

# CHAPTER 3

## ESTABLISHING THE NATION



### OPENING PRAYER

Lord God,

As I prepare to read about how the nation of Israel was established, I ask for spiritual wisdom and understanding. Open my ears and let me hear Your voice. Open my eyes and show me Your Truths. Help me identify life's lessons taught in Scripture and show me how to apply them in my life. Mold me and transform me. Make me holy as You are holy.

Amen

# CHAPTER SUMMARY

## ESTABLISHING THE NATION

*(Exodus 1–34)*

**W**hen the book of Exodus opens, 430 years have passed since Jacob and seventy members of his household migrated to Egypt. Each of Jacob's sons became the patriarch of a tribe. Joseph was patriarch of two tribes, named after his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Over the years, Jacob's descendants had significantly increased in numbers to about two and a half million people. They were known as Hebrews or Israelites. They were still living in Egypt, but had been enslaved and were being oppressed. The Lord divinely empowered a man named Moses to deliver them from slavery and lead them out of Egypt to the land God had promised their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Exodus tells the story of how God delivered Israel from the Egyptians by performing a series of miracles. God's miracles included sending ten plagues that devastated Egypt, sparing Israel's firstborn sons from death in an event known as the Passover, and parting the Red Sea so the Israelites could walk across and escape from the Egyptians.

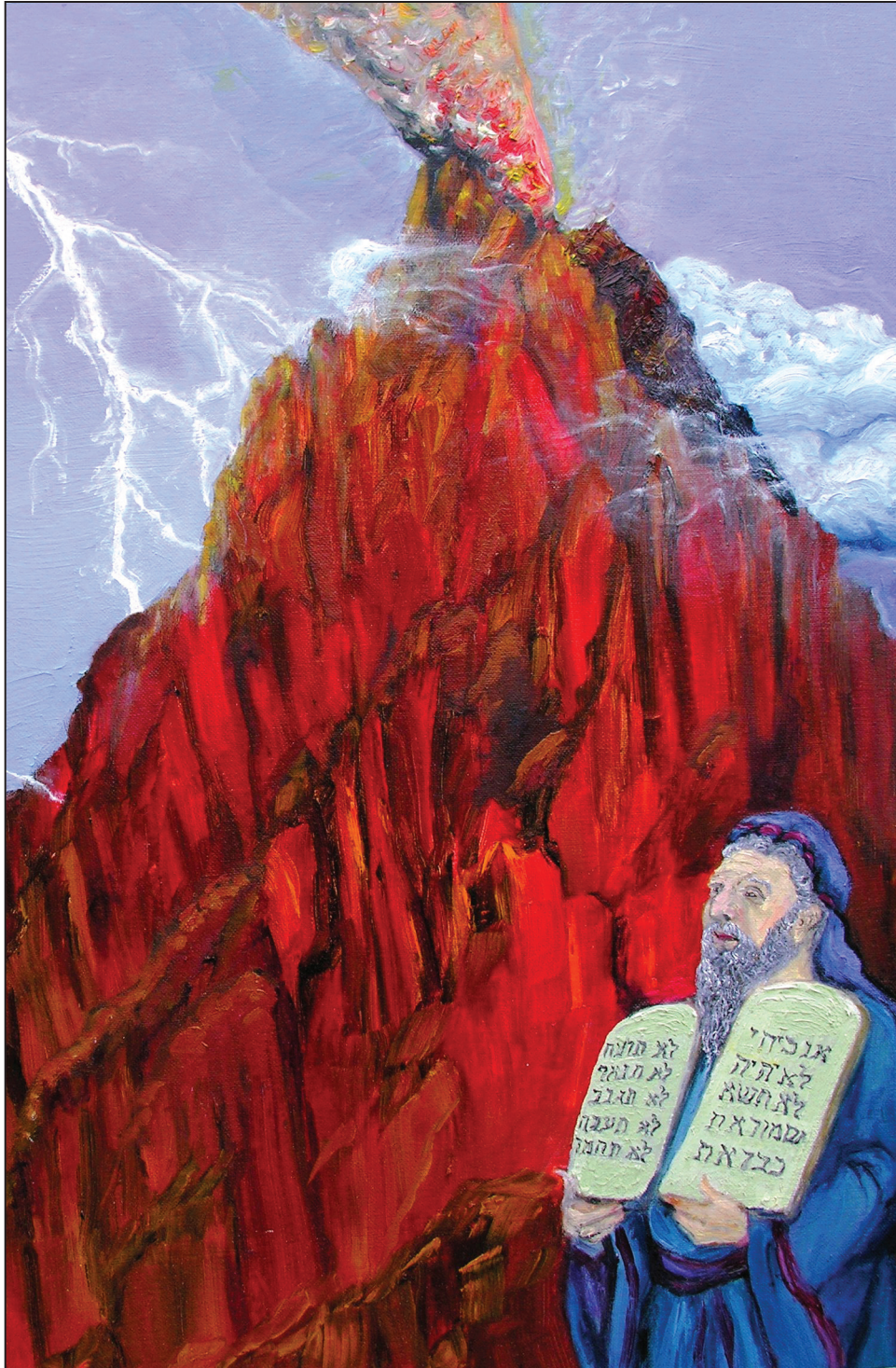
Exodus continues with an account of the Israelites' journey as they headed for Canaan. God provided their every need. The Lord guided them through the desert with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God fed them, protected them from disease, and fought their battles. Along the way, the Lord cultivated His relationship with the Israelites, giving them the Ten Commandments and teaching them how to live righteous and holy lives. Israel was the nation established and set apart by God to live for Him and to teach other nations about the One True God.

|                             | <b>Approximate Timeline</b> | <b>Location</b> | <b>Biblical Scriptures</b> | <b>Author</b> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Exile in Egypt</b>       | 1526 B.C.–1446 B.C.         | Egypt           | Exodus 1–2                 | Moses         |
| <b>The Call of Moses</b>    | 1446 B.C.                   | Egypt           | Exodus 3–11                | Moses         |
| <b>The Passover Miracle</b> | 1446 B.C.                   | Egypt           | Exodus 12                  | Moses         |
| <b>Out of Egypt</b>         | 1446 B.C.                   | Sinai Desert    | Exodus 13–19               | Moses         |
| <b>The Ten Commandments</b> | 1445 B.C.                   | Sinai Desert    | Exodus 20–34               | Moses         |

MAP OF KEY LOCATIONS



## MOSES



“Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.” (Exodus 32:15–16 TNIV)

## SECTION 1: EXILE IN EGYPT

### **Israel, from Joseph to Slavery in Egypt: (Exodus 1)**

- About 430 years had passed since Jacob and his household of about seventy people migrated to Egypt to avoid famine.
- Jacob's twelve sons died, ending that generation, but their offspring rapidly multiplied. They were called "Hebrews" or "Israelites."
- There were now about two and a half million Israelites (descendants of Jacob) living in Goshen of Egypt, and their numbers were steadily increasing.
- While Joseph was alive, Egypt was a good place for the Israelites. However, another king came into power after Joseph's death who knew nothing about him and how he had helped Egypt.
- Pharaoh became concerned about such a large number of foreigners living in Egypt.
- Pharaoh feared the Israelites might align themselves with Egypt's enemies, conquer Egypt, and take over. To prevent this from happening, the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites.
- The Egyptians were brutal taskmasters, forcing the Israelites to work hard and long hours on Pharaoh's building projects; however, the more the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites, the more their numbers grew.
- In an effort to slow down the Hebrews' population growth, Pharaoh ordered all boys born to Israelites to be thrown in the river.

### **Moses, from Birth to Age Eighty: (Exodus 2)**

- During this time, a boy was born to a couple who were descendants of Levi, Jacob's third son.
- To save her son, the baby's mother hid him for three months. She then put him in a basket and placed it along the bank of the river.
- Pharaoh's daughter found the baby. The baby's sister saw what happened and approached Pharaoh's daughter. She asked the princess if she needed a Hebrew mother to nurse the baby.
- The princess said yes and the baby's sister then arranged for the baby's own mother to nurse him.
- When the baby was older, his mother took him back to Pharaoh's daughter, who named him Moses and raised him as her own son.
- Years later when Moses had grown into adulthood, he went to visit his Hebrew family. While visiting his people, Moses saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave.
- Moses looked around to see if anyone was watching and then killed the Egyptian. Although Moses had been cautious, someone saw him kill the Egyptian and the news soon spread.
- When Pharaoh heard about the murder, he ordered Moses' execution. However, Moses escaped and fled to Midian.
- Moses came to a well and sat down. Shortly afterwards, he saw several young girls who had come to the well for water. Some shepherds began harassing the girls and Moses came to their rescue.

- The girls later told their father about Moses' good deed and he invited Moses to join them for dinner.
- The girls' father, a priest in Midian, asked Moses to stay and become a member of his household. Moses accepted the offer and later married one of the priest's daughters, named Zipporah.
- Moses lived in Midian as a shepherd, tending his father-in-law's sheep for the next forty years.
- Meanwhile, the Israelites were still living in slavery and suffering in Egypt. They cried out to God for help.
- God was moved with compassion and began orchestrating plans for the Israelites' deliverance.



## RECOMMENDED BIBLE READING

Exodus 1:1–2:25 **Slavery in Egypt**

Romans 9:1–5 **God's Chosen People**

## SECTION 2: THE CALL OF MOSES

### Moses Chosen to Deliver Israel: (Exodus 3–4)

- One day while Moses was tending sheep at Horeb (also called Sinai, the mountain of God), the Lord called out to him from a bush that was burning, but not consumed.
- The Lord told Moses that He (God) was sending him (Moses) to deliver Israel from slavery and lead them out of Egypt to Canaan.
- Moses was reluctant and objected to God’s plan of deliverance, saying “*Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?*” God responded saying, “*I will be with you*” (Exodus 3:11–12 NIV).
- Then Moses said to God, “*Suppose I go to the Israelites . . . and they ask me, ‘What is his (God’s) name?’*” (Exodus 3:13 NIV).
- God told Moses that His name is *Yahweh*, which is translated, “*I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you*” (Exodus 3:14 NIV).



Note: *Yahweh* is traditionally rendered “Jehovah.” It is the Hebrew name of God usually translated “LORD” and appears in Scripture with an initial large capital letter followed by three small capital letters (LORD). The Hebrew name *Adonai* is also translated “Lord”; however, it appears in Scripture with only the first letter capitalized (Lord). Jehovah is the “Self-Existent One True God.”

- Moses continued his protest asking, “*What if they do not believe me or listen to me . . .?*” (Exodus 4:1 NIV). God gave Moses power to perform miracles so the Israelites would believe that the God of Israel had sent him.
- Finally Moses said to God, “*O Lord, I have never been eloquent . . . I am slow of speech and tongue . . . Please send someone else*” (Exodus 4:10, 13 NIV).
- At this point, God became angry with Moses and said to him, “*What about your brother, Aaron . . . He will speak to the people for you . . . But take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it*” (Exodus 4:14, 16, 17 NIV).
- Moses was about eighty years old when he went home, gathered his wife and children, and began the journey to Egypt, carrying the staff God had given him.
- Moses met up with Aaron along the way, and they traveled to Egypt together. Upon their arrival, they met with Israel’s leaders and told them God was going to deliver the Israelites. Israel’s leaders praised God for the message of deliverance.

### Moses Confronts Pharaoh: (Exodus 5–6)

- Moses and Aaron met with Pharaoh and told him they were delivering a message from the God of Israel.
- Moses and Aaron said to Pharaoh, “*This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go so they may hold a festival in my honor in the wilderness*” (Exodus 5:1b).
- God’s message meant nothing to Pharaoh. He not only refused to let the Israelites go, but he increased their workload.
- The Israelites became discouraged as did Moses. God encouraged Moses and told him that all would soon see the power of the Lord, the God of their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

### God Sends Ten Plagues to Egypt: (Exodus 7–11)

- Moses and Aaron confronted Pharaoh numerous times demanding that he let the Israelites go free. With each encounter, Pharaoh stubbornly refused.
- Each time Pharaoh refused, the Lord sent a plague as a demonstration of His power. The plagues were devastating. God sent ten plagues before Pharaoh finally agreed to let the Israelites go.

#### THE TEN PLAGUES

- ✓ The water of the Nile River was turned to blood.
- ✓ Frogs took over the land.
- ✓ Gnats infested men and animals.
- ✓ Flies invaded Egypt, but not Goshen, where the Israelites lived.
- ✓ Egypt's livestock died, but not Israel's.
- ✓ Boils (sores) infected the Egyptians, but not the Israelites.
- ✓ Hail devastated Egypt, but not Goshen.
- ✓ Locusts destroyed everything left after the hail.
- ✓ Darkness covered Egypt, but not Goshen, for three days.
- ✓ Egypt's firstborn sons were killed, but Israel's were spared.



#### RECOMMENDED BIBLE READING

Exodus 3:1–4:20 **Moses Chosen to Deliver  
Israel**

Romans 9:6–24 **God's Sovereignty**



## SECTION 3: THE PASSOVER MIRACLE

### The Passover, Saved by the Blood: (Exodus 12)

- Before the tenth plague, God told Moses to tell the Israelites to slaughter a lamb—one that was perfect without defect—and smear its blood on the doorframes of their houses.
- Moses gave the people God’s instructions, and they did just as they were told.
- At midnight, God’s destroyer (angel of death) killed every one of the Egyptians’ firstborn sons, including Pharaoh’s oldest son. The Egyptians’ firstborn animals were also killed.
- The angel of death passed over the houses with blood smeared on the doorframes, so the Israelites’ firstborn were spared. This was the “Passover” miracle.



Passover is a Jewish holiday that is still celebrated annually. It is a reminder of how God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

Passover foreshadowed the significance of blood for the remission of sins, “. . . *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*” (Hebrews 9:22b NIV).

Jesus was our Passover lamb, perfect without defect, who shed His blood for us. The Apostle Paul tells us that “. . . *Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed*” (1 Corinthians 5:7b NIV).

- When Pharaoh realized what had happened, he told the Israelites to gather their belongings and leave Egypt at once.
- The Israelites left in such a hurry that they did not have time to let their bread rise. They took unleavened bread (a flat bread).



Note: Leavening (yeast) is often used in Scripture to represent sin, and unleavened bread is used to symbolize the removal of sin. For Scriptures that refer to yeast as sin, see Matthew 16:5–12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; and Galatians 5:9. Today, the Feast of Unleavened Bread is celebrated as part of Passover. The unleavened bread symbolizes freedom from slavery.



### RECOMMENDED BIBLE READING

Exodus 11:1–12:30 **The Passover**

Hebrews 11:23–29 **Moses’ Faith**

1 Corinthians 5:6–8 **Christ, Our Passover Lamb**

## SECTION 4: OUT OF EGYPT

### Miracle at the Red Sea: (Exodus 13–14)

- Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt through the desert towards the Red Sea. God guided them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
- Following the pillar of cloud, the Israelites headed south towards Mount Sinai.
- God did not lead the Israelites through the region of the Philistines, which was the shortest route to Canaan; He knew they would lose a battle against the mighty Philistines.



Note: The Philistines were an aggressive warring tribe. The Israelites, on the other hand, had been in slavery for years and were not trained or equipped for military battle. God knew they would lose a battle against the Philistines, and those who survived would retreat and return to Egypt.

- Moses and the Israelites carried Joseph's remains with them, for their ancestors had promised to bury Joseph in Canaan.
- Shortly after the Israelites' departure, Pharaoh became angry and changed his mind. He and his army went after Israel and caught up with them at the shore of the Red Sea.
- The Israelites were terrified when they saw Pharaoh and his army. Moses said to them, *"Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today"* (Exodus 14:13 NIV).
- Miraculously, God separated the waters of the Red Sea and the Israelites started walking across to the other side. The Egyptians followed the Israelites through the parted sea.
- The Egyptians were unable to make it to the other side because their chariots' wheels got stuck in the mud and came off, making them impossible to drive. The Egyptian army was thrown into a state of total confusion.
- After all the Israelites had crossed and were safe on the other side, God caused the waters to rush back into place, drowning Pharaoh's army.



God used Moses as a savior. He was a deliverer, leader, and prophet. The parting of the Red Sea represented deliverance and is a picture of our deliverance from an old life separated from God to a new life in Christ.

### The Lord's Provision, Protection, and Guidance: (Exodus 15–17)

- Moses led the Israelites from the Red Sea southward into the desert. Soon they began to complain because the water in the area was not safe to drink.
- God mercifully responded to their complaints, pointing out a tree branch to Moses. When Moses threw the branch into the water, it became safe to drink.
- God then told the Israelites that He would prevent them from getting sick and catching diseases if they would listen to Him and obey. God said, "I am *Jehovah-Rapha*," which means "The LORD Who Heals" (Exodus 15:26).



Note: *Jehovah-Rapha* is a Hebrew name of God, the Great Physician and Healer.

- As the Israelites traveled onward, they complained about the lack of food. They were upset with Moses and blamed him for their situation.
- The people told Moses they would have been better off dead in Egypt. They grumbled saying, “at least there was food in Egypt.”
- God mercifully responded again, sending quail for meat. The next morning, God provided a food substance they were to eat as bread.
- When the Israelites saw the food which formed on the ground each morning, they asked, “What is it?”
- Moses replied, saying it was bread. Moses also told them God would provide enough of this bread for them to eat each day. They called it *manna*, which means, “What is it?”
- As the Israelites journeyed farther, they began complaining about the lack of drinking water again. They were angry with Moses and demanded that he find water for them to drink.
- Moses cried out to the Lord in prayer, asking for help. Moses told the Lord that the people were so upset they were ready to stone him.
- The Lord pointed out a rock and told Moses to strike it with the staff of God. Moses obeyed the Lord, and drinking water came gushing out of the rock.
- The Amalekites, a nomadic group of people, later discovered that the Israelites were in the area and sent their warriors to fight against them. Moses called upon a young man named Joshua to lead the Israelites into battle.
- Joshua gathered men for battle, while Moses, Aaron and Hur (one of Moses’ assistants) went to the top of a mountain, carrying the staff of God.
- As long as Moses held the staff of God in his hands and kept them raised, Joshua and his men were victorious. When Moses lowered his hands, the Israelites began to lose.
- The battle raged on for a long time. Moses finally grew weary and could no longer keep his hands raised, so Aaron and Hur held Moses’ hands and kept them raised. The Israelites eventually won the battle against the Amalekites.
- Moses built an altar and called it *Jehovah-Nissi*, which means “The LORD Is My Banner” (Exodus 17:15).



Note: *Jehovah-Nissi* is the Hebrew name of God as Conqueror. *Jehovah-Nissi* is the One Who Gives Victory Over the Enemy.

#### **Advice on Delegating Authority: (Exodus 18)**

- Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, having heard about the miracles God had performed, came to meet with Moses.
- Jethro soon noticed that everyone was coming directly to Moses for help with their individual problems.
- Jethro advised Moses to delegate authority to other capable leaders and to get involved only when issues were of high priority or when the delegated leaders needed his help.

- In this way, Jethro helped Moses organize a leadership structure for handling the people's social, moral, and religious issues.

### **Israel Arrives At Mount Sinai: (Exodus 19)**

- Two months after the Israelites left Egypt, they came to Mount Sinai (the mountain of God) and set up camp.
- God told Moses to tell Israel they would be His treasured possession if they obeyed and kept His covenant.
- When Moses told the leaders of Israel what God had said, they responded in unison, *“All that the LORD has spoken we will do”* (Exodus 19:8a NKJV).



## RECOMMENDED BIBLE READING

Exodus 13:1–14:31 **Miracle at the Red Sea**

Exodus 16:1–17:16 **The Lord's Provisions and Protection**

John 6:22–40 **Jesus is the Bread of Life**

## SECTION 5: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

### God Gives Israel the Ten Commandments: (Exodus 20)

- God gave the people these commandments:

#### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. *“You shall have no other gods before me.”*
2. *“You shall not make for yourself an idol.”*
3. *“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.”*
4. *“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”*
5. *“Honor your father and your mother.”*
6. *“You shall not murder.”*
7. *“You shall not commit adultery.”*
8. *“You shall not steal.”*
9. *“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”*
10. *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house . . . or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”*

### God Establishes Laws of the Covenant with Israel: (Exodus 21–24)

- In addition to the ten commandments, God gave Israel numerous other laws that covered social, moral, and religious issues such as:
  - ✓ How slaves, widows, the poor and strangers were to be treated.
  - ✓ How cases involving homicide, kidnapping, assault, stealing and property loss should be handled.
  - ✓ How holidays and festivals were to be celebrated.
- God also gave Israel laws forbidding unrighteous conduct such as:
  - ✓ Improper sex acts, idolatry, lying, cheating, deception and bribery.
  - ✓ Making treaties with nations who worship idols.
- Moses read God’s covenant laws to the people of Israel and again they responded in unison saying, *“All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient”* (Exodus 24:7b NKJV). Moses then sprinkled blood on the altar and on the people, sealing the covenant.



Under the covenant of the Old Testament, Israel would be God’s treasured possession and in right standing with Him if they obeyed God’s laws. The Old Testament covenant was sealed with animals’ blood.

The covenant of the New Testament opens the door for anyone to be God’s treasured possession. We are made righteous through faith in Jesus Christ. This covenant was sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20; Hebrews 9:13–15, 22)

- God later called Moses to the top of Mount Sinai for more detailed instructions.
- Moses took Joshua with him and left Aaron in charge at the base of the mountain. Moses spent forty days and forty nights in God's presence at the top.

#### **God Gives Moses Plans for the Tabernacle and Priesthood: (Exodus 25–31)**

- While at the top of Mount Sinai, God gave Moses detailed plans for building a tabernacle to be used as a place of worship. God also outlined procedures and plans for the priesthood.
- The Lord instructed Moses to tell the Israelites that they must observe the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.
- God told Moses that the Sabbath is a sign of His covenant with Israel. Observing the Sabbath would help them remember that God is *Jehovah-Mekoddishkem*, which means, “The LORD Who Makes You Holy” (Exodus 31:13).



Note: *Jehovah-Mekoddishkem* is the Hebrew name of God, The One Who Sanctifies. *Jehovah-Mekoddishkem* sets us apart and makes us pure for His sacred purposes.

#### **Israel Worships an Idol: (Exodus 32–34)**

- Meanwhile, Moses had been gone for such a long time that the people began to think he was not coming back. They went to Aaron and asked him to make an idol god for worship.
- Aaron listened to the people and made a golden calf, which the people worshiped with much rejoicing and celebration. This happened shortly after they had promised to obey the God of Israel.
- The Lord became so angered that He threatened to destroy the Israelites and make a great nation of Moses' descendants instead of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Moses interceded for the Israelites, begging the Lord to forgive them. Moses reminded God of His covenant with their forefathers.
- Moses told the Lord that the Egyptians would mock them and say that the God of Israel led them into the desert and killed them.
- Moses continued pleading with God until He finally relented. The Lord renewed His covenant with Israel and admonished them to obey and not be led into idolatry again.



### RECOMMENDED BIBLE READING

Exodus 20:1–17 **The Ten Commandments**

Exodus 32:1–35 **Israel Worships an Idol**

Exodus 33:1–34:14 **Moses Intercedes for Israel**

Galatians 3:15–29 **God's Law and God's Promises**

Romans 9:30–33 **Israel's Failure**



## MEDITATION & PRAYER

Moses and Miriam sing after the Lord delivered Israel:

“Who among the gods is like you, Lord?

Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? You stretch out your right hand, and the earth swallows your enemies. In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.”

(Exodus 15:11–13 TNIV)

Lord God Jehovah,

Who is like You? You are majestic in holiness and awesome in glory. You are everywhere and always present. Your love is immeasurable. You are all-powerful. Your strength is incomparable. You are all-knowing. Your wisdom is insurmountable. Lead me, as You did Israel, in Your unfailing love and guide me to Your Holy dwelling.

Amen



## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe Moses' journey of spiritual growth from the burning bush to the Ten Commandments.

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2. What parallels do you see between Moses' life and Jesus' life?

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3. What miracles did God perform through Moses to demonstrate His power?

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4. What is the story of Passover? What *Picture of Redemption* do you see in the story of Passover?

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5. What event does the Feast of Unleavened Bread celebrate? How does unleavened bread provide a *Picture of Redemption*?

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6. What provisions did God make for the Israelites as they journeyed to Mount Sinai?

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7. God entered into a covenant with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. What was the Old Testament covenant and how was it sealed? God later entered into a covenant with all mankind. What is the New Testament covenant and how was it sealed?

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## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

8. Moses was reluctant to accept the mission God had for his life. In Moses' case, there was a burning bush to affirm God's presence. How do you know when God is calling you to action? What can you do to affirm God's call when there is no burning bush?

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9. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, advised him to delegate some of his authority to capable leaders. In what areas of your life do you need to delegate more authority? Think about how this applies to you at home, work, church, community, etc. What steps can you take that will enable you to delegate more?

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10. Aaron buckled under pressure and made a golden calf for the Israelites to worship. How do you respond when being pressured to please others? What about when you're being pressured to do something you know is wrong?

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11. When God became angry with the Israelites for worshipping the golden calf, Moses interceded for them in prayer. Intercessory prayer is petitioning God's special favor for someone other than oneself. Why did Moses intercede for the Israelites in prayer instead of allowing God to kill them and make his (Moses') descendants a great nation? What did you learn from Moses about intercessory prayer?

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12. What did God reveal to you about His character through His Hebrew names: *Yahweh (Jehovah)*; *Jehovah-Rapha*; *Jehovah-Nissi*; and *Jehovah-Mekoddishkem*?

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13. What situation has God worked out for you recently? Write a message of thanks to God for His provision, protection, and guidance in your life.

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## CLOSING PRAYER

The author of Hebrews tells us that it is impossible to please God without faith:

“And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him. . . . It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible.”

(Hebrews 11:6, 27)

Dear Lord Jehovah,

I thank You for all the mighty things You’ve done and are continuing to do for me. You are the One who gives me victory over my enemies. You are my Physician and the One who makes me holy. Help me as you did Moses to keep my eyes on You, the One who is invisible. Teach me to live in the fullness of Your presence. Strengthen my faith, for I want to be well-pleasing to You.

Amen