

# OUTLINE STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### EXODUS

The second book of Scripture is closely connected with the first. “**Now**” has essentially the same meaning as “**And**”: for the first verse of Exodus is a repetition of Genesis 46:8. The whole law is a conjunction, the schoolmen used to say. Exodus continues the story of the chosen people. The theme of the book is the *deliverance of Israel from the oppression of Egypt, and their separation to God*. The key verse is Exodus 12:13; the key word, *blood*.

The chief figure is Moses, whose life is divided into three periods of forty years each,

- Forty years’ training in the learning of Egypt;
- Forty years’ training in God’s school in the desert, Exodus 3:1;
- Forty years as the leader and law-giver of Israel.

The book may be divided into three parts:

- I. Bondage of Egypt, chaps, 1-5.
- II. God’s intervention for Israel’s deliverance, 6-18.
- III. The Law at Sinai; The Theocracy constituted, 19-40.

Exodus has three principal topics, viz.: the Passover, the Law, and the Tabernacle; i. e., redemption, obedience, worship; life, loyalty, love.

1. *The Oppression*, chapters 1, 2.

How long it continued before God interfered on behalf of His suffering people, is not known. Probably it culminated under the long reign of the great monarch Rameses II, “Child of the Sun,” “whose proud and scornful face with its curling nostril and peculiar fall of the lower lip, with its long profile so majestic and beautiful, is seen on the monuments of Egypt to this day” (Stanley). It was this man, no doubt, to whom it was pretended the gods gave the falchion of destruction with the command, “Slay, and slay, and slay,” who caused the Israelites to serve with rigor, and who made their lives bitter.

God saw their affliction, and came down for their deliverance. “When the tale of bricks is doubled then comes Moses.” This is the proverb which has sustained the Jews through many a long oppression.

## 2. *The Judgments on Egypt*, chapters 7-11.

As we read the description of the ten plagues, we discover that each of them is aimed at some idolatrous practice, or at some despotic feature of the government of the Egyptians.

- It was not an ordinary river whose waters were turned into blood, but the sacred Nile, to which religious honors were paid.
- It was not the common cattle that died in the fields, but the calf of Heliopolis, the bull of Memphis, to both of which worship was given.
- It was a nation that worshipped the sun, which called its king “the Child of the Sun,” which sat in darkness for three days.
- It was the governing class, the haughty men who wielded the absolute power of death, the proud and stubborn nation, whose first born were smitten with death.

What God did in Egypt was for a sign to men. He poured shame and ruin on the beast-worship, water-worship, sun-worship, and tyranny of the land.

## 3. *The Passover*, chapters 12, 13.

This is the prominent feature of Exodus, and one of the most significant ordinances of Israel’s after-history. The fundamental doctrine of atonement, revealed in Genesis, speaks forth in this second book in unmistakable terms.

Israel was sheltered by the blood on the night when the angel-destroyer passed through the land. God’s word about the blood was, “**When I see the blood I will pass over you.**” They were a poor, enslaved, ignorant people, despised by their masters, degraded in their own eyes. But with the blood-sign of atonement upon them, they were “comely” in God’s sight. “**Thou seest no iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in thine Israel,**” was Balaam’s testimony not long after the blood redeemed, sanctified and delivered them.

The exodus marked a new era in the history of the chosen people.

The month of deliverance became the first of their calendar ever after. It was preeminently Israel’s redemption whereby they were brought into new and more intimate relations with God, just as the death of Christ who “**is our passover, sacrificed for us,**” is the eternal salvation of all believers.

## 4. *Sinai and the Law*, chapters 19-24.

Save Calvary, no other spot is hallowed with such stupendous scenes as Sinai. Everything around tended to make the occasion a most impressive one.

The massive grandeur of those rocky heights, the frowning peaks in all directions encircling the mount, with every outward form of animal and vegetable life withdrawn; the thunders and the lightnings; the voice of the trumpet, the descent of the darkness on the summit, all combined to render the revelation there given the most solemn and imposing.

The law given at Sinai consists of two parts: the Decalogue, and the secondary laws which flow from it. Lying at the base of all other legislation of the Jewish dispensation are the Ten Commandments. These “Ten Words,” as they are called, constitute the very essence of the covenant with Israel. Considered as a religious and ethical code the Decalogue sums up in the tersest form all human duties, whether toward God or man.

The secondary laws are those which springing out of the Decalogue, were more particularly intended to regulate the conduct of the people in their relations with one another, chapters 21-23.

They may be thus grouped: Laws connected with the rights of persons, of property, the Sabbath and festivals. They are civil, criminal and ceremonial laws. Israel constituted a theocracy. God was the Head and Sovereign; the people were to be a nation of priests unto Him; therefore holy, upright, pure and honest.

#### 5. *The place of worship, the Tabernacle*, chapters 25-40.

It was the Lord’s dwelling-place among His people, 25. It is commonly called “**the tabernacle of the congregation**,” as if it were the meeting-place of the tribes. But this is not all the meaning of the phrase. It also means, “*the tent of the meeting*,” for it was here that God and His people met together; here that He gave forth His oracles for their guidance and instruction. It is quite suggestive that He chose a tent for His dwelling. It denotes how completely and graciously He identified Himself with His own. If they dwell in tents, so will He. If they journey, He will also. Where they go He goes. “**In all their affliction He was afflicted.**”

The Tabernacle had two compartments:

The first called the Holy Place in which were the golden Candlestick, the Table of Shew-bread, and the Altar of incense—i. e., light, food, communion.

The second, the Most Holy Place which contained the Ark of the Covenant, with its Mercy-seat or Propitiatory, and overshadowing cherubim—the Throne of the Lord, that symbolized the Throne of Grace, Hebrews 4:16.

The compartments were separated by a strongly woven veil, four fingers in thickness, the Rabbins say, with its three colors, blue, purple, and scarlet, inwrought with symbolic figures.

The Most Holy Place was shrouded in darkness, and was inaccessible save to the High Priest who entered it but once a year. A court surrounded the Tabernacle within which were placed the Altar of Sacrifice and the Laver, and the Priests and Levites lodged. Kitto’s estimate of the cost of the Holy Tent is \$1,250,000; William Brown’s, \$1,500,000.

That the Tabernacle was designed to embody vital truth and teach it to God's people is certain. In Hebrews 9:9 we are told it was "**a figure (parable) for the time then present**"—an object-lesson to faith. What did it teach?

(1) *It symbolized God's presence with His people*, Exodus 25:8, "**That I may dwell among them,**" Exodus 29:44-46. Cf. II Corinthians 6:16.

(2) *It taught the necessity of holiness.* God's dwelling with His people in the Tabernacle demanded holiness on their part, Leviticus 20:26; 21:8; Numbers 5:3, etc. It was His presence with them that made them what they were. He identifies Himself with His children now more intimately than then, John 14:33; Ephesians 2:20-22; I John 4:16, etc. Once He dwelt among His people, now He dwells in them. By and by there will be a more glorious and ineffable tabernacling with the redeemed, Revelation 21: 3, 4.

(3) *It was a figure of God's plan of bringing sinners to Himself*, Hebrews 9:23. By means of the blood of beasts the people were made ceremonially clean, and relationship with God was maintained. By the blood of Christ we are brought into eternal fellowship with Him. The altar of sacrifice set forth the truth about pardon, justification: the laver, cleansing, or sanctification. In short, the rites of the Tabernacle were a type of God's method of salvation.

(4) *It was a symbol of the incarnation of the Son of God*, John 1:14; "**and the word was made flesh, and dwelt (tabernacled) among us.**" The Lord dwelt with His people according to His promise, Leviticus 26:11, 12, in the Sanctuary. But now He has come to take up His permanent abode with them by "wedding Himself forever to their flesh." We note a sort of progress in the manifestation of God to men—

First, His presence in the Tabernacle.

Second, the Incarnation.

Third, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, the descent of the New Jerusalem, the Heavenly Tabernacle, into the glorified earth.

For the service of the Tabernacle Aaron and his sons were set apart as priests, together with the Tribe of Levi who were to execute the duties assigned them under the direction of the priests, Exodus 28; Numbers 4.

7. *The pillar of cloud and of fire*, Exodus 13:21, 22. Its first appearance was at Etham, "**in the edge of the wilderness.**" This fact is very suggestive. Just when all roads and canals, cities and villages are left behind, and an untried and trackless wilderness lies before the people, then God provides for them the mysterious cloud which never leaves them till the long journey is over, and guidance is no longer required.

(1) The cloud *symbolized God's presence with His people*, Exodus 14:19, 24, 25; 33:10.

(2) The cloud *served as a guide for the people*, Exodus 13:21; Numbers 9:17, 18; Psalm 78:14; Nehemiah 9:19, etc.

They were incompetent to be their own guides. He alone who had brought them into “**the great and terrible wilderness**” was able to conduct them through it. Hobab’s “eyes” would not do, Numbers 10:31; only the Lord God was sufficient.

(3) *It adapted itself to their necessity*, Nehemiah 9:19. It was a leader by day, a pillar of fire by night.

(4) *It was a shelter for the people*, Numbers 10:34; Psalm 105:39.

(5) *It was a defense*, Exodus 14:19; Deuteronomy 1:30.

In all the various offices and movements of the cloud, that which most impresses the reader is this, the minuteness of God’s care for His people, His personal interest in them. Nothing is too small for Him to do for them, nothing too great. He studies their comfort, attends to every detail of their lives and their happiness. He is just as mindful of His children now. “**But the very hairs of your head are numbered,**” Matthew 10:30; “**casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you,**” I Peter 5:7. Over us also He throws the great aegis of His protecting care, and beneath His wings how safe we are!

8. *Israel’s sojourn in Egypt*. Is it possible to ascertain its duration? Can we reconcile the apparently discrepant statements of Scripture with respect it?

In Genesis 15:13 God announced to Abraham that his seed would be a stranger in a land not theirs, and be afflicted 400 years. Stephen in his defence before the Sanhedrin quoted this prediction, and identified it with the oppression of Egypt, Acts 7:6-19. One land is denoted, not two countries. This is clear from the promise contained in the prediction, “**But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again,**” Genesis 15:16.

The affliction, obviously, was to be outside of Canaan, for at its termination Abraham’s seed was to be restored to their own land. It is generally held that the term “**generation**” is equivalent to a period of *one hundred years*. In Exodus 12:40, 41, it is expressly stated that the duration of the sojourn in Egypt was 430 years. The Septuagint Version has a various reading— “*Now the sojourning of the children of Israel which they sojourned in Egypt and in Canaan was four hundred and thirty years.*” But those ancient translators certainly knew the meaning of the expression, “**children of Israel,**” i. e. sons of Jacob. They would hardly be guilty of writing such nonsense as that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were the children of themselves.

The genealogy recorded in Exodus 6, Numbers 3, etc., of the family of Moses and Aaron (Levi) appears to reduce the length of the sojourn to 215 years. But if no omission of links in this table be allowed, a very serious difficulty confronts us.

The line runs thus: Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses. Kohath, Moses’ grandfather, according to Exodus 6, had four sons, Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. The male descendants of these four men numbered at the time of the Exodus, 8,600, Numbers 3:28. If we assign one-fourth of this number to Amram, Moses father, we have over 2,000 males belonging to his family; and the number must be doubled to include the females—4,000 and more in that one household. First Chronicles 7:23-27 contains another genealogy covering the same period as that of Exodus 6.

According to this table there are at least ten generations between Jacob and Joshua the son of Nun, whereas in Exodus 6 there are but five between Jacob and Moses. Moreover, Joshua seems to have been grown at the time of the Exodus.

How are we to reconcile this apparent discrepancy between the genealogies of Exodus and I Chronicles? Thus: the list of names given in Exodus 6 is not complete; some of the generations lying between Jacob and Moses are dropped out. It is not uncommon to find such omissions in genealogical tables of Scripture. In the most important of all, that of Christ in Matthew 1, three successive generations are thrown out, viz: the immediate descendants of Athaliah. If we allow for such omissions in Exodus 6, the difficulties are cleared away.

If now we conclude that the sojourn was of 430 years' duration what are we to do with Paul's statement in Galatians 3:17, to-wit: "**And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God (in Christ), the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the covenant of none effect**"?

If we understand the apostle as dating from the original enactment of the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15), then he is in conflict with Moses and Stephen whose chronology makes the period between that transaction and the Exodus to be about 645 years. If they are right, or rather, if our interpretation of them be right, then is Paul's date wrong to the extent of two hundred years and more. Is it credible that the man who wrote II Timothy 3:16, "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,**" and who claimed for his own teaching an authority identical with that of Jesus Christ Himself (I Corinthians 7), should have blundered two hundred years and more in a date with which he was perfectly familiar?

We believe the key to the difficulty, and the solution of the entire question, lies in the apostle's use of the word "**confirm before,**" or confirmed forth, as the word may mean. This word (*prokuroo*) is never employed in the New Testament, nor so far as we have discovered, in the Greek version of the Old, to designate the institution of a thing, a first transaction; it signifies to ratify, or confirm a thing already in existence.

A single instance of its use may be given.

In Genesis 23 we read that Abraham bought a field of Ephron, paying the stipulated price for it in the presence of witnesses, and it "**was made sure unto Abraham,**" verse 17 (Sept. "*Establish*"). Afterward, Abraham buried Sarah in Machpelah, and so the field with the cave in it "**was made sure unto Abraham,**" verse 20. In this case the word in the Sept. is Paul's "**confirm.**"

Nothing can be plainer than this. The burial of Sarah ratified the transaction which had been previously concluded between the two men.

The original institution of the covenant is recorded in Genesis 15, and was accompanied by a solemn sacrifice, the voice of God, and a supernatural darkness. But this covenant was afterward confirmed, as in Genesis 17, when its sign and seal, circumcision, was added to it. It was again confirmed when Abraham offered Isaac, Genesis 22.

Nor was this all, it was confirmed to Isaac, Genesis 26: and to Jacob at Bethel and Beersheba, Genesis 28, 35, 46.

The last confirmation was to Jacob when he was on the way to Egypt in the wagons which Joseph had sent to convey him thither. No otherwise can we understand the repeated declarations of Scripture that Isaac and Jacob were associated with Abraham as the divinely chosen heads of the covenant, cf. Exodus 2:24; 6:4-8; 32:13; Leviticus 26:42; I Chronicles 16:16, 17, etc.

These three men, these and no others, are the covenant men. But how could Isaac and Jacob be united with Abraham in it? Certainly not in the institution of the covenant, for in that Abraham stood alone. They could only be in the subsequent acts in which God renewed and amplified its terms, and in which He made these two men parties to it with Abraham. And these subsequent acts are precisely the confirmations and ratifications to which Paul alludes in Galatians 3:17.

The last confirmation, in conjunction with the visible manifestation of God, transpired at Beersheba when Jacob was on the way to Egypt, Genesis 46:2-4. It is believed that Paul dates his 430 years from this point, and this was precisely 430 years before the exodus, Exodus 12:40, 41. Therefore, Paul perfectly harmonizes in chronology with Moses and Stephen.

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