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# The Ten Commandments

## Introduction Part 4

*by: Ronald L. Dart*

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The road out of Egypt is not a pleasant drive. It boggles my mind to even think about walking it. I set out one morning in a borrowed Volkswagen to drive from Cairo to the Suez Canal. My wife was with me, and the lady we intended to baptize in, of all places, the Red Sea.

It is a desolate wilderness across there. Once you leave the Nile Valley, there is, well there's nothing, just desert. All we passed on the road was a downed Russian aircraft in the desert. This was while the Aswan dam was under construction and Egypt was full of Russians.

### **Freedom**

According to the book of Exodus, 600,000 men, plus women and children, set out across that desert to freedom, led by Charlton Heston, oh excuse me, I mean, led by Moses.

You don't have to be very perceptive to realize, that this gaggle of refugees, under the best of conditions, would be nothing but trouble. And these were, well, they weren't the best of conditions, but they were free. It's hard for us to imagine what that meant to them. It is just that they had no idea yet what freedom was going to mean.

At any point in history, men have to make decisions about what freedom is worth. Again, and again in history, men have given up freedom for safety and for comfort, and the road the slavery is not always seen for what it is.

### **Matzo**

If we were to put an icon on your computer screen to represent this moment in history, click on it and go back there, that icon would be a piece of matzo, unleavened bread. The reason for it comes in Exodus chapter 12 verse 34, "As they were leaving Egypt, the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs already bound up in their clothes, upon their shoulders, and out they went."

And verse 37 says, "And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about 600,000 on foot that were men besides women and children {38} And a mixed multitude also went up with them, flocks and herds, and cattle, {39} And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough they brought out of Egypt, because it hadn't been given any chance to rise, because they were thrust out of Egypt. They couldn't tarry or wait, and they hadn't prepared any food, so what they had to do was, slap that bread on the fire and cook it fast. They could not wait for it to rise. That takes time, and time was something they did not have.

As far as we know with any certainty, this is the origin of the Jewish Feast of Unleavened Bread known as the Passover, although it's apparent that there were known and observed festivals before this time, perhaps even involving unleavened bread.

(Note: We may think of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover as being Jewish Feasts but in reality, they have been ordained by God. Notice Leviticus 23:2 "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts.")

I have discussed these festivals at length in a series of programs on Christian Holidays. Write or call us and ask for the first CD in that series and we will send it to you free and tell you how to get the rest.

### **Festival of Unleavened Bread**

Continuing in Exodus 13 verse three, "Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, with a mighty hand the LORD brought you out of here. There shall no leavened bread be eaten. {4} This day you came out in the month Abib. {5} And it shall be when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month, {6} Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread and the seventh day shall be a feast to the LORD."

So, the Israelites were required to eat unleavened bread for seven days. They had a Festival on the first day and a Festival on the last day and during this entire period of time, no leaven was even to be seen in any of their dwelling places, tents, not even in their houses when later they dwelt in the land. They were to get leavening out of their lives. (In the New Testament we see the analogy that leavening is a symbol for sin).

The LORD said, {8} "You shall tell your son in those days, saying, "We do this because of what the LORD did when we came out of Egypt. {9} And it is going to be a sign on your hand, a Memorial between your eyes."

This by the way is a repeated symbol in the Bible, your right hand and your forehead have to do with the way you live your life, with the things you do and with the way you think. With your will and with your actions.

The LORD said, "It will be a sign on your hand and a Memorial between your eyes, that the LORD's law may be in your mouth for with a strong hand has the LORD brought you out of Egypt. {10} Therefore you shall keep this ordinance in its season from year to year."

### **God's Justice on Egypt**

God was not through with Pharaoh. He wasn't through with Pharaoh's people. There was a major element of justice still to be finished off with them.

Let's continue in verse 18 of Exodus 13, "God led the people around through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea, and the children of Israel went up harnessed, that is actually armed, out of the land of Egypt." They actually were dressed for battle.

"Moses," {19} "took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had straightly sworn the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you will carry my bones away when you go." {20} They left Succoth and camped in Etham, on the edge of the wilderness, {21} and the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them in the route that they were to go, and by night in a pillar of fire, so they could have light, to go by day and by night."

They didn't just go 12 hours a day. Apparently, they went much more than that.

Verse 22, "God never took the cloud away, nor the pillar of fire from in front of them."

Now we are in chapter 14 of Exodus and verse 1, "And the LORD said to Moses, {2} "I want you to turn aside and camp here, before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: you shall camp by the sea. {3} For Pharaoh, when he sees this, is going to say, "A Ha, they are entangled in the land and the wilderness has shut them in. They are trapped."

Now no one knows precisely where this was, but when we drove to Suez, we turned south along the Red Sea until we came to the end of the road. We had the Red Sea on one side and the hills and the desert on the other, actually it was not a bad little beach there on the shore of the Red Sea, but we were at a dead end. There was nowhere to go from there. It would surely have made a neat trap.

I stood there, looking out across the Red Sea, and wondered what it would be like to look at it with the water like a wall on one side and the other. They did a pretty good job of that in the movie, the Ten Commandments, as the sea that rolled back and stood like a wall on both sides.

Verse 4, "God said, "I am going to harden Pharaoh's heart, and he is going to follow after you, and I will be honored upon Pharaoh and upon all his hosts, because I want the Egyptians to know that I am Yehovah (Hebrew YHVH usually translated as LORD.)""

They did what God said, then developed the final tragic part of this tale for the Egyptians.

### **Pharaoh Had Second Thoughts**

After all is said and done, Pharaoh seems to have had one of those experiences where you slap your forehead and say, "What have I done? What was I thinking? How could I have let these people go?"

And so, predictably they lined themselves up and went out to get them back. Verse 6 of Exodus 14, "Pharaoh made ready his chariot, and took his people with him. {7} And he took 600 chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt and the captains in everyone of them."

Pharaoh had the absolute pick of his entire Army, and his major mobile armored division, {8} "And so his heart was hardened, and they went after the Israelites, but the Egyptians went all the way to the sea, his horsemen, his army, and he came upon the Israelites, all camped out along the shore of the Red Sea."

It kind of made my hair stand up on the back of my neck to think that I might have been standing near the spot where all this took place.

Verse 10, "When Pharaoh got close, the children of Israel looked up and saw the Egyptians coming, and they were scared to death. Prayers began to be offered up to God everywhere in the camp. {11} And they said to Moses." (And this is also so terribly predictable,). "They said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why couldn't we have just died in Egypt? Why do we have to die out here? Why have you dealt with us this way? Why did you bring us out here for? {12} Didn't we tell you this in Egypt, saying, "Leave us alone, so we can be slaves to the Egyptians. It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die out here in the wilderness."

Slavery is better than freedom is what these people were saying. They had been in that condition, for so long, they did not know any other, and freedom scared them to death. I think if the truth were known, they were probably every bit as much afraid of freedom as they were of Pharaoh.

"Moses said," {13} "Don't be afraid. Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, for he will show you today, the Egyptians, whom you see today, look at them. This is the last time you'll ever see them forever. {14} The LORD will fight for you and you are to keep silent." {15} The LORD said to Moses, "What is all of this praying to me going on down here? You tell the children of Israel they are to go forward, {16} You stand up there on the shore, lift up your rod, stretch your hand over the sea and divide it, And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground though the middle of the sea. As for me," God says, {17} "I'm going to harden the hearts of the Egyptians and they're going to follow, and I'm going to get honor upon Pharaoh, upon all his hosts, upon his chariots, upon all his horsemen. {18} And the Egyptians will know that I am, Yahweh, when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots upon all his horsemen."

### **Justice**

Why did God want to get honor from Pharaoh and the Egyptians? Why was that necessary? Why not just hold them off? Take the children of Israel across the Red Sea and then shut the door behind them so the Egyptians couldn't follow? The answer was justice, because these are the people who had killed Israelite babies in their hundreds, perhaps thousands. These were the

people who had held all these thousands of people, these hundreds of thousands of people in slavery, for all of their lifetimes, who had taken advantage of them brutally.

And the time came for justice to come down. So "God said, "I'm going to do this," Verse 19 of Exodus 14, "An angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud and the fire went back and stood behind them. {20} It came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and it was a cloud of darkness to them, but it gave light by night to the Israelites."

This kept the Egyptians and the Israelites apart all night long.

### **Children of Israel Went Down into The Midst of the Sea Upon dry Ground**

Exodus 14 verse 21, "Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided, {22} And the children of Israel went down into the midst of the sea upon dry ground, and the waters were a wall on their right hand and on their left."

It absolutely boggles the imagination. One wonders if you could go over to the wall of water and stick your finger in it? Probably not. It was probably further away, and it may be speaking figuratively, but it still captures the imagination, when the Israelites had gone down into the sea on dry ground and they arrived on the other side."

### **Egyptians Pursue the Israelites**

Exodus 14 verse 23, "The Egyptians pursued, and they went in after them into the midst of the sea, all of Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and all his horsemen, {24} And it came to pass in the morning watch, the LORD looked into the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud and troubled the host of the Egyptians, {25} And took off their chariot wheels."

So here you are, you're chasing, you're mad, you're angry, all of your weapons are ready, your sword is in your hand, you are whipping your horses in a fury, you're trying to catch these people going through the bottom of the sea and how they mustered the courage to follow them is another question altogether. And as you go, you reach a certain point, and all of your chariot wheels come off!

About that time the Egyptians decided the better part of wisdom was to run for their lives and they tried.

Verse 26 of Exodus 14, "And Yehovah said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon the chariots, and upon all their horsemen." {27} And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared, and the Egyptians ran for their lives, and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the middle of the sea. {28} The waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. There remained not so much as one of them."

In looking at the whole Biblical account, you are persuaded that the story as told in the movie the 'Ten Commandments' is wrong. Pharaoh did not survive. Pharaoh was at the head of his chariots and he died with all the rest of them.

Funny how certain thoughts come to you at certain times. I feel kind of sorry for the horses.

### **The LORD Saved Israel**

Exodus 14 verse 30, "Thus the LORD saved Israel that day, out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel stood and watched the bodies of Egyptian soldiers washing up dead on the seashore. {31} They saw the great work which the LORD did on the Egyptians, and the people feared the LORD and believed the LORD and his servant Moses."

I would certainly think so. Israel celebrated with song and dance when they saw that they were safe, but their joy is not going to last very long. Anyone who knows the geography and the general layout of that land, the climate of that land, is going to understand very quickly that this is going to be a time of great hardship for these people. They are free, but now they have all the responsibilities, obligations and opportunities of free men.

### **No Water in The Desert**

Let's continue in Exodus chapter 15 verse 22, "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur, three days out there in that desert, and they found no water. And when they finally came to Marah, {23} They could not drink the waters of Marah, because they were bitter. The name of it was called Marah, which means bitter. {24} So the people murmured against Moses."

I can kind of half way understand why someone might do that, but again, having seen all that they had seen up until this point, being led by a pillar of cloud, of a pillar of fire and having seen what was done to the Egyptians, having walked dry shod on the bottom of the Red Sea, you would think they could somehow hope in God, but what they did was to complain against Moses.

They complained by saying, "What shall we drink?" {25} Now Moses cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree, and when he took the tree, he threw it in the waters and the waters were made sweet. There he made for them a statute, and an ordinance, (a decree and a law), and there he proved them, {26} And he said this to the Israelites. "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you."

Now that is really a profound statement, pregnant with meaning, because very early on in all this, the LORD actually lets us know something, which, it takes a little study and scholarship to figure out as you read your way through this law, but He tells us plainly here, that His commandments, His judgments His statutes, all of these things He is going to explain to them, through these days in the wilderness and at Mount Sinai. These laws have to do with their health and well-being. There is a direct connection between obedience to God and health. There is a direct connection

between disobedience to God and disease, and it doesn't take God at the consoles flipping switches and pressing buttons to make it happen.

### **The Law of God**

It's a part of life, and the law of God which the LORD was going to give them, was to give them a lamp to their feet, a light to their path so they wouldn't stumble and fall down and hurt themselves. So, they wouldn't eat things they should not eat. So, they wouldn't drink things they shouldn't drink. So that they actually would live good, clean, healthy lives, and a long life. Why? Because they lived according to the way that God was in the process of showing them.

### **One Month on The Road**

"They took their journey from Elam," Exodus chapter 16, verse one, "and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elam and Sinai, on the 15th day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt."

This is a simple one. Israel left Egypt on the 15th day of the first month and they arrived here on the 15th day of the second month, so they were 30 days on the road at this time.

### **Bread from Heaven**

Verse 2 of Exodus 16 "The whole congregation of the children of Israel began to murmur against Moses and Aaron out in the desert, {3} And they said, "We wish to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt."

Now you know, that's a little hard to get hold of when you think about it, but again, you have to kind of understand what a hardship they were under out there in the desert.

They went on to say, "We wish we had just died, by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, because down there we sat by the flesh pots and we had bread to the full. We had all those things and you brought us out here in the wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Well, the LORD heard what they said, {4} and the LORD said to Moses, "I'm going to rain bread from heaven for you and the people will go out and gather a certain rate every day, but I'm going to do, right here, right now, I want to prove these people to see whether they're going to walk in my law or whether they won't

We are going to find out whether these people will do what I tell them or not. Now here's how it's going to work, {5} On the sixth day, they will prepare what they bring in and it will be twice as much as they gather every day." {6} So Moses and Aaron told the children of Israel these things, and they said, at evening you will know that the Lord is He who brought you out of the land of Egypt, {7} And in the morning, you will see the glory of the LORD, for he hears your murmurings against him and what are we that you murmur against us?"

Moses and Aaron could say, "We are nobody folks, we came down here because God sent us, we brought you out of Egypt because God brought us all out of there, so we should listen to God."

Moses said, {8} "This is the way it's going to be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to eat to the full, because he's heard your complaints against him, not against us are you complaining but it's against God."

"Moses spoke to Aaron," {9} "I want you to tell these people, come near before the LORD, He has heard your murmurings." {10} They brought the people up and they told them, "The glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud," {12} And God said, "Okay I heard all this. Tonight, you're going to eat flesh, and in the morning, you will be filled with bread, and you're going to know that I am your God." {13} It came to pass, at evening, the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all round about the host, {14} When the dew disappeared later in the morning, thin flakes, white like hoar frost, covered the ground. {15} And the children of Israel looked at it and said, "What's that?" They didn't know what it was. And Moses said, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat.""

They called it, 'What's it,' which is roughly what manna means in Hebrew. They didn't know what it was. It was manna.

Verse 16, "This is what God commanded, everyone of you, gather an omer for every man according to the number of the persons. You want to add up your people, gather up just enough, and prepare that. {18} When they measured with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over. He that gathered little had no lack. They all gathered according to their eating."

These were the daily instructions. You know there is a lot of faith involved in this. You can't gather more than for one day, because you have to trust that God will put it there again in the morning. Just go one day at a time. That would make a good title for song, wouldn't it?

So, Moses told the people, {19} "Let no man leave of it until the morning. {20} Notwithstanding, somebody didn't listen."

### **What Happens When You Don't Obey God?**

We used to have a saying, "There is always that 10% that doesn't get the word and sure enough it was true here as it was everywhere else. Somebody said, "I don't know, the manna might not be here in the morning, I am going to get some extra."

"So, they did, and some got extra, and it bred worms, and stank, and Moses was furious with them."

I imagine their neighbors were upset too, because I gather that this stuff must have really smelled up the landscape.

### **Getting Ready for The Sabbath**

Exodus 16 verse 21, "So they gathered the manna every morning, every man got what he had to have, and when the sun got hot, it all melted away. It was gone. {22} And it came to pass, that the sixth day came around, and all the people who had been paying attention went out and

gathered twice as much as they had before, and some of the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. "A lot of people are gathering too much manna and we are going to have worms and stink again.""

Moses said, {23} "No, no, this is what God said to do. Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today. Cook what you will cook, whatever remains over, you keep it till the morning. {24} So they did, and it didn't stink and there were no worms."

Now this is really fascinating because of all the things that God might've tried them out on of the Ten Commandments, which are to come, He tried them out on the Sabbath Day. It involved an interesting test of faith and that is that you could not gather too much on Monday or Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday or you are going to stink up the whole landscape, you had to trust that it would be there the next day and when we came to the Sabbath day, we could gather twice as much because we weren't supposed to do the work of gathering and preparing food on the holy Sabbath Day.

### **Which Day Is the Sabbath?**

Now there is an answer here to a question that is often asked about the Sabbath. People want to know; does it really make any difference which day I keep as the Sabbath? Maybe I could just keep Wednesday, Wednesdays are more convenient for me. Or perhaps Thursday or Monday. Why does it always have to be one particular day of the week? Well, you didn't have any choice in Israel when you were out there in the wilderness with Israel, did you? You couldn't choose Monday. You couldn't choose Thursday. You had to do it when everyone else did it.

You know, when you think about it, the Sabbath is not just an individual issue. It's a community issue, and that's why the whole community had to be taught about the Sabbath, the same way, on the same day.

### **Manna - What's It**

The house of Israel called the name of that stuff, manna. What's it, because they didn't know. Verse 31 of Exodus 16, "It was like coriander seed, white and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey, {32} And Moses said, "This is what God told us to do about this, fill an omer of it to be kept for all your generations, so they can see the bread from which I have fed you in the wilderness." Future generations will hear the story and they will not believe it. So, I want you to keep one omer, one little pot of it so they can see it, and so they can know it. {33} "So they took a little pot, filled it with manna, and put it up before the Ark of the testimony."

So, the children of Israel ate manna for 40 years, until they finally came into the Promise Land. I suppose you could make a guess, by that time, they were pretty tired of it.

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*The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit [RLDEA.com](http://RLDEA.com) where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.*

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### **Discussion Questions**

1. Can you imagine what it would have looked like when the Israelites made their exodus through the desert?
2. What is freedom worth to you?
3. Have you ever wondered how many were in the “mixed multitude?”
4. Do you think that there were other nationalities, other than Egyptians, in the mixed multitude?
5. Have you ever considered that God was not just the God of Israel but also the God of the Gentiles long before the New Testament?
6. Why is it so hard for the majority of Christians to realize that the feasts that God proclaims are not the ‘Feast of the Jews’ nor the ‘Feast of the Hebrews’ nor the ‘Feasts of Israel,’ but are the “Feasts of the LORD?”
7. Do you have a hard time understanding the Israelites when they get so scared that they want to go back to Egypt and bondage or do you understand why they were so fickle?
8. Are there times where you behave kind of like the Israelites, moments of doubt rather than faith?
9. What can we learn from the Israelites in our Christian walk?
10. Have you realized that God’s laws are for our overall well-being, spiritually and physically and not to burden us?