



EXODUS

Survey of the Old Testament: The Torah

Fall 2004

Introduction

Background

Title: Exodus is Greek for “the way out,” and describes how God provided the Israelites “a way out” slavery in Egypt.

Author: Moses.

Date Written: 1450-1410 BC.

Date of Events: The date of the exodus is determined from 1 Kings 6:1. This passage states that construction of Solomon’s temple was begun 480 years after the exodus and in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign. Solomon’s reign began in 966 BC Therefore, by a little mathematics we arrive at this:

4 th year of Solomon’s reign	962 BC
Number of years after exodus	+480BC
Date of exodus	1442 BC

Thutmose III (1490-1445 BC) is most likely the Pharaoh who increased the load of Israel. Amenhotep II (1445-1425 BC) was in all likelihood the Pharaoh of the exodus.

Structure

Yahweh’s Presence in the Redemption of Israel (chapters 1-18)				Yahweh’s Presence in the Establishment of Israel (chapters 19-40)		
(1-4)	(5-10)	(11-13)	(14-18)	(19-24)	(25-40)	
The Preparation by Yahweh	The Plagues of Yahweh	The Passover of Yahweh	The Provision of Yahweh	The Precepts of Yahweh	The Presence of Yahweh	
					(25-31) Command to Build the Tabernacle	(31-34) The Sin of the Golden Calf

Exodus is the history of the redemption and establishment of the nation of Israel. Just as in the birth of the United States there was a war for independence followed by the establishment of a constitution, so also Exodus recounts Israel’ independence and constitution. For Israel, however, the birth of their nation is permeated by the presence of Yahweh.

Purpose

Moses wrote Exodus to the nation of Israel while it was wandering in the wilderness. In the book of Numbers we see the nation refusing to take the land God had promised them. As a result, God would not allow the nation to go into the Promised Land until that generation had died. During the following 40 years, a new generation grew up, and needed to hear the things that God had done for their parents so they could be ready to receive the land.

Moses is writing to the generation waiting to go into the Promised Land. He recounts the redemption of Israel from slavery in Egypt and the covenant that God made with the people. Exodus passes the message of Israel's birth as a nation to the generation which will occupy the land.

Theme

God's presence among the nation He has redeemed and established.

Yahweh's Presence in the Redemption of Israel

The Preparation by Yahweh

Israel Enslaved (1:1-14)

Exodus is the sequel to Genesis. Joseph and his brothers, the sons of Jacob (Israel), are living in Egypt. After their death, the Pharaoh of Egypt forgets Jacob and the Israelites grow in numbers. Fearing the growing number of Israelites, Pharaoh enslaves the Israelites.

The Heroic Midwives (1:15-22)

Even in the midst of this enslavement, God blesses the family of Israel, causing their number to multiply rapidly. When the family arrived, there were 70 persons. Some 400 years later there is a nation of probably over two million.

To stem the tide of Israel's procreation, Pharaoh now must institute the infanticide of all the males born Israelites. He requires that the midwives of Israel throw newborn boys into the Nile. Moses tells of two Israelite mid-wives, Shiphrah and Puah, who stand up to Pharaoh and refuse to obey him. In this very humorous encounter, the mid-wives tell Pharaoh that the Israelite women are so hearty that the babies are born before they can get there. The mid-wives fear God more than they fear Pharaoh

The Birth of Moses (2:1-10)

The command to kill the male offspring becomes very personal in chapter 2. A young Levite woman gives birth to a boy, and after 3 months of hiding the child, she "obeys" Pharaoh's command to toss the boys into the Nile River. However, she puts him into a miniature ark as she puts him in the Nile. She also places him into the river strategically, for the ark arrives at the location where Pharaoh's daughter is bathing.

Pharaoh's daughter opens the ark, takes pity on the child and decides to adopt the baby boy. Then, in another great irony, hires the baby's mother to nurse the babe. The princess names the baby Moses, which means "drawn forth," for he was drawn forth from the river.

The Development of Moses (2:11-22)

The adoption by Pharaoh's daughter provides Moses with the best education available in the world. He would have been trained in leadership, oratory, and warfare. From the human point of view, he becomes the perfect candidate to deliver Israel.

However, when Moses exercises his leadership skills, he finds himself alienated from his people and from Pharaoh. Moses has killed an Egyptian task master, and now his people have refused his leadership. In fear of Pharaoh's wrath, Moses flees from Egypt and settles in the land of Midian where for 40 years God will be prepared him to lead the nation.

The Pronouncement of the Name "Yahweh" (2:23-4:31)

Forty years later, while tending the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro, Moses discovers a bush which is on fire, but is not burning. As he approaches, God tells Moses that he has heard Israel's plight and that he is calling Moses to lead his people out of Egypt.

Moses, however, unlike the Hebrew midwives, fears Pharaoh more than he fears God. In his hesitation he asks two profound questions: "who are you?" and "who am I?"

Who Are You? (2:23-3:22)

The Importance of a Name

Moses' first excuse is that he doesn't know God's name. He asks, "who shall I say sent me?" God responds by revealing to Moses his memorial name- the name by which He wants to be known for all generations.

In our culture we do not place a great deal of importance on the meaning of names. We are as likely to name our children based on family traditions and the sound of the name as we are on the meaning of a name. However, in ancient Hebrew culture, names had great significance. Understanding the meaning of a person's name reveals something about the character of that person. For example, in Genesis, the name Eve means "mother of the living." Abram is given a new name, Abraham, which means "father of a great multitude." Jacob, whose name means "deceiver," is also given a new name, Israel, which means "one who contends with God." All of these names tell us something about the character of the person and their place in the God's narrative history.

The names of God in the bible have the same significance. In the English we typically refer to God by his titles (i.e. God, Lord, Almighty). But God has a name which has fallen into disuse through the millennia. This name has tremendous meaning and significance, both for the Israelites in the time of Moses and also for us today. *God has a name and he wants us to know it!*

God's memorial name

Moses is concerned that if he tells the people of Israel that God has sent him, they will want to know the name of this god (3:13). Israel was living in the midst of a polytheistic culture, and it is likely that most Israelites were also polytheistic. In essence, Moses is saying that Israel is going to want to know which god sent him.

God responds by telling Moses his name in verses 14-15. This is God's "memorial-name" for all generations. This is the name by which he wants to be remembered by everyone for all time. But what is this name? From our English bible it is not clear.

God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations. (Exodus 3:15)

In our English Bible, God's memorial-name is translated as LORD (note the small caps). This is not really His name, but is a substitute. As a result of this unfortunate translation, most people do not know God's real name.

There is a long standing tradition behind this translation. The post-exilic Jews, in reverence to God's memorial name, when reading scripture, substituted the Hebrew word "Adonai," which means Lord. This reverence was founded in a desire to obey the 3rd commandment, "you shall not take the LORD'S name in vain." Rather than risk taking his name in vain, they would always substitute "Adonai" when reading the scriptures aloud.

The 2nd century BC translators of the Hebrew scriptures in Greek substituted the Greek word for "Lord" whenever the Hebrew used God's memorial name. Our modern English translators have continued this long-standing tradition. However, to clarify for the modern reader as to when Lord means Master and when LORD means God's memorial-name, when God's memorial-name is translated, Lord is always placed in small-caps (LORD vs. .Lord).

However, the memorial name of God is not LORD. The truth of his name can be found even in English by looking at verse 14:

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14)

The name of God is actually based on the verb "to be." God says, "I am who I am." The name of God is the Hebrew word for the third-person singular of the verb "to be." In English the name of God would be properly translated "He is." In Hebrew, this is the word "Yahweh."

This name has been corrupted through the ages however, due to a misunderstanding of the Hebrew language and culture. The ancient Hebrew writing system did not have any vowels. As such, the Hebrew name of God is represented by the letters YHWH. Later, as the writing system evolved, vowel sounds were added by putting accent marks next to the consonants. However, by this time the tradition of substituting "Adonai" for "Yahweh" had been well established. Therefore, to remind the reader of this substitution, Hebrew scribes inserted the vowels for the word *Adonai* whenever the consonants for the word *Yahweh* appeared.

In 1520, the German bible scholar, Galatinus, unaware of this substitution, transliterated the Hebrew, combining the consonants of one name and the vowels of the other¹. So YHWH became YaHoWaiH. As this German word moved to English, the Y sound became J and the W sound became V, resulting in the word Jehovah. However Jehovah is not a real name, but a mispronunciation of the Hebrew consonants YHWH.

Unfortunately, the actual vowel sounds for YHWH have been lost. Even today, our insertion of the vowel sounds to form the name Yahweh are only the best guess by Hebrew scholars. Nonetheless, this is God's memorial name for all generations. God has a name, and He want us to us it.

The meaning of God's name

If Yahweh literally means "he is," what does that say about the character of God? The answer is found in the context of chapter 3.

The Transcendence of Yahweh

In God's response to Moses inquiry, He says, "I Am who I Am." The name Yahweh reveals something of the transcendent nature of God. He is who He is, and He is not dependent on anyone or anything. The name indicates that God is eternal, omnipresent, and independent from creation. The name connects the God of the burning bush with the God who created all things from nothing.

The Imminence of Yahweh

But the name also has a secondary meaning which is paradoxical to the transcendence of God. The name Yahweh also speaks to God's imminence. Most immediately in the context of verses 14 and 15 we see that the memorial name of God is being connected to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is not merely a transcendent God of creation, but the personal God of Israel's patriarchs. This is the God of the covenant who promised to give the land, the seed and the blessing to His people.

Prior to the Exodus, the Israelites may doubt of if there is God of the covenant. It has been four centuries since the covenant had been given to the Patriarchs. If He really is the personal God of their fathers, why has He been so slow to fulfill the covenant?

The introduction to the burning bush narrative explains that God is not slow to fulfill the covenant, and His memorial name affirms that He is a personal God who provides for His people.

So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them. (Exodus 2:24-25)

¹ Ronld B. Allen. From a lecture given at Camp Tadmor, Oregon, August 2, 1993.

Yahweh is the God who has heard His people. Yahweh is the God who remembers His covenant. Yahweh is the God who sees and takes notice of His people. Not merely a transcendent God, Yahweh is aware of the affliction of His people and will now *come down* to deliver them.

The Yahweh said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land..." (Exodus 3:7-8a)

The name Yahweh is closely connected to the redemption of Israel and to the willingness of God to *come down* to deliver Israel and eventually to live with the nation (Exodus 33:14)².

Relation of Jesus to the Name of God (John 8:51-59)

The name Yahweh is closely connected with the name and claims of Jesus. Jesus, who's very name means "Yahweh saves," is the fullest reflection of the meaning of the name Yahweh.

The Context

In John 8, Jesus is in a heated discussion with the Pharisees and other Jews. Jesus has been trying to show them their sinfulness and their own need for salvation. Furthermore that by believing in Him, they "will never taste of death" (v. 52)

The Jews respond by stating that Abraham and the prophets died, and question Jesus as to who exactly he thinks he is. Does he really regard himself as more than Abraham? (vs. 52-53) Jesus' response astounds these people. In verse 56 He states, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

This was a preposterous claim. Jesus was a relatively young man who was claiming to have seen Abraham. The Jews must think at this point that Jesus is nuts, and say so.

The Claim

Jesus' response is an even more preposterous (or shall we say blasphemous) statement.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

Jesus does not say that before Abraham was born, *he was*. He said *I AM*. He is specifically using this to assert his claim that He is Yahweh, the Great I AM. He is claiming to be God himself, in the flesh, having existed from eternity past, self-existent, independent. Lest we doubt that Jesus is actually claiming to be Yahweh, the reaction of the Jews affirms the boldness of such a claim as they to pick up stones to execute this blasphemer.

Just as Yahweh, the God of the Exodus left behind his transcendence and came down to deliver Israel, so also Jesus Christ left behind his transcendent nature and came down to earth to deliver all humankind from their sin.

Who Am I? (4:1-31)

"Please Send Someone Else!" (4:1-17)

God has addressed Moses first question, "who are you?" He then follows up with a second question, "who am I?" Moses, a man trained in Pharaoh's court for leadership, doubts His own abilities. Apparently, his first attempt to lead Israel (2:14) has greatly impacted his self-confidence.

God provides Moses with evidence that it He will provide Moses with the skills necessary to confront both Pharaoh and the Israelites (4:4-5, 8-9). Likewise, God will provide Aaron as Moses' spokesman (4:14). But God become angry at Moses, not for his self-doubt, but for his lack of faith in God's provision.

² Ibid.

The answer to Moses' first question ("Who are you?") has rendered the second question ("who am I?") moot. If Yahweh provides what we need to accomplish His purposes, who we are and what skills we possess are irrelevant. Refusing to serve God when He has called us is not an act of humility or self-depreciation. It is a lack of faith in God's provision and care.

"You are a Bloody Bridegroom to Me"(4:18-26)

Moses decides to obey God, and after obtaining permission from Jethro, begins his journey to Egypt. But on the way we find an odd passage. Suddenly God seeks to kill Moses, his messenger. Moses has not circumcised his son. Moses' wife, Zipporah, must perform the circumcision in order to prevent God from killing him. Zipporah responds enigmatically, saying "you are a blood bridegroom to me."

The text of this passage is unclear. The passage could just as properly be translated such that God is seeking not to kill Moses, but his son. Likewise, Zipporah may not be calling Moses as her bloody bridegroom, but instead is calling Yahweh her bloody bridegroom, referring to an ancient Egyptian practice of circumcising the groom prior to a wedding³.

In either case, it is clear that Moses would not be qualified to lead the Israelites if he had not carried on the command of God to circumcise his son. Even in the end, it is not Moses who steps forward, but Zipporah who must take care of the issue. Moses is clearly not a perfect leader, and while an important man of faith, he is only God's agent. It is clearly God who will rescue Israel, not Moses.

The Plagues of Yahweh

Moses' First Encounter with Pharaoh

Moses' Request (5:1-3)

After meeting with the leaders of Israel, Moses confronts Pharaoh. Moses, however, doesn't ask Pharaoh to emancipate the slaves. Instead, he asks Pharaoh to release the nation for a three-day feast to Yahweh in the wilderness. Although it may appear otherwise at first, Moses was not being disingenuous with his request. If Moses had asked for full emancipation, no one would have blamed Pharaoh for rejecting the request. By asking Pharaoh for a "more reasonable" request, he is demonstrating the stubbornness of Pharaoh.

Pharaoh's Response (5:4-9)

The Egyptians had many gods. In fact, the Egyptians believed that Pharaoh himself was divine. Now Moses introduced this unknown god, Yahweh. But Pharaoh is not impressed. "Who is this Yahweh that I should obey him? I do not know Yahweh." This becomes a significant question. Yahweh is going to make himself known to Pharaoh through the coming events.

Moses' response angers Pharaoh and he forces the Israelites to keep their quota of bricks, but now they had to supply their own straw.

Israel's Response (5:21)

Moses feared that the Israelites would not follow him. Now his fears were coming true. The people were angry with Moses and Aaron for angering Pharaoh. This is just the first example of the fickleness of the Israelites.

God's Response

In reaction to Israel's anger, Moses asks God, "Yahweh, why did you send me?" God responds in chapter 6.

³ Ibid.

God reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant (6:1-8)

Under the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12, 15, 17), God promises Abraham that his descendents would inherit the land of Canaan. This was an unconditional covenant, and was not dependent on Abraham or his offspring meeting any conditions. In Exodus 6, God reiterates the Abrahamic covenant. If God has unconditionally promised the land to Abraham, then God is still obligated to fulfill the covenant. He promises to do so with this generation.

In the reiteration of the covenant, we find that God is reaffirming his personal nature. In fact, God is now closer to Israel than He even was to Abraham, for he did not reveal his personal name, Yahweh, to any of the patriarchs. But now God has revealed his name and again emphasizes his personal concern for his people. He will redeem Israel, He will be their God, and Israel will be His people.

God hardens Pharaoh's Heart (7:1-5)

God tells Moses that He will harden Pharaoh's heart such that, even in the midst of terrible plagues, Pharaoh will refuse to let Israel go. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is often seen as unfair, as if God had preordained Pharaoh's stubbornness. While God has the right to preordain Pharaoh for this part in the drama (Romans 9:17-21), there are two factors to consider in this discussion:

- Pharaoh had already demonstrated his stubbornness in chapter 5. God was just allowing Pharaoh's heart to reach the full expression of his predisposition.
- The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is not a condemnation of his eternal soul. This hardening is merely related to the emancipation of Israel. This passage is not a specific example of salvific election.

God does reveal however, his reason for hardening Pharaoh's heart. Through the events that are to come, the hardness of Pharaoh's heart will allow God to show great signs and wonders and, in so doing, reveal to the Egyptians who Yahweh is. Pharaoh may not have known who Yahweh was before, but by the time God is done, Pharaoh will know all about Yahweh.

Moses' Second Encounter with Pharaoh

As Moses confronts Pharaoh the second time, the passage establishes a course of events which will repeat itself over the course of ten plagues. The pattern is as follows:

- Moses relays Yahweh's demand that Pharaoh "let my people go."
- Pharaoh responds negatively.
- Moses initiates a plague.
- Pharaoh recants and allows Israel to leave.
- God relieves Egypt of the plague.
- Pharaoh changes his mind and again refuses to let Israel go.

Just as notable, however, are the exceptions to the pattern. For example, on some of the plagues, Israel experiences the pestilence, while they are exempt for others. Some of the plagues are repeatable by Pharaoh's magicians, others are not.

Two Issues Regarding the Plagues

Discounting the plagues as natural phenomena.

There are some feasible natural phenomena explanations for the plagues. For example, the Nile turning to blood could be explained by a natural phenomena when silt from upstream regularly flows down to turn the Nile red like blood. While feasible as a natural phenomena, that doesn't eliminate the supernatural element. For example, there are many natural reasons for an over population of frogs. Yet, the timing, if nothing else, reveals a supernatural element. Furthermore, most of the need to provide a natural "explanation" comes from a anti-supernatural bias.

The plagues as a direct challenge to Egyptian gods.

The reason God sent the plagues was to reveal to Egypt his power, and his supremacy over their gods. Each of the plagues directly challenges the jurisdiction of an Egyptian god, proving the power of Yahweh over the Egyptian pantheon. God is showing that not only does Yahweh have power over all the Egyptian gods, but that He is the one and only god, who rules over everything the Nile, the frogs, the flies, the cattle, and everything over which the Egyptians have ascribed a deity.

The Plagues

Scripture	Plague	Israel Exempt	Magicians Repeat	Egyptian Gods Involved
7:14-24	Nile River to Bloods	No	Yes	Hapi – spirit of the Nile Khnum – guardian of the Nile
7:25-8:15	Frogs	No	Yes	Heqt – form of a frog Hapi – spirit of the Nile
8:16-19	Swarms of Lice/Gnats	No	No	Uncertain “This is the finger of God.” (8:19)
8:20-32	Flies	Yes	No	Uatchit – a god who manifest himself as a fly.
9:1-7	Disease on the Cattle ⁴	Yes	No	Apis bull revered; Sacred bulls and cows Ptah, Mnrvis, Hathor
9:8-12	Boils/Sores on Man and Animal	Yes	No (plague afflicts magicians)	Sekhmet – goddess with power to heal. Serapis – healing god
9:13-35	Destruction of Crops & Cattle by Hail	Yes	No	Seth – protector of crops Nut – sky goddess
10:1-20	Destruction of Crops by Locusts	Yes	No	Isis – goddess of life Seth – protector of crops
10:21-29	Darkness	Yes	No	Re – sun god. Atum – god of setting sun.
11:1-12:36	Death of the Firstborn	Yes – if blood properly applied		Osiris – giver of life Pharaoh also was considered deity

The Passover of Yahweh (11:1-13:16)

The Tenth Plague (11:1-10)

The tenth and final plague starts with the same pattern as the previous nine. Moses demands that Pharaoh let Israel go, and Pharaoh refuses. But Yahweh assures Moses that the pattern will change; this is the last plague, and when it is over, Pharaoh will release Israel. Yahweh will finally demonstrate His power is greater than the divine Pharaoh himself, as he kills his first born offspring, along with the first born of the entire nation.

The Passover Established (12:1-14, 24-27)

To remember this last plague, and Israel’s deliverance from the plague, God establishes the Passover Feast. The Passover takes place on the 10th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar,

⁴ While the English states that “all” the cattle died, this word can also mean “throughout all,” or “everywhere.” This must be the proper translation for in subsequent plagues, there are other livestock left alive which are later afflicted. JFB states:

“Not absolutely every beast, for we find (Ex 9:19, Ex 9:21) that there were still some left; but a great many died of each herd--the mortality was frequent and widespread.”

which is late March through early April on our calendar. To commemorate the event, the Israelites are to:

- Take an unblemished one-year old lamb on the 10th day.
- On the 14th day they are to kill the lamb at twilight.
- They are to put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of the house.
- Throughout the day they are to eat the lamb that has been roasted, along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.
- They are to eat it with their shoes on and their traveling clothes on.

The festival is called Passover, for the angel of Yahweh would only “pass over” those homes who have placed blood on the door post. This was the sign that the household had slaughtered a year-old lamb as a substitution for the first born male in the home.

Of greater significance, Passover is the memorial to Yahweh, the God who heard the cries of His people. If only an Israelite family would show this simple act of faith, Yahweh will rescue them from slavery. Passover, then, is a reaffirmation of an Israelite’s faith in the salvation of Yahweh.

Death and Redemption of the Firstborn (12:28-36, 13:1-3, 11-14)

For those, however, who do not trust in the blood of the Passover lamb, the first born are killed. When the Egyptians realized what had happened they, along with Pharaoh, demanded that all Israel leave immediately. The Egyptians wanted them out so bad that they gave them gold and riches just to leave. In that way, the Israelites plundered the Egyptians.

The first born of Israel are not passed over without payment however. First, the lamb must be sacrificed as a substitute. But further, God requires that all the first born males be paid for (“redeemed”) to remember that the first born belong to God. They are His to kill or to deliver. For the rest of the history of Israel the giving of the first born serves a memorial to this night.

The Last Supper

The night before Jesus crucifixion, He and His disciples celebrate the Passover Feast. By this time in Judaism, Passover has become a detailed ritual full of symbolism and meaning. But now Jesus is going to extend that symbolism to himself as he declares the New Covenant.

As they began eating the unleavened bread, Jesus declares, “This is my body, which is broken for you.” Jesus body was broken in his death on the cross. Therefore, no longer do we need a lamb sacrificed on Passover, for Jesus himself is, as John the Baptist declared, the lamb of God. As the lamb gave its life in the place of the first born, now Jesus is giving his life in the place of all of us. Jesus, then, forever more is known as the lamb of God:

*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches
and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.
(Revelation 5:12)*

The Provision of Yahweh

Yahweh Provides Deliverance from the Egyptian Army (13:17-15:21)

The Pillar of Fire - (Exodus 13:17-22)

Israel departs from Egypt in haste, for Moses and God knew the fickleness of Pharaoh. Israel had to get out of Egypt quickly before Pharaoh changed his mind. The shortest route for Israel to the Promised Land is through the north. But God directs them south because the nation is not ready for war, and the north would take them through the land of the militant Philistines.

As Israel leaves, Moses fulfills the faith of Joseph by taking his bones with them as they leave Egypt. For four hundred years Joseph's request for his remains to be buried in the Promised Land had been remembered by the people.

God lead Israel out of Egypt in a very tangible way. By day, Yahweh went before the nation in a pillar of cloud. By night, he was in a pillar of fire. To see the leadership of God physically manifest in this way must have been very assuring to Israel. Often we wish that God would lead us through your personal wilderness in such an obvious way. Yet, even when God's leadership was evident, it didn't produce obedience in the Israelites. It would be a mistake to think that our faith would be any stronger in light of God's obvious leadership in our life as well.

Parting of the Red Sea - (Exodus 14:1-22)

Yahweh leads Israel slowly across the desert. There are nearly two million people on the move, including women, children, the elderly, livestock, and all their possessions. This is not a rapid escape, but a slow exit. Then God has them camp with the Red Sea to the east. Pharaoh and his army are overtaking them from the west. God has encamp Israel in a place where they would be trapped between Pharaoh's army and the sea.

The nation of Israel is not ignorant of their plight. Why had God led them into a trap! What has Moses done? Slavery in Egypt was better than this. But Moses reassures the people that Yahweh would save them again, and that the Egyptian army would be defeated forever. All that would be required of Israel is that they stand and watch as God saved them.

Following God's instruction, Moses stretched his hand over the sea and the wind blew all night until a wall of water left a dry path. Israel was free to cross. However, it would take a long time to move 2 million people across the sea. God protected the nation while they crossed by moving the pillar of clouds/fire between Pharaoh's army and the Israelites. The pillar manifest itself to the Egyptians as a dark cloud, but as a pillar of fire to light the way to Israel. It took the entire night for Israel to cross.

Pharaoh's Army Defeated - (Exodus 14:23-30)

The next morning, the pillar moved across the sea, and the Egyptians entered into the dry path in the sea. But God frustrated the Egyptian by causing their chariots to become stuck in the mud. The whole army was in confusion while Israel watched. The army came to realize that they needed to retreat, for Yahweh was fighting for Israel. Moses stretched his hand back out over the sea, and the wall of water collapsed, drowning Pharaoh and his army.

The Song of Deliverance - (Exodus 14:31-15:21)

The Israelites responded to their deliverance by singing and praising God. The nation, who just a few hours before had been in such despair about their entrapment against the sea are ecstatic about their deliverance by Yahweh.

But had Yahweh not lead Israel to the edge of the Red Sea, where the nation was trapped, they would have never seen the deliverance by God. If the situation had not seemed so desperate, Israel would not have recognized their need for God's salvation.

This reveals a key principle of God. God's deliverance often does not come to us until we recognize that there is no other way of escape but to "stand by and watch the salvation of God."

Yahweh Provides Water and Food (15:22-17:7)

The Bitter Waters of Marah (Exodus 15:22-27)

Israel has just seen the deliverance of God, but not before they realized their desperate situation. Now, the nation faces another desperate situation. They were in the desert, but there had been no water for three days. The nation camps at Marah, but its waters are bitter, and soon the nation

become bitter towards Moses and Yahweh as well. God uses Moses to sweeten the water and Yahweh again provides for the people.

Manna from Heaven (Exodus 16:1-36)

After Israel has seen God provide water, they soon become hungry and grumble that God has brought them to the desert to starve.

Israel's complaint against Moses is doubly ironic. First, they had just seen the power of Yahweh to deliver, in the Passover, in the Red Sea, and with the waters of Marah. Secondly, they remembered their enslavement in Egypt as preferable to their current plight. The people were longing for the "good ol' days." The "good ol' days" were not as good as they remembered, and their attitude marginalized their redemption by God.

As soon as we forget how desperate we were before our salvation, we too will begin to marginalize God's deliverance. It is important for us to remember our deliverance, and reiterates how important it is to memorialize our salvation. It reiterates the importance of Passover and the Lord's Supper.

God provides food by a daily morning delivery of manna (Hebrew for "what is it?"). These "frost flakes" provide daily sustenance for two million people. Each day, each person has a quart of manna for food, except on the day before the Sabbath. On this day, there would be double manna, so that people would not have to collect on the Sabbath.

If people collected more than one day's worth, the food would spoil. In so doing, God taught day-to-day reliance on His provision. This was also how God would remind the nation to observe the Sabbath, even before the law was given.

Manna was provided Israel for forty years until they came to the border of Canaan. Each day, the provision of God was lying on the ground waiting to be picked up. The daily manner of how God provided for the nation revealed his great care for his people, even when they complained and forgot about his provision and care.

Yahweh Provides Deliverance from the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16)

In chapter 17, the Amalekites, descendants of Esau, rise up to battle against Israel. Israel was unprepared for war. This is a slave nation which has never had waged war. Moses appoints Joshua as the general, and then he, Aaron and Hur climb to the top of a hill to watch the battle. As long as Moses' hands are raised, the battle went in favor of Israel. When his hands fell, the Amalekites would gain the upper hand. Aaron and Hur support Moses when his arms become tired.

Again, this is evidence of God's provision. It is not Joshua's military skill which has won the battle. It is Yahweh providing deliverance.

Yahweh Provides Leadership for Israel (Exodus 18:1-27)

Finally, Israel arrives in the land of Midian, and Moses is reunited with his family and his father-in-law, Jethro. Jethro, the priest of Midian, praises Yahweh for his deliverance of Israel from Egypt. For Jethro, the exodus is finally proof that Yahweh is greater than all the other gods.

Jethro, however, is frustrated when he sees how Moses is governing the people. Moses was serving as the only judge for over 2 million people. This was an untenable situation which was exhausting both Moses and the Israelites. So Jethro steps in and offers advice: delegate or die!

This is the beginning of the structure of government for this fledgling nation. Up to this point, Israel is not yet a nation. It is just a rag-tag group of ex-slaves. God begins the process here of transforming this group of former slaves into a nation, with formalized government and hierarchical leadership.

In the coming chapters, government, leadership, and law are going to become more formalized as God provides Moses with the law. Thus the transition from a people of slaves to a real nation.

Yahweh's Presence in the Establishment of Israel

The Precepts of Yahweh

The Covenant (Chapter 19)

Preparation for the Covenant

After the Israelites escaped the Egyptian army at the Red Sea, they traveled for 3 months to Mt. Sinai. There God announced his intention to enter into a covenant with the nation.

God's desire was to make the Israelites His own possessions, to established them as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Israel responded (verse 8), "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!"

To become a nation a group has to have two things: (1) Independence, (2) Law. Israel had found their independence in the Exodus. Only now would they receive the law and become a true nation.

Structure of the Covenant

With the affirmation that Israel would obey the LORD, the focus of the book changes to the specifics of the covenant.

The covenant follows a standard format in that day for a covenant between a king and a vassal nation, known as a suzerainty treaty. This is a standard format found in Near Eastern treaties discovered in the nineteenth century. The consistency of the Mosaic covenant to these treaties shows that God wanted Israel to consider Him as their suzerain.

The Mosaic Covenant Compared with Suzerainty Treaties

Source: Bible Knowledge Commentary

Parts in the Near Eastern Suzerainty Treaties	Given on Mount Sinai	Given in the Transjordan	Given in Canaan
Preamble	Ex. 20:2a	Deut. 1:1-4	Josh. 24:1-2a
Historical prologue	Ex. 20:2b	Deut. 1:5-4:43	Josh. 24:2b-13
General stipulations	Ex. 20:3-17	Deut. 4:44-11:32	Josh. 24:14-15,23
Specific stipulations	Ex. 20:22-23:33	Deut. 12:1-26:15	
Deposit and periodic reading	Ex 25:16, 21	Deut. 31:9-13, 26	Josh. 24:25-26a
Invocation of witnesses		Deut. 30:19; 31:28	Josh. 24:22, 26b-27
Curses and blessings	Lev. 26	Deut. 27-28	Josh. 24:19-20
Vassal's oath of allegiance	Ex. 24:3		Josh. 24:16-18, 21, 24
Solemn ceremony	Ex. 24:4-11		

The next five chapters are his specific stipulations of the treaty. This treaty forms the basis for Israelite law and establishment of the Nation. The giving of the Law was crucial for very practical reasons. Here you have 2 to 3 million former slaves wandering the wilderness. These people had never governed themselves, and had no established rules or order.

The Ten Commandments (Chapter 20)

The Ten Commandments summarize the rest of the Law. These general stipulations form the basis of the entire covenant-treaty. As you read through the rest of Exodus and on into Leviticus, you can find all the ordinances there will have a direct relationship to one of the ten commandments.

The covenant-treaty sets up Yahweh as their sovereign King, establishing theocracy as their form of government. If God is going to make Israel a kingdom of priests, their allegiance to this God-King

is critical. Therefore, the first four commandments deal with the relationship of the people to this king. They must worship only Yahweh, and worship in truth.

The last six commandments dealt with the relationship of the people to each other. If they are to be a holy nation, the people must treat each other with honor and respect.

Jesus recognized this two-fold division of the Ten Commandments when he summarized the law in two commands: 1) love God; 2) love others (Matthew 22:37-40).

While the Ten Commandments are written in the context of God's covenant with the nation of Israel, the precepts here are sufficiently general that they have direct application for all saints in all time. All the commandments are at least implicitly affirmed prior to the giving of the Mosaic law. The New Testament affirms each of the Ten Commandments. These commands reveal the general ethical precepts of God, applicable for all.

The Bill of Rights (Chapters 21-23)

Following the general precepts are specific applications for Israel at that point in history. The specifics begin with what could be termed "Israel's Bill of Rights⁵." The next three chapters specify the way people are to treat each other in the context of very practical relationships. It grants certain rights to individuals and requires that justice be served.

Rights of the Disadvantaged

Slaves (21:2-11)

There were some very revolutionary provisions required for the institution of slavery. Here all masters are to set their slaves free every 7th year (vs. 2). Female slaves are not to be sold to foreigners, and must be taken care of, even in the event she is replaced (vs. 7-11).

While the allowance of slavery itself may seem barbaric, the very notion that there are limitations on how a slave may be treated was almost absurd. These laws, relative to their neighboring nations, were very humanitarian treatment of slaves.

Foreigners, Widows, Orphans, & the Poor (22:21-27)

Foreigners, widows, and orphans were to be treated well. Lending money to the poor should be without interest and made without collateral. The people were to look out for the disadvantaged.

Accused (23:1-9)

In judicial proceedings, false testimony, listening to the majority opinion, partiality (even to the poor), and bribery was not allowed. The seriousness of a falsely finding a person guilty was reiterated strongly (vs. 7).

Rule of Restitution (21:22-22:5)

The Punishment Must Fit the Crime (21:22-36)

One of the constant themes of the Mosaic law is restitution. Punishment is not established for revenge, deterrence, or rehabilitation. Under the Mosaic law punishments, criminal and civil, require that the offender repay the offended for what was damaged or destroyed.

For example, premeditated murder and kidnapping requires the death of the murderer. However, other murderers are allowed to flee into exile. Verse 23 summarizes personal injury and assault claims:

(Exodus 21:23-25 NASB) "But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life, (24) eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, (25) burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

⁵ Rick Taylor, from a lecture, *Grace Institute*, given February 17, 1994, Grace Community Fellowship, Eugene, Oregon

In personal property cases, the same idea of restitution held true. However, punitive damages were also allowed:

(Exodus 22:1 NASB) "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep."

From the perspective of many New Testament readers, the concept of eye for eye, tooth for tooth, must seem quite harsh. After all, Jesus said we ought to turn the other cheek. In reality, the eye for eye was, in the culture of the day, rather merciful. In Middle Eastern culture, the punishment was not eye for eye, tooth for tooth, but life for just about everything⁶. God here is saying, the punishment must fit the crime.

Restitution and the Guilt Offering

As we will see in Leviticus, restitution must be paid to both the victim and to God. This is called the Guilt offering, and it too seeks to repay the offended, for God is holy and is offended by all sin.

*The act of making restitution to a victim was so closely identified with the atoning sacrifice made to God, that the two expressions could be seen as elements of the same command. Neither could stand alone.*⁷

With this background, the cross of Jesus makes more sense. The atonement, or restitution must be paid for all the wrongs we have committed. The offended, God, must be repaid for what he has lost. Jesus made that restitution with His own life.

Covenant Ratified (Chapter 24)

In chapter 19 the people agreed to obey God, but this was without knowing the details of the contract. It was only an indication of interest. Now that the law was more fully revealed, and the people have heard the details of God's command, Moses explained it to the people, and again the people responded.

(Exodus 24:3 NASB) Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!"

To ratify the covenant, Moses writes down the words of YHWH, makes an offering to God and sprinkles blood on the people. This demonstrates that the Mosaic covenant is a blood covenant, the most binding form of contract between parties⁸. As is typical of a blood covenant, the ratification concludes with a ceremonial meal as the elders join Moses on the mountain to eat with God. The covenant is signed, sealed, and delivered.

The Presence of Yahweh

Yahweh's Presence Revealed

Prior to the Exodus, God declares that He has heard the cries of His people and that He would "come down" to rescue His people (3:8). The descent of Yahweh was not merely figurative, for God would reveal himself to His people in a very physical way. These revelations are seen as clouds, fire, lightning and other physical events. These manifestations of God's presence, or His Glory, are revealed in differing degrees to different people at different times.

⁶ Albert Baylis. *From Creation to the Cross*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 1996), 141.

⁷ Ken Massey, "Restitution" in *Holman Bible Dictionary for Windows*, Parsons Technology, 1994.

⁸ See Grace Institute Notes from Genesis, "Background to Biblical Covenants"

This does not diminish God's omnipresence. God is in all places. Yet at certain places and at certain times God chooses to reveal more of himself to people.

Revealed to the Nation (Chapter 19:16-19, 20:18-26)

We see God reveal His Glory first in the pillar of clouds and fire which lead them to the Red Sea and then on to Sinai. (13:21-22)

God Glory is more fully revealed to the Nation at Mt. Sinai. In verses 16-19 God descends on the mountain and brings thick clouds, thunder and lightning, and a loud trumpet sound.

The people were fearful at the sight. God had warned them that they would die if they went near the mountain. But now the people were afraid that if they even heard God's voice they would die. (20:18-19)

There was a two fold reason why God revealed himself to the nation in this way: 1) to give credibility to Moses (19:9) 2) to inspire fear that they might not sin (20:20).

Revealed to the Elders (Chapter 24)

While the people were not allowed to climb the mountain, God did allow the Elders of Israel to see more of his Glory. Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and 70 elders to affirm the ratification of the covenant. (24:9)

God here is revealed himself and did not kill them.

Then they ate and drank with God himself.

Revealed to Moses (Chapters 24, 34)

Moses first sees a manifestation of God's glory in the burning bush (Chapter 3). Here he covers his face at the sight for fear that he would perish having seen God.

Moses is allowed to go even further up the mountain in chapter 24, and for 40 days and received the law and the instructions on the building of the tabernacle.

In chapter 34 Moses has a desire to see God in all of His glory. There God has to protect Moses in the cleft of the rock for fear that anything but a glimpse of his back would kill him.

Over the course of time Moses' desire to know God grew from a hesitant curiosity (chapter 3) to the point where God must protect him from seeing too much of Him. But the more Moses got to know God, the more he desired to know Him.

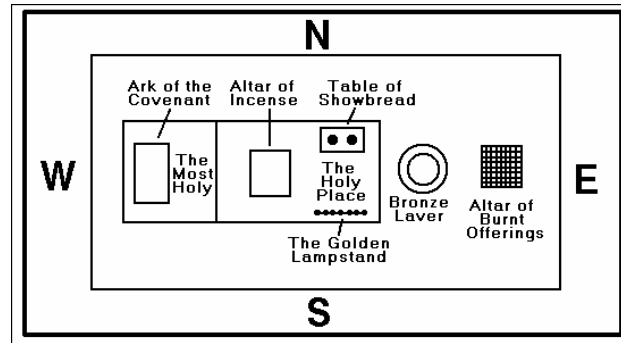
The Place for the Presence of Yahweh

The Tabernacle as Yahweh's Dwelling Place

Now that Yahweh had ratified the covenant with Israel and was established as their King, arrangements had to be made to build a place from which the King would rule⁹. So God, in excruciating detail outlines the design of his dwelling place amongst the camp of Israel. This place was called the *tabernacle* or sometimes the tent of meeting. The word tabernacle comes from the Hebrew word meaning "to dwell" or "to settle down" and "live among"¹⁰, signifying that this would be the place where God would settle down and live amongst the people. This was the fullness of Yahweh's promise to "come down" to His people to deliver them.

⁹ *Holman Bible Handbook*. David S. Dockery, ed. (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers. Electronic edition STEP file).

¹⁰ *The Nelson Study Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997. Electronic edition STEP file.



Source: Nelson Study Bible

The book of Exodus devotes 12 chapters, and nearly a third of the entire book, to the detailed plans of the tabernacle issued by God (chapters 25-31) and then the detailed carrying out of those plans (chapters 35-40). Such detail and prominence within the book reveals something of the importance in getting the exactness of the tabernacle correct. Much of the beauty of the temple is found facing inwards, far from public view. Even the description of the temple begins from the inside and works its way out, viewing the temple from God's perspective rather than Israel's¹¹.

This detail and perspective emphasizes the holiness of God. If this was to be the dwelling place of Yahweh, it had to be as perfect as possible, for Yahweh is holy and can not stand imperfection. God's presence within the tabernacle is most fully seen in the Holy of Holies, the place where the ark of the covenant dwells. This room is sectioned off and is only entered by a human once per year to make atonement for sin (Leviticus 16). God would be present with Israel within the temple, but the fullness of His glory was too great to bear and the people had to be shielded from this glory.

The Tabernacle as a Model of the Heavens

This detail, however, was also important, because the earthly tabernacle is an earthly representation of the heavenly tabernacle of God. The writer of Hebrews reveals this as he comments on Exodus 25:40:

...(the priests) serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN." (Hebrews 8:5)

The entire tabernacle was modeled after the heavenly dwelling place of God. The exactness of the dimensions, the detail of the materials, the quality of the workmanship were all crucial, for the tabernacle is not just a place where God reveals some of His glory physically on earth, but is a replica of the place where the fullness of God's glory dwells spiritually in heaven.

The model is important, because it helps serve as a picture of the priestly role of Jesus Christ. The priests would offer sacrifices for the people in the earthly tabernacle each day to atone for their sins. Furthermore, once a year, the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies to atone for the people. But Jesus Christ entered not an earthly Holy of Holies, but the heavenly Holy of Holies to atone for the sins of the world, not annually, but once and for all.

Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship, but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance....But when Christ appeared

¹¹ Ibid.

as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. (Hebrews 9:6-12)

The Tabernacle as a model of the Christ and the Church

The tabernacle represents that place where God demonstrates his love and concern for His people. It is the place where He has come down to dwell with them, redeem them, and show His glory to them. The final development of Yahweh's presence with His people, however, is found in the person of Jesus Christ.

(John 1:14, 18) And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.... No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

The full presence or glory of God has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Today we see God's glory, not in the tabernacle, but in the person of Jesus Christ. In Jesus, Yahweh has come down to dwell with His people, to redeem them, and to show His glory. To see Christ is to see the fullness of God's glory.

Now, even though Jesus no longer is physically dwelling on earth, His presence and His glory are still with us, for Christ has sent the Holy Spirit who explains and reveals the glory of Christ to us (John 16:7, 14).

Because of Christ incarnation and the filling of the Holy Spirit, today, God does not dwell in a temple made with hands, but in the church (1 Corinthians 3:16) and in our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19).

If we desire to grow in our knowledge of who God is, or to experience the presence of God, it requires an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ and a sensitivity to the presence of the Spirit. It requires living according to the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).

Yahweh's Presence Withheld

The Sin of the People (Chapter 32:1-6)

God had revealed himself to the nation of Israel. But when 40 days of the thunder and lightning on Sinai became normal and Moses did not come down, the people became restless. They wanted another manifestation of God. So they demanded of Aaron, "Come, make us a god who will go before us." (vs. 1).

Aaron fashioned the golden calf and proclaimed to the people, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." (vs. 4) Aaron was not making a new God, but was giving another manifestation of YHWH to the people (vs. 5)

The people had violated the second commandment and had taken the Glory of God and reduced it to a golden calf. They had already broken the covenant that they had agreed to in chapter 24.

The Initial Response of God (Chapter 32)

The covenant had been broken. God was no longer obligated to his part of the covenant. He states this intention to Moses in verse 10:

(Exodus 32:10 NASB) "Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation."

Moses pleads with God not to destroy the people for two reasons: (1) What would the Egyptians say about a God who frees his people only to destroy them; (2) Remember your covenant with Abraham.

Then Moses records a remarkable thought. God changed his mind. The immutable sovereign God of the universe, who had every legal right to destroy the people, relented. Because of God's abundant mercy, he allowed Moses to influence him and give the nation another chance.

The Second Response of God (Chapter 33)

God decided not to destroy the people. He decided to fulfill the promise to Abraham and give the people the land. However, because of their sin, the King was not going to go with His people.

(Exodus 33:3 NASB) "Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate people, lest I destroy you on the way."

Because the people had substituted the image of a golden calf for the Glory of Yahweh, God would not go with them. He would withhold his glory. The cloud which had been before the Israelites now descended on a tent far outside the camp when God was meeting with Moses. The people now had to worship God from afar.

Sin builds barriers between man and God. Even Christians, who sin after accepting God's gift of forgiveness through Jesus' death and resurrection, have to deal with the consequence of their sin. One of the realistic consequences is that there is an alienation that comes between us and our God whenever we disobey Him. Yes, we are still His child, just as the Israelites were still His people. Until we show genuine repentance, as the Israelites did, a barrier exists between God and us.

Moses was greatly upset by the prospect of going on to the Promised Land without God's presence. He has the people show their repentance and their sorrow by removing their jewelry. Moses again appeals to God and his reputation.

(Exodus 33:16 NIV) "How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

Even though Israel had sinned and God was not obligated to fulfill his part of the covenant, because of Moses' righteousness, God relents.

The concept of one righteous man influencing God's punishment on wicked people is not unique to this event. God waited until Noah was the last left before destroying the earth. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed only after Lot and his family were the last left. It does not take many righteous people to forestall the punishment of God. In the case of Moses, his righteousness influenced God to accompany Israel into the Promised Land.

Restoration of the People (Chapter 40)

The nature of the accompaniment is build up with a prelude in chapters 25-31 and 34-40. In the detailed instructions on how to build the tabernacle and its accouterments, God is proscribing how He wants His throne room to look. This would be the place where God in His glory would dwell with the Israelites.

In order for it to be a place where the Most Holy God could dwell, everything had to be done just right and to the exact detail. And the Israelites did just as God asked. Finally, after all the arrangements were made, God descended upon the tabernacle.

(Exodus 40:34-38 NASB) Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. (35) And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud

had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. (36) And throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; (37) but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. (38) For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.

The covenant was back in place, and God dwelt among His people as their King.

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