

# ISRAELITES: REDEEMED AND TESTED BY GOD

Exodus 12:43 - 40:38

## STRUCTURE

**Key-persons:** Moses, the Israelites

**Key-locations:** Red Sea, Marah, Desert of Sin, and Rehidim

**Key-repetitions:**

- Each time the Israelites faced a problem: the people complained, Moses prayed and then God acted. This happened when: the Israelites saw Egyptians chasing them (Ex 14:1-30); at Marah where the water was bitter (Ex 15:22-25); at the Desert of Sin when they remembered food in Egypt (Ex 16:1-35); and at Rehidim where there was no water (Ex 17:1-7).
- The Israelites feared they would die in the desert (Ex 14:10-12; 16:3; 17:3).
- God's provisions in the desert: the cloud and the fire (Ex 13:20-22); water (Ex 15:13-25; 17:1-6); food (Ex 16:13-19); protection from the Egyptians (Ex 14:10-28) and from the Amalekites (Ex 17:8-13).
- The glory of the Lord: manifested in the destruction of the Egyptians (Ex 14:4, 12); manna (Ex 16:7); the cloud (Ex 16:10). The Lord will gain glory (Ex 14:4, 17, 18).
- The Lord tested the Israelites (Ex 15:25; 16:4-8).
- The Israelites were unanimous in responding, "We will do everything the Lord said" (Ex 19:7; 24:3).
- The Lord spoke to Moses (Ex 19:3, 9, 10, 20, 24; 20:1, 22; 24:1).
- Moses reported the Lord's words to the people (Ex 19:7, 25; 24:3).
- Eight of the Ten Commandments begin with a negative order, "You shall not" (Ex 20:3-17).
- God emphasized the historical fact that it was he who brought the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex 19:4; 20:2).
- The Israelites trembled with terror when they stood at the foot of the smoking mountain where there was thunder, lightning, a thick dark cloud, and a loud trumpet blast (Ex 19:16; 20:18).
- Obeyed exactly as God commanded: in the celebration of the festivals (Ex 23:15; 34:18); in the construction of the Tabernacle (Ex 25:1-9; 31:11; 35:10; 36:1; 40:19, 21, 23, 25, 29, 32); when Moses went up Mount Sinai (Ex 34:4); the priests, their garments and their consecration (Ex 39:1; 5-7, 21, 31-32, 41-42; 40:16; Lev 8:1 - 9:21).
- Anger: God was angry (Ex 32:7-10; 33:3; Lev 10:1-3). Moses was angry (Ex 32:19-20).
- God appeared in a cloud (Ex 19:9; 24:16-19; 33:9; 34:5; 40:34-36).

- Tabernacle (Ex 25:1-9; 26:1-36; 27:1-21; 28:43; 29:4, 10-11, 30-44; 30:1-36; 31:1-11; 35:11-21; 36:1-37; 38:8-31; 39:32-40; 40:2-38).
- Consecrated: the Tabernacle (Lev 8:10-11, 15); the priest (Lev 8:1-2, 12-13, 22-28, 30).

**Key-attitudes:**

- The Israelites feared dying in the desert.
- The Israelites complained each time they faced a crisis.
- Moses felt frustrated when the Israelites complained, but he also felt confidence in God.
- Moses felt anger toward the Israelites when they disobeyed God.
- Moses worshiped the Lord.
- God felt that the Israelites were indebted to him since he liberated them from slavery in Egypt.
- The Israelites trembled with terror when they faced the smoking mountain where there was thunder, lightning, a thick dark cloud, and a loud trumpet blast.
- The predominance of God is expressed in everything that happened.
- The Israelites expressed firmness when they proclaimed, "We will do everything the Lord said."
- The Israelites' insecurity when Moses was absent.
- Aaron was unstable and vulnerable to the influence of others.
- The attention to detail in doing exactly as the Lord commanded.

**Initial-situation:**

Israel's descendants became slaves in Egypt. The Lord used Moses to confront Pharaoh and demand that the Israelites be allowed to leave Egypt. The Lord sent ten plagues against the Egyptians before Pharaoh allowed the Israelites to leave. After 430 years in Egypt, the Israelites left, on their way to Canaan.

**Initial-problem:**

Pharaoh changed his mind about letting the Israelite slaves leave Egypt.

**Final-situation:**

Moses consecrated the tabernacle and all its furnishings, and he consecrated Aaron and his sons as a priest.

## BIBLE STORY

### Leaving Egypt

When the Israelites left Egypt, the Lord went ahead of them by day in a pillar of cloud and by night in a pillar of fire (Ex 13:20-22).

Pharaoh changed his mind about letting the Israelite slaves leave Egypt. All Pharaoh's troops pursued the Israelites and caught up with them as they camped by an inlet of the Red Sea (Ex 14:1-9).

The Israelites saw the Egyptians and cried out in terror to the Lord, "It was better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

Moses replied, "Stand firm and watch the Lord deliver you today."

Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord used a terrific East wind to drive the sea back. The sea-waters split. The Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

Pharaoh's army pursued the Israelites. Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its place covering the entire army of Pharaoh.

That day Israel put their trust in the Lord and in Moses his servant (Ex 14:10-31).

### God's Provisions in the Desert

Moses led Israel from the Red Sea into the desert. The Middle Eastern deserts were rocky, dry wastelands. When they came to Marah, the water was bitter. The people complained to Moses, "What are we to drink?"

Moses cried out in prayer to the Lord. The Lord showed him a stick of wood. Moses threw it into the water, and the water turned sweet (Ex 15:22-26).

Forty-five days after they had left Egypt, they came to the Desert of Sin. The whole community complained, "In Egypt we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you brought us out into this desert to starve all of us to death" (Ex 15:27 - 16:3).

In the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes as fine as frost appeared on the desert ground. When the Israelites saw it, they asked each other, "What is it?"

Moses told them, "It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat."

The Israelites called the bread manna which means "*What is it?*". They ate manna forty years, until they reached the border of Canaan (Ex 16:9-36).

God led the Israelites to camp at Rephidim where there was no water. They confronted Moses, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt with our children and animals to die of thirst?"

Moses cried out in prayer to the Lord.

The Lord told Moses, "Take the staff in your hand. Strike the rock, and water will gush out of it." Moses obeyed (Ex 17:1-7).

The Amalekites attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Joshua led the Israelite men to fight the Amalekites in the valley.

Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of a hill. When Moses held up his hands, the Israelites won; whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites won. Moses sat on a stone. Aaron and Hur

held his hands up so that his hands remained up till sunset. So Joshua defeated the Amalekites in battle (Ex 17:8-16).

### **At the Foot of Mount Sinai**

Three months to the day after they left Egypt, they came to the Desert of Sinai and camped in the desert facing the mountain (Ex 19:1-2).

The Lord told Moses to tell the Israelites, "You saw what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. If you obey me and keep my covenant, then out of all peoples you will be my special treasure."

The people responded, "We will do everything the Lord said" (Ex 19:3-9).

On the appointed day: there was thunder and lightning, a dark cloud covered the mountain, smoke billowed up, a loud trumpet blast was heard, and the mountain trembled. Everyone in camp trembled with terror. Moses and Aaron went up the mountain (Ex 19:16-25). God gave Moses the Ten Commandments.

### **The Ten Commandments**

God said, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery (Ex 20:1-2).

1<sup>st</sup> You shall have no other gods before me (Ex 20:3).

2<sup>nd</sup> You shall not make for yourself an idol. You shall not bow down to them or worship them (Ex 20:4-6).

3<sup>rd</sup> You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God (Ex 20:7).

4<sup>th</sup> Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy (Ex 20:8-11).

5<sup>th</sup> Honor your father and your mother (Ex 20:12).

6<sup>th</sup> You shall not murder (Ex 20:13).

7<sup>th</sup> You shall not commit adultery (Ex 20:14).

8<sup>th</sup> You shall not steal (Ex 20:15).

9<sup>th</sup> You shall not give false testimony (Ex 20:16).

10<sup>th</sup> You shall not covet (Ex 20:17).

The Lord also gave Moses other laws and regulations for the Israelites to obey (Ex 20:21 - 24:3). The Lord promised rewards if the Israelites obeyed his laws (Lv 26:3-13) and punishment if they disobeyed them (Lv 26:14-17).

The Israelites answered, "Everything the Lord said, we will do" (Ex 24:3).

### **Moses on Mount Sinai**

Moses went up to the mountain top again and stayed there for forty days and forty nights (Ex 24:12-18).

The Lord instructed Moses, "Tell the Israelites to make a tabernacle (tent) for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the plans I will show you (Ex 25:1-9). Moses received detailed instructions on how to construct the tabernacle and for each of its furnishings that would be used for worship (Ex 25:10 - 27:21).

God instructed Moses that Aaron along with his sons would serve as priests (Ex 28:1-3).

## **The Golden Calf**

While Moses was on the mountain top, the people confronted Aaron, "Make us gods who will go before us. We don't know what happened to Moses."

All the people took off their earrings. Aaron took the gold, melted it and used an engraving tool to make an idol in the shape of a calf.

The people shouted, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

Early the next day the people offered animals as burnt-offerings. They sat down to eat and drink, and got up to have sex (Ex 32:1-6).

Moses went down the mountain and approached the camp. He saw the gold calf and the dancing; his anger flared (32:15-20).

Moses asked Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?"

Aaron answered, "Master, these people said to me, 'Make us gods who will lead us. We don't know what happened to this Moses who brought us up out of Egypt.' So they gave me the gold jewelry. I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!" (32:21-25).

Moses pleaded with God not to destroy the Israelites because of their sin of making and worshiping the golden calf (32:30-35).

## **Tabernacle Constructed**

God had given Moses detailed instruction on how to construct a tabernacle and all its furnishings (25:1 - 27:21).

The Israelites made the Tabernacle and its furnishings just as the Lord commanded Moses (Ex 35:50 - 39:43).

Moses set up the tabernacle. The cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night (Ex 40:34-38).

Moses consecrated the tabernacle and all its furnishings. He consecrated Aaron and his sons as priests (Lev 8:22-30).

## **GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS**

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

## **SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What were some of the problems the Israelites faced after they left Egypt?
2. How did the people react to problems and how did Moses react to problems?
3. What provision did God make for the Israelites in the desert?
4. What were some of the ways the Israelites rebelled against God?
5. What commands did God give the Israelites?

## LIFE-LESSONS

1. People who are liberated by God are guided by him. Just as the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire guided the Israelites (Ex 13:20-22), followers of Jesus are guided by the Bible and the Holy Spirit.
2. God leads those he redeems into crisis situations where solutions are beyond human ability. God delivered the Israelites, and then led them into the desert where they were unable to provide for their bare necessities: water, food and protection from enemies. Without divine provisions, they would have died in the desert.
3. Circumstances don't determine one's attitudes or reactions, but reveal what is already inside of a person. The Israelites faced problems beyond their abilities to solve, and they lost faith, complained and criticized Moses. Moses was faced with the same circumstances, yet he had faith and prayed asking God for help. Circumstances revealed that the Israelites already had within themselves the disposition to complain. Faced with the same circumstances, Moses revealed his disposition to trust God, expecting him to solve the problems.
4. God establishes absolutes for his people. Anyone who crossed boundaries established by God would be put to death (Ex 19:12-13). The Ten Commandments establish absolutes; God determines that some things are right and some things are wrong (Ex 20:1-17).
5. The Legislator of the Ten Commandments demands that people control tendencies they have that would offend God. It may be that a person does not commit the offenses that the Ten Commandments prohibit, but each person has the tendency or the desire to disobey each commandment.
  - Youths have the tendency of thinking that they know more than their parents.
  - Human nature has the tendency of wanting to kill those who mistreat them.
  - People have the tendency of thinking that sex outside of marriage would be exciting.
  - People have the tendency of wanting to lie in order to take advantage of others.
  - People have the tendency of desiring to take for themselves what belongs to others.