This paper on Exodus is an offshoot of the Exodus Bible Study I posted recently. Instead of asking questions and answers, it makes the same basic points in a straight forward essay sort of way.

Introduction

The book of Exodus is one of the most important books in the OT. It contains the two most important events found in the OT: Israel’s exodus from Egypt and Yahweh’s covenant with Israel. These two events made a profound impact not only on the OT but also the NT. Therefore having a proper understanding Exodus is of the utmost importance.

This paper is based on the work of Dr. John Kleinig, a Lutheran theologian from Australia. He does not buy into the view that the covenant at Sinai is a form of a Hittite suzerain-vassal treaty. His view, based on the text of Exodus, is that it was given for liturgical purposes. If this is the case, it is important to define what we mean by “liturgical.” Liturgy is the work done for the benefit of the people. In the church, the work done that benefits people is done by God. So liturgy is the order of Divine Service by which God benefits his people. In the covenant, God established the Divine Service in order that he might dwell with, meet with, and bless his people.

In this paper we will look at the following:

**(1)** First, we will look at the Biblical context for Exodus.
**(2)** Second, we will look at where Exodus begins and where it ends.
**(3)** Third, we will look at what point Israel became God’s people.
**(4)** Fourth, we will look at a key text in Exodus, around which this view of Exodus revolves.
**(5)** Fifth, we will look at the structure of the book of Exodus,
**(6)** Sixth, we will look at each part in the structure of Exodus to see how it moves the book toward the liturgical goal.
**(7)** And finally, we will look at the purpose of Exodus as shown by an elaborate pun.
**(8)** We will close with a summary of the argument for a liturgical reading of Exodus.

(1) The Biblical Context of Exodus

First we will look at the Biblical context for Exodus. Exodus is part of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Even though the Pentateuch contains five books, it is really one continuous story. Therefore we will look at Exodus:
(1a) in relation to the Pentateuch as a whole
(1b) in terms of the book that precedes it, Genesis,
(1c) in terms of the book that follows it, Leviticus.

First let’s look at the Pentateuch as a whole as the context of Exodus.

 (1a) Context: The Pentateuch as a Whole

The Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy) tells one continuous story. The only reason it was divided into five books is because it would not all fit on one scroll. Each of the five books filled up one scroll. Exodus is the second scroll/book of the five books of the Pentateuch. Since the Pentateuch tells one story, we need to look at it as a whole and see how Exodus fits in to this story. I submit in this paper that the story that God tells in the Pentateuch is how he created and keeps Israel as his holy people.

The Pentateuch lays out the journey that Israel took. It is a journey from the promised land to Egypt, from Egypt to Mt. Sinai, from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh, and from Kadesh to the plains of Moab on the outskirts of the promised land. So, it is a journey that centers on five places: 1) the promised land, 2) Egypt, 3) Mt. Sinai, 4) Kadesh, and 5) the edge of the promised land. At each point along the way, God had something to say to his people.

* 1) In the promised land (Canaan), God called Abraham from the nations to be the instrument that he would use to carry out his plan of salvation. To Abraham God made covenant promises and passed those promises down to Isaac and Jacob/Israel. These words of God are recorded in Genesis 12-50.
* 2) In Egypt God spoke through his servant Moses to cause the 10 plagues in order to compel Pharaoh to let his people go so that they could worship him in the desert. These words of God are recorded in Exodus 1-18.
* 3) At Mt. Sinai, God spoke his covenant to his people, both personally and through Moses. In this covenant God proposed to make his people holy and spelled out to them how holy people live and how they could remain holy. These words of God are recorded in Exodus 19-40; all of Leviticus, and Num. 1-10.
* 4) At Kadesh, God spoke to them about how their relationship with him would work once they entered the land. They were to approach him through the sacrifices he authorized. He split up the leadership responsibilities by appointing various men to lead them. He gave them instructions on what to do with the current inhabitants of the land and rules for land distribution. These words of God are recorded in Num. 11-36.
* 5) At the edge of the promised land, through Moses, God spoke to a new generation of Israelites. He reiterated how they were a holy people, how they could remain holy, and how they should live in theholy land that God was giving them. These words of God are recorded in Deuteronomy.

In every country there is something that unifies the people, gives them purpose, and gives them an identity. That something might be the land they live in, the language they speak, their ethnicity, etc. What was it that gave Israel unity, purpose, and identity? It wasn’t any of these things. Looking at the Pentateuch we see that it was the fact that they were a people who were created by Yahweh, gathered around Yahweh, worshipped Yahweh, and travelled with Yahweh. He gave them access to himself and made them mediators between himself and the nations. They were Yahweh’s holy and priestly people. What made them different from all other people was that Yahweh, the true God, was with them, sharing his holiness with them and blessing them in order that they might be a blessing to the world. Yahweh had determined to work out his plan of salvation through them. The Pentateuch then is the foundational story of the people of Israel.

(1b) Context: Genesis

Genesis begins with God creating the universe. He then orders it and it is through the created order that blesses his creation. But not long after God created the world, the first humans sinned against God, ruining its order. God came to his creation and immediately promised to send a savior who would restore his creation to the way he intended it be. God’s plan to restore his broken world would be carried out by a nation he would create from Abraham and Sarah. God promised Abraham three basic things: (1) his descendants would become a nation, (2) he would give the land of Canaan for that nation to live in, and (3) through that nation he would bless the whole world. These promises were passed down Abraham to Isaac to Jacob. Jacob would later be called Israel. The family of Israel was rather large and they ended up moving to Egypt to escape a drought. The book of Exodus begins with the Israelites living in Egypt.

**Important Contextual Points from Genesis to Help Understand Exodus**

The following points from Genesis will be important for a better understanding of Exodus.

1. God blesses through the order that he creates.
2. Because sin entered the world and became a part of man’s basic nature, man’s future looked hopeless, but God had a plan to deal with and reverse the effects of sin. God would send a Seed of the woman to crush the serpent.
3. God began to implement his plan of salvation through Abraham. To Abraham God made covenant promises: to make from his offspring/seed a nation, to give that nation the land of Canaan to live in, and to bless the whole world through his offspring/Seed. Yahweh reiterated these promises to Abraham’s son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob/Israel.
4. Yahweh foretold that Abraham’s descendants would go live in another country, be made into slaves, and after 400 years Yahweh would bring judgment on that country and bring his offspring back to the land he promised them.
5. At the end of Genesis the offspring of Israel had moved to and lived in Egypt.

(1c) Context: Leviticus

Leviticus presupposes God’s presence and interaction with His people in the daily divine service (the daily sacrifices), which was established in the covenant in Exodus. God wanted to be with his people in order that he might share his holiness with them and bless them. Leviticus then shows when, where, how, and why God shares his holiness. But before the Israelites could come into his presence to receive his holiness they had to be ritually clean. Coming into God’s holy presence could have two effects. It brought either life to the clean or death to the unclean. Therefore the whole book of Leviticus is concerned with keeping God’s people clean in order that they might safely approach him and receive his holiness, life, and blessing.

**Important Contextual Points from Leviticus to Help Understand Exodus**

In Exodus Yahweh had proposed to make his people Israel holy, they agreed to it, and he made them holy. He gave them three gifts they could use to maintain their holiness: the tabernacle, priesthood, and daily divine service (sacrifices). The tabernacle had been carefully built according to Yahweh’s specifications and Yahweh had taken up residence in it. Yahweh had pitched his tent in the midst of his people’s tents. Now in Leviticus the story continues.

The following points from Leviticus will be important for a better understanding of Exodus.

1. Yahweh authorized that certain offerings could be made to cleanse his people, show his favor for his people, and share his holiness with them.
2. Yahweh authorized priests to perform the divine service each day.
3. Since Yahweh was holy and anything that was unclean that came into contact with him was destroyed, he spelled out for Israel how they could remain clean and approach him safely.
4. As his holy people, Israel was to order their lives around the tabernacle and the services performed there.
5. Yahweh provided the divine service and his holy name in order that he might be with them and bless them.

(2) The Beginning and Ending of Exodus

When reading a book, one always looks to see where it begins and where it ends. The middle part will tell you how it got from one to the other. First we will look at the beginning of Exodus and then we will look at the end of Exodus.

(2a) The Beginning of Exodus (Ex. 1)

Exodus begins where Genesis left off. The Israelites had gone to Egypt to escape the drought. As Exodus begins they are still in Egypt. And even though they started as a small group of 70 people, God has blessed them as he had promised and they have increased greatly in number and filled the land. A new king arose who did not know Joseph and his family. He saw how many Israelites there were living in Egypt and how strong they were. He worried that if Egypt was attacked the Israelites would seize the opportunity, join Egypt’s enemies, fight against Egypt and then escape. Because of this he tried to get control of the Israelites. First, he made them into slaves and forced them into hard labor. But the more he oppressed them the more they multiplied. So he tried another tactic. He ordered the Israelite midwives to kill the newborn Israelite boys. But the midwives feared God and would not do it. They told pharaoh that the babies were born quickly before they could get there. God was pleased with the midwives and he continued to multiply the Israelites and make them strong. Since that tactic did not work, pharaoh commanded his people to kill any newborn Israelite boy.

So the bottom line as Exodus begins is that the Israelites are still in Egypt, they have increased in number dramatically, the pharaoh is afraid of their numbers, and he has made them into slaves.

(2b) The End of Exodus (Ex. 40)

As Exodus ends, God instructs Moses to erect the tabernacle and Moses does so, exactly as he was told to by Yahweh. Moses anointed the tabernacle and everything in it to make it holy. Moses dressed and anointed Aaron and his sons as priests. With the tabernacle now ready for use, Yahweh took up residence in the tabernacle. The glory cloud of his presence moved from the top of the mountain and filled the tabernacle. Yahweh now lived with his people. By the glory cloud God’s people knew Yahweh was with them. He would lead his people on their journey to the promised land with the cloud. Whenever it lifted, they would set out and follow it on their journey, and whenever it did not lift, they stayed camped where they were. This was the case for their entire 40 year journey.

So, Exodus began with Israel in Egypt working as slaves and it ends with Israel camped out at Mt. Sinai and Yahweh taking up residence in the midst of them so that he can be with them and lead them on their journey to the promised land. The intervening chapters will tell us how they went from one to the other.

(3) The Covenant Makes Israel God’s People, Right? No!

There is a common misconception about the status of the Israelites in Exodus based upon a Reformed view of the covenants and it’s in almost all text books. They believe that God made a covenant with Abraham that God would make the Israelites his people. And then at Mt. Sinai the Israelites became the people of God through the covenant. The basic covenant for this view was that Yahweh would become Israel’s God and Israel would become God’s people (kinsfolk, extended family). So they believe that before Mt. Sinai Israel is not God’s people and by the covenant at Sinai they became God’s people.

But if you take a close look at the text of Exodus you will find that the Israelites were already God’s people before the covenant. In Ex. 4:22, Yahweh called Israel “my firstborn son.” Yahweh demanded though Moses that pharaoh let his “firstborn son” go. And if he refused, then Yahweh would kill the firstborn son of pharaoh and sons of Egypt. Then as the battle between Yahweh and pharaoh goes on, 15 times Yahweh calls Israel “my people.” Even before Exodus in the book of Genesis, Yahweh called himself “the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac.”

So in Genesis and the early part of Exodus before the covenant is made, Yahweh considers the Israelites his people. That means that the purpose of the covenant was not to make the Israelites his people – they already were. As we shall see, God had a different purpose in covenanting with his people.

(4) A Key, Pivotal Text for Understanding Exodus and Its Structure

There are two major parts to Exodus. There is Ex. 1-18, which covers Israel’s exodus from Egypt and its journey to Mt. Sinai, and then there is Ex. 20-40, which covers God’s appearance to Israel and his instructions to them. Ex. 19 falls in between these two halves and is a pivot point of the book. In particular, Ex. 19:2-8 is a key passage for understanding Exodus and how the two halves of the book fit together. In it God states his purpose in choosing Israel more clearly than anywhere else in the OT. He chose her in order to sanctify her (make her a holy nation) for her liturgical mission (kingdom of priests) to the world.

An important paper written about this text by Dr. John Kleinig can be found at: [www.johnkleinig.com/files/9013/2730/7607/On\_Eagles\_Wing.pdf](http://www.johnkleinig.com/files/9013/2730/7607/On_Eagles_Wing.pdf) . It is the basis for this part of the study.

**Structure of Ex. 19:2-8**

The basic structure of this pivotal passage is as follows. The events in 19:3-6 counterbalance the events in 19:7-8 so that the words of the people in 19:8 correspond with God’s words in 19:4-6a.

1. The Arrival of Israel at Mt. Sinai: 19:2
2. The Meeting of Moses with God on the Mountain: 19:3-6
	1. The appointment of Moses as God’s representative (3)
	2. God’s proposal for Israel (4-6a)
		1. A reminder of his guidance (4)
		2. A call for obedience to him (5)
		3. His purpose for his people (5b – 6a)
	3. God’s command to report his proposal to Israel (6b)
3. The Meeting of Moses with the People of Israel: 19:7-8
	1. The report of God’s proposal to Israel’s leaders (7)
	2. The unanimous acceptance of God’s proposal (8a)
	3. The report to God of their acceptance (8b)

**Ex. 19:4-6 forms a natural pivot.**

1. Ex. 19:4 summarizes what God has done for Israel as portrayed in Ex. 1-18.
2. Then in Ex. 19:5-6 he foreshadows what is about to happen.
	* Verse 5 states the purpose of chapters 20-24 and
	* Verse 6 states the purpose of chapters 25-40. This pivotal text makes clear the theological structure of the book of Exodus.

Early on when Yahweh called Moses, he made a promise to him. **He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.” (3:12)** Now in Ex. 19:1-3, having been delivered from bondage and provided for in the wilderness by Yahweh, God brought Israel to that same mountain where he called Moses and made this promise to Moses. When they arrived Moses went up the mountain to speak to God. Yahweh had kept his promise. He had been with Moses and Israel and he had brought them to that same mountain where they will serve God. This promise and fulfillment then was a sign to Moses that he could be certain that it was Yahweh who had called him, been with him, and led Israel to this mountain where he is present.

In verse 4, Yahweh began to speak to Moses. He said, **‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.’** When he says “**what I did to the Egyptians,**” he is referring to the calling and commissioning of Moses, the ten plagues, where God afflicted the Egyptians and killed their firstborn sons and animals, and the exodus through the Red Sea, where the Egyptian army drowned. This one phrase summarizes Ex. 1 -15. The second half of the sentence, “**how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself,**” refers to how Yahweh, the ruler of all the earth, brought Israel out of Egypt, protected and provided for them in the desert, and brought them to himself at the mountain with little effort and in a miraculous way. This phrase summarizes Ex. 16-18.

After summarizing what he did for Israel (Ex. 19:4), God defined Israel’s future relationship with himself and his purpose for them in Ex. 19:5-6a. The conditional clause at the beginning of Ex. 19:5 is often misunderstood. Earlier we established that Israel was God’s people already long before the covenant at Sinai (see section 3 above). In Gen. 17:7 God said to Abraham, “And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.” God unconditionally said he would be the God of Abraham and his descendants. So, the conditional clause “**if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant**” in Ex. 19:5a cannot mean that if they don’t keep the covenant they will no longer be God’s people, as God’s covenant promises to Abraham’s descendants were unconditional.

Israel did not choose to be God’s people. In fact, God chose them and he did it in spite of their sinfulness (see Genesis 12-50). Now Yahweh proposes a mission for his people. The choice Israel had before them was to choose whether they would carry out this mission. If they agreed to the mission and listened to Yahweh’s voice, Yahweh said, “**you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**” (Ex. 19:5-6a). Yahweh planned on reconciling the world back to himself and he intended to use Israel to accomplish that plan. That was his purpose for making them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Israel’s mission is defined in two ways. The first way is found in Ex. 19:5b. If Israel hears Yahweh’s voice and keeps his covenant with them, Yahweh said, “**you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine**.” As the Creator, all people and nations belong to Yahweh. Even though he owned all the nations on earth (Ex. 19:5b), Israel would be Yahweh’s special possession. The second way that Israel’s mission is defined is found in Ex. 19:6a. There Yahweh said Israel would be “**a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**.” Since these two things (kingdom and nation) come together, they complement each other. Let’s take a closer look at them.

Yahweh was King over all the nations and he was King over Israel. He proposed that the kingdom of Israel play a special role in the administration of his greater kingdom of all nations. He would have the Israelites serve as his courtiers in administering his kingdom of the whole earth. But they would be different from normal courtiers. Normal courtiers/administrators carried out political functions but Israel was to carry out priestly functions. Because of this, the primary purpose God had for his people had to do with worship (Divine Service) and not politics.

Israel was to be a priestly kingdom. The nation of Israel was being called by God to perform a priestly function on behalf of the world. The nation of Israel was to be a mediator between God and the nations. As part of the covenant, God would establish the tabernacle, which would be the place where he dwelled with his people and the place where he gave them access to himself. From the tabernacle Yahweh would graciously give out blessings. The nations had no access to the one, true, living God. It would be Israel’s mission, if she accepted it, to use her access to God at the tabernacle to obtain blessings for the nations.

“Kingdom” and “nation” are parallel with each other. Israel is to be a kingdom and a nation. And as the phrase “of priests” qualifies “kingdom,” so the word “holy” qualifies “nation.” The word holy is almost undefinable to us humans. That is because the only person or thing that is actually holy is God. It is part of his essence. All other things that are holy are holy because they derive their holiness from God. God shares his holiness with them. No person or group of people is holy in and of themselves. Knowing this means that Israel cannot make themselves a holy nation, so what does it mean that Israel is to be a holy nation? The only way for Israel to be holy is to receive holiness from God. God will have to make and keep Israel holy. God will make her holy through the sprinkling of blood on her (Ex. 24:3-8) and after that they will remain holy by their participation in the divine service at the tabernacle (Ex. 29:38-46).

In this proposal, Yahweh was offering Israel a unique privilege and responsibility. By her liturgical involvement she would fulfill her liturgical mission as long as she listened to the voice of God.

Moses went before the elders of the people and told them all that Yahweh said. And the people’s response was, **“All that the Lord has spoken we will do.**” The people of Israel had agreed to listen to the voice of God and keep his covenant with them. They agreed to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Moses then reported to Yahweh that the people had accepted his proposal.

**Summary of Ex. 19:1-8**

In a number of ways, Ex. 19:1-8 is a pivotal passage in the book of Exodus:

**(1)** Firstly, it is pivotal because it states that God brought Israel to himself at the mountain and Israel set up camp there. This will be the **location** of Israel for the rest of Exodus, all of Leviticus, and the first ten chapters of Numbers.

**(2)** Secondly it is pivotal in terms of the **structure of Exodus**. This text redirects the reader/hearer from what Yahweh had done for Israel (the first half of the book) to Yahweh’s future relationship with Israel (the second half of the book).

**(3)** Thirdly, in the words of Yahweh to Moses, Yahweh quickly summarizes what he has done for Israel (redeemed, provided for, and brought them to himself) and then makes a **proposal** to them. Yahweh proposes a special mission for them. And if they accept this mission, they will be Yahweh’s treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, which anticipates the second half of the book.

**(4)** Fourthly, the people react by accepting Yahweh’s proposal. Their **acceptance of the proposal** then sets the stage for all of the instructions of the covenant that follow in the rest of Exodus.

(5) The Structure of the Book of Exodus

We’ve seen that the first half of Exodus deals with Israel’s redemption from Egypt and journey to Mt. Sinai (Ex. 1-18) and the second half of Exodus covers God’s appearance to Israel and his instructions to them (Ex. 20-40). And we’ve seen that in between the two main parts of Exodus, Ex. 19:2-8 provides a pivot from the exodus to the covenant. More specifically, Ex. 19:4-6a summarizes what God did for Israel in Ex. 19:4 (Ex. 1 – 18) and God’s future relationship with Israel and his purposes for her in Ex. 19:5-6a (Ex. 20 – 40). Given this, we can lay out the structure of the book of Exodus in the following way. This outline was provided by Dr. Kleinig in his Continuing Education class on Exodus called “From Slavery to Divine Service – Israel as a Liturgical Community.”

Outline of the Structure of Exodus

**1. Part 1 – Procession of Israel from Egypt to Sinai (Ex. 1 - 18)**

1. **Commission of Moses and Aaron: Gift of God’s Presence and Name (Ex. 1 - 4)**
2. **Contest Between God and Pharaoh (Ex. 5 - 12:36)**
	1. **Demand for Release of the Israelites (Ex. 5:1 – 6:1)**
	2. **God Battles with the “gods” of Egypt (Ex. 6:2 – 12:36)**
3. **Exodus from Egypt and Deliverance at Red Sea (Ex. 12:37 – 15:21)**
4. **Guidance and Preservation in the Desert (Ex. 15:22 – 18:27)**

**2. Part 2 – Consecration of Israel and Its Tabernacle at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19 – 40)**

1. **God’s Theophany and His Covenant with Israel (Ex. 19 – 24)**
2. **Seven Speeches: Institution of Tabernacle and Divine Service (Ex. 25 – 31)**
3. **Threat of God’s Presence by Idolatry: Access by Name (Ex. 32 – 34)**
4. **Building and the Consecration of the Tabernacle (Ex. 35 – 40)**

(6) How Each Part of Exodus Moves Us Towards the Liturgical Goal

Next we will take a look at each part of Exodus and see how it helps move the reader from Israel’s initial slavery in Egypt to her being camped at Mt. Sinai with Yahweh living in the tabernacle in their midst.

**Part 1 – Procession of Israel from Egypt to Sinai (Ex. 1 - 18)**

(Part 1A) Commission of Moses and Aaron: Gift of God’s Presence and Name (Ex. 1 - 4)

**Background information about Israel and Moses (Ex. 1 – 2)**

As Exodus begins the Israelites are still in Egypt, they have increased in number dramatically, so much so that the pharaoh is afraid of their numbers and has made them into slaves. (For more on Ex. 1, see section 2a above.)

Moses plays an important role throughout the book of Exodus. Ex. 2 tells how Moses was born, he was saved from death as baby by pharaoh’s daughter, he killed an Egyptian, he fled from pharaoh to Midian, and he became a shepherd in the wilderness. In all of this, God was training Moses for the role he had in store for him. Growing up in the royal palace, he was educated and learned administration of a country. Living in the desert for 40 years, he would have learned how to live in the harsh conditions of the wilderness. All of this would serve him well as he led the Israelites through the desert.

**Yahweh observes what is happening to his people (Ex. 2:23-25)**

After the background information about Israel and Moses comes an important statement at the end of Ex. 2. It say, “the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help” and God heard their cries and groaning. The weight of slavery had taken its toll. The misery of the Israelites was so great that they could only express themselves with groaning. But the God of Israel was not far off. He heard the groans of the afflicted Israelites. This should not be surprising because God had promised Jacob, “I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again.” So the God of Israel had gone with his people just as he had promised. He was there with them and heard their cries for help.

Besides hearing the Israelites, God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. (Ex. 2:24b). To “remember” someone or something in the Scriptures can be the thought process where one remembers a person or thing. But many times it is not just cognitive thoughts, it’s more than that. It also involves taking action. For instance, several times in Genesis and Exodus it says that “God remembered.” God is omniscient, he knows all, so he does not forget. When it says that God remembers something, it means he is about to take action.

So for instance, when “God remembered” Noah and the animals on the ark (Gen. 8:1), God stopped the rain and caused a wind to blow so that the water receded and the water dried up so that Noah and the animals could leave the ark and return to the earth on dry ground. And when Joseph asked the cupbearer to “remember” him (Gen. 40:14), he wasn’t asking him to only think about him when the cupbearer got out of prison. He was asking him to put in a good word for Joseph to the pharaoh so that Joseph could get out of prison. So in this use of “remember” in the Scriptures, there are two parts to it: the first is to remember the person in your thoughts and the second is to do something for him.

Knowing this about the word “remember”, in this case when “God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob” (Ex. 2:24b; see also Gen. 17:7-8) he remembered his promise to give the land of Canaan to Abraham’s offspring as an everlasting possession and that he would be their God. He is about to take action and make good on this promises. God heard their groaning and remembered his covenant (Ex. 2:24). He saw the plight of the Israelites and he knew how badly they were being treated (Ex. 2:25). God would not sit idly by and allow this to continue. These verses signal that God was about to take action on behalf of his people to release them from slavery and to bring them to the land he had promised them.

**Yahweh’s plan to use Moses to release his people (Ex. 3:1-22)**

As Moses watched over his sheep at Mt. Horeb, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush (Ex. 3:2). This “angel” was the Yahweh himself (see Ex. 3:4a). Yahweh called out to Moses, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” He does this so that Moses knows that he is encountering the God of Israel, the same God that appeared to his forefathers and made covenant promises to them.

Yahweh tells Moses He has seen (Ex. 3:7, 9) the affliction and oppression of the people of Israel. He has heard (Ex. 3:7, 9) the cry of the people of Israel caused by their slavery. He knows (Ex. 3:7) the sufferings of his people. Knowing the situation of his people Yahweh tells Moses that he plans to send Moses to pharaoh to bring God’s people out of Egypt (Ex. 3:10).

Moses is overwhelmed by the task laid out before him. How will he, a simple shepherd, go to powerful pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 3:11)? Yahweh reassured Moses by telling him he would be with him and he gave him a sign. And the sign was that when Moses brought the people out, they would worship Yahweh on this very mountain.

Moses asked God, If the Israelites ask what your name is, what should I tell them (Ex. 3:13)? God told Moses (Ex. 4:15) “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

In most translations of the Bible, YHWH (with vowels added, Yahweh), the personal name of God, is rendered as “The LORD.” Since this is God’s personal name, it is actually very important. How a person introduces himself to someone else determines how much access he gives to that person. So someone named Bob Smith could introduce himself in various ways. He could say, Hi, I’m \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He could say his is Mr. Smith (limited business access) or Dr. Smith (professional access) or Bob (personal, full access). God’s name, Yahweh, is like “Bob” above. It is his personal name. He is giving full and personal access to the people of Israel. They can call upon him at any time and he will hear them.

So in Moses’ dealings with pharaoh, Yahweh gave him two seemingly feeble weapons to use in taking on pharaoh and the gods of Egypt. Yahweh promised to be him (Ex. 3:12) and he gave him his name (Ex. 3:15). But Pharaoh and the Egyptians will find out just how powerful these weapons are.

Moses is to tell the elders of Israel that Yahweh has seen what is being done to them in Egypt and made this promise, “I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.” The elders will listen to Moses and Moses and the elders will go to the king of Egypt, tell him that they have met with Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, and they will ask if they can take a three day journey into the wilderness in order to make sacrifices to him. Pharaoh will not listen and Yahweh will strike Egypt with all kinds of wonders and compel him to let them go with a mighty hand. And after that pharaoh will let the Israelites go (Ex. 3:16-20). By that time, the Egyptians will be so glad to see the Israelites leave that they will give them gold and silver and clothes, whatever they want, so that no more wonders strike them (Ex. 3:21-22). The Israelites will “plunder the Egyptians.” The victors of war plunder their defeated adversaries. In this case, the Israelites wouldn’t lift one finger against the Egyptians. They will let Yahweh do all the fighting.

**Moses is given powerful signs and a spokesman (Ex. 4:1-31)**

Moses doesn’t think the people of Israel will believe him, so Yahweh gives Moses three powerful signs. He will be able to take his staff and turn into a snake and back to a staff again. He will be able to take his hand and make it leprous and turn it back to normal again. He will be able to take water from the Nile and when he pours it out on dry ground it will become blood. (Ex. 4:2-9).

But Moses was reluctant so next Moses said he wasn’t a good speaker. Yahweh told him he would be with him and teach him what to say (Ex. 4:11-12). Moses really doesn’t want to do this, so he comes right out in v. 13 and says, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.” Instead Yahweh gives Moses his brother Aaron to speak for him. Yahweh wouldn’t take no for answer, so Moses readied his family to go to Egypt (Ex. 4:18-20). Yahweh’s last instruction for Moses was this. When he gets to Egypt, he is to go before pharaoh and do the miracles.

When Moses performs the signs, Yahweh will harden pharaoh’s heart so that he will not let the people go (Ex. 4:21). When pharaoh refuses to let the Israelites go, Moses is to say, ‘Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’” (Ex. 4:22-23). The threat Yahweh made goes along with his view of Israel. He is basically telling pharaoh, If you are going to treat my firstborn unjustly and you are going to refuse to let him go, then the firstborn of Egypt will suffer. In fact they will die. This statement anticipates what will eventually happen.

Aaron went out to meet Moses and Moses told him all that Yahweh had said and the signs that Yahweh had commanded him to do. Once they arrived in Egypt, Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people (Ex. 4:29-30). The people of Israel reacted by believing Moses and Aaron. “When they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction they bowed their heads and worshiped.” (Ex. 4:31)

**How does this Exodus 1-4 move us towards the liturgical goal?**

In order to get Israel to Mt. Sinai with Yahweh dwelling among them, Israel will first have to get out of slavery and out of Egypt. These chapters give us the first steps taken by Yahweh to free his people from slavery. In these chapters we see that God has heard their cries for help and prepared, equipped, and called Moses to lead Israel out. And so that it would not be a surprise, Yahweh alerted Moses ahead of time that pharaoh would not willingly let Israel go and that he would have to be compelled by force to do so. And that is exactly what Yahweh planned to do. Next will come the confrontation between Moses and pharaoh, and between Yahweh and pharaoh and the gods of Egypt.

(Part 1B) Contest Between God and Pharaoh (Ex. 5 - 12:36)

(Part 1B.1) Demand for Release of the Israelites (Ex. 5:1 – 6:1)

**The Demand Seems to Have Backfired**

When Moses and Aaron went to pharaoh, they demanded of him, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’” (Ex. 5:1). Pharaoh’s response to Yahweh’s demand was that he didn’t know who Yahweh was; he was not going to obey him; he was not going to let the people go (Ex. 5:2).

In Ex. 5:1 Moses and Aaron said they were going to hold a feast for Yahweh in the wilderness. In Ex.5:3 they make the request again in a different manner. This time they said they wanted to go on a three journey in order to sacrifice to Yahweh, their God. Pharaoh’s response was that the people have a lot of work to do. You can’t take them away from their work. They have no time to rest. The same day, pharaoh issued a command to the taskmasters and foremen. The Egyptians had supplied the Israelites with straw for brick making. Now the Israelites will have to get the straw themselves and the count of the number of bricks they were required to make should be the same (Ex. 5:6-9).

The taskmasters and foremen told the people what pharaoh had commanded (Ex. 5:10-12). The taskmasters pushed the people hard (Ex. 5:13) and when they did not make enough bricks they beat them (Ex. 5:14). The foremen went to pharaoh and complained (Ex. 5:15-16). Pharaoh basically said, if you’ve got time to go sacrifice to Yahweh, you must have idle time on your hands. And he reiterated his demand: get your own straw and make the same number of bricks.

The Israelite foremen met with Moses and Aaron and complained that they had made the Israelites a stench to pharaoh and he would just as soon kill them (Ex. 5:20-21). When Moses heard this, he complained to Yahweh. He questioned why he had allowed this evil to befall his people and why he had not delivered them. Yahweh told Moses, Now you will see what I will do to pharaoh. When I am done with him, he will drive the people out of Egypt.

**How does Exodus 5:1 – 6:1 move us towards the liturgical goal?**

In the previous part of Exodus (Ex. 1-4), we saw that Yahweh had a plan to release Israel from Egypt and he made all of the preparations necessary to carry out that plan. Now in this part of Exodus, we see Yahweh begin to execute that plan. Moses and Aaron go to pharaoh, as Yahweh asked them to, and demand that he let the Israelites go on a three day journey to have a feast with their God, Yahweh. Pharaoh refuses, saying he doesn’t know who this God Yahweh is and he will not obey him. Instead he will force the Israelites to work even harder by getting their own straw to make their quota of bricks. The foremen and people are angry with Moses and Aaron for bring even harder labor on them. Moses complains to God for allowing this evil to happen to his people. Since pharaoh would not listen and obey, Yahweh announces to Moses that he will now unleash his power against pharaoh to force him to let them go.

(Part 1B) Contest Between God and Pharaoh (Ex. 5 - 12:36)

(Part 1B.2) God Battles with the “gods” of Egypt (Ex. 6:2 – 12:36)

**Promise to Redeem Israel**

Yahweh spoke to Moses. He said, I am Yahweh, the all-powerful God who appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I made a covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan. And now I’ve heard the cries of the people of Israel (Ex. 6:2-5). Tell them, “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. ... I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.” Yahweh has decided that it was now time for his people to exit Egypt. He would bring them out using Moses. Through Moses he has given his word to Israel to deliver and redeem them (Ex. 6:6).

Let’s take a closer look at the word “redeem.” It means “buy back” or “pay the price.” It is a term used in a slave market. A master brings a slave to sell. Another person buys the slave and then sets him free. He is said to have paid the price for the former slave’s freedom. He is that former slave’s redeemer. I’ve always had a hard time applying this to Israel in Egypt. What price was paid for Israel’s release from slavery? I guess you could say the cost for Israel’s freedom was the lives of all the firstborn of Egypt.

But there is another way of looking at this that makes more sense to me. Hopefully you’ve heard of the term “kinsman redeemer.” The whole book of Ruth revolves around a kinsman-redeemer. So what is a kinsman-redeemer? It is usually the oldest male relative in a family clan. What does he do? What is he responsible for? The male head of the family protects the life, livelihood, and status of all family members. He is the protector of the family. When Yahweh appeared to Abram in a dream, he said to Abram, “I am your shield.” (Gen. 15:1). So Yahweh is the protector of Abram and his family. He is their Redeemer.

Ps. 78 recalls the history of Israel, how Israel was unfaithful and how Yahweh was always faithful to Israel. In Ps. 78:35 God is called Israel’s Rock and Redeemer. In Ps. 19:9, David calls God his Redeemer. In the book of Isaiah, God calls himself the Redeemer of Israel (Is. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8). So Yahweh is the Redeemer not only of Abram but also his descendants, Israel.

Specifically, what is it that a redeemer does to protect his extended family and its livelihood?

1) The redeemer will redeem one of the family members from false accusation in a court of law. He acts as the defense council. In this role he redeems the person from injustice.

2) If a member of the family falls into slavery, it is the duty of the redeemer to get the money together from the rest of the family to buy the person back so that he is free again. Slavery very often had to do with debt. If you couldn’t pay your debt, you were forced to sell yourself as a slave. So the redeemer had to do whatever he could to keep family members from going too far into debt. In this case then the redeemer redeems a family member from debt and slavery.

3) If there was war and one of the family members was captured, he would be made into a slave. Most of the time prisoners of war were made into slaves. It was the job of the kinsman-redeemer to free his family member. An example of this is Abraham going and freeing his nephew Lot who had been taken captive. So the redeemer redeems the person from captivity.

4) Later when the Israelites were in the promised land, each family received a plot of land, in effect leasing it from Yahweh. If a family lost their plot of land, that is, if they had to sell it to pay some debt, it was the duty of the kinsman redeemer to redeem the land, to buy it back so that it was not lost from the family.

5) Next comes what we would consider a strange duty. It has to do with Levirite marriages. If a man dies and he has no male child to leave his property to, it was the job of the redeemer to father a child with the man’s wife in order to produce a male offspring or to have someone in the family produce male offspring with the widow. When the child is born he is seen as the son of the deceased man. He carries on the family name and receives the inheritance. This ensures that the family does not come to an end. It protects the ongoing continuity of the family. This type of thing is quite common in many parts of Africa. The story of Ruth is all about the kinsman redeemer. It is an example of Levirite marriage.

Generally speaking, it is the job of the kinsman redeemer to make sure the inheritance is not lost, which is primarily land, to make sure the family stays intact, and to ensure the status of each member of the family (social, economic, and religious) is preserved.

So how does this apply to Israel in the situation they are in? God is the Kinsman-Redeemer of Israel. He is responsible for their well being. Israel has been treated unjustly so God intervenes as its Kinsman Redeemer to make sure that justice is done. Israel has lost its freedom and God comes to liberate them. God is the head of the “extended family” of Israel and he redeems the family from slavery. In slavery they had lost their promised inheritance and they had lost their status. As their Redeemer, God seeks to restore what Israel lost. So we see from this that redemption is a little broader than what we normally understand.

**“Knowing” Yahweh**

There is a phrase that is used over and over again in this section (Ex. 6-12). It is “that you may know that I am Yahweh.” With this phrase God expresses his purpose for the ten plagues. Through Moses and Aaron, God spoke this to:

> Ex. 6:6-7: The people of Israel.

> Ex. 7:5: The Egyptian people.

> Ex. 7:15-17: Pharaoh.

> Ex. 9:14: Pharaoh, his servants, and his people.

> Ex. 10:1-2: Moses.

When “know” is used in this way, it is more than head knowledge. It is a knowing because you’ve experienced something. For instance a mother knows her children because she spends time with them every day. Or a husband knows his wife because they have an intimate relationship. When Yahweh carries out these plagues on Egypt, pharaoh, his magicians, the Egyptians, and the Israelites see them and experience them, what will they learn from this “knowing” of Yahweh?

* + Ex. 6:6-7: The Israelites will know that it was Yahweh who redeemed Israel and brought her out of the slavery of Egypt.
	+ Ex. 7:4-5: When Yahweh uses these plagues, these mighty acts of judgment, to bring his people out of Egypt, the Egyptians will know that the God of Israel is powerful.
	+ Ex. 5:2; 7:17: When Moses and Aaron first went to pharaoh requesting he let Israel go, he said, “Who is Yahweh? ... I do not know Yahweh.” When Yahweh unleashes the water turned to blood and all the other plagues against Egypt, pharaoh will know firsthand who Yahweh is.
	+ Ex.8:10: They will learn that there is no other god like Yahweh, the God of Israel.
	+ Ex. 8:22: They will know that Yahweh is in the land (see ESV footnote) and that he is in control, affecting one area of Egypt and not another area.
	+ Ex. 9:14: They will know that that there is no god like Yahweh in all the earth.
	+ Ex. 9:29: They will know that the earth belongs to Yahweh. He owns it; he controls it.
	+ Ex. 10:1-2: Moses will tell his children and grand children about how Yahweh dealt harshly with the Egyptians so that future generations will know Yahweh as their God.
	+ Ex. 11:7: They will know that Yahweh makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.
	+ Ex. 9:16: Yahweh had raised up pharaoh and used his power against him so that the name of Yahweh would be proclaimed throughout the earth.

**The Battle**

When Moses and Aaron approached pharaoh and demanded he let Israel go and pharaoh refuses to, it started a battle. It was not only a battle between Moses and pharaoh or Moses/Aaron vs. pharaoh/magicians or even Yahweh vs. pharaoh. Moses and Aaron didn’t do any fighting they were simply God’s mouthpiece. And pharaoh was the point man representing more than himself, his magicians, and his people. Ultimately the plagues directed against the gods of Egypt (Ex. 12:12).

The Egyptians literally had hundreds of gods, gods of the sky, gods of the earth, and gods of under-earth. In fact pharaoh himself was considered to be a god. He was the incarnation of the sun god, the most high god of Egypt.

In the following verses, Ex. 6:26; 7:4; 12:17, 41, God calls Israel his “hosts.” This word is a military word. It refers to the fighting battalions. But Israel is a funny kind of army. In Egypt, it never does any fighting. Yahweh’s instruction to his troops later on at the Red Sea was to stand still, drop your hands, and watch what I do to pharaoh’s army. So in the battle that ensued, it was actually Yahweh, the Champion of Israel, battling all by himself against pharaoh, his magicians, his army, and all the gods of Egypt. It was one God against a vast array.

Pharaoh represented the most high god of Egypt, the sun god. The ninth plague was that darkness covered all of Egypt except Goshen for three days. This plague was a direct challenge to the highest god of Egypt (Ex. 10:21-29). How did his powers stand up to the God that created the universe and who was Israel’s God? His powers were impotent when dealing with God Almighty. God proved him to be a non-god. In their totality, God used the plagues on Egypt to prove that he alone was the true God and that all of the gods of Egypt were nothing. Yahweh obliterated them all.

**Acts of Judgment**

Yahweh said he would bring about “great acts of judgment” against Egypt (Ex. 7:4). The plagues are seen as acts of judgment against Egypt. We tend to think of judgment in a negative sense. In this case, pharaoh and Egypt are being punished for not letting Israel go. But there is a positive side to judgment as well. In every court case, the judgment handed down by the judge or jury is good for one side and bad for the other. It just depends which side you are on. So in this case, Moses, Aaron, and the Israelites would be happy with God’s judgment for them. They saw his judgment as just and fair.

In many cases, the purpose of a court and the judgments it hands down is to right a wrong. And so it is with God’s judgments. He judges to right a wrong, to fix what’s broken, to restore what’s been lost. Through no fault of their own, Israel has lost its freedom and been forced into slave labor. God’s judgment on Egypt was to right this wrong.

**A Powerful Enemy is No Match for Yahweh**

God had given Moses and Aaron power to work miracles. When they went before pharaoh, Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent (Ex. 7:8-10). Pharaoh and his magicians responded. Through the powers of evil, they performed the same miracle. They cast their staffs down and they became snakes. (Ex. 7:11-12a). God showed his power over the magicians and the evil gods of Egypt when he caused Aaron’s snake/staff to swallow up the snakes/staffs of the magicians (Ex. 7:12b).

In the first plague (Ex. 7:14-25), Aaron stretched his staff and hands over the waters of Egypt and turned them into blood. The magicians of Egypt duplicated the miracle through their secret arts (Ex. 7:22a). In the second plague (Ex. 8:1-15), God caused frogs to come up out of the Nile and cover Egypt. The magicians of Egypt duplicated the miracle using their secret arts. (Ex. 8:7). In the third plague (Ex. 8:16-19), God caused gnats to come out of the dust and they covered both man and beast. The Egyptian magicians tried to duplicate the miracle but couldn’t. They recognized that the Most High God had caused this to happen (Ex. 8:18-19a).

The forces of evil are powerful, yet they are no match for the Creator of the universe. For two plagues they kept up and duplicated the miracles, but after that they were a non-factor. In the sixth plague (Ex. 9:8-12), God humiliated the magicians by causing unsightly boils to cover them. They learned not to mock Almighty God. They were truly powerful, but their powers were easily thwarted by Yahweh the God of the Israelites.

**The plague that changed pharaoh’s mind**

Before Moses even went back to Egypt, Yahweh had told him what would happen. Pharaoh would harden his heart and refuse to let the Israelites go. At that time, through Moses, Yahweh will threaten pharaoh. Moses will say to pharaoh, “Thus says Yahweh, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.” (Ex. 4:22-23).

Now nine plagues went by and pharaoh, just as Yahweh had told Moses, was still refusing to let Israel go. Then the Lord said to Moses, “Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you away completely.” (Ex. 11:1).

Then Yahweh told pharaoh through Moses what he was about to do. Since pharaoh would not let Yahweh’s firstborn go, he told pharaoh he was going to kill all of the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn in each family to the firstborn of the their cattle (Ex. 11:4-5). Then at midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock (Ex. 12:29). As a result of this, “there was not a house where someone was not dead” (Ex. 12:30b).

Pharaoh then summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, “Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as you have said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!” (Ex. 12:31-32). At that point the Egyptians wanted the Israelites to leave immediately. They were afraid they would all die. They gave the Israelites anything they wanted: silver, gold jewelry, and clothes. And so as Israel left Egypt they plundered the Egyptians (Ex. 12:36).

**How does Ex. 6:2 – 12:36move us towards the liturgical goal?**

In order to serve God at Mt. Sinai pharaoh had to release the Israelites. And in order to build the tabernacle in which God would dwell with them, they had to be free. And in order for them to journey with God to the promised land, they had to be freed from their slavery in Egypt. It was the mighty hand of Yahweh that sent plague after plague on Egypt and forced pharaoh to let them go. In doing so it became clear to pharaoh, the magicians, the Egyptians, the Israelites, and the countries of the world, that Yahweh was the powerful God that is over all gods on earth. In all of this Israel did nothing. Yahweh did everything. Yahweh came to the aide of his people and redeemed them as he promised. They now marched out of Egypt toward Mt. Sinai, the mountain of God, where they would be given the divine service in which Yahweh would meet with his people, show his favor toward them, and bless them.

Part 1C - Exodus from Egypt and Deliverance at Red Sea (Ex. 12:37 – 15:21)

**Israel starts the journey out of Egypt**

After the Israelites were told to leave and they plundered the Egyptians (Ex. 12:36), Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth (Ex. 12:37a). “About six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children” made the journey (Ex. 12:37b). They took their flocks and herds with them (Ex. 12:38b). Because they were “thrust out of Egypt,” they took with them unleavened bread dough. They did this because they left so quickly that they did not have time to leaven it and wait for it to rise (Ex. 12:39). The people of Israel had lived in Egypt for 430 years. This was the amount of time that God had told Abraham that Israel would be in a foreign land and mistreated.

**Israel is to remember this day**

Because of this great work of Yahweh for Israel, Yahweh instituted the Passover meal. Every year they were to celebrate the Passover meal to remember how Yahweh initiated their release from Egypt by passing over and not striking down the firstborn Israelites (Ex. 12:43-51). To remember this day, Yahweh also instituted the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 13:3-16). They were to celebrate this feast in order to remember what Yahweh did for them to force pharaoh to let them go. By eating unleavened bread, they were to remember that their departure came so quickly that they did not have time to leaven the bread and wait for it to rise.

**The end goal of the exodus from Egypt**

Ultimately Yahweh released Israel from Egypt in order to bring Israel back to the land he had sworn to their fathers to give them (Ex. 13:5, 11). Joseph had faith that God would keep his promise to bring them back to the land he promised them (Gen. 50:25). And Joseph showed his faith by making his brothers swear that they would carry his bones with them when God visited his people and brought them back to the promised land. Now that they were being released, Moses took the bones of Joseph with him to keep the promise made to Joseph (Ex. 13:19). Ultimately, Yahweh’s goal in bringing Israel out of Egypt was to bring them back into the promised land and plant them on his holy mountain, the place where his sanctuary and dwelling place would be (Ex. 15:17).

**Yahweh fights for Israel**

After the Israelites left, Pharaoh changed his mind, gathered his army, and pursued the Israelites. (Ex. 14:5-9). When the people saw pharaoh’s army coming, they became afraid (Ex. 14:10-12). Moses told the people, Don’t be afraid, stand firm, and see the salvation that Yahweh brings. Just be silent and watch. He said Yahweh would save them, work for them, and fight for them (Ex. 14:13-14).

The angel of Yahweh, who was in the cloud leading Israel, moved from before Israel to behind Israel, separating Israel and the Egyptian army. Yahweh caused it to be dark for the Egyptians and light for the Israelites. He caused a strong east wind to blow, which divided the waters of the Red Sea and dried the ground. The Israelites then started crossing the Red Sea on dry ground. When the Egyptians saw this, they pursued them into the midst of the sea (Ex. 14:22-23). Yahweh then threw the Egyptians into a panic and caused the wheels of their chariots to not work correctly (Ex.14:24-25a).

When all of this happened, the Egyptians realized that Yahweh was fighting for Israel. But it was too late. Yahweh had Moses raise his hand over the sea and when he did, Yahweh caused the water to return to its normal place and it covered the Egyptian army and they all died. (Ex. 14:27-28). When the Israelites saw the great power of Yahweh and what he did to the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses. (Ex. 14:31).

To celebrate this great victory Moses and all the people sang a song to Yahweh (Ex. 15:1). In it, they ascribed all glory to for this great victory to Yahweh (Ex. 15:2-18). This was appropriate because Yahweh did everything. He saved Israel. Israel did nothing to save themselves.

**The reason why God allowed this last confrontation with pharaoh to happen**

Earlier during the ten plagues, Yahweh let Egypt experience firsthand his power and majesty. He wanted them to see that he was not like other gods. He was not a local god. He was the one, true God who created and is over all the earth. Pharaoh finally released Israel from slavery and was beginning to understand. Yet Yahweh had one more great act to perform to nail this truth down for good. Yahweh hardened pharaoh’s heart so that he would pursue the Israelites whom he had just days earlier released. He did it so that he would gain glory over pharaoh and so that the Egyptians would know Yahweh as the great God.

Pharaoh’s heart had once again hardened and he did indeed come after the Israelites (Ex. 14:5-9). When the Israelites saw the Egyptian army and that they were hemmed in by the Red Sea they were afraid, but Yahweh planned to open up a way through the Red Sea. Yahweh would harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they would follow Israel as they went through the Red Sea (Ex. 14:17a). The result would be that Yahweh would gain glory over pharaoh and his army and pharaoh would know that he was Yahweh (Ex. 14:17b-18).

Way back when Moses first went to pharaoh to ask for the release of Israel in the name of Yahweh, pharaoh’s response was, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go” (Ex. 5:2). Throughout the ten plagues and in this great exodus event Yahweh was showing pharaoh and all of Egypt who he was. They were experiencing firsthand that he was the all-powerful God whom the gods of Egypt were powerless to stop. In these great miracles Yahweh was answering pharaoh’s initial question, ““Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go?”

Not only would the Egyptians know Yahweh, word would spread about the God of Israel and what he had done. Others heard about the mighty acts of Yahweh and it had an effect on them. The people of Philistia heard and they trembled and were seized with fear (Ex. 15:14). The chiefs of Edom were dismayed. The leaders of Moab trembled. The hearts of the Canaanites melted (Ex. 15:15). These are all the current inhabitants of the land Yahweh promised to give to Israel. Yahweh performed these great acts so that they too would know the God of Israel, that he was a God of great power. Yahweh was softening them up so that they would be afraid and discouraged when Israel came to take the land.

**How does this part of Exodus move us towards the liturgical goal?**

In order for Israel to serve Yahweh at Mt. Sinai as God told Moses they would do in Ex. 3:12, they had to be free to journey to the mountain. In Ex. 5 - 12, Yahweh “convinced” pharaoh through force to let them go. And now in Ex. 13 - 15, Israel had been freed and had started to journey out. When pharaoh changed his mind and came after Israel, Yahweh protected his people, provided a way of escape through the Red Sea, and killed all of the Egyptian charioteers that pursued them. Now safely out of Egypt, the Israelites could make their way to Mt. Sinai, where Yahweh will give them instructions on how they can serve him.Part 1D - Guidance and Preservation in the Desert (Ex. 15:22 – 18:27)

**Israel’s journey to Mt. Sinai**

Once Israel had made their exodus from Egypt through the Red Sea, Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur (Ex. 15:22a). Eventually they came to Elim, which was an oasis with water, and camped there (Ex. 15:27). They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai (Ex. 16:1a). Then the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin ... and camped at Rephidim (Ex. 17:1). They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness (Ex. 19:1b, 2a). They camped before Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:2b). The journey from the Red Sea to Mt. Sinai took them 3 months (Ex. 19:1a).

They had now reached the first major stop on their journey to the promised land. Earlier Yahweh had told Moses that it would be a sign to Moses that Yahweh had truly sent him, when he would bring Israel out of Egypt and serve him on Mt. Sinai, the place where God first called Moses (Ex. 3-4). Now the sign was being fulfilled. Yahweh was making it happen just as he said he would.

**Yahweh’s provision for Israel on its journey**

During the first three days in their desert journey they did not find water (Ex. 15:22b). At Marah they finally found water, but they could not drink it because it was so bitter. The people grumbled against Moses and Moses cried out to Yahweh (Ex. 15:24-25a). Yahweh showed Moses a log, had Moses throw the log into the water, and the water became sweet so they could drink it. Later when they came to Elim, it had 12 springs of water, so they camped near the water. So in the wilderness Yahweh provided Israel with water (Ex. 15:27).

In the wilderness of Sin, the people again grumbled against Moses. This time they grumbled about not about water but about having food to eat. They thought they would die from hunger (Ex. 16:3). Grumbling against Moses was really grumbling against Yahweh. How did Yahweh respond to their grumbling? He said he would rain bread from heaven for them; he would provide meat and bread (manna) for them (Ex. 16:4a, 12). Yahweh provided and the people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan (Ex. 16:35). So while Israel journeyed in the wilderness, Yahweh daily provided food for Israel.

When Israel came to Rephidim, the people did not find water to drink (Ex. 17:1b). So they started quarreling with Moses because there was no water to drink. They demanded water to drink (Ex. 17:2). Moses was exasperated. Yahweh told Moses to take his staff, go to the rock of Horeb, and strike the rock with the staff. (Ex. 17:5-6). Moses did so and water came out of the rock for the people to drink. So once again Yahweh provided water for his people.

While at Rephidim, Amalek came and fought with Israel (Ex. 17:8). Moses told Joshua to choose some men and go out and fight Amalek (Ex. 17:9a). Moses said, “Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand” (Ex. 17:9b). Moses’ staff had been used to perform many of the miraculous plagues. It represented the presence and power of God as it was used on behalf of his people. And now it was used for the same purpose. Moses held his staff high all day long (Ex. 17:10-12) and with the power and presence of Yahweh with Joshua, Joshua and his men overwhelmed Amalek and his men (Ex. 17:13). Therefore Yahweh protected his people and gave them victory over their attackers.

Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, came to Moses at the mountain of God along with Moses’ wife and sons (Ex. 18:5). He had heard about all that Yahweh had done for Moses and for Israel and how Yahweh had brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 18:1). As they met up, Moses told Jethro all that Yahweh had done to pharaoh and the Egyptians for the sake of Israel and how he delivered them (Ex. 18:8). And Jethro rejoiced and blessed Yahweh when he heard all that Yahweh did to deliver Moses and the Israelites (Ex. 18:9-10).

When you have a large group of people like the Israelites, some people are bound to have disputes and complaints against others. When the Israelites had disputes they took their cases to Moses who heard them and judged them. But Moses found himself judging cases all day long. When Jethro observed what Moses was doing, he told him he was going to wear himself out. He advised Moses to find some trustworthy men and let them judge the smaller cases. He said Moses should judge only the harder cases. This would take the burden off of Moses. Moses listened to his father-in-law and did what he recommended. This organization and sharing of judicial duties would be helpful going forward (Ex. 18:13-27).

**Israel will know Yahweh**

Earlier in Exodus we saw that Yahweh performed wonders (plagues) in Egypt in order to make himself known. From those miracles pharaoh, his magicians, the Egyptian people, and the Israelites would learn firsthand that Yahweh, the God of Israel, was a powerful God in whose presence the gods of Egypt were impotent.

When Yahweh miraculously made a way for Israel to escape through the Red Sea, pharaoh, the Egyptian army, the Egyptians, and the Israelites would once again learn to know that Yahweh was a great God above all gods. Word of what Yahweh did spread to Canaan so they too would know Yahweh.

Yahweh rained down bread from heaven for Israel, so that Israel “shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord.” (Ex. 16:6-7a). Yahweh told them that at twilight when the Israelites ate meat and in the morning when they were filled with bread, “Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God” (Ex. 16:12b). So the miraculous provision of food was another chance to know Yahweh.

When Jethro heard about the great deliverance the Lord worked for Israel, he learned that Yahweh was greater than all gods (Ex. 18:11a). So Yahweh used the great acts of deliverance that he performed to make the truth known far and wide to all kinds of people and countries that he was above all gods, that the gods of the nations are impotent when he confronts them.

So to sum up, after the exodus the journey to Mt. Sinai began. This journey was difficult because they had to make their way through the wilderness where there was little food or water, especially for such a large group of people. Yet they had nothing to fear because Yahweh led them and provided for them. He provided water and food. God also protected them from an enemy who fought against them. And finally, through Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, God organized a judicial system that was fair and shared the burden and could be used on their journey.

**How does this part of Exodus move us towards the liturgical goal?**

The short term goal for Israel as defined by Yahweh was for Israel to serve Yahweh on his holy mountain. So after their escape from Egypt by the exodus at the Red Sea, Israel needed to make their way to Mt. Sinai. Through the pillar of cloud/fire Yahweh led his people on a journey through the wilderness. And in spite of their grumbling, he took care of them on the way, providing them with water, food, and protection. Finally after about three months Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai. Israel would spend nearly a year at Mt. Sinai. There Yahweh would speak to his people and give them instructions about how they could serve him in the divine service and live as his holy people.

**Part 2 – Consecration of Israel and Its Tabernacle at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19 – 40)**

Part 2A - God’s Theophany and His Covenant with Israel (Ex. 19 – 24)

**The pivot from the first half of Exodus to the second half**

Ex. 19:1-8 is a pivotal and important passage in the book of Exodus. Israel had camped at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:2). Moses went up to God and God spoke to him (Ex. 19:3). First he spoke to him about what he had done for Israel. This refers back to the first half of the book. According to Ex. 19:4, Yahweh had done two major things for Israel: 1) Through miraculous plagues and mighty power he forced the Egyptians to release Israel. 2) He effortlessly brought Israel through the wilderness to Mt. Sinai, bringing them to himself.

As Yahweh continued to speak to Moses, he made a proposal that Moses was to tell the people of Israel. He proposed that Israel listen to God’s voice and keep his covenant with them (Ex. 19:5a). If they listened to God and kept his covenant, out of all the nations they would be his treasured possession. This would be so because the mission that God would carry out through Israel would benefit all of the nations. He would use the Israelites to reconcile the world back to himself. Because of this special mission, they would be his special people.

If they listened to and carried out God’s Word, Yahweh also said they would be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (Ex. 19:6a). Yahweh was King over all the nations and kingdoms of the earth. He proposed using the kingdom of Israel as his courtiers in helping him administer his worldwide Kingdom. But they would be a strange kind of courtiers. The nation of Israel would serve the King as priests. As “a kingdom of priests” they would have access to God. Since the nations worshipped other gods, they did not have access to him. So Yahweh proposed that Israel step in as a mediator between God and the nations so that God could bless the nations through them. As priests, this nation would stand in Yahweh’s holy presence. To do so, they themselves would have to be holy. But Israel had no way of making themselves holy priests. And so Ex. 19:6a looks forward to the rest of Exodus in which Yahweh will make Israel holy and will set up the means by which he will keep them holy.

Moses told the elders and people of Israel what God’s proposal was (Ex. 19:7). What was the people’s response? All the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do” (Ex. 19:7). The people agreed to listen to God’s voice, obey his commandments, and to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

After God introduced himself and made his commitment of himself to them clear in this opening statement, he gave them three things: the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments, the Ten Words) (Ex. 20:1-21), the Law of the Altar (Ex. 20:22-26), and the covenant code (Ex. 21-23). We will now take a look at each of these and their liturgical connection.

**Yahweh’s gift of the Ten Words to his people**

Since they agreed to God’s proposal, Yahweh told Moses to prepare the people because Yahweh was going to come down and speak directly to his people (Ex. 19:9-15). On the third day, Moses brought the people out to meet with God. And when God descended, there was thunder and lightning, a thick cloud, a loud trumpet blast, and the whole mountain trembled greatly (Ex. 19:16-20). And then Yahweh spoke to his people (Ex. 20:1). We usually call the words that Yahweh spoke to them the Ten Commandments. We may call it this, but in Hebrew they are really called the Ten Words. Only later would they be called commandments. So we will refer to them as the Ten Words.

When Yahweh appeared to Israel, he spoke to them. The first thing Yahweh said to them was “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Ex. 20:2). In this one sentence he said three things. 1) He introduced himself by name, Yahweh. 2) He said he was their God. 3) And he said that he was the one who had brought them out of Egypt, out of the slavery they were in. He said these things so there would be no mistake as to whom it was that was speaking to them.

How much access you give to someone to yourself is shown by how you introduce yourself to him or her. If you say, Hi, I’m Mr. Smith, then you are only giving professional access. If you say, Hi, I’m John, then you are giving them full access to your whole person. That is what Yahweh is doing here. He gives them his personal name. He is giving them full access to himself.

The Words which Yahweh is about to speak to Israel are dependent on this sentence in Ex. 20:2. The Words are in indicative form and not imperative form, which means they are statements of fact and not commands. If they are God’s holy people, then this is how they will live. Another way of stating this is with the phrase: Because - Therefore. Because Yahweh is their God who rescued them from slavery in Egypt, Therefore they will keep God’s Word. They will want to keep God’s Word out of gratitude for all that Yahweh had done for them. Yahweh has shown his favor toward them by delivering them from slavery, so they need not obey his Word in order to gain his favor. They already have it.

In speaking this one sentence (Ex. 20:2), Yahweh is giving them three gracious gifts. 1) First, he gave them the gift of his name. He was giving them his personal name (**I am Yahweh**), which gives them full access to him and his mercy and grace. 2) Second, he gave them the gift of his commitment to them to be their God. He said, I am Yahweh, **your God**. 3) Third, he gave them the gift of redemption. It was he who compelled pharaoh to release the Israelites, his firstborn son. He brought them **out of the house of slavery**. He did this not to make them his slaves but to free his son from slavery, from serving the Egyptians and the Egyptian gods, in order that they might freely work with him as holy priests who bring blessing to the world.

We have said that the goal of Exodus had to do with liturgy (“worship,” Divine Service). How were the Ten Words used liturgically (as part of the divine service)? Look at Ps. 24:3. What question is being asked? “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?” This was a question asked by the people to the Gatekeepers in the temple. When the people came to enter the temple they asked this question. And the answer the Gatekeepers gave to this question was, “He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully” (Ps. 24:4). Only those people who were clean could enter gate. How did one know if he was clean and pure? By seeing if they had kept the Ten Words. The Ten Words were used liturgically to examine one’s self. We can make similar use of the Ten Words to examine ourselves when we prepare for the Lord’s Supper. This is a liturgical use of the Ten Words.

Another way they were used liturgically was when the Ten Words were placed inside the Ark of the Covenant. That was a reminder that God judged them by the Ten Words. And just as important was the fact that they were kept beneath the mercy seat. The blood of atonement was sprinkled on it each year. So God uses the Ten Words to judge people and then he used atonement to cover over those sins against the Ten Words.

The first three Words of the Ten Words that God spoke were about Israel’s relationship with Yahweh. This is typically called the First Table of the Law. The first three Words were:

* First Word (Ex. 20:3): “You shall have no other gods before me.”
* Second Word (Ex. 20:7): “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.”
* Third Word (Ex. 20:8): “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

These three Words deal with three holy gifts from God:

* God’s holy presence with his people.
* God’s holy name.
* The Sabbath Day was a holy day.

Since all three of these things are holy, when one breaks God’s Word concerning any of these three, one desecrates God’s holiness. Each Israelite was holy because through the divine service God shared his holiness with them. When one was in a state of holiness, one could safely enter into God’s holy presence. When one desecrated one’s holiness, it was no longer safe to enter into God’s holy presence. It would only kindle God’s wrath. So the screening by the Gatekeepers was done to protect God’s holiness.

Words four through ten are usually called the second table of the Law. They have to do with our relationship with our neighbors. The breaking of these words did not desecrate one’s holiness, but it did defile a person. To enter into God’s presence, one had to be not only holy but also clean. It was not safe to come into God’s presence in a state of impurity. So once again this screening was done as a matter of protection. The second table of the Ten Words was used to determine if they had defiled themselves, had made themselves impure before they entered into God’s holy presence.

The Ten Words can certainly be used to show people their sin and to guide people in the way to live, but here in this context the Ten Words were given so that people could be sure they had not desecrated or defiled themselves before they entered into God’s holy presence. Therefore the Decalogue was given for liturgical purposes. The Ten Words are linked to the divine service.

**Yahweh’s gift of the Law of the Altar to his people (Ex. 20:22-26)**

Over and over again in the OT you will see God taking man’s natural religion, the worship of gods through idols, and turning it on its head. In pagan religions, a god would appear to someone at a certain place. In order for that person to call upon that god and to meet with that god on a regular basis, he would build an idol for the god and put it at the place where the god appeared to him inside a shrine. The idea was that the god would use the idol’s eyes to see with, ears to hear with, nose to smell with, mouth to eat with, and hands to touch with. The idol was not a god, but was used as a way of accessing that god. So an idol was a means of accessing a god.

But in the Ten Words, Yahweh had forbid them from making idols and bowing down to them (Ex. 20:4-5a). And once again in Ex. 20:23 Yahweh said, “You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold.” So not only could Israel not make idols of other gods, they could not make an idol for Yahweh either. Yahweh forbid them from using an idol to access him. If not by an idol, how then could Israel access Yahweh and meet with him? Instead of building an idol for Yahweh at every place where he made his name known to them, they were to build an altar and offer sacrifices to Yahweh on the altar (Ex. 20:24a). When they did this, Yahweh would come to them and bless them (Ex. 20:24b). So an altar would take the place of an idol. Israel would have access to Yahweh and meet with Yahweh at the altar. It was there that they could call upon his name.

A precedent was set already for this in Genesis. At the place where Yahweh appeared to Abram and promised to give the land of Canaan to his offspring, Abram built an altar for Yahweh (Gen. 12:7b). When Abram moved on from Shechem to Bethel, he built an altar to Yahweh and called upon the name of Yahweh at Bethel (Gen. 12:8). In Gen. 26:23-25, when Yahweh appeared to Isaac, he built an altar there and called upon the name of Yahweh. In Gen. 35, God told Jacob to build an altar at Bethel, the place where God appeared to Jacob and promised to be with him.

So in each case at the place where God appeared to the patriarchs, they built an altar there for Yahweh and called on the name of Yahweh. The patriarchs did not have access to God through idols. Instead the altar and name of Yahweh took the place of idols. Through those means Israel had access to Yahweh their God.

**God’s gift of the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 21-23)**

How do holy people live? In ten short Words Yahweh spoke to his people and told them how his holy people live (Ex. 20: 1-21). Now in Ex. 21-23, in what is commonly called the Book of the Covenant, Yahweh expands upon the Ten Words. Most of these chapters (Ex. 21:1 – 23:9) have to do with the second Table, how the Israelites were to treat their neighbors. It is very similar to our case law. It shows how the general rule is applied to specific cases.

The following areas of life are covered. By listening to what Yahweh says and doing what he asks, they show that they are consecrated to Yahweh (22:31). The ten Words are applied to specific aspects of the social, economic, and religious life of the holy nation.

* Ex. 21:2-11: Treatment of slaves.
Slaves were to be treated as people and not disposable chattel.
* Ex. 21:12-17: Sanctity of human life.
They were to protect human life and those through whom God creates life.
* Ex. 21:18-27: Restitution for unintentional injuries.
If someone incurs bodily harm, then restitution must be made.
* Ex. 21:28-32: Laws concerning injury caused by animals.
When the owner is liable and when he is not. When an animal takes life, its forfeits its life.
* Ex. 21:33-36: Restitution for property loss by negligence.
If someone loses livestock because of negligence, then restitution must be made.
* Ex. 22:1-15: Property loss by theft and other causes.
Rules for special cases where restitution may or may not be required.
* Ex. 22:16-17: The loss of virginity.
If a man has sex with a virgin, he must pay the bride-price.
* Ex. 22:18-20: Capital punishment.
Cases where the death penalty is required.
* Ex. 22:21-27: Abuse of the stranger and needy.
For these offenses, they will have to answer to Yahweh.
* Ex. 22:28-31: A regard of God’s claim to all life.
Shows their complete submission to God.
* Ex. 23:1-9: False witness in and out of court; bribery.
As holy people they are not to partake in malicious gossip or false testimony. They were to help their enemy in times of trouble and maintain justice for all.
* Ex. 23:10-19: Assent to precepts demanding Israel’s total commitment to God.
Time was a gift from Yahweh. They were to devote periods of time weekly and yearly to glorify Yahweh, their Redeemer and Creator.
* Ex. 23:20-33: Blessings of covenant obedience.
Yahweh will send his angel before them to guard them and bring into the land he had prepared for them. They are to listen to him and obey him. When they enter the land, they are not to bow down to their gods; they are to break the pillars to their gods into pieces; and they are to serve only Yahweh their God. They must be driven out so that they and their gods do not become a snare for them. When they do what Yahweh commands, he will bless them and drive out the current inhabitants of the land.

**Yahweh sanctifies his people**

Yahweh told Moses to “Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar” (Ex. 24:1-2). When they came up, Moses was to come near Yahweh, Aaron, his sons, and the elders were not to come near Yahweh, and the people were not to come up the mountain at all (Ex. 24:2).

Before going up, Moses told the people all that Yahweh had said (Ex. 24:3a). So, they had heard Yahweh himself speak the Ten Words. Then Yahweh spoke to Moses individually and told him to pass his Word on to the people. Moses did this. He told them about the law of the altar (Ex. 20:22-26). Instead of accessing God through idols, he would meet with them and give them access to himself through an altar and his name. And he told them about The book of the Covenant (Ex. 21:1-23:9), which included all of the laws that explained how they were to live as his holy people. They were to treat their neighbors fairly, they were to be totally committed to Yahweh, and they were to listen to and obey his angel, who would bring them into and give them the land. When Moses told them everything, all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do” (Ex. 24:3b).

Moses then wrote down the words of Yahweh (Ex. 24:4a). This probably included Ex. 20-23. And then Moses rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel (Ex. 24:4b). Then Moses had the young men of Israel offer burnt offerings and peace offerings to Yahweh (Ex. 24:5). Moses then took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar (Ex. 24:6). Next he took the Book of the Covenant, which would have included the Ten Words, the law about altars, cases where the Ten Words were applied, and Yahweh’s promises, and read it to the people (Ex. 24:7a). And the people said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.”

Summary: Through Moses Yahweh had proposed to Israel that they be his holy, priestly people (Ex. 19:6). When Moses told them about Yahweh’s proposal, all the people agreed to it (Ex. 19:8). Then Yahweh spoke directly to his people, when he spoke the Ten Words (Ex. 20:2-17). Israel was to live by these Words. When the people became afraid, they asked that Yahweh no longer speak directly to them but through Moses. Yahweh laid out to Moses how these Ten Words would be applied in specific cases (Ex. 21-23). When Moses reported these words to the people, they agreed to everything Yahweh had spoken. Now in a formal ceremony as sacrifices are being made, Moses read all of God’s Words given at Mt. Sinai to the people. And for a third time they all agreed to Yahweh’s proposal.

So three times they agreed to be God’s holy, priestly people. As his holy people, they agreed to live by the Ten Words Yahweh spoke to them, as applied to life in the various laws Yahweh had given them. When they agreed for the third time to everything Yahweh had spoken, Moses took the blood and threw it on the people (Ex. 24:8a).

To determine the significance of this application of blood, let’s look ahead to the consecration of the priests. In Ex. 29 instructions for the consecration of the priests are given. Offerings are made for the priests, but most important is how the blood is used. Blood was applied to the right ear, thumb, and big toe of the high priest and priests (Ex. 29:20). The rest of the blood was thrown on the sides of the altar (Ex. 29:20). Then what were they to do with the blood (Ex. 29:21a)? They were to take part of the blood that is on the altar and the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments, and on his sons and his sons' garments with him. That made the high priest and the priests and their garments holy (Ex. 29:21b). Blood which came into contact with altar became most holy. Contact with anything that was most holy communicated holiness. Therefore the priests and their garments became holy. In this case, God communicated his holiness by making the blood most holy and coming into contact with most holy blood made a person or thing holy.

So knowing this about the application of blood helps us understand what is happening in this ceremony at Mt. Sinai. After Moses threw half of the blood on the altar, he threw the other half on the people. As the sprinkling of blood on the priests and their garments made them holy, so the sprinkling of blood on the people at Mt. Sinai made them holy.

Yahweh had proposed that Israel be his holy people. The people agreed to it. And after learning about what was expected of them as God’s holy people and how they were to live, they agreed to it again. Now in this ceremony they agreed to it one last time and are actually made holy. At this time and place and in this way the people of God became the holy people of God.

After the people of Israel were made holy, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up into the presence of the God of Israel. When they went up they saw God. They beheld God, and ate and drank (Ex. 24:10a, 11b). All of Ex. 20-24 is a theophany, an appearance and revealing of God to Israel. He appeared in lightning, thunder, a thick cloud, smoke, fire, and quaking. He revealed himself when he spoke directly to Israel. He revealed himself through his Word spoken to Moses. And now he appears to Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel as they ate and drank in his presence.

The chapter ends with Moses going up into the presence of God to receive the stone tablets with the law inscribed on it. And the cloud of God’s glorious presence covered the mountain. Moses entered the cloud and was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

In this section (Ex. 19-24), Exodus takes a turn. They have escaped from Egypt and Yahweh has brought them to his holy mountain. There Yahweh proposed that Israel be holy and a kingdom of priests. Yahweh then spoke directly to his people, giving them the Ten Words, which outlined how God’s holy people should live. When the people became afraid, God spoke to Moses instead of the people. He gave to Moses: the law about altars, case laws where the Ten Words were applied to various situations in life, laws about the Sabbath and festivals, and his promise to give them the land of Canaan. Moses told the people all the words Yahweh had spoken to him and they agreed to do all that Yahweh had spoken. Finally, this section ends with a formal ceremony in which all the words of Yahweh are read out loud to the people, the people agree to keep God’s Word, sacrifices are made, half of the blood of the sacrifices is thrown against the sides of the altar, making the blood most holy, and the other half is thrown on the people, making them holy. So this section began with Yahweh proposing to make his people holy and it ends with him making them holy.

**How does this part of Exodus move us towards the liturgical goal?**

Yahweh had redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt and brought her to himself at Mt. Sinai. His reason for doing so was so that he could appear to them and make a proposal to them. He proposed they be a holy and priestly people. He had a plan to use them in reconciling the world back to himself. He planned to dwell in their midst, to lead them back to the land of Canaan, and to give them that land. When they settled there, they would come before God and be mediators between God and the nations. In order for God to live among them and lead them, they had to be holy. So he shared his holiness with them and made them holy at the ceremony at Mt. Sinai. In order for them to continue to live in God’s presence, they would have to continue to be holy. Holiness is not something possessed but is received from God. So basically in the rest of the book of Exodus Yahweh will lay out a means by which Israel could receive holiness and blessings from him on a continual basis. The means by which this would happen was the worship system God designed. It is what we call divine service.

Part 2B - Seven Speeches: Institution of Tabernacle and Divine Service (Ex. 25 – 31)

Chapter 24 ended with Moses ascending to the top of Mt. Sinai and entering the cloud of God’s presence. Moses would stay on the mountain in God’s presence for 40 days and 40 nights (Ex. 24:18). What would happen over that period of time? Over that time, Yahweh would speak to Moses. There are seven speeches by Yahweh to Moses in these seven chapters. The speeches are found as follows:

* Speech 1 is found in Ex. 25:1 – 30:10. (This is by far the longest speech.)
* Speech 2 is found in Ex. 30:11 – 30:16.
* Speech 3 is found in Ex. 30:17 – 30:21.
* Speech 4 is found in Ex. 30:22 – Ex. 30:33.
* Speech 5 is found in Ex. 30:34 – Ex. 30:38.
* Speech 6 is found in Ex. 31:1 – Ex. 31:11.
* Speech 7 is found in Ex. 31:12 – 31:17.

In these chapters Yahweh instructs Moses about things that are needed for worship. For Christians in the West, the word “worship” primarily means thanking and praising God. And that is Ok, but that is not the essence of Biblical worship. What is most important in Biblical worship is not what the people do, but what God does. God devised worship as a way for him to come to his people and bless them. So the essence of worship is God serving his people. That is why Lutherans call worship Divine Service. It puts the emphasis on God and what he is doing. So as we move forward in this paper I will for the most part be using the term Divine Service instead of worship.

**Speech 1 (Ex. 25:1 – 30:10)**

This speech begins with Yahweh asking for freewill contributions from Israel. These contributions would be used in the building of a sanctuary for Yahweh (Ex. 25:8a). The purpose of the sanctuary was so that Yahweh could dwell in their midst. He would live right there with his people (Ex. 25:8b). They were to make it exactly according to the pattern that Yahweh would show them (Ex. 25:9).

The first thing that Yahweh said they should make was “an ark of acacia wood” (Ex. 25:10a). Then they were to make a mercy seat out of pure gold (Ex. 25:17a). The mercy seat would be placed on top of the ark (Ex. 25:21a). Inside of the ark, the testimony (the stone tablets with the Ten Words engraved into them) was to be placed (Ex. 25:16, 21b). At the Ark Yahweh would meet Moses and would speak to him about his commands for Israel (Ex. 25:22).

Think of the ark with its mercy seat and cherubim as the royal throne of Yahweh, the Creator of the universe. He would invisibly sit upon this throne in the midst of his people. Underneath him would be the Ten Words that his holy people agreed to live by and that he would judge them by. But on top of the Ten Words was the mercy seat upon which the blood of atonement would be sprinkled each year (Lev. 16). So God’s mercy was over his Law. Because of atonement his mercy could “overrule” his justice. This is how he would deal with his sinful people, in mercy.

Next they were to make a table of acacia wood (Ex. 25:23). They were to place the Bread of the Presence on the table before Yahweh (Ex. 25:30). Following this they were to make a lampstand out of pure gold (Ex. 25:31a). It would be placed in the Holy Place and it would be used to light up the Holy Place.

They were to make a tabernacle, that is, a tent to put these things in (Ex. 26:1a). It was to have ten curtains, which would be used as the sides of the tent. They were to be made of fine linen in the colors of blue, purple, and scarlet (Ex. 26:1b). These were the colors of royalty. Woven into the curtains were to be Cherubim (angels) (Ex. 26:1c). With the royal colors and the angels, the tabernacle was to be like heaven on earth. The God who sits far above his creation in the heavens would graciously come down and live with his people here on earth.

The tabernacle will be divided into two parts or rooms, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (Ex. 26:33b, 34). A veil would separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (Ex. 26:33). It too would be made of fine linen, using the royal colors of blue, purple, and scarlet. And it too would have cherubim woven into it just like the curtains. The ark with its mercy seat was to be placed in the Most Holy Place (Ex. 26:34). The table and the lampstand were to be placed in the Holy Place (Ex. 26:35).

They were also to make an altar (Ex. 27:1a). And the tabernacle was to have courtyard (Ex. 27:9a). The people of Israel were to bring pure, beaten olive oil, which was to used in the lampstands regularly in the tabernacle to provide light in the Holy Place. (Ex. 27:20-21).

To work in the tabernacle, Yahweh chose priests. The first priests would be Aaron and his sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar (Ex. 28:1). They were to wear holy garments for glory and beauty, which consisted of: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash (Ex. 28:2, 4). Attached to the edges of the ephod were to be two shoulder pieces (Ex. 28:7). On these shoulder pieces were to be placed two onyx stones. On the stones they were to engrave the names of the sons of Israel, six on one stone and six on the other. Aaron (the high priest) would wear the ephod with it shoulder pieces and engraved stones when he went into God’s presence. When he did this, he would bear the names of the sons of Israel on his shoulders before the Yahweh (Ex. 28:8-12).

The high priest would also wear a breastplate. Four rows of precious stones were to be placed on the breastplate (Ex. 28:17a). Each stone was to have the name of one of the sons of Israel engraved on it (Ex. 28:21). When Aaron wore the breastpiece, he would bear the names of the sons of Israel on his heart as he went into the Holy Place in the presence of Yahweh (Ex. 28:29). This breastplate was called the breastpiece of judgment (Ex. 28:15a, 29a, 30a). Urim and Thummim were to be placed in the breastpiece (Ex. 28:30a). These were kind of like dice. The idea was one would have “yes” on it and the other would have “no” on it. They would be placed in a pocket in the breastpiece. Whenever they asked God for an answer about something, the high priest could reach in his pocket and pull one of them out.

They were also to make a plate of pure gold (Ex. 28:36a). ‘Holy to Yahweh’ was to be engraved on it (Ex. 28:36b). The engraved gold plate would be fastened to the front of the turban worn by Aaron (the high priest) (Ex. 28:37-38). For the high priest they were to also make a coat, a turban, and a sash (Ex. 28:39). For Aaron’s sons (the priests), they were to make coats, sashes, and caps (Ex. 28:40). The priests were to wear these garments when they served Yahweh at the sanctuary (Ex. 28:41-43).

In ch. 29 it tells how the priests are ordained to serve Yahweh. They are to bring Aaron and his sons to the tabernacle, wash them, and dress them (Ex. 29:4-6, 8-9). Aaron, the high priest, is to be anointed with the holy anointing oil (Ex. 29:7). Then a sin offering is to be made for Aaron and his sons (Ex. 29:10-14). Then a ram is to be offered as a whole burnt offering to Yahweh (Ex. 29:15-18). Then another ram is killed and the blood from it is to be applied to the right ear, the right thumb, and the right big toe of Aaron and his sons. The blood from the altar along with the holy anointing oil are then to be sprinkled on Aaron and his son’s and their garments, which makes them and their garments holy (Ex. 29:19-21). Then they are to make a wave offering to Yahweh, with the right thigh being designated for the priests and the breast for the high priest (Ex. 29:22-28). Future sons who succeed them will be ordained by wearing the holy clothes for seven days and by being anointed in them (Ex. 29:29-30). Aaron and his sons are to boil and eat the holy meat from the ram with which atonement was made (Ex. 29:31-34).

This procedure for ordaining the priests was to be followed each day for seven days. This procedure also made atonement for the altar and made it most holy so that anything that touched it became holy (Ex. 29:35-37). Once this procedure was complete, the priests could officially serve Yahweh by offering sacrifices on the altar.

The priests were to serve at the tabernacle every day by offering sacrifices. Each day they were to offer two lambs that were a year old, one in the morning and one at twilight (Ex. 29:38-39). With each they were to offer a grain offering and drink offering (Ex. 29:40-41). These were to be burnt offerings (Ex. 29:42a). When the sacrifices were offered on the altar, Yahweh was meeting with his people the Israelites, speaking to them, and by his presence with them he was sanctifying them (making them holy) (Ex. 29:42b-43).

The purpose for bringing Israel out of Egypt and for setting aside the tabernacle, it furnishings, and the priests was so that he could dwell with them and be their God. He is their God and they will learn that first hand (Ex. 29:45-46). What does it mean “to be their God”? A God takes care of his people. He blesses his people. God’s plan is to bless Israel and through them bless the world.

In the ancient world, kings on occasion would hold an audience with their subjects. On such occasions the people could make their concerns and requests known. In this case Israel’s King, Yahweh, would hold audience with Israel every day twice a day at the altar at the tabernacle. He would be completely accessible to his people and from there he would bless them and sanctify them.

Notice that Ex. 29:42-46 focuses on what God will do in the daily service and not on what Israel would do. Yahweh is instituting this daily service so that he can: meet with them (Ex. 29:42b, 43), speak to them (Ex. 29:42b, 43), dwell with them (Ex. 29:45), be Israel’s God (29:45), and act as their God, so that they know him as their God (Ex. 29:46). In the Divine Service, what Yahweh was doing was more important than what the Israelites were doing. In the daily sacrifices Yahweh was serving his people. That is why we call the regular public daily services at the tabernacle and temple the Divine Service. This is the model for Christian worship. The same thing is happening in Christian services. God is coming to us and serving us by giving us amazing gifts. Christian services that focus on praise singing are not wrong but they miss what is most important. What God is doing for us is much more important than what we are offering to God.

This then is one of the major reasons why Yahweh released his people from slavery in Egypt, so that he can dwell in their midst, give them full access to himself on a daily basis, and bless them on a daily basis. In Ex. 29:42a Yahweh says, “It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord ...” It was to be a regular ritual from this point going forward. This is the “means of grace” for Israel. And the priests would be intimately involved in it because they would be the ones who would perform the Divine Service.

The first speech continues into the first part of chapter 30. One more thing was to be made. They were to make an altar to burn incense on (Ex. 30:1a). It was to be put “in front of the veil that is above the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is above the testimony” (Ex. 30:6). Aaron was to burn incense on it every morning and every evening (Ex. 30:7-8).

**Summary of speech 1.** That was a long speech and it listed many things that Israel was to make. Yahweh said Israel was to make the following things:

* + Ark, with testimony inside and mercy seat covering it
	+ Table for the Bread of Presence
	+ Lampstand to provide light in the Holy Place
	+ Tabernacle, with two parts, the Holy Place and Most Holy Place, separated by a veil
	+ Altar for burnt offerings
	+ Courtyard for the tabernacle
	+ Holy garments for the high priest and priests, which included an ephod with shoulder pieces that had onyx stones engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. It also included a breastplate which had on it precious stones engraved with the name of the twelve tribes of Israel. In the breastplate was the Urim and Thummin, which was used to inquire of God. The high priest wore a turban which had a gold plate attached and on it. It said, Holiness to Yahweh.
	+ Altar of incense to use morning and evening

This was the place where the priests were to work and the furnishings that they were to use in their service to Yahweh. The service for the consecration and ordination of the priests is outlined. The Divine Service which the priests were to perform was instituted by Yahweh. In it he would meet with his people and bless them.

**Speech 2 (Ex. 30:11 – 16)**

The rest of the speeches are much shorter. When a census was taken, each person, age twenty and older was to give a half shekel to Yahweh (Ex. 30:13a). The offering was given to atone for their lives. The offering was used for the service of the tent of meeting (Ex. 30:15-16).

**Speech 3 (Ex. 30:17 – 21)**

In this speech Yahweh said the Israelites were to make a bronze basin (Ex. 30:17-18a). It was to be placed in between the tent of meeting and the altar and it was to be used for washing the hands and feet of the priests (Ex. 30:18b-19). The priests were going to be handling holy things. They had to have clean hands and feet when they handled holy things or walked on holy ground. If they were unclean then they would die (Ex. 30:20-21).

**Speech 4 (Ex. 30:22 – 33)**

In this speech Yahweh lists 4 fine spices and olive oil. They were to make it “into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer” (Ex. 30:25). With it they were to anoint the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law, the table and its articles, the lampstand and all of its accessories, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the basin and its stand(Ex. 30:26-28). They were to consecrate them so they will be most holy, and whatever touches them will be holy (Ex. 30:29). They were also to anoint Aaron and his sons so that they can serve Yahweh as priests (Ex. 30:30). This is sacred anointing oil and no one else is to be anointed with it.

**Speech 5 (Ex. 30:34 – 38)**

In this speech Israel is to make a fragrant blend of incense out of fragrant spices (Ex. 30:34-35a). After it was made it was most holy. They were to consider it as holy to Yahweh.

**Speech 6 (Ex. 31:1 – 11)**

In the sixth speech, Yahweh said he had chosen two artisans to head up the building project for the tabernacle and everything in it and also the garments for the priest and the anointing oil and the incense. He chose Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah and Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, to help him (Ex. 31:2, 6a). He also said, “I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you.” They are to make everything just as Yahweh commanded them.

**Speech 7 (Ex. 31:12 – 18)**

In the seventh and last speech, Yahweh said Israel must observe Yahweh’s Sabbaths (Ex. 31:12-13a). The Sabbath days will be a sign between Yahweh and Israel for the generations to come (Ex. 31:13b). When the Israelites rest on each one of these days, they will know Yahweh, their God who makes them holy (Ex. 31:13c). Israel was to work for six days. The seventh day was to be a Sabbath day, a day of rest (Ex. 31:15a). It was very important that they keep this commandment because if anyone did any work on the Sabbath, they were to be put to death (Ex. 31:15b).

There were no other religions like this, that is, religions that required a day of rest. This was Israel’s act of worship. They worshipped by doing nothing. While pagans did work for their gods to provide for them, the Israelites let Yahweh do all the work in providing for them. The Israelite religion was opposite from natural religions of the world. This ritual of doing nothing set Israel apart and was to be observed forever.

When Yahweh finished speaking all of these things to Moses on top of Mt. Sinai, Yahweh gave Moses two tablets of stone with the covenant law inscribed on it by Yahweh (Ex. 31:18). So, all of these instructions from Yahweh about the tabernacle are part of the covenant. They primarily belong to God’s side of the covenant. Through these means he will create a way for Israel to safely approach him and meet with him. At the tabernacle, through the Divine Service, Yahweh promised to dwell with his people, meet with his people, make them holy, and bless them.

**How does this part of Exodus move us towards the liturgical goal?**

This section moves us a long way toward the liturgical goal of Exodus. Liturgy has to do with Divine Service. It has to do with God meeting with his people and using the means he has chosen to bless them and make them holy. In this section God gives Moses instructions for building a sanctuary where he could live among his people. He also gave instructions to make of all of the accessories needed to carry out Divine Service and he selected the priests who would perform the Divine Service in the way that he prescribed. God’s goal in delivering Israel from Egypt was so that he could dwell with them, bless them, and bring them to the promised land. The tabernacle would be the place where he would live among his people, bless them, and guide them.

Part 2C - Threat of God’s Presence by Idolatry: Access by Name (Ex. 32 – 34)

**Israel Creates an Idol for Yahweh**

**Summary.** Once at Mt. Sinai, Yahweh proposed that Israel be his holy, priestly people and in response all of the people agreed to do everything he said (Ex. 19:5-8). Yahweh then spoke the Ten Words directly to Israel (Ex. 20:1-17) and he spoke the Book of the Covenant to Israel through Moses, laying out how holy people live (Ex. 20:22 – 23:33). Having heard from Moses how the Ten Words were fleshed out, all the people once again agreed to what Yahweh proposed (Ex. 24:3). Then after writing down all the words of Yahweh, in a solemn ceremony Moses read the Book of the Covenant to the people and all of the people for a third time agreed to do all that Yahweh commanded (Ex. 24:4-7). Then Yahweh made them holy by throwing the blood of the sacrifices on the people (Ex. 24:8). They were now his holy people.

In speaking the Ten Words to Israel, the very first Word Yahweh spoke to Israel was that they were to have no other gods besides Yahweh (Ex. 20:3). Because of this, they were forbidden to have any idols (Ex. 20:4-5a; see also Lev. 19:4; 26:1).

It said earlier that Moses was up on the mountain for 40 days receiving the instructions from Yahweh about holy living (Ex. 24:18). That’s over a month! Because of this the people said to Aaron, “As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him” (Ex. 32:1c).

They thought something happened to him and that he wasn’t coming back. Now that led to a dilemma. Moses is the one who communicated with Yahweh. If Moses wasn’t there anymore, how would they communicate with Yahweh? The people came to Aaron and said, “Up, make us gods who shall go before us.” (Ex. 32:1b).

Now the word translated as “gods” could just as well be translated as “god,” singular. If it is translated as “god” in v. 1, then it would be translated as “god” in v. 4. Then v.4 would read, “This is your God, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” If this were the case, then the idol that Aaron made, the golden calf, would be a representation of Yahweh. This then is backed up by what Aaron said they would do the next day. He said they would hold a feast for Yahweh (Ex. 32:5b).

How do pagans communicate with their gods? They do it through idols. The idol becomes the eyes, ears, mouth, hands, and mouth of the god. The Israelites were doing what any pagan person at that time would do. They were asking Aaron to build them an idol for Yahweh so they could communicate with him and they were doing it because Moses was no longer there.

So their intention was to worship Yahweh. But there was a big problem with this. As we said above, Yahweh had forbidden all idols, even if it was an idol for himself. By worshipping an idol, they were breaking the very first Word God spoke to them.

If we go back to Ex. 20, the very first thing that Yahweh said to his people, which introduced the Ten Words was, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Ex. 20:2). So the very first thing Yahweh did was give Israel his personal name, Yahweh. As we said several times above, by giving them his name, he was giving them full access to himself. So they already had a way of communicating with Yahweh. They need simply to call upon his name. They didn’t need an idol.

Yahweh was not pleased with the Israelites. Instead of calling them “my people” or “my son” as he previous did, he told Moses they were “your people” (Ex. 32:7). In a manner of speaking he was disowning them. Yahweh intended to let his wrath burn against Israel, that is, to wipe them out and start all over with Moses (Ex. 32:10). In response to this threat Moses began interceding for Israel. What follows then is a series of four intercessions by Moses for Israel.

**Intercession #1 (Ex. 32:11-29)**

Moses’ first argument against Yahweh wiping out Israel is that it would hurt Yahweh’s reputation. The Egyptians would say, He just brought them out to kill them. It would paint Yahweh as an evil God (Ex. 32:12a). Instead of wiping them out, Moses implored Yahweh to “Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people” (Ex. 32:12b).

In Moses’ second argument against Yahweh wiping out Israel, he appealed to Yahweh’s covenant promises to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had promised to make them into a great nation and to give them the land of Canaan (Ex. 32:13). If he wiped them out, he couldn’t keep his promises. Yahweh reacted by relenting from bringing disaster on his people (Ex. 32:14).

Moses, and Joshua his aide, then went down the mountain. As they went down, Moses was carring the two tablets of stone, which had the words and instructions of God engraved on them, and he threw them down and broke them (Ex. 32:15-19). This symbolized that Israel had broken the covenant Israel had just made with Yahweh. They had promised three times to do all that Yahweh said. Then Moses took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it (Ex. 32:20).

When Moses confronted Aaron about this, Aaron came up with an unbelievable lame excuse (Ex. 32:21-24). Then when asked by Moses, the Levites stood up for Yahweh and Moses had them kill those that reveled in idolatry (Ex. 32:25-29).

**Intercession #2 (Ex. 32:30 – 33:11)**

Moses returned to Yahweh with the intention of seeking atonement for Israel. He asked Yahweh to forgive the sin of the Israelites (Ex. 32:32a). If he would not forgive their sin, Moses offered himself in the place of Israel. He offered to have his name blotted out of Yahweh’s book of life (Ex. 32:32b). Yahweh turned down Moses’ offer. He would punish the ones that sinned (Ex. 32:33). Yahweh then sent a plague on them for making the golden calf idol (Ex. 32: 35).

Then Yahweh told Moses that they should leave and go to the land he promised to the patriarchs (Ex. 33:1). But Yahweh said he would not go with them. Instead he would send an angel who would go before them (Ex. 32:2-3). Moses told the people that Yahweh said they were a stiff-necked people and that he would not go with them because if he did, he would consume them (Ex. 32:4-5). If Yahweh withdrew his presence from Israel, Moses would no longer be able to speak to Yahweh face to face (Ex. 33:11a).

**Intercession #3 (Ex. 33:12 – 34:8)**

Moses said to Yahweh, You told me to lead the people to the promised land. You told me I have found favor in your sight. If this is true then I need to know you and your ways. Implied then is, How can I know you and your ways and lead these people if you are not with us, if you do not go with us? And besides that, these are your people not mine (Ex. 33:12-13). Because of this, Yahweh agreed to go with them and to unburden Moses of his duties (Ex. 33:14).

What did Moses see as key to him and the Israelites knowing that they had found favor in Yahweh’s sight, which would make them distinctly different than all of the other people on earth (Ex. 33:15-16)? It was Yahweh’s presence with them that would show his favor towards them and make them distinct from all the other people on earth. Yahweh agreed with Moses and promised to be present and go with his people (Ex. 33:17).

If Yahweh was going to be with them and go with them, then Moses naturally wanted to see Yahweh. So Moses boldly asked to see the glory of Yahweh’s presence (Ex. 33:18). Yahweh said he would allow Moses to see his glory and at the same time he would proclaim or preach his name, Yahweh, to Moses (Ex. 33:19a). And when Yahweh’s name is proclaimed, grace and mercy are proclaimed, because that exemplifies who Yahweh is (Ex. 33:19b).

Yahweh would pass before Moses but Moses could not see the unveiled glory of holy God. So Yahweh said when he appeared to Moses he would shield Moses and allow him to see only the backside of God’s glory (Ex. 33:20-23).

Before this happened, Moses was to cut two new stone tablets and bring them with him the next day. So early in the morning he took the tablets and ascended the mountain by himself (Ex. 34:1-4). Once there Yahweh descended and stood there with Moses (Ex. 34:5a).

Once there, Yahweh proclaimed his name – Yahweh (Ex. 34:5b, 6a). His name says what kind of God he is. He said, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.” This shows the two sides of Yahweh. On the one hand it shows that Yahweh is gracious, loving, and forgiving. On the other hand it shows that Yahweh is just. Those who are guilty of sin will be punished. In response, Moses prostrated himself before Yahweh (Ex. 34:8).

So by giving Israel his name, what was Yahweh giving Israel? He was giving them access to himself. And since he was a gracious, merciful, loving, and forgiving God, through his name he was giving them access to his grace and mercy.

Now this is all important. Yahweh has agreed to be present with and go with his people. But he is holy and his people are obviously sinful, as the golden calf incident has just illustrated. How will a holy God live amongst a sinful people without destroying them? In proclaiming his name to Moses, Yahweh has just given Moses the answer to that question.

**Intercession #4 (Ex. 34:9 – 34:35)**

In his last intercession for Israel, Moses asks that Yahweh go with them and “pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance” (Ex. 34:9b). Since Yahweh is a gracious and merciful God, Moses asked that Yahweh forgive his people.

In response Yahweh reestablished the covenant that Israel had broken. He reestablished the relationship they had broken. He reaffirmed his commitment to them. They will see him do awesome things. He will drive out the current inhabitants of the land of Canaan and give it to them (Ex. 34:10-11).

Concerning the Canaanites and their gods, they were not to intermingle with them. They were to tear down their places of worship. These people would lead them to worship their false gods. They were to worship Yahweh alone (Ex. 34:12-16). They were to make no idols. They were to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread and atone for the firstborn. They were to observe the Sabbaths by resting. They were to appear before Yahweh three times a year, for the three great pilgrim feasts. They were to observe God’s commands concerning sacrifices (Ex. 34:17-26). In reestablishing the covenant, Yahweh had Moses write these words down on the tablets that he brought with him (Ex. 34:27-28).

After being with Yahweh on top of the mountain for another forty days and nights, Moses came down with the two tablets of testimony. And Moses’ face shone, reflecting the glory of Yahweh to the people. Moses told the people all that Yahweh commanded. Each time Moses talked to Yahweh he would tell the people all that Yahweh commanded (Ex. 34:29-35).

**How does this part of Exodus move us towards the liturgical goal?**

The goal of Exodus is for God to live among his people, to meet with them daily, giving them holiness and blessing, and for God to lead his people to the land he promised them. All of this is threatened by golden calf incident. Because of it Yahweh threatens to wipe out his people and start all over. But through Moses’ intercession, Yahweh is persuaded not to annihilate his people but instead he forgives them, recommits himself to them, and agrees to go with them to the promised land. But how could a holy God live among such a sinful people. The answer is given in the name of Yahweh, which stresses what a gracious and merciful God he is. At the tabernacle in the daily Divine Service they could call on his name and receive grace and mercy. In the Divine Service atonement would be made for their sin and they would receive holiness and blessing from Yahweh. And so Israel needed to make the tabernacle and its furnishings that Yahweh had instructed so that Yahweh could live with them and go with them.

Part 2D - Building and the Consecration of the Tabernacle (Ex. 35 – 40)

**First Thing Moses Said – Sabbath (Ex. 35:1-3)**

This section begins with Moses saying three things. Moses gathered together all of the congregation of Israel and told them what Yahweh had commanded. The first thing he relayed to the people was that “Six days work shall be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord” (Ex. 35:2a). They were to take it very seriously because Moses said, “Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death” (Ex. 35:2b).

They were to do no work on the Sabbath (Ex. 35:3). The important thing about Israel’s worship is not work but rest. They were not to do work and provide for their God like the pagans did for their gods. Rather, they were to let Yahweh work and provide for them. Their worship was pure receiving. Their resting would prepare them to do holy work the other six days. This was completely counter-cultural. Yahweh had them perform rituals that were similar to the pagan rituals but he turned them on their head, completely changing the meaning and purpose of them.

**Second Thing Moses Said – Contributions (Ex. 35:4-19)**

Then Moses relayed another command from Yahweh. The Israelites were to make contributions to Yahweh (Ex. 35:5a).What should motivate them to give was a generous heart (Ex. 35:5b). In Ex. 35:5c, 6, and 7 Moses lists the things they were being asked to contribute. Next Moses asked for craftsmen to come forward and make the things that Yahweh had commanded they make (Ex. 35:10). Then Moses listed all of things they were to make, the tabernacle and all of its furnishings and the garments that the priests would wear when they served at the tabernacle (Ex. 35:11-19).

**Contributions Given (Ex. 35:20-29)**

Everyone whose heart and spirit was moved made contributions (Ex. 35:21a). The things they brought would be used for making “The tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments” (Ex. 35:21b). Men and women who had a willing heart brought: jewelry and gold, blue, purple, and scarlet yarns or fine linen, goats' hair or tanned rams' skins or goatskins, silver and bronze, acacia wood, cloth spun with their hands, onyx stones for the ephod and breastplate, spices and oil for the light, anointing oil, and fragrant incense. They brought all of these things as a freewill offering to Yahweh (Ex. 35:21-29).

**Third Thing Moses Said – Construction of Tabernacle (Ex. 35:30 – 36:1)**

Moses spoke to the people a third time. Moses said Yahweh had called Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah to lead this building project (Ex. 35:30). Whenever God calls someone for a task, he also equips them to accomplish that task. To equip Bezalel to accomplish this task, Yahweh “filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship” (Ex. 35:31). More specifically Yahweh gave him the ability to “devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft” (Ex. 35:32-33). Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan was to work with Bezalel’s on this project (Ex. 35:34b). “He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of workman or skilled designer” (Ex. 35:35). To help these two men build the sanctuary Yahweh called “Every craftsman in whom the Lord has put skill and intelligence to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary” (Ex. 36:1).

**The making of the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the priestly vestments (Ex. 36-39)**

The people kept bringing their freewill donations every morning. They brought more than enough to complete the task and Moses had to command the people to stop bringing donations (Ex. 36:4-7).

Next it tells all that they made, starting with outer shell and then the inner furnishings. For the outside they made curtains and coverings for the tabernacle (Ex. 36:8-19), wooden frames for the tabernacle (Ex. 36:20-34), and the veil for the Holy of Holies and screen for the entrance of the Holy Place (Ex. 36:35-38). For the inside of the tabernacle they made the ark with its mercy seat and cherubim (Ex. 37:1-9), the table with its vessels, plates, dishes, and bowls (Ex. 37:10-16), the lampstand and its utensils (Ex. 37:17-24), the altar of incense, along with the holy anointing oil, and pure fragrant incense (Ex. 37:35-29), the altar of burnt offering with its utensils (Ex. 38:1-7), the bronze basin (Ex. 38:8), and the court with its hangings and screen (Ex. 38:9-20).

Large quantities of Gold, silver, and bronze were used in making the tabernacle (Ex. 38:24-31). From blue, purple, and scarlet yarns they made “finely woven garments, for ministering in the Holy Place. They made the holy garments for Aaron” (Ex. 39:1). They made the ephod with shoulder pieces (Ex. 39:2-5), the onyx stones with the names of the sons of Israel engraved on them set upon the shoulder pieces (Ex. 39:6-7), the breastpiece set with twelve precious stones engraved with the names of the twelve sons of Israel (Ex. 39:8-21), the robe of the ephod (Ex. 39:22-26), the coats, the turban, the caps, the linen undergarments, and the sash (Ex. 39:27-29), and the gold plate which was attached to the turban and inscribed with the words “Holy to Yahweh” (Ex. 39:30-31). In making the garments for the priests, it stresses over and over again that they did “as the Lord had commanded Moses” (Ex. 39:1, 5, 7, 21, 26,29, 31, 32, 42, 43).

**Readying the tabernacle for service (Ex. 40:1-33)**

Now that everything for the tabernacle had been made, Yahweh instructed Moses to set up the tabernacle and put all the furnishings for it in place (Ex. 40:1-8). Then Moses was to anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it with the anointing oil (Ex. 40:9-15, especially v. 9). After receiving these instructions, Moses followed Yahweh’s instructions and erected the tabernacle and placed in it all of its furnishings just as Yahweh commanded (Ex. 40:16-33, especially v. 16).

**The glory cloud of Yahweh (Ex. 40:34-38)**

Now that the tabernacle was set up and ready for use, “the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Ex. 40:34-35). The cloud was associated with Yahweh’s presence and the cloud did two things. First, it revealed that Yahweh was present with his people. When the people saw the glory cloud, they knew Yahweh was present with them. Second, since no one could see God and live, the glory cloud hid God’s presence. It protected the people from seeing the unveiled glory of Yahweh.

From this point forward, when the people saw the cloud lifted up above the tabernacle, they knew it was time to move on. But if the cloud was not lifted up, they remained camped at that location (Ex. 40:36-37). During the day the presence of Yahweh appeared to Israel as a cloud, but at night it appeared as if fire were in it (Ex. 40:38).

**How does this part of Exodus move us towards the liturgical goal?**

In this part of Exodus the liturgical goal is achieved. With the making of the tabernacle, the furnishings, and priestly garments as God commanded, with the erection of the tabernacle and all its furnishings as commanded, and with the anointing of the tabernacle, furnishings, and priestly garments as God commanded, the tabernacle was now ready to be used by Yahweh for Divine Service. With everything in place, the cloud of Yahweh’s presence moved from the mountain to the tabernacle and Yahweh took up residence in the midst of his people. From there he would meet with his people and bless them twice a day everyday and from there he would lead his people to the promised land. This was Yahweh’s purpose in releasing them from slavery, bringing them to himself, covenanting with them, making them holy, and having the tabernacle built.

**(7) The Purpose of Exodus as Shown by an Elaborate Pun**

The Hebrew language has a pretty small vocabulary. That means that a word can have several different meanings and be used in several different ways in a sentence. The meaning of a Hebrew word then is determined by the sentence and context in which it is used. This is true of many Hebrew words, but in the book of Exodus we are primarily concerned with one word in particular, the word that is many times translated as “serve” or “service.” We will take a look at how this word is used in Exodus and see how it reveals the purpose of Exodus.

**Different Uses of the Word “Serve”**

The word we want to take a look at is *‘ābad.* It can be used in the following ways:

1. Its basic meaning is “to cultivate the ground.” In English we might say you serve the soil or we would say you plow or cultivate the soil.
2. Secondly, it can mean “to work.” This is the most common use of the word.
3. Thirdly, it can refer to specialized work. For instance, in a negative sense, it can mean “to be a slave” or to work as a slave or to work for someone.
4. Fourthly, it can be used in a more positive sense. It can mean “to work as somebody’s manager” or “deputy” or “minister.” In this sense David is said to be the servant of the Lord. He serves the Lord as his prime minister. He is God’s representative here on earth. In a similar way, a king has many courtiers who work with him managing his kingdom.
5. Fifthly, it can mean “to perform a ritual” and therefore “to worship” (or better “serve”) someone or something. So the statement, “I serve the Lord in Jerusalem” means that at the temple I perform the rituals that God has prescribed in his torah (instructions).

When translating this word into English, it is many times translated as “serve” or “service” or “servant.” It has to do with performing work. That work might be just be normal work one does freely or work you are required to do for someone or work you do with someone or ritual works you perform. The context of the sentence tells which of these is appropriate. Let’s take a look at several passages spread throughout Exodus.

* Ex. 1:13-14: So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel **work as slaves** and made their lives bitter with **hard service**, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them **work as slaves**. [use #3]
* Ex. 2:23: During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their **slavery** and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from **slavery** came up to God. [use #3]
* Ex. 3:12: He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall **serve God** on this mountain.” [use #5]
* Ex. 3:18: And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may **sacrifice to the Lord our God.**’ [use #5]
* Ex. 4:22-23: Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may **serve me**.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’” [ use #4 and #5]
* Ex. 5:1: Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may **hold a feast to me** in the wilderness.’” [use #5]
* Ex. 5:3: Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may **sacrifice to the Lord our God**, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.” [use #5]
* Ex. 6:5: Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as **slaves**, and I have remembered my covenant. [use #3]
* Ex. 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3 : ... that they may **serve me** ... [use #4 and #5]
* Ex. 10:9: Moses said, “We will go with our young and our old. We will go with our sons and daughters and with our flocks and herds, for we must **hold a feast to the Lord**.” [use #5]
* Ex. 12:16, 25-27: [The Passover] On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly. **No work** shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you. ... And when you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this **service**. And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this **service**?’ you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” [use #2 and #5]
* Ex. 14:5: When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from **serving us**?” [use #3]
* Ex. 14:12: Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may **serve the Egyptians**’? For it would have been better for us to **serve the Egyptians** than to die in the wilderness.” [use #3]
* Ex. 14:31: Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in **his servant Moses**. [use #4]
* Ex. 20:5: You shall not bow down to them or **serve them**, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, [use #3]
* Ex. 23:24-25: you shall not bow down to their gods **nor serve them**, nor do as they do, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces. You shall **serve the Lord your God**, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you. [use #3 and then #4 and #5]
* Ex. 23:32: They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you **serve their gods**, it will surely be a snare to you.” [use #3]
* Ex. 28:1, 4, 41; 29:1, 44, 30:30; 40:15: ... **serve me** as priests. [use #4 and #5]

**Two Different Kinds of Service**

We’ve seen the word “serve” used in several different ways. At the beginning of Exodus, the Israelites serve Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Ex. 1:8-14; 5). Pharaoh was believed to be a god, the incarnation of the sun god. And Egypt had many gods. So by implication, the Israelites served not only pharaoh and the Egyptians, but also the gods of the Egyptians. This service was not voluntary, it was forced labor. They were forced to be slaves.

At the same time Yahweh wanted the Israelites to serve him. There was a difference between Israel’s service to pharaoh and their service to Yahweh. The Israelites would be serving Yahweh as his firstborn son (Ex. 4:22). In this type of service, Israel would not be slaves to Yahweh as they were to pharaoh and the gods of Egypt. Instead they would be free and serve as a member of the family. They would work with God by performing the rituals that he prescribed. They would benefit from their service to him. In a broad sense, the benefits they receive from serving Yahweh would be blessing. Yahweh would also drive out the Canaanites and give them the land he promised them (Ex. 23:23-33).

So, serving Yahweh is the opposite of pagan service. Serving pagan gods meant you were their slaves. You provided them with everything they wanted and needed. The offerings brought to pagan gods were food for the gods. On the surface it might have seemed the same for Israel. They brought sacrifices/food to Yahweh their God, but God turned the pagan ritual upside down. He took the sacrifice/food, made it holy, and then gave it back to the Israelites to eat as a holy feast. The Israelites received holiness and blessing from this banquet that they ate in Yahweh’s presence. In pagan worship, the people provided for the gods. In worship of Yahweh (the Divine Service), Yahweh provided for his people.

Instead of being forced to work for pharaoh, the Israelites would be free to serve Yahweh. And their service of him would be a privilege and delight.

**God’s purposes for Israel’s Service to Yahweh**

Yahweh’s word to Moses and his demands to pharaoh revealed God’s purpose for releasing Israel from bondage. God’s purpose was:

* Ex. 3:12; 4:22; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3: So they could serve Yahweh.
* Ex. 3:18; 5:3: So they could sacrifice to Yahweh their God.
* Ex. 5:1; 10:9: So they could hold a feast for Yahweh.

All three of these are saying the same thing only in different ways. The way they would serve Yahweh would be to offer sacrifices to him and then receive those same sacrifices back from Yahweh and eat them as a great feast before Yahweh. So the first purpose for releasing Israel from bondage was so that they could serve Yahweh at Mt. Sinai by offering sacrifices to him and feasting with him.

Israel had just escaped from Egypt through the Red Sea. The army of pharaoh had drowned. Moses and all the people sang a song of victory. At the end of the song, concerning what Yahweh would do for his people they sang, “You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established”

 (Ex. 15:17).

Which mountain are they talking about? Mt. Sinai was called the mountain of God (Ex. 3:1; 4:27; 18:5; 24:13). But they sang that Yahweh would “plant them” on his mountain. Normally if you plant something it stays where it is planted. It is permanently there. Israel would not permanently stay at Mt. Sinai.

In Is. 2:3; Micah 4:2; and Zech. 8:3 the mountain of the Lord is Mt. Zion at Jerusalem. In Joel 2:1; 3:17, the mountain that Yahweh calls “my holy mountain,” the mountain where he dwells is Mt. Zion at Jerusalem.

So the second reason for Israel’s exodus is stated in Ex. 15:17. The place where Yahweh will bring his people in to is the promised land. And the mountain where he will plant them is Mt. Zion at Jerusalem. God’s intention in bringing his people out of Egypt is to take them to and to give them the land that he promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And once he has given it to them he will plant them on his own mountain, Mt. Zion, the place where his temple will be built and where he will dwell in the midst of his people.

We said above that one of the meanings of the word translated as “serve” was to perform ritual service. In Ex. 29:38-46, Yahweh prescribed a ritual that Israel was to perform every day. He brought them out of Egypt so they could perform this ritual. They were to offer a lamb as a burnt offering in the morning and in the evening at the altar that stood before the entrance of the tent of meeting (the tabernacle). The purpose for performing this ritual was:

* Ex. 29:43: so that Yahweh could meet with his people and sanctify them.
* Ex. 29:45: so that Yahweh could dwell among his people and be their God (by blessing them).
* Ex. 29:46: so that they would know that Yahweh was their God who brought them out of Egypt so he could dwell with them.

So the third reason why Yahweh brought his people out of Egypt was so that he could dwell among them, meet with them on a daily basis, and be their God by blessing them.

God had released Israel from slavery in order that they might serve him. They would serve him by performing the rituals he prescribed. Through those rituals Yahweh would bless them and make them holy. The place where God intended for them to serve him was at Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. Yahweh would lead them on a journey to the promised land and plant them on Mt. Zion. There they would serve him daily. There he would live with his people, meet with his people, and bless his people.

**Summary of the Pun on the word Serve**

In the beginning of Exodus, Israel served pharaoh, the Egyptians, and the gods of Egypt as slaves. Israel is God’s firstborn son. They were not to serve anyone as slaves. God created the Israelites so that they might serve him and therefore use them to bring blessing to the nations. And so in Exodus Yahweh comes to the aide of his people and through his great power releases them from slavery and brings them to himself. He then tells them about the mission he has for them to be a holy, priestly people. In agreeing to this mission, Israel agrees to serve Yahweh by performing the daily services that Yahweh prescribes at the tabernacle where he dwells among them. Through these services they will be blessed and they will act as mediators for the nations. In this service they serve God but more importantly God serves and blesses them as their God.

**(8) A Summary of the Argument of a Liturgical Purpose for Exodus**

**The background provided by Genesis**

1. Yahweh made covenant promises to Abraham to make his descendants into a nation, to give them the land of Canaan, and to bless the world through them.
2. The covenant promises were passed on to Isaac and Jacob/Israel.
3. Yahweh also told Abraham that his descendants would be made into servants by another nation and afflicted but after 400 years Yahweh would bring judgment on that nation and he would bring them out of it.
4. Jacob and his sons’ families had to move to Egypt to escape the drought.

**Israel as slaves in Egypt**

1. In Egypt Israel survived the drought and God blessed them and their numbers multiplied greatly.
2. After being in Egypt for about 400 years, a new pharaoh became afraid that the Israelites might revolt and so he made them into slaves.
3. The people cried out in bondage and Yahweh prepared Moses to be the deliverer of Israel.

**Yahweh’s purpose for delivering Israel from slavery**

1. Yahweh heard the cries of the Israelites and came to rescue them.
2. Through the ten plagues he forcefully released them from slavery in order that they might serve him/sacrifice to him/feast with him. Service to him would be not be forced but free.
3. His purpose in delivering Israel, as expressed in their victory song at the Red Sea, was so that he could plant them on Mt. Zion, the place where the temple would be built, the place where he would live with his people, and the place where the Divine Service would be performed.

**Israel as Yahweh’s holy people**

1. In the covenant at Sinai, Yahweh proposed that Israel be his holy and priestly people.
2. The people accepted Yahweh’s proposal and Yahweh made them holy.
3. Yahweh explained to them how holy people live and the people once again agreed.
4. Since holiness is received and never possessed, Yahweh provided a way to keep his people holy – the Divine Service.
5. By performing the rituals of the Divine Service, Yahweh would meet with his people, bless his people, and sanctify his people.

**How a holy God can dwell with sinful people**

1. The holiness of the people was desecrated when they worshipped the golden calf.
2. Yahweh threatened to destroy the Israelites but Moses interceded for them. Moses appealed to Yahweh’s covenant promises to the patriarchs and to Yahweh’s reputation.
3. Yahweh relented and said he would not wipe out Israel, but he would not go with them to the promised land.
4. Moses interceded again and once again Yahweh relented and agreed to go with them. But how could a holy God be with sinful people?
5. The answer is given in Yahweh’s name. His name means he is gracious and merciful. By giving them his personal name, he had given them access to himself. And by calling on his name in the Divine Service they not only have access to him but also have access to his grace and mercy.

**The building of the tabernacle**

1. In order for holy God to live among the Israelites, atonement had to be made for their sins and they had to be holy. This would be accomplished in the Divine Service at the tabernacle.
2. So Moses had the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the garments of the priests made according to the instructions given by Yahweh.
3. After they were made, the tabernacle was constructed as God instructed. Then it, its furnishings, and the priestly garments were anointed with holy anointing oil.
4. The tabernacle was now ready to be used.

**Yahweh takes residence among his people**

1. With the tabernacle being ready, Yahweh moved from the top of the mountain into the tabernacle.
2. At the tabernacle, through the Divine Service, Yahweh would meet with his people, their sin would be atoned for, and he would bless them and make them holy by giving them holy food.
3. Yahweh would go with them and lead them to promised land.

**The story of Exodus – from slavery to Divine Service**

So Exodus tells the story of how Israel went from slavery in Egypt to a free people at Mt. Sinai with Yahweh their God living in their midst. It tells how Yahweh had big plans for his people. He would make them a holy and priestly people through whom he would bless the whole world. When they agreed to his proposal, he made them holy and provided a way to keep them holy – the Divine Service. In order to perform the Divine Service, they needed a place to perform it and the people to perform it. So Yahweh gave them instructions on how to build a tabernacle. This is where the Divine Service would be performed. And he provided priests who would perform the Divine Service on behalf of the people. The priests would be Aaron, his sons and their descendants. At the end of Exodus, the tabernacle is ready and Yahweh moves in. In Leviticus Yahweh will continue to give instructions concerning the Divine Service and the tabernacle, the priests will be ordained, and the first Divine Service will be performed.

**Does Exodus have a Liturgical Goal? Yes!**

After a careful reading of Exodus and based on the Word of God itself rather than on some theory based on some other nation and culture, we can state confidently that a correct reading of Exodus is a liturgical one. It is actually very simple. Yahweh released his people from slavery and brought them to himself at Mt. Sinai in order to dwell with them and act as their God. His plan was to make them his holy people and bring them to the land he promised their forefathers. When they arrived at the promised land, he would drive out its inhabitants and take up permanent residence among them at the temple in Jerusalem. Israel would then act as priests for the nations, taking the needs of the nations to God and bringing the blessings of God to the nations. Israel’s identity as God’s people is wrapped up in the Divine Service, which was performed at tabernacle and later temple. In Exodus, Yahweh establishes the daily service, the place for the service (tabernacle), the furnishings needed and used in the service, and the people who will perform the service. The reason that Yahweh released Israel from slavery was so that he could dwell with them, meet regularly with them, bless them, and make them holy. All of this is accomplished at the tabernacle with its services. That was the goal of Israel’s exodus from Egypt. And in Exodus Yahweh achieves that goal.