



5

God Chooses Israel

Summary

God brought Israel out of slavery and made them His chosen people. The Lord raised up Moses, who led Israel, despite their frequent grumbling and lack of faith, into the Promised Land. The period of the Judges was marked by everyone doing what was right in his own eyes. During this period, however, Ruth, an ancestor of David, showed great faith and was rewarded for it. The Law of Moses gave structure to the life of Israel and taught the people what it meant to worship the one true holy God.

Lessons

- 21 - Israel Becomes a Nation
- 22 - Key Event: The Exodus
- 23 - Key Person: Moses
- 24 - Everyday Life: The Story of Ruth
- 25 - Bible Study: The Law

Miriam's Dance, from a 14th-century Bulgarian Psalter

Memory Work

Learn Psalm 78:5-7 by the end of the unit.

Books Used

The Bible (You will read the book of Ruth while you are reading Lesson 24.)

In Their Words

The Cat of Bubastes

Project (choose one)

1) Write 300 to 500 words on one of the following topics:

- Write journal entries from the Exodus through the wilderness as if you were an Israelite. Record your observations, fears, and faith. See Lesson 22.
- Write a character study of Moses: his strengths, his weaknesses, his successes, his failures, and how God helped him grow. See Lesson 23.

2) Make a video documentary of the early history of Israel as told in this unit. Your documentary should be at least five minutes long.

3) Create a painting that celebrates the law that God gave to Moses. See Lesson 25.



View from Mount Carmel, Israel

Lesson 21

Israel Becomes a Nation

During the second half of the second millennium BC (1500-1000 BC), the Shang dynasty exercised control of China. The Hindu religion was growing in India. Phoenician ships were trading and exploring around the Mediterranean Sea and even into the Atlantic Ocean. The city of Mycenae was built in southern Greece. The Trojan War took place. Stonehenge was already a landmark in England. Mayan tribes were living in villages in Central America.

Meanwhile, along the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean, a nation that had begun as one large family underwent a people movement that took them from being slaves in Egypt to possessors of a land on the eastern Mediterranean coast. Many nations settled new lands during this period. What was unique about this particular group is that their identity, their move, and their new land were all specially guided by God.

Affliction and Deliverance

The extended family of Jacob's sons and their children had come to Egypt in peace and with the approval of Pharaoh. Jacob's son Joseph had been Pharaoh's vizier and had arranged for his family to

move to Egypt during the famine. They lived in the land of Goshen and prospered.

After several years, however, a different pharaoh came to the throne who did not remember Joseph and the agreement by which the sons of Israel had been allowed to live in the land. This new pharaoh feared the growing number of Israelites. Desiring to show his authority, he subjugated the Israelites to forced labor, requiring them to make bricks for his many building projects. However, the more they were oppressed, the more the Israelites grew.

Pharaoh next tried a policy of ethnic cleansing by selective infanticide. He ordered Hebrew midwives to kill all male Israelite children and only let the girls live. This, he might have thought, would give the Israelites fewer potential soldiers. The girls could be intermingled with other slaves and the potential threat diffused. But the midwives feared God and refused to kill the male children, and God blessed the midwives for what they did.

Deliverance for the Israelites came from within Pharaoh's own household. A woman of the tribe of Levi hid her baby boy in a basket and put it into the Nile, where it was found by Pharaoh's daughter. The princess named the boy Moses and raised him as her own son. When Moses was about forty years old, he killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew.

Pharaoh heard about it and tried to kill Moses, but Moses escaped into the land of Midian. There Moses married Zipporah, daughter of Jethro, and tended his father-in-law's flocks.

About forty years later, God called Moses from a burning bush to return to Egypt and tell the new Pharaoh to release the descendants of Israel from bondage so that they could go into the wilderness and worship Him. Moses was reluctant to do so at first, but he eventually agreed and returned to Egypt. Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let this large band of workers and potential enemies leave his control. God sent a series of plagues on Egypt, which finally convinced Pharaoh to release them. God parted the Red Sea so that the Israelites could escape. When Pharaoh and his army chased them, God sent the waters of the sea back over the pursuers and drowned them.

Chosen People and the Promised Land

In the wilderness, God initiated a covenant in which He declared that He would be the God of the Israelites and called them to be His people. They were to set themselves apart from the world as a holy nation, dedicated to worshiping and serving only the one true God. The Lord set forth His Law for them to observe and gave instructions for building a large tent or tabernacle as the place they were to worship Him. The people agreed to the covenant, but their commitment to it was shaky. Almost immediately they began worshiping a golden calf that Aaron, Moses' brother, made for them.

The Israelites showed lack of faith many times, but especially when they listened to the faithless report of spies who had searched out the land of Canaan which God had promised to give them. Ten spies said that the Israelites could never overcome the people who were living in the land. Joshua and Caleb believed that God would bring them victory,



*Detail from Worshipping of the Golden Calf
Lucas van Leyden (Dutch, c. 1530)*

but the people listened to the ten fearful ones. As a result, God made them wander in the desert for forty years, until that adult generation had died off.

Moses led them to the border of the Promised Land, but God did not allow him to enter it because of his own disobedience. Joshua took up the role of leader and led the Israelites across the Jordan, which God divided for them just as He had divided the Red Sea for the previous generation. Since Canaanite tribes already lived there, Israel had to fight them in order to capture their cities and take control of the land. The Israelites defeated the Canaanites, but some pagan people continued to live in the land and became an influence on the Israelites that caused them to disobey God, even to the point of worshiping idols. Joshua oversaw the allotment of land to the various tribes of Israel. Some had chosen to live east of the Jordan but had promised to serve God and to help capture Canaan for their brothers.

The Period of the Judges

God always wanted the Israelites to look to Him and not to any human as their true leader. In a stirring farewell speech, Joshua challenged the Israelites to put away the gods they had known in Egypt and the gods their forefathers had known in Mesopotamia and to turn aside from the gods of the Canaanites. “Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

Joshua’s generation did not do a good job of teaching their children about the Lord. When they died out, a generation arose that did not follow the God of their fathers. The Israelites forsook the Lord

and began to worship the gods of the people around them. The Hebrew word for master is *ba’al*. It came to be used for the chief Canaanite god (Ba’al) and for other gods as well (the Ba’als). They also worshiped the goddess Ashtoreth (plural, Ashtaroth).

A cycle of events repeated itself several times during this period in Israel’s history. Because of Israel’s unfaithfulness, God turned them over to enemies and plunderers. The people cried out to the Lord for help, and God raised up a judge to deliver them. Under the judge the Israelites routed the enemy and peace was restored. Then the people forgot their blessings, returned to following Ba’al and other gods, and the cycle began again (see Judges chapter 2).

Detail from Samson with the Philistines, Carl Heinrich Bloch (Danish, 1863)



The term judge brings to our minds the hearing of court cases; but only one judge, Deborah, is described as settling disputes (Judges 4). The term judge as used in the book of Judges is best understood as referring to someone who brought the judgment of God against Israel's enemies in battle. Deborah, by the way, does not disprove the Biblical pattern of male spiritual leadership. She actually filled a vacuum caused by the lack of responsible male leadership on the part of Barak.

The stories recorded in the book of Judges tell of gross unfaithfulness and immorality committed during this time. Instead of enjoying the new land that God had given them and the abundant provision God had promised, the Israelites wandered spiritually and did not live up to their identity as God's holy people. The last verse of Judges says it well: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

Conclusion

The children of Israel did not build pyramids or other structures that still stand today. They did not contribute significant scientific or mathematical advances to mankind's knowledge. Israel did not command a vast territory in a way that served as the model for governing an empire.

Instead, the legacy that Israel gave to the world was the knowledge of what it means to live for the one true God—and what it means when an individual or a nation does not live this way. As we will see later in this unit, the Law that God gave to Moses has had a significant impact on Western legal practices. The inspired writings of the Hebrews have had an influence on our thought and literature that cannot be measured. God's working with Israel is an important building block in His providing a Savior for all the world. These are the reasons why a study of Israel is important, not just for religious history but for world history in general.

*“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous!
Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God
is with you wherever you go.”*
Joshua 1:9

Assignments for Lesson 21

Bible Read Exodus 1-5. Commentary available in *Student Review*.

Literature Continue reading *The Cat of Bubastes*. Finish it by the end of this unit.

Student Review Optional: Answer the questions for Lesson 21.



*Detail from The Israelites Crossing the Red Sea
Juan de la Corte (Spanish, c. 1650)*

Lesson 22 - Key Event

The Exodus

In the Exodus, God fulfilled His promise to Abraham by making a nation of his descendants and giving them the land of Canaan. The Exodus is the most significant single event in the history of Old Testament Israel. It brought independence for Israel, showed God's willingness to act on their behalf, and gave them their identity as God's people.

First Kings 6:1 says that Solomon began the temple 480 years after the sons of Israel left Egypt. We are fairly certain that the temple was begun around 966 BC, which would put the Exodus around 1446 BC.

From Oppression to Hope

God brought good out of bad when He led Joseph through many trials to become vizier of Egypt. Through God's mercy, Jacob's household was able to come to Egypt and live in prosperity. However, this good thing turned bad when a different pharaoh feared the Israelites and made them perform hard labor. God heard their groaning; remembered the covenant He had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and acted to end their suffering.

The Lord called Moses to lead His people out of bondage. Pharaoh's first response to Moses' call to let God's people go was to accuse the Israelites of

being lazy and to increase their work load. Rather than thanking Moses for being their deliverer, the Israelites called down God's judgment upon him for making their lives more difficult.

Plagues and Deliverance

To convince Pharaoh, God initiated a series of plagues on Egypt. God used the plagues to show that He was more powerful than the gods of the Egyptians and their magicians. Pharaoh was unmoved by the first plague, even though it showed God's power over the Nile River. Pharaoh's magicians reproduced it. After the second plague, which the magicians also reproduced, Pharaoh agreed to let the people go to sacrifice to God in the wilderness; but after the plague passed, he hardened his heart and changed his mind. The Egyptian magicians could not reproduce the third plague and recognized it as the finger of God, but Pharaoh's heart continued to be hardened; he still was not willing to admit that the Lord was indeed God.

The Lord protected Israel from the fourth plague as a further demonstration of His working on their behalf. Pharaoh again gave them permission to go and even asked that they pray for him; but when the plague passed he hardened his heart again.



Aaron Changes the Water of the Nile into Blood, *Jan Symonisz Pynas (Dutch, 1610)*

God continued to press his case by sending plague after plague, but stubborn Pharaoh responded by continuing to refuse Moses' request. The plague of darkness was especially humiliating to the Egyptians, who worshiped the sun-god as a chief deity. The Hebrews, meanwhile, had light.

The tenth plague was the death of the first-born in every Egyptian house. God said that Israel was His first-born son. The price that Pharaoh paid for refusing to let God's first-born son go was that his first-born son would be killed. As part of the institution of the Passover meal, God instructed the Israelites to spread sheep's blood on their doorways so that the Lord would pass over their houses. As

Pharaoh mourned the death of his own first-born child, he finally agreed to let the people of Israel go; and they left before he changed his mind.

As the Israelites fled eastward to the Red Sea, Pharaoh once again had a change of heart and set out with his army to bring the Israelites back. Seeing the advancing army, the Israelites became frightened and accused Moses of bringing them out to the wilderness to die. God parted the waters so that the Israelites could walk to the other side. When Pharaoh and his army tried to follow, the Lord closed the sea over them and they were drowned.

The Covenant at Sinai

The Departure of the Israelites Out of the Land of Egypt, *David Roberts (Scottish, 1830)*



Three months after leaving Egypt, the Israelites came to Mount Sinai. There Moses met with God, who offered a covenant to Israel. The Lord offered the covenant on the basis of the grace He had already shown in bringing Israel out of slavery to Him. All the earth is His, God noted; but if the Israelites would obey His voice and keep His covenant, Israel would be His special, chosen people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

The people agreed to do whatever the Lord said. Following an elaborate preparation, the Lord then spoke the words of the Law to Moses, beginning with the Ten Commandments.

God's Blessings, Israel's Grumbling

The people of Israel had a difficult time recognizing God's blessings and living in the faith that God was trustworthy and good. When Moses stepped forth as their deliverer, at first they didn't rejoice at their newfound hope but instead grumbled because Pharaoh increased their work load. When God brought them out to the Red Sea, they didn't trust that God would carry through with their deliverance but instead bewailed the fact that Pharaoh's army was following them.

God provided amply for the people, even though they complained frequently. When the people grumbled about the lack of fresh water, God gave them water. When the people grumbled for lack of food, God sent them manna. When they complained that all they had to eat day after day was the same manna from heaven, God gave them quail.

When God spoke from Mount Sinai, they were afraid and did not want God to speak to them directly. When Moses took a long time conversing with God on Mount Sinai, the people lost faith and had Aaron make a golden calf as a pagan idol. When ten of the spies who went into Canaan returned with fearful reports, the people did not rejoice at the land God was giving them but instead gave up hope.

The people of God, shown grace upon grace and called into a covenant with the one true God, did not let the blessings they received change their hearts. Instead, they focused on the difficult things before them and complained even about their blessings. Rather than becoming a grateful people who trusted the God who had provided for them again and again, they became a grumbling people who doubted God and abandoned Him at the least difficulty. May God's people today learn from their example and resolve to thank God for His blessings and to trust God even through the hard times (see 1 Corinthians 10:6-12).

Significance of the Exodus

The Lord commanded Moses to take a census of Israel in the second year after they had come out of Egypt. The census revealed 603,550 men, not including the Levites (Numbers 1:2, 2:32). We can safely assume that most of these men were married and that many of them had children. It is not unreasonable to conclude that one to two million people came out of Egypt in the Exodus.

The Exodus made Israel into a nation and gave them their identity as God's holy people. It showed that God can be trusted. Hundreds of years had passed since God had made His promise to Abraham. The intervening years had brought many unlikely twists and turns in the story, but God was faithful. Numerous references in the Bible point to the Exodus as a demonstration of God's mercy (see, for example, Psalm 105 and Hosea 11:1-4).

The Gathering of the Manna

Dieric Bouts the Elder (Dutch, 1467)



Each year, even centuries later, the Passover reminded all Israelites of God's mercy and helped them feel as though they participated in the Exodus. The fathers in every generation were to say to their children, "With a powerful hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery" (Exodus 13:14). Jews around the world continue to observe the Passover each year. However, those who do not know Christ are missing the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise.

This pivotal event of the Old Testament has meaning for the Christian as well. Just as God brought Israel out of the bondage of slavery through the waters of the Red Sea into the freedom and blessing of being God's people, so God brings us out of bondage to sin through the waters of baptism

into the freedom and blessing of being Christians (see 1 Corinthians 10:1-4). Paul describes Jesus as our Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). The wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness have been compared to the hardships of the Christian life. Crossing the Jordan and reaching the Promised Land have become symbols of death and heaven in many hymns.

The story of Israel is unique in history. God wanted the Israelites to have a powerful sense of their special, divine calling so that they would live up to His will for them. They failed in this to a great degree, but the call still serves as a beacon for those who want to escape spiritual slavery and find the freedom of a new identity as God's people.

*You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians,
and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.
Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant,
then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples,
for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me
a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
Exodus 19:4-6a*

Assignments for Lesson 22

Bible Read Exodus 13-15. Commentary available in *Student Review*.

In Their Words Read Dayenu (page 22).

Literature Continue reading *The Cat of Bubastes*.

Student Review Optional: Answer the questions for Lesson 22.



Detail from The Finding of Moses, Laurens Alma Tadema (Dutch, 1904)

Lesson 23 - Key Person

Moses

Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, through forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and to the brink of the land God had promised to give them. While in the wilderness, Moses was the messenger who gave God's Law to Israel; and he was the leader who guided them through many trials of faith.

Moses was a great leader, but he did not start out being bold and courageous. He grew into the position God gave him, and along the way he showed that he had his share of human failings.

Overview of Moses' Life

Moses was born in Egypt to Amram and Jochebed from the tribe of Levi. He was raised as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. We assume that he was brought up in the royal household and received an education in keeping with his status. However, he was aware of his Hebrew background, a fact which influenced a decisive moment in his life.

When Moses was about forty years old, he defended a fellow Hebrew by killing the Egyptian who was beating him. Word about his deed got out; and when Pharaoh tried to kill him, Moses escaped to the land of Midian on the Arabian

peninsula. There Moses met the family of Reuel, priest of Midian. Moses married Zipporah, one of the priest's daughters, and the couple had two sons. Moses' father-in-law is called by two names in the Bible. Reuel means friend of God and was probably his name (Exodus 2:18). Jethro, which means excellence, was probably his title (Exodus 3:1).

For the next forty years, Moses lived as a shepherd for Reuel, no doubt learning wilderness life and also learning the work of a shepherd, skills he would need when leading the people of Israel. Moses spent the first forty years of his life in the household of Pharaoh and the next forty years as a shepherd—quite a come-down in status.

At the age of eighty, Moses received God's call from the burning bush on Mount Horeb (also called Mount Sinai) to return to Egypt and lead His people out of bondage. Moses was reluctant to follow God's instruction, but he obeyed the call and went back to the land he had left as a wanted man. Pharaoh did not want to let the Israelites leave, but a series of plagues from God finally convinced Pharaoh to do so. Moses led the Israelites through the Red Sea and to Mount Sinai, where God initiated and established the covenant between Himself and the nation of Israel.

The Lord told Moses to send twelve spies into Canaan who would bring back reports on the land and its inhabitants. Ten of the spies returned with fearful reports and dire warnings about Israel's inability to take the land. Joshua and Caleb were convinced that God could make it happen, but the people believed the ten negative spies and bewailed their fate. God punished them by making the people of Israel spend the next forty years in the wilderness until that adult generation died out (except for Joshua and Caleb). So for the last forty years of Moses' life, he shepherded Israel in the wilderness and brought the new generation to the Jordan River in preparation for entering the Promised Land.

Moses himself, however, was not allowed to enter. Earlier Moses had struck a rock instead of speaking to it to bring forth water. Because of this act of disobedience, God forbade him from going into Canaan. After viewing the land from Mount Pisgah, Moses died at the age of 120. God buried him in the land of Moab.

Moses and the Burning Bush
Dieric Bouts the Elder (Dutch, 1467)



Guided by the Hand of God

The life of Moses was clearly guided by the hand of God. He was born under a death threat, as Pharaoh had ordered all male Hebrew children to be cast into the Nile. Moses' mother did cast her baby into the Nile, but she put him into a basket first; and the daughter of Pharaoh found him. Moses' sister arranged for their own mother to nurse him until he was weaned.

Forty years later, Moses fled from Egypt, again under a death threat. In Midian God led him to the family of a priest. When Moses returned to Egypt to free the Israelites, God gave him courage and the words to speak when he appealed to Pharaoh. God clearly had a purpose for Moses' life, and He saw to it that His will for Moses was fulfilled.

A Reluctant Leader

Moses did not accept the mantle of leadership willingly. When God called him at the scene of the burning bush, Moses gave a series of excuses to try to get out of the assignment, as recorded in Exodus chapters 3 and 4.

1. "Who am I to do this?" Moses asked. God's reply was that He would be with Moses (Exodus 3:11-12). It was not so much a question of who Moses was but who God was, and God was going to be with him.
2. "What shall I tell the Israelites about who sent me?" God was not commonly known by the Israelites, and of course they had heard much about Egyptian gods. With what divine authority would Moses go? God said that His identity is "I AM." The God who truly exists, as opposed to all the false gods, was his authority (Exodus 3:13-15).
3. "What if they don't listen to me? What if they deny that God has appeared to me?" Moses was not convinced that they would take his word for it, so God showed him two

miracles and gave him the promise of a third as proof that God had indeed spoken with him (Exodus 4:1-9).

4. “But I am not eloquent. I am slow of speech and tongue.” Evidently Moses had some speech impediment or a great fear of speaking in public. He thought God should use someone more eloquent in the role. But God replied, “Who made the mouth? Who makes someone dumb or deaf?” In other words, God was in control of Moses’ mouth. The Lord would be with his mouth and would give him the words to say (Exodus 4:10-12).
5. “Lord, send whomever you want,” Moses said at last, which meant “anyone but me.” The Lord was angry with Moses and said that Aaron would be Moses’ mouthpiece. God indeed sent someone else—but only to accompany Moses (Exodus 4:13-16).

Sometimes we give excuses to God, but they really do no good. God knows the situation, and He knows us better than we do. Moses was reluctant, but God could still use him as long as he obeyed. Moses’ weakness did not stop him from being God’s servant. God wanted Moses in this role; and even though Moses was not all he could have been at the time, God trained him on the job.

Intercessor for Others

Moses spent his life interceding for others. He acted on behalf of a fellow Israelite when the latter was being beaten by an Egyptian. He helped the daughters of Reuel when shepherds drove them away from the water. Moses pleaded with God on behalf of Egypt during the plagues. Of course, Moses presented God’s case to Pharaoh on behalf of the people of Israel.

In the wilderness, Moses appealed to God on behalf of the Israelites when God was ready to destroy them. On two occasions, God considered



Victory O Lord! by John Everett Millais (English, 1871) depicts Aaron and Hur helping Moses hold up his hands during battle with the Amalekites (Exodus 17).

wiping out Israel and starting over with Moses to build a nation (Exodus 32:9-10, Numbers 14:11-12). This was something God had done before in the case of Noah. Moses pleaded Israel’s case, even though the people were ready to cast him off and select a new leader (Numbers 14:4).

On both of these occasions, Moses told God that the action He was planning to take would not look good to other nations. It would make it appear that God had brought Israel out of Egypt just to do away with them, Moses said. Other nations would think that God was not strong enough to bring the people into Canaan. In addition, Moses pointed out, God had made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had given His word about giving the land to their descendants. In Numbers 14:17-18, Moses quoted God’s own words to Him, the words

He had spoken to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7 about being compassionate, gracious, and slow to anger. God relented on both occasions, but He did punish Israel appropriately.

Close Relationship with God

“The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend” (Exodus 33:11; see also Numbers 12:6-8). Moses probably enjoyed a closer intimacy with the Almighty than anyone else who has ever walked this planet except for the Lord Jesus Himself. This intimacy changed Moses’ life and helped him to become the leader that he was. God initiated the relationship at the burning

bush, and neither He nor Moses ever moved away from this closeness. It is because of this intimacy that Moses was able to intercede for the Israelites as mentioned above.

After the incident of the golden calf, God declared to Moses that He would not go with Israel into the Promised Land. Moses again appealed to the Lord, saying that God’s presence with them distinguished Israel from all the other nations on the earth. Moses asked to know God’s ways so that he could find favor in His sight. God agreed to do this, and Moses asked to see God’s glory. God allowed Moses to see His back (for no man can see the face of God and live), and the Lord declared to Moses His goodness and compassion.

The Tetragrammaton: YHWH

God revealed His name to Moses as “I AM” (YHWH, related to the Hebrew verb “to be,” Exodus 3:14). God’s identity is that He is the God who is, who really exists. God revealed who He is by the deeds He performed. The ancient Hebrew language did not have any vowels, only consonants; so God’s name was rendered YHWH (the Greek word tetragrammaton means “four letters”). The translation into German was JHWH, the significance of which we will explain shortly. In an attempt to obey the third of the Ten Commandments — not to misuse God’s name — the Israelites never pronounced YHWH at all. Instead, they used the word Adonai, which means Lord. In English translations of the Old Testament, when you see LORD in all capital letters, the word in Hebrew is YHWH. It is being translated the way the Israelites would have rendered it, using Adonai or Lord.



Many centuries later, when fewer people spoke Hebrew and the common pronunciations were becoming unfamiliar, Jewish scholars added vowel points, or symbols, to indicate how words were to be pronounced. For the word YHWH, they used the vowel points for Adonai. Thus the rendering in the Hebrew Bible became Y-a-h-o-w-a-h. The German rendering was J-a-h-o-w-a-h, which became Jehovah. But this word came about only in the Middle Ages. Jehovah was not used in the Hebrew Old Testament and was never used by Jews as a name for God. It is actually a combination of the consonants of YHWH and the vowels of Adonai.

The Mesha Stele (pictured at left, in The Louvre) is among the oldest known surviving written uses of the name YHWH. It was discovered in Palestine in 1868. Dating from about 800 BC, this monument was created by Mesha, king of Moab, to celebrate a victory against the king of Israel. Mesha is mentioned in 2 Kings 3.

Lesson 23 - Key Person: Moses

Moses' face was changed by his conversations with the Lord. When he came down from talking with God on Mount Sinai, his face shone. The other people were afraid to come near him, so Moses began to wear a veil. He lifted the veil when he talked with the Lord, but he kept the veil in front of his face at other times. Paul wrote that Moses used the veil so that the people could not see that the shine of his face faded over time (2 Corinthians 3:13). Moses was not only transformed physically by his relationship to God, but inwardly as well.

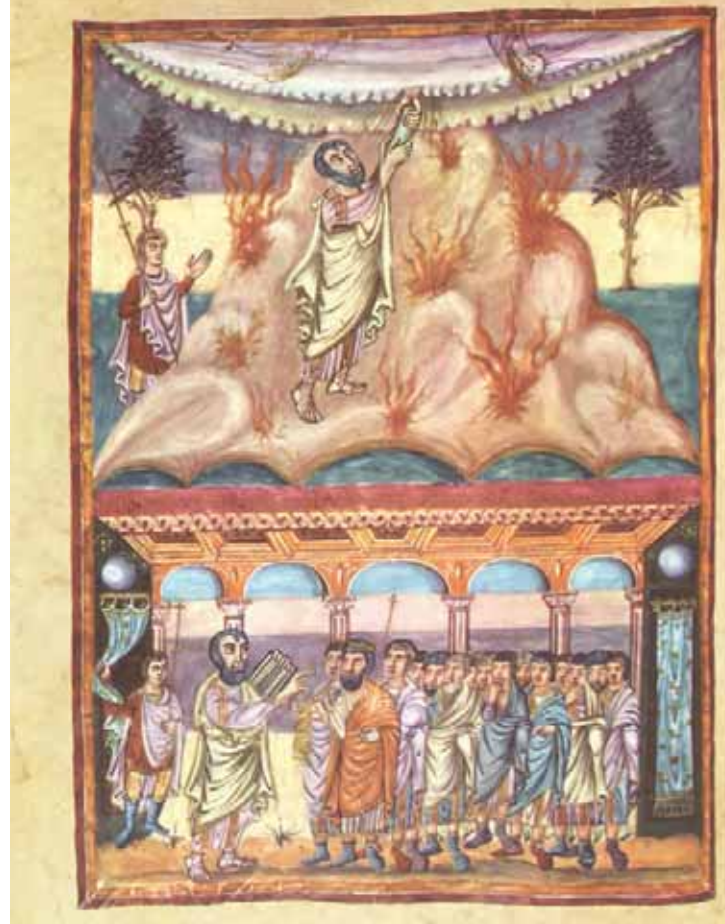
Moses' Spiritual Growth

At first, as mentioned earlier, Moses was reluctant to do God's bidding. He feared that since the Israelites would not listen to him, neither would Pharaoh. However, Moses eventually went boldly to Pharaoh; and, as we have noted, he approached God Himself with great confidence.

As the Egyptian army was approaching the Israelites at the Red Sea, Moses assured the frightened people that God would act on their behalf. God said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward" (Exodus 14:15). In other words, there is an appropriate time for prayer; but then comes the time for action. It is maturity to know when those times are.

Moses struggled deeply with the Israelites' lack of faith. At times he rebuked them, at times he complained about them to the Lord, and at other times he interceded to God on their behalf. It takes a person of great maturity to be able to separate the sin from the sinner, to rebuke sin when necessary but to pray for someone out of a heart of concern when prayer is needed.

Moses learned the art of delegation from his father-in-law. Jethro noticed that Moses was spending all day every day deciding issues between the people (knowing how they grumbled against God, we can only imagine how they complained about each other!). Jethro told Moses that he was in danger of letting the people wear him out with



This illustration, from a Frankish manuscript (c. 840 AD), depicts Moses receiving the Tablets of the Law and reading them to the Israelites.

this responsibility. Moses needed to appoint "able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain" to serve as arbiters among smaller groups of Israelites. Moses himself needed to concentrate on being the people's representative before God and handling the major disputes. Moses followed Jethro's advice, and life among the people ran much more smoothly. This incident is an example of the wise delegation of responsibility and the value of recognizing godly men who can serve God's people (Exodus 18:13-26).

In spite of his growth and his years of faithful service, Moses was not perfect. At Meribah, the Israelites again grumbled about Moses, this time because they did not have water. God told Moses to speak to the rock and water would come forth. In his anger, however, Moses struck the rock. Because of this disobedience, God did not allow Moses to enter the Promised Land. God said that Moses did not believe God or treat Him as holy in the sight

of the people. God could not let such obvious disobedience go unpunished. The consequences of doing so would have been too great for the people of Israel.

Choose Life

The book of Deuteronomy is a series of three sermons that Moses gave near the end of his life to the people of Israel as they were preparing to enter Canaan. He reviewed what had happened to them from the Exodus to that point, reiterated some of the Law that God had given through him, and made a final exhortation to the people to serve God faithfully, even though he knew they would not.

When Moses had outlined the choice they faced of following or rejecting God, he said, “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Moses laid down his life to serve his people, even though they did not appreciate him and often complained about what he did. He showed that he was able to rise above such pettiness, and in so doing he set an example that many generations after him would appreciate and honor. God showed His wisdom in choosing Moses to be the leader of Israel at the most critical time in their history. The world is different because of what he did.

A Note on Terms: *Through the centuries, people have used several terms for the land area at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. In this curriculum, we use the term Israel to refer to the nation of Israel, both ancient and modern. We use the historical term Palestine to refer to a larger area that includes Israel, especially during the period from the Roman occupation of ancient Israel to the establishment of the modern State of Israel.*

*Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant,
for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later.
Hebrews 3:5*

Assignments for Lesson 23

Bible Read Deuteronomy 1-6. Commentary available in *Student Review*.

In Their Words Read the excerpt from *Geography* (pages 23-24).

Literature Continue reading *The Cat of Bubastes*.

Student Review Optional: Answer the questions for Lesson 23.



Photograph of a Road to Bethlehem, August Salzmann (c. 1853)

Lesson 24 - Everyday Life

The Story of Ruth

The book of Ruth tells the beautiful story of King David's ancestors. It shows how a few people were faithful to God during the unhappy period of the Judges when, generally speaking, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). The story is an example of how God works to accomplish good for His people. We also see the importance of fulfilling one's family responsibilities. *Before reading further in this lesson, stop and read the book of Ruth.*

As inspired literature, the book of Ruth is a masterpiece. Clear themes are woven through the narrative. The covenant name of God, YHWH, is used eighteen times in the book. The Hebrew word group that includes redeem and redeemer is used twenty times. One main idea in the book, then, is that as Boaz was the kinsman-redeemer for Ruth, God is the Redeemer of Israel. God's redemption is illustrated by His redeeming Ruth and Naomi from poverty through Boaz.

The word return is used fifteen times, twelve times in the first chapter. Naomi returned to Israel with her daughter-in-law, Ruth returned from the paganism of her people to the right path of serving God, and in the end the Lord returned blessing upon Naomi when Obed was born to Boaz and Ruth. Another key concept in the book is kindness.

God showed kindness to His people even during the time of the Judges, and the Israelites in the story demonstrate this same kindness toward each other.

The name of the author is not given in the book, which might have been written during or after the reign of David in honor of his forebears. Set in a particular time and place in history, Ruth gives us glimpses of everyday life during this period. We will take special note of these insights in this lesson.

Difficulty and Sadness

In the days of the Judges a famine struck Israel, probably as punishment for its unfaithfulness. Elimelech, of Bethlehem in Judah, took his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, about fifty miles east to the land of Moab, hoping to be able to survive there as economic refugees. That Elimelech would go to Moab indicates his desperate circumstances, since Moab and Israel had long been enemies (see Judges 11:17 and Numbers 22-24).

Elimelech died in Moab. His sons took Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah, as wives, even though God had forbidden the Israelites from marrying foreign wives (Deuteronomy 7:3) and had forbidden a Moabite from entering the congregation of Israel (Deuteronomy 23:3-6). People do not always follow

God's Law. It could well be that Elimelech and his sons did not know the Law well, since copies of it were scarce and it was not faithfully taught and practiced during this time. More tragedy struck the family when the sons of Elimelech died, leaving the widowed Israelite Naomi with two widowed Moabite daughters-in-law.

In ancient Israel a woman was provided for by her father until she married, then by her husband until he died, and then by her sons. Naomi, in a foreign land because of a famine, now had no one to provide for her. When the Lord ended the famine in Israel, Naomi headed back to Judah. Her daughters-in-law accompanied her, but Naomi discouraged them from following her. She could promise no more sons to them as husbands to fulfill the requirement of levirate marriage (explained on page 118).

Amidst tears, Orpah followed Naomi's advice and returned to her home; but Ruth clung to Naomi and wanted to go on with her. Ruth made a conscious decision to turn away from her Moabite roots and religion and adopt Israel and Israel's God as her own. Naomi could see that Ruth was determined to continue with her, so she stopped trying to convince her to go back.

Return to Bethlehem

When the women arrived at Bethlehem, the people of the village were excited to see Naomi again after ten years. "Is this Naomi?" they asked. The heartbroken widow answered with a word play on her name. Naomi means pleasant, but Naomi saw her life as anything but pleasant. Instead, she said, "Call me Mara (which means bitter), for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me" (Ruth 1:20). Perhaps significantly, Naomi did not use the covenant name of God, YHWH, or even Adonai, Lord, but the less personal El Shaddai (Almighty). She felt distant from God's blessings.

God's blessings, however, were about to come upon Naomi in abundance. The word Bethlehem means house of bread. After the famine, it would

once again be a house of bread for Naomi and the people of Judah. Following her time of loss and grief, Naomi would receive more blessings from the Lord than she could imagine and would have much over which she could rejoice. Significantly, the narrative does not call her Bitter but continues to call her Naomi—Pleasant. Naomi's life would not be defined by the bitterness of the past but by the pleasant things which God had in store for her.

Naomi and Ruth had to find some way to survive since they did not have husbands to provide for them. The Law of Moses made provision for the poor in Israel. The Lord commanded the Israelites not to harvest every last sheaf of grain and every last grape in the vineyard. They were to leave the corners of the field and some of the grapes for the poor (Leviticus 19:9-10, 23:22). This private-sector work-relief program for the poor was intended to be a benefit "for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands" (Deuteronomy 24:19). Naomi and Ruth certainly qualified to be gleaners.

Ruth and Naomi, *Nicolaas Verkolje (Dutch, 1744)*





Ruth and Boaz, *Barent Fabritius* (Dutch, 1660)

Harvesting Grain

Ruth went out to harvest what grain she could from the fields. Elimelech had a wealthy kinsman named Boaz living in the region, but apparently Ruth knew nothing about him. Ruth 2:3 literally says that Ruth’s “chance chanced upon” the portion of the field that belonged to Boaz. The implication in the narrative is that she did not just happen to come to the field of Boaz. Instead, the Lord guided her path there. In so doing He provided for her physical needs and gave her the opportunity to find a permanent solution to her distressing life situation.

When Boaz came upon the workers in his field, they exchanged greetings that expressed faith in God (Ruth 2:4). Boaz noticed Ruth and wanted to find out who she was. He assumed that as a young woman, she would be under the protection of someone. When he learned that she was with Naomi and that the two of them were alone in the world, he

made special provisions to take care of them. Boaz was not going to treat Ruth as a poor vagrant gleaner.

Boaz had heard about the sacrifice Ruth had made in joining Naomi in Israel. He spoke a blessing upon Ruth, asking that she receive a full reward from the Lord, “under whose wings you have come to seek refuge” (Ruth 2:10-12). The image of baby birds or chicks under their mother’s wings conveys the idea of security from attack and provision for one’s need. Ruth had put her trust in the Lord. In his blessing, Boaz was asking the Lord that her trust be rewarded. A major part of the way the Lord took care of Ruth was through the kindness of Boaz himself.

Naomi was overjoyed when she learned that Ruth had worked in the fields of Boaz. She advised Ruth to stay with the female servants and to work only in the fields of Boaz. Being with the men would provide protection, while being with the young women would provide fellowship and keep her from being alone and possibly victimized. Working only in the fields of Boaz would show Ruth’s trust in him and her thankfulness for his kindness. It would also allow her to continue to enjoy his protection and provision.

Planning the Proposal

Marriages in those days were arranged by the parents, so it was natural that Naomi would take steps to provide Ruth with a home and family security. Naomi found out Boaz’s activities and knew when Ruth should approach him. The barley harvest being finished, he would be winnowing the crop at the threshing floor. Naomi instructed Ruth to prepare herself for meeting Boaz. When he lay down to sleep for the evening, she was to go in, uncover his feet, and wait for him to tell her what to do.

Ruth went to the threshing floor and hid until Boaz had gone to sleep. Boaz had enjoyed a successful harvest, had worked all day winnowing the barley, and had enjoyed a filling meal. Now he was ready for a good night’s sleep, but he still had one more business task to perform. He needed to protect his

Unit 5 - God Chooses Israel



A group of people reenacted the story of Ruth and Boaz in Palestine around 1940. This is one of a series of photographs showing “Ruth” carrying grain, with the city of Bethlehem in the background.

harvest from robbers, so he slept at the end of the heap of grain. When he had gone to sleep, Ruth came to him, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

Uncovering his feet, probably by removing the cloak that he wore during the day and used as a blanket at night, was an indication that she wanted to marry him. At midnight Boaz awoke and was surprised to see a woman lying at his feet. Ruth asked Boaz to “spread your covering over your maid” (a euphemism for marriage used in Ezekiel 16:8), since he was a near kinsman to her late husband.

Family relationships were important in Old Testament Israel. The kinsman-redeemer was expected to buy back family property (Leviticus 25:25), purchase the freedom of a brother who had been enslaved (Leviticus 25:47-55), or avenge a murder (Numbers 35:19). The law of levirate marriage in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 called for the brother of a deceased Israelite to take his dead brother’s widow and have children by her in the dead brother’s name. Although it is not specifically called for in the Law, the practices described in Ruth indicate that the kinsman-redeemer was commonly expected to fulfill the levirate marriage requirement for a deceased relative. Ruth was asking Boaz to be her kinsman-redeemer, redeeming her from poverty, widowhood, and childlessness.

Boaz, however, went beyond mere legal expectations. He genuinely cared for Ruth and had great admiration and respect for her. Although Boaz had been extremely kind to Ruth, he expressed thanks to her for her kindness towards him in being interested in him as a husband. She had not pursued younger men in town, which suggests that Boaz was several years older than Ruth. Because of her virtuous behavior, which was well-known in the community, Boaz was honored to serve as her kinsman-redeemer.

However, one matter had to be resolved before he could fulfill the role of kinsman-redeemer. Although he was related to Elimelech, another man in town was a closer relative. The text does not indicate whether Naomi knew about this closer kinsman. Before Boaz could properly take the role of kinsman-redeemer, the other man had to decline it. Boaz promised to resolve the issue the next day.

Negotiating with the Relative

Boaz went to the town gate, the best place to find the nearer kinsman with whom he had to speak. When Boaz found him, he called ten elders of the city to be witnesses. By making these arrangements, Boaz showed his good character and his respect for the opinions of others. He wanted to talk with the relative in the open, and he wanted reliable witnesses to be present. The way in which Boaz handled the situation suggests that he was a person of considerable position and influence in the community.

The negotiations began in the indirect way that is still typical of the Middle East. Boaz mentioned a tract of land which once belonged to Elimelech that Naomi needed to sell. The parcel of land had to be redeemed by a relative. Boaz told the relative that he (the relative) had first right and obligation to buy the land, but that Boaz would do so himself if the relative were unwilling. The relative said that he was willing to redeem the land.

At this point, Boaz mentioned Ruth, as if to say, “By the way, there will be a wife involved.” Apparently redeeming the land and redeeming the widow had to be done by the same kinsman-redeemer. This changed things for the relative, who said that he could not serve as the redeemer lest he ruin his own inheritance. If he married Ruth and she gave birth to a son, the field would revert to the son and the relative would lose his investment. In addition, the relative might also have been concerned that the expense of a family would cause him to lose the property he already owned. Boaz again showed his generous nature by not being concerned about such matters. Since the nearer kinsman declined to exercise his right to be the redeemer, Boaz was willing to do it.

The deal was confirmed by the relative giving his sandal to Boaz. This was a custom of the time to show that the giver was relinquishing all rights of possession. The nearest provision in the Law of Moses regarding such a practice is found in Deuteronomy 25:7-10, which interestingly enough deals with the law of levirate marriage. The law said that if a man refused to take his brother’s widow and father a child by her in his dead brother’s name, the woman was to take his sandal, spit in his face, and declare the shame of his refusal in the presence of the elders. The giving of the sandal to Boaz was not a matter of shame but of the relative merely handing over his rights as kinsman-redeemer. Apparently the Israelites’ practice of the sandal had changed since the Lord had given the original provision.

Michelangelo painted this image in the Sistine Chapel (1511-1512) as part of a series on the ancestors of Christ. Salmon is shown on the right and Ruth and Obed on the left.

The Connection with David

Boaz and Ruth were married, and they had a son. The women of Bethlehem rejoiced with Naomi over the complete reversal of her fortunes. They offered glowing praise of Ruth and expressed the prayer that Naomi’s grandson would bring her joy in her old age. The women of the town (who apparently had an active and influential presence as a group in the community) are credited with giving the boy his name, Obed, which means “servant of the Lord” (Ruth 4:17). This is the only child mentioned from the union of Boaz and Ruth.

Obed was the father of Jesse, who became the father of David. The book ends with the genealogy from Perez, son of Judah, through Boaz and concluding with David. Ruth was David’s great-grandmother. It is conceivable that David knew Ruth in his early years. The story of Ruth might well have been one of the favorite tales in David’s family history.

During a period of instability in Israel, David took his parents to Moab, Ruth’s homeland, for safety. While they were there, his parents stayed with the king of Moab (1 Samuel 22:3-4). Perhaps their connection with Moab through Ruth helped make this temporary move possible.



What Else Was Happening? (1500 BC - 1100 BC)

- 1 The Olmec civilization developed along the Gulf of Mexico. These people were creative artists, as evidenced by the many different types of sculpture that have survived. Among the most striking examples are the colossal heads (example at right).
- 2 The Minoan Palace at Knossos, Crete, was a sprawling complex with hundreds of rooms. More likely a religious center than a palace, it had an elaborate water drainage system, including toilets, and extensive storage facilities. Discovered in the late 1800s, the site underwent excavation and attempts at reconstruction into the 1900s.
- 3 The Battle of Kadesh took place about 1275 BC between Egyptian and Hittite armies. It involved some 30,000 men and a few thousand chariots. The Egyptians claimed victory, but they ended up retreating.
- 4 The Vedas are foundational religious texts for Hinduism—hymns, sacrificial ceremonies, chants, and magical/medical rituals. The material evidently began to be collected during this period. Followers memorized the information and passed it down from one generation to the next. The middle image at right is from a 19th-century written copy.
- 5 The Shang dynasty flourished in China. Tens of thousands of so-called oracle bones have been discovered. Questions were written on bones or shells in an appeal for dead ancestors to give guidance (example at right). The culture also practiced human sacrifice.



*Then the women said to Naomi,
“Blessed is the Lord who has not left you
without a redeemer today,
and may his name become famous in Israel.”
Ruth 4:14*

Assignments for Lesson 24

Bible Your reading of Ruth was your Bible assignment for today.

Literature Continue reading *The Cat of Bubastes*.

Student Review Optional: Answer the questions for Lesson 24.



Lesson 25 - Bible Study

The Law

While Israel was camped around the base of Mount Sinai in the desert, God gave to Moses a code of laws to regulate the national, personal, interpersonal, and worship activities of the people. This was not the first legal code that governed a nation in the ancient Near East. The Sumerians, Babylonians, Egyptians, and Hittites, as well as others, had written laws. God's Law did, however, have unique attributes that set it apart from other legal systems.

The Law of Moses served as the practical guide for the daily and yearly life of Israel. It has also influenced the development of Western legal systems in more recent times. This lesson will help you understand and appreciate the blessing of the Old Testament Law.

Covenant and Regulations

Any married couple can tell you the difference between a marriage and a marriage license. A marriage is a relationship between two people who have committed themselves to each other in a unique way for the rest of their lives. It is a bond shared by the persons involved. A marriage license is the legal document that shows the binding nature of the marriage. It stands for the many legal statutes

that protect and support marriage. A good marriage is not held together by a piece of paper. It is held together by the love and commitment that the man and woman have for each other. Yet without a marriage license, that relationship would have no status before the law.

In the same way, the heart of the relationship between God and Israel was not the Law, but the covenant agreement that they entered into at Sinai. What held the relationship together was the heartfelt commitment that God had for Israel and that Israel had for God. When Israel's commitment was lacking, the relationship suffered. The Law was not the sum total of the covenant; the purpose of the Law was to provide form and content to the relationship between God and Israel. In other words, since the covenant existed, the Law stated what God expected from the people.

The structure of the covenant and Law is similar to the treaties used in the ancient Near East between a conquering ruler (called a suzerain) and the conquered people (called vassals). The suzerain stated what he would do for the vassals and what he expected from the vassals. The vassals were not in a position to negotiate the terms of the treaty. All they could do was either accept it or reject it. However, they did benefit from the arrangement because the

suzerain promised to protect the vassals. In this vein, God called Israel to Himself and stated what He would do and what He expected Israel to do. Israel could not negotiate the terms of the covenant. They could only either accept it or reject it.

The nations around Israel tended to believe in multiple gods because they thought that no single god was all-powerful. God wanted Israel to know that He was their one God and that He was strong enough. He wanted their complete loyalty. God is a jealous God. He tolerates no competitors and no half-hearted allegiance. With YHWH, it is all or nothing. These are the terms on which He offered the covenant, and this is how He wanted Israel to respond to it.

A Covenant Based on Grace

Many people believe that the old covenant was based on law and the new covenant in Christ is based on grace. However, the old covenant was based on grace as well. God showed grace to the Israelites by bringing them out of slavery in Egypt, and then He offered the covenant to them on the basis of the unmerited favor He had shown them (Exodus 19:4-6).

God never wanted Israel just to obey the external requirements of the Law without any devotion to Him. God wanted the Israelites to love Him with all of their heart, soul, and strength. He wanted their heart-felt commitment to Him and to following His Word (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). God never wanted a rote, mechanical, or hypocritical going through the motions of keeping His commandments (Isaiah 1:10-15).

The Law must be understood in the context of the relationship between God and Israel. The first five books of the Old Testament are what are usually called the Law. These books of Moses are also known as the Pentateuch, from the Greek words for five books. However, not every verse in these books is a law. They contain many stories about God and His dealings with mankind and specifically with Israel. These stories are part of the Law, and that is the point. We must not try to separate the Law from the covenant. The stories in the Pentateuch give the context for the Law. The legal code came out of the entire covenant experience for Israel.

God wanted Israel to live as His holy people. He wanted Israel to follow His guidelines because He had done so much for them. However, many Israelites came to believe that being chosen by God meant that they were superior to other

The Books of the Torah

Torah is the Hebrew name for the first five books of the Old Testament (the Greek name is Pentateuch). In the Hebrew Bible, the name for each book is taken from the first few words of the book itself.

Genesis is about origins. Exodus concerns Israel's departure from Egypt but also includes many laws. Leviticus deals primarily with the regulations of the Levitical priesthood. Numbers is so named because of the census that opens the book, but it provides us with most of the history of the wilderness wanderings of Israel. In Deuteronomy Moses repeats the Law for a new generation. The name Deuteronomy is from the Greek deuterio-nomos, meaning second law. The Torah scrolls above are from the Chesed-El Synagogue in Singapore.





This Hebrew text is from the Book of Numbers. The name of God is in the middle of the image.

be worshiped in a distinctly different way. Because people matter to God, they were to be treated in a godly fashion. Because holiness is important to God, God's way is distinctive from other religions. Since people are important to God and holiness is important to God, to be God's holy people was an especially significant calling.

The Meaning of the Law for Christians

The Law is just as inspired as the rest of the Bible. However, the Old Testament Scriptures are connected to the old covenant, which is no longer the way people are called to have a covenant relationship with God. This is available only in Jesus, and the New Testament Scriptures are connected to the new covenant and are thus the authority for Christians in their covenant relationship to God. The Law led us to Christ as a pedagogue led a child to his tutor in ancient Greece (Galatians 3:24-25; the Greek word in this passage, commonly translated tutor, is *pedagoge*, better translated child-conductor). Now

that we have Christ, we no longer need a child-conductor. The book of Hebrews explains how Christ set aside the old covenant with its regulations when He established the new covenant through His blood (Hebrews 7-10).

Some provisions of the Law deal with timeless issues, such as immorality and kindness. These principles apply to Christians because the one true holy God has called the church to be His holy people. We can grow in our understanding of the nature of God by seeing what He allows and forbids in the Law.

No one keeps the Old Testament Law perfectly. In the first place, no one can (Romans 3:19-20). Secondly, the Law cannot be followed completely because the temple does not exist and thus the ritual law cannot be kept. In addition, we do not need to keep the Law because the sacrifice Christ made of Himself for us was a once-and-for-all atonement (Hebrews 10:14). Thus, keeping the Law is not something we should pursue. Efforts in the early church to make Christians obey the Law were met with stiff apostolic resistance (Acts 15, Galatians 5:1-6).

Conclusion

God gave the Law for Israel to live by as His chosen and holy people. Israel lived under what is called the Law of Moses for about 1,500 years. After the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, many Jews tried to continue to live by as many laws as they could. However, much of the ritual code was impossible to keep with the loss of the Temple.

The Law that God gave to Israel through Moses was a blessing for those called to live by it (Psalm 19:7-11). In the Law, the Israelites had instructions

from God about how they were to live and how they were to worship Him. They could see both that God is merciful and that God exacts appropriate punishment for transgression. God set high standards for justice and love, much higher than the standards of the pagan nations around them. The Law was not intended to be a list of burdensome regulations to keep people from enjoying life. It was God's way of guiding His people in the first steps of holiness, a gift that brought abundant blessings when they obeyed it, and the way that Israel could know how God wanted them to live in holiness and righteousness.

*For this commandment which I command you today
is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. . . .
But the word is very near you, in your mouth and
in your heart, that you may observe it.
Deuteronomy 30:11, 14*

Assignments for Lesson 25

Bible Read Leviticus 19 and Deuteronomy 32. Commentary available in *Student Review*.

Recite or write Psalm 78:5-7 from memory.

Literature Finish reading *The Cat of Bubastes*. Literary analysis available in *Student Review*.

Project Complete your project for the unit.

Student Review Optional: Answer the questions for Lesson 25 and for *The Cat of Bubastes*; take the quiz for Unit 5; and take the first history, English, and Bible exams.