

Exodus - a Teacher's Guide

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. After picking out Abraham's family to be His representatives to the world, why did God leave them down there in Egypt for so long, until they had apparently forgotten everything they had ever known about Him, and had been brought to such grinding slavery? Do you think the other nations in Moses' day would have respected the "God" of a nation of slaves? Did God choose the children of Israel for special privileges or special responsibilities?

The land of Canaan (named after Ham's son, Canaan: Genesis 10:15-18) was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:5,13-21; 17:3-14; 22:15-18; 26:2-5,24; 28:4,10-16; 35:9-12; 48:4). After possessing this land the children of Israel were to be a blessing to all nations (Genesis 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Galatians 3:8 compare Exodus 23:20-33).

The land was given to the descendants of Canaan until they filled up their cup of iniquity (Genesis 15:16-21; Acts 7:2-8), as a fulfillment of God's 400 year prophecy. God was thus choosing Abraham's descendants primarily for a special responsibility. But they needed to be separated for some time from the Canaanites so they wouldn't adopt their "religious" practices. In Egypt they were despised by the Egyptians because of their occupation (Genesis 46:33,34) and their type of worship. This allowed them to multiply in relative seclusion with a minimum of mixing with heathen nations. But finally He had to take them out of Egypt because they were being cruelly oppressed. (Exodus 3:7-10)

"Gods" were rated in those days primarily according to how their worshipers did in battle. Thus there would be almost no respect for the "God" of a nation of slaves. Even the Israelites had lost a great deal of respect for their God, *Yahweh*, after He left them in Egyptian slavery for so many years. God had to do something quite dramatic to gain some respect once again.

2. Why do you think there was a decree to kill all the male children? (Exodus 1:16,22) If you could have asked one of the Israelites about their God as all the male babies were being killed (Exodus 1:15-22), how do you think they would have described Him? Did the devil have anything to do with this? If so, why?

Male children (especially the firstborn) were considered to be the special property of the "gods" of most ancient heathen nations. By destroying the male children, you would eventually destroy a nation completely because the girls would be married to men of other nations and thus would be expected to adopt their "gods" and their nationality. Except under very special circumstances, women did not inherit property from their parents. (See exception among Israelites: Numbers 26:33; 27:1-10; 36:1-13; Joshua 17:3-6) When the Egyptians began killing the Hebrew baby boys, the Hebrews must have felt that their nation was on the verge of extinction. It seemed to indicate to them the total impotence of their "God".

No doubt the devil had done some very careful thinking and calculating about the progress of things among "God's people". He must have realized that things were getting pretty serious for

“God”. Under those circumstances, it is quite possible that the devil thought it was time for Yahweh to consider sending a “Messiah” to rescue His downtrodden people. If so, the devil may have reasoned, if we kill all the baby boys we will be able to destroy or prevent the coming of the “Messiah”.

3. Why did God ask Moses to take off his shoes before approaching the bush? (Exodus 3:5) What are the implications of God choosing the name “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:13,14) for Himself? Why would God choose a verb rather than a noun as a name? This same name is used in the book of Genesis. Had Moses already heard of this name, or was the book of Genesis written after this disclosure?

Moses’ experience with the burning bush took place near Mt. Sinai (Exodus 3:1). God wanted to impress Moses with the solemnity of the occasion and the seriousness of His message. In accordance with the customs of that day God asked Moses not to come too close and to remove his sandals to show respect. (Compare Joshua 5:13-15; Ezekiel 24:15-24) He also covered his face because he was afraid to look at God (Exodus 3:6).

The Hebrew word transliterated *YHWH* was the ancient name for Israel’s God. It was probably pronounced as *Yahweh*. It is sometimes referred to as the TETRAGRAMMATON or “four-letter word”. It was regarded by the Hebrews as being too holy to pronounce. As a result, whenever they read the Bible and came to this name for God, they would actually pronounce the word *Adonai* in its place. *Adonai* means Lord. Ancient and modern Hebrew is normally written without any vowels! As you read along you put in the correct vowels yourself! Hundreds of years later, when Hebrew was no longer spoken and had become a “dead” language, they developed a system of vowel “points” that suggested which vowels were supposed to go where. Since they did not pronounce the word *YHWH* when they were reading, but pronounced *Adonai* instead, they actually put in the vowels for *Adonai* under the letters for *YHWH*. Much later when people were even less familiar with the Hebrew language, they tried to put the vowels from *Adonai* into the consonants for *YHWH* and the hybrid word *YaHoWeH* or *Jehovah* was the result. This name was never used for God in ancient times. *YHWH* is actually a special form of the verb “to be”. It is translated in various ways: “I am WHO I am”; “The Eternal One” etc. We do not know when Moses first learned this name for God but it is included in the books of Genesis and Job, each of which was written before Exodus. In most English translations wherever the Hebrew has *YHWH* the English translation will have “LORD” in small capital letters. Thus you can know when this special personal name for God is being used.

4. Why did Moses apparently not tell Jethro his father-in-law the truth about his plans for going to Egypt? (Exodus 4:18) Why did Moses apparently lie to Pharaoh in requesting permission to go into the wilderness for only three days to worship their God? (Exodus 5:3)

God told Moses that Aaron would be his spokesperson (Exodus 4:14-16). Moses’ first task when approaching Egypt was indeed to find and talk to Aaron. No doubt his first questions were about the family and what was happening to all of them. It is very likely that Moses even told Jethro more details of his plans that are not recorded in the Bible. This is not an attempt on the part of Moses to deceive his Father-in-law.

By their statement to Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron were making it clear to him that they did not nor ever could consider him as a “god”. They were also suggesting that they were rejecting all the

other “gods” of Egypt. This is why they needed to go out into the desert to worship their own “God”. They told Pharaoh that they must go out to follow the explicit instructions of their “God”. If they had really only wanted to go out for three days, it is quite likely that they could have arranged it with Pharaoh. There was a great deal implied by Moses’ and Aaron’s statement to Pharaoh and he understood these implications very well!

5. What is the meaning of, or reason for the incident with Moses’ son on the way to Egypt? (Exodus 4:24-26) What is the meaning of “The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses”? (Exodus 4:14)

See handout Exodus #3: **“God Seeks to Kill Moses.”**

6. How would you respond today if someone appeared to you as Moses did showing the three miraculous “signs” as proof of his divine mission? (See Exodus 4:1-9) If this is a good kind of proof or evidence, should God be using more of it today?

Human beings have always had a tendency to be impressed by things that they cannot understand or which seem to indicate some sort of mysterious or miraculous power. It is clear from Scripture that even genuine miracles can sometimes be counterfeited by human beings, not to mention the Devil! (See Exodus 7:8-13) The Devil can even make himself appear as an “angel of light”. (2 Corinthians 11:14,15) At the end of this earth’s history, the Devil will perform many miracles and lead astray almost the whole world! (See Matthew 24:4,5,23-27; Revelation 13:3,4,7,8,13-17) This would suggest that to trust in miracles is the most dangerous thing of all! Miracles are perhaps the poorest kind of evidence! In the case of Pharaoh, God used these simple “miracles” just to let Pharaoh know that he was not dealing with a few ordinary humans. God already knew that He would soon present a lot more convincing evidence—the ten plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, etc.!

7. What was the purpose of the ten plagues? Why is God apparently using might and power (Compare Zechariah 4:6) to get the children of Israel out of Egypt? Who killed the firstborn in Egypt, and why? Does God destroy the wicked in the end? (See 1 Chronicles 10:3,4,13,14) Did God harden Pharaoh’s heart or did Pharaoh harden his own heart (Exodus 9:34-10:1)? If so what does that mean?

See handout Exodus #4: **“Hardening Pharaoh’s Heart”**.

8. Why could God help the children of Israel win the battle against the Amalekites only when Moses’ arms were up? (Exodus 17:11) Was this some kind of magic?

The fact that the children of Israel could succeed in battle only when Moses’ hands were held up was an indication to everyone that God was the One who was actually winning the battle. This was not some kind of magic. It was God’s way of helping them remember that He was going to fight for them and conquer the land for them. Proof that they were not capable of winning any battles on their own is given dramatically in Deuteronomy 1:34-45. The story of the Israelites vs the Amalekites is a long and very interesting one! (See **Esther - A Teacher’s Guide**: #’s 3,10,11, and additional notes at the end)

9. Why did God give the children of Israel meat to eat, if He knew it was not good for them? (Exodus 16:1-15) Compare Numbers 11:4-34; 21:4-9.

We have record of three times when the children of Israel complained about the food. It was usually the “mixed multitude” who were the first to complain. (Numbers 11:4) On the first occasion

God gave them quails to eat for a day or two and began to feed them with manna. (Exodus 16:1-36) On the next occasion, they were complaining about the manna itself and God sent them enough quail to last a month (Numbers 11:4-34) but many of them died in a plague. What do you think of God's way of reacting to the request for meat in Numbers 11:18-20? Doesn't this sound like a pouting child? Why would God allow Himself to be pictured like this? God recognized that the children of Israel had rejected His leadership at this point. (See modern versions) They despised the provisions He knew were for their best good. On the third occasion God didn't give them any food but sent them fiery serpents instead, followed by a bronze serpent so they could be preserved from death (Numbers 21:4-9). Was God losing His patience? God simply withdrew His daily protection from them and they experienced what they would have experienced if God had not been daily preventing it earlier. (Deuteronomy 8:15; Ellen White comments #a) Did God miraculously provide food for all the animals as well?

10. At Mt. Sinai, was it the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit that was manifested on top of the mountain? (Exodus 19,20; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4; John 5:39; Luke 24:44) Why did God consider it necessary to come down on Mt. Sinai as He did? What was He trying to teach them (us) about Himself? What do you think God actually accomplished by this display of power? Why did He behave so differently 1400 years later on the Mt. of Olives (Matthew 23:37-39), or the Mt. of Beatitudes (Matthew 5)?

The God who came down on the top of Mt. Sinai was "gentle Jesus, meek and mild". (1 Corinthians 10:1-4) It really wouldn't matter since Jesus states plainly that if we have seen Him we have seen the Father, (John 14:9) and He is sending us another "Comforter" just like Himself, The Holy Spirit. (John 14:16; 16:7) In this case God realized that He needed to do something really dramatic to get the attention of the Israelites. Although He had managed to get them out of the land of Egypt, they were still not so sure of His power. See #11 below. God wants us to recognize His power but not to be frightened by it. (Exodus 20:20) The circumstances 1400 years later were very different and called for a different manifestation.

11. Do you think that God overdid the "fear" experience at Mt. Sinai? If so how do you explain what was happening 40 days later while Moses was still on top of the Mount? Why do you think the Israelites were so terrified after the Sinai experience? Why wasn't Moses afraid? (Exodus 20:19,20) Or was he? (Hebrews 12:18-21)

God has demonstrated repeatedly in Scripture that the use of force and power never succeeds in accomplishing what He wants most. After God's first great show of power at the time of the flood, the people built the tower of Babel, not because they had respect for God but because they were trying to escape His judgments. (See Genesis 11:1-9) The ten plagues finally convinced Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go. But three days later he was in hot pursuit of them. (See Exodus 14:5-31). After the tremendous show of power on Mt. Sinai, the children of Israel rebelled 40 days later and built a golden calf which they called "Yahweh"—their "god". Much later, after Mt. Carmel, even the fiery prophet Elijah was scared to death a day later when he heard Jezebel's threats. (See 1 Kings 18,19) Tremendous exhibits of God's power only seem to set things up for a great downfall a short time later.

12. Why does God say He will visit "the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations"? (Exodus 20:5) Moses knew this wasn't right! (Job 21:19,20; Ezekiel 18; Deuteronomy

24:16)

God is not here threatening some vengeful act upon the children of those who disobey Him. The God who made the laws of heredity and of cause and effect is simply stating what He knows is true. (Ezekiel 18) Human beings need to learn that sin has serious consequences even sometimes for the innocent! This is part of what we are to learn in the great controversy. (Deuteronomy 29:19-21; See Ellen White comments # b)

13. Do you think the ten commandments are descriptive laws (like the law of gravity they describe how things actually work) or proscriptive laws (they are given by someone in authority to tell us what we may or may not do—like speed limit laws)?

Most people think of the Ten Commandments as proscriptive laws, perhaps because of the way they were given and the wording of the laws. If you were setting up a new community with entirely new laws, would you leave out any of the ten? Would you allow people to murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, etc. In order to live together in peace and harmony, we need to observe all ten. In light of this, the commandments might better be understood as “You will not...” statements. There is a very good reason for every one of these commands. Those who choose to violate them simply reap the results of their own choices. Such laws then are descriptive and not proscriptive. (See Ellen White comments #c)

14. What is the meaning of “he shall serve him forever” (Exodus 21:6)?

The following note, abbreviated from *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by Arndt and Gingrich, may be helpful. “To the ancient near-eastern mind the vast stretches of time that we try to envision as ‘forever’ were unfathomable. To them the term forever just meant ‘as long as it is supposed to last’. The Greek lexicon describes this as ‘of time to come which, if it has no end, is also known as eternity’.” While these verses suggest that forever does not have to go on for a long time, the righteous can be assured that eternal life will have no end because “there will be no more death.” (Revelation 21:4; compare 20:14) The servant mentioned in this verse clearly could not serve beyond his own death! The words “forever”, “eternal”, and “everlasting” all have similar meanings in the ancient languages. Compare Jude 7.

15. What were the people asking for in Exodus 20:18,19? Why?

This is the first suggestion in the Bible of the idea of a mediator or intercessor. It was not God’s idea that they needed one, it was their idea because they were afraid. They were asking Moses to serve as their mediator with God. They wanted an intercessor to protect them from dying when God spoke to them. In more modern times, Christians have wanted a Mediator to appease God’s wrath and change God’s attitude toward them. Jesus Himself said,

John 16:26,27:

²⁶ kai; ouj legw umin ofti egw; e;rwthsw ton patera peri; umwn: (*Nestle-Aland Greek NT*)

“I say not unto you that I will speak unto my Father for you.” (*Tyndale*)

“I am not saying to you that I shall be asking the Father concerning you..” (*Concord. Literal*)

“I say not unto you, that I will pray unto the Father for you...” (*Geneva*)

“I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you...” (*KJV*)

“I do not say to you that I will pray the Father for you...” (*RSV*)

“I do not say that I will ask the Father for you,..” (*Williams*)

"I do not say that I shall pray to the Father for you,.." (*Jerusalem; NEB*)
 "I do not say that I will ask him on your behalf,.." (*GNB*)
 "I don't tell you I'll ask the Father for you." (*Beck*)
 "I do not tell you that I will ask the Father for you." (*NAB*)
 "I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf..." (*NIV*)
 "I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf..." (*NASB*)
 "I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf..." (*NRSV; Translator's*)
 "I do not say that I shall have to petition the Father for you." (*Anchor*)
 "I won't have to ask him for you." (*CEV*)
 "I'm not telling you that I will make requests on your behalf..." (*The Five Gospels*)
 "I will not say to you, I will ask the Father on your behalf." (*Schonfield*)
 "I won't need to ask the Father to grant you these requests..." (*TLB*)
 "I do not say that I will intercede with the Father for you..." (*Twentieth Century*)
 "I shall not have to ask the Father in your behalf." (*Norlie*)
 "I do not promise to intercede with the Father for you..." (*Goodspeed*)
 "I need make no promise to plead to the Father for you,.." (*Phillips*)
 "I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf [for it will not be necessary]." (*Amplified*)
 "I won't continue making requests of the Father on your behalf. I won't need to." (*The Message*)
 "After that, you'll feel more comfortable in going to the Father directly and in my name asking Him for anything you need. And I'll be asking Him for things for you as well." (*The Clear Word*)

Nowhere does the Bible suggest that God's attitude toward us needs changing. (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:18,19) God has sent Christ Jesus to plead with us to come back to Him!

16. After reading through the entire experience of the Israelites while they were camped at the base of Mt. Sinai, do you think God wants us to fear Him, to be His obedient servants, or to be His friends? (like Moses-Exodus 33:11-13,17; 34:8,9; Numbers 12:6-8)

There are only a few people in the Bible that are described as God's friends. **Abraham** (Genesis 15:6 18:25; 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23); **Moses** (Exodus 33:11-13,17; 34:8,9; Numbers 12:6-8; Deuteronomy 5:4; 34:10); **Job** (Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:7,8).; John 13:23; 19:26; 21:7; 21:20). These "friends" of God obviously had such a relationship with Him that He could treat them like friends (John 15:15). Notice the clear distinction that Jesus makes between servants and friends. John seems to be the person who understood this perhaps best of all. It is certain that God doesn't want us to fear Him (1 John 4:18).

17. How could the Israelites be kind to strangers and foreigners if they were to utterly destroy anyone who offered any sacrifice to any "god" except the Lord? (Exodus 22:20,21)

Since the children of Israel were living under a theocracy and not a secular government, worshiping any other "god" was not only foolish and direct rebellion against the true God, but was also treason against the government! Death has almost always been the accepted punishment for treason. But foreigners or aliens who were respectful to the true God were to be treated generously just like Israelites. (Exodus 12:19,48,49; 22:21; Leviticus 18:26; 19:33,34; 23:22; 25:6; Deuteronomy 1:16; 10:18; 14:28,29; 16:11,14; 31:12, etc)

18. What is wrong with boiling a kid in its mother's milk? (Exodus 23:19, Exodus 34:26, Deuteronomy 14:21)

This was an ancient Canaanite ritual connected to their worship of fertility. God is here doing everything He can to keep His people away from such corruption. This custom was spelled out in the *Ras Shamra* tablets found in ancient Ugarit, a Syrian coastal city opposite the island of Cyprus.

19. Why are only the men asked to attend the annual festivals to worship God (Exodus 23:17)?

In the ancient patriarchal system the males were the ones who were counted and specifically commanded to attend the festivals. (Compare Matthew 14:21; 15:37; John 6:10) This was not a prohibition against anyone else attending. (1 Samuel 1:1-23; Luke 2:41-45) As “patriarchs” the men represented their whole families in the command as well as in the fulfillment of that command. In actual fact, everyone who possibly could attended these gatherings.

20. Why was the “angel” who was sent to lead the children of Israel so unforgiving (Exodus 23:21; 32:11-14;32:34,35; 33:1-6)? Why is God pictured as so stern in some of these passages?

It is clear from the accompanying passages that the Lord wanted to lead His people into the land of Canaan. It is also clear that God wanted them to take Him seriously. When the children of Israel were not cooperating with God, He could not bless them, take care of them, and go ahead of them as He had planned. The Bible suggests that only those who are in complete harmony with God can expect His full blessing. The “angel of the Lord” in this passage is Christ, Himself. Throughout the books of Moses, God is pictured as very particular, even detailed, in his instructions. This is not the same as arbitrary and exacting. It suggests that God is interested in every detail of our lives and understands much better than we do the consequences of wandering away from Him. To a group of ex-slaves accustomed to being given detailed orders every day of their lives, these commands and even the penalties that went with them did not seem out of line. (See Joshua 1:16-18)

21. What is the meaning and purpose of “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”? (Exodus 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:19,20; Deuteronomy 19:16-21; See Matthew 5:38-42) Do you think this was ever God’s ideal?

In order to understand this command it is necessary to understand the community and society in which it was given. In 1901 a black diorite stone was found in the acropolis of Susa (Biblical Shushan). It was 7 ft. 4 ½ in. tall and 24 inches around at the base. On the top it showed a picture of Hammurabi, the sixth king of the first dynasty of Babylon, who lived approximately 1728-1686 B.C. shortly after the days of Abraham. In the picture, Hammurabi was standing in front of the sun-god Shamash. Underneath the picture were 282 laws spelled out in the form of a civil law code originally containing 3,624 lines divided into 39 columns. Many years later the stone was captured by the Elamites and taken to Susa where five of the columns were erased. In the preface and epilogue Hammurabi tells how he has been commissioned by the “gods” to be a wise ruler over the people. The people are to come and read the laws and know what is right to do. Compare these rules from the Code of Hammurabi (CH) with the Biblical injunctions:

CH 196: “If a citizen destroys the eye of the son of a citizen, his eye shall be destroyed.”

CH 197: “If he breaks the bone of a citizen, his bone shall be broken.”

CH 198: “If he destroys the eye of a subordinate or breaks the bone of a subordinate, he shall pay one mina of silver.”

CH 200: “If a citizen knocks out a tooth of a citizen, his tooth shall be knocked out.”

In the CH there is a clear distinction between free citizens and serfs (subordinates). In the

Hebrew laws each person is treated as a person in his own right.

CH 199: "If he destroys the eye of a citizen's slave, or breaks the bone of a citizen's slave, he shall pay half of the purchasing price."

Exodus 21:26: "And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake."

In general the laws of Moses were more humane and recognized the rights of the individual more than the CH did. In 1948, an even earlier code known as the Code of Lipit-Ishtar was discovered and published. It was written in Sumerian one or two centuries before the Code of Hammurabi but is very similar and in fact contains a number of laws that are identical. Also in 1948, the Code of King Bilalama of Eshnunna who ruled some 300 years before Hammurabi was published. It is clearly a predecessor to the other two codes. In 1954, an even earlier code, known as the code of Ur-Nammu, was discovered and found to be much more humane than any of the three pagan codes. This would suggest that the closer the laws were to the original verbal commands given by God to all men (compare Genesis 26:5) the more they reflect the great Lawgiver. (See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 616-619)

22. Why was it necessary for Moses and the others who were called up into the mount to wait for extended periods of time before they were ready to approach God? What changes actually took place during this time? What do you think happened to Moses that caused his face to shine (Exodus 34:29-35)? Did Moses ever describe God's back? (Exodus 33:23) Why couldn't Moses see God's face (Exodus 33:20)? Was God saying, "If I catch you peeking at Me, I'll kill you?" Or was there some other reason why Moses couldn't look at Him?

God had told Moses that no one could see His face and live. Note carefully that this does not refer to occasions when God appeared in human form and veiled His glory. In this case Moses asked to see God in His full glory. (Exodus 33:18) The fact that God said he could not is no arbitrary command on God's part. Exposed to the full light of God's glory sinful human beings would be consumed. God is here showing Moses as much of His glory as Moses can tolerate.

23. What was God's original plan for the conquest of the land of Canaan (Exodus 23:27,28)?

God had given the inhabitants of Canaan 400 years of probation. (Genesis 15:12-16) Abraham had traveled up and down in their land and no doubt spoke to them about the true God. They should have known the true God through their ancestors as well. When these Canaanites had become so wicked that God felt it was necessary to drive them out of the land, He still made it clear that any of them who would recognize the true God and worship Him would be accepted. (See above #17) For the next 1200 to 1300 years the land was to be given to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Genesis 17:7,8; 26:3,4; 28:13,14) Nevertheless they also were clearly warned of the consequences if they followed the footsteps of their predecessors in the land. (See Leviticus 26:14-46; Deuteronomy 7:17-26; 8:18-20; 11:17; 29:24-28) The punishment promised to the Jews was perhaps even more severe than that meted out to the Canaanites! See Handout Exodus #5: ***"Was God Fair to the Egyptians and the Canaanites?"***

24. Why did a God who said, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" (Exodus 20:4) immediately ask them to make the ark with its two golden angels? (Exodus 25:10-22)

The word "cherub" or the plural "cherubim" probably comes from an Assyrian word *karabu*

meaning “to bless” or “to pray”. The position of these “cherubim” facing each other and the Shekinah representing God’s presence above the mercy seat in the middle is not suggestive of an idol, but represents God’s plan to bless the children of Israel if they will remain faithful to Him. Furthermore, the ark was located in the most holy compartment of the tent or tabernacle. It was thus out of view of all people except the High Priest and those who prepared it for carrying when the tent moved. The ark was never intended as an object of worship.

25. When God began giving the commandments, why didn’t He say simply, “There are no other gods” instead of “Thou shalt have no other gods before me?” Does God just want to be pre-eminent among others or is He the only God? (Exodus 20:3)

God is here using a Hebrew idiom that means “besides me”, “in addition to me”, or “in opposition to me”. This command in connection with the next one clearly forbids the worship of any other “god”. God does however recognize that the children of Israel have come from an environment and were going to a new country where many “gods” were worshiped. These polytheistic religions were strictly forbidden. God says again and again “I am the LORD” and there is none else. (See Joel 2:27)

26. Why did God say, “Thou shalt not kill” and then order His own children to kill so many times: **the man who gathered sticks on Sabbath** (Numbers 15:32-36); **anyone who worships Molech** (Leviticus 20:2); **the man who cursed** (Leviticus 24:10-18); or **who murders someone** (Numbers 35:16-24); **false prophets** (Deuteronomy 13:1-5); **promoters of a new religion** (Deuteronomy 13:6-18; 17:2-5); or **someone who is disrespectful to his parents** (Deuteronomy 21:18-21); **who commits adultery** (Deuteronomy 22:20-27); or **people who steal** (Joshua 7)?

At this time when the Israelites are first entering into their new land, God needs to have the full cooperation of all in order to get things started right. See “**Leviticus-A Teacher’s Guide**” question # 7.

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Ellen White Quotes:

ST, September 2, 1880; PP 392; RH, November 5, 1903.

a. *Patriarchs and Prophets* 429

Because they [the children of Israel] had been shielded by divine power they had not realized the countless dangers by which they were continually surrounded. In their ingratitude and unbelief they had anticipated death, and now the Lord permitted death to come upon them. The poisonous serpents that infested the wilderness were called fiery serpents, on account of the terrible effects produced by their sting, it causing violent inflammation and speedy death. **As the protecting hand of God was removed from Israel**, great numbers of the people were attacked by these venomous creatures.

b. *Patriarchs and Prophets* 306

“\Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.’ It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing, but they are not punished for the parents’ guilt, except as they participate in their sins. It is usually the case, however, that children walk in the steps of their parents. By inheritance and example the sons become partakers of the father’s sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and

debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation. This fearful truth should have a solemn power to restrain men from following a course of sin.”

c. *Christ's Object Lessons* 315

God requires perfection of His children. His law is a transcript of His own character, and it is the standard of all character. **This infinite standard is presented to all that there may be no mistake in regard to the kind of people whom God will have to compose His kingdom.** The life of Christ on earth was a perfect expression of God's law, and when those who claim to be children of God become Christlike in character, they will be obedient to God's commandments. **Then the Lord can trust them to be of the number who shall compose the family of heaven.** Clothed in the glorious apparel of Christ's righteousness, they have a place at the King's feast. They have a right to join the blood-washed throng. *Christ's Object Lessons* 315; *God's Amazing Grace* 148 (1900)

“Who can measure or anticipate the gift of God? For ages sin had interrupted the flow of divine benevolence to man; but God's mercy and love for the fallen race have not ceased to accumulate, nor lost their earthward direction. The inhabitants of the world, their reason perverted, have turned the earth into a lazar-house. But God still lives and reigns, and in Christ He has poured on the world a healing flood. **In the gift of God's dear Son, a definite view of His character has been given to the race that is never absent from His mind. His very heart is laid open in the royal law. That infinite standard is presented to all, that there may be no mistake in regard to that kind of people God would have compose His kingdom. It is only those who are obedient to all His commandments who will become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. These will be honored with a citizenship above, a life that measures with the life of God,--a life without sorrow, pain, or death throughout eternal ages.**” *The Signs of the Times*, November 17, 1898