

Exodus

WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT? God delivers his people from Egyptian slavery and gives them his law.

WHO WROTE IT? Christian and Jewish traditions say the author was Moses.

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN? In the 1400s B.C.

WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT? Exodus begins 400 years after Genesis ends.

THE BREAKDOWN

- Chapter 1: God's people suffer in Egypt
- Chapters 2-4: Moses' birth and training
- Chapters 5-11: Moses; Pharaoh; ten plagues
- Chapters 12-13: The first Passover
- Chapters 14-15: God parts the Red Sea
- Chapters 16-17: God supplies food and water
- Chapter 18: Moses' father-in-law gives advice
- Chapter 19: The Lord at Mount Sinai
- Chapters 20-23: God gives Moses the Ten Commandments and other laws
- Chapter 24: Moses and the people worship God
- Chapters 25-31: Instructions for worship
- Chapter 32: The Israelites sin against God
- Chapters 33-35: Additional laws and regulations
- Chapters 36-40: The Tabernacle is dedicated

KEY CONCEPTS

- Passover
- Worship (offerings, sacrifices)
- Covenant
- Laws, commandments
- The Tabernacle

SCORECARD

- Pharaoh:** Ruler of Egypt
- Moses:** God's deliverer
- Aaron:** Moses' brother
- Miriam:** Moses' and Aaron's sister
- Joshua:** Moses' military commander

READING TIME



WORTH MEMORIZING

- 3:14 God replied to Moses, "I Am Who I Am. Say this to the people of Israel: I Am has sent me to you."
- 15:2

"The Lord is my strength and my song; he has given me victory.

This is my God, and I will praise him— my father's God, and I will exalt him!"

- 15:11

"Who is like you among the gods, O Lord—

glorious in holiness,

awesome in splendor,

performing great wonders?"

- 20:1-17 (This is for the ambitious—it's the Ten Commandments.)

THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE

• THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

We understand the need for rules in sports, laws in society, and operating instructions for tools and machines. But very often we are tempted to think that when it comes to our private life, we can pretty much do what we want. The Ten Commandments remind us that we're made to operate according to rules that God set up. When we violate those rules, we hurt ourselves and others.

• WE WERE MADE TO LIVE IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

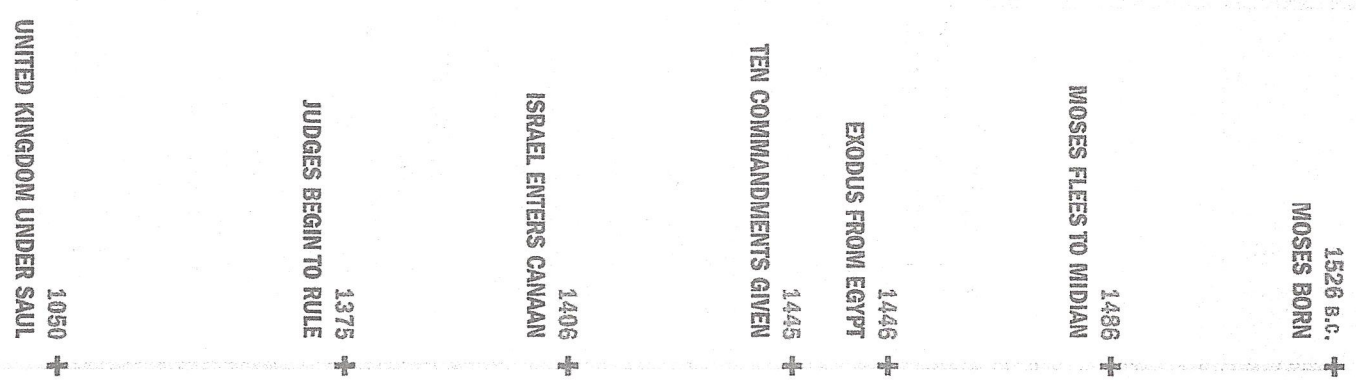
Though we sometimes feel we're all alone in this world, God doesn't want us to live like that. He has made it possible for us to have a relationship with him. That's where we find true fulfillment in life.

WHAT'S THE POINT OF
Exodus?

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God loves his
people enough
to demand
holiness.

Timeline





If you've ever booked a tour while traveling, you know everything depends on the skill of the guide. With a good guide, the trip is a pleasure. Inferior guides babble all day and may even get us lost. The book of Exodus tells us we have a Guide who provides authoritative commentary on life and goes before us every step of the way.

As the book of Genesis ends, Jacob and his family of about seventy souls are living in Egypt, where they found safety and relief from famine in the days of Joseph. But Exodus fast-forwards the story, and in the intervening years, the Israelites multiply into a mighty nation and are enslaved by the Egyptians. Exodus is the story of how God, using His servant Moses, delivered His people, crossed the Red Sea, traveled to Mount Sinai for further instructions, and built the tabernacle as a dwelling for God's guiding presence among them.

Exodus portrays the doctrine of redemption, even as the Passover Lamb is a type of Christ. That elaborate tent, the tabernacle, also wonderfully foreshadows Jesus, the One who tabernacles among His people, leading us unfailingly.

Knowing that God goes ahead of us removes the fear that comes from dramatic changes in life. Our Redeemer has promised to guide our steps and give us the wisdom we need, but we must first set aside anxiety, quiet our hearts, and set our minds on seeking His will and His timing.

He knows the way through the wilderness.



KEY THOUGHT:

God provides the redemption, provision, and guidance His people need.



KEY VERSE:

"Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today."
Exodus 14:13



KEY ACTION:

We must be still in God's presence, then go forward in God's power
(see Exodus 14:13, 15).



KEY PRAYER:

Lord, help me to stand firm and see Your deliverance, for I know You will fight for me; I only need to be still.

BASIC SURVEY

EXODUS

AUTHOR: Not stated, but traditionally attributed to Moses. In Exodus 34:27 (NASB), God told Moses, "Write down these words," and Jesus, in Mark 12:26, quoted from Exodus as "the book of Moses."

DATE: Approximately mid-1400s BC.

IN TEN WORDS OR LESS

God delivers His people, the Israelites, from slavery in Egypt.

DETAILS, PLEASE

The Israelites prosper in Egypt, having settled there at the invitation of Abraham's great-grandson Joseph, who entered the country as a slave and rose to second-in-command. When Joseph dies, a new pharaoh sees the burgeoning family as a threat—and makes the people his slaves. God hears the Israelites' groaning, remembering "his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (2:24 KJV), and raises up Moses as deliverer. God speaks through a burning bush, and Moses reluctantly agrees to demand the Israelites' release from Pharaoh. To break Pharaoh's will, God sends ten plagues on Egypt, ending with the death of every firstborn child—except those of the Israelites. They put sacrificial blood on their doorposts, causing the Lord to "pass over" (12:13) their homes. Pharaoh finally allows the Israelites to leave the country (the "Exodus"), and God parts the Red Sea for the people, who are being pursued by Egyptian chariots. At Mount Sinai, God delivers the Ten Commandments, rules for worship, and laws to change the family into a nation. When Moses delays on the mountain, the people begin worshipping a golden calf, bringing a plague on themselves. Moses returns to restore order, and Exodus ends with the people continuing their journey to the "promised land" of Canaan, following God's "pillar of cloud" by day and "pillar of fire" by night.

QUOTABLE

- > And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (3:14 NKJV).
- > Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go (8:1 KJV).
- > When I see the blood, I will pass over you (12:13 KJV).

- > "You shall have no other gods before Me" (20:3 NASB).

UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL

God told the Israelites to celebrate the "Passover" with a special meal of bread made without yeast (12:14–15). Three thousand years later, Jewish people still commemorate the event.

SO WHAT?

The story of redemption is on clear display in Exodus, as God rescues His people from their slavery in Egypt. In the same way, Jesus breaks our bonds of sin (2:15).

READ EXODUS 1 AND 34.

- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 21. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 16. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 16. →

HEART OF THE BOOK

MOSES THE DELIVERER

Pharaoh commanded the Hebrews to cast all their newborn boys into the Nile, but Moses' mother set him in the river in a basket among the papyrus instead. Pharaoh's daughter saw him and adopted him, and Moses was raised in the royal palace as a prince of Egypt.

When Moses grew up, he became convinced that he was called to deliver his people (Acts 7:25), so when he saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew slave, he killed the overseer. This became known, and Moses was forced to flee. He took refuge in the land of Midian, where he worked as a shepherd for forty years.

One day God appeared in a burning bush on Mount Sinai and told Moses, "I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:10 NIV). Back in Egypt, Moses performed miracles and called down devastating plagues. After the death of all the firstborn Egyptian sons, stubborn Pharaoh finally yielded and let the Israelites go free. Later, when Pharaoh's charioteers chased them, Moses raised his staff and God parted the Red Sea. The Israelites escaped, but the sea came crashing back down and drowned the pursuing chariots.

On Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and the books of the Law. Moses led the Israelites forty years in the wilderness, all the way to Canaan. God promised Moses, "I will raise up for them a Prophet like you" (Deuteronomy 18:18 NKJV), and Jesus is that Prophet and Deliverer (Acts 3:22–23; 7:37).



Moses was chosen by God to lead His people out of Egypt and into the land He had promised them. Moses is shown here in Moses with the Miracles of the Law by Guido Reni (1575–1642).

READ EXODUS 2-3.

- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 21. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 17. →

CLOSER LOOK

THE PASSOVER

Even though the first nine plagues had devastated the land of Egypt, Pharaoh still hardened his heart and refused to let the Israelites leave Egypt. So Moses warned that the Lord would send one final plague. He commanded the Israelites to sacrifice a one-year-old lamb at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. They were then to roast it and eat it after sundown.

He also instructed them to smear some of its blood on the doorframes of their homes (Exodus 12:7). Moses warned that they must then stay indoors all that night. "For the LORD will pass through the land to strike down the Egyptians. But when he sees the blood on the top and sides of the door-



The painting, *The Sacrificial Lamb* by Josefa de Ayala (1630–1684), shows the importance of the Passover Feast, which is in honor of God's grace and the deliverance of the Israelites.

frame, the LORD will pass over your home" (Exodus 12:23 NIV). This is how the Feast of Passover got its name. Just as God had warned, at midnight the Angel of the Lord passed throughout Egypt. He passed over the houses of the Israelites and didn't harm them, but killed all the firstborn males of both people and animals. After this, Pharaoh finally set the Israelites free.

For the next nearly fifteen hundred years, the Jews celebrated Passover. Then in AD 30, Jesus was crucified during the Passover Feast. He was the ultimate Passover lamb. As Paul wrote, "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7 NKJV). And John the Baptist declared, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29 NKJV).

READ EXODUS 11-12.

- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 18. →

CLOSER LOOK

GOD PARTS THE RED SEA

When the Israelites left Egypt, God didn't instruct them to head west through the desert, by the northern road. Instead, He directed them to take a southern route that brought them to the shores of the Red Sea. It seemed to be a mistake. Worse yet, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his chariot army after them. And there the Israelites were, trapped! But God had a plan.

God astonished them by miraculously parting the waters before them. "The floods stood upright like a heap; the depths congealed in the heart of the sea" (Exodus 15:8 NKJV). Since *congealed* means "hardened," it appears that God performed an outright miracle, causing the normal laws of nature to bend to His omnipotent power.

He could also have divinely amplified natural means. Exodus 14:21 (KJV) specifies, "The LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night . . . and the waters were divided." Even today, a phenomenon called "wind setdown" (sustained east-west winds) at the Bitter Lakes, north of the Red Sea, pushes the waters aside, exposing the lakes' bottom. After all the Israelites had crossed the sea, God may then have stopped the wind abruptly, causing massive walls of water to rush back with punishing force, drowning Pharaoh's charioteers.

However God did the miracle, He did it. The Israelites escaped slavery, and Egypt's chariot army was destroyed. And for centuries, this miracle was referred to as the greatest of God's wonders of old—a pivotal event in their history.

READ EXODUS 13:17–22 AND 14.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 21.



God delivered the Israelites from Pharaoh's army by parting the Red Sea so that His people could cross to safety. This deliverance is illustrated in *Passage of the Jews through the Red Sea* by Van Anraouky (1817–1900).

HIDDEN TREASURE

GOD SENDS MANNA

Soon after the Israelites headed into the desert, they ran out of food. So God said, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you" (Exodus 16:4 NIV). The next morning thin flakes like frost covered the ground. The Israelites asked, "Manna?" which is Hebrew for "What is it?" Then "the people . . . boiled it in a pot and made it into flat cakes. These cakes tasted like pastries baked with olive oil" (Numbers 11:8 NLT). The Bible calls manna "the bread of heaven" (Psalm 78:24 NKJV), and God supplied it for forty years. Some Jews told Jesus that God gave their ancestors bread from heaven and asked what miracle He would do. Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35 NKJV).

READ EXODUS 16 AND JOHN 6:22–69.

HIDDEN TREASURE

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

"Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire . . . and the whole mountain quaked violently" (Exodus 19:18 NASB). Then the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain and for the next forty days gave him laws to govern His people. "And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two . . . tablets of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18 NKJV). These tablets contained the Ten Commandments. While all the many ceremonial laws of Moses were fulfilled in Christ and are now passed away, these ten commands remain in effect. Paul said that "the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Galatians 5:14 NIV).

READ EXODUS 19–20.



This statue, showing Moses holding the tablets, is found in St. Martin's Church in Braunschwieg, Germany.

HIDDEN TREASURES

THE GOLDEN CALF

When Moses had been many days on the mountain, the people told Aaron, "Come on... make us some gods who can lead us. We don't know what happened to this fellow Moses" (Exodus 32:1 NLT). Aaron was in charge while Moses was absent, but he yielded to the pressure and made a golden idol of a calf. Then the people announced, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" (Exodus 32:4 NKJV). They then began partying. When Moses came down, he "saw that the people were running wild... out of control" (Exodus 32:25 NIV). God was prepared to wipe out everyone, but Moses pleaded with God, so He spared them. Nevertheless, three thousand of the worst offenders died.

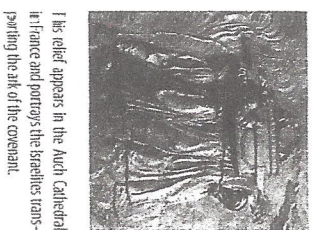
READ EXODUS 32-33.



The Golden Calf as in Exodus 32:4 by James Tissot (1836-1902) illustrates how the Israelites disobeyed God while Moses was away.

HIDDEN TREASURES

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT



This relief appears in the Arch of Constantine and portrays the Israelites transporting the ark of the covenant.

The ark of the covenant was a small chest made of acacia wood and covered with gold inside and outside. A golden lid called the "atonement cover" was on top, with two golden cherubim with outspread wings sitting on that. The two stone tablets of the Law, a gold jar of manna, and Aaron's rod were stored inside (Hebrews 9:4). When the Israelites were in the wilderness, the ark was kept in the tent of meeting. When Solomon built a temple of stone, it was in a special room called the holy of holies. God sometimes appeared and spoke from between the two cherubim (Exodus 25:22). That's why the Israelites considered the ark to be a symbol of the presence of God.

READ EXODUS 25 AND 37.

Moses

A Colossus Meets God's Love

THE FIGURE OF MOSES towers over the landscape of the Bible like a colossus. Only the names Jesus and David appear more often in Scripture than his. So what makes him so special?

You could ponder how Moses' mother spared his life by placing him in a reed basket and floating him down the Nile River, where the pharaoh's daughter found him (Exodus 2:1-10). Moses' name recalls the moment when the princess lifted him out of the water: Moses sounds like the Hebrew for "to lift out."

Or you could mention how he spent the first 40 years of his life as a privileged scion of royalty, until the day he lost his temper and killed an Egyptian overseer who had

Moses

demonstrated

God's

demanding

holiness,

but he also

demonstrated

God's amazing

grace.

abused a Hebrew slave. When his secret got out, Moses fled to a desert region called Midian (Exodus 2:11-15; Acts 7:23-29).

Or you could contemplate how Moses spent the next 40 years of his life in God's wilderness classroom, receiving a very different sort of education from the kind he had enjoyed in Pharaoh's palace. He married a local girl and started a family, far from the land of his childhood (2:21-22). Or perhaps you remember the "burning bush incident," when Moses received a personal commission from God to rescue the Israelites (3:1-4:17).

Then again, maybe you recall how God used Moses to send

10 fearsome plagues on Egypt to convince Pharaoh to "let my people go" (5:1-12:50); or how Moses held his staff over

the Red Sea at God's command to open "a dry path through the sea" (Isaiah 43:16); or how he gave his nation God's holy laws (Exodus 19:1-20:17).

With all the staggering events of Moses' life, however, we should never forget that he was human. He often grew weary of his role and was repeatedly disgusted with his constantly complaining countrymen (see 5:22; 14:1-11; 15:24-25; 16:2-3; 17:2-4).

One day this revered lawgiver—who had urged his people to obey God wholeheartedly and who frequently reminded them of the consequences of sin—disobeyed God.

The Lord told Moses to "speak to the rock over there, and it will pour out its water" (Numbers 20:8). But Moses, fed up with the Israelites' constant rebellion, struck the

rock with his staff in a fit of temper. Water did pour from the rock, relieving the thirsty people. But Moses had to live with the consequence. "Because you did not trust me enough to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel," God told him, "you will not lead them into the land I am giving them" (Numbers 20:12). Moses died at the age of 120, just short of the borders of Canaan (Deuteronomy 34:7).

And yet, his story doesn't end there. Moses exhibited God's demanding holiness by giving Israel the law, but he also demonstrated God's amazing grace. Centuries later, a living Moses was allowed to enter the Promised Land—when he and the prophet Elijah brought Jesus a touch of heaven just before our Savior began his march to the cross (Mark 9:2-4).

Colossal? Without a doubt. But Moses would gladly point you to the truly colossal: God's boundless mercy and love.

THE POINT: You never get so big that God's love is not bigger still.

Someone you
should know

Pharaoh

The Curse of a Stubborn Heart

MORE THAN ONE WIFE has complained about a stubborn husband, and more than one husband has taken it as a compliment. Yet stubbornness about the wrong things can carry chilling spiritual consequences.

Want an example? Meet one of the greatest villains of the Bible.

Most of us think of this man whenever we hear the word *Pharaoh*. The term was a title for the ruler of Egypt, like *king*, but it was also used as a proper name. In contrast to the wise and generous leader of Joseph's era, the pharaoh who ruled during Moses' lifetime nearly ruined his empire through arrogance and stubbornness.

The Bible tells us that the immediate predecessor to this ruler "knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done" (Exodus 1:8). Fearing that the Israelites, who lived in Egypt, would soon become too numerous to control, he forced them into slavery and eventually ordered them to kill their newborn sons (1:16, 22). Moses escaped the slaughter but as an adult had to flee Egypt after killing a slave driver (2:12). During Moses' exile, the pharaoh died (2:23), and a new ruler ascended the throne.

When Moses was 80 years old and had been away from Egypt for 40 years, God commanded him to return to the land of his birth and tell Pharaoh to "let my people go" (5:1). Time after time, the king refused. Despite miraculous signs and weighty threats, "Pharaoh's heart remained hard" (7:22).

If we continue to "harden our hearts" to the voice of God, he may eventually harden them for good.

But take a closer look at the whole story. God made good on his prediction *only after Pharaoh repeatedly chose on his own to act stubbornly*.

After the first plague (when the Nile's waters turned to blood), the Bible says, "Pharaoh's heart remained hard" (7:22). The same thing happened after the second plague (of frogs): "Pharaoh . . . became stubborn" (8:15). Again after the third plague (of gnats), "Pharaoh's heart remained hard" (8:19). After the fourth plague (of flies), "Pharaoh again became stubborn" (8:32). After the fifth plague (an animal epidemic), still his "heart remained stubborn" (9:7).

Only after the sixth plague, when boils tormented humans and beasts throughout Egypt, does the Bible say, "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" (9:12). And from then on, this stubborn man had passed the point of no return (9:34-35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8).

Pharaoh demonstrates that stubbornness is a serious spiritual issue with enormous and even deadly ramifications. If we continue to harden our hearts to the voice of God, eventually he may harden them for good. As the Bible says, "Whoever stubbornly refuses to accept criticism will suddenly be destroyed beyond recovery" (Proverbs 29:1).

THE POINT: Stubbornness is a spiritual issue with grave consequences.

SPOTLIGHT

THE RELUCTANT CANDIDATE

Moses put up five excuses to avoid becoming Israel's deliverer. God had an answer for every one.

MOSES

- 1 Who, me? I'm nobody. (3:11)
- 2 People will ask me hard questions like, "So who is this God who sent you?" (3:13)
- 3 Nobody's going to listen to me. (4:1)
- 4 I'm a lousy public speaker. (4:10)
- 5 G'mon—just send somebody else. (4:13)

GOD

- I'll go with you.
Tell them my special name: I AM.
Here are two miracles to get their attention. . . .
Who made your mouth in the first place? I did!
Okay, you can communicate through your brother, Aaron. Now, that's enough—get moving!

SPOTLIGHT

10 PLAGUES, 10 RULES

God gave Egypt 10 lessons on who was in charge (chapters 7-12). Then he gave his people 10 commandments (chapter 20) that have since become world-famous.

THE PLAGUES

- 1 Main water source turns nasty
- 2 Frogs everywhere
- 3 Gnats everywhere
- 4 Flies everywhere
- 5 Livestock epidemic
- 6 Boils on animals and people too
- 7 Major hailstorm
- 8 Locusts everywhere
- 9 Three-day blackout of the sun
- 10 Death of the firstborn

THE RULES

- 1 No other gods
- 2 No idols to represent other gods
- 3 Use God's name respectfully
- 4 Make the Sabbath day special
- 5 Honor your parents
- 6 Don't murder
- 7 Don't commit adultery
- 8 Don't steal
- 9 Don't lie
- 10 Don't covet other people's stuff

Personal Gold

from STUART BRISCOE

WHAT KIND OF GOD IS HE, ANYWAY?

If we knew who God really is, we'd show him "a little more respect." The problem in the modern world is that too often there is an inadequate knowledge of God. There's a lot of speculation as to who God is and what he's like. But we need to operate on the basis of revelation, not speculation. It is one thing for us to express what we *think* God is like; it is an entirely different thing for us to recognize what God *says* he is like. Speculation at the expense of revelation leads only to mystification.

What better place to discover who God is than in his self-description? When talking to Moses on Mount Sinai, God described himself as: "The compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Exodus 34:6-7, NIV).

Isn't that wonderful? Isn't it exciting to know that God is compassionate and gracious and forgiving and slow to anger and faithful and loving and kind? But that's only part of the picture. For he went on to say, "Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 34:7, NIV 1984).

We must make sure that we have a well-rounded picture of who God is: God is fundamentally holy, good, just, right, and fair. If we contravene his laws, if we insult who he is, resist his guidance, and ignore his direction, then he must respond in a manner that is in keeping with his holy, just, right, and fair character. He must, if he is true to himself, deal with us in righteous judgment. Truly it is "a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31, NLT).

But if we will admit that we were wrong and repent of what we have done, he will overwhelm us with his grace, loving kindness, and forgiveness.

SPOTLIGHT THE LONGEST-RUNNING MIRACLE OF ALL TIME

Nothing quite equals God's feeding program for the nation of Israel in the wilderness.	3,000,000	mouths (est.)
	x 3	meals a day
	x 365	days a year
	x 40	years
	131,400,000,000	meals served

Party Animals

Exodus 32

NEWS REPORTS frequently describe high-energy gatherings called raves, which attract thousands of young people with their alluring mix of music, lights, intoxicants, and dancing.

Though raves garnered renewed popularity in recent years, they are nothing new. In Exodus 32, thousands of Israelites enjoyed their very own rave.

Moses had gone up Mount Sinai to meet with God. When he was gone longer than expected, the people cast off their inhibitions and threw a wild party, asking Aaron, Moses' brother, to make them an idol. Men and women worked together on the project. Aaron and other craftsmen melted down jewelry and carefully formed a gold calf. Then the people ate, drank, and "indulged in pagan revelry" (32:6).

But their rave was short-lived. God told Moses to hurry back down Mount Sinai. When Moses saw what was going on, he was furious. He angrily threw down the two tablets on which God had personally inscribed the Ten Commandments (the first of which prohibits idolatry). The tablets were destroyed, as was God's patience with his sinful people.

At Moses' plea, God did not completely destroy the Israelites for their sin, but there was still a terrible price to be paid: the Levites, God's special servants, were sent through the crowd to kill around 3,000 of the offenders.

Perhaps the reason the Israelites became party animals can be found in their unresolved frustrations with God. After being saved from bondage in Egypt, they had endured months of hard travel, boring food, and uncertainty about where they were going. In spite of Moses' repeated exhortations, they refused to put their faith solely in the God who had liberated them. Today, many believers harbor hidden frustrations about their lives. The best thing to do with these feelings is to confess them to God. Don't let them simmer until they spill over into behavior you will later regret.

God's Top Ten Laws for Living

Exodus 20:1-17

AGES BEFORE LATE-NIGHT TV host David Letterman popularized his humorous "Top Ten List," God gave humanity his top guidelines for living: the Ten Commandments.

Emphasizing the importance of putting God first in all areas of life, these laws cover everything from idolatry to theft to murder. Not surprisingly, two of the ten give God's views on how the sexes should relate to one another.

The seventh commandment says, "You must not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). God created men and women as sexual beings meant to enjoy the deepest forms of sexual intimacy. But the Bible makes it clear that sexual intimacy is to exist only in the context of a lifelong, faithful, monogamous relationship. Scripture is rife with examples of how sex outside of marriage can contaminate and ultimately destroy every area of our lives.

The tenth commandment tells us not to covet (be envious of) things that belong to other people, including their houses, oxen, or donkeys (perhaps we could substitute more contemporary modes of transportation, such as our neighbor's late-model BMW). High on the list we see, "You must not covet your neighbor's wife" (20:17). Here again, because we are sexual beings, God specifically applies the commandment to sexuality.

Over the centuries, some have complained that the Ten Commandments are too negative ("Do not do this") instead of positive ("Do this"). Others have suggested that God seems preoccupied with sex. But considering the many ways inappropriate sexual relationships can complicate our lives, God's instructions regarding adultery and covetousness are appropriate and necessary. He's not trying to squelch our fun; he's trying to cut down on our heartache.