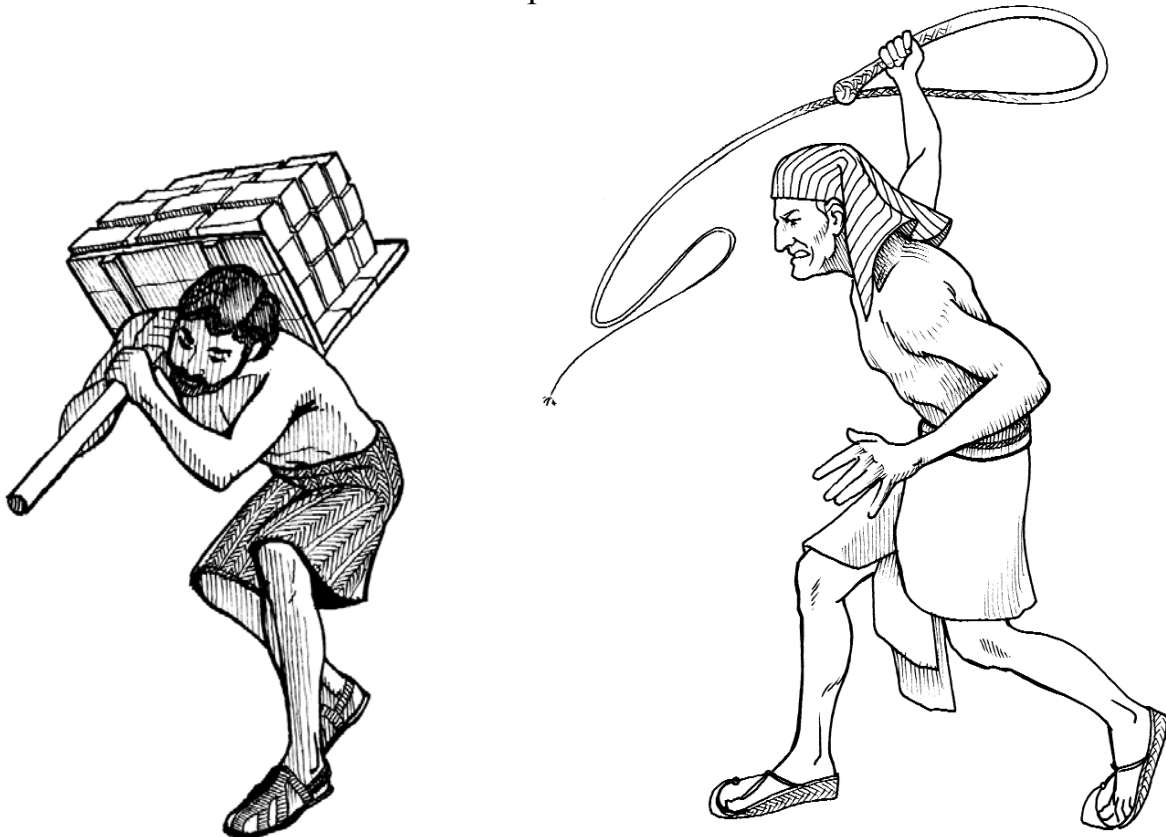
As slaves, they could not leave Egypt. They became a source of free labor to the Egyptian people. Pharaoh thought that if he made the Israelites suffer constant beatings and hard labor, they would stop increasing.

But he was wrong. The more they suffered, the more they increased in number (Exodus 1:11-12). This made the Egyptians fear—and hate—the people of Israel even more.

The princes and royal officials of Egypt worried among themselves. “If we don’t stop them soon from growing, they will outnumber us and seek revenge!”

So the cruel taskmasters were pressured to work the slaves even harder. The Israelites worked all day under the burning sun. They were forced to dig for clay, and then form bricks. They carried the bricks to various building sites throughout Egypt. They built large storehouses for grain and other foodstuffs. They also made water canals, temples, palaces, and other large buildings, such as pyramids (Exodus 1:13-14).

With each day that passed, life for the Israelites became more miserable and hopeless.





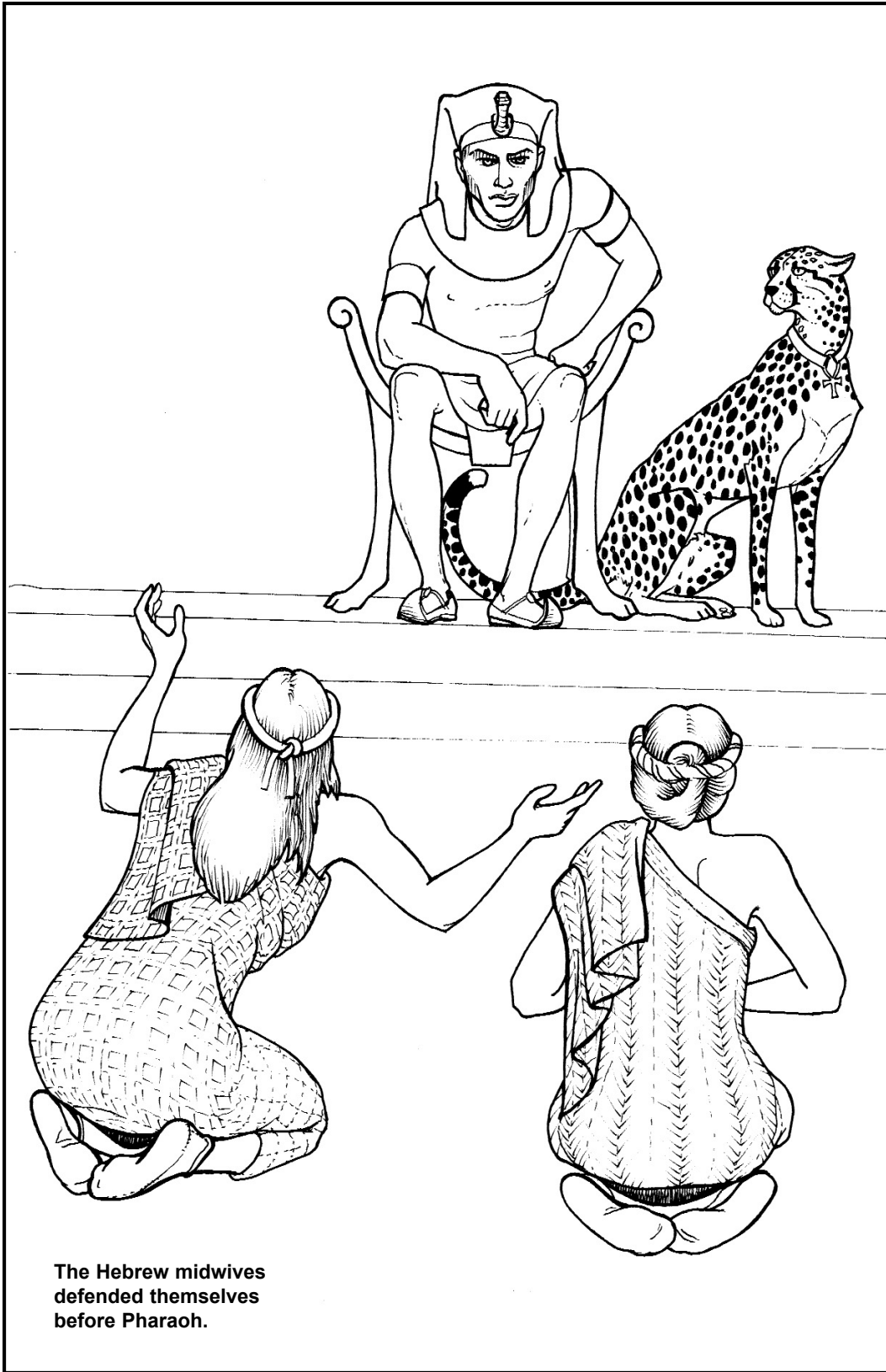
### **Slaughtering the Helpless**

Pharaoh was so determined to keep the Israelites from increasing, he called for the top leaders of the Hebrew midwives—Shiphrah and Puah—and gave them an evil command: “Whenever you and the other midwives are called upon to help Israelite mothers deliver their Hebrew babies, you must kill the newborn boys. Do not spare their lives. However, do not touch the newborn girls. They may stay alive.”

Shiphrah and Puah could hardly believe their ears. They knew that they could not go through with the king’s evil plan. The midwives knew that killing innocent babies was wrong and refused to obey Pharaoh.

When the king discovered that his plan was not carried out, he was angry. Calling for Shiphrah and Puah, he said, “Why have you disobeyed me and allowed the Hebrew baby boys to live?”

They said, “My lord, you don’t understand. Hebrew women are stronger than Egyptian women. Because they are accustomed to hard work, the Hebrew women are able to give birth before the midwives can even arrive.”



**The Hebrew midwives  
defended themselves  
before Pharaoh.**

This answer did not please Pharaoh. However, God put it into the king's mind not to punish them. And because the midwives feared their Creator and put Him first, God provided them homes (Exodus 1:15-21).

Meanwhile, the people of Israel continued to grow. This made Pharaoh blind with anger. He commanded all the Egyptians, "Throw every newborn Hebrew son into the river!" (Exodus 1:22).

### **Saved From the River**

Amram, a descendant of Levi, was upset when he heard Pharaoh's decree. His wife, Jochebed, had just given birth to a beautiful baby boy. Though Amram and Jochebed's older children, Aaron and Miriam, were safe from Pharaoh, their newborn baby was in constant danger. For three months, they were able to hide him from Pharaoh's soldiers, who searched the homes of the Israelites daily. Knowing that the Egyptians would eventually discover their baby, Amram and Jochebed devised a plan to save their little son's life.

Jochebed gathered some bulrushes (plants that grew along the banks of the Nile River) and made a small basket, or ark. Sealing it with asphalt and pitch to make it watertight, she placed the baby into the ark, and then set it among the reeds in the Nile.

Jochebed knew that Pharaoh's daughter regularly came to the river to bathe. She trusted in God to cause the Egyptian princess to find the baby and have mercy on him.

Pharaoh's daughter did come to the river that day. Meanwhile, little Miriam watched from afar. She wanted to see what would become of her baby brother.

When the princess saw the ark floating in the river, she ordered her handmaids to bring it to her. Upon opening it, she gasped, "It's a baby! A Hebrew baby!"

Even though her people had grown to look down on and hate the Israelites, Pharaoh's daughter felt sorry for the baby. "Such a beautiful boy," she said. "I can't allow this one to be thrown into the river."

"But princess, you know what your father has commanded," a handmaid said. "This baby is a Hebrew. He must die like the others."

The princess thought for a moment. Then she said, "Not if I take the child as my own."

Hearing this, Miriam rushed over to the princess. She said, "I know a nurse from among the Hebrew women. She can nurse the baby for you! Shall I go get her?"

The more the princess gazed into the baby's beautiful face, the more she felt that she had to protect him.

She said to Miriam, “Go bring me the nurse, child.”

Minutes later, Jochebed was brought before Pharaoh’s daughter. Unaware that she was the baby’s mother, the princess said to her, “Take this child and nurse him for me. I will pay your wages.”

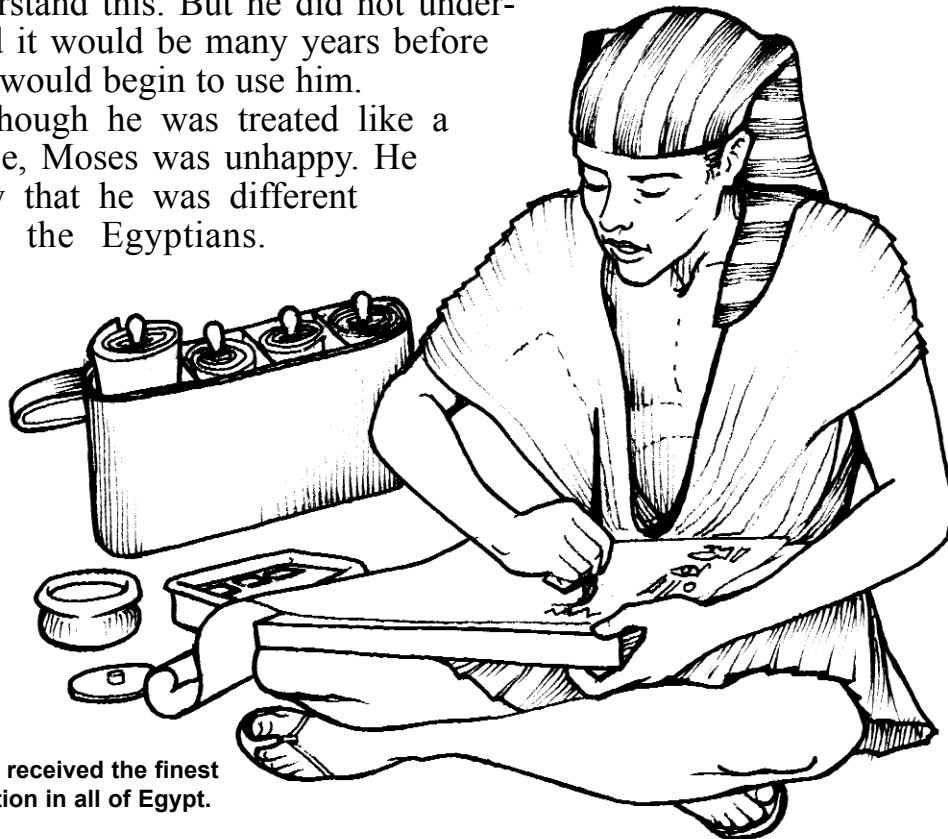
Jochebed did not hesitate to obey. She knew that God had given her the chance to be with her baby for a couple more years.

When the boy grew old enough that he no longer needed to be nursed, his mother brought him to live with the princess. From then on, he grew up among the royal leaders and government officials of Egypt. Though he was born an Israelite and the son of slaves, the Egyptians considered the boy to be the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, and thus a prince of Egypt. His adopted mother decided to give him the name Moses, which means “drawn out.” This was because she had drawn him out from the waters of the Nile River (Exodus 2:1-10).

### **Run For Your Life!**

As he grew up, Moses was trained and educated by the best teachers in all of Egypt. He was taught to read and write, and to think and act like a king. God was guiding Moses’ education. He planned to use him for a great purpose. Even Moses came to understand this. But he did not understand it would be many years before God would begin to use him.

Though he was treated like a prince, Moses was unhappy. He knew that he was different from the Egyptians.



Moses received the finest education in all of Egypt.



He understood that he was born a Hebrew. While Moses ate the best foods, wore the best clothes, received the finest education and lived in grand palaces, his people, the Israelites, were slaves. They suffered beatings by wicked overseers. They ate whatever scraps of food were available to them. They received little or no education. And their knowledge of the one true God was all but lost. The Hebrews lived in constant misery and fear.

Moses grew to be so curious about his people that he went out to visit them. He wanted to personally see how bad their lives were. "Maybe I can do something for them," he thought.

He came across an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew slave. The slave begged for mercy, but the taskmaster would not listen. Anger welled up inside Moses. He knew he had to act quickly. He looked around, saw that no one was watching, and then rushed the Egyptian, tackling him to the ground. As the slave lay in the sand, gasping for air and dying from his wounds, Moses and the taskmaster fought.

When the fight was over, the Egyptian was dead. Moses had taken his life. "If Pharaoh finds out about this, he will have me killed!"

Moses quickly dug a grave and hid the Egyptian's body in the sand.

The next day, Moses came to visit the Hebrews again. When he came upon two Israelites fighting each other, he said to the one who had started the fight, "Why are you striking your friend? Aren't you both Hebrews? You shouldn't be fighting each other."

The man snarled back at Moses: "Who made you a prince and judge over us? Do you plan to kill me like you did that Egyptian yesterday?"

"Oh no!" Moses thought. He suddenly realized that what he had done in secret would soon be known throughout all Egypt.

"When Pharaoh finds out that I defended a Hebrew slave and killed an Egyptian, he'll think that I'm leading the Hebrews to rise up against him!"

Fearing for his life, Moses ran away from Egypt to escape Pharaoh's wrath (Exodus 2:11-15).

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

# MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH

Moses was tired, thirsty, and running for his life. He wandered the barren wilderness until he came to a well in the land of Midian. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham, just like the Israelites. However, the Israelites came from Abraham and Sarah, his first wife, while the Midianites came from Abraham and Kertuah.

Lying in the cool shade of a tree, Moses watched seven young women bring their flocks of sheep to the well. These seven sisters, who were daughters of the priest of Midian, drew water from the well, filling troughs for their sheep to drink from.

Meanwhile, some shepherds also led their sheep to the well. But instead of drawing their own water, the shepherds drove off the sheep belonging to the seven sisters, and then began watering their own flocks.

Moses, who always hated when stronger people mistreated weaker ones, stood up to the shepherds. He helped the sisters bring their flocks back to the well and then watered them. The sisters were both stunned and grateful. It was unusual for a stranger to come to their aid.

When they arrived home, their father Reuel, also known as Jethro, wondered how his daughters were able to water the sheep so quickly.

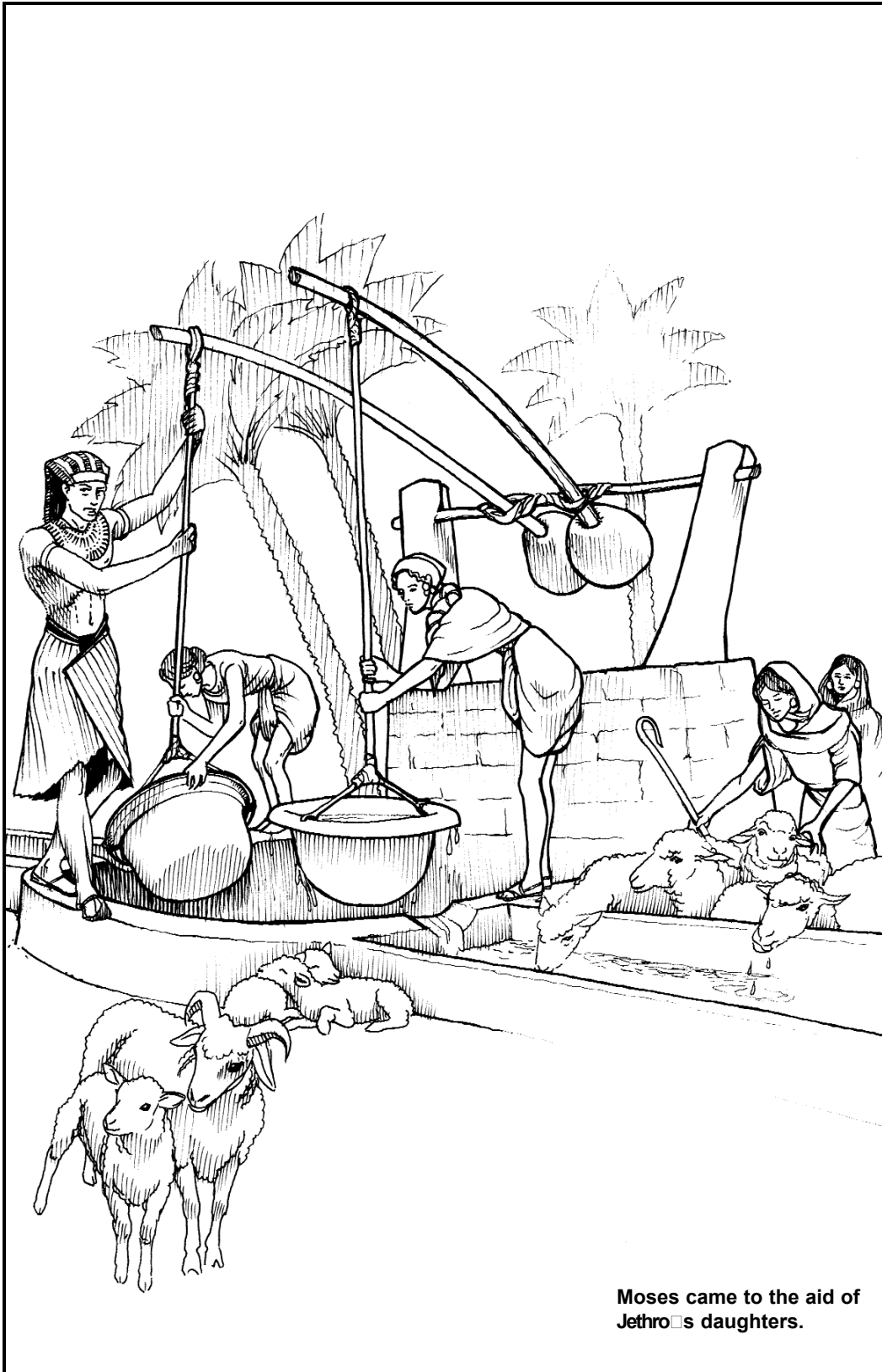
They said, “As usual, the shepherds tried to take our share of water, but some Egyptian rescued us. And he drew enough water for us and the flocks, too.”

Because Moses had been wearing Egyptian clothing, the sisters naturally thought that he was an Egyptian.

Jethro was so impressed that a stranger had defended his daughters, he wanted to repay the man for his kindness. He said, “Where is this Egyptian? Why didn’t you bring him home so that I could thank him?”

The daughters did not know what to say. In their excitement, they had left Moses sitting by the well.

Jethro said, “Quick! Find the stranger and bring him home so that we can feed him. It’s the least we can do to show him our thanks.”



Moses came to the aid of Jethro's daughters.

The sisters found Moses and brought him back to their home. Jethro greeted him with a giant bear hug. “My friend, sit, eat, drink. You are my guest. My home is your home.”

Overwhelmed with such kindness, Moses decided to stay for a few days until he could decide where he would go next. Days became weeks, and weeks became months. Meanwhile, Moses worked hard for Jethro. He helped him and the rest of his family tend to their many sheep.

Thoughts of returning to Egypt faded away when Jethro decided to give Zipporah, one of his daughters, to be Moses’ wife. Soon after they married, she gave birth to a son. Moses named him Gershom, which meant “stranger there.” This was because Moses was a stranger in a foreign land. He longed to be with his people and see them freed from slavery. But he didn’t see any hope of this happening (Exodus 2:15-22).

### **God Hears**

Forty years had passed since Moses fled Egypt, and now Pharaoh was dead. For the Israelites, slavery was becoming unbearable. With all hope lost, the Hebrews cried out to the God of their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Though over the years they had lost most of the knowledge they had about the Creator, they did know that He was their only hope. So they continually prayed and cried out to God, begging Him to deliver them.

God took pity and heard their desperate prayers. Though Israel had strayed from Him and followed the pagan customs and traditions of the Egyptians, God took notice of the Hebrews’ suffering and misery. And He remembered the promise He had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: to multiply their descendants like the stars above and give them a beautiful land flowing with milk and honey.

God always keeps His word.

He decided that it was now time to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt and lead them to the Promised Land (Exodus 2:23-25). And as always, God planned to use one man to lead such a huge project.

### **Moses and the Burning Bush**

One day while Moses was tending sheep, he led his flock to the back of the desert and came to Mount Horeb. Walking along the way, he saw a strange sight: a bush was on fire—but it would not burn up!

“This is odd,” Moses thought. “The fire should have burned up the bush and gone out by now.”

Curious, he stepped closer to it.

When he drew near, a loud and mighty voice boomed out from the bush: “Moses, Moses!”

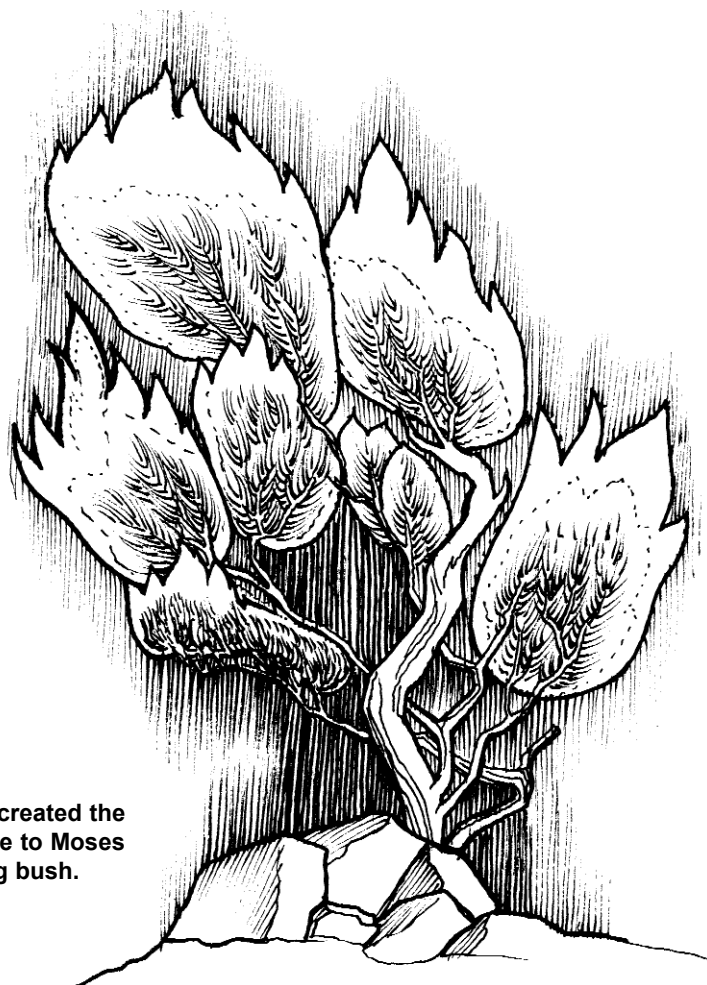
Moses was shocked to hear his name called. Slowly stepping away from the bush, he answered, “Here I am.”

The voice, which came from the Messenger of the Eternal, said, “Do not come near this place. You are standing on holy—special—ground, set apart by My presence for a great purpose. Treat this holy ground with respect, and take your sandals off your feet.”

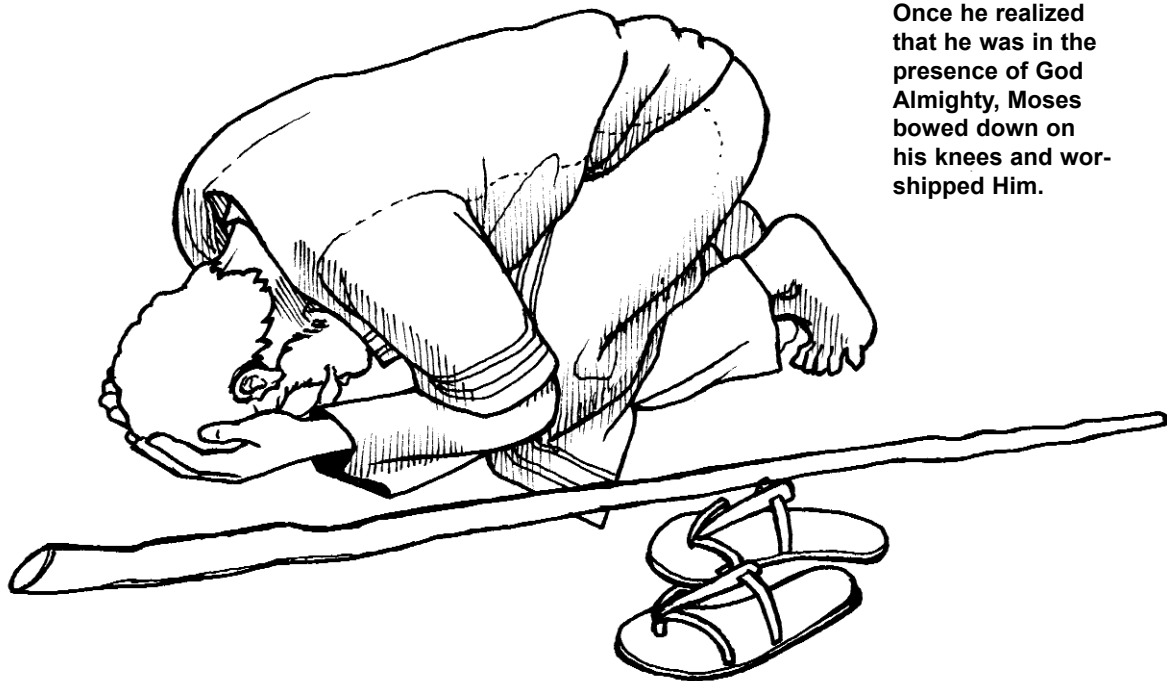
Moses quickly obeyed and removed his sandals. He thought to himself, “Who is this voice coming from the burning bush?”

The Messenger of the Eternal—the Member of the God Family who speaks for God the Father, and later became Jesus Christ—said, “I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!”

Moses dropped to his knees and hid his face to the ground. He was too afraid to look at the burning bush. He realized that the Creator of the universe was speaking from it (Exodus 3:1-6).



**The One who created the universe spoke to Moses from a burning bush.**



Once he realized that he was in the presence of God Almighty, Moses bowed down on his knees and worshipped Him.

God said, “I have seen how My people have suffered in the land of Egypt. I have heard them cry out to Me because of the violent beatings from their taskmasters. I know the sorrows of the children of Israel. I have come to deliver them from the cruel hand of the Egyptians. I will free My people from Egypt and will deliver them into Canaan, a great land flowing with milk and honey. Moses, I will send you to Pharaoh and will use you to bring My people out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:7-10).

Moses said, “Who am I to go to Pharaoh, or to bring the Israelites out of Egypt? I had to runaway from there just to save my life. If Pharaoh remembers who I am, he’ll have me killed. And if I am not remembered, why should he listen to me, a stranger? I’m no one!”

God reassured Moses. “Do not fear. I will be with you and protect you. I will also give you the wisdom to do and say the right things.”

But Moses replied, “Suppose I do go to Pharaoh and the children of Israel and tell them that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has sent me. They will want to know your name—what shall I tell them?”

“Tell them I AM THAT I AM. This is My name. Tell the children of Israel that the God who calls Himself ‘I AM’ has sent you to them. For now on, they and their children after them shall know Me by this name forever” (Exodus 3:11-16). The Eternal then directed Moses to gather the elders, or leaders, of Israel and tell them what God planned to do.

“Then you and the elders shall face Pharaoh,” God said, “and tell him that I command My people to make a three-day journey into the wilderness in order to worship Me. But Pharaoh will not release them until I strike Egypt down with mighty miracles and wonders.”

God then told Moses that when Israel is set free, the people will leave Egypt carrying away Egyptian treasures of silver and gold, as well as the finest clothes (Exodus 3:18-22).

Though this should have encouraged him, Moses still made excuses. “But they won’t listen to me. No one will believe me when I tell them that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has appeared to me.”

The Eternal was patient with Moses. He said to him, “What is that in your hand?”

Moses looked at his shepherd rod, which he always had with him when tending sheep. He used it to protect his flock from wild animals. He also used it to guide and sometimes correct them. “You mean this, Eternal One?”

God said, “Yes. Cast it to the ground.”

Moses obeyed—and the rod of wood mysteriously changed into a long, hissing snake!

“Now reach out and grab the snake by its tail.”

Again, Moses obeyed—the snake changed back into the shepherd rod!

“When the people see this miracle,” God said, “they will believe that I have appeared to you” (Exodus 4:1-5).

Knowing that Moses would ask for more proof, God commanded Moses to put his hand inside his robe next to his chest. When Moses took it back out, his hand was withered, full of holes and caked with white flakes of rotting skin.

Moses gasped: “Leprosy!”

God told him to place his hand back inside his robes; Moses quickly obeyed. When he brought it back out, his hand was completely healed.

“If the people do not believe the first miracle, they will believe this one. And if some still refuse to believe and will not listen to you, then you shall take some water from the Nile River and pour it on dry land. That water will become blood” (Exodus 4:6-9).

Though he knew that he was in the presence of the Almighty God and had watched Him perform astounding miracles, Moses still came up with excuses. He did not want to accept this special mission.

He said, “Many years have passed since I left Egypt. I won’t be able to speak the Egyptian language well enough for Pharaoh and his people to take me seriously. When I stumble over my words they will

laugh at me. Also, I don't know how to speak Hebrew well enough for the Israelite elders to accept me as their leader."

"Who has made the mouths of men?" said God. "I am the One who gives all humans the ability to speak, hear and see—and I am the One who can take these abilities away! Now go, Moses, and I will use your mouth to speak for Me. I will teach you what you shall say."

But Moses said, "Please, God, pick someone else for this mission."

The Eternal was angry—yet He was still patient with the man. He said, "Your brother Aaron will speak for you. You will teach him what I will teach you, and Aaron will be your spokesman. Now go, and take your rod with you. You shall use it to perform mighty miracles. Do not be afraid of the Egyptians, for I am with you" (Exodus 4:10-17).

Finally realizing that God would not take "no" for an answer, Moses went home and prepared for his trip to Egypt.

### **Parting Ways**

Moses explained to his father-in-law, Jethro, that he needed to journey to Egypt. "It's been 40 years since I've seen any of my relatives," he said. "I need to know what has become of them."

Jethro simply told him, "I understand, Moses. Go in peace."

Afterward, God spoke to Moses, reassuring him that the Egyptians who wanted to take his life 40 years ago were now dead.

So Moses took his wife Zipporah and their sons, Gershom and Eliezer, and the shepherd rod and headed for Egypt (Exodus 4:18-20).

Along the way, God reminded Moses to use the rod to perform miracles and wonders before Pharaoh. "But remember, I will harden the Egyptian king's heart. He will not let My people go. Then you will say to Pharaoh that Israel is a firstborn son to Me. If Israel is not given freedom, then I will take the life of Pharaoh's firstborn son!"

Some time later, Moses and his wife began to argue about a very serious matter concerning one of their sons. This made Moses decide to send his family back to Midian so that he could focus on completing his special mission (Exodus 4:21-26).



CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

**CONFRONTING  
THE KING OF EGYPT**

**B**ack in Egypt, God spoke to Aaron and told him to go out into the wilderness. “There you will find your long-lost brother, Moses.”

Aaron obeyed, and met his brother out in the wilderness. They cried and hugged each other. They could not remember ever feeling so happy.

Moses quickly told Aaron everything that God had said. “My special mission includes you, too, Aaron.”

“Me?”

“Yes,” said Moses. “It’s been 40 years since I’ve had to speak Egyptian or Hebrew to anyone. I am out of practice. If I speak before Pharaoh or the elders of Israel, I’ll get my words confused and jumbled, and I stutter. No one will listen to the words God has given me because they’ll be too busy laughing at the way I speak. I need your help.”

Aaron said, “What do you need me to do?”

“God has picked you to be my spokesman,” Moses answered.

“A spokesman?”

Moses said, “Yes. Since you speak both Egyptian and Hebrew very smoothly, you will speak for me. Whatever God tells me, I will tell you. Then you will tell Pharaoh, and the elders of Israel. Are you ready?”

Aaron nodded slowly as he thought about this great responsibility. “Yes, I’m ready” (Exodus 4:27-28).

As soon as the two brothers came to Egypt, they gathered the elders of Israel in the land of Goshen and told them about the Eternal’s plan. “The God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is going to free all of Israel from slavery, and will deliver His people into Canaan, the Promised Land.”

Those who doubted that God had really spoken to Moses were amazed when they saw Moses perform fantastic miracles.

One man shouted, “Such power can only come from the one true

God!” The other elders quickly agreed.

“The Eternal has seen our suffering and has heard our prayers,” they said to themselves. “He sent us Moses to lead us out of slavery. After all these many years, God will deliver us into the Promised Land!”

Then they all bowed their heads and worshipped God, who calls Himself “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 4:29-31).

### **Standing Before Pharaoh**

Getting an audience before Pharaoh was not easy. He only listened to very important people, such as other members of the royal family, government officials, or representatives of other nations. He did not consider the Hebrews important.

However, Moses had been raised among Egyptian royalty since he was a child. He knew how to get an audience before Pharaoh. This was just one of the many reasons why God picked Moses to represent Him before the Egyptian king.

Sitting from his throne in the midst of the royal court, Pharaoh pointed a finger at Moses, Aaron and the elders of Israel. “Why are these Hebrew slaves standing here before me?”

Before any of his royal servants could answer, Aaron stepped forward. Speaking for Moses, he said, “The God of the Israelites has a message for you, O king.”

Pharaoh sat back in his seat. “Oh really? And just what is this message?”

“God says to you, ‘Let My people go, so they can worship Me in the wilderness.’”

A wicked smile grew across Pharaoh’s face. He said, “Egypt worships many gods. Who is this God that you speak of? I don’t know Him. Why should I obey His voice?”

“The God of the Hebrews has spoken to us,” Aaron said. “Release us so that we might go on a three-day journey out into the wilderness and worship Him there. Otherwise, He may punish us with a disease or by an army.”

The king silently stared at the faces of Moses, Aaron and the elders of Israel. His anger boiled within him.

Certain that Pharaoh would need to see proof of God’s power, Moses stepped closer, ready to use his shepherd rod.

Pharaoh leaned forward and said, “Moses and Aaron, why do you keep my slaves from doing their labor? Because of you, the elders of Israel are here instead of out in the field working! Now leave my royal

court and get back to work—all of you!”

Before Moses was able to use his rod to perform God’s miracles, Pharaoh’s soldiers surrounded the Hebrews and shoved them out of the throne room (Exodus 5:1-4).

### **Pharaoh Punishes the Slaves**

Pharaoh was angry. The more he thought about Moses and Aaron’s request, the angrier he became.

“Who do those slaves think they are telling me to let them go?” he muttered.

He called for the captain of the guard.

“Yes, my lord?” the man said.

Pharaoh said, “I want you to gather my taskmasters and the Hebrew officials and give them this message: ‘No more will you give my Israelite slaves straw to make bricks. From now on, the slaves shall gather their own straw. Yet they must still lay the same number of bricks as they did before. Do not let them reduce the number. These Hebrews are lazy. They are just trying to make an excuse to get out of work. Since they think they have time to go out into the wilderness to worship their God, then they have time to gather straw for themselves.’”

The captain of the guard quickly went out to deliver Pharaoh’s message.

Upon hearing their king’s command, the taskmasters told the Israelites to gather their own straw. “We will not give it to you. And we expect you to make and lay the same number of bricks as you have done in the past,” they added. “No excuses!”

But straw was difficult to find, so the slaves worked long hours to gather whatever stubble they could collect. When they could not make and lay the same number of bricks that were expected of them, the taskmasters beat the Hebrew officials. The taskmasters expected the officials to beat the slaves and make them work faster. Instead, the officials complained to Pharaoh. “O king, how can we expect to make the same number of bricks if we are not given the straw we need to make it? And why are we, your servants, beaten when the fault is with your people?”

“You are lazy!” Pharaoh screamed. “All of you Hebrews are too lazy to work! Your so-called leaders, Moses and Aaron, make up excuses, saying your people need to worship their God out in the wilderness. Liars! Now go back in the field and work! You don’t need us to give you straw—go find it for yourselves!”

The Hebrew officials were so frightened by Pharaoh's screaming, they cringed. "If we don't deliver the same number of bricks expected from us, we'll be in deep trouble," one man said (Exodus 5:5-19).

Upon leaving Pharaoh's palace, the officials spotted Moses and Aaron waiting outside. They said to them, "May God look upon you and judge. You have made us an object of hate in the eyes of Pharaoh and his taskmasters. Because of you they are ready to kill us."

This troubled Moses. With doubts pouring into his mind, he found it harder to put his trust in God.

So he prayed to God: "Lord, why have you sent me? I obeyed your command and faced Pharaoh. Yet he has done evil to my people, and You still have not delivered them out of his hand—why?"

God answered his prayer: "Be patient, Moses. When I am finished unleashing My great power throughout Egypt, Pharaoh will be so eager to let My people go, he will drive them out! Remember—I am the Eternal, the Ever-living One. I am the God who spoke to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I am the One who promised to give their descendants a land flowing with milk and honey. And I am the One who will use you to fulfill My promise."

With these words, Moses' trust in God was restored (Exodus 5:20-23 and 6:1-8).

### **Representing God's Government**

Moses tried to inspire the Israelites by telling them about God's plan to release them from slavery. But the Hebrew slaves suffered so much misery from their long, hard hours of labor they could be not cheered up. Whatever Moses had to say to them they ignored (Exodus 6:9).

Seeing this, God told Moses to speak to Pharaoh again. "Tell him to let My people go."

But Moses said, "The Israelites won't even listen to me anymore. How can I expect Pharaoh to hear me?"

"Moses, obey My voice! You and Aaron will speak My words to Pharaoh again. I will use you to deliver My people out of his hand. But first I will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will refuse Me. Then I shall show My great power in all Egypt through mighty miracles and wonders. I will prove to the Egyptians that their false gods and puny idols are no match for Me. For I am the Almighty Eternal God" (Exodus 6:10-30 and 7:1-7).

God planned to use Moses and Aaron as a team to represent how the God Family works (Exodus 7:1-2). Moses represented and symbolized God the Father, the Supreme Leader who makes the ultimate

By the power of God,  
Moses's shepherd rod  
turned into a snake.



decisions. Aaron represented and symbolized Jesus Christ (also known as the Word or Messenger of the Eternal). Just as Christ speaks for His Father and carries out His decisions, Aaron spoke for Moses and carried out his decisions. Moses and Aaron's example represented God's perfect government—the way God works.

Today, God's government rules in His Church. But in the soon-

coming wonderful world of tomorrow, God's government—His Kingdom—will rule over the entire world. And just as God the Father and Jesus Christ always agree and never argue, all people will live the same way!

### **The Miraculous Shepherd Rod**

Moses and Aaron obeyed God and faced Pharaoh before his throne.

“Why do you dare to come into my presence?” said the king. “Perhaps you do not value your lives.”

Unafraid, Moses and Aaron spoke God's words. But Pharaoh was not impressed.

Then Moses, following God's command, said to Aaron, “Take my shepherd rod.”

Aaron took the rod and cast it to the floor at Pharaoh's feet. Through God's miraculous power, the rod changed into a giant snake!

At first Pharaoh was amazed as he saw the snake slither and squirm across the floor. Then he called for his magicians and sorcerers. Through the evil powers of Satan the devil and his demons, these wicked men threw their rods to the floor—and the rods changed into snakes too!

Pharaoh grinned as he said, “See, Moses? My gods are just as powerful as your God.”

But the king stopped grinning when he saw Moses' snake swallow up the snakes of his wicked magicians (Exodus 8-12). Pharaoh and the magicians could hardly believe their eyes. No one had ever embarrassed his magicians before.

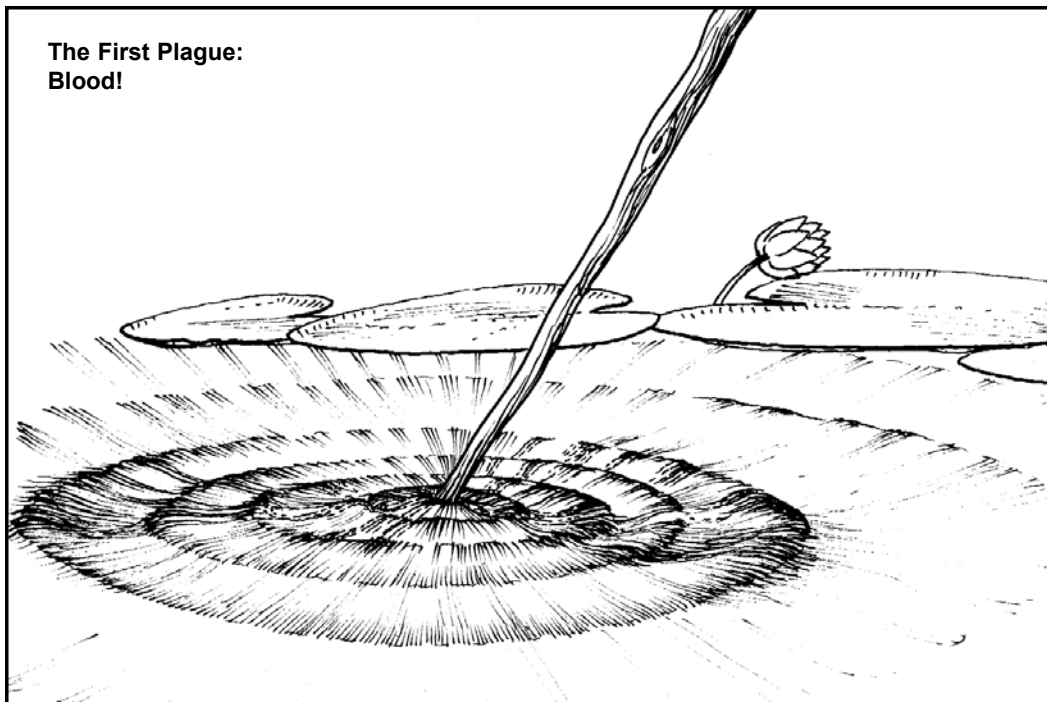
In a fit of rage, the king screamed, “Get out! Get out of my sight, Moses, and don't come back!” Pharaoh's heart was hardened, just as God had said it would be (Exodus 7:13).

### **First Plague: Blood!**

The next morning, following God's instruction, Moses and Aaron stood by the bank of the Nile River. As was his custom, Pharaoh bathed in the water, surrounded by his personal guards, servants and assistants. As the king relaxed in the cool, clean waters, something caught his attention.

“Moses and Aaron,” he muttered.

Immediately, the guards jumped into the river and headed over to the two men to arrest them. But Pharaoh said, “Wait. Let's have some fun with them.” The guards obeyed, though they held onto their



swords, hoping that their king would change his mind.

Pharaoh said to the brothers, “Well, Moses and Aaron, what brings you down to the river? Are you here to speak for your invisible God?”

The king’s men laughed.

Speaking for Moses, Aaron said, “The Eternal God of the Hebrews has said, ‘Let My people go so that they may worship Me in the wilderness.’ But you, O king, would not obey. Thus says the Eternal: ‘By this you will know that I am God.’”

Then Moses told Aaron what to do. Pharaoh, his men, and a swelling crowd of onlookers watched as Aaron took the shepherd rod and waved it over the Nile River.

Pharaoh said, “Go home, Moses, before you embarrass yourself. Your magic is useless. Your God cannot match the power of the gods of Egypt.”

But Pharaoh’s words came back to haunt him when he heard the people shout, “Blood!” The king looked down and saw that the cool, clean waters of the Nile were turning murky and red. Scooping some of it up with his hand, he tasted it. “It is blood!” he gasped (Exodus 7:14-17, 20-21).

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

# MIGHTY MIRACLES, AWESOME PLAGUES

**E**very river, stream, pond and pool of water in Egypt had turned to blood. Even in buckets and pitchers, there was not a drop of water, only blood. Soon the fish in the river and streams died. Their rotting flesh floated to the top; Egypt was filled with stench.

Pharaoh looked to his magicians to undo God's awesome miracle, but the best they could do was make their own blood.

The king's heart was hardened. He knew that he was powerless against God's plague, but he would not give in to God's demand. So he sulked in his home and decided to wait. He may have thought that his false gods needed more time to act on his behalf.

Meanwhile, since the Egyptians did not have fresh water to drink, they dug deep into the earth in search of water. God's plague lasted for seven days (Exodus 7:19-25).

### **The Second Plague: Frogs**

Though they were the last people Pharaoh wanted to see, Moses and Aaron came to the palace and delivered God's message to the king: "Let My people go so that they may serve Me. If you refuse, I will strike your land with frogs."

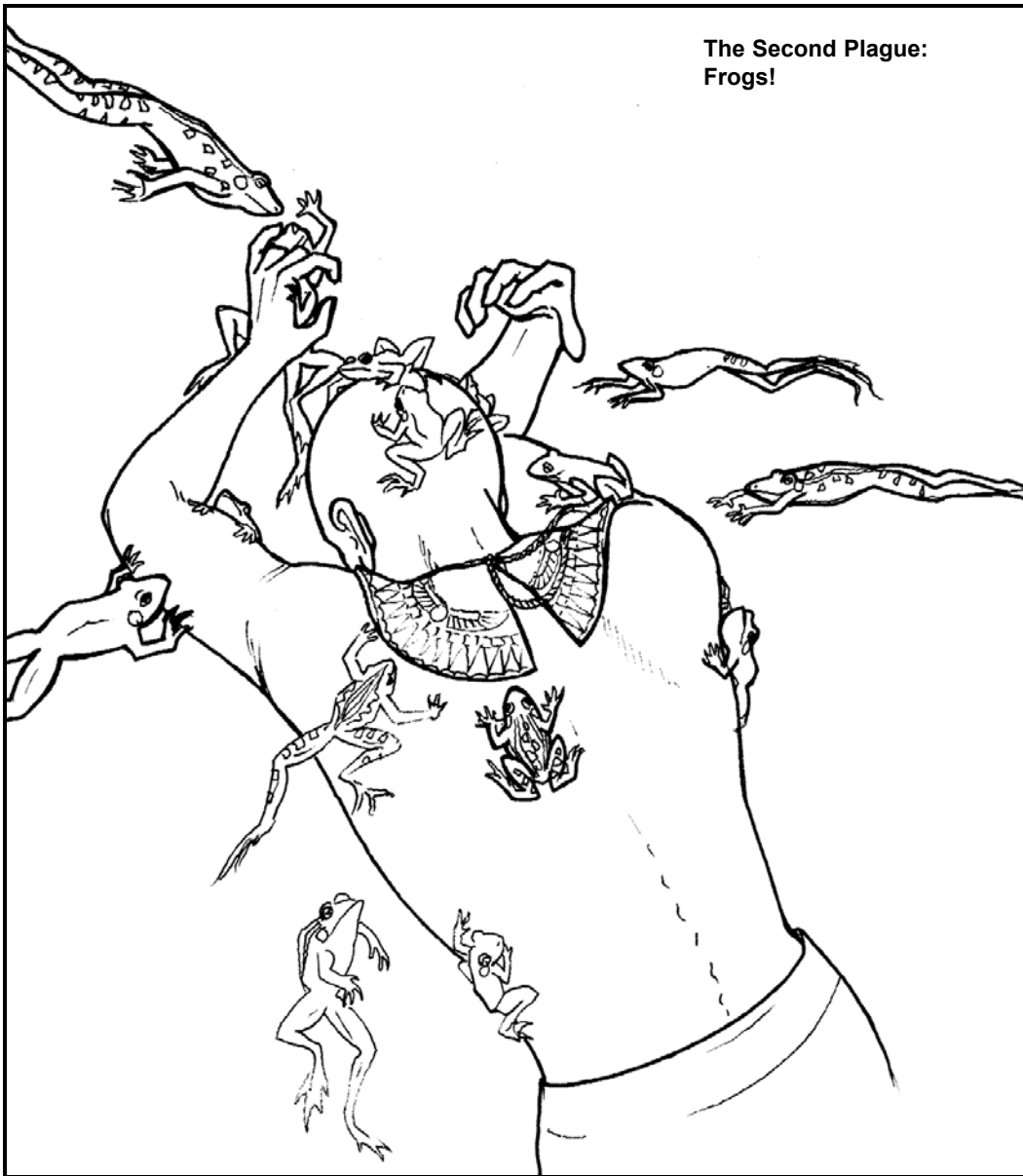
Like before, Pharaoh was too stubborn to listen.

So Aaron, following Moses' direction, took the shepherd rod and waved it over the streams, rivers and ponds of Egypt. Out came frogs! They jumped and squirmed throughout the land. Wherever people walked, sat, slept or ate, there were frogs.

Pharaoh's magicians tried to get rid of them, but the best they could do was copy God and make their own frogs.

The king had had enough. He called for Moses and Aaron, and said





to them, “Ask your God to take away these frogs from me and my people—then I will let the Israelites go free and make sacrifices to their God.”

Moses and Aaron tried to hide their excitement. At last, Pharaoh was about to release Israel from slavery!

To show respect, Moses allowed the king to choose when God should destroy the frogs.

Instead of saying, “Immediately,” Pharaoh said, “Tomorrow.” He may have hoped that his magicians would find a way to stop the plague before God could act.

Moses told Pharaoh, “Tomorrow the frogs will be destroyed, just as you have asked. By this you may know that there is no other god like the Eternal God” (Exodus 8:9-10).

The Egyptians worshipped many false gods. They made idols of them in the shape of calves, cats, frogs, birds and other animals. They even worshipped the Nile River, because it was a vital source for watering their vast farmlands. This is why God created plagues that had to do with the river or with animals. He wanted to show both the Egyptians and the Israelites that He alone was God—and that their false gods were powerless against Him.

### **Frogs Destroyed**

Moses cried out to God in prayer. He asked Him to remove the plague and destroy the frogs.

The next day, the Egyptians awoke to find that all the frogs were dead. Though relieved, the people still had to get rid of the dead carcasses. Everyone searched throughout their homes, villages and fields, and gathered the dead frogs and threw them into heaps. As their flesh rotted away, all of Egypt was consumed with a great stench.

Moses said to his brother, “Now Pharaoh will keep his word and set Israel free.”

But Pharaoh changed his mind. Once the plague was removed, he saw no need to keep his promise (Exodus 8:12-15). Unfortunately, there are many people like Pharaoh today. They say one thing, but do another. They cannot be trusted.

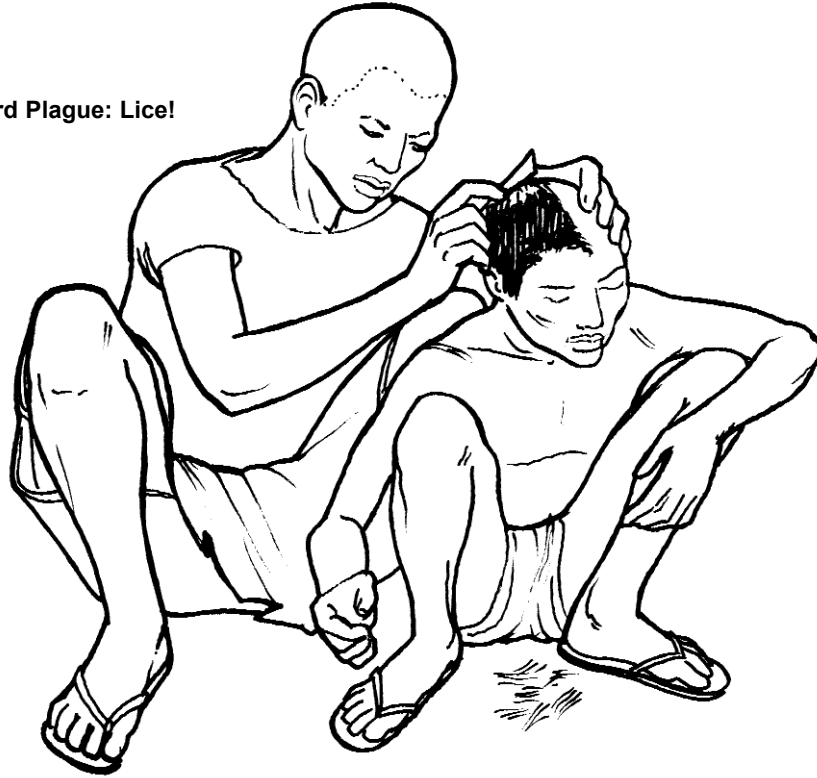
However, God’s faithful servants strive to follow God’s example in keeping promises—even if it hurts (Psalms 15:1, 4).

### **The Third Plague: Lice**

Following God’s command, Moses told Aaron to take the shepherd rod and strike the dust of the ground. When this was done, suddenly, throughout the land of Egypt, the dust merged into massive swarms of tiny, stinging, lice-like insects. Every man, woman and child suffered from them—even the animals were constantly bitten by these pesky bugs. Everywhere they went, people and animals had to scratch themselves to get some relief (Exodus 8:16-17).

Pharaoh’s evil magicians may have suffered the most. Their false religion of magic and sorcery required that they regularly shave almost all of their body hair, and to wear only one tunic. This left most of their skin exposed to the stinging bites of the lice.

### **The Third Plague: Lice!**



In an effort to prove that they could match God’s power, the magicians tried to produce their own lice-like insects—but God would not allow it!

Defeated, the men went to Pharaoh and reluctantly admitted, “This plague is from God. His power is too great for us to copy. You must give in to the God of the Hebrews.”

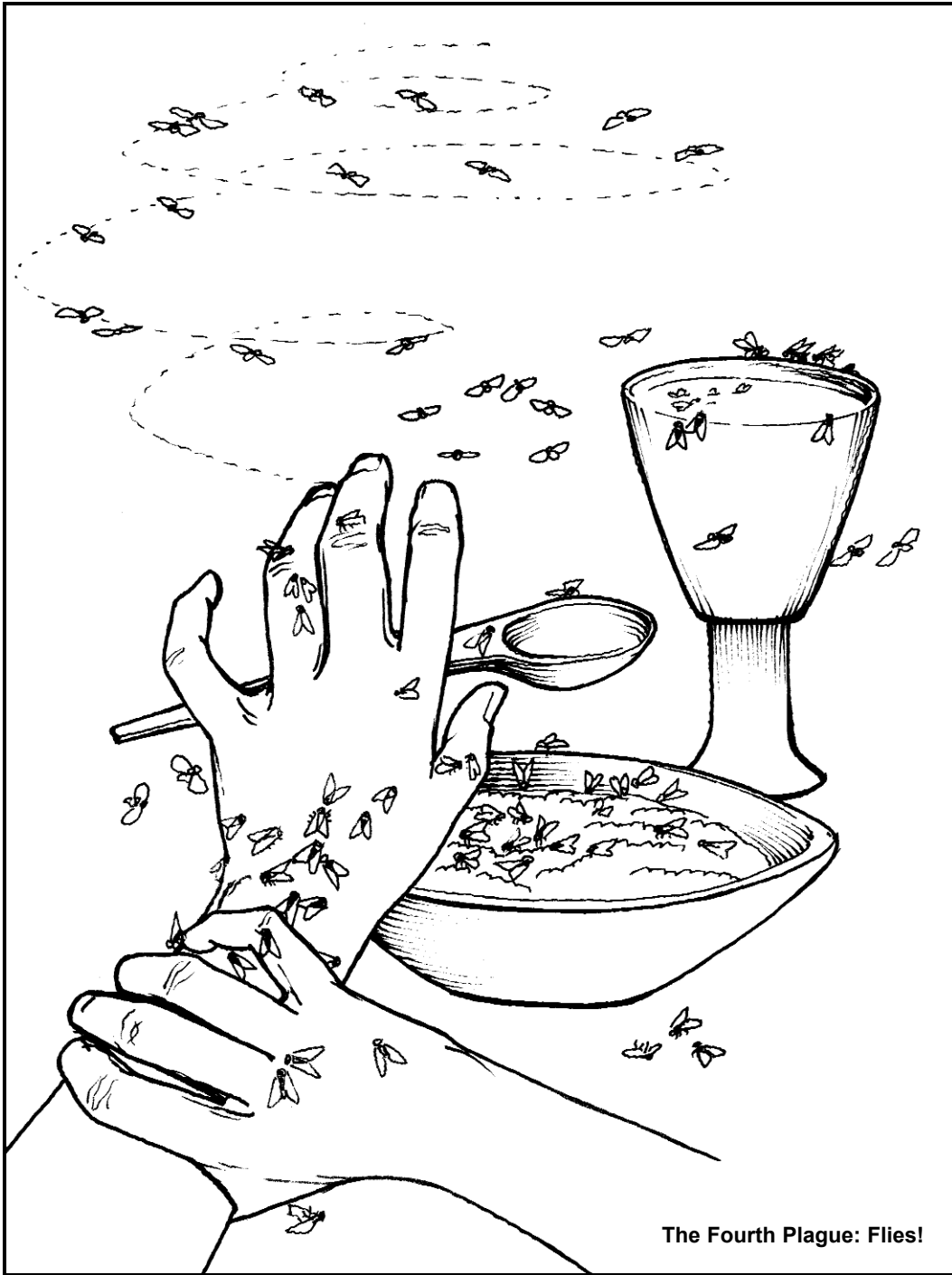
“What?” the king said. “I’d rather suffer than let Israel go free.” Pharaoh was too stubborn to listen to their advice.

### **The Fourth Plague: Flies**

The next morning, Pharaoh was bathing in the Nile River when he saw Moses and Aaron standing along the bank.

“What is it now, Moses?” the king yelled.

“I have come to deliver God’s message. Thus says the Eternal, ‘Let My people go so that they may serve Me. If you refuse, I will send swarms of flies throughout your land. I will send them upon you, your servants, and into the homes of all the Egyptians. Everywhere you look will be flies. But My people will not suffer from them. The land of Goshen will be untouched. This will be a sign to you, to show that I have put a division between My people and your people. I am the Eternal’ (Exodus 8:20-23).



In rage, Pharaoh struck the water with his fists. “Get out!” he screamed. “Get out of my sight!”

Moses and Aaron silently walked away.

Soon after, all of Egypt was filled with flies. They got into everything: the Egyptians’ food, their hair and clothes, into their mouths and

nostrils. People had to cover their faces with veils for protection. Swarms of flies invaded every corner in every room, stinging and biting everything in sight. No one was safe from them.

No one, except for God's people. Over in the land of Goshen, the Israelites were safe and unharmed. Off in the distance they could see God's plague swarm throughout the rest of Egypt. Then they prayed to God, thanking Him for His great mercy.

Meanwhile, Pharaoh grew tired of having to cover himself and protect his skin from the flies. He longed to be able to sleep without constantly having to scratch himself. He wanted to eat his meals without worrying about having flies or their eggs in his food.

His servants, who also wanted relief, begged Pharaoh to call for Moses and Aaron. Finally, the king gave in.

When the brothers were brought before him, Pharaoh said, "Your people are free to worship their God right here in Egypt. Now pray to the Eternal and ask Him to remove this plague."

"We can't offer animal sacrifices in front of the Egyptians. Your people worship cows and goats and such—but we sacrifice these same animals to please God. If your people see us do this, they will pick up stones and try to crush us to death. We must go three days' journey into the wilderness. There we can freely sacrifice to God, just as He has commanded us."

Pharaoh desperately wanted to hold on to the Hebrews. As slaves, they were a source of free labor, and vital to maintaining Egypt's vast wealth.

The king made another proposal: "I will let your people go to sacrifice to their God...but they can only travel so far." Pharaoh hoped that the Israelites would be frightened on their journey and that he would be able to lure them back to Egypt. "Now go pray to your God for me."

Moses, through Aaron, said, "We will go out from you, then. And we will pray to the Eternal for you. He will take away all of the flies tomorrow."

Pharaoh began to smile.

"But know this," Moses said. "The king must not go back on his word. If you do, God will unleash even more plagues upon your people" (Exodus 8:24-29).

Reluctantly, Pharaoh nodded his head, and then looked away from the two men.

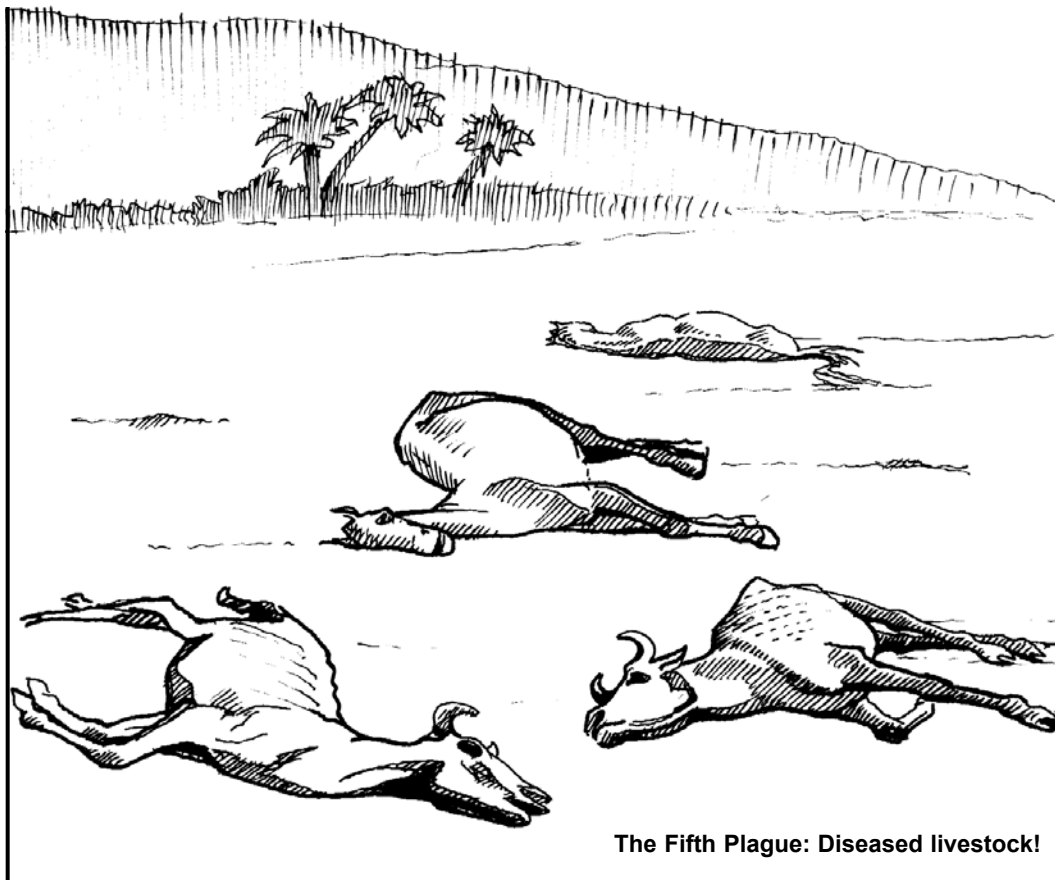
Moses kept his word and prayed to God on Egypt's behalf. God listened to his prayer and removed the flies from Egypt. Not one remained.

Weak, tired and sore from the last four plagues, the Egyptians hoped that their lives would get back to normal. But they soon discovered that their hope was in vain. Pharaoh went back on his word. He refused to let God's people go. Hardening his heart, he stubbornly refused to obey God—just as the Eternal had said (Exodus 8:30-32).

### **The Fifth Plague: Diseased Livestock**

Obedying God, Moses and Aaron told Pharaoh that another plague would soon strike Egypt. This time, it would affect many of the Egyptians' livestock. But the king would not listen. Many thoughts ran through his carnal mind. He wanted to kill Moses and Aaron, but he was afraid of making their God angry. The more he thought, the more stubborn he became.

The next day, a mysterious disease came upon Egypt: Many of the people's animals and livestock—cows, horses, donkeys, camels, sheep and others—grew sick, and then died. Like the fish and frogs before them, the dead carcasses rotted away.



**The Fifth Plague: Diseased livestock!**

However, Pharaoh learned that the livestock belonging to the Israelites stayed healthy. Not one fell sick or died (Exodus 9:1-7).

This plague was a serious blow to the Egyptians. They worshipped false gods, in the shape of bulls, goats and such. The people wondered how their “gods” could not overpower the God of the Hebrews. Some said, “I don’t know how much more of these plagues we can take.”

Meanwhile, Pharaoh remained just as stubborn as before. “No God of slaves will tell me what to do,” he said.

### **The Sixth Plague: Boils**

Again, Moses and Aaron stood before the Egyptian king and delivered God’s message. And as before, Pharaoh refused to give in. So Moses, obeying God, took handfuls of ash from a furnace and sprinkled it into the sky.

Pharaoh said, “What madness is this?”

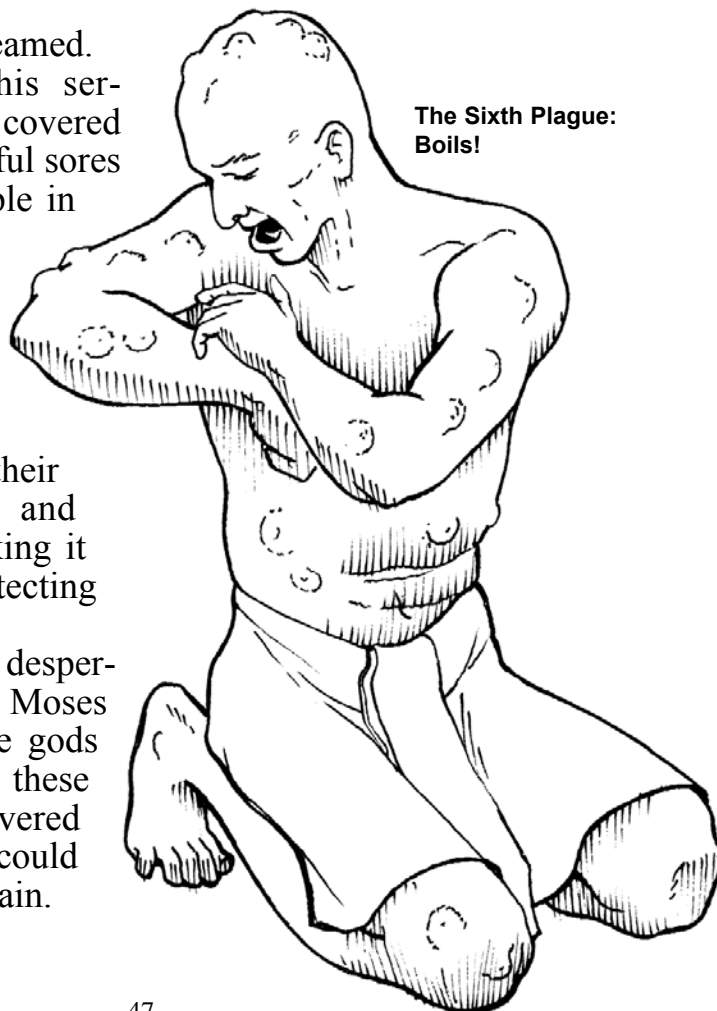
The king soon received his answer. When the ash fell to the ground and upon the people in Pharaoh’s court, God’s plague was clear for all to see.

“Boils!” a servant screamed.

Pharaoh looked at his servants’ skin. They were all covered with round lumps of painful sores and blisters. All the people in the court were covered—except for Moses and Aaron. And throughout the land, all of the Egyptians suffered from boils; their animals, too.

Yet the Israelites and their animals were healthy and unharmed. God was making it obvious that He was protecting them.

Pharaoh’s magicians desperately tried to stand before Moses and prove that their false gods would protect them. But these wicked sorcerers were covered with so many boils, they could not stand up, due to the pain.



They said to Pharaoh, “My lord, give the Hebrews their freedom, we beg of you!”

“No!” said the king. God had hardened Pharaoh’s heart so that He could perform even more astounding miracles yet to come (Exodus 9:8-12).



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

# PHARAOH'S STUBBORN HEART

**T**rying to keep from scratching his sores and blisters, Pharaoh sat uncomfortably in his throne seat. Standing before him were Moses and Aaron, delivering another message from God.

“Thus says the Eternal, the God of the Hebrews: ‘I could have easily struck you and your people with a disease and taken your lives. But I chose not to do so. I have allowed you to live in order to show through you My great power. After I am done punishing you with plagues, all the earth will know My name.’”

Pharaoh did not want to hear God’s words, but he knew he had little choice. He knew that God was about to strike Egypt with another plague—he only hoped that it would not be more than he could bear.

### **The Seventh Plague: Hail**

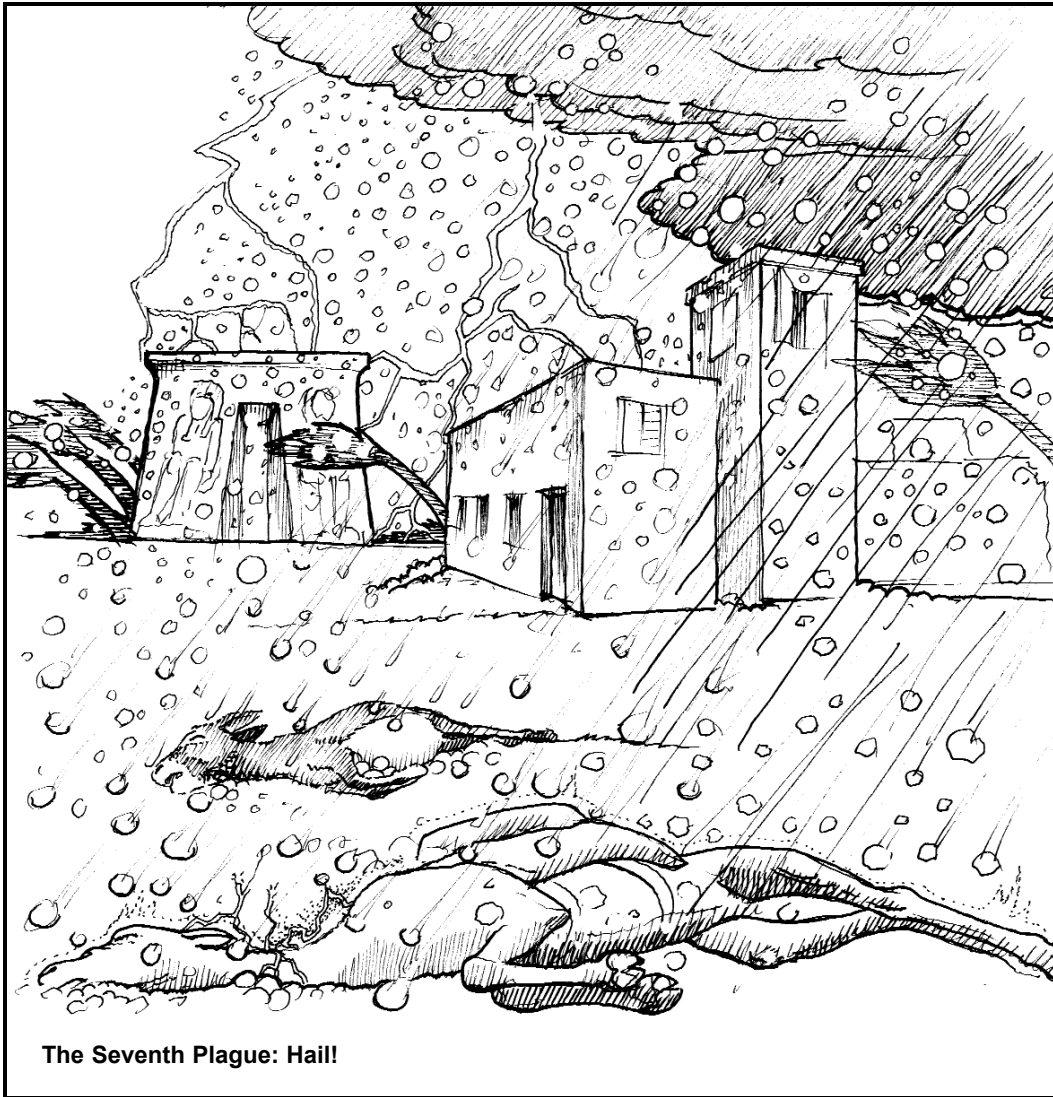
Moses and Aaron continued the Eternal’s message: “Tomorrow, I will cause it to hail, such as has never been seen since Egypt was founded. Those who own cattle, be warned—take your herds inside. Do not leave them out in the fields, else they will be destroyed by the hailstorm.”

Some of Pharaoh’s own servants believed God’s message. They took His offer of mercy and brought their personal servants and cattle indoors.

But Pharaoh’s other servants wanted to please the king. They told him, “This Hebrew God doesn’t scare us, my lord.”

The king took comfort in their foolish words.

But the next day, after Moses followed God’s command to stretch his hand up to the sky, the hail came down. Giant balls of hard ice dropped from the sky and landed on all the servants and cattle that were working out in the fields. Many lost their lives. As the hailstorm smashed into homes, destroyed crops and battered down trees, people screamed, running for shelter.



Moses then lifted his rod high above him, and God sent lightning bolts across the sky. Even more hail poured down upon Egypt as loud thunderclaps exploded across the land. The Egyptians hid in fear. The lightning caused sparks of fire to ignite and spread. Everywhere in Egypt, there was panic and chaos (Exodus 9:13-25).

But in the land of Goshen, there was peace (Exodus 9:26). The Israelites and their livestock were unharmed. When Pharaoh learned about this, he decided it was time to call for Moses and Aaron.

When the two brothers were brought before him, they were shocked to hear the king say, “This time I have sinned. The Eternal is righteous, but my people and I are wicked.”

It sounded as though Pharaoh was repenting—turning away from his wrong thoughts and attitude in order to obey and please God.

However, Moses could see through the king's words. He knew that Pharaoh was not really sorry. He whispered to Aaron, "Don't be fooled. The king is only saying what he thinks we want to hear."

Pharaoh said, "Enough is enough. Plead with the Eternal, and ask Him to take away the thunder and hailstorm. I will let your people go. They will no longer need to stay in Egypt" (Exodus 9:27-28).

Through Aaron, Moses said, "I will pray on your behalf as soon as I leave the city. The thunder, lightning and hail will stop—then you will know that the earth belongs to God, not to your false gods. But as for you and your servants, I am not fooled. I know that you don't fear the Eternal, as you should" (Exodus 9:29-30).

Pharaoh wanted to snap back with a harsh answer, but he kept his mouth shut until Moses and Aaron had left.

Later, the king learned that his crops of flax and barley were destroyed. The Egyptians would have less food to get them through the winter. The wheat crops, however, had been spared. Pharaoh did not appreciate that God was giving him mercy, and time to repent (Exodus 9:31-32).

God took away the horrible hailstorm, but Pharaoh went back on his word. He hardened his heart and refused to let Israel go free.

### **The Eighth Plague: Locusts**

Pharaoh was not surprised to see Moses and Aaron stand before his throne again. He knew why they were there.

"Thus says the Eternal: 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go so that they can serve Me. If not, tomorrow I will bring a new plague—locusts! They shall cover Egypt and eat the few crops you have left, as well as every tree. Every home, big and small, will be filled with locusts. This plague will be greater than anything in the history of your country. Nothing else has ever been like it to this day. I am the Eternal.'"

Then Moses and Aaron turned around and left, leaving Pharaoh sitting on his throne, angry and helpless (Exodus 10:1-6).

The king wanted to get out from his troubles, but he was too stubborn to humble himself and put God's will first. He just would not repent.

His servants began to realize this. They said, "How long will you allow Moses to rain such trouble on us? Hasn't Egypt suffered enough plagues? Release the Hebrews; let them go serve their God. Our country is already destroyed—we cannot afford to take on any more plagues!"

**The Eight Plague:  
Locusts!**



Pharaoh thought, “Even my servants are turning against me. Without them, my days of ruling Egypt might be short.”

He reluctantly called for Moses and Aaron. When they arrived, the king said, “Your people can go serve their God. But first, tell me—which ones will go?”

Moses said, “All the Israelites must leave—young and old, adults and children, men and women—everyone, along with our livestock. We must all go to hold a special feast to the Eternal” (Exodus 10:7-9).

“Are you sure it’s wise to bring your women and children into the wilderness with you? You don’t know what kind of dangers are out there. You had better be sure that your God will protect you; the wilderness is dark and full of evil things. You had better beware.” Pharaoh was trying to convince Moses to leave behind the women and

children. He added, “Now, Moses, you and the Israelite men can go, but leave the rest behind. You don’t need them to serve your God.”

Before they could answer, the king’s guards drove Moses and Aaron out from the throne room (Exodus 10:10-11).

At God’s command, Moses waved his rod over Egypt, and God sent a hot, dry east wind to blow through the land throughout the day and night. In the morning, the Egyptians discovered what the wind had brought with it: locusts.

Just like the frogs, lice and flies before them, the locust covered the fields and villages. They crept and hopped everywhere and got into everything, searching for food. There were so many locusts, they filled the sky and blocked out most of the sun.

In a short time, they ate every plant and fruit they could find. Almost all the grain and vegetables the Egyptians had gathered and stored were gone (Exodus 10:12-15).

Pharaoh panicked. He was the most powerful ruler on earth, yet he was powerless against God’s awesome miracles.

Calling for Moses and Aaron, he said, “I have sinned against your God and against you. I admit that I’ve gone back on my word and failed to release Israel. Please forgive my sins, just this once. And pray to your God for me. Ask Him to take away this plague.”

The two brothers said nothing. They knew that Pharaoh was just as stubborn as before, because God was hardening the king’s heart for a great purpose. God was using these plagues to show His awesome power so that they would be remembered for the rest of history.

“Well?” Pharaoh said. “Will you do it?”

Moses and Aaron nodded their heads, and quietly walked away.

Later, after Moses prayed to God, the Almighty sent a strong west wind to blow throughout Egypt. It took away the locusts and dumped them into the Red Sea. Not one locust was left behind.

Of course, now that the plague was gone, Pharaoh changed his mind again, and refused to release his slaves (Exodus 10:16-20).

### **The Ninth Plague: Darkness**

Feeling angry and frustrated, Pharaoh paced back and forth in his chambers. He was tired of having to deal with Moses and Aaron. But he did not want to give in to their demands. His Hebrew slaves had been profitable to him and his fellow Egyptians. He felt that if he released the Israelites, he would appear weak to his people, and to the surrounding nations. As king, Pharaoh was used to getting his way. He was never taught to admit when he was wrong.



“I am the king,” he thought. “I am never wrong.”

Pacing back and forth, he noticed that the room was getting dark.

“That’s strange,” he said. From his window he saw that the sky was growing midnight black—yet it was still morning. God had sent another plague upon Egypt: darkness!

Egypt became so dark that people could barely see their own hands in front of them. For three days, the Egyptians stayed in their homes because those who dared to go outside into the darkness got lost (Exodus 10:21-23).

God sent the plague of darkness in order to teach the people an important lesson. By removing the light, the Eternal showed that He was far more powerful than Ra, the false god of the sun whom the Egyptians worshipped.

While the darkness consumed Egypt, the land of Goshen had plenty of light. God was making a clear difference between His people, the Israelites, and the Egyptians (Exodus 10:23)

Again, Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron. He said to them, “Your people may go out and serve the Eternal.”

“All of us may go?—including the women and children?”

Pharaoh said, “Yes. All of you may go. But let your flocks and herds stay here” (Exodus 10:24). Without their livestock to use for food and sacrifices, the Israelites would be forced to return to Egypt.

Pharaoh understood this. He would do anything to keep the Israelites as his slaves.

Just as Moses and Aaron, as a team, represented God the Father and the Word (now called Jesus Christ), Pharaoh represented someone, too—Satan the devil. Though he did not know it, Pharaoh was influenced by Satan. The king's mind was filled with the devil's wrong thoughts and attitudes—pride, rage, greed, and the desire to please himself, even if it hurt other people. These and all other evil attitudes come from the devil. As the false god of man's world, Satan continually sends out bad attitudes, wicked thoughts and evil desires in order to lead people to do his will (II Corinthians 4:4 and Ephesians 2:2).

And just as Pharaoh would do anything to keep the Israelites under his rule, the devil will do anything to keep God's people from reaching their awesome human potential: to be born into the God Family.

Satan constantly tries to get God's people to reject the Eternal and to rely upon themselves. He does not want them to build God's holy, righteous character—the ability to: (1) Know right from wrong, based on God's laws, (2) choose what's right and reject what's wrong, and (3) do what's right, even if doing the wrong thing seems easier or better. Every time someone decides for himself what is right and what is wrong, he is following the way of Satan.

The devil knows that those who fully develop God's character will one day be changed into Spirit Beings. They will be born into God's Family, and have the same powers as God the Father and Jesus Christ. This is something Satan cannot have.

But you can.

### **Pharaoh Loses His Temper—Again**

Through Aaron, Moses said to Pharaoh, “We need our flocks and herds with us. We will use them to give burnt offerings to our God. We can't leave any of our livestock behind.”

“Get out!” the king screamed. “Get out of my sight and never come back! You have seen my face for the last time. The day you face me again is the day you die, Moses!”

Moses nodded. “The king is correct. I will not see your face again” (Exodus 10:25-29). Then he and his brother departed.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

# THE FINAL PLAGUE STRIKES EGYPT

Some time had passed since Moses began delivering God’s message to Pharaoh. Yet even after nine devastating plagues—blood, frogs, lice, flies, sick and dying livestock, boils, hail, locusts and darkness—the king’s stubborn mind would not give in to God’s will. Though Egypt was nearly destroyed, Pharaoh could not bear to release the Israelites.

This was all according to God’s plan. He was now ready to unleash His final plague upon Egypt. This plague would be so destructive that Pharaoh would finally let God’s people go free.

The Eternal told Moses to speak to the Israelites. “Tell them to ask from their Egyptian neighbors gold and silver jewelry.” This would be a way for the Egyptians to pay back wages for all the harsh labor they had forced the Israelites to do for them.

The people listened to Moses and did as God commanded. They had no problem getting personal treasures from the Egyptians. After having suffered nine of God’s plagues, the people of Egypt began to treat the Israelites with respect. They dared not offend or mistreat the Hebrew slaves, or else face the wrath of the Eternal, their God.

The Egyptians also began to respect Moses. They now saw him as a powerful man—even more powerful than Pharaoh. They knew that every time Moses said something was going to happen, it always came true. This was because Moses obeyed God (Exodus 11:1-3).

### Preparing for Passover

Moses said to the Israelites, “Thus says the Eternal: ‘At midnight, I will go in the midst of Egypt and will strike the firstborn throughout the land. Every firstborn in Egypt, from the son of Pharaoh to the son



of the common servant, shall all die—even the firstborn of all animals shall die! Egypt will cry like it has never done before. This night will never be forgotten.”

The crowd grew excited, anxious for God to deliver them from slavery. The people drew closer and listened to Moses continue with God’s message.

“I will not harm the Israelites and their animals. They will be left untouched. In this way you shall know that I consider My people different than the Egyptians. I am the Eternal.”

Everyone in the crowd was excited and fearful.

“After God has unleashed His last plague,” Moses said, “Pharaoh will not only release us from slavery—he will drive us out of Egypt!”

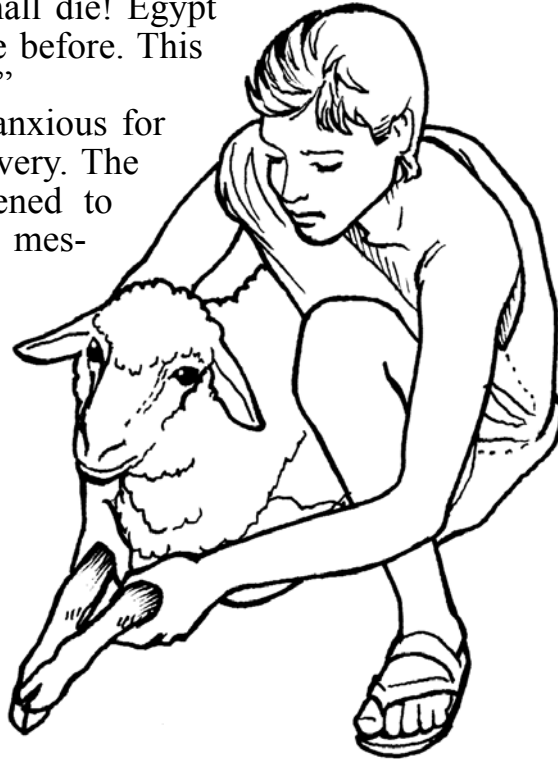
The people cheered. Finally, after all these years, they were about to be set free. And God would lead them into the Promised Land (Exodus 11:4-8).

To prepare His people for the upcoming journey out of Egypt and into the wilderness, God told Moses and Aaron that He would teach Israel His way to count time. Today, men begin their calendar year in the dead of winter. But God begins His calendar in the beginning of spring, when trees and other vegetation are renewed.

God said, “This month shall be to My people the first month of the year.” This is called the month of Abib. It begins at different times in man’s calendar, sometimes in March, sometimes in April.

God said that on the tenth day of Abib, each family of Israel must choose a lamb, a male that was only one year old. The family was to remove it from the flock. The lamb had to be physically perfect, without any spots and marks. The family was to care for it until the 14th day of Abib. That evening—God counts days from sunset to sunset, while men count days from midnight to midnight—all the families of Israel were to kill their chosen lambs.

“And then,” God said, “they shall take the blood of the lamb and



smear it on the doorposts of the homes where the families will be eating. That night they must roast the lamb and eat it, along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Make sure that you eat all of the lamb. That which is left over you shall burn with fire. Also make sure that the lamb is roasted whole, with its head, legs and inner parts. It must not be eaten raw or boiled.

“And do not leave your homes. Stay inside. I will send a death angel to pass over all the homes in Egypt. The death angel will strike the homes of those who do not have lamb’s blood smeared on their doorposts. Every firstborn son of both man and beast will be destroyed. Thus I will bring judgment to the false gods of Egypt, whom the people sacrifice to, rather than to Me.

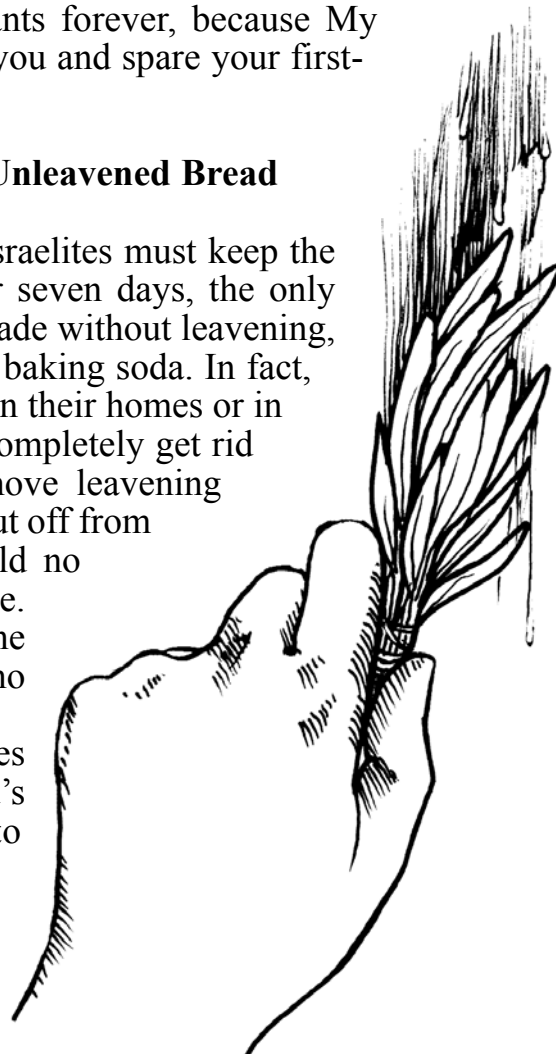
“But as for those homes with lamb’s blood smeared on their doorposts, My angel will leave the people there untouched. This is the Passover of the Eternal. This day shall be a memorial, to be kept by you and your descendants forever, because My destroying angel will pass over you and spare your firstborn” (Exodus 12:1-14).

### **God Explains the Days of Unleavened Bread**

God further explained that the Israelites must keep the Days of Unleavened Bread. For seven days, the only bread they could eat had to be made without leavening, such as yeast, baking powder or baking soda. In fact, no leavening was allowed to be in their homes or in their possession. They were to completely get rid of it. If anyone refused to remove leavening from their lives, they would be cut off from the people of Israel. They would no longer be a part of God’s people. They would be cut off from the Promised Land. They would no longer have God’s protection.

Even strangers—non-Israelites who lived in peace among God’s people—were commanded to keep the Days of Unleavened Bread.

God also told Moses and Aaron that the first and seventh day of Unleavened Bread—the



15th and 21st of Abib—were Holy Days. They were Sabbath days that must be kept once a year. Usually, annual Holy Days can fall on any day of the week, depending on God’s calendar. Just like the weekly Sabbath, no one was allowed to do any work on annual Sabbath days, except to prepare food for feasting. The first and last days of Unleavened Bread were holy times for God’s people to assemble, and praise the Eternal.

“And you shall teach all these things to your children,” God said, “and to your children’s children.”

### **The Meaning of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread**

What the Israelites did not know is that Passover represented the ultimate sacrifice that would be given about 1,500 years later.

The Word, the One who speaks for the God Family, would become a flesh-and-blood man. He would live a lifetime of obeying God, resisting wrong attitudes and thoughts of Satan, and building God’s holy, righteous character. Called Jesus Christ, He would qualify to replace Satan as ruler over the earth. Then Christ, as God’s Son, would give mankind the perfect sacrifice: His perfect, innocent, sin-free life. His sacrifice would pay the death penalty, which all people earn when they sin—break God’s laws.

Three days after Christ’s death, God the Father would bring His Son back to life—resurrect Him—but not as a physical human being. Christ would become a Spirit Being and a Member of God’s Family, just like before. Jesus Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection would provide a way for all people to be born into God’s Family. That is why the Bible calls Jesus “the Firstborn of many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

The physically perfect lamb chosen at Passover represented Christ. The lamb’s sacrifice and blood represented Christ’s perfect sacrifice and innocent shed blood.

The unleavened bread represented Jesus’ body, which never broke any of God’s laws. During the Feast of Unleavened Bread, leaven represented sin—all the wrong attitudes, desires and actions of Satan the devil. These include selfishness, greed, lust, envy, hatred, pride, vanity and more.

But why did God pick leaven to represent sin?

Leaven puffs up bread, making it bigger than it really is. In the same way, sin puffs up people. Sin makes people think that they are better than everyone else. This always leads to an “I’ll decide for myself” attitude, rather than trusting in God.

Today, millions of people who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ say that Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread were only for ancient times. But God's people still keep His feasts and Holy Days, just as they will when Christ returns to set up the Kingdom of God.

### **The Tenth and Final Plague: Death of the Firstborn**

The Israelites obeyed God. At the end of the 13th of Abib, the people gathered their chosen lambs. Then at evening, when the 14th of Abib began, they killed the lambs and smeared the blood on the doorposts of their homes. All the people of Israel ate roasted lamb, with bitter herbs and bread made without leaven (Exodus 13:3-4).

At midnight, the Eternal kept His word and sent His destroying angel to pass through Egypt.

That night, Pharaoh heard the longest, most heart-breaking cry in his life. From his bedchambers, he walked onto his balcony, which overlooked Egypt. The whole land was filled with mournful cries and moans.

"I bet Moses has something to do with this," he thought.

Just then, the king heard his wife scream. Her shriek came from their oldest son's bedchambers.

When Pharaoh dashed into the hallway, he saw his servants on their knees, crying and weeping.

"What is it? What's wrong with all of you?"

One man said, "You should have listened to Moses."

"What?" said Pharaoh. "How dare you speak to me that way!"

Another servant said, "Because of you, my son is dead. The God of the Hebrews took his life—He took all the lives of our firstborn sons." The man fell to the ground face forward, and cried.



Then Pharaoh remembered that his wife had screamed. He raced to his oldest son's bedchambers, slammed open the doors. The king's grieving wife sobbed over their son's bed.

Pharaoh drew closer, afraid to see the unthinkable.

"My boy!" he cried. "Not my son, too. No!"

Pharaoh's firstborn son was dead (Exodus 12:28-30).



## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

# THE RUSH TO FREEDOM

Every firstborn of man and beast were dead, but the Israelites had been spared. Before the night was over, Pharaoh called for his fastest messenger.

“Go find Moses and Aaron. Tell them and the rest of the Israelites to leave Egypt at once. Let them go serve their God. Tell them to take their livestock and be gone. Also tell them to bless me, too. I have lost my precious boy” (Exodus 12:31-32).



All the Egyptians were anxious to get rid of the Israelites. In fact, they freely gave whatever the Israelites asked for—gold and silver jewelry, fine linen, etc.

“Take it! Take it all!” they said. “Just leave Egypt and go in peace.”

That day—the daytime portion of the 14th of Abib—all of Israel prepared for their long journey into the wilderness (verses 33, 35, 36).

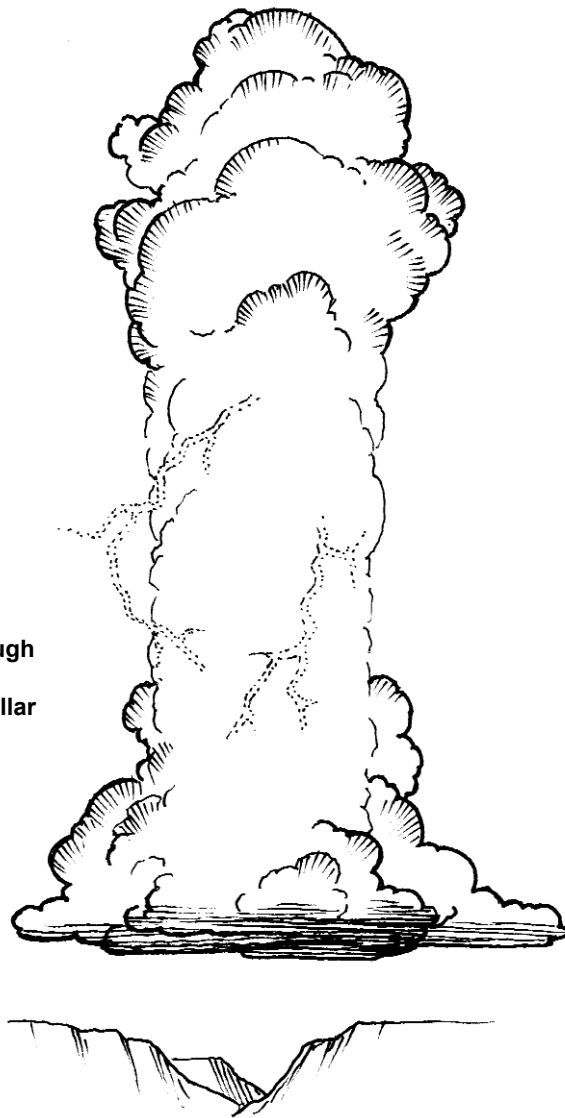
The Israelites shouted, “Freedom! Freedom!”

When they had gathered all their belongings, including livestock and the treasures they had just received, the people marched out of Egypt. This was the night of the 15th (Deuteronomy 16:1). In all, there were

about two or three million joyful Hebrews leaving their former masters behind.

A mixed company of foreigners came with them,

**As they marched through the wilderness, the Israelites followed a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.**



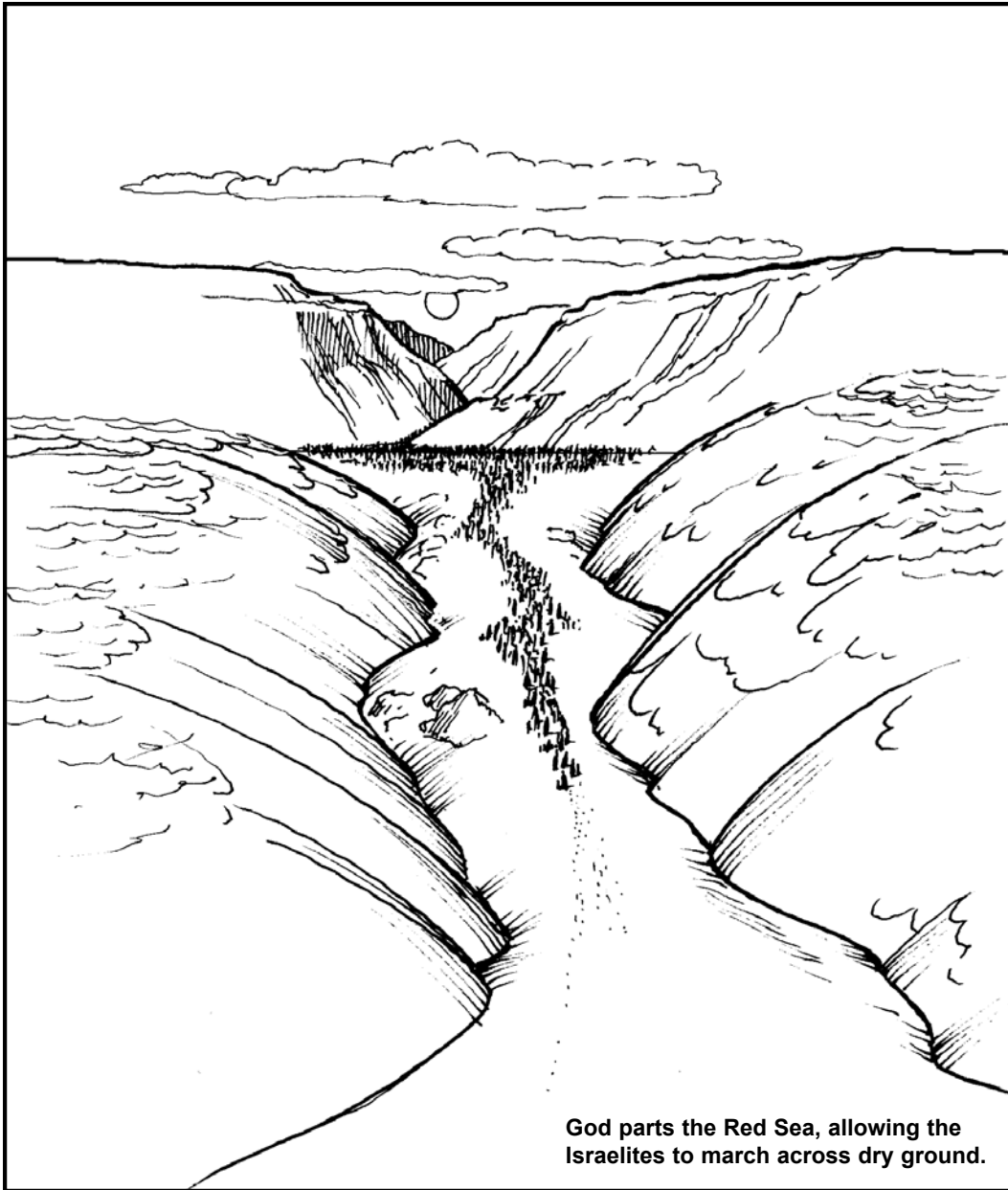
including some Egyptians. These people felt that life would be much better under the rule of the God of Israel than under Pharaoh's rule (verses 37-38).

And everyone took with them unleavened bread to eat along the way (verses 34, 39).

### **Night To Be Much Observed**

Gathering at the city of Rameses, the Israelites marched out of Goshen, at the beginning of the 15th of Abib. Moses later wrote that this was





the Night To Be Much Observed. It was a special night for two reasons: First, it was the beginning of the First Day of Unleavened Bread, which was an annual Sabbath; second, it was the night God commanded His people to remember and celebrate forever. That is why God's Church keeps it today, thousands of years later (Exodus 12:42).

As they marched out of Egypt, the people celebrated and thanked God. They praised Him for sparing the lives of their firstborn, and for releasing them from slavery.

The Israelites took with them the bones of Joseph, son of Jacob.

Years ago, Joseph asked that his bones be brought out of Egypt and properly buried in the Promised Land (13:19).

God guided Israel southeast to the city of Succoth.

You may be wondering how the Israelites knew which way God wanted them to march. The Messenger of the Eternal (who later became Jesus Christ) led them in a towering pillar of cloud! When the people saw it, they were amazed.

Moses said, “This is how God will lead us to Canaan.”

And at night, the people were even more amazed to see the pillar of cloud turn into a pillar of fire! It gave off enough light for the people to see, even at night.

Moses said, “Whenever the pillar of cloud or of fire moves, we must follow. Whenever it stops, we must stop” (verses 21-22).

“Look, the cloud is moving!”

All were amazed to see the giant pillar of cloud move—especially when it was leading them in a southerly direction. Some of the Israelites wondered why they weren’t going east, toward the trade routes, which were the shortest way to Canaan. Moses reminded them that they must follow the cloud, no matter where it went.

“God knows better,” he said. “He has everything under control. Trust Him.” Moses came to understand that no one can out-think or out-guess God. In the wonderful world of tomorrow, when Christ sets up His Kingdom on earth, all will be taught to trust God to lead their lives. Only by following Him can people be truly happy.

God, in His supreme wisdom, decided that the shortest route was also the most dangerous. He knew that the Israelites were not yet ready to face the Philistines and other fierce warriors who lived in Canaan. His people were not used to war, so God decided to lead them on a longer, but less dangerous path (verses 17-18).

From Succoth, the people marched to Etham, camping at the edge of the wilderness. They would soon be leaving Egyptian territory (verse 20 and Numbers 33:5-6).

### **Nowhere to Run**

Back on their journey, the Israelites spent the day marching through dry, sparse Egyptian wilderness. When the pillar of God finally stopped, the people knew that it was time to camp again.

Moses looked over the surroundings. On one side of the camp was the Red Sea. On the other side was a towering range of jagged mountains. And behind them was the wilderness.

“Are you sure this is wise?” some asked Moses. “What if some army

came along and attacked us? We would have nowhere to run and hide.”

Others said, “What are you talking about? No one is going to attack us out here. We’re alone. The cities of Egypt are far away. We have nothing to worry about.”

But Moses knew better. God allowed Israel to become trapped between the sea and the mountains for a reason. God had told Moses that He would harden Pharaoh’s heart and inspire him to chase after the Israelites.

This is why Moses was not surprised to hear people scream, “Chariots are coming! Chariots are coming!”

### **Nowhere to Hide**

“Pharaoh will kill us! We’re trapped between the mountains and the sea—there’s no way out! We’re all doomed!”

Driven by fear, the people surrounded Moses. “Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Was it so that we might die out here in the wilderness? Didn’t we tell you to leave us be? We were better off serving the Egyptians. Because of you, Moses, we’re about to be slaughtered!” (Exodus 14:11-12).

Moses stood on a high point and looked across the crowd of frightened and angry faces. But he was not afraid. God had placed His Holy Spirit in Moses. It replaced Moses’ fear with courage, boldness and trust in God—faith.

Knowing that the Eternal would rescue them all, Moses said, “Do not fear. Stand still and see the salvation of God Almighty. Watch Him deliver us from this danger. The Egyptians you see today you shall never see again. God will fight for you. All you need to do is stand and watch. The Eternal will do the rest” (verses 13-14).

Some were comforted by Moses’ words. But most still did not trust God. They let their fear control their emotions. This is because they did not have God’s Holy Spirit working in their minds, like Moses had.

Today, true Christians do have God’s Spirit within them. It gives them the power, love, and faith to obey and trust God. When a Christian allows God’s Spirit to lead him in the right direction, that person will not allow fear or other emotions to control him (II Timothy 1:7).

Moses prayed to God.

The Eternal answered, saying, “Lift up your shepherd rod and stretch out your hand over the Red Sea. I will divide the waters, and the Israelites shall make their escape. Do not worry about getting stuck in the muddy seabed. I will dry the ground. Then I will harden the

hearts of the Egyptians. When they see you make your escape, they will follow. When they do, I will bring honor to Myself. The Egyptians will know that I am the Eternal” (verses 15-18).

### **God Parts the Red Sea**

Pharaoh and his chariots and horsemen raced toward the trapped Israelites.

“Kill them!” the king shouted. “Kill them all!”

The army drew near. The soldiers were driven by anger and hatred for their former slaves. Soon, they would close in on the Hebrews and take away their lives.

Just then, the pillar of cloud moved from the head of the camp to its rear, blocking the Egyptians in their path. Pharaoh commanded them to go through the cloud, but his generals said, “The cloud is too thick. We could end up doing more harm to ourselves than to the Hebrews. Let us camp here for the night. The cloud won’t stay here forever. When it leaves, we’ll be well rested and ready. Besides, the Israelites are trapped. There’s no way for them to escape.”

Reluctantly, Pharaoh agreed. “Perhaps you’re right. If we wait, it will give my men and their horses time to rest.”

The king ordered his men to make camp.

Meanwhile, the Israelites all wondered how long God would keep the pillar of cloud between them and the Egyptians.

That night, while the Egyptian camp was in darkness, the Israelite camp had light, which came from the cloud (Exodus 14:19-20). God provided this light to show Israel His next great miracle.

The people anxiously watched Moses as he walked through the crowd and headed for the edge of the sea.

“Where is Moses going?” some whispered.

“Perhaps he thinks we should swim our way to freedom.”

“That’s ridiculous. The waves are too strong and the distance to the other side of the sea too far. We would all drown!”

Moses ignored their comments. Placing his trust in God, he raised his rod and stretched his hand over the Red Sea. Immediately, a strong wind from the east blew back the waters. All that night, two giant walls of water formed and parted through the sea, revealing a smooth, dry path (Psalms 77:19-20).

Turning to the people, Moses said, “The Eternal your God shall now deliver you.”

The Israelites were shocked and amazed at the sight. Their God had just parted the Red Sea.

## Escape Through the Red Sea

At Moses' command, the Israelites broke camp, grabbed their belongings, and marched onto the path through the sea. They stared up at the amazing sight of the towering walls of water. It was as though an unseen hand held back the sea, creating a canyon of water.

Many thoughts raced through the minds of the Israelites:

“How long will God keep the Egyptians from chasing after us?”

“Are these walls of water going to fall on us before we make it to shore?”

“I don't believe it! This is impossible!”

But Moses knew what all of God's servants know—with God, nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37 and 18:27).

All through the night, the two or three million Israelites and a mixed multitude of foreigners escaped through the sea.

Early next morning, the pillar of cloud removed itself from blocking Pharaoh's army. The king immediately ordered his men to attack. His soldiers gladly took up their weapons, mounted their horse and chariots, and rushed into the Israelites' camp.

Only they discovered that the Israelites were gone!

Pharaoh said, “Where are they? Where did they go? How could they have disappeared?”

A soldier pointed to a wide path of footprints leading to the shore. That's when the Egyptians saw that the Red Sea was parted in two.

The soldiers stood in silence. “What kind of God can do that?” some wondered.

Most men would have been afraid at this display of God's power. They would have turned back. But God had hardened Pharaoh and the Egyptians' hearts. He did so to show the Israelites—and all mankind—that the Eternal will always fight for those who serve and obey Him.

Pharaoh broke the silence. “Attack!”

The chariots and horsemen raced onto the path and followed it into the Red Sea. Soon they were able to see the Israelites marching just ahead; the last of them were just about to reach the other side of the sea. The soldiers drove the chariots and horses even harder.

Suddenly, the wheels of the chariots came off! Some dug deep into the ground and got stuck. The soldiers couldn't go any farther.

Some said, “This is the work of the Eternal!”

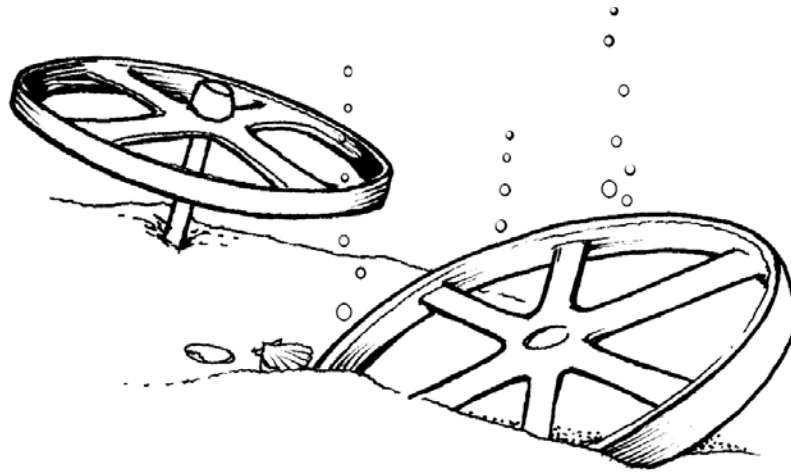
“We can't fight the God of Israel! Let's get out of here!” (Exodus 14:23-25)

As the soldiers rushed to get back to shore, God told Moses to

stretch out his hand over the sea. Pharaoh's men stumbled and crashed into each other, trying to escape.

Then suddenly, the canyon walls of water came crashing down upon them. The soldiers and horses smashed into each other. Giant waves of water picked them up and dropped them into the sea. The men screamed and tried to hold on to anything they could use to float on the water's surface.

But the soldiers struggled in vain. Pharaoh's army was wiped out (verses 26-28).



**Pharaoh's army was destroyed by the crushing waters of the Red Sea.**

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

# ISRAEL TESTS GOD

All the people of Israel cheered and jumped for joy, hugging and dancing, as bodies of dead soldiers and horses washed up on the beach. Their former slave masters would never be a threat to them again. Seeing God's great handiwork, the Israelites worshipped and feared the Eternal. They began to trust Him, and Moses as well (Exodus 14:29-31).

### **Singing Praises to God**

That day was an annual Sabbath—the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. As with all Sabbaths, God commanded His people to come and assemble before Him. Then Moses led the Israelites to sing a special song to praise and thank their God for His great mercy, mighty miracles and awesome wonders.

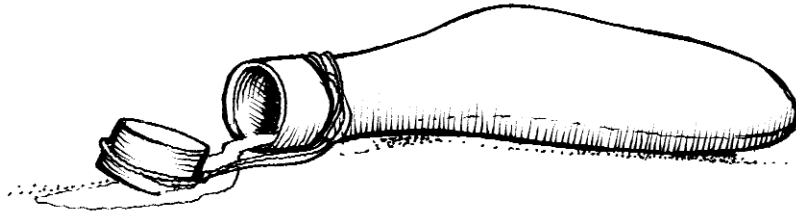
Unlike today, when most people create music or sing songs to please only themselves, Moses and the Israelites sang to please God. They sang about how the Eternal had rescued them through the Red Sea; how He had fought their battles for them; and how He had destroyed their enemies. They also sang about how the rulers of Canaan would tremble and melt away when God brought them into the Promised Land.

Miriam (Moses and Aaron's sister) led all the women to dance and play a musical instrument called the timbrel.

It was a happy, exciting, Sabbath-day festival—all because God had kept His promise to free His people from Egypt (Exodus 15:1-21).

### **Grumble, Moan, Complain**

Three days had passed since the Israelites traveled from the shores of the Red Sea. Now they were in the barren Wilderness of Shur, and there was no water to be found. And the supply of fresh water they had brought was all but gone.



Many of the people grumbled and complained, that is, until the pillar of cloud led them to a large pool of water. The people crowded around it, scooped up the water, and drank.

Then they immediately spat it back out. What they thought was fresh, clean water tasted bitter and stale.

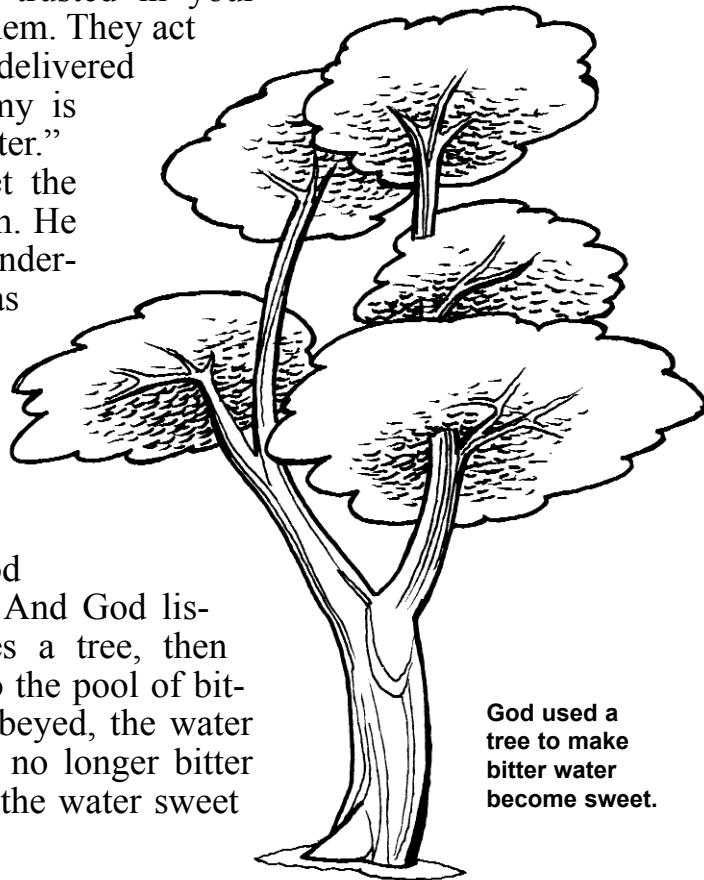
Angry, some turned to accuse Moses. “Why have you done this, Moses? Why did you bring us out here in the wilderness without fresh water to drink? What are we supposed to do—die here under the burning sun?”

They called the place Marah, which meant “bitter” (Exodus 15:22-24).

Aaron was amazed. He said to Moses, “Just three days earlier the people praised God and trusted in your leadership. Now look at them. They act as though the God who delivered them from Pharaoh’s army is too weak to give them water.”

But Moses did not let the people’s anger trouble him. He relied on God. Moses understood that the Eternal was testing them. He wanted to see whether the Israelites would seek God and put Him first, or simply moan and complain.

Moses cried out to God in deep, personal prayer. And God listened. He showed Moses a tree, then ordered him to cast it into the pool of bitter water. When Moses obeyed, the water instantly changed. It was no longer bitter and stale. God had made the water sweet and fresh.



**God used a tree to make bitter water become sweet.**



The Eternal said, “If you will listen to Me, and choose the way I have chosen to be right, I promise to put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians. For I am the Eternal God who heals you” (verses 25-26).

God then led Israel to a place called Elim, in the Wilderness of Sin, where there was plenty of water for all—12 wells of fresh, clean water, plus 70 palm trees (verse 27). The people made themselves full, comfortable and satisfied.

### **God Displays His Glory**

When it was time to leave, the people gathered their things and followed the pillar of cloud farther into the wilderness of Sin (Numbers 33:10-11). It did not take very long for the Israelites to give in to their carnal nature and start complaining:

“It’s been a whole month since we left Egypt,” said one man. “When is Moses going to get us to the Promised Land?”

Another said, “I’m hungry. What are we supposed to do for food?”

A month had passed since the Israelites had marched out of Egypt. The people had eaten most of the breads, grains, and other foods they had brought along. Instead of seeking God to provide more food, the Israelites chose to grumble and complain again. Many surrounded Moses and Aaron, and blamed them for their food shortage:

“We would be better off if God had left us to die in Egypt! At least there we had plenty of meat and bread for us and our families. You only brought us out here so that we could starve to death in the wilderness” (Exodus 16:3).

Moses and Aaron could hardly believe their ears. “Doesn’t anyone trust God?” they asked.

Because they constantly gave Moses and Aaron credit for delivering them from the hands of Pharaoh, God knew that the Israelites needed to be taught a lesson. He needed to get through to their minds that the Eternal was their Deliverer—not Moses and Aaron.

The Israelites had carnal minds. Without God’s Holy Spirit working in them, they could only put their trust in physical things—what they could see or touch.

But God is Spirit. He is invisible. Like the wind, He cannot be seen, unless He so chooses. Only those who have His Holy Spirit guiding their minds—their thoughts and desires—can fully worship and trust God.

Despite all the astounding miracles He had already performed, God knew that the carnal-minded Israelites needed to see daily miracles.

These would help to remind them where they should place their trust.

So God said to Moses, “I will rain down on my people bread from heaven. Every morning, My people are to go out and gather this special bread. But they are only allowed to collect enough to last the day. On the sixth day of the week, they are to gather twice as much.

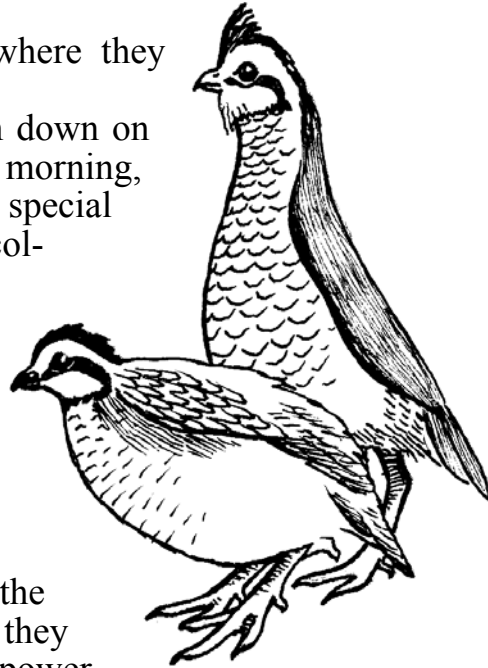
“In the evening, I will rain down meat. In this way, the people will know that I am the Eternal, the One who brought them out of Egypt” (verses 4-5).

Quickly, Moses and Aaron told the Israelites the good news. And then they added, “At evening, you will see the power and glory of the God who freed you from slavery. He has heard you complain and groan against Him. You may have thought that you were complaining against us, but the truth is you were complaining against the God of the universe!”

That evening, as the sun slowly faded into the horizon, all the people looked up into the dark sky and waited. Then the pillar of cloud displayed the awesome might and power of God Almighty—and the people shivered and trembled with fear.

After this, God produced another miracle: Small, plump birds, called quails, dropped down into the Israelites’ camp. They were everywhere, covering the entire campground. The quails were easy to catch, and, after killing and cooking them, the Israelites found out that the birds were tasty, too.

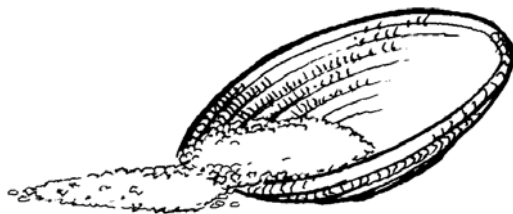
With their bellies full of fresh-cooked meat, the people waited for morning to come. They were anxious to see what God would do next (verses 6-13).



### **Manna From Heaven**

Morning came, and God produced another miracle. The Israelites awoke to find morning dew lying on the ground all about them. When the dew dried up, it revealed small, white, round crackers of bread. It tasted like wafers made with honey (Exodus 16:31).

Some asked, “What is it?” This led the Israelites to call the bread from heaven “manna,” which means “what is it?” (verses 11-15).



Moses reminded them that each person should gather enough manna to meet their daily needs, about two quarts (verse 16). The people obeyed—but not entirely. Some gathered more than their fair share, and some gathered less.

God saw this and produced another miracle: Those who gathered too little or too much manna were surprised to discover that what they had just collected still came to about two quarts (verses 17-18).

This should have taught the Israelites to follow God’s exact instructions. But the people proved to be too stubborn and rebellious to listen. They wanted to do things their own way, and decided for themselves right from wrong, good from evil.

They even disobeyed God’s command to eat all of the manna they collected and leave none overnight. Those who refused to listen awoke the next morning to a rotten smell. The bread they had saved from the night before was now squirming with worms, and gave off a foul stench (verses 19-20).

Upon discovering their disobedience, Moses was angry.

He said, “How dare you disobey a direct command from God! He granted you His mercy, releasing you from suffering and misery—and this is how you treat His kindness?”

The guilty ones hung their heads in shame. Their sin of rebellion and disobedience was exposed for all to see (and smell). Most people think that they can do all kinds of evil and never get caught. But someday, God will judge the sins of all men. No one will escape His judgment.

During that week, the Israelites learned to gather manna the right way: just enough to supply their daily needs, and none left overnight. Any manna that was not collected melted when the noon sun was high in the sky (verse 21).

### **In Danger of God’s Wrath**

When the sixth day of the week came (today, we call it Friday) God, through Moses and Aaron, told the Israelites to gather twice as much

manna. Many wondered why.

Moses said, “Tomorrow is the Sabbath, the weekly day of rest, which God created for all mankind. He gives us the first six days of the week to do all our work and pleasure. But the seventh day is a Sabbath. It is a special day that belongs to our God. Use today—the sixth day—to prepare for God’s Sabbath. Do all your baking and boiling today and store away enough food to last through tomorrow. Don’t worry about the manna rotting overnight; God will protect it. Tomorrow when you awake, there will be no new manna for you to gather. God wants you to rest” (Exodus 16:22-26).

The people obeyed. Each person gathered about four quarts of manna—enough to feed them for that day and the next.

But next morning, some of the Israelites chose to rebel against God’s command. They arose early and searched for manna to collect. Yet there was none to be found.

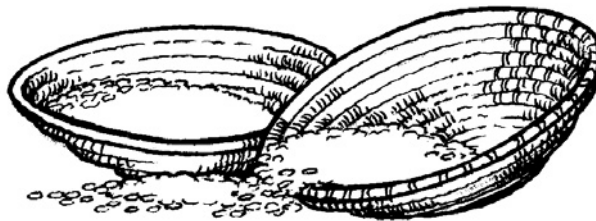
This angered God!

He said, “Moses, this is a rebellious and stubborn people. How long will they refuse to keep My commandments and laws?”

Moses warned Israel of God’s wrath. The people, remembering what God had done to the Egyptians, kept the Sabbath day holy—special and full of joy—by resting on it (verses 27-30).

Sometime later, God commanded Moses and the Israelites to save an omer (a little more than two quarts) of manna. This was to remind future generations of Israelites that God had fed His people bread from heaven while leading them through the wilderness, into the Promised Land (verses 32-33).

This was also written in the Bible to remind us that God will always provide for our needs. All we have to do is trust and obey Him.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

# SNEAK ATTACK!

**G**od led the two million-plus Israelites through the Wilderness of Sin. They camped at Dophkah, Alush and then Rephidim (Numbers 33:12-14).

The Israelites soon discovered that Rephidim was so barren, no water could be found. Again, the people moaned and complained.

Some said, “Moses, we need more water—give it to us now!”

Others said, “Is this why you brought us out of Egypt—to kill us, our children, and our cattle, too? We’re all dying from thirst!”

Even though it was God who had delivered them, and the pillars of cloud and fire were right there for all to see, the Israelites saw only Moses as their leader. Like many do today, they focused on human beings to solve all their problems instead of trusting in God.

Responding to their complaints, Moses said, “Who am I? I’m just an ordinary human being. I’m not the One who freed you from slavery. I don’t have the power to make water. God is our Great Provider. Why do you test God by looking to me to provide for you? You should be seeking the Eternal.”

The Israelites grew hostile and bitter. If their needs weren’t met soon, something terrible could happen.

Fearing for his life, Moses prayed. “O Eternal God, what shall I do with these people? All they do is moan and grumble—and now they’re ready to take my life!”

Unlike many deceived men who claim to speak for God, Moses did not take credit for the Eternal’s amazing miracles. He knew that all blessings came from the Almighty. Moses struggled to make the carnal-minded Israelites understand this.

God said to him, “Moses, go before the people. Take with you the elders of Israel and your shepherd rod. I will direct you to the rock in Horeb. You will strike it with your rod, and out will pour water.”

Moses faithfully obeyed.

The elders of Israel and all the people watched as he struck the rock

with his rod. Suddenly, sweet, fresh water poured out from it.

Because Moses showed the Israelites that he relied on God as his leader, God showed them that He was working through Moses. Complaining against Moses, God's chosen leader, was like complaining against God Himself.

Since the Israelites tested God by bitterly moaning and grumbling, the place was called Massah and Meribah, which meant "testing" and "contending" (Exodus 17:1-7).

### **War Council Plans**

News of Israel's dramatic release from Egypt had spread to the many tribes and nations living in Canaan. These Gentiles (non-Israelites) knew that God had delivered Israel from slavery in order to take Canaan away from them.

One tribe, the Amalekites, were more worried about Israel than were the other people living in Canaan. The Amalekites were nomads, people who roamed from place to place, never settling down in one spot. They lived mostly in the region of Negev, located in the southernmost part of Canaan.

The leaders of the Amalekites met to make a plan about what to do with Israel.

One man stood up, and said, "The Israelites must be stopped. Right now, as I speak, they are marching toward Canaan, claiming that it's their Promised Land. And our territory stands between them. If we don't crush the Israelites now while we still have the chance, they may grow stronger by the time they get here."

Another said, "He's right. The time to strike is now. This may be our best opportunity to get rid of them, once and for all!"

But some of the other leaders were worried. "What about their God? He struck Egypt with ten plagues when Pharaoh and his people stood in God's way. Look what happened to them."

"Bah! The Egyptians worshipped the wrong gods, that's all. This God of the Hebrews is no match for our gods. Besides, my scouts report that the Israelites are bringing with them lots of Egyptian treasures—gold, silver, fine linen. These Hebrews are like ripe fruit waiting to be plucked."

All in the war council agreed. They lifted their swords and cheered, "Death to Israel!"

The Amalekites were descendants of Amalek. He was the grandson of Esau, who was the brother of Jacob (Israel). The Amalekites' hatred for the Israelites partly came from the jealousy and friction that had

occurred between Esau and Jacob. This hatred still exists between these two peoples.

But in tomorrow's wonderful world, when Jesus Christ rules over all nations, everyone will live in peace. That time is coming very soon.

### **Sneak Attack!**

The Amalekite leaders formed an army and raced off to meet the Israelites. Along the way, Amalekite scouts brought back reports of Israel's movements.

"The Israelites have most of their strongest men and weapons stationed at the middle and front of their camp. But their rear is less guarded."

Armed with this new information, the leaders devised their plan of attack.

The army secretly came to the rear of the Israelites' camp and hid. When their leaders gave the command, the Amalekites swooped down from the hills. They grabbed whatever treasure they could find, while slaying the weak and weary.

"This is too easy!" the raiders cheered.

The Israelites were taken by surprise. They expected to be attacked in Canaan, not in the wilderness. Some panicked—they didn't know what to do. The Israelites were used to being slaves, not soldiers.

Before Israel could react, the Amalekite raiders fled back up into the hills.

Moses knew that they would be back. So he chose his servant Joshua (Exodus 33:11) to lead the people into battle. "Joshua, go and choose men who can fight. Get them ready to meet the Amalekites."

The next morning, the Amalekites attacked again. This time, Israel was ready for them. Swords, shields and spears clashed against each other as the bloody battle waged on.

Meanwhile, Moses stood on top of a hill that overlooked the fighting. He held his shepherd rod high above his head, praying for God to give Israel victory.

God did not answer immediately. God knows that if He always answered prayers right away, people would stop putting their hearts into their prayers. God wants all His servants to learn that relying upon Him takes patience, endurance and strength.

You must also understand that Moses did not lift up his rod because it was some kind of "magic wand." Of and by itself, there was nothing special about his shepherd rod. God decided to use it as a symbol of His great authority and power. Like a good shepherd who uses his rod



The bloodthirsty Amalekites tried to crush the Israelites.



to lead, protect, and sometimes correct his sheep, God uses His authority and power to lead, protect and lovingly correct His people.

### **Success Belongs to God**

With Moses holding the rod high above him as he prayed, Israel was defeating the raiders.

In the thick of the battle, Joshua yelled to his troops, “Keep fighting, we’re winning!”

The Israelites charged at their enemies even harder. But just when they thought that victory was theirs, the Amalekites regained their strength and struck back.

Joshua said, “I don’t understand.”

Then he looked up to the hill where Moses stood. Moses had been praying with his hands in the air for so long, his arms grew tired and heavy. Because his hands lowered, God was no longer answering Moses’ prayers.

Aaron and a man named Hur rushed up the hill, grabbed Moses’ arms, and lifted them above his head.

Suddenly, Israel was winning the battle again. Whenever Moses’ hands started to lower, the Amalekites began to win.

Moses was so tired from standing that Aaron and Hur brought a rock over for him to sit on. Then they stood on each side of him and held up his arms while he prayed.

Fighting viciously against their foes, the Israelites saw Moses with his hands held high, praying for them. This caused the Israelites to realize two things: (1) Their success depended on God answering Moses’ prayer; (2) God was clearly working through Moses.

The fighting and bloodshed continued throughout the long, tiring day until the sun began to set. Only then did God give Israel full victory over their enemies.

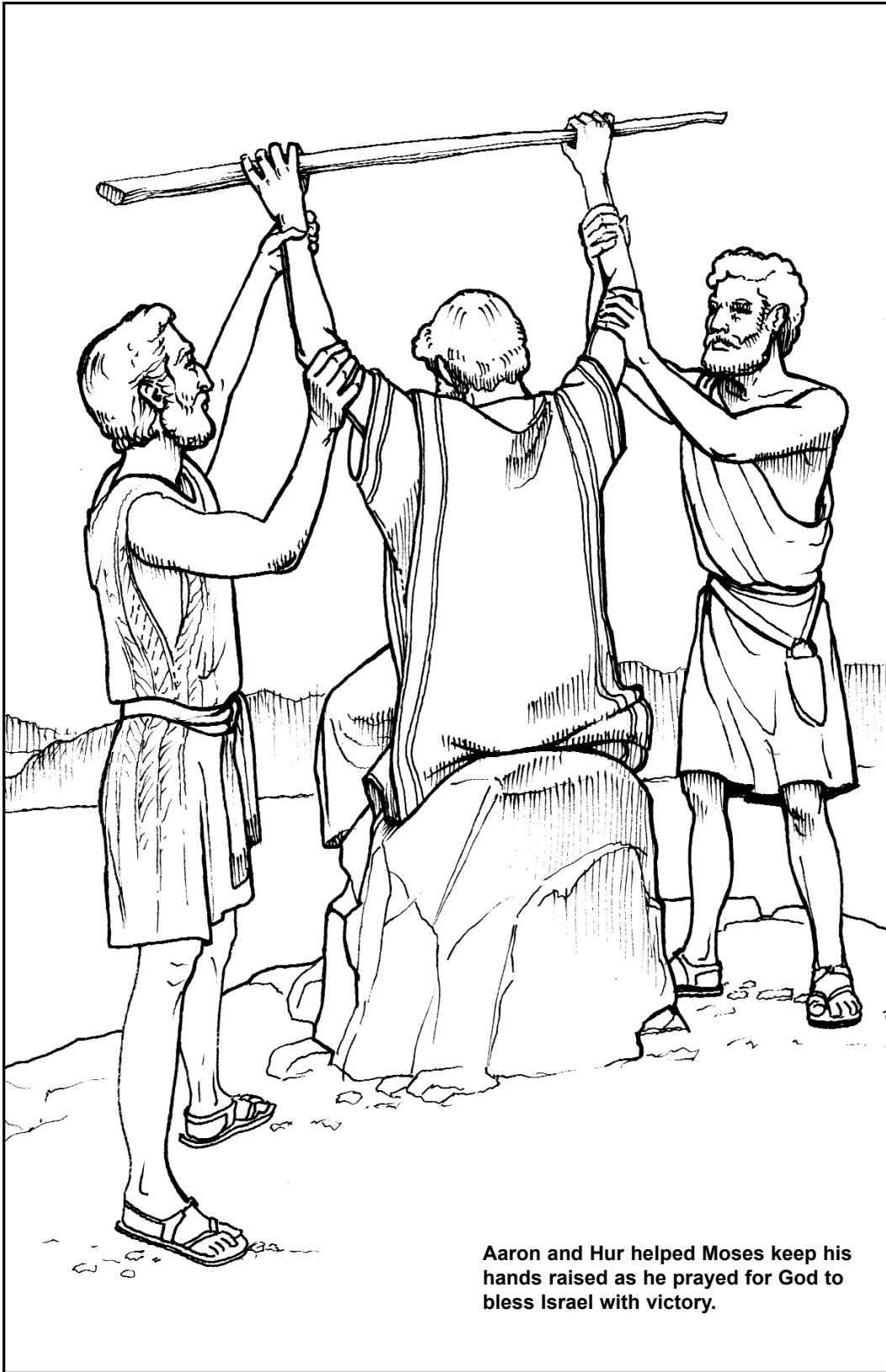
Joshua shouted, “Success! God has given us success!”

The Israelites cheered with him, and fell upon their remaining enemies like a giant tidal wave. When the battle was finally over, Israel had gained valuable experience fighting deadly forces. The people also learned to look to God for their success.

News of their victory quickly spread to other Gentile nations, terrifying them into thinking twice before daring to attack God’s people.

The next day, all the people of Israel gathered weapons and armor of the dead Amalekites. They also gathered the gold, silver and other valuables left behind in the enemy camp.

As the people danced and celebrated, Moses built an altar of wor-



**Aaron and Hur helped Moses keep his hands raised as he prayed for God to bless Israel with victory.**

ship. He called it “The Eternal is my banner.” Throughout man’s history, there have been many wars and battles. Armies usually carried flags that showed where they received their authority—usually from a king or a country. Moses was showing that Israel’s authority and power came from God. He knew that the Almighty would fight all their battles for them. All they had to do was be patient and obedient.

God promises the same protection to His people today. He will answer their prayers, provide for their needs, and fight their battles for them—if they put His will first and obey Him (Exodus 17:8-16).

### **Sentenced to Destruction**

Witnessing the evil of the Amalekites—how they tried to destroy the Israelites before they could enter the Promised Land—God promised to destroy them. He told His people to remember what their enemy had done, how they struck them from behind and slew the weak—all because they did not fear God. The Eternal promised to utterly destroy them when He would deliver Israel into Canaan. He would use Israel as His sword. Not one Amalekite was to be left alive (Exodus 17:14 and Deuteronomy 25:17-19).

### **Jethro Pays a Visit**

Among those who heard about Israel’s release from Egypt and recent victory was Jethro, priest of Midian. He was also Moses’ father-in-law. Jethro was impressed when he heard about the many wonderful miracles God had performed for the Israelites.

When he learned that Moses and the Israelites were camped at Horeb, Jethro decided to pay his son-in-law a visit. He brought with him Moses’ wife Zipporah, and their two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (Exodus 18:1-5).

When they met, Moses and Jethro were happy to see each other. Many exciting events had happened since the two men last saw each other. Moses was eager to share with his father-in-law all the details. And Jethro was eager to listen.

When Moses told about dealing with Pharaoh, the ten plagues from God, the dramatic release from Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and the narrow escape from Pharaoh’s army, Jethro rejoiced. “Blessed be the Eternal. He is the God who delivered you out of Egypt. He is the One who freed all of Israel from slavery. Now I know that the Eternal is greater than all gods!” (verses 6-11).

Jethro was so inspired by what God had done, he decided to offer

burnt offerings to the Eternal. Then Moses, Aaron and the elders of Israel gathered with Jethro and had a feast.

## CHAPTER THIRTY

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The next morning, Jethro decided to watch Moses handle his daily duties as physical leader over Israel. From the time the sun rose in the east until it set in the west, Moses heard and judged many disputes and arguments of all who came to him. Jethro watched as long lines of people stood before Moses, asking for help.

“He took my sandals. I want them back.”

“My brother won’t share the inheritance our father left us.”

“She is spreading lies about me.”

“This one made a promise, but now he’s gone back on his word.”

The Israelites complained about and accused each other of all sorts of wrongs. Some of these complaints were simple misunderstandings. Some were minor problems that could easily be solved. And some were cases of terrible injustices in need of deep understanding and wisdom.

These petty, selfish arguments were driven by carnal nature, brought on by the devil. He did not want God’s people to reach the Promised Land. Satan knew that if he could get the Israelites fighting among themselves, they would not work together—and they would not help each other through the difficult journey ahead.

From morning to evening, Jethro watched his son-in-law make final decisions for all problems, big and small. Only after carefully watching did Jethro speak to Moses about his daily duties (Exodus 18:13-14).

Jethro said, “My son, why are you doing this? Why are you wearing yourself out trying to decide every single matter for the people? Your entire day is filled with endless cases of listening to complaints and arguments, leaving you no time for other things—why?”

“Because the people come to me to ask for God’s wisdom in these matters,” Moses said. “This way, they get to know the laws of God.”

“Moses, you may mean well, but the way you’re going about it is not good.”

Moses listened to  
Jethro's wise advice.



Most men would have told Jethro to mind his own business. But Moses was the meekest man alive. He was willing to listen to good advice, especially from older, more experienced people like his father-in-law. Unlike many now, Moses respected the elderly. He knew that, because older people have lived long lives, they have experiences and life lessons to share. Older people, such as your grandparents, usually have a certain wisdom gained from experience. It cannot be learned in school or books. This is why Moses valued his father-in-law's advice.

### **Wisdom in God's Government**

Jethro said, "Moses, if you keep spending your whole day judging matters for the people, you will wear yourself out. What you are doing

is long, tiring work. Continuing to do this will destroy you, and Israel will suffer.

“Now consider this. Go out among the people and find able men, men known for their wisdom and having good, solid character, men who fear and obey God. Honest men, who hate to covet—who don’t allow themselves to desire things to the point of disobeying God in order to get them. Take these men and make them leaders over Israel. Make some leaders over thousands, some over hundreds, some over fifties, and some over tens. Then let these able men of good character judge matters for the people. Every great matter they shall bring to you. But every small matter they shall judge, with God’s help. If you do this, you will have more time to serve God in other ways. And all of the Israelites will be able to get their matters judged as well” (verses 15-23).

Moses saw the wisdom in Jethro’s advice. It was clearly inspired by God. So Moses quickly put Jethro’s plan into action, and God blessed it (verses 24-26).

Jethro’s advice described the way God works through His people today. God leads His Church through one man. But since one man cannot possibly take care of every single detail, God places other leaders under this top man. These men all work together to carry out God’s will among the people. This is called top-down government.

Some time later, Jethro decided that it was time to leave. He tearfully hugged Moses good-bye, and wished him well, and headed for home.

### **God Makes a Proposal**

In the third month of God’s sacred calendar (around the time we know as May), the pillar of cloud led the Israelites to break camp. They journeyed southward, into the more mountainous region of the Wilderness of Sinai. The march was harder than usual, because the land was rocky and gradually slanted uphill.

The cloud finally led the Israelites to set up camp at the foot of Mount Sinai. This mountain had two peaks. One was called Sinai. The other was called Horeb, where God first appeared to Moses, in a burning bush (Exodus 3:1-6).

Obedying God’s command, Moses left the camp and made his way up Mount Sinai. The long climb was steep and difficult, especially for Moses, who was about 80 years old. But God protected him. He made sure that Moses did not fall or hurt himself (Exodus 19:1-3).

When he reached the mountain’s highest peak, Moses heard God speak.

He said, “Remind the Israelites what I did for them—how I personally freed them from slavery and delivered them from the hands of their former masters, the Egyptians. Then tell them that I want to make a covenant with them—a special agreement. If the Israelites obey Me and keep the terms of this agreement, they will be a special people to Me. Of all the people on earth, Israel will be like a precious treasure to Me. I shall make them into a kingdom of priests—teachers of My wonderful laws. They shall also be a holy nation to Me, set apart from all the other nations, special in My eyes” (verses 4-6).

God wanted Israel to become a model nation. He wanted them to set the right example to all the other nations in the world. He wanted to show that those who seek to obey and please God would be blessed. The Israelites were to be a living example, showing that God’s Way always works.

God’s people today—His Church—are doing just that. They have set their minds to obey and please God in everything they do. Though they are far from perfect, God considers them to be His royal priesthood and holy nation, because they strive to represent His righteous way of life (I Peter 2:5, 9).

### **Making Themselves Clean Before God**

Moses climbed down the mountain and told the elders of Israel everything God had said. Remembering all that God had done for them so far, all the people happily agreed to keep God’s covenant. They wanted to be considered special in God’s eyes.

Moses returned to the top of Mount Sinai to deliver Israel’s reply.

God gave him further instructions, then sent him down the mountain to prepare the Israelites for a very special event.

Coming before the people, Moses said, “You have two days to prepare yourselves so that God will speak to you directly. Wash your clothes and make yourselves clean. Our God is holy and pure—He does not want to come in the presence of unclean things.

“Also, do not go up the mountain, or even touch it. I will put up borders for you to stay behind. Whoever crosses these borders and touches God’s mountain will be put to death! Whether man or beast, any who touch the mountain will be crushed with stones. God will signal when it is okay to come up the mountain: when the trumpet sounds long.”

The people obeyed. They washed their clothes and bathed themselves. They also made sure to keep away from the mountain of God (Exodus 19:7-14).



## **God Speaks!**

When the third day came (the Feast of Firstfruits, also known as the Day of Pentecost), the Israelites awoke to see a thick, smoky cloud mysteriously surrounding the top of the mountain.

“What’s this?” some asked. “What’s happening up there?”

Fiery bolts of lightning flashed across the inky darkness that was quickly spreading over the Israelite camp. Then bursts of ear-shattering thunder crashed and pounded throughout the sky.

Little girls screamed for their mothers. Little boys hid behind their fathers. And all the Israelites trembled at the sound of a loud trumpet blast.

Moses said to them, “Come out of your tents. Hurry. We must go to the foot of the mountain and assemble before God.”

As the sound of the trumpet grew louder, the people saw Mount Sinai shake and tremble. Some of them were so curious, they drew too close to the mountain.

A voice from the cloud said, “Moses, come up here!”

Moses quickly obeyed.

God then told him, “Warn the Israelites not to climb up the mountain. Many are curious to see Me. No man can stand to see My full presence. Tell those who are foolishly thinking about coming up here that their curiosity could cost them their lives!”

Moses raced back down the mountain, then shouted to the people, “Get back! Stay away from the mountain. Don’t even think about trying to get a look at God. No man can see His full presence and live to tell about it!”

Heeding Moses’ warning, the people backed away from Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16-25).

## **The Ten Commandments**

Then a loud, booming voice came down from the mountaintop and echoed across the land. The Israelites huddled together, quivering with fear.

The voice said, “I AM THE ETERNAL, YOUR GOD. I am the One who brought you out of Egypt, freeing you from the bonds of slavery.”

For a moment, there was silence. God wanted the Israelites to think about His words and what they meant to them.

Then the voice said, “YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME!”

This was the First Commandment. People must never put anything or any person before the one true God.

“YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF IDOLS or carved images in the likeness of anything in heaven, earth, or in the sea in order to bow down and worship them!”

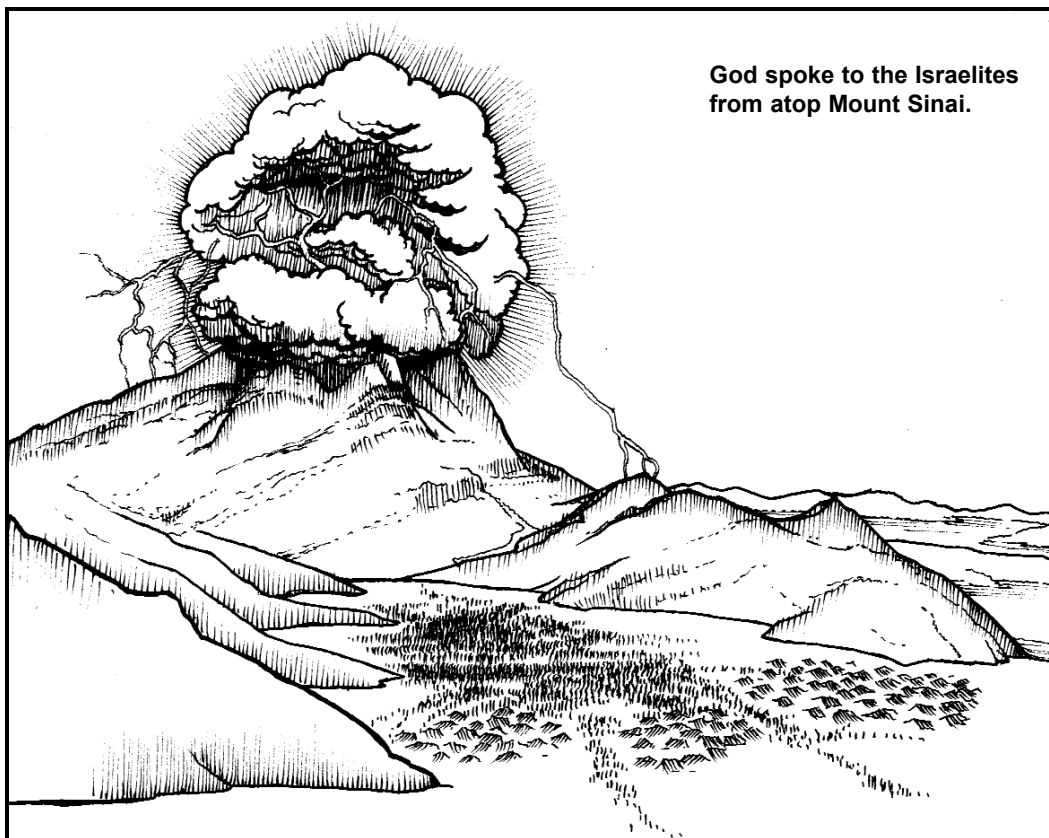
This was the Second Commandment. Throughout history, people have put their trust in religious statues and pictures—they even trust in so-called “good luck” charms.

God hates this. He said, “For I am a jealous God, and will punish those who bow down and serve idols, even to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me. However, I will show love and mercy to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

Then came more silence.

The voice said, “YOU SHALL NOT MISUSE MY NAME OR TAKE IT IN VAIN! I will punish anyone who misuses or disrespects My name.

This was the Third Commandment. Even now, most people do not speak God’s name with the respect that it deserves. And if they don’t respect His name, they certainly won’t respect Him or His commandments.



The Fourth Commandment came next: “REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, AND KEEP IT HOLY! The first six days of the week belong to you. Use them to do all your work. But the seventh day belongs to Me. It is the Sabbath. On that day, you shall rest, and assemble before Me, to worship Me. Follow My example—in six days, I recreated the sky, earth and sea. But on the seventh day, I rested. I blessed that day to be My Sabbath rest for you.”

Most break this commandment without even knowing it. The devil has misled and deceived many people into believing that God’s Sabbath is on the first day of the week. But God’s people know the truth. They understand which day is God’s Sabbath—they assemble together and worship Him on the seventh day of the week.

God gave the First, Second, Third and Fourth Commandments to teach His people how to serve and show love toward Him.

Then He gave the next six commandments to show people how to love and respect each other.

The Fifth Commandment: “HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER that you may live a long, joyful life in the land the Eternal your God is giving you!”

People who do not treat their parents with respect will not treat God, our Father in heaven, with respect.

The Sixth Commandment: “YOU SHALL NOT MURDER!”

Only God has the right to take the lives of others. No one else may do this without His permission. All life belongs to God.

The Seventh Commandment: “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY!”

From man’s creation, God ordained that marriage between a man and his wife is special—holy—set apart for a godly purpose. The intimate love and affection that a husband and wife should have for each other must stay in the marriage. It must never be shared with others. When it does, marriages and families break apart. And God does not want this.

The Eighth Commandment: “YOU SHALL NOT STEAL!”

Taking things that belong to others without their permission is wrong. Unfortunately, many do rob and steal from each other. For them, it is a way of life.

The Ninth Commandment: “YOU SHALL NOT TELL LIES AGAINST ANYONE!”

Throughout history, many people have been imprisoned or even killed because someone lied about them. They were falsely accused of doing something they did not. This should never be.

The Tenth Commandment: “YOU SHALL NOT COVET—lust—

wrongly desire things that belong to other people! You shall not covet the wife, servant, livestock, or anything that belongs to someone else.”

Most people break this law all the time. They see something they think they “just have to have.” They let their carnal desires fill their minds, to the point that they will do anything to get what they want—even lie, steal or murder! This is why people must learn to always be content with what they have (Philippians 4:11-12).

### **God’s Laws Define Love**

These were the Ten Commandments God gave to Israel. They are still in effect today. They are based on one word: Love—first toward God, then toward other people (Exodus 20:1-17). If the world kept them today, there would be no more crime or war or poverty. All would live together in peace, harmony and safety. This is what God wanted for Israel.

This is what God will bring when He sets up His Kingdom on the earth.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

# THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

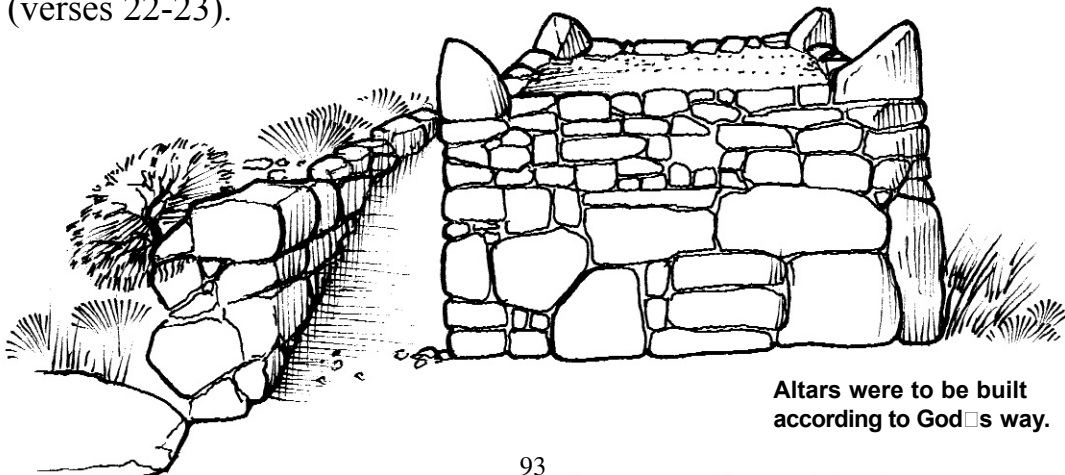
**B**y giving them His Ten Commandments, God gave the Israelites an opportunity to start a new life as a nation that feared and obeyed the Eternal. Here was their chance to be a shining example to the nations of the world.

But the Israelites did not think of this—they were too busy trembling from God’s powerful voice. They turned to Moses and said, “You speak to us, Moses. We’ll listen to you. But God’s voice is too much for us. If He speaks again, we will die!”

Moses tried to reassure them. “Don’t fear the lightning and thunder—God is not here to hurt you. However, you should show God proper fear and respect, so that you do not break any of His laws” (Exodus 20:18-21).

### Idolatry, Altars and Sacrifices

After Moses climbed back up Mount Sinai, God said to him, “Remind the Israelites that though they have heard My voice, they have not seen Me. Therefore, they will be tempted to create idols and carved images or pictures of what they think I look like. Tell them not to do this. They must never make images or pictures of Me. I do not want anyone to worship Me the way that the pagan nations worship their false gods” (verses 22-23).



Altars were to be built according to God’s way.

God then told Moses how to properly build an altar of worship, and how to make sacrifices on it. “The altar must be made either of earth or uncut stone. For if you use a cut stone on it you will have polluted the altar.”

God said that, for burnt offerings and peace offerings, the Israelites were to sacrifice sheep and oxen (verses 24-25).

### **Various Judgments**

To keep the carnal-minded Israelites from getting into trouble, God told Moses that He was giving them various detailed ordinances, or judgments. These laws gave more details to the Ten Commandments. They would help the Israelites to solve specific problems that were bound to arise.

These judgments told the people not to mistrust or be cruel to their servants. They taught the Israelites how to deal with murderers and violent people; those who disrespected their parents; kidnappers (people who stole other people); vicious animals; thieves; sorceresses; how to repay others after causing the loss of their livestock or property.

Other laws taught them to not make sacrifices to false gods. These judgments protected non-Israelites who lived among God’s people in peace. And they protected widows and orphans. They instructed the Israelites to show respect toward God and human leaders; to keep from spreading rumors; to keep from getting involved with riots (mobs of people who seek to do violence and evil).

God’s judgments also showed Israel that it was important to observe His annual feast days, which were also Sabbaths (Exodus 21, 22 and 23).

### **Personal Protection**

Then God said to Moses, “The Messenger of the Eternal will prepare My people and lead them into the Promised Land. My Messenger will protect them. When they come to Canaan, I will drive out their enemies: the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

“I will cut them out of Canaan. You shall not serve their false gods. Instead, you will destroy their idols and pillars of worship.

“But I will not drive out your enemies all at once. I will take a year, so that the wild beasts in the land do not increase and spread out of control for lack of people to slay them.

“You shall not make peace agreements with your enemies, or join

them against other nations. Neither shall you make agreements or covenants with their false gods.

“Obey Me and I will bless you with more food and drink than you can imagine. And I will take all your sicknesses and diseases away from you” (Exodus 23:20-33).

### **Israel Formally Accepts the Covenant**

At God’s instruction, Moses brought his brother Aaron, Aaron’s two oldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel up to the mountain to worship God. However, only Moses was allowed to be in God’s presence (Exodus 24:1-2).

God had Moses tell the elders the terms and conditions of His covenant. Speaking for the people of Israel, the seventy elders agreed to keep the laws, judgments and rules God had proposed.

Then Moses wrote down all the words God had spoken (verses 3-4).

Next morning in camp, Moses had an altar built at the foot of Mount Sinai. Twelve uncut stones or pillars were erected around the altar. They represented the twelve tribes of Israel (verse 4).

For burnt offerings and peace offerings, Moses picked a team of young men to sacrifice sheep and oxen to God. When the animals were slain, Moses took half the blood and sprinkled it on the altar.

Then he read aloud the Book of the Covenant, which he had written down the night before. All of Israel listened.

While the sacrifices were on the altar, consumed by fire, the elders and the people of Israel said, “So be it!” This meant that they officially agreed to God’s terms.

Moses took the rest of the blood and sprinkled it on the elders, who represented the people.

He said, “Here is the blood of the covenant, which God has made for you” (verses 4-8).

It probably sounds strange that Moses sprinkled blood on the people and the altar. God had him do this for a very important reason.

About 1,500 years into their future (about 2,000 years in our past), the Word—the One who speaks for the God Family—would be born as a human being. As a physical man, He would live a perfect life. He would never sin—break God’s Commandments. At His death, this man (called Jesus Christ) would become the ultimate blood sacrifice. There would be no more need for animal sacrifices. Christ’s innocent, sin-free life would be sacrificed for all mankind. His shed blood would be able to forgive the sins of all people, once and for all. Animal sacrifices cannot do this.

Whenever people sin, they break God's Law. And anyone who breaks His Law earns the penalty of death. But since Jesus Christ lived a perfect life—without sin—His death paid the penalty of death for everyone.

The blood that Moses sprinkled represented Jesus Christ's ultimate sacrifice.

### **God Reveals Himself**

The Eternal commanded Moses to come before Him on Mount Sinai. And He said, "Bring with you Aaron, his sons Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders."

After making the long, difficult climb up the steep mountainside, the men were set to see an awesome sight: the God of Israel revealed Himself! He allowed the men to partly see His form and shape. They were astonished that God was shaped just like a man. The pagan worshippers of Gentile nations, such as Egypt, worshipped false gods that were in the shape of animals. But God made man after the God-kind—after His own form and shape (Genesis 1:26-27).

The men were filled with awe and fear. They saw the feet of God, and under Him was a floor of sapphire stone. The men quickly bowed down and worshipped their Creator. They hoped God would not take their lives. They knew that no human being is able to see the greatness of God and live. The brilliance of the Eternal's presence is too great for the eyes of humans to handle.

God gave them His great mercy. He cut back His full presence so that the men could see His shape. Thankful, the men feasted together, praising God (Exodus 24:9-11).

This was not God the Father who these men had seen. No human being has ever seen God the Father (I John 4:20). Moses and the men saw the Word, the One who speaks for God the Father. Today we call Him Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 10:1-4).

### **Special Offering for a Special Project**

Again, God called Moses to climb up to the upper part of the mountain. Taking his assistant Joshua with him, Moses told the elders of Israel, "Wait here. If you have any concerns or matters to take care of, Aaron and Hur will stay with you. Go to them for guidance."

The elders looked on as Moses and Joshua climbed up Mount Sinai and disappeared into the cloud that surrounded the top (Exodus 24:12-15).



Part way through their journey, God ordered Moses to leave Joshua behind. He wanted only Moses in His presence. Joshua stayed, watching Moses disappear into the cloud layer above.

When Moses had gone far enough, the glory and power of the Eternal came upon Mount Sinai. Down from below, all of Israel saw what could only be described as fire coming upon the mountaintop.

Many wondered, “What’s going on up there? How long will Moses be away?”

But no one dared to go up or even touch God’s mountain. For now, the Israelites were too afraid to disobey God.

Moses waited within the cloud for six days. On the seventh day, God spoke (verses 16-17).

“Moses, tell My people that they are to give a freewill offer—gifts from the heart. They are to take the jewelry and other treasures they received from the Egyptians and decide for themselves how much they will freely give to Me. Their offering will be used to create a Tabernacle—a special temple made of tents. It will travel with the Israelites on their journey to Canaan. My Tabernacle will represent the order, cleanliness and holiness of My throne in heaven. Only the best materials may be used in building it: Gold, silver, brass; blue, purple, scarlet and fine linen; goats’ hair, rams’ skin dyed red, badgers’ skin, acacia wood, oils, spices, and precious stones.

“Within My Tabernacle will be My sanctuary—the Most Holy Place. I will dwell there so that I may be among the Israelites. Israel will be the only nation on earth to have their God personally live among them.”

### **A Family of Priests**

In addition to building His Tabernacle, God planned for the Israelites to make an ark—a special gold chest that would hold two stone tablets with God’s Commandments written on them. Called the Ark of the Covenant, the chest would represent God’s throne in heaven, the place where God controls and maintains the vast universe, and grants mercy to all who seek Him.

God gave Moses highly specific details and instructions into measuring and building the Tabernacle and the many things that would go with it. He also established Aaron and his sons as a family of priests for Israel. Aaron was to be the first high priest. All other high priests after him would come from his family line.

Part of Aaron’s duties would be to offer the right sacrifices at the right time, in the proper way. In addition to offering burnt offerings

**Moses climbs up Mount Sinai to meet with God.**



daily, sweet spices of incense were to be given. These would represent the prayers of God's people.

Today, our High Priest is Jesus Christ. When Christians pray to God the Father, they do so by Christ's authority. Jesus acts as a Mediator between God and His people (Exodus 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30).

### **God's Spirit Empowers Talent**

God told Moses that He had chosen two men to lead the Tabernacle project. Their names were Bezaleel, who was the grandson of Hur, and Aholiab. God said that He would fill them with His Spirit of wisdom, understanding and knowledge. This would enhance their natural abilities of stone-cutting, carving wood, and shaping metals.

Together, Bezaleel and Aholiab would lead other skilled people (craftsmen, weavers, designers, artists, and such) into building the Ark, its Mercy Seat, and God's Tabernacle and all the furniture and things that went with it. This also included creating special clothing for Aaron and his sons to wear when they would perform their priestly duties (Exodus 31:1-11).

The Tabernacle project was to show that the Eternal is the God of decency and order (I Corinthians 14:33, 40). He does not dwell in confusion.

The high priest wore special clothes as he worked in God's Tabernacle.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

# ISRAEL MAKES AN IDOL

**G**od gave Moses further instruction about His Sabbath day: “Tell the Israelites that they must keep My Sabbath. These Holy Days are Mine; they belong to Me. They shall be kept by My people and their descendants. The Sabbath day is a sign between Me and those who fear and obey Me. As a sign, My Sabbath identifies who I am and who My people are. If any fail to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy, they shall be put to death!”

God had just made a special Sabbath covenant with Israel. If His people were careful to keep His Sabbaths, they would always remember who God is. And they would not be deceived into following after false gods. But if the Israelites defiled God’s Sabbath—if they labored on this day, or kept the Sabbath on the wrong day of the week instead of the seventh day—they would forget the God who freed them. They would even forget that they were His people.

True Christians keep God’s weekly Sabbaths and annual Holy Days so that they can worship the right God. That is one of the reasons why God considers them to be His people (Exodus 31:12-17).

### **Tablets of Stone**

Moses spent forty days and nights in God’s presence, listening to all that the Eternal had to say. There was much information and instruction for Moses to absorb.

When He was finished, God gave Moses two stone tablets, called the two tablets of the testimony. On both sides of them, God had personally written the Ten Commandments (Exodus 31:18; 32:15-16; 34:1, 28-29; and Deuteronomy 4:13; 5:22; 9:10-12). These tablets were to be placed within the Ark of the Covenant. They were to travel with the Israelites into the Promised Land.

Moses was anxious to show the Israelites God’s laws written on stone—but little did he know that the people were already breaking those laws while he was away.

God personally wrote the Ten Commandments  
on both sides of two stone tablets.



### Impatience Leads to Idolatry

Down in the camp, the Israelites grew restless. Moses had been gone for weeks, and many wondered when he would come back.

Some said, “Where is Moses? Why has he abandoned us?”

“Some leader he is,” others said. “He should be down here telling us what to do, not wasting time talking to God!”

“How long is he going to be up there, anyway?”

The Israelites allowed their rebellious thoughts to grow. This led them to accuse Moses of bad leadership.

A swelling crowd of disgruntled accusers turned to Aaron for answers.

“You’re Moses’ brother,” they said. “How long must we wait for him to return?”

“Moses will join us soon, you’ll see. Just be patient.” Aaron tried his best to calm them and reassure them that everything was okay.

But as days passed into weeks, the Israelites pressured Aaron more and more. “The people grow restless. What am I to do?” he wondered.

One day, an angry crowd again approached Aaron. This time, their demands were more dangerous.

They said, “Moses has abandoned us. We are tired of waiting for him. He has left us here to die in the wilderness. We don’t know what’s become of him. Therefore, Aaron, make us gods that we can see—gods

that will lead us out of this place and deliver us into the land of milk and honey!”

Taken aback, Aaron said, “You can’t be serious! Have you so soon forgotten the God who delivered us from Egypt—the One who said we shall have no other gods before Him—the One who commanded us not to make idols or images and worship them?”

He gazed over the angry, bitter faces. Their cold expressions told him that it was no use reasoning with them. These carnal-minded Israelites were too stubborn to listen.

Then Aaron became afraid. He thought, “If I do nothing, they might kill me. I have to stall for time. If I keep these people busy, perhaps Moses will show up in time. He’ll know what to do.”

So Aaron said to the crowd, “If it’s gods you want, you will have to provide the materials needed to create them. You men and women, break off your gold earrings and bring them to me. Your gods will come from the gold you are wearing.” Aaron may have thought that few would give up their personal jewelry to make a false god.

Unfortunately, he was wrong.

To Aaron’s surprise, the people gladly took off their gold earrings, put them into a collection, and then brought the offering before him.

Moses had not returned yet. Not knowing what to do, Aaron felt trapped. Feeling that he had no other choice but to give the people what they wanted, he took the gold and melted it in fire. He hoped that Moses would return by the time it cooled.

He did not.

Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Aaron had the gold shaped and fashioned into an image of a calf.

The crowd was amazed at the shiny idol of gold. Having lived among the Egyptians, the Israelites were used to pagan customs, such as idol worship.

They were not used to worshipping a God they could not see. Now they felt right at home.

Aaron said, “Here is your god, who brought you out of Egypt.”

The crowd cheered.

Then, having an altar built in front of the idol, Aaron said, “Tomorrow is a feast day to the Eternal” (Exodus 32:1-5).



He may have convinced himself that the idol was okay as long as the people used it to worship God. If so, Aaron was wrong. The God of the Bible wants people to worship Him His way—any other way of worship is sin.

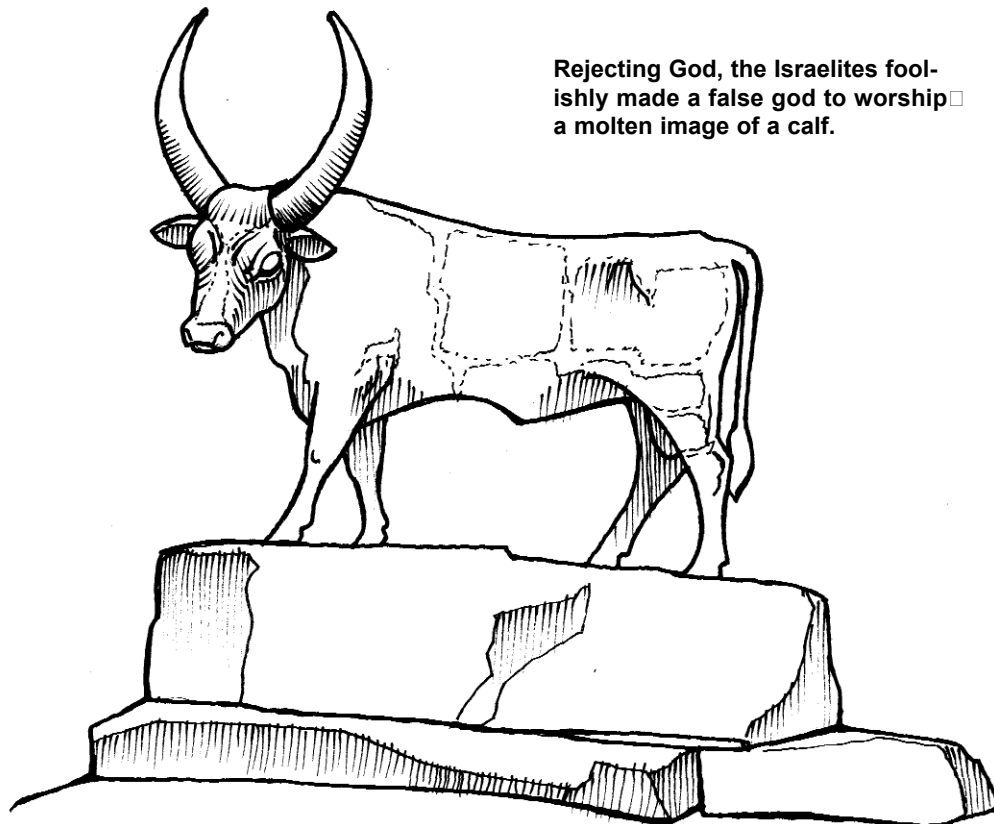
As you can see, relying on human reasoning never works. But trusting in God always does.

### God Alerts Moses

Early next morning, a large crowd of idol-worshippers assembled to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings upon the altar. Then they feasted, stuffing themselves with food and alcohol. Their greed led to shameful behavior. Because the Israelites had replaced the one true God with a false god, they had committed themselves to the way of sin (Exodus 32:6).

The Eternal was hot with anger!

Up on Mount Sinai, He said to Moses, “Go, get down to the camp. Your people have corrupted themselves. They have rejected Me and My ways, and now worship an image of gold! They have even made sacrifices to it, claiming that their false gods delivered them from Egypt.”



Rejecting God, the Israelites foolishly made a false god to worship—a molten image of a calf.

Moses was shocked speechless. Gathering his thoughts, he wondered, “How could they have forgotten all of the marvelous wonders God has done for them?”

The Eternal said, “This is a stiff-necked people. They do their own will, and reject Mine. I have seen how they are. Since they are swift to reject Me and My laws, I will reject them. I will destroy them, Moses, and make you and your descendants into a great nation. In this way, I will fulfill the promise I made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—through you!”

Moses was taken aback. The thought of the Israelites’ destruction was too much for him.

Quickly, he dropped to his knees and prayed. “O Eternal God, why let Your wrath consume your people? You are the One who broke their chains of slavery. It was You who led them to escape the hand of Pharaoh and his army. You are the One who reduced Egypt to nothing with ten miraculous plagues. If you destroy Your people, the Egyptians will claim that the only reason you led the Israelites out of Egypt was to slay them in the wilderness. Please, do not let Your enemies have reason to rejoice over the death of Your people. Remember the promise You made to Abraham—to give the Promised Land to them.”

Hearing these words, God knew that Moses deeply loved Israel, despite their flaws. Even though they had minds that were naturally hostile to God (Romans 8:7), Moses still loved them. He wanted the Israelites to succeed, and become the model nation God desired them to be.

So the Almighty changed His mind. He said, “Because of you, Moses, I will not destroy Israel” (Exodus 32:7-14).

### **Racing Down Mount Sinai**

With God’s reassurance that He would not destroy the Israelites, Moses picked up the stone tablets, then headed down Mount Sinai.

Along the way, he came across his assistant, Joshua. Moses had left him at the lower part of the mountain forty days earlier.

Excited, Joshua said, “Moses, I’m so glad to see you. You’ve been away so long, I started to worry about you.”

“I’m fine, Joshua. But we must hurry.”

“So you heard the shouting, too. The people must be in trouble down there. It sounds like there’s a war going on in the camp!”

Moses looked the younger man in the eyes, and said, “Oh, they are in trouble, alright. But it’s not the sound of war or crying out for help that you hear. It’s the sound of feasting and singing.”



Puzzled, Joshua followed Moses down the steep slopes of Mount Sinai (Exodus 32:15-18).

### **The Righteous Anger of Moses**

When the two finally made it down the mountain, they came near to the camp. Moses and Joshua were in for a sight: Men and women playfully cheered and danced around a calf made of gold! Many of the idol-worshippers were drunk from too much wine; they stumbled over each other and stammered over their words, making fools of themselves. They laughed and played, making a mockery out of being a holy nation and a kingdom of priests.

Suddenly, a man looked over his shoulder. “Look! There’s Moses!”

The laughter and dancing stopped. The people froze in their steps. No one said a word.

Even Moses stood in silence for a moment. He fought to control his emotions as his anger built within him. He gazed over the shameful display of idol worshipping and feasting. Taking the two stone tablets he had carried down from Mount Sinai, Moses raised them above his head and smashed them to the ground!

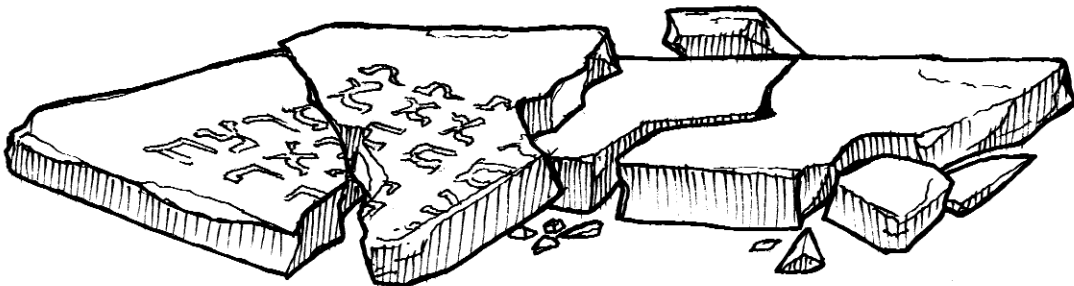
The people were frightened. They parted from Moses’ path as he marched through the crowd of onlookers. Moses headed for the golden calf, then had the idol pulled down and thrown into the fire. After it melted, he had the gold ground into fine powder.

Scattering the gold powder into the water supply, he said, “You wanted false gods to worship. Well, here is your false god—now drink!”

Moses made the idol-worshipping Israelites drink the very thing that had led them to sin (Exodus 32:19-20).

Then Moses looked around, and said, “Now where is my brother?”

Aaron wanted to stay out of Moses’ sight, but he knew that it would be useless. Moses confronted his brother and asked him why he had allowed Israel to commit such great sins.



But Aaron made excuses. “It was the people. You know how much they love to get into trouble. They demanded that I make gods for them to worship. I tried to hold off on carrying out their demands, but when you took so long to return, I didn’t know what else to do. So I had the people make a collection of their earrings. Once they gave it to me, I threw it into the fire—and out came this calf.”

Moses was disappointed. Shaking his head, he said, “Aaron, you failed to show firm leadership. A real leader stands up for what is right—even if the people under him want to do what is wrong. You did not stand up for God and His Way. You followed the will of the people instead of leading them to follow God’s will. Your failure led Israel to sin. Were it not for the Eternal’s abundant mercy, all of Israel would be destroyed” (verses 21-24).

Aaron lowered his head. He felt ashamed. He realized that his brother was right.

“Look around you, Aaron,” Moses said. “Look at the people.”

Aaron looked around and saw how unruly and disorderly the Israelites were.

Moses said, “See how rebellious and disrespectful they have become?”

Aaron nodded his head.

Moses said, “God has mercifully spared Israel. But the crowd of people who danced and played before their false god, even now they refuse to change their lives. Therefore, they will lose their lives. It’s the only way to save the other Israelites.”

Aaron nodded again.

Moses stood before the camp and shouted, “Whoever is on the Eternal’s side, come to me!”

The sons of the tribe of Levi ran over to Moses. Members of the same tribe that Moses and Aaron came from, they had not bowed down to the golden calf or feasted before it.

Moses said to these courageous men, “Every man grab a sword. Then go throughout the camp and slay every Israelite and every foreigner among us who rejects God and longs to worship idols. Have no pity for them or spare their lives—even if it means slaying your own brother!”

The Levites faithfully obeyed Moses’ command. By the end of the day, about 3,000 men had lost their lives.

Because the Levites had stood up for God and His ways, God ordained that the tribe of Levi would from then on assist the priesthood, which would descend from Aaron’s family. The Levites were also to take care of God’s Tabernacle (verses 25-29).

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

# BUILDING GOD'S TABERNACLE

**M**oses was unlike any man the Israelites had ever seen. Filled with righteous anger, he dealt with the idol-worshipping sinners with a firm hand. Yet Moses was also the meekest man alive. He was willing to deny himself a quiet, peaceful life in order to guide these stubborn, stiff-necked Israelites to the Promised Land.

In fact, Moses was so meek, and he loved the people of Israel so much, he returned to the top of Mount Sinai to speak with God. He pleaded with the Eternal to forgive Israel's sins.

"Eternal God," he prayed, "Your people have sinned greatly, even to the point of making false gods for themselves. But please forgive them—if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."

God said, "Go lead the people into Canaan, Moses. I will only punish those who sin against Me."

Then God sent a mysterious plague among those who had joined in worshipping the image of the calf, sinners whom the Levites could not find to slay. They were people who thought they could hide their sins from God (Exodus 32:30-35).

### **Cut Off From God**

After this, God said to Moses, "Tell Israel to prepare for their journey into Canaan. I will fulfill My promise, but I will not personally lead the Israelites. Instead, I will send an angel to lead them."

"But why, God?" said Moses. "Why won't you lead us there Yourself?"

"Because the Israelites are too rebellious and stubborn. They are bound to do something that would cause Me to consume them in My wrath" (Exodus 33:1-3).

Moses told the Israelites what God had said. All the people mourned and cried. They stripped off their ornaments to show how sad they felt. Then everyone tearfully watched as Moses took his tent and placed it outside the camp.

Some sobbed, “God will no longer be among us.”

“How can we ever hope to defeat the Canaanites and the other people living in Canaan? Without God to personally guide and protect us, we’re all doomed!”

The people watched as Moses entered his tent, now called the Tabernacle of Meeting. The pillar of cloud descended and stood at the tent’s doorway.

A man said, “Moses must be talking with God. I hope he can convince God to change His mind.”

All the Israelites praised and worshipped God, hoping that He would not leave them (verses 4-10).

No matter how big or small, sin is always a serious matter to God. A sinner is someone who breaks God’s Law; he chooses to go in the opposite direction of God’s way of life. As a result, sin cuts people off from God. He cannot be among those who reject His ways. This is why God hates it when people—especially those who know better—break His laws. Their actions say that they are rejecting Him.

Sin, no matter how small, always leads to suffering and misery. This is why God takes such a hard stand against those who break His Commandments—yet is ready, willing and able to forgive and show mercy to those who repent—change their minds—and follow His ways.

### **Friendship With God**

For weeks, the people stood up whenever Moses left the camp and entered the Tabernacle of Meeting to speak with God. And they looked on as the pillar of cloud visited the Tabernacle of Meeting (Exodus 33:4-10). The thought of going to the Promised Land without God’s presence scared the Israelites. So they worshipped the Eternal more, praising His great name.

Because Moses feared and obeyed His Creator from the heart, God spoke to Moses as a friend. He knew that Moses was fully dedicated to serving Him and caring for His flock—the people of Israel. Because of their close friendship, Moses was able to plead with God.

And God listened.

Moses asked God to change His mind and personally protect and guide Israel into the Promised Land.

God said, “I will. Since you have found grace—special favor—in My sight, and I consider you a friend, I will do as you ask.”

Thanking Him, Moses said, “God, since I am Your friend, and you know and see me, allow Your friend to see You.”

This was a very bold request.

God said, “No man can see Me in My full strength. My full presence is brighter than the sun. No human could survive such a sight. I will not let you see My face, but what I will do is let My goodness pass before you. When I signal you, you will see only part of Me. Come to the mountain and I will reveal Myself.”

When Moses had done so, he hid behind a rock and waited for God’s glory to pass by him. God shielded Moses with His hand as he passed by. When He pulled His hand back, Moses was able to see parts of God’s back!

Moses was in awe. Here was the Giver of all life, the One who had created the stars in the sky, the earth and the sea below.

Goosebumps grew over Moses’ body as God said, “I AM THE ETERNAL!”

Moses trembled. He fell down to the ground and worshipped the Eternal (verses 12-23).

### **The Dangers of Idolatry in Canaan**

God commanded Moses to cut out two stone tablets. They were to be the same shape as the ones he had smashed.

“In the morning, bring them up to Me on the top of Mount Sinai.”

Moses followed God’s directions and brought the new stone tablets to the mountaintop. In awe, Moses watched as the Eternal descended in a cloud and stood before him.

God said, “I am the Eternal. I am merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant with goodness and truth. I freely give mercy and forgiveness to all who repent and reject their own way. But I will punish the guilty, even to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me.”

As Moses bowed his head to worship, God promised to renew His covenant with Israel.

“I will perform miracles greater than any man or nation has ever seen. Then all the nations around you will see My work—and they will tremble. When I bring My people to Canaan, I will drive out the people there. My people must not make covenants or peace treaties with them. You shall destroy their idols, altars and other places of pagan worship.

“You shall worship no other god but Me! Neither you nor your children are allowed to marry into the families of these pagan Gentiles. If you do, they will lead Israel into serving other gods. I am a jealous God—My name is Jealous!

“Be sure that you do not make molten images, like the golden calf” (Exodus 34:1-17).

God reminded Moses that the Israelites must keep the Days of Unleavened Bread, as well as the weekly Sabbath. All the men of Israel were to assemble and gather together before the Eternal three times a year and give offerings.

God promised: “I will drive out your enemies and enlarge your borders. When you travel to attend My feasts, I will protect you and your land. No one will take it from you. And you shall tithe—pay a tenth part—of the firstfruit of your land.”

Moses followed God’s command to write down all the words, just as he had done before (verse 18-27).

### **The Shining Face of Moses**

Moses spent another forty days and nights in God’s presence. During this time, he fasted—he did not eat or drink, because God’s presence gave him all the strength he needed.

After God wrote the Ten Commandments on the new stone tablets, Moses brought them down from Mount Sinai.

Nearing camp, Moses saw shock and horror in the faces of all who looked at him. Some turned away. Others looked as though they wanted to turn and run.

He asked, “What’s wrong?”

Some said, “Moses, is that you?”

Moses was puzzled. “Of course it’s me. Don’t you recognize me?”

Then another person said, “If it is you, what happened to your face?”

Moses soon realized that, because he had been in God’s direct presence for so long, his face shined like a bright light! Everyone who saw Moses was afraid—even his brother Aaron. They were too frightened to come near him.

Moses tried to reassure the people. “Don’t be afraid. It’s only me.”

Though they did come to him, Moses decided to wear a veil to cover his face. He did not want his appearance to distract the people as he presented God’s covenant and the two tablets to Israel.

But whenever Moses spoke to God in the Tabernacle of Meeting,



he always took the veil off. He wanted to show proper respect to his Creator (Exodus 34:28-35).

### Giving From the Heart

Through Moses, God gave Israel an opportunity to show their appreciation toward their great Provider and King.

“Whoever has a willing heart, let him bring before God a freewill offering. It shall be made of gold, silver, brass, fine linen, goats’ hair, rams’ skins and badgers’ skins, acacia wood, precious oils, spices and sweet incense and precious stones. These shall all be used for the making of My Tabernacle.”

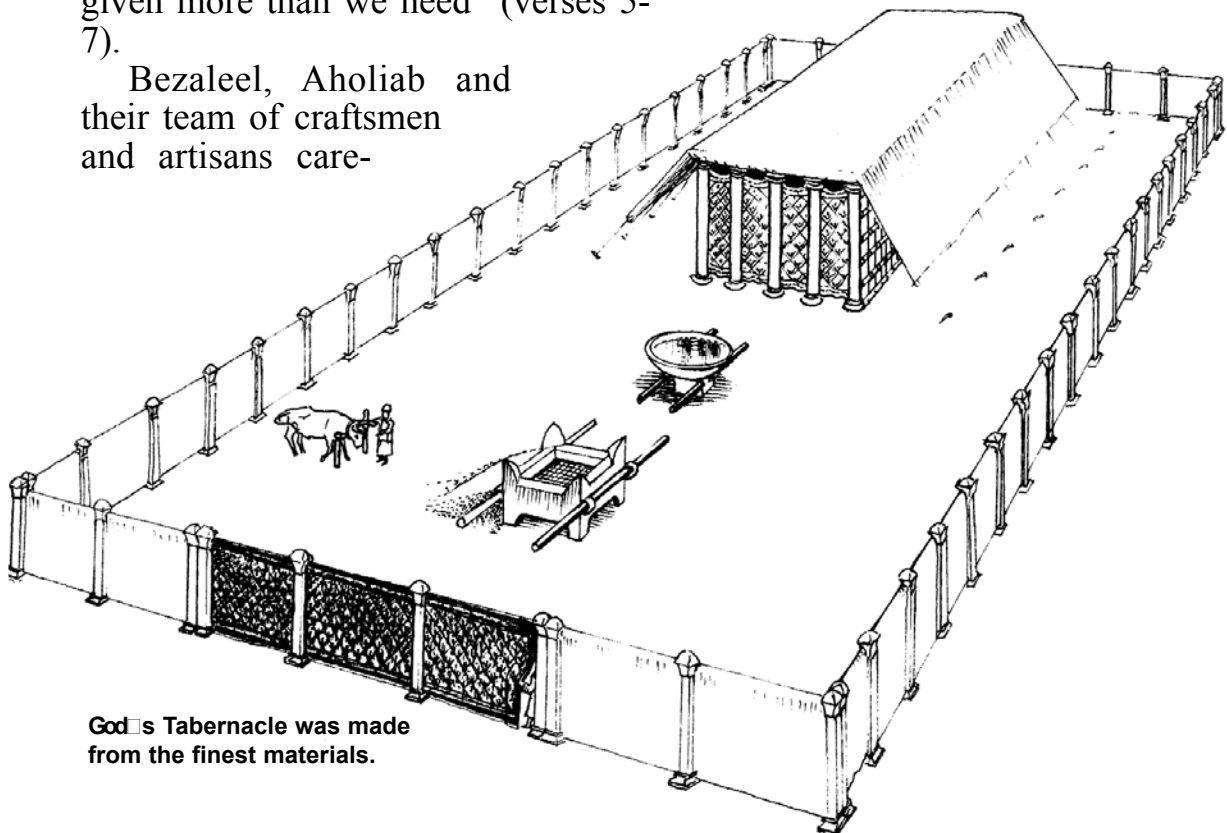
The whole congregation of Israel jumped at the chance to serve God. Everyone who had a willing heart gathered the best of what they possessed and offered it to the Eternal (Exodus 35).

Then Moses, following God’s will, appointed Bezaleel and Aholiab to lead other craftsmen, builders, weavers, artists and such to create, build and assemble the great Tabernacle project. Everything they used for this came from the huge special offering (Exodus 36:1-4).

The Israelites had brought so much to the service of God’s work that Moses had to make another special announcement.

“Enough. Do not bring any more to the offering. You have already given more than we need” (verses 5-7).

Bezaleel, Aholiab and their team of craftsmen and artisans care-



God’s Tabernacle was made from the finest materials.

fully followed God's exact directions, assembling the Tabernacle and everything that went with it. They made the Ark of the Covenant and everything that went into the Most Holy Place.

Bezaleel made the special clothes to be worn in the Holy Place, along with the holy garments to be worn by the high priest.

When the massive project was completed, Moses inspected every piece and section. He wanted to make certain that everything met God's high standards of quality and excellence. Bezaleel, Aholiab and the others watched nervously as Moses did his inspection. Then they cheered when he said, "Well done," and blessed them (Exodus 35-39).

### **God Is Well Pleased**

It had been over a year since God had brought His people out of Egypt.

God commanded Moses to set up the Tabernacle in the midst of Israel. Moses made sure that everything belonging to the Tabernacle—the Ark, the altar of burnt offering, the gold lampstand, etc.—were also set up.

Then the Tabernacle of God and all of its items were anointed by oil—set apart and made special. As high priest and priests, Aaron and his sons were anointed, too.

With everything properly set up according to His precise instruction, God was so happy that He filled the tent with the pillar of cloud. Moses could not even enter it.

The Israelites sighed with relief. They had pleased God.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

# BOOK OF THE LEVITES

About one year had passed since the Israelites had left Egypt. Building the Tabernacle of God was done. The Eternal's presence dwelt among the people, in the Tabernacle's Most Holy Place. Now Israel was ready to receive God's detailed system of laws concerning sacrifices, setting up an official priesthood, His annual Sabbaths and feast days, and other things.

Because they had lived among the Egyptians for hundreds of years, the Israelites were used to pagan practices and customs, such as worshipping false gods. As a result, they had forgotten the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And they no longer knew how to properly fear and worship Him.

God did not want His people to worship Him the way that the Egyptians worshipped their false gods. So He set apart the family of Aaron to be His priesthood, with Aaron being the high priest. He also set the tribe of Levi apart from the other tribes of Israel.

Then God gave Israel a system of laws—rules that showed how to make sacrifices, and how to keep themselves clean and holy before their Creator.

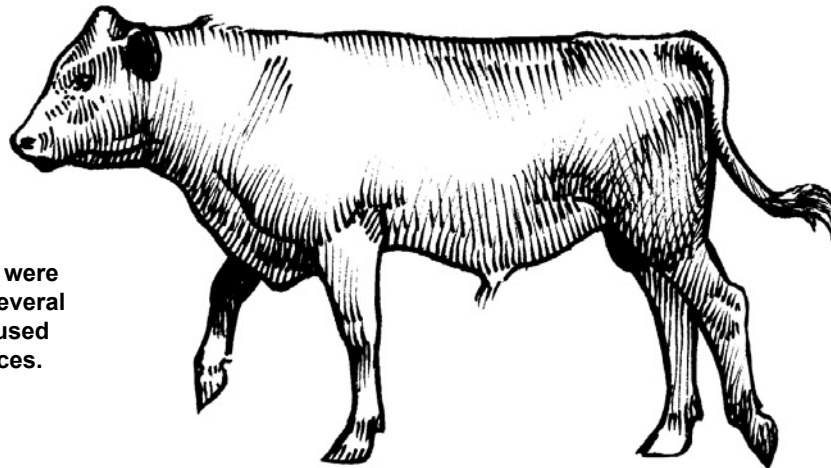
These laws also showed the Levites how to properly take care of His Tabernacle, how to be teachers, scribes, musicians, officers and judges (I Chronicles 23), and how to assist the priesthood (Numbers 18:1-6).

### **Kinds of Offerings**

There were five kinds of sacrifices: Burnt offerings, grain offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, and trespass offerings.

Burnt offerings included bullocks, rams, goats, doves or pigeons. They had to be males that were physically perfect, without spot or mark, and had to be at least eight days old. The entire sacrifice was to be burned. This symbolized dedicating one's entire self to God and His ways (Leviticus 1:1-17; 22:27).

**Bullocks were among several animals used in sacrifices.**



Grain offerings included grains, flour with oil and incense, or cakes made without leaven. They were to be baked and offered with salt. A handful of this offering was burned; the rest went to the priests (Leviticus 2).

Peace offerings included cattle, sheep or goats. The fat was burned, while the rest was eaten—partly by the priests, partly by the people who made the offering (Leviticus 3).

Sin and trespass offerings involved different offerings for different sins (Leviticus 4-5). Sin offerings were for sins that were made unknowingly. After the fat was burned, the rest of the offering was sometimes burned outside the camp. In other cases, the priests ate it. If the sin involved a person who was wronged by someone, the sinner had to pay that person what he had lost, plus a fifth part more (Leviticus 1-5).

There were also various other offerings: Drink offerings, wave offerings, heave offerings.

A man who wanted to sacrifice an animal to God was to bring it to the Tabernacle. He would then lay his hands on it. This showed that the offered animal represented him. Once the animal was slain, its blood was sprinkled on the altar. God said that only specific parts were to be burned.

He also said, “Do not offer sacrifices to demons.”

Burnt offerings were to be given daily. Other offerings were to be given on the first day of each month, and on Passover, Pentecost, the Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 6-7).

Today, animal sacrifices are no longer needed. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ paid the price of sin—death—for all mankind.

## High Standards for the Priesthood

Before the time of Moses, sacrifices were offered by patriarchs, who were the heads of families. God changed this by establishing His priesthood for Israel. All sacrifices were to be brought before His priests.

These priests were to come from the family of Aaron. Since they were to represent God's government and His spiritual perfection, the priests had to meet certain high standards. Priests had to be physically perfect—no marks or scars, or any other physical defect. The women they married also had to meet certain high standards. Above all, God's priests had to always set the right example for the people of Israel (Leviticus 21-22).

Aaron was the first high priest. The high priest wore special clothes, including a breastplate with twelve precious stones, which represented the twelve tribes of Israel.

The high priest was the top person in charge of the Most Holy Place, the altar, the other priests, and the Levites.

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest was commanded to come to the Holy Place. He was to bathe himself, then put on the holy garments of the high priest—a linen tunic, trousers and a sash.

He was to offer a bull as a sin offering for himself and his family of priests.

Then he was to take two goats from the people of Israel, and present them before the Eternal at the door of the Tabernacle of Meeting. One goat represented the Word (Jesus Christ); the other represented Satan the devil. It was called the "Azazel" goat.

The high priest was to cast lots for the two goats—kind of like picking straws, only God is the One who chooses. In this case, lots were cast in order for God to show which goat represented Christ, and which represented Satan. This is because Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:14-15). Because the devil wants to deceive the whole world into worshipping him, he makes himself appear to be like God. Human beings cannot tell the difference between God's ways and Satan's. That is why people must always trust God to show them the right way to live.

After God chose which goat would represent Satan, the high priest was to take that goat (the Azazel goat) and lay hands upon it. All the sins of Israel were to be placed on it. This represents God holding Satan, the ultimate source of sin, responsible for leading mankind down the wrong path.



Because they looked just alike, only God could tell which goat represented Jesus Christ, and which one represented the devil.



Then a suitable man (who represented an angel) was to release the Azazel goat (Satan) out into the wilderness. It would never be brought back into Israel again.

But what of the other goat, the one that was to represent Christ? It was to be offered as a sin offering for all the people of Israel. This represented the sacrifice of Jesus Christ being offered for all mankind (Leviticus 16).

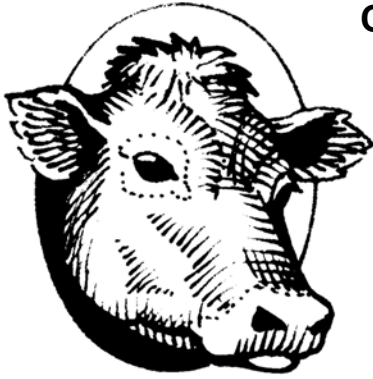
The Day of Atonement pictures the time when Satan will no longer be the god of this world (Revelation 12:9). When Jesus Christ returns to set up His Kingdom, Satan and his demons will be put away. They will no longer be able to lead mankind into the ways of sin.

### **Strange Fire**

Even though God told Aaron and his sons the importance of setting the right example, Nadab and Abihu did not fear God. Because they foolishly allowed themselves to get drunk, they used bad judgment and sinned before God. Instead of taking burning incense from God's altar, they took it from another source. God called this "strange fire"—and He was not pleased.

Nadab and Abihu failed to properly perform their duties. They did not respect the offices God gave them. As a result, God had to take their lives.

**CLEAN MEATS**



Cow



Goose

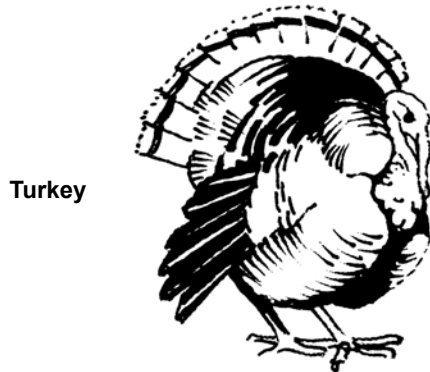
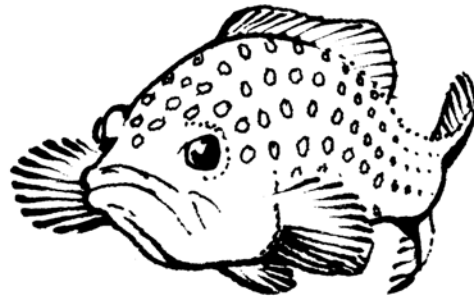


Grasshopper

Fish (with fins and scales)



Chicken



Turkey



Sheep

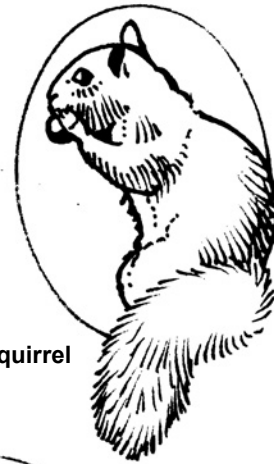
# UNCLEAN MEATS



Pig



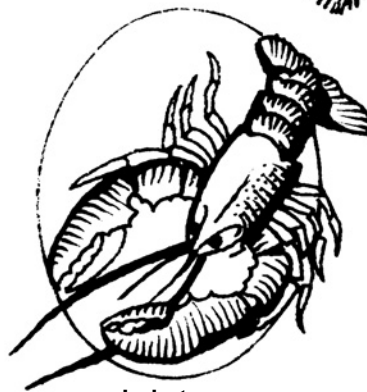
Camel



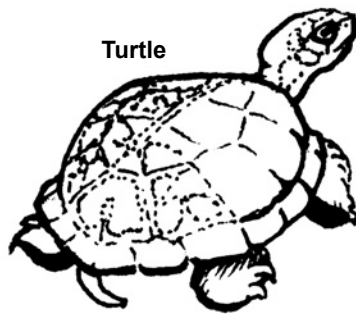
Squirrel



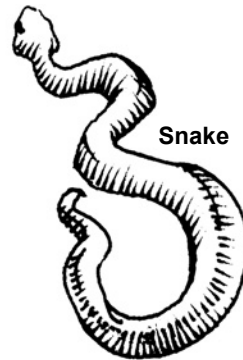
Octopus



Lobster



Turtle

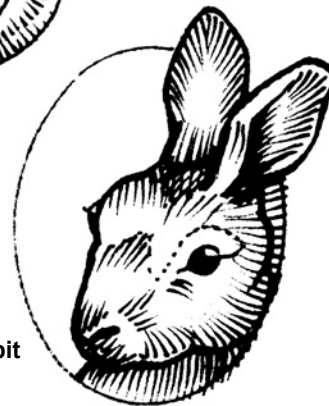


Snake

Snail



Rabbit



God said to Aaron, “Before you enter the Tabernacle of Meeting, you and your sons must never drink wine or other alcoholic drinks. If you disobey Me in this, you will die. I want you to perform your duties with clear minds. You are to be teachers and leaders of Israel. As My representatives, the Israelites will look to you to teach them all My ways. You will teach them the difference between holy and unholy, clean and unclean.”

Furthermore, God told Aaron and his family not to cry and mourn for the death of Nadab and Abihu. As God’s priestly representatives, Aaron’s family had to set the right example and show that they supported God’s decision (Leviticus 10).

Aaron’s other sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, were left to help perform the priestly duties (Leviticus 10).

### **Clean and Unclean Meats**

God is the Creator of all life. He created specific kinds of animals for various reasons. Not all animals were created to be eaten by people. Since man cannot discover on his own which animal is good for him to eat, God had to reveal this knowledge (Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14).

The animals God allows us to eat are called “clean.” Those which we should never eat are called “unclean.”

Land animals that are clean must chew the cud and have cloven hooves, which are split in two parts. Among these are cows, goats, lambs, buffalo, bison and deer.

However, unclean land animals—pigs, rats, snakes, camels, rabbits, horses, bears, dogs, cats, squirrels, raccoons, lizards and such—should never be eaten.

Water creatures that are clean must be fish that have fins and scales: Trout, tuna, etc.

But unclean water creatures, such as shrimp, lobsters, crabs, oysters, eels, sharks, do not have fins and scales. God did not create them for us to eat.

Some clean birds are chicken, quail, doves and pigeons.

Unclean birds and flying creatures are eagles, vultures, falcons, owls, storks, ravens, seagulls, hawks and bats.

Did you know that God says there are clean and unclean insects? Among clean insects are locusts, grasshoppers and crickets.

Most people do not care for these laws of clean and unclean foods. Yet God decided long ago which animals are good for us to eat. Since He created them, doesn’t it make sense to listen to God?

It is amazing how often people, deciding for themselves what's good for them, will eat almost anything that walks, flies, creeps, hops or swims!

### **Various Laws and Commands**

God gave the Israelites other laws concerning animals: The people were not to eat the blood of animals; animals or birds killed for hunting must have their blood completely drained before cooking and eating the meat; the Israelites were forbidden to eat an animal that was killed by other animals, or died of itself.

God gave detailed laws that told Israel how to handle people who have contagious diseases. Sometimes, a sick person can spread his sickness to others, making them ill too. God commanded that the sick should be shut off from the healthy—quarantined. In this way, sicknesses or diseases would not spread (Leviticus 13-14).

God gave various laws concerning property, the Sabbath, idolatry, stealing, swearing and gossiping. He said that people must love and respect others the same way that they love and respect themselves (Leviticus 19:18). They must show kindness to strangers, and show respect for their elders. These laws showed how to be just and fair in everything you do.

They also forbade sorcery and witchcraft, which is evil in God's sight. He also forbade people to worship Molech—a false god people made sacrifices to—even taking the lives of their own babies! (Leviticus 19-20.)

God warned against keeping the pagan customs of the Egyptians or Canaanites (Leviticus 18). He said that the Israelites must not marry foreigners or let family members marry them. And the Israelites were not to marry close relatives.

### **Annual Sabbaths and Feast Days**

God explained that, along with the weekly Sabbath, there were His annual Sabbaths and feasts. They were to be kept during certain times of the year, according to God's sacred calendar.

The Israelites did not know it, but these days represented God's Master Plan of helping all mankind become born into His great Family. God's one true Church is still keeping these Holy Days and feasts today.

Passover begins on the evening of the 14th of Abib (in March or April). This day is not a Sabbath; it is a feast. People are allowed to



work on it. On this day, about 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ was sacrificed so that the sins of all people might be forgiven. The sacrifice of the Passover lamb represented this. Without this forgiveness, those who sin are cut off from God. They are to drink red wine, which represents Christ's shed blood. They must also eat unleavened bread, which represents Christ's broken body.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread begins immediately after Passover. It lasts for seven days, from the 15th to the 21st of Abib. The first and last days of this feast are Sabbaths. People must not work on these two days. Before the feast arrives, Christians must remove all leaven (yeast, baking powder, baking soda, etc.) from their lives. This means they must search their homes, cars, clothes—anything that belongs to them. During the feast, leaven represents sin. Just as leaven puffs up bread and makes it bigger, sin puffs up people. It makes them think they are better than what they really are. God hates this, because such attitudes always lead to disobeying God and hurting other people. By eating unleavened bread during the seven days of the feast, Christians show God that they are striving to live Christ's perfect example.

Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Weeks or Firstfruits, occurs in May or June. It represents the birth of God's Church. Almost 2,000 years ago, in A.D. 31, God gave the followers of Jesus Christ something that the ancient Israelites did not have—His Holy Spirit. With God's Spirit in their minds, Christians have the power to conquer their carnal nature and reject the wrong attitudes and desires of Satan and his world. In the Bible, God often calls Christian "firstfruits." This is because they are the first of many who will be born into His family, when Jesus Christ returns.

The Feast of Trumpets occurs on the first day of the seventh month in God's sacred calendar, in September or October. It represents the day when Jesus Christ will return from heaven to set up the Kingdom of God on the earth. God's people will be brought back to life—resurrected—and changed into Spirit Beings. They will be born into the God Family. They will help Christ restore world peace and justice. That day is coming soon.

The Day of Atonement comes on the tenth day of the seventh month. It represents Satan—the author of mankind's sins—and his demons being imprisoned so that they can no longer deceive people into breaking God's laws.

The Feast of Tabernacles begins on the 15th day of the seventh month. It lasts for seven days. This feast pictures the wonderful world tomorrow. For 1,000 years, Christ and those born into the God Family, at His Return, will teach, guide and lead people into rejecting the way

of sin and accepting God's Way of out-going concern for others. Finally, the world will be at peace. No more wars, fights, crimes, stealing, lying—breaking God's Commandments will be a thing of the past!

Right after the Feast of Tabernacles is the Last Great Day. It pictures the time when God will bring everyone else who has ever lived back to life. In His great and abundant mercy, God will give these human beings the chance that true Christians have today—to know and understand His laws, and live His way of life. He will give them His Spirit, which will guide them into building godly character. All mankind will have the opportunity to be born into God's Kingdom (Leviticus 23).

That is your future!

Even today, most people do not have this knowledge.

But now, you do.

### **Blessings and Cursings**

God said that, if the Israelites kept His laws and commandments, and did not make idols or carved images, kept His Sabbaths, He would bless them.

He said, "I will give you rain at the right time, and your farmlands will overflow with good food. I will give you peace, and rid your land of wild animals. Five of you will chase a hundred of your enemies; a hundred of you will chase away one thousand of them. I will favor you among all the nations, and increase the number of your people. My Tabernacle will be among you. I will be your God, and you shall be My people."

But, if the Israelites rejected God and His laws, He said that He would curse Israel.

He said, "I will fill your land with terror! Wasting disease and fevers will strike you. Your enemies will eat the food that you raise on your farms. I will set My face against you, and your enemies will defeat you. You will be so afraid, that you will run when no one chases you.

"And if you still refuse to obey Me, I will break the pride of your power. Your land will no longer produce fruit.

"If you still reject Me and My laws, I will send seven times more plagues on you, according to your sins. I will send wild animals, which will snatch away your children, eat your livestock, and kill your people. I will strike you with diseases, and deliver you into the hands of your enemies. Food will become so scarce that parents will eat the

flesh of their children! I will destroy your cities and tear down your idols. And you will be scattered among the nations as slaves” (Leviticus 26).

### **Breaking Camp**

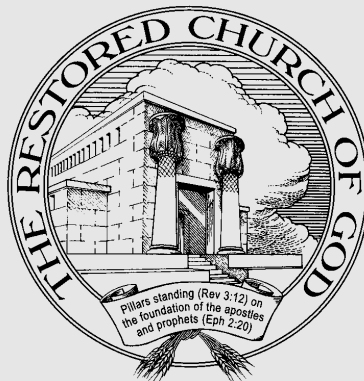
The Israelites had experienced much: They had been slaves in Egypt, with no hope for release. Then the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob revealed Himself, unleashing ten terrible plagues over Egypt. Then the pillars of cloud and fire led them out into the wilderness. With God’s help, they narrowly evaded Pharaoh’s army and escaped through the Red Sea. They were fed manna from heaven. God protected them from an army of raiders.

Now God was living in their midst, in His Tabernacle. Armed with His laws, statutes and judgments, the twelve tribes of Israel were now ready to break camp and head for their final destination: The Promised Land.

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