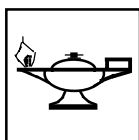


1. **v. 1 made thee a god.** The verb translated 'made' here is the regular verb 'to give'. In this case it is perhaps best translated 'appointed'. It emphasises that the commission is one of a superior to an inferior, an honour bequeathed by God. 'God' is the Hebrew *elohim*, without an article. While it is used elsewhere in the plural sense to refer to angels and to the elders of Israel as judges, the usage here is distinctive because it is used of a singular individual who is not God, namely Moses. Although plural in form, the word governs a singular verb in almost all of its occurrences, since it usually refers to God Himself. In a manner somewhat akin to that in which the angel of the Lord bears His Name and is referred to as 'LORD' in Genesis, here Moses is to 'be' (in the sense of 'represent') God to Pharaoh. See further the comment.
2. **v. 2 send.** The idea of *sending* is one that recurs through the plague accounts. If space does not permit returning to it in a later article, the occurrences may be easily checked in a concordance.
3. **v. 3 I will harden Pharaoh's heart.** Not one of the usual two words for hardening, *chazaq* or *kabad*. Here the word is *qashah*, 'severe', 'harsh', 'hard(-pressed)', the only occasion on which it is used in Exodus 1-15. The phenomenon of hardening was discussed last month.
4. **v. 4 armies.** Literally, 'hosts', not necessarily with a military connotation (see note on 6:26, Feb. 2002, p. 39).
5. **v. 7.** The biographical detail of the ages of Moses and Aaron again serves to demarcate the mission to Pharaoh and the plagues which will follow. All the preliminaries are now in place, and the main narrative may now begin.
6. **v. 9 say unto Aaron, Take thy rod.** It has been suggested that Aaron himself performs the signs as long as the Egyptian magicians are present; if they are not then Moses may perform them instead. This would imply that Moses speaks to Pharaoh as an equal; when Pharaoh has company then both leaders have representatives who perform their signs for them.
7. **v. 9 serpent.** The word here is *tanniyn*, normally a word for a large reptile, whale/sea monster (cf. Job 7:12; Lam. 4:3), or even dragon. The Septuagint does indeed adopt the translation 'dragon' in this passage, the term being different from the usual word for 'snake', *nachash*, found in the other rod-snake passage, Exodus 4:3. Most interpreters take *tanniyn* to be a term with a fairly broad range of meanings, and prefer to take it as a regular snake here, but one could take the dragon/reptile sense. Pharaoh is addressed by the same word in Ezekiel 29:3; compare also Isaiah 51:9.



## Encounter

Reprinted items from earlier issues, chosen by  
the Publishing Editor

# The Law given through Moses\*

## 13. Internal evidence

Islip Collyer

**W**HEN A NATION possesses a law which has been revered for thousands of years, and when it also has a written history claiming to deal with national beginnings, we should certainly expect to find a record of the manner in which the law came into being. A history may contain errors, and the writers may have been prejudiced, but in all that claims to be historical there is nearly always a substratum of fact. Surely any reader may be absolutely convinced of such a basis of truth in the records

of the Jews. The time has long gone by when an unbeliever could dismiss all the ancient history of Israel as fictitious. So much has been confirmed by modern discovery that even those who only pay heed to outside evidence now recognise the historical basis.

Mr H. G. Wells, although distinctly sceptical in outlook, freely admitted the factual foundation

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of Israel's ancient history. He spoke of the book of Judges as a narrative mainly of disasters frankly recorded. The student who is well enough acquainted with the history to see the internal evidence can have no doubts on the subject, for, although there is a continual insistence on the special position of the nation as a people chosen by God, and although there is a considerable element of the miraculous, which tends to repel most readers, the record as a whole is so discreditable to the nation that a student readily recognises the unmistakable foundation of truth. Moreover, the words of denunciation from successive prophets are so severe that the reader senses the presence of something very unusual in the writings of mankind.

That is the phase of the subject which we must now emphasise. The record gives a detailed account of how and when the Law originated. Any student who wants to be fair must take notice of the circumstances related in the history.

THE giving of the Ten Commandments, the centre of the Law, is connected with one of the most painful and disgraceful incidents ever recorded of a nation. While Moses was in Mount Horeb receiving the Law, the people thought he was dead, and they wanted a god to deliver them. They made a golden calf, presumably after the manner of Egypt, they worshipped it and, as it is written, they "sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play" (Ex. 32:6). Probably most readers will realise the sinister significance of these last words. Idolatry was often associated with play of the most licentious character.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, in his lengthy and detailed *Antiquities*, records the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Law, but says not a word regarding the golden calf. He testified continually to the truth of Scripture, but in many ways he toned down the narrative to present the nation in a more favourable light. In this spirit of patriotic partiality he passes the incident of the golden calf in silence.

In the Bible it is related twice, first in Exodus and then in the recapitulation presented in the book of Deuteronomy. Can anyone suggest an explanation for such a story appearing in the history, except the obvious one that such an incident occurred? But if one feels compelled to admit that something of the kind happened, what is to be done with the surrounding circumstances? Why had Moses left them and why was he in the mount? Why should there be any refer-

ence to this disgraceful incident but for the fact that it was so closely connected with a very important matter in the history?

THERE is, however, a still more serious and significant fact related in this connection. The record tells us that, when Moses on returning from the mount saw the disgraceful scene, he cast the tables of stone from his hand and they were broken. It is possible that some Christians may see, or think they see, a symbolic meaning in this destruction of the first record of the Law. For the moment we can leave this matter of symbolic meanings and merely take note of the fact that this breaking of the tables was necessarily a most painful matter to the Jews. They were always quick to perceive omens for good or ill in any unusual occurrence. This indeed was characteristic of most ancient nations.

There was no possibility of seeing any favourable significance in this breaking of the tables on which God had written the Law. They were broken as the direct result of national sin and they had to be replaced with other stones. So it must be admitted that the giving of the Law was definitely connected with incidents far removed from all that the Jews would desire to contemplate.

ANOTHER painful matter connected with the Law is related in the first book of Samuel. The table of testimony had been put in the ark, and this was the most sacred of Israel's possessions. At the time when Samuel was born, the high priest was weak, his sons were wicked and the people as a whole were worthy of their leaders. The Philistines invaded the land and the Israelites were defeated. In a desperate attempt to turn the tide of battle they brought out the ark, and the Philistines captured it.

The sceptical reader is not under any logical compulsion to accept the full story of how the ark was restored to the land of Israel (1 Sam. 6,7), but he is certainly called upon to take note of this incident in its bearing on the history of the Law. He may suggest that an ordinary outbreak of disease might make the superstitious Philistines think that the presence of the ark was a menace to them and so induce them to send it back. The details indicating a Divine control might be added later—so the unbeliever may suggest. We need not trouble to argue this phase of the matter. It is clear, however, from the narrative that the loss of the ark was a disgrace to the people, and the circumstances in which it

was returned to them were not at all to their credit (6:19). Here, then, we have another of those coldly unpleasant matters of history in which the ark with its sacred contents figured conspicuously in the national life.

A LITTLE later there came another painful incident. David, the greatest of Israel's kings, was established in his kingdom, and naturally desired to bring the ark to his centre of government. For this removal they used the ordinary means of transport prevailing in their day, a cart drawn by oxen. It was no doubt a natural mistake to make, but any careful reader of the Law would instantly perceive that it was a most serious error. The Philistines were not condemned for putting the ark on a cart, for they knew no better. David certainly ought to have known that the ark was to be carried by sanctified Levites, and that rings and poles were provided for this purpose.

During the journey on the ox cart there was a painful episode, one of the men being slain for taking hold of the ark as if it had been an ordinary piece of furniture. This was not an incident that any Jew would have desired to invent. Probably all earnest readers, both Jews and Gentiles, would greatly prefer that it had never been recorded, for, although we are told repeatedly in Scripture that God will be honoured and sanctified in those who approach unto Him, and we are shown that the individual life counts for little, we are just as reluctant to learn the lesson now as they were in ancient Israel. We read that David was "displeased" at this tragedy (2 Sam. 6:8), and that, instead of carrying out his original intention, he had the ark turned aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. This man treated it with more respect and so received a blessing. Later, David realised that he had been at fault in not seeking God after the due order. Levites were

sanctified so that they might carry the ark to Jerusalem.

What was it that was so sacred? Who had laid down those important laws which David had forgotten and the breach of which caused tragedy? Here again we find historical incidents such as no one would desire to invent, incidents to the detriment of Israel's greatest king, but definitely connected with the fact that the nation had an ancient sacred Law which was of supreme importance. The Law was violated as often as Christian precepts are neglected now, but at least lip service was rendered to it and there was a recognition of its sanctity. The suggestion that it came into existence in post-exilic times is as unreasonable as it would be to maintain that the whole of the New Testament was produced at the time of the Reformation.

In connection with the early days of Solomon, we read that "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel" (2 Chron. 5:10). A fraudulent writer might well have affirmed that Aaron's rod and the golden pot of manna were still there, but no such claim is made. The tables were there, and that was what made the ark the most sacred of Israel's possessions.

One other very significant matter is related. Solomon, we read, brought the daughter of Pharaoh from the city of David to the house he had built for her, for he said, "My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the LORD hath come" (8:11). For such a great king to feel that a building was too holy for his queen was surely a remarkable testimony to the reputation of the ark which caused the holiness. We may well take this as one more piece of internal evidence that the Law was given to Israel very early in the national history.

### Rome, Jerusalem and the Bible

A new booklet by Brother Paul Billington, published by the *Bible Magazine*. The booklet shows that the struggle for control of the Holy Land is not just between Jew and Arab, but has worldwide political and religious involvement, being long prophesied as the preliminary to the return of Christ and the setting up of God's Kingdom.

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