



Summary of Exodus

Chapter One

The chapter commences with a brief resume of the patriarchs coming to Egypt and how the Hebrew nation became prolific from just seventy migrants.

A long time had passed since Joseph had played his part in saving Egypt from famine and disaster. The new Pharaoh could only see the Hebrew nation as a threat to Egypt so he enslaved them and used them as forced labour, yet they grew even stronger and were seen as an even greater threat.

To combat the threat Pharaoh instructed the Hebrew midwives to kill all male children at birth but to let the girls live. The midwives did not obey Pharaoh because they feared God more than him and when questioned by him as to why not, they made up a story that the Hebrew women gave birth quickly before the midwives arrived. Again, Pharaoh issued the decree that all male babies were to be drowned in the Nile but the girls could live.

Chapter Two

This chapter narrates two different points at which Moses' life was preserved: as an infant (vv.1-10) and as a young man (vv.11-22). Clearly, the Book of Exodus intends to narrate the setting, events, and characters in each case as the actual events of Moses' preservation. In the NT, these two particular narrative motifs will converge in the events of Jesus' preservation from Herod following his family's flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-23). It is crucial for the first audience to know how God preserved Moses from several dangers: this story, together with the account of God's call on Moses (Exodus 3:1-4:17), should enable the people of Israel to embrace Moses as God's authorised 'prince and judge' (v.14), as well as their lawgiver.

Chapter Three

Moses encounters God within the Burning Bush and is told that God wants him to lead his people out of their enslavement and into the Promised Land. Moses doubted he was the man for the job but God insisted he would be with him.

To enable Moses to convince the Israelites he was from God, the Lord revealed the name by which he was to be known, 'I AM'. Moses was then to go to the elders and take them with him to tell Pharaoh he must let the Israelites travel out for three days in order to worship God. However, God also revealed that Pharaoh would not allow this until God had demonstrated his strength against Egypt. The Egyptians would supply the wealth the Israelites would need in order to leave slavery and make their way to the Promised Land.

Chapter Four

Moses doubted that the people would believe he had been sent by God. So God demonstrated two miracles with Moses' staff turning into a snake and back to a staff, and his hand becoming leprous and being cured again. He also told Moses that he would allow him to show that the Nile waters could be turned to blood. These signs would persuade the people.

Moses then shows reluctance by stating he was not an eloquent speaker but God reassured him that he would provide the speech Moses needed. Moses then pleaded with God to send someone else, which angered God but he did state that he would allow Aaron to speak for Moses.

Moses first went to his father-in-law to seek permission to take his family to Egypt and Jethro agreed. God told Moses that he could perform the miraculous signs before Pharaoh but that God had hardened his heart so that he would not release the Israelites. As they were the firstborn of God, he would kill the firstborn of Egypt to secure the release of his people.

On the way to Egypt, God attempted to kill Moses but he was saved by the actions of his wife, who circumcised their son, which Moses should have done on the eighth day of his life. God also instructed Aaron to travel out into the wilderness to meet Moses, who instructed him with the Words of the Lord. All the Israelites believed Moses when he arrived in Egypt.

Chapter Five

Moses and Aaron made their first petition to Pharaoh on behalf of God to let the Israelites make a three day journey into the wilderness to worship God. But Pharaoh did not recognise the authority of God and refused. More than that, he issued a decree that the Israelites would no longer be supplied with straw to make bricks but they must collect their own and still produce the same quota.

Despite toiling even harder the Israelites could not meet these demands and were beaten. Their supervisors made representation to Pharaoh but were called lazy because they wanted to cease work and go out to worship their God. They then complained to Moses that he had brought this calamity upon them and it was his fault they were being so badly mistreated. Hence Moses made representation to God on their behalf.

Chapter Six

God told Moses that he remembered his covenantal promises to the patriarchs and had heard the groaning of the enslaved Israelites. He confirmed to Moses that he would deliver the people by his own strength out of slavery and into the land he had promised their forefathers. God then instructed Moses and Aaron to return to Pharaoh to demand the release of the Israelites but Moses once again doubted.

The author then provides a brief genealogy of the Israelites, particularly focusing on Aaron and Moses being of the tribe of Levi, and listing the descendants of Aaron who would later become the priests of Israel.

Again, God tells Moses to go to Pharaoh and let him know that it was God who commanded him. However, Moses stated that he was a poor speaker and Pharaoh would dismiss whatever he said.

Chapter Seven

Because of the power of the Lord, Moses would be like God before Pharaoh and the words he spoke would be the words of God. When Pharaoh subsequently refused to heed those words then God would act in a way that all Egypt would know that he was the Lord.

God instructed Aaron to throw his staff on the ground before Pharaoh and it turned into a snake. Pharaoh told his magicians to do the same and their staffs too became snakes but Aaron's snake ate all the others. Despite this sign, Pharaoh's heart remained hardened.

The first plague strikes Egypt when Pharaoh is encountered by Moses and Aaron at the Nile. Because of Pharaoh's hardened heart, God instructs Aaron to strike the water with his staff and it turns to blood, killing the fish, removing access to drinking water and causing a great stench. The bloodied water affected every source throughout the land. However, Pharaoh was not impressed as his magicians were able also to produce the same effect.

Chapter Eight

This chapter deals with plagues two, three and four. The second plague saw the entire land and all dwelling places inundated with frogs, a phenomenon that the magicians of Egypt could replicate but not resolve. Pharaoh pleaded with Moses to

pray to the Lord to remove the frogs, which he did and the following day all the frogs were dead.

Plague three was a total infestation of gnats formed from the dust of the earth that settled on people and livestock. The magicians could not replicate this and exclaimed that it must be the work of God but Pharaoh took little notice.

The fourth plague saw flies or biting insects swarm in all the houses of the Egyptian people but not in the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived. Thus God showed the distinction he was making between his people and the people of Pharaoh. At this, Pharaoh gave permission for Moses to take the people out a short distance to worship God but Moses explained that there must be a three day separation between the Israelites and the Egyptians, who would find this worship to God abhorrent. Moses again prayed to God for the plague to be lifted and Pharaoh again hardened his heart.

Chapter Nine

This chapter records plagues five, six and seven. Once again it is revealed that it will be the Egyptians and not the Israelites who will suffer the consequences of the plagues.

God once again showed mercy, not just by forewarning Pharaoh of the plagues and their consequences, but before plague seven Pharaoh was told to bring the livestock and slaves into safe shelters to avoid death. Those who took notice of this warning were saved while those who ignored the advice lost their livestock and slaves.

Following the seventh plague Pharaoh confessed his sin, told Moses he could go out to worship God and asked him to pray to God to stop the violent hail storm. When Moses prayed and the hail storm was stopped Pharaoh once again hardened his heart.

Chapter Ten

The chapter describes the final two plagues before final devastation is wrought on Egypt. Moses and Aaron are sent to Pharaoh to instruct him that it is the Lord he is defying and, because of this, an unprecedented plague of locusts will now come and devour what is left of the land. Pharaoh's officials advised him to let the people go but Pharaoh would only agree to the men going and so Moses brought the plague of locusts upon Egypt. Pharaoh realised his sin and asked Moses to pray to the Lord for forgiveness, which he did and the plague ended, with not a single locust left in the land.

Upon the Lord's instructions, Moses then brought a plague of darkness on the land that lasted for three days so that no Egyptian could see the face of another but the Israelites remained in the light. Pharaoh then agreed that all the people could go

out to worship the Lord but they must leave their livestock behind. Moses told Pharaoh that the people and their livestock must be released but Pharaoh refused. He dismissed Moses and told him never to return or face death for doing so.

Chapter Eleven

God promised that Pharaoh would send the people away after just one more plague and that they would go with great wealth given to them by the people of Egypt. Moses then warned Pharaoh of the terrible outcome of the final plague and the impact it would have on his nation but Pharaoh's heart remained hard.

Chapter Twelve

God instructed Moses and Aaron that the new lunar cycle was to mark the start of the New Year. The chapter then describes how lambs are to be apportioned within families, how they are to be kept, cooked, eaten and any remains disposed of. The blood from these unblemished animals is to be daubed on the lintels and door frames so that the final plague will not strike their houses.

God goes on to ordain this Passover meal to mark the start as a even day celebration to the Lord that will be kept every year by all future generations as well. Only unleavened bread was to be eaten as part of these celebrations. Those who fail to observe this statute would be cut off from their people. Moses then instructed the elders as to what the people were to do and all the people obeyed the word of the Lord.

At midnight on the 14th day of that first month the Lord struck down all the first born humans and livestock throughout all of Egypt. The firstborn of Pharaoh died as did the firstborn of the lowest citizen. Pharaoh was so struck with grief and shock that he summoned Moses and told him to take all the Israelites and their possessions, and to go out from the land.

Urged on by the Egyptians, who gave away great amounts of gold and jewellery to their former slaves, the Israelites left in haste, taking only basic foodstuffs to make unleavened bread as ordained for the festival. It was four hundred and thirty years since Jacob had settled his family in Egypt when they finally left on the night that the Lord had ordained, with six hundred thousand men plus women and children making the initial journey from Rameses to Succoth, a journey that is remembered by all generations since.

Final instructions for eating the Passover were given to Moses and Aaron stating that all the people of Israel must participate, and their slaves and any aliens living among them may eat of the Passover but all male participants must be either circumcised or excluded.

Chapter Thirteen

The Lord commands that all firstborn should be consecrated to him. Moses then instructs all the people that they are to keep Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread every year when they reach the Promised Land as a reminder that the Lord had brought them out of Egyptian slavery in the month of Abib. Moses then explains how and why the firstborn are to be consecrated to the Lord their God in remembrance of how he had freed them.

Although they had a large fighting force of men, God did not take the direct route to the Promised Land as that would bring them into the land of the Philistines before they were ready to fight. Instead, God led them east towards the wilderness in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Moses took the bones of Joseph so they could be interred in the land of Canaan.

Chapter Fourteen

With his heart still hardened, Pharaoh led his army in pursuit of the Israelites, who were encamped on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea. The Israelites saw the Egyptians coming and, in fear of their lives, they cried out to God to rescue them. They also complained to Moses for bringing them out but Moses tried to reassure them that God would fight for them.

God instructed Moses to hold out his hand over the sea so that it parted ahead of the Israelites so they could cross over in safety with the Angel of God standing between them and the Egyptian charioteers. He clogged the wheels of the chariots, throwing the pursuers into disarray.

Once the Israelites had reached dry ground on the other side, God instructed Moses to hold out his hand over the sea once more and it closed over the Egyptians, killing all of them. God had once again saved his people.

Chapter Fifteen

The primary focus of this chapter is that of thanksgiving for deliverance. First Moses leads the Israelites in songs of praise; then Miriam takes up the lead with the women dancing, singing and playing musical instruments.

The Israelites then set out into the wilderness of Shur. For three days they were without water and when they arrived at Marah, the water there was bitter and the Israelites complained to Moses. He cried out to the Lord who showed him a piece of wood, which was to be cast into the water for it to become sweet and drinkable.

God tested the Israelites at Marah by saying that if they remained obedient to him he would never bring on them any of the plagues he had wrought against Egypt in

their sight. They then travelled on to Elim, where the conditions were much more favourable.

Chapter Sixteen

About four weeks after leaving Egypt the Israelites were journeying in the wilderness of sin between Elim and Sinai. Once again they started grumbling to Moses, this time about the lack of food. They were reminded by Moses and Aaron that they were, in fact, complaining to the Lord.

As the glory of the Lord appeared, the Israelites gathered before him. He promised them meat at twilight and bread each morning and, as promised, they had quail that evening and in the morning this strange flaky bread appeared on the ground. The Israelites were commanded to go out each morning and gather only enough bread that was needed for each family for each day. The bread melted as the sun grew hot and any surplus bread that the Israelites tried to keep overnight was eaten by worms and was foul. But on the sixth day they were commanded to gather enough bread for two days so they would not have to gather it on the Sabbath. This bread remained fresh for the two days. Everyone who did as the Lord commanded had enough food to eat.

There were those who disobeyed the Lord and went out looking for the bread on the Sabbath but there was none. The Israelites ate this bread, which they called manna, each day for the next forty years. In accordance with the Lord's instruction, an omer of manna was stored in a jar to be kept for perpetuity. This bread never went stale or became infested with worms!

Chapter Seventeen

The Israelites continue their journey through the wilderness of Sin in stages and camp at Rephidim, where they have no water. Having just doubted the Lord's provision of food, they now doubt that he will give them life-sustaining and, once again, they quarrel with Moses. Moses again seeks the guidance of God, who tells him to strike his staff against the rock at Horeb. When he does so, water gushes forth from the rock for the people and livestock to drink.

It is at Rephidim that Israel fights its first battle with the people of the land. The Amaleks attack Israel, so Moses instructs Joshua to lead an army out against them, while Moses oversees the battle from a nearby hilltop. All the while Moses holds his staff aloft the Israelites succeed in battle. When he lowers it to the ground through tiredness, the tide of battle turns against Israel. With the help of Aaron and Hur, Moses manages to hold the staff aloft for the remainder of the battle until the Amaleks are finally defeated. Moses built an altar there to commemorate the Lord's victory and his promise to blot out Amalek from the land.

Chapter Eighteen

While camped at the mountain of God, Moses is joined by his father-in-law Jethro, who had travelled out into the wilderness with Moses' wife Zipporah and their two sons. Moses recounts all that had befallen the Israelites in Egypt and on their journey, and how God had always been there to protect them. Jethro praised God for this and offered a sacrifice.

Jethro then observed Moses' heavy workload as he sat all day arbitrating for the people in their disputes and dealing with their problems. Jethro realised this was an unsustainable burden for one man and he advised Moses to implement a hierarchical structure of leadership, God-fearing men who could take on the role of leading their people and resolving daily issues, leaving Moses only to deal with the most difficult of circumstances. Moses accepted the council of Jethro, who then departed and returned to his own land.

Chapter Nineteen

At the start of the third month, just seven weeks after the Israelites had left Egypt, they arrived at Mount Sinai. God summoned Moses to the mountain and instructed him to tell the Israelites that, if they would keep the commandments of God, then they would be his treasured possession out of all the nations on earth. Moses reported this to the elders of Israel. They too would be able to hear the voice of God when he spoke with Moses.

Moses was told to consecrate the people over the coming two days for on the third day the Lord would come to his people. They were instructed not to set foot on the mountain or face death for doing so.

On the third day there was a tremendous blast of a trumpet that made the people tremble and Moses brought them out to the foot of the mountain and they saw God descend on the mountain in fire and thick smoke. God called Moses onto the mountain and told him to return to the people to warn them that they must not venture onto the mountain. Even the priests could not stand before God unless they had been consecrated.

Chapter Twenty

God spoke to the gathered Israelites and issued what has become known as the Ten Commandments. When he had finished speaking, the people asked Moses to mediate between them and God as they were frightened by his voice. Moses said God had done this to test them.

God then instructed Moses to tell the Israelites never to make an idol to other gods but to make an altar to God on which to make their various sacrificial offerings. Various details for the altar are given.

Chapter Twenty One

The first law in this chapter is the way in which both male and female slaves shall be treated and the rights they have. It states the length of their service and how they should be treated once that service is completed.

The second law deals with justice for violent crime, including who should face capital punishment for their crime and who should make reparation for lesser crimes. It spells out the principle of an 'eye for an eye.'

The third law determines the reparation for any injury or damage caused by a person's ox. Liability does not lie with the owner unless there is evidence that the animal had caused human deaths in the past and the owner had not taken appropriate safeguarding measures to prevent a reoccurrence.

Chapter Twenty Two

The first part of the chapter deals with the Laws of Restitution, dealing with the compensation to be paid by a thief to the owner of any property that has been stolen. In addition, it deals with reparations to be paid when property or livestock are damaged or killed by a person other than the owner. If there are no witnesses in these matters they are to be brought before the Lord and an oath in his presence from the accused would be accepted as the truth.

The final passages deal with a wide range of social and religious issues, with details of any reparations or punishments to be made for each.

Chapter Twenty Three

The chapter commences with a range of commands that should ensure that natural justice prevails, yet there is indication that many will not obey. The person of God is called to act according to the law and not majority rule.

There is now further clarification of the need for a Sabbath rest on the seventh day. Likewise, the land is to receive a sabbatical every seven years.

The law now briefly outlines the need for every man to honour three sacred festivals dedicated to the Lord: Unleavened Bread in the Spring, First Fruits at the first harvest and Ingathering as the final harvest crop is brought in.

God promises to send his angel to lead the people into the land of Canaan, where he will give the Israelites total victory and a life of great freedom provided they do not adopt the ways of the pagan nations in the land and worship on the Lord. The Promised Land is described as stretching from the Red Sea all the way north to the River Euphrates.

Chapter Twenty Four

God called Moses and other senior leaders to him. Only Moses was allowed near to God; the others stood at a distance. Moses told all the people what the ordinances of God were and they agreed to them. Altars were built at the mountain, sacrifices made and the blood from these was splashed equally on the altars and on the people.

God then called Moses and the senior leaders into his presence and they beheld God. After they had their meal, God summoned Moses up onto the mountain to receive the stone tablets of the covenant and God's glory settled upon the mountain. Moses remained with God on the mountain for forty days and nights.

Chapter Twenty Five

God starts to reveal the design and contents for his Tabernacle that will be his sanctuary among the people until the Temple is built by Solomon in Jerusalem hundreds of years later. The people are to provide the precious materials that will be used to make the Tabernacle, its contents and the clothing for its priests. This chapter describes those offerings, the design and construction of the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of the Bread of the Presence, and the golden Lampstand.

Chapter Twenty Six

This chapter provides precise design instructions needed to construct the frame of the Tabernacle and all the curtains needed to cover the framework. In addition, a further curtain was required to separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place so that no one, except the High Priest, could see what was inside the Most Holy Place.

Chapter Twenty Seven

Design details continue, starting with the bronze altar, its utensils and carrying poles. The altar was to be used for making burnt offerings. This is followed by details for the design of the gated courtyard that would surround the tabernacle. Finally, a command is issued for the people to provide olive oil for the lamps, which are to burn continuously and are to be tended by Aaron and his sons.

Chapter Twenty Eight

God now formally instructs Moses to call forward Aaron and his four sons to serve God as priests. The chapter is then taken up with the design of the various garments that they will wear when they come forward to serve God at the altar in the courtyard and attend their duties in the Holy Place.

Chapter Twenty Nine

The ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests, and indeed for all their descendants that would follow after them, was to be a seven day process, with meticulous details provided for the procedures to be followed.

As well as the sacrificial offerings for the ordination, the chapter also lists the daily offerings that are to be made. In exchange, God promised to dwell with his people to be their God.

Chapter Thirty

The chapter commences with instructions for the construction and use of the Altar of Incense that was to be placed within the Holy Place. Its use included the place where the annual rite of atonement would take place.

The Lord then instructed Moses that, when the census of the people was taken, everyone registered over the age of 20 years was to make an offering of half a shekel that would be used for the upkeep and operation of the tabernacle.

A bronze basin to be used by the priests was to be built and placed in the courtyard between the altar and the tent of meeting. The priests were always to wash their hands and feet before coming to minister to God else they would die.

Finally, detailed instructions are given in the preparation of holy anointing oil that was forbidden for any purpose other than for the consecration of items within the tabernacle and those serving as priests within it. Anything that was anointed with this oil would be holy. Any improper use of the oil would render the person to be cut off from the people.

Chapter Thirty One

God informs Moses that the spirit-filled Bezalel and his equally gifted assistant, Oholiab, are to lead the people in making all the items that have just been described according to the designs, as the Lord has commanded.

Before the work begins, God instructs Moses to remind the people that they must keep the Sabbath Law and warns of the dire consequences for not doing so. This is a law that is to be observed by the Israelites throughout their generations. In keeping this law, they are reminded of God's creative work.

It was after Moses had received all these instructions in the presence of God on Mount Sinai that he was given the two tablets of the Covenant, that is, the Ten Commandments written by God's own hand.

Chapter Thirty Two

While Moses was up on Mount Sinai with God, the people lost heart and rebelled against the Lord. They persuaded Aaron to make them a golden calf, which he did and they held a worship festival to it.

God told Moses to leave him alone and return to the people who had rebelled against him, indicating that he would now destroy them and make his nation out of Moses' alone. However, Moses pleaded on behalf of the people, not for their sake but for the sake of God's name and the Lord relented.

Moses descended the mountain with the Ten Commandments in his hand. In his anger, he threw the tablets to the ground and smashed them; then he totally destroyed the golden calf and disposed of the precious metal it was made from.

Moses anger burned against Aaron too, who offered the excuse that he could not prevent the people from having their will. Moses then called the Levites to his side and instructed them to go among the people and they killed three thousand of them. Thus the Levites were consecrated to serve God.

The next day, Moses returned to the mountain of the Lord to ask him to forgive the Israelites, offering his own salvation for God's mercy. God did not blot Moses out of his book but he did say the sinners would be judged at the appropriate time; and he sent a plague against the people.

Chapter Thirty Three

After the incident with the golden calf, this chapter narrates the tension of the events as the Lord says he will not go among his people, and the existence of a temporary tent of meeting raises questions about the future of the tabernacle. It is in this context that Moses continues to mature in the role of covenant representative as he intercedes again for the people of Israel, as he did in 32:9-14.

Chapter Thirty Four

The Lord calls Moses back up to Mount Sinai and proclaims further his covenant name and character before reaffirming some of the stipulations related to worship and renewing the covenant with Moses and Israel.

When Moses comes down to speak the words of the covenant to the people, he does not know that his role as the one through whom the Lord will speak is also reaffirmed through his shining face.

Chapter Thirty Five

After a brief reminder of the Sabbath law requirements, Moses instructed the people to take up an offering of all the things that God required so that the tabernacle could be made. He also instructed all those gifted in various arts and

crafts to come forward to construct the tabernacle, its contents and the clothes that the priests were to wear.

When Moses had finished speaking the Israelites departed. Then all the men and women who had willing hearts brought all the items that were required and worked with the skills they had to make the tabernacle and all its articles.

Moses then informs the people that God had put the divine spirit in Bezalel to perform all the intricate design work along with Oholiab.

Chapter Thirty Six

Moses then called forward those with the skills to make the tabernacle and all its components. They brought their offerings and, in fact, gave more than was needed so that Moses had to issue the command that the people were to stop giving and were not to make other items as offerings for the project. A detailed description then follows as to how the tabernacle was constructed.

Chapter Thirty Seven

This chapter deals with the making of the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of the Bread of the Presence, the Lampstand, the Altar of Incense and the making of the oil and the incense itself.

Chapter Thirty Eight

The construction of the tabernacle continues. This chapter describes the making of the Altar of Burnt-Offering that will be located outside of the tabernacle and all the utensils that will be used with it. Finally, the material for the courtyard itself is made.

The chapter concludes with a summary statement describing the process for making the items that were used for the tabernacle and a catalogue of the materials that were used.

Chapter Thirty Nine

The last part of the work to be done was to make the ceremonial robes that the priests would wear when ministering in the presence of God. After these were made, all the work required for the construction of the tabernacle and its fittings was completed.

Chapter Forty

It was almost one year after the people had left Egypt to them completing the work required for the construction of the tabernacle. Now that work is complete, the tabernacle and its courtyard were erected for the first time. It was to be laid out precisely as the Lord had commanded starting with the Holy of Holies and

working outwards. Once everything was in place it was to be anointed with the special oil that had been made for this purpose. After this, Aaron and his sons were washed, dressed in their priestly garments and anointed for their duties.

Once all this had been completed the glory of the Lord came in a cloud and filled the tabernacle so that not even Moses could enter it. From that day on, whenever the glory of the Lord was in the tabernacle then the people would remain encamped. When the Lord's glory lifted from the tabernacle, they could break camp and continue their journey, but the Lord remained with them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to guide them.