

# Challenge 2014: Bible in a Year

## Week 4: Exodus 15-38 (January 20-26)

### Summary:

We begin this week's reading with Moses' song of God's redemption, praising God for his deliverance through the Red Sea. Following Moses' song is Miriam's song, significantly shorter than Moses' song, but probably prepared as a refrain sung during rests in Moses' song. Humans, though, tend to be fickle and immediately after the song of Moses we find the people facing hardship and beginning to complain. The water at Marah was bitter, probably meaning stagnant and undrinkable, and the people were thirsty. Here God worked a miracle — one of a great many in the wilderness, making the water "sweet" — able to be drunk.

Shortly after, the people began complaining about food and God sent Mana from heaven to feed his own — and not just mana, though that would have been enough, but quail also. The final gift of food brought to the people was that of water coming from a rock and it is this water that would follow the Israelites through their wanderings.

As the Israelites approached Mount Horeb, better known to us as Sinai, Amalek and his people, the first of the nations outside of Egypt would rise up against them. This is where we are told the well-known account of Moses raising his hands while the Israelites battled and needing with them prevailing while his hands were raised and falling back when hands were lowered.

The people moved closer and set up camp around Mount Sinai and were joined by Moses' father-in-law, Jethro (also known as Reuel, the Priest of Midian). It is here that Jethro encourages Moses to have Elders elected from the people to try cases and handle disputes, only bringing the most significant problems to Moses.

One of the most significant events in the history of God's people takes place at Mount Sinai, God presents his people with what we know as the Ten Commandments. Here God codifies a set of standards for the life of God's people. From these ten commands, all of the civil laws will also be derived. These are not new commands as warrant for all is found within the pages of Genesis, but it is here that all of these laws and moral expectations are brought together and written on stone by the finger of God.

What follows is a series of civil guidelines, drawn from the 10 Commandments, and that are applied to the people. It is in this section that the well-known principle "an eye-for-an-eye and a-tooth-for-a-tooth" can be found. Sometimes this language sounds harsh to us, but understand first that it is far more equitable than most ancient cultures of the day, it asserts a principle that the punishment must fit the crime but not exceed the crime, and it ultimately seeks justice done in the life of the community.

Other principles can be found as well — that if there is theft, typically one-and-a-half or double restitution is to be made. In some cases, where a man's livelihood is put in jeopardy by the theft (like that of an ox), four or five times restitution is required. It is here that the death penalty is expressed where there is a death of an unborn child — a reminder that God views the unborn as fully human.

In this section, we are also introduced to the plans God has for the building of the Tabernacle, a tent of worship that will contain the sign of his presence in confirmation of the covenant that God gives. Though sometimes the detail can be wearying, it is a sign to us as to how seriously God takes our worship. Chapter after chapter is spent giving these details.

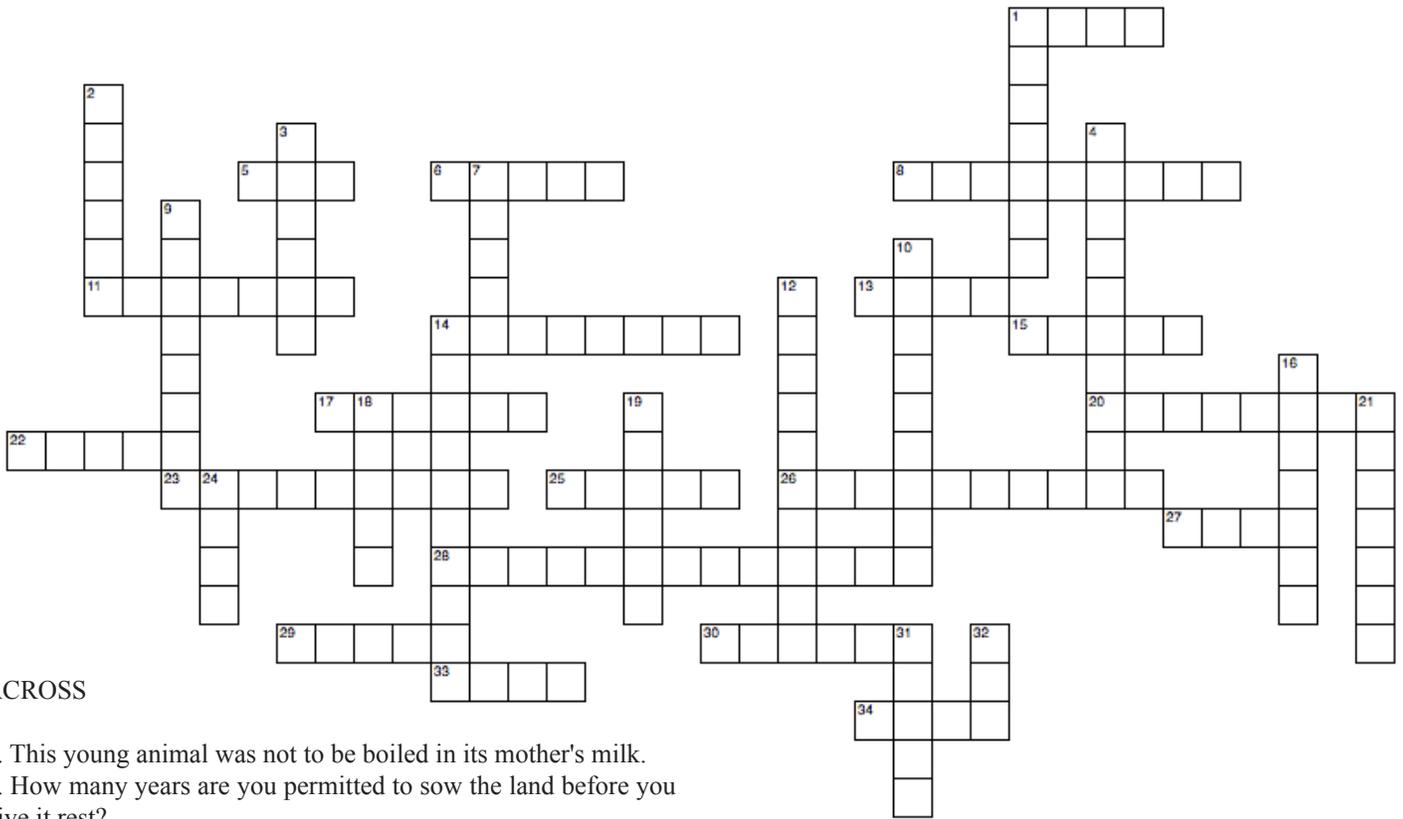
Moses has spent 40 days on the mountain with God and that causes the people to become restless. They talk Aaron into making a golden calf to worship in the absence of Moses' leadership. Aaron gives in and they do so. Moses, of course, stumbles on their activity and in rage smashes the Ten Commandments to the ground as a visual sign to

the people that they had already broken every single one. Even in his anger, Moses intercedes for God's people and God's wrath is withdrawn (a picture of Christ's intercession for us). The people repent, the covenant will be renewed, and then they will get to work on the making of the Tabernacle. Our reading closes, then as the people make that which God had commanded to the precise design of the Lord.

### Chromatic Notes:

- Many scholars think that the Songs of Moses and Miriam were actually sung essentially together with the men singing a few verses of Moses' song and the women echoing with Miriam's refrain. Regardless of how the song was sung, though, there were well over a million people singing together in the desert on that day; I can only begin to imagine the power of hearing all of those voices lifted up in song together.
- Mana means, "What is it?" reflecting the confusion the Israelites had. They would eat Mana through the 40 years of wilderness wanderings and for the first year they entered into Canaan — until the first harvest was brought in.
- 1 Corinthians 10:4 points out that the rock in the wilderness that brought forth water anticipates Christ who gives us living water.
- Amalek is a descendant of Esau (Genesis 36:12), again we see this rivalry between the children of Jacob and Esau rising up.
- Jethro's priestly name, Reuel, means "Friend of God" and fits as a likely title given to this priest of Midian.
- The Election of Elders found in Exodus 18 provides the basis for the Christian understanding of Eldership in the church — men elected by the people who will serve as overseers to maintain the peace and purity of the people of God.
- The Ten Commandments go by many names in the history of God's people. Sometimes they are called the "Moral Law of God" and sometimes they are called the "Decalogue."
- It is this moral law of God that Jesus says will never pass away until the heavens and the earth will pass away (Matthew 5:18); in addition, this law not only gives us a basis for civil government, but it also serves to drive us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). Also, as God expresses his perfect character in his perfect law, it can be used as a tool by Christians in our sanctification, as we strive to live a life honoring to God.
- Oholiab and Bezalel are introduced to us as expert craftsmen who oversee the work being done on the making of the furnishings for the temple. Note that they are first filled by the Spirit to be able to craft as they do (a reminder that craftsmanship is a gift of God) and though our Bibles don't always translate it as so, they are described as "wise" in their craft, a reminder that wisdom covers not just choices but actions and activities as well.
- There is an amazing self-testimony of God found in the context of Moses' intercession for the people as a result of the Golden Calf. In Exodus 34:6-7, God passes by Moses (who is kept safe in the cleft of the rock!) and declares his character — he is merciful and gracious, abounding in steadfast love, but at the same time a just God who judges the wicked even to the third or fourth generation.

## Week 4: Exodus 15-38



### ACROSS

1. This young animal was not to be boiled in its mother's milk.
5. How many years are you permitted to sow the land before you give it rest?
6. Four of these were required in restitution if you were caught thieving them.
8. God promises Israel that if they will be obedient, he will give them the land from the Sea of the Philistines (Mediterranean) to this Middle-Eastern river.
11. One of the "wise" craftsmen of the Tabernacle furnishings.
13. The vessels and utensils for the Table of Testimony were made from this material.
14. On the fifteenth day of the second month after they were away from Egypt, the people of God did this.
15. Another name for Horeb.
17. The first battle that Israel has in the wilderness is with \_\_\_\_\_, the descendant of Esau.
20. Moses wrote down the words of God on the mountain and then read it to the people; this was called the Book of the \_\_\_\_\_.
22. This was crafted on the four corners of the Altar.
23. Another word for a traveler or an alien.
25. This is the penalty if you were to strike a man so that he died.
26. Passover is also called the Feast of this kind of bread.
27. The bread God supplied to the people in the wilderness.
28. Moses had to command the people to stop bringing these because they had ample materials to build the Tabernacle and sanctuary.
29. God also provided this in the wilderness for meat.
30. This kind of angel was crafted on top of the Ark of the Covenant.
33. This part of Moses shone brightly after speaking with God.
34. You shall not pervert justice to this group or class of people.

### DOWN

1. The name of one of Moses' sons.
2. A father-in-law with good advice for Moses.
3. She led the women in singing after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea.
4. This was the name given to the sanctuary in the wilderness.
7. You are to show this to your father and mother.
9. God promised to pass all of this before Moses on the mountain.
10. You shall not permit one of these to live.
12. This instrument was used by the women as they celebrated the Red Sea crossing.
14. Aaron and the People made this when they feared Moses might have died on the mountain. (2 words)
16. We are to remember this day and keep it holy.
18. This place means "bitter."
19. The Ark of the Covenant was made from this kind of wood.
21. The High Priest also had two stones on his breastplate that were to help him discern the will of God (hint: not Urim).
24. The names of the sons of Israel (12 Tribes) were carved on this kind of stone.
31. In renewing the covenant, Moses took this from the sacrifice and threw it on the people.
32. One of the men who helped hold up Moses' arms during the battle.