



**Bible Teaching
& Publications**

First Seen in a Basket, Last Seen on a Mountain Top

The Extraordinary Life of Moses

Book 1

By

Alan Taylor

Managing Director

JO-AL Bible Teachings & Publications

www.jo-al.com

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JO-AL Bible Teaching & Publications is based in Melbourne, Australia, and was founded by Alan and Joan Taylor in 2009. Alan and Joan have experience in pastoring and pioneering churches, and in travelling teaching, worship and music ministry. At the same time, they have established a successful secular technical consulting company.

A Note from the Author

The writer of Hebrews tells us that since we are surrounded by a so great a crowd of witnesses, we should run with endurance the race is set before us. This study series focuses on one of the greatest of all those witnesses, and highlights lessons we can learn from the highs and lows he experienced as he ran his amazing race.



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PART 1. NO OTHER PROPHET LIKE HIM

God's Testimonial

In Deuteronomy 34:10-12 is one of the greatest statements ever made in the Bible about one of God's servants:

"since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses."

Three key reasons are given:

- God knew him face to face. No other prophet was on such intimate terms with Him. This is demonstrated in Exodus 33:18-23 when Moses asked God to "please show me Your glory", and God graciously responded.
- God sent him to perform some of the most fantastic signs and wonders recorded in the Old Testament before Pharaoh and all Egypt, the world super power of that day.
- God used Him for some of the greatest demonstrations of His mighty power in the sight of all Israel.

In God's "Hall of Fame"

Great achievers in sports, entertainment and other fields today are included in the "Hall of Fame" for their chosen profession because of their talents and exploits. But what can compare with the honour of being one of God's greatest heroes listed in Hebrews 11? They will be remembered for ever!

Was a type of Jesus

The Scriptures reveal the vital role that Moses played in God's plan to establish His Kingdom on earth. He was a type of Jesus;

"The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear." (Deuteronomy 18:15)

God established the Old Covenant through him:

"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)

and Old Covenant believers were baptized into him. What an awesome responsibility!

"Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (1 Corinthians 10:1-2)

One of Jesus' Counsellors

Moses was one of the two trusted servants God chose to discuss the greatest event in history with His Son:

"And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." (Luke 9:30-3)

First seen in a basket

Exodus 2:1-4 tells us that Moses came onto the world scene when he was 3 months old floating in a basket among reeds on the bank of the river Nile in Egypt – who would like to start life like this? Not

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exactly being born with a silver spoon! But Hebrews 11:23 tells us he had something much more valuable going for him – **parents with faith in God** who did not fear the threats of Pharaoh:

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

Last seen on a mountain top

Moses was last seen at the age of 120 climbing up to the top of a mountain the land of Moab, where God allowed him to view the Promised Land before he died:

"Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land saying 'I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.'" (Deuteronomy 34:1-4)

The reason why God would not let him cross over will be discussed in a later study.

Buried by God

He is the only person recorded in Scripture who was actually buried by God.

"So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day." (Deuteronomy 34:5-6)

Even the devil turned up at his funeral!

"Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses....." (Jude:9)

Greater than Moses?

In Luke 7:28 Jesus makes what at first sight appears to be an extraordinary statement:

"I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

Jesus puts John the Baptist on a par with Moses, then says that the least believer is greater than either of them. How can this be? The answer lies in **who we are** rather than what we have accomplished. As believers, we have been born again to become children of God.

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God." (1 John 3:1)

Thus, we all have a status and relationship with God that not even the greatest Old Covenant believers could have, as it could only come after the death and resurrection of Christ.

In **Part 2, "From Basket to Palace"** we will focus how the faith of Moses' parents set him on the pathway to rescue Israel in a time of great national crisis.

PART 2. FROM BASKET TO PALACE

In Part 1, we saw Moses as one of the greatest of God's servants of all time. Yet he came onto the world scene floating in a basket among the reeds on the bank of the Nile River – his only defence being the FAITH OF HIS PARENTS. We will now move on to see what their faith achieved.

Israel in Crisis

The survival of Israel as a nation is nothing short of miraculous. Down through the ages they have come through crisis after crisis! They have faced none greater than the time of terror which Moses was exposed to described in Exodus 1. After coming to Egypt at the time of Joseph, their numbers grew so rapidly that the Egyptians began to see them as a threat. Eventually, Pharaoh (king of Egypt) appointed task masters over them to oppress them and used them as slave labour for large construction projects. However, the more they were oppressed, the more numerous they became, and the Egyptians feared them. Then the king came up with a murderous plan – kill every male baby.

A similar command was given by King Herod centuries later to kill all the male babies in Bethlehem and the surrounding area. We see this as a Satan inspired plan to kill the Messiah. Likewise, hidden behind the Pharaoh's malice, was the desire of Satan to prevent the eventual coming of the Messiah by cutting off all the male descendants of Abraham. This is another way in which Moses was a type of Jesus.

But persecution of God's people has never been successful. In fact, history reveals that the Kingdom of God always thrives and grows the most when facing great opposition.

Drawn from the Water

Clearly this was not the best time for a male Israelite to be born in Egypt! However, as we have seen, he had the huge advantage of parents with faith in God. Also, Acts 7:20 reveals that he had another critical thing going for him:

"At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months."

He had FAVOUR WITH GOD, even at this early age!

For three months, his parents hid him from the eyes of search parties and spies who must have been everywhere. No doubt they spent many a day waiting on God, knowing that they would inevitably have to come up with another plan. At last an idea was born in their hearts. Undoubtedly, they must have believed that such an audacious and unusual plan was God's answer. Exodus 2:3-9 tells us that his mother placed Moses in a waterproofed basket among the reeds by the river bank, a place where she must surely have known that Pharaoh's daughter came to walk and bathe. Perhaps she also had heard that the princess was the kind of person who would have compassion on a baby facing certain death. The faith of Moses' parents was reflected in their daughter who boldly stepped forward to offer to find an Israelite woman to nurse the baby for the princess, which led to Moses being returned to his mother who even got paid to nurse him – an amazing outcome which confirmed that the plan had indeed been inspired by God. When he was weaned, his mother brought him to the princess who adopted him as her son and called him Moses – "because I drew him out of the water".

Neither Moses' parents, nor the princess, could have had an inkling of the destiny God had in mind for Moses. Likewise, most parents today do not know what God has in store for their children when they are born, unless God reveals it for a special reason. One of the greatest mistakes we can make is to try to pressure our children to fulfil our own ambitions for them instead of seeking God for His plan, which is

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frequently quite different. Many parents have become frustrated with children for not embracing their ambitions, when in fact God is placing other dreams in their hearts.

Prince in a Palace

Acts 7:21-22 reveals that:

"Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds."

So not only did he miraculously escape death, but he was raised as a prince in the palace of the most powerful king of that era – something only God could have arranged! However, it was not just intended to give him a great lifestyle. It was part of his training for his future key role in God's plan to deliver Israel and lead them to the land of Canaan as promised to Abraham.

Growing up as the grandson of the king of Egypt meant that:

- He would not be overawed when he was sent by God to confront the King and demand that he "let My people go".
- He was taught all the wisdom of Egypt, who were the most advanced nation in the world.
- He was exposed to training in leadership and government.
- He received military training.
- He became a mighty military leader and powerful orator.

Little did the Egyptians know that they were training the leader who would one day challenge them to release the Israelites from slavery!

However, natural abilities and training could only take Moses so far, and further training was needed in God's "boot camp" to prepare him, or any other servant of God, to carry out God's assignment - but more of that later.

In **Part 3, "Not by Might"** we will join Moses in his prime as a mighty prince of Egypt.

PART 3. NOT BY MIGHT

On the Brink

In Part 2 we left Moses growing up as Pharaoh's adopted grandson. When we rejoin him in Acts 7:22, he is in his prime as a mighty prince of Egypt; yet he was on the brink of a series of events which threatened to end in his premature death. Psalm 118:8-9 tells us:

"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes."

Moses was about to find this out as the Egyptians turned against him; but it was a lesson that stood him in good stead in the challenges that lay ahead of him. We too must always look to God for our security in all circumstances, no matter what. Let's face it, He's the only real security we have!

Though He Was Rich

At the age of forty, Moses was at the top of the heap. As a member of the royal family, he had all the riches of Egypt at his disposal. Yet Hebrews 11:24-26 tells us that his heart was with his suffering people. He was ready to answer God's call to be their deliverer, even though it would cost him so much:

"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked for the reward."

This is another example of Moses being a type of Jesus who:

"for the joy that was before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

Jesus Himself stressed that "it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven". Moses deserves **full marks** for his willingness to put the kingdom of heaven first.

The Sword of the Flesh

It was at that point that Moses made a huge mistake. He fell into the trap of trying to do God's work in his own strength and ability – which were very great – a trap that many of us fall into, even with much less ability than Moses! Exodus 2:11-14 tells us that Moses began to wield the **"sword of the flesh"** and ended up killing an Egyptian who was beating a fellow Israelite. He had yet to learn that God's way is:

"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit" (Zechariah 4:6)

The apostle Paul was another one who had great natural ability, but who had to learn that:

"My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9)

This vital lesson is laid out for us by Paul in Ephesians 6:10:

"Finally my Brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

On the Run

Moses' attempts to serve God went from bad to worse. Soon he was on the run as Pharaoh sought to kill him. Hebrews 11:27 tells us what pulled Moses through this crisis – his faith that God was still with Him despite the circumstances:

"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. (Hebrews 11:27) x



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Likewise, we must never judge the presence of God in our lives by circumstances. 2 Corinthians 5:7 teaches us that we walk with Him **by faith**, not by sight.

God's ways are higher than ours, and an apparent disaster, even when self-inflicted, can be the gateway into a new era of our life in the Kingdom of God.

So it was with Moses who was heading right into **God's 'Boot Camp'**, as we will see in **Part 4**.

PART 4. GOD'S BOOT CAMP

Being posted to an army boot camp means a drastic change in lifestyle – God’s “boot camp” was no exception. Moses exchanged a king’s palace for an outback sheep station (Exodus 2:15-22)! Little did he realize that he was embarking on a forty-year training program for a mission tougher than any special forces commander ever tackles – how to get over three million people, including women and children out of Egypt, away from a powerful Pharaoh, and lead them across an inhospitable wilderness to take over a new country already occupied by six hostile nations. Only God could come up with the idea of tending sheep as preparation for such a monumental task! As the Great Potter, He used it to reshape Moses’ CHARACTER. Some of the great strengths which Moses gained during his time in ‘boot camp’ are discussed below.

Humility

Shepherding sheep in the outback for forty years did wonders for Moses ego! The mighty prince of Egypt became the humblest man on earth (Numbers 12:3). This made it safe for God to reveal Himself to Moses and use him in ways that few others have experienced.

The danger of spiritual pride is so great that the apostle Paul had to put up with a “messenger of Satan” to buffet him for his own protection (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Patience

Looking after sheep can be a frustrating business! They tend (like all of us) to go astray (Isaiah 53:6). Moses’ patience was to be stretched to the limit in his future role in as the Israelites’ leader.

Many of God’s dealings in our lives are aimed at establishing patience, without which we will not be able to inherit His wonderful promises (Hebrews 6:12).

Slowness of Speech

The man who was mighty in words became slow of speech (Acts 7:22 and Exodus 4:10). This was a valuable asset to Moses when he later faced frequent provocation and explosive situations.

James tells us that this is something God wants for all His people (James 1:19-20). Changes in our speech is one of the sure signs of Spiritual growth.

Dependence upon God

Moses, as a prince of Egypt, was trained to be a confident, self-reliant leader. But in this strange new wilderness environment he would have been thrown back onto dependence on God.

God often has to bring us to a point where our own resources are insufficient in order to “force” us to lean upon Him, which is the **ONLY** way to victorious life and service (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Personal Relationship with God

Moses had an unsurpassed relationship with God. Deuteronomy 34:10 tells us that he was the only prophet “whom the LORD knew face to face”. This undoubtedly began during those long lonely days in the wilderness when Moses had so much undisturbed time to meditate and pray. John the Baptist was another great prophet who was forged in the wilderness (Luke 1:80), and the apostle Paul spent time in the wilderness when God called him into the ministry (Galatians 1:17).

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We all need to spend time alone with God to build on the personal relationship which began with our new birth. When we are in the midst of a battle, it is too late to start!

Courage and Self Sacrifice

Moses, like other shepherds of his time, had to contend with attacks of lions, bears and other ferocious predators without the help of modern weapons. Undoubtedly, he must have put his life on the line many times to defend his sheep. His willingness to sacrifice himself for his sheep became absolutely critical to the whole future of the nation of Israel when he asked God to blot his name out of His book instead of his people who had sinned at Mount Sinai (Exodus 32:32) - another example of Moses as a type of Christ the "Good Shepherd" who actually did lay down His life for His "sheep", and experienced separation from God on the cross on behalf of us all (John 10:11 and Matthew 27:46).

The apostle Paul exhibited the same sacrificial attitude when he said he wished he was "accursed from Christ" instead of his countrymen (Romans 9:3). He also urged believers at Rome to present their bodies "as a living sacrifice" to God (Romans 12:1).

God wasn't only preparing Moses for his great mission, He was developing character which he would take with him into eternity. We need to recognize that He is doing the same for us, especially when we are in times of trial. Hebrews 12:5-12 tells us that God as our Father uses the difficulties of life as a "boot camp" to "stamp" His **FAMILY IMAGE** on all of us.

In **Part 5 "Called from A Burning Bush"** we will arrive at Moses' dramatic graduation from "God's boot camp".

PART 5. CALLED FROM A BURNING BUSH

Graduation Time

Military boot camp graduation ceremonies are often impressive, but none has ever been as dramatic as the one God had in store for Moses. Typically, the camp commandant will call out the names of the successful graduates who will now move on to active service. However, Moses was called by the Angel of the Lord from a bush burning with supernatural fire to a task that would be overwhelming to a top general, let alone a military graduate (Exodus 3:1-4).

Standing on Holy Ground

Moses was obviously perplexed about why the bush didn't burn up, but he must have been absolutely astounded when a voice called his name from the midst of the bush - especially when the voice said it was God speaking, and that he must stop and take off his sandals as he was standing on holy ground (Exodus 3:3-5).

The scripture doesn't explain why God chose to call Moses in such a dramatic and supernatural fashion. But it is reasonable to conclude that it was needed to help Moses believe that it was indeed God who spoke. This was especially important given the seemingly (to Moses) impossible mission He called Moses to undertake.

In the case of the apostle Paul, who also had a dramatic experience, he had to believe that he was called to proclaim as Son of God the very one whose followers he was fanatically pursuing and persecuting for blasphemy. No wonder Acts 9:6 tells us he was "trembling and astonished".

Who Was the Angel of the Lord?

The "Angel of the Lord" was clearly God and not a created angel, as He is referred to as "LORD (Yaweh)" in Exodus 3:4, as God in verse 6, and as "I AM" in verse 14. So why word "Angel". The key is that the Hebrew word for angel also means messenger or ambassador.

Exodus 23:20-21 reveals that the "Angel" was indeed a Messenger sent by God. It also reveals that the "Messenger" Himself was **also** God, due to God saying "My name is in Him" and "He will not pardon your transgressions" - words that cannot refer to a created angel!

"Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him."

This ties in with Exodus 3:8

"So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey"

Thus, the most likely conclusion is that the "Sender" was God the Father and the "Messenger" was God the Son, who came down to deliver God's people from the power of Pharaoh and lead them into the Promised Land.

About 1300 years later, God again sent His Son, this time to deliver all who believe in Him from the power of the "pharaoh" of this world and transfer them into the Kingdom of God (John 3:16 and Colossians 1:13).

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Reluctant Deliverer

Exodus 3:11 tells us that after 40 years of sheep herding, Moses no longer saw himself as the deliverer of his people:

"But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Not only was it a daunting task, but he was likely still regarded in Egypt as a fugitive under a death penalty! Also, after his previous failed attempt, he thought it would be difficult to convince the Israelites that God had sent him. He even doubted his previous prowess as a speaker. He had yet to learn one of the key revelations of the apostle Paul, who also downplayed his speaking ability (2 Corinthians 11:6):

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10)

Despite God's assurances, including the promise of miraculous signs, Moses continued to resist and asked Him to send someone else till God grew angry. He finally yielded when God said that his older brother Aaron would speak for him.

In our own lives, spiritual growth frequently comes through embracing tasks and changes that appear difficult or even impossible. Such times may require us to:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Signs and Wonders

In Exodus 3:18-20, God promised to perform wonders to convince Pharaoh to let the Israelites go a 3 days' journey into the wilderness. And in 4:1-9, He instructed Moses to perform miraculous signs before the elders of Israel:

"that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

John 20:30-31 tells us that the purpose of the many signs that Jesus did was:

"that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Mark 16:17 tells us that Jesus said that signs "will follow those who believe", and verse 20 records that:

"they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs."

and Acts 4:29-30 reveals that the early believers prayed for boldness and signs and wonders:

"by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

Clearly, Moses, Jesus, and the early believers needed signs and wonders to convince their hearers to believe their message, and the early church prayed for God to move in this way. If we want the same results, we would do well to follow their example!



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Out and Into

In Exodus 3:8 God said that He had come down to deliver Israel from the hand of the Egyptians. But He didn't stop there, He went on to say that He intended to **bring them into** "a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey".

Likewise, Jesus came down not only to deliver us from the power of darkness, but also to convey us "into the kingdom of the Son of His love" and all of the Kingdom blessings for this life and for eternity. So let's not be satisfied with being delivered from "Egypt", but follow Him into our "land of promise" and lay hold of everything that Jesus has provided for us.

*"do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."
(Hebrews 6:12)*

In **Part 6 "One Man with a Rod"** we will join Moses as returns to Egypt to confront Pharaoh and deliver the Israelites.

PART 6. ONE MAN WITH A ROD

The Rod of God

In Exodus 4:19 God tells Moses it was time to return to Egypt, and assured him that all the men who sought his life were now dead, something which must have been worrying Moses. After gaining permission from Jethro his father in law, he set out with his wife and two sons. The only “weapon” he possessed to face the might of Egypt, the then world superpower, was his rod, which he carried in his hand. Only now, verse 20 calls it **“the rod of God”**, a weapon through which God had promised to perform signs and wonders.

A Brush with Death

Exodus 4:24-26 describes an incident which almost ended the mission before it had scarcely started. The scriptures say that at an encampment “the Lord met him and sought to kill him”. No details are given, but it appears likely that he was struck with some kind of serious sickness. His life was spared when his wife Zipporah hastily circumcised one of their sons and cast the foreskin Moses feet, accusing him of being a “husband of blood”. Reading between the lines, it appears likely that Zipporah had resisted circumcising the boy, perhaps after witnessing the circumcision of their other son – Midianites did not practice circumcision.

In Genesis 17:10-14, God had commanded that every male child be circumcised when he was eight days old as a sign of the Abrahamic covenant. Any child not circumcised would be cut off from his people due to breaking the covenant. Having an uncircumcised son would have seriously undermined Moses’ qualification to be the leader of Israel and God’s vessel for introducing the law. The fact that Zipporah performed the circumcision rather than Moses may indicate that Moses was too close to death to do it himself.

In the Old Testament, the activity of Satan is revealed only a few times. At such a critical time in God’s plan of redemption, it seems likely that Satan was involved in stirring up the dispute between Zipporah and Moses. In Ephesians 6:11, Paul urges us to:

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ”

We need to be vigilant as Satan may come against us in unexpected ways at key times in our lives!

A Good Start

Exodus 4:27-31 tell us that God sent Aaron to meet Moses at the mountain of God, the scene of the burning bush. To his credit, Aaron believed Moses’ account of his dramatic meeting with God, undoubtedly helped by being at the very place where it took place. When they arrived in Egypt, the elders of Israel also believed. when they heard the words that God had spoken to Moses and saw the miraculous signs. Undoubtedly, Moses and Aaron would have been encouraged by the successful start to their mission.

However, this didn’t last long!

Let My People Go

When Moses and Aaron confronted Pharaoh, they boldly declared (Exodus 5:1):

“Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.’”

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Verses 5:2-23 record that Pharaoh not only rejected God's word but punished the Israelites by making them source their own straw for brick making and beating their leaders when they complained. His strategy was devastatingly effective as the leaders blamed Moses and Aaron who in turn blamed God for bringing trouble on the people. God responded by telling Moses He was going rescue Israel from the bondage of Egypt and give them the land of Canaan to fulfil His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He said that because of what He was going to do to Pharaoh, he would actually drive them out of Egypt! Moses told this to the people; but they would not listen because of their "anguish of spirit"

In our day, it is common for all kinds of hindrances to suddenly spring up when someone is on the brink of breaking out of "Egypt" into the Kingdom of God. Strong opposition can arise even from family members and close friends. However, 2 Corinthians 2:14 assures us that God "always leads us in triumph" if we choose to follow Christ our deliverer.

Power Encounter

Exodus chapters 7-10 records the ensuing confrontations with Pharaoh who called in the magicians of Egypt to respond to the miracles performed by Moses and Aaron. However, even though they demonstrated extraordinary supernatural power, the magicians could only go "three rounds" against the power of the Holy Spirit. Like Simon the Sorcerer centuries later (Acts 8:9-13), they had to acknowledge the overwhelming supremacy of the "finger of God", and their humiliation was complete when they were covered with boils along with all the other Egyptians. God went "another eight rounds" with His only opposition being the stubbornness in Pharaoh's heart. The resulting devastation of Egypt may have been related to their deep involvement in the occult as revealed by the magicians, as well as their enslavement and cruel oppression of Israel.

You can serve the Lord but

As God's hand grew progressively heavier upon Egypt, Pharaoh began to make a series of compromise offers - "Yes you can go and serve the Lord but....". Satan still uses this strategy to deflect people from fully serving the Lord:

"I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. (Exodus 8:28)

Here is a common deception. "By all means follow Jesus, but don't go too far." We must remember that God hasn't just cleaned us up to live a "better" life - He's given us a totally new one. He wants us to be conscious of our separation from the world, to be in the world but not of it (2 Corinthians 6:17 and John 17:15-16).

"Go now, you who are men, and serve the Lord, for that is what you desired." (Exodus 10:11)

Now Pharaoh offers to let the men go, but not their families. However, God wants to save our entire family (Acts 11:14 and 16:31), and we must continue to pray and believe for their salvation even if they are indifferent or even hostile! We will look at this further in the next study.

"Go, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be kept back. Let your little ones also go with you." (Exodus 10:24)

Our enemy want us to hold back our possessions from God. But the Bible tells us to "honour God with your possessions" (Proverbs 3:9). Our commitment to Him must be total (Roman 12:1).

Living in Goshen

Exodus 8:22-23 and 9:26 tell us that the land of Goshen, where God's people lived, was protected from the devastating plagues. Likewise, Jesus has delivered us from the curse of the law and all its implications



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and has set us apart to enjoy God's blessings (Galatians 3:13-14). God let the Egyptians see that He made a distinction between them and His people, and today He wants those around us to see His blessings in our lives so that they will be drawn towards His Kingdom (Matthew 15:21-28, 8:5:13, and 5:14-16).

In **Part 7 "When I See the Blood"** God sends the final plague upon Egypt and institutes the Passover.

PART 7. WHEN I SEE THE BLOOD

The Final Plague

Exodus 11 reveals the final and most terrible plague – the sudden death of the firstborn of every family in Egypt, including Pharaoh, and their livestock; but Pharaoh still wouldn't listen. Verse 10 tells us that "the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart", which has led to accusations that God was unjust. The apostle Paul answered this in Romans 9:22-24:

What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

The enslavement and oppression of the Israelites by Pharaoh and the Egyptians, which included the death of their male babies, certainly justified the judgement of God. Yet God still provided a way for them to escape had they been willing to let the Israelites obey God's command to go and hold a feast to Him in the wilderness. Exodus 8:15 tells us that Pharaoh hardened his own heart after he saw his magicians duplicate the supernatural sign of the rod performed by Moses and Aaron and the first two plagues. At this stage, he likely thought that the gods of Egypt were as powerful as the God of Israel. However, in verse 8:19, he continued to harden his heart after the magicians failed to equal the third plague and acknowledged that it was the "finger of God". From then on, he had no excuse for disobeying God's command, and, after two more plagues, verse 9:12 tells us that this time GOD hardened his heart. At this point, Pharaoh had missed the opportunity to escape the justice of God, and the hardening of his heart by God, which led to the remaining plagues, was part of God's judgement.

The judgement of God on Egypt made known His longsuffering as well as the eventual wrath on those who refused to obey him despite many warnings confirmed by signs and wonders. The miraculous liberation of the entire nation of Israel showed His mercy for those who chose to obey Him, as spoken by Paul in the Romans 9:22-24 above.

A New Beginning

Israel's exodus from Egypt was not only a deliverance from bondage and oppression, it was to be an entirely new beginning in a new land. In Exodus 12:1-2, God even told Moses to start a new calendar!

Likewise, when we are delivered from the "Pharaoh" of this world, we are born again into an entirely new life in the Kingdom of God. As proclaimed by the apostle Paul:

*"if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."
(2 Corinthians 5:17)*

*"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."
(Colossians 1:13)*

I will Pass Over You

In Exodus 12:3-14 God told Moses that every household should kill a one year old unblemished male lamb, and put some of the blood on the two doorposts and lintel of their house, then roast it and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They had to eat it in haste, wearing a belt and sandals and carrying a staff. And He said:

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"when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt"

This was to be called the LORD's Passover, and Israel were instructed to keep it as a feast to the LORD on the same day every year as an everlasting memorial.

The Lamb of God

Now, the sacrifice of even thousands of lambs was not sufficient to allow God to spare the Israelites from the judgement He was bringing upon Egypt (Hebrews 10:4). No, the lambs were symbolic of the LAMB OF GOD, Jesus, who would be crucified at the feast of the Passover centuries later:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)

For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. (1 Corinthians 5:7)

When the lambs were killed by "the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel", little did they realize that they were "prophesying" of that future time when their descendants would cry "Crucify Him" (Mark 15:13).

God instructed the Israelites to eat the flesh of the lamb which foreshadowed the words Jesus spoke to His disciples to "take, eat; this is my body" (Matthew 26:26). The lamb gave the Israelites strength and energy to leave Egypt and start on their arduous journey. Similarly, Jesus strengthens and empowers us to leave the world behind and start a new life in the Kingdom of God.

You and Your House

Each house was marked by the blood of the lamb, and everyone it was set aside for God's mercy. The same principle holds true for the blood of Jesus. In Acts 16:31, when the Philippian jailor asked what he must do to be saved, the apostles replied:

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Of course, it does not mean that other family members are automatically saved. Each person still has to make their own decision, just as every Israelite had to decide to be in their house on the night of the Passover. However, it clearly reveals that the whole family is set aside for God's special dealings.

This principle even applies when the believing person is not the head of the family, or even a respected family member. Joshua 2:12-14 tells us that, against all odds, Rahab the harlot successfully interceded for her parents and entire family, including those who were not living in the same house. What a wonderful encouragement for us to keep praying and believing for all our family members to be saved.

The Only Way In

Note that the blood was put on the door frame of the house, so that the only way in to safety was by the blood. This reminds us that there is only one way to salvation, and that is by the blood of Jesus. Each household was only spared because God saw the blood. Good works, "holy" living, or service for God had nothing to do with it. Likewise, we are saved by grace and only grace by believing in Jesus and receiving Him as saviour and Lord:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of your selves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

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Remember Me

The Israelites were commanded to keep the Passover as annual feast, to remind them of how God liberated them from slavery and oppression. At the Passover with His disciples just before His crucifixion, the real Lamb of God instituted the Lord's Supper for His followers to remember Him, how He suffered and died to set us free from slavery to sin and the oppression of Satan, and enter into His wonderful New Covenant:

"He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me'. Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.'" (Luke 22:19-20)

Unlike the Passover, the Lord's Supper (or Communion as it is commonly called today) was celebrated often by the early church, pointing to the importance of keeping Jesus and what he accomplished for us on the cross at the centre of our lives.

The Unleavened Life

God instituted the Feast of Unleavened Bread to follow immediately after the Passover. For seven days, the Israelites had to eat unleavened bread to remember when God brought them out of Egypt in haste, before they had time to add leaven to their dough (Exodus 12:15-20 and 34).

In 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, the Apostle Paul likened the Corinthian believers to unleavened bread, and urged them to purge from their midst the gross immorality they were tolerating, calling it "old leaven". He referred to avoiding malice and wickedness and living with sincerity and truth as keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

"Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

In **Part 8** Pharaoh gives Moses and Israel their "**Marching Orders**".

PART 8. MARCHING ORDERS

Free at Last

With the final plague, God achieved “mission impossible”, setting free an estimated 2.5-3 million slaves (based on 600,000 men) all at the same time (Exodus 12:31-33 and 37). Pharaoh not only agreed to let them go, he actually ordered them to leave immediately in the middle of the night, fulfilling God’s word to Moses after his first discouraging encounter with Pharaoh (Exodus 6:1 and 11:1). Pharaoh not only drove them out, but asked Moses to bless him also. If only he had done this when Moses first spoke God’s word to him, he could have completely avoided the plagues which had virtually destroyed Egypt and the loss of his own firstborn son.

Philippians 2:10 tells us that eventually everyone will have to “bow the knee”. The question is will we do it now at God’s throne of grace, or later, like Pharaoh, at God’s judgement seat when it is too late.

“at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.”

Back Pay plus Compensation

God made sure His people received generous “back pay” plus “compensation” of gold, silver, and clothing for all the years of unpaid slavery and affliction (Exodus 12:35-36). This fulfilled God’s promise to Abraham hundreds of years earlier that they would leave with “great possessions” (Genesis 15:14), and foreshadowed the promise of abundant restoration which Jesus provides when He delivers us from the affliction of the “Pharaoh” of this world (John 10:10).

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

We not Your Own

God told Moses in Exodus 13:2 that all the firstborn of Israel now belonged to Him, and had to be consecrated to Him. They had been spared only because of the blood of the lamb during the Passover, while the firstborn of the Egyptians perished.

Likewise, we were bought by the blood of Jesus and are no longer our own, as revealed by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Thus, accepting Jesus as Lord **is not an option!**

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

God later took the tribe of Levi to serve Him as substitutes for all the first born (Numbers 3:44-45).

Shortest Way not the Best

Now the shortest way to the Promised Land of Canaan lay through Philistine territory. However, Exodus 13:17-18 tells us that God led them towards a longer route through the wilderness. He said they were not ready to face war with the Philistines, who in later years proved to be formidable in battle.

This reminds us of the importance of seeking God’s guidance, as the most obvious way is not necessarily the best. God said that the Israelites were likely to give up and return to Egypt if they faced war with the Philistines. 1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us that God will not lead us into situations that we cannot cope with:

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God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

Some of God's people have suffered unpleasant, even serious consequences, by ignoring God's warnings about a direction they were taking.

A sobering example is recounted in 1 Kings 13, where a man of God disobeyed the clear instruction of God and listened to a false prophecy, which cost him his life. Unfortunately, false prophecies have also led to disastrous results in our day.

Led by the Spirit

Exodus 13:21-22 reveals that the LORD went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire to give them light at night, revealing God's will to guide His people:

This is a message given throughout the Bible, for example:

- Psalm 119:105 says that God's word is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path.
- Romans 8:14 tells us to be led by the Spirit.
- Colossians 1:9 urges us to pray to be filled with the knowledge of His will
- In Matthew 6:13, Jesus tells us to pray that we are not led into temptation, but delivered from the evil one.
- James 4:13-15 warns us to seek God's will before making plans.

The Israelites were probably too busy celebrating their miraculous escape from Egypt to be concerned about the direction God was leading them. Little did they realize that they would soon face a far greater challenge than a longer journey!

God's unexpected master plan is revealed in **Part 9 The Salvation of the Lord**

PART 9. THE SALVATION OF THE LORD

God Sets a Trap for Pharaoh

Exodus 14:1-9, reveals that God was not yet finished with His judgement on Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He instructed Moses to tell the Israelites to turn and make camp near the Red Sea, and said that Pharaoh would think that the Israelites had become confused and were trapped by the wilderness. Little did Pharaoh realize that a trap was being set for him and his army.

God revealed to Moses that He would harden Pharaoh's heart to pursue in order to:

"gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord."

This was clearly a continuation of the judgment of God described in Part 8, now extended to destroy Pharaoh's military power. Pharaoh took the bait and set off in pursuit of Israel with his army, horsemen and chariots., and overtook Israel camping by the sea.

Israel Panics

The Israelites had marched out of Egypt boldly, but in their first test of faith they scored a ZERO. In Exodus 14:10-12, when they saw the Egyptians marching after them, they were gripped by fear and told Moses he should never have brought them out of Egypt. How quickly they had forgotten how God had miraculously protected them during the plagues He brought on Egypt through Moses!

Yet were Jesus' disciples any better? When the big storm arose on the Sea of Galilee they panicked, even with Jesus sleeping at the back of their boat! Note what Jesus said to them:

"Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" (Mathew 8:26)

Like the Israelites, they failed the faith test, quickly forgetting all the miracles they had seen Jesus perform.

In both cases the circumstance was ordered by God, and He expected them to have faith in Him to protect them. So too when we face threatening situations, He expects us to trust in His promises to protect and deliver us such as:

"Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ." (2 Corinthians 2:14)

"No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways." (Psalm 91:10-11)

King David, another of the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11, gave us a great example to follow when he refused to fear and declared in Psalm 27:

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident.

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The Salvation of the Lord

Moses alone showed faith when he said:

"Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." (Exodus 14:13-14)

However, verse 15 reveals that he also called out to God. Apparently, he didn't know how God was going to save Israel, and when the Egyptians closed in he also began to feel the pressure! Perhaps he was expecting something along the lines of the previous plagues. However, his cry was a cry of faith rather than fear. He told the people to stand still and be quiet while God fought for them. He went further, and added that they wouldn't see the Egyptians again, showing that he believed that this was God's final judgement upon them.

It was only when Moses was stretched to the limit, that God revealed His amazing plan, to part the sea to make a way for Israel to pass over on dry ground while luring the Egyptians to follow.

In 2 Corinthians 8:11, the apostle Paul describes a time when God delivered him and his companions when, like the Israelites, they thought there was no way they could escape death:

"We do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us"

He concluded that the experience was designed to teach them not to trust in themselves at critical times, but in God, who is able to even raise the dead – a vital lesson given the dangers they faced in their ministry. Likewise, the dramatic last-minute deliverance of the Israelites was undoubtedly intended to build their faith for the challenging journey that lay ahead of them.

It has continued to inspire faith in God's people ever since, and still does today. It seems that all believers sooner or later experience last minute deliverance from seemingly impossible situations.

Crossing the Red Sea

The dramatic Red Sea crossing is described in Exodus 15-19. Moses stretched out his rod and God caused the sea to part by a strong east wind all night, allowing the Israelites to cross on dry ground with a wall of water on each side. The Angel of the LORD in the pillar of cloud which had led them out of Egypt moved behind them and frustrated the Egyptians with darkness while giving light to assist the Israelites. Exodus 13:21 says that the LORD was in the pillar of cloud, showing that the Angel of the LORD and the LORD were one and the same. In Part 5, it is concluded that this was God the Son (Jesus) who was sent as God's messenger (Angel), who came down to deliver God's people from the power of Pharaoh and lead them into the Promised Land.

Verses 24-25 record that God hindered the Egyptians when they followed Israel. And when they began to lose their chariot wheels they recognised the supernatural intervention of God and turned back to flee. However, as morning dawned, God commended Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea again, and the waters returned, burying chariots, the horsemen and all the army.

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Israel Celebrates

Exodus 14:1-21 records how Israel celebrated their narrow escape with singing and dancing. Their song proclaimed that this demonstration of God's power on their behalf will cause the surrounding nations to fear – especially Canaan, which was their destination:

"All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. Fear and dread will fall on them"

In Joshua 2:8-11, Rahab the harlot testified to the Israelite spies that this is exactly what happened:

"I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt"

But this is a story for a later study.

Once again, the Israelites Euphoria soon evaporates in **Part 10 The Journey Begins**

PART 10. THE JOURNEY BEGINS

From Dancing to Discontent in Three Days

In Part 9, we left the Israelites dancing and singing in celebration of their miraculous escape from the Egyptians. Undoubtedly, they were elated and full of confidence as they set out into the wilderness on their way to the Promised land. However, when they arrived at Marah after three days without finding water, and found that the water was undrinkable, their mood quickly changed.

“And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” (Exodus 15:22-24)

Moses was no longer a national hero, and they complained against him just as they did when the Egyptians pursued them after their miraculous deliverance from Pharaoh. The Red Sea crossing was an even greater demonstration that God was with them, yet their faith failed again.

Tests – God’s Road to Maturity

Marah was the second of the many tests the Israelites faced when God led them out of Egypt. Deuteronomy 8:2 tells us that the God’s purpose was to let Him, and more importantly them, see what was really in their hearts, and whether they would continue to keep His commandments:

“And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.”

James 1:2-4 reveals that tests still play a vital role in the journey of faith of God’s people today:

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

This teaches us that holding on to our faith in God’s promises in stressful times **produces patience**, which we need in order to grow into mature and complete believers – something we can rejoice about even when the going gets tough!

Healing Promised for God’s People

In Exodus 15:25, Moses cried out to God:

“and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet”

Once again, God showed that He was willing and able to meet Israel’s need supernaturally when there seemed no way out in the natural – a lesson just as important for us today when we face seemingly impossible situations!

But God didn’t stop there. In verse 26, He chose the time when they were contemplating the miraculous “healing” of the water to give them an even greater promise – healing and health, a wonderful blessing which would differentiate them from other nations:

“If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you.”

Matthew 8:16-17 quotes Isaiah and reveals that the promise of healing was still in force and was based on the sufferings of Jesus:

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"When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses'."

Jesus confirmed healing as a provision of the Kingdom of God in Luke 10:9 when He sent out His followers to the towns and villages and told them to:

"heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'."

Then, in Mark 16:15-18, He revealed that the promise of healing was extended to all believers when He gave the "Great Commission":

"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons;they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

As believers, we are now in the Kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13), so the promise of healing still applies to us. This was clearly understood by the early church as in James 5:14-15):

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

A Time of Rest

Exodus 15:27 records that, after the drama of Marah, God led Israel to encamp at Elim, where there was abundant drinkable water and palm trees. The scripture doesn't tell us how long they stayed there or happened. Perhaps God gave them a time of recuperation before leading them on through the wilderness where they would soon encounter their next test.

As believers, we too can expect God to provide times of recuperation between the challenges we encounter in our spiritual journey. For example, Acts 8:1-3 describes a time of great persecution for the early Jerusalem church, which was then followed in 9:31 by a time of peace and edification:

"Then the churches[d] throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied."

Wilderness not Desert

It is worth pausing to consider what the wilderness that lay ahead of the Israelites was really like. The landscape today is a barren, dry desert with occasional springs fed by underground water. However, the Scriptures indicate that at the time of Moses, while there were some barren waterless areas, it was largely open pasture land, with sufficient surface and well water to support vegetation, bushes, trees, wild animals such as goats, lions and bears, and nomadic peoples such as the Amalekites and Midianites. This is supported by historical studies which indicate that the Middle East had much higher rainfall and was more fertile in antiquity.

Looking at the Scriptures, the Hebrew word for wilderness, "midbâr", according to the BDB Standard Biblical Hebrew Lexicon and Strong's Concordance, was the common word for uninhabited land or open pasture. For example, Moses was pasturing sheep in the wilderness ("midbâr"), when God called Him out of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-2), and the Israelites left Egypt "with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock" (Exodus 12:38), which could only have survived in open pasture. Evidence of bushes and trees include the burning bush, the tree used to sweeten the waters at Meribah, the palm trees at Elim and the man gathering sticks on the sabbath day (Numbers 25:32).

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References to water include the bitter waters of Meribah, the 12 wells at Elim, and the brook that descended from Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 9:21). There are also many references to wells in Genesis indicating underground water resources, which exist today. The Israelites may have had time to dig wells during some of their stopovers in their 40-year sojourn in the wilderness. Clearly, God knew where there was sufficient water for the Israelites to camp, and the need for the supernatural supply of water from a rock on two occasions appears to have been due to God deliberately leading them to waterless places to test them, rather than indicating a widespread water problem.

The King James Bible has caused some confusion by using "wilderness" and "desert" interchangeably for the translation of the same Hebrew word "midbâr". For example:

Exodus 3:18 reads: *"let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness (midbâr)"*

While 5:3 reads: *"let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert (midbâr)"*

Thankfully most Bible versions use only wilderness.

In **Part 11 "Quails for Dinner and Angels' Food for Breakfast"**, the Israelites grumble yet again, and God prepares a supernatural menu for them in the wilderness.

PART 11. QUAILS FOR DINNER AND ANGELS' FOOD FOR BREAKFAST

More Grumbling

In Part 10 we left the Israelites enjoying a time of R and R among the palm trees at Elim. No doubt they set out on the next leg of their journey in a positive and optimistic frame of mind which we all typically feel after a welcome holiday. They would be unaware that God was leading them into their third time of testing which began when they reached the Wilderness of Sin on their way to Mt Sinai. This time they ran out of food and began to grumble about hunger, reminiscing about the good old days of plenty in Egypt and accused Moses and Aaron of bringing them into this wilderness to kill them with hunger (Exodus 16:2-3).

It was clear that the pressure was getting to Moses and Aaron; and who could blame them when faced with feeding 3 million people in the wilderness!

"But what are we, that you complain against us?" And what are we? Your complaints are not against us but against the Lord." (Exodus 16:7-8)

We also should not be too hard on the Israelites. They had not yet grown used to God leaving His provision to the last minute in His "school of faith" program - something all of us believers today often struggle with!

God then instructed Moses to make an amazing promise to the people that He would perform a double miracle:

"And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'" (Exodus 16:11-12).

Not only would they have meat that very evening, all 3 million of them, but they would have abundant bread the next morning! Surely this is one of the most compelling proofs in the Bible that "nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). God knew that it would be a difficult message for the people to believe, so He confirmed it with a miraculous sign, which no doubt helped to allay their fear:

"Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud." (Exodus 16:10)

Comfort Food

The first thing God did was to bring comfort to the people by providing very familiar food. Quails were common in ancient Egypt. They were known as a high protein food, and big farms were established to breed them to supply workers on their large building sites.

"So it was that quail came up at evening and covered the camp" (Exodus 15:13)

To this day, large flocks of quails still migrate between Europe and Africa and are trapped in nets in Egypt after landing exhausted along the coastal districts. So perhaps God directed migrating flocks of quails to land at the Israelites camp site.

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What is It?

The people would have gone to sleep well satisfied, and no doubt hoped for some familiar bread for breakfast, though perhaps they wondered how God could possibly supply it in the middle of nowhere! However, when they awoke, they were unexpectedly confronted by a something they had never seen before:

"And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, as fine as frost on the ground." (Exodus 16:14)

So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was." (Exodus 16:15)

"And the house of Israel called its name Manna. And it was like white coriander seed, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey." (Exodus 16:31)

Why Call it Manna?

The word translated "manna" in verse 31 and "what" in verse 15 is the same word "man" in the Hebrew bible. So the literal meaning of "manna" is "what", which emphasises that it was totally unknown to the Israelites who, as long-time residents of Egypt, were surely familiar with all the produce available in the region. ("Man" was transliterated as "manna" in the Jewish Septuagint Greek Language Bible, and has been adopted for most English language versions.)

What Was Manna?

- Called bread from Heaven. (Exodus 16:4 and a number of other scriptures)
- Called angel's food. (Psalm 78:25)
- Looked like white coriander seed, and tasted like wafers made with honey. (Exodus 16:31)
- Could be made into cakes that tasted like pastry prepared with oil. (Numbers 11:8)
- Could be baked and boiled. (Exodus 16:23)
- Could be ground on millstones, beat in a mortar, and cooked in pans. (Numbers 11:8)
- Was unfit for eating after one day unless the next day was the Sabbath. (Exodus 16:20-21)

God's Wonder Food

Manna was God's wonder food. He foresaw that the Israelites would be in the wilderness for 40 years with very limited food supplies, and provided the world's first "all in one" meal. Only recently, thousands of years later, have we developed the technology to even come close to it; and it is interesting that among the many brands, one from Europe is called "Mana"!

Why Such a Short Shelf Life

The only criticism we might be tempted to make is the very short shelf life which would be unacceptable today:

"Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. So they gathered it every morning" (Exodus 16:31)

But God had some special purposes in mind, far more important than providing good food:

- To test them, whether they would walk in His law or not. (Exodus 16:4)

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- That He might make them know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 8:3)
- That He might humble them and that He might test them, to do them good in the end. (Deuteronomy 8:16)

Clearly, by His last minute deliverances and day by day provisions, God wanted to teach them to rely on Him and His promises in their daily lives, even when faced with extreme difficulties. He revealed that the times of testing were designed to train them as a father trains a son:

You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you. (Deuteronomy 8:5)

Knowing that God is treating us as His sons is just as important for believers today in understanding and co-operating with the His dealings in our lives, and distinguishing them from the attacks of the devil.

As with the Israelites, God wants us to look to Him to meet our needs on a daily basis:

"Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11)

And not to worry about tomorrow's needs:

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:31-33)

and as part of His training program, we too will be faced with difficulties that we need to embrace as opportunities to grow in faith and confidence in God as our Father and provider.

Was it Really Angel's Food?

The Scriptures clearly say that it was indeed Angel's food:

"they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation. Yet He had commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of heaven, had rained down manna on them to eat, and given them of the bread of heaven. Men ate angels' food; He sent them food to the full. (Psalm 78:22-25)

The Hebrew word for translated as "bread", literally means "grain", which more closely matches the description of manna given above. Yet the angels are said to be spirits:

And of the angels He says: who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire." (Hebrews 1:7)

It has been commonly assumed that spirits do not eat. However, we know that angels can eat when they assume human form as when the LORD and two angels ate bread and calf's meat with Abraham in Genesis 18.

Why Didn't the Israelites Eat their Livestock?

The answer is given by Moses on the second recorded occasion when the people complained about the lack of meat:

The people whom I am among are six hundred thousand men on foot; yet You have said, 'I will give them meat, that they may eat for a whole month.' Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to provide enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to provide enough for them?" (Numbers 11:21-22)

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Given the vast number of mouths to feed, the flocks and herds would soon be decimated, which would have seriously affected their livelihood in Canaan. They would also have been their source of milk during the wilderness journey.

Moses also indicated that they obtained fish, though not nearly enough. This would have been most likely during first portion of their journey which ran close to the sea.

Another possible source of meat could have been locusts, which were eaten in the wilderness by John the Baptist:

"Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey." (Matthew 3:4)

The locust is the only Kosher insect, and they are eaten in Israel to this day, especially when they are plentiful when swarming. They are reported to be a good source of protein, fats, iron and zinc.

The mention of honey reveals the presence of bees in the wilderness, further support for the wilderness not being all barren desert, as discussed in Part 10. It is a source of sugar and minor minerals.

God's Weekend Special

God announced a special provision for the "weekend" whereby a double portion of manna was to be gathered on the sixth day. Enough food for both the sixth and seventh days was to be prepared, and God allowed the portion for the seventh day to be kept overnight without degrading:

"And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. Then he said to them, 'This is what the Lord has said: Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.' So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. Then Moses said, 'Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none.'" (Exodus 16:23-26)

Here, God introduced the concept of the Sabbath day on which no work was to be done, which would soon be enshrined in the ten commandments during the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai.

"Then he said to them, This is what the Lord has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'" Exodus 16:23

Later, the keeping of the Sabbath became a strict religious rule, but Jesus revealed that it was intended for man's benefit":

"And He said to them 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath". (Mark 2:27)

As believers, although we are not under the Law of Moses, we would be wise to include a regular day of rest in our lifestyle for our physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.

Jesus the True Bread from Heaven

Jesus revealed that the manna was a foreshadowing of His coming down from heaven to give life to the world:

"My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." (John 6:32-33)

and went on to proclaim:



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"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

As the manna satisfied physical hunger and gave physical life to the Israelites, so Jesus satisfies spiritual hunger and thirst, and gives spiritual life to the world.

In **Part 12 "Water, War and Wisdom"**, God provides water from a rock, they are attacked by the Amalekites, and Moses' father-in-law provides some timely wisdom.

PART 12. WATER, WAR AND WISDOM

WATER

Lack of Trust in God's Guidance

It would be reasonable to think that the amazing miracles of the Quails and Manna would have increased the confidence of the Israelites in God's ability and willingness to provide for them in their journey across the wilderness. However, their lack of trust in Him was exposed again when there appeared to be no source of water at the very next campsite, even though the cloud gave them visible evidence that God had guided them to that very location:

"Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink.

And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, 'Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?'"

"they tempted the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'" (Exodus 17:1, 3 & 7)

Likewise God has promised to guide His people today by His Spirit:

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." (Romans 8:14)

and we need to trust that He is with us and guiding us, even when things are not turning out as we thought:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Like the Israelites, He may be setting us up for a miracle as when He told Moses to:

"Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." (Exodus 17: 5-6)

Look to God not Man

As with the previous tests, the people looked to Moses instead of God:

"Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, 'Give us water, that we may drink.'" (Exodus 17:2)

a mistake which they were still making during ministry of Jesus'."

"Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.'" (John 6:31-32)

The apostles Peter Paul and Barnabas strove to avoid this error, for their sakes as well as for those who experienced or witnessed the miracles that God performed through them (Acts 3:12 and 14:8-18) .

Jesus the Spiritual Rock

The Scriptures reveal that the rock which Moses struck was a type of Jesus:

"all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4)

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The water from the rock in the wilderness and the well in Samaria satisfied natural thirst for that day only, but the water Jesus gives is living water which becomes an internal fountain which satisfies our spiritual thirst for ever:

"Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water. Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.'" (John 4:10, 13 & 14)

WAR

Israel's First Battle

Israel experienced their first taste of war after leaving Egypt when they were attacked by the Amalekites:

"Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim." (Exodus 17:8)

It appears that this occurred as the Israelites continued their journey to Mount Sinai, as the Scriptures indicate that they were on the move when the Amalekites attacked their rear:

"Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God." (Deuteronomy 25:17-18)

God had sheltered them from battle just after leaving Egypt:

"Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, 'Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt.'" (Exodus 13:17)

But now He must have decided they were ready to begin their military preparation for the conquest of Canaan, even though they were only about 2 months into their journey!

"And Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.'" (Exodus 17:9)

The Battle is the Lord's

Moses had just used the "rod of God" in the miracle of water from the rock; but this time the miracle was the victory of an untrained "army" of recently freed slaves!

"And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword." (Exodus 17:11-13)

Moses never used his rod in this manner again; so clearly it was not intended to be a blueprint for winning battles. Rather it was meant to teach the Israelites that if they depended on Him they would be victorious against overwhelming odds. Young David clearly understood this when he boldly and confidently challenged Goliath who was mocking King Saul and the Israelite army:

"This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that

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the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands."
(1 Samuel 17:46-47)

David's "rod" was the name of the Lord of Hosts

"But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."
(1 Samuel 17:45)

God's people today are still facing battles, but they are against spiritual rather than physical enemies:

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12)

and our "rod" is the name of Jesus:

"Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."
(Luke 10:17)

"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." (Acts 4:29-30)

Who Were the Amalekites?

The Amalekites are first mentioned in Genesis 14:7, which states that Chedorlaomer and his allied kings attacked the "country of the Amalekites". The second reference is in Genesis 36:12, which identifies Amalek as the grandson of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. However, these appear to refer to different people, as Esau was not yet born when Chedorlaomer attacked the Amalekites.

There are various views about this among Bible commentators. Some propose that they are the same people, and that Genesis 14:7 refers to the area which was later inhabited by the Amalekites.

God Declares War on Them

After the battle against the Amalekites, God gave Israel instructions for their future total destruction:

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.' And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; for he said, 'Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation'." (Exodus 17:14-16)

The only information about the source of God's anger in the Scriptures is Deuteronomy 25:17-18 which is quoted earlier. It tells us that their attack on the Israelites revealed that **they did not fear God**.

Joshua 2:11 says that the hearts of the people in the great cities of Canaan, such as Jericho, melted with fear when they heard how God dealt with Egypt, the then world superpower. Yet the Amalekites were arrogant enough to suppose that they could successfully oppose God and devise a strategy of attack which would succeed where Egypt had failed.

If the Amalekites were in fact descendants of Esau, they would surely have known about God's promise to Abraham that Canaan was to be the Israelites' future homeland. Yet they tried to stop them even though they knew that their territory, which was to the south of Canaan, was not included in Israel's inheritance (Numbers 13:29). Some Bible commentators have speculated that they may have been motivated by concern that the Israelites posed a threat their pasture lands in the Sinai peninsula, or possibly by antagonism dating from Esau's dispute with Jacob.

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Later scriptures reveal the long term enmity of the Amalekites towards Israel. They attacked Israel numerous times (Numbers 14:45, Judges 6:33, Judges 10:12, 1 Samuel 14-15, 1 Samuel 30:1), and Haman, a descendent of the Amalekite king Agag, plotted to annihilate the Jews (Esther 9:24).

Behind the Scenes

God reminded the Israelites under Joshua to completely blot out the remembrance of the Amalekites after they were established in Canaan:

"Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget." (Deuteronomy 25:1)

At first sight, annihilation *seems* to be a very severe response. However, looking "behind the scenes", the Scriptures reveal that Israel's subsequent failure to complete this task had very serious future consequences when, as mentioned above, Haman plotted to wipe out all the Jews who at the time of Esther were dispersed around the Persian/Median empire:

"Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them" (Esther 9:24)

This would have cut off the bloodline of Jesus, which points to the implacable enmity of the Amalekites being inspired by Satan in an attempt to thwart God's plan of redemption. This would explain why God, foreseeing Satan's scheme, instructed the Israelites to cut off the Amalekites' bloodline. The Book of Esther reveals how God, as always, had a brilliant "plan B", and at the last minute completely overturned the plot and elevated Mordecai the Jew to second in command of the empire – but this is for another study!

One key lesson we can learn today is that even when we fail to do God's will, He can and will turn our failure into a triumph over the enemy, who is still trying to thwart God's plans!

WISDOM

Note

Exodus chapter 18 appears to be out of sequence, as verse 5 states that Israel was "encamped at the mountain of God", yet chapter 19 begins with their arrival. This may be due to the difficulty of fitting it in chapters 19-31 which are devoted to details about the Law, the tabernacle and the priesthood.

A Family Reunion

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, decided to visit the Israelite's camp after hearing about how God brought Israel out of Egypt. The timing may have been due to the proximity of the site to his home, which was close enough for Moses to tend his sheep in the area when God called him from the burning bush (see Part 5).

"And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people—that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, with her two sons" (Exodus 18:1-3)

Jethro took the opportunity to bring Moses' wife Zipporah and their two children with him. Verse 3 tells us that Moses had sent her back home, but provides no information as to when and why. Perhaps it was to free Moses from family responsibilities to concentrate on the momentous events leading up to the departure from Egypt and journey to Mount Sinai.

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There had clearly been some kind of prior communication between them about the visit, but no details are given:

"Now he had said to Moses, 'I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her.'"

Who Was Jethro

Exodus 18:1 above tells us that he was the priest Midian; and the Scriptures indicate that the Midianites served pagan gods. They were descendants of Midian, a son of Abraham and his wife Keturah (Genesis 25:1-2), and would have initially had some knowledge of God. However by the time of Moses they were associated with the Moabites and their pagan gods. Numbers chapter 25 recounts that Midianite and Moabite women caused the Israelites to bow down and sacrifice to their gods, including Baal, incurring God's anger.

When Jethro heard how God had delivered the Israelites from Egypt he declared that The LORD was greater than all the gods and sacrificed to Him, which has led some Bible commentators to speculate that he was converted to serve the God of Israel.

"Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them'. Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to God" (Exodus 18:11-12)

However he did not declare the Lord to be the only true God as clearly Rahab did when she hid the spies in Jericho:

"And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath." (Joshua 2:11)

So whether or not he was fully converted the God of Israel remains uncertain.

A Word in Due Season

When Jethro saw that Moses was spending all day judging the people by himself, he counselled him to adopt a system of delegated authority in which only the difficult cases were referred to him which he could bring before God. This would prevent him from becoming worn out and free him to focus on teaching God's statutes and laws. He urged Moses to launch the new system provided that God approved (Exodus 18:17-23). The Scriptures tell us that Moses "heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said" (verse 24). However, there is no information as to whether he sought God about it or simply knew in his spirit that it was the right thing to do. He referred to his decision again just prior to Israel's entry into Canaan many years later, which indicates that God had not opposed it. In fact, to further relieve the load on Moses, God told him to select 70 elders of the people, and said He would "take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone" (Numbers 11:17).

So it appears that Jethro's advice was "a word spoken in due season". (Proverbs 15:23) In fact it became the foundation for the judicial system of Israel.

Jethro's advice for Moses to focus on taking difficult cases before God and on teaching God's statutes and Laws is mirrored in Acts 6 when the Apostles became bogged down by administrative problems. The answer was to appoint the first "deacons" to free up the apostles to focus on prayer and teaching.

"Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation,



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full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

In both cases the key criteria for the candidates were their character and relationship with God. To select the wrong people can make a bad situation much worse, as unfortunately has happened all too often!

In **Part 13 in Book 2 "An Appointment with God"**, Moses and the Israelites arrive at Mount Sinai to keep their appointment with God, which will set them apart from all nations.