

# EXODUS

## *Introduction*

*Exodus is the book about liberation and covenant with its codes, about the first steps in the desert. Those who today acknowledge the existence of a historical nucleus in these stories place the oppression and exile from Egypt between the reign of Ramses II and Mernepta (1290–1204).*

## EXILE FROM EGYPT

*The Lord enters history by siding with an enslaved people, oppressed by one of the powers of that time. The Lord of history appears as a redeemer of slaves, as defender of the rights of those who have no rights, as a righteous deliverer. The Lord acts, in part through Moses, the great human liberator.*

*The final author, using diverse texts, composes a magnificent and grandiose picture, using diverse repetitions.*

*These chapters are anchored in people's memory, becoming a model or patron of successive liberations. It also enters in the New Testament along this line extending its influence and inspiration even to people who do not believe in that liberating God. The Lord will always be for Israel "the one who took us out of Egypt, from slavery."*

**1**<sup>8</sup>A new king who had not known Joseph came to power<sup>9</sup> and said to his people:

—The Israelites are more numerous and stronger than we are.<sup>10</sup> Let us deal warily with them lest they increase still more and, in case of war, side with our enemy, fight against us and escape from the land.

<sup>11</sup>So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor. In that way they built the storage towns of Pithom and Rameses.<sup>12</sup> But the more they oppressed the Hebrews the more they increased and spread, until the Egyptians dreaded the Israelites<sup>13</sup> and became ruthless in making them work.<sup>14</sup> They made life bitter for them in hard labor with bricks and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields. In all their work the Egyptians treated them harshly.

<sup>15</sup>Then the king of Egypt gave orders to the Hebrew midwives—one of whom was called Shiprah and the other Puah:

<sup>16</sup>—when they attended Hebrew women who were on the birth stool and saw that it was a boy, they were to kill it, but if it was a girl they were to let it live.

<sup>17</sup>But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded but let the children live.

<sup>22</sup>Pharaoh then gave this order to all the people:

—Every infant boy born to the Hebrews must be thrown into the Nile, but every girl may live.

## Moses' infancy

**2**<sup>1</sup>Now a man belonging to the clan of Levi married a woman of his own tribe.<sup>2</sup> She gave birth to a boy and, seeing that he was a beautiful child, she kept him hidden for three months.<sup>3</sup> As she could not conceal him any longer, she made a basket out of papyrus leaves and coated it with tar and pitch. She then laid the child in the basket and placed it among the reeds near the bank of the Nile;<sup>4</sup> but the sister of the child kept at a distance to see what would happen to him.

<sup>5</sup>Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the Nile; her attendants meanwhile walked along the bank. When she saw the basket among the reeds, she sent her maidservant to fetch it. <sup>6</sup>She opened the basket and saw the child:

—A boy, and he was crying!

She felt sorry for him, for she thought:

—This is one of the Hebrew children.

<sup>7</sup>Then the sister of the child said to Pharaoh's daughter:

—Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?

<sup>8</sup>Pharaoh's daughter agreed, and the girl went to call the mother of the child.

<sup>9</sup>Pharaoh's daughter said to her:

—Take the child and nurse him for me and I will pay you.

So the woman took the child and nursed him <sup>10</sup>and, when the child had grown, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter who adopted him as her son. And she named him Moses to recall that she had drawn him out of the water.

## Moses' youth

<sup>11</sup>After a fairly long time, Moses, by now a grown man, wanted to meet his fellow Hebrews. He noticed how heavily they were burdened and he saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his own people. <sup>12</sup>He looked around and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

<sup>15</sup>When Pharaoh heard about it he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in the land of Midian. There he sat down by a well.

<sup>16</sup>A priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's sheep. <sup>17</sup>Some shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses went to their help and watered the sheep.

<sup>18</sup>When the girls returned to their father Reuel, he asked them:

—Why have you come back so early today?

<sup>19</sup>They said:

—An Egyptian protected us from the shepherds, and even drew water for us and watered the sheep.

<sup>20</sup>The man said:

—Where is he? Why did you leave him there? Call him and offer him a meal.

<sup>21</sup>Moses agreed to stay with the man and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah in marriage. <sup>22</sup>She had a child and Moses named him Gershom, to recall that he had been a guest in a strange land.

<sup>23</sup>It happened during that long period of time that the king of Egypt died. The sons of Israel groaned under their slavery; they cried to God for help and from their bondage their cry ascended to God. <sup>24</sup>God heard their sigh and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. <sup>25</sup>God looked upon the Israelites and revealed himself to them.

## Moses' vocation

**3** <sup>1</sup>Moses pastured the sheep of Jethro, his father-in-law, priest of Midian. One day he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the Mountain of God.

<sup>2</sup>The Angel of Yahweh appeared to him by means of a flame of fire in the middle of a bush. Moses saw that although the bush was on fire it did not burn up.

<sup>3</sup>Moses thought:

—I will go and see this amazing sight, why is the bush not burning up?

<sup>4</sup>Yahweh saw that Moses was drawing near to look, and God called to him from the middle of the bush:

—**Moses! Moses!**

He replied:

—Here I am.

<sup>5</sup>Yahweh said to him:

—Do not come near; take off your sandals because the place where you are standing is holy ground.

<sup>6</sup>And God continued:

—I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

Moses hid his face lest his eyes look on God.

<sup>7</sup>Yahweh said:

—I have seen the humiliation of my people in Egypt and I hear their cry when they are cruelly treated by their taskmasters. I know their suffering. <sup>8</sup>I have come down to free them from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them up from that land to a beautiful spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the territory of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup>The cry of the sons of Israel has reached me and I have seen how the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup>Go now! I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.

<sup>11</sup>Moses said to God:

—Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the people of Israel out of Egypt?

<sup>12</sup>God replied:

—I will be with you and this will be the sign that I have sent you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.

<sup>13</sup>Moses answered God:

—If I go to the Israelites and say to them: ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ they will ask me: ‘What is his name?’ What shall I answer them?

<sup>14</sup>God said to Moses:

—I AM WHO AM. This is what you will say to the sons of Israel: ‘I AM sent me to you.’

<sup>15</sup>God then said to Moses:

—You will say to the Israelites: ‘YAHWEH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, has sent me.’ That will be my name forever, and by this name they shall call upon me for all generations to come.

<sup>16</sup>Go! Call together the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob appeared to me and said: I have seen and taken account of how the Egyptians have treated you, <sup>17</sup>and I mean to bring you out of all this oppression in Egypt and take you to the land of the Canaanites, a land flowing with milk and honey.’

## Moses and Aaron in the presence of Pharaoh

**5** <sup>1</sup>After this Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said:

—This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel says: ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast for me in the desert.

<sup>2</sup>Pharaoh replied:

—Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice and let Israel go? I do not know Yahweh and I will not let Israel go.

<sup>6</sup>That same day Pharaoh gave the following order to the taskmasters of the people and to the Israelite foremen:  
<sup>7</sup>—You will no longer supply the people with straw for making bricks. Let them go and find it themselves;  
<sup>8</sup>but you will exact from them the same number of bricks as before, not one less. They are lazy and that is why they are crying out to go and sacrifice to their God. <sup>9</sup>Make the work harder for the people and pay no attention to their lies.

## PASSOVER

**12** <sup>1</sup>Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt and said:

<sup>2</sup>—This month is to be the beginning of all months, the first month of your year. <sup>3</sup>Speak to the community of Israel and say to them:

On the tenth day of this month let each family take a lamb, a lamb for each house. <sup>4</sup>If the family is too small for a lamb, they must join with a neighbor, the nearest to the house, according to the number of persons and to what each one can eat.

<sup>5</sup>You will select a perfect lamb without blemish, a male born during the present year, taken from the sheep or goats. <sup>6</sup>Then you will keep it until the fourteenth day of the month.

On that evening all the people will slaughter their lambs <sup>7</sup>and take some of the blood to put on the doorposts and on top of the doorframes of the houses where you eat.

<sup>8</sup>That night you will eat the flesh roasted at the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. <sup>11</sup>And this is how you will eat: with a belt round your waist, sandals on your feet and a staff in your hand. You shall eat hastily for it is a passover in honor of Yahweh. <sup>12</sup>On that night I shall go through Egypt and strike every firstborn in Egypt, men and animals; and I will even bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt, I, Yahweh! <sup>13</sup>The blood on your houses will be the sign that you are there. I will see the blood and pass over you; and you will escape the mortal plague when I strike Egypt.

<sup>14</sup>This is a day you are to remember and celebrate in honor of Yahweh. It is to be kept as a festival day for all generations forever.

## Exile of Israel

<sup>29</sup>It happened that in the middle of the night Yahweh struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, heir to the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner in the dungeon and the firstborn of all the animals.

<sup>31</sup>Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron in the night and said:

—Get up and go from among my people, you and the people of Israel. Go and worship Yahweh as you have said! <sup>32</sup>Take your sheep and your cattle, as you told me, and go!

## Passover ritual

**13** <sup>1</sup>Yahweh spoke to Moses saying:

<sup>2</sup>—Consecrate to me every firstborn: the first to leave the womb among the sons of Israel, whether of man or beast, is mine.

<sup>3</sup>Moses said to the people:

—Remember the day you came out of Egypt from the house of slavery, for it was by his power that Yahweh brought you out; because of this you will not eat leavened bread. <sup>4</sup>The day you left was in the month of Abib.

## The unleavened bread

<sup>5</sup>When Yahweh brings you to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites and the Jebusites—a land flowing with milk and honey which he swore to your fathers to give you—you will carry out this ceremony.

<sup>6</sup>For seven days you will eat unleavened bread and on the seventh day you will hold a feast in honor of Yahweh. <sup>7</sup>You will eat unleavened bread for seven days and no leavened bread is to be seen among you or anywhere throughout all your territory. <sup>8</sup>On that day you will tell your son: ‘I do this because of what Yahweh did for me when I came out of Egypt.’

<sup>9</sup>This ceremony will be for you as a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead, so that Yahweh’s law may be ever on your lips, for it was with great power that Yahweh brought you out of Egypt. <sup>10</sup>Because of this you will observe this ordinance at the appointed time from year to year.

## Towards the Red Sea

<sup>19</sup>Moses took with him the bones of Joseph for he had made the Israelites swear saying, “God will surely remember you and then you will carry my bones with you away from here.”

<sup>20</sup>They moved on from Succoth and encamped at Etham bordering the wilderness. <sup>21</sup>By day Yahweh went before them in a pillar of cloud to guide them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, enabling them to travel day and night. <sup>22</sup>Neither the cloud by day nor the fire by night, disappeared from the sight of the people.

## Crossing of the Red Sea

**14** <sup>5</sup>The king of Egypt was told that the people had fled; then Pharaoh and his ministers changed their minds with regard to the people. ‘What have we done,’ they said, ‘in allowing Israel to go and be free of our service?’ <sup>6</sup>Pharaoh prepared his chariot and took his army with him. <sup>7</sup>There were six hundred of his best chariots; indeed he took all the Egyptian chariots, each one with his warriors.

<sup>8</sup>Yahweh had hardened the mind of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who set out in pursuit of the Israelites as they marched forth triumphantly.

<sup>9</sup>The Egyptians—all the chariots and horses of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army—gave chase and caught up with them when they had encamped by the sea near Pihahiroth, facing Baalzephon.

<sup>10</sup>The Israelites saw the Egyptians marching after them: Pharaoh was drawing near. They were terrified and cried out to Yahweh. <sup>11</sup>Then they said to Moses:

—Were there no tombs in Egypt? Why have you brought us to the desert to die? <sup>12</sup>What have you done by bringing us out of Egypt? Isn’t this what we said when we were in Egypt: Let us work for the Egyptians. Far better serve Egypt than to die in the desert!

<sup>13</sup>Moses said to the people:

—Have no fear! Stay where you are and see the work Yahweh will do to save you today. The Egyptians whom you see today, you will never see again! <sup>14</sup>Yahweh will fight for you and all you have to do is to keep still.

<sup>15</sup>Yahweh said to Moses:

—Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward.

<sup>16</sup>You will raise your staff and stretch your hand over the sea and divide it to let the Israelites go dry foot through the sea. <sup>17</sup>I will so harden the minds of the Egyptians that they will follow you. <sup>18</sup>And I will have glory

at the expense of Pharaoh, his army, his chariots and horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh when I gain glory for myself at the cost of Pharaoh and his army!

<sup>19</sup>The Angel of God who had gone ahead of the Israelites now placed himself behind them. The pillar of cloud changed its position <sup>20</sup>from the front to the rear, between the camps of the Israelites and the Egyptians. For one army the cloud provided light, for the other darkness so that throughout the night the armies drew no closer to each other.

<sup>21</sup>Moses stretched his hand over the sea and Yahweh made a strong east wind blow all night and dry up the sea.

The waters divided <sup>22</sup>and the sons of Israel went on dry ground through the middle of the sea, with the waters forming a wall to their right and to their left. <sup>23</sup>The Egyptians followed them and all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and horsemen moved forward in the middle of the sea.

<sup>24</sup>It happened that in the morning watch, Yahweh in the pillar of cloud and fire, looked towards the Egyptian camp and threw it into confusion. <sup>25</sup>He so clogged their chariot wheels that they could hardly move. Then the Egyptians said:

—Let us flee from the Israelites for Yahweh is fighting for them against Egypt.

<sup>26</sup>Then Yahweh said to Moses:

—Stretch your hand over the sea and let the waters come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and horsemen.

<sup>27</sup>Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. At daybreak the sea returned to its place. As the Egyptians tried to flee, Yahweh swept them into the sea. <sup>28</sup>The waters flowed back and engulfed the chariots and horsemen of the whole army of Pharaoh that had followed Israel into the sea. Not one of them escaped. <sup>29</sup>As for the Israelites they went forward on dry ground in the middle of the sea, the waters forming a wall on their right and their left.

<sup>30</sup>On that day Yahweh delivered Israel from the power of the Egyptians and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup>They understood what wonders Yahweh had done for them against Egypt, and the people feared Yahweh. They believed in Yahweh and in Moses, his servant.

*The exile from Egypt will be the most important event in the history of Israel. It is the beginning of the awareness of being God's chosen people. It will always be handed down from parents to children and they will celebrate it during the yearly feast of the Passover and in the Psalms, where they sing to the mercy of God leading them through the Red Sea, and the manna, and the water in the desert.*

**You can also read:**

*Psalm 78. The theme of this Psalm is the liberation of the people of Israel until the election of King David.*

## **FIRST STAGE IN THE DESERT**

### *Introduction*

*The people are already out of Egypt but have not yet arrived to the promised land. In between these two frontiers, in between these two decisive moments emerges a time of discernment in the desert.*

*This stage becomes a pattern of future pilgrimages through other deserts, to conquer freedom and hope. Because of its primordial character, these events have a symbolic value of future religious experiences (water, manna), culminating in the symbolic theology of the evangelist John.*

## Manna and quails

**16** <sup>1</sup>The Israelites left Elim and the entire community reached the desert of Sin, between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after leaving Egypt.

<sup>2</sup>In the desert the whole community of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron <sup>3</sup>and said to them:

—If only we had died by the hand of Yahweh in Egypt when we sat down to caldrons of meat and ate all the bread we wanted, whereas you have brought us to this desert to let the whole assembly die of starvation!

<sup>4</sup>Yahweh then said to Moses:

—Now I am going to rain down bread from heaven for you. Each day the people are to gather what is needed for that day. In this way I will test them to see if they will follow my Teaching or not. <sup>12</sup>I have heard the complaints of Israel. Speak to them and say: Between the two evenings you will eat meat, and in the morning you will have bread to your heart's content; then you shall know that I am Yahweh, your God!

<sup>13</sup>In the evening quails came up and covered the camp. And in the morning, dew had fallen around the camp. <sup>14</sup>When the dew lifted, there was on the surface of the desert a thin crust like hoarfrost. <sup>15</sup>The people of Israel upon seeing it said to one another:

—What is it?

For they didn't know what it was.

Moses told them:

—It is the bread that Yahweh has given you to eat.

<sup>16</sup>This is what Yahweh commanded: Gather it according to the amount each one eats, about four liters a piece, and according to the number of persons each of you has in his tent.

<sup>17</sup>This is what the people of Israel did. They gathered it, some more, others less. <sup>18</sup>But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered more didn't have too much while those who gathered less didn't have too little. Each one had as much as he needed.

## Water from the rock

**17** <sup>1</sup>The whole community of the people of Israel moved on from the desert of Sin going from place to place as Yahweh commanded, and encamped at Rephidim. But there was no water to drink.

<sup>2</sup>The people complained to Moses and said:

—Give us water to drink.

But Moses replied:

—Why do you find fault with me? Why do you put Yahweh to the test?

<sup>3</sup>But the people thirsted for water there and grumbled against Moses:

—Why did you make us leave Egypt to have us die of thirst with our children and our cattle?

<sup>4</sup>So Moses cried to Yahweh:

—What shall I do with the people? They are almost ready to stone me!

<sup>5</sup>Yahweh said to Moses:

—Go ahead of the people and take with you the elders of Israel. Take with you the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. <sup>6</sup>I will stand there before you on the rock at Horeb. You will strike the rock and water will flow from it and the people will drink." Moses did this in the presence of the elders of Israel.

<sup>7</sup>The place was called Massah and Meribah because of the complaints of the Israelites, who tested Yahweh saying, 'Is Yahweh with us or not?'

# COVENANT

## *Introduction*

*The great encounter of the people with God takes place in the desert. It is about a foundational encounter.*

*The human institution of the covenant, especially between the ruler and the vassal, is used to signify and carry out the union between God and a chosen people.*

*God manifests this offer through a liberating act, offers and demands conditions, sanctions with promises and threats. The ceremony is liturgical; the pact is sealed with a sacrifice.*

*The primary conditions of God are “ten words” and to these a “code of Covenant” is added.*

*As soon as the covenant is done, the people break the second commandment. Moses, as intermediary of the covenant, has to intervene, siding with his people.*

**19** <sup>1</sup>Exactly two months after the Israelites had left Egypt, they arrived at the wilderness of Sinai. <sup>2</sup>They arrived there coming from Rephidim and camped in the wilderness of Sinai.

<sup>3</sup>The Israelites camped there in front of the mountain, but Moses went up to God and Yahweh called to him from the mountain, saying:

<sup>4</sup>—This is what you are to say and to explain to the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagle’s wings and brought you to myself. <sup>5</sup>Now if you listen to me and keep my covenant, you shall be my very own possession among all the nations. For all the earth is mine, <sup>6</sup>but you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

And he added:

—This is what you are to say to the people of Israel.

<sup>7</sup>So Moses went and summoned all the elders of the people and related to them all that Yahweh had commanded him to say.

<sup>8</sup>All the people responded with one voice:

—All that Yahweh has said, we will do.

Moses then brought back to Yahweh the people’s response.

<sup>9</sup>Yahweh spoke to Moses:

—I am going to come to you in a dense cloud so that the people may hear me speaking with you and trust you always.

Then Moses related to Yahweh what the people had said.

## **The Decalogue**

**20** <sup>1</sup>God spoke all these words. <sup>2</sup>He said:

—I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

—<sup>3</sup>Do not have other gods before me.

—<sup>4</sup>Do not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth; <sup>5</sup>you shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God; for the sin of the fathers, when they rebel against me, I punish the sons, the grandsons and the great-grandsons; <sup>6</sup>but I show steadfast love until the thousandth generation for those who love me and keep my commandments.

—<sup>7</sup>Do not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain for Yahweh will not leave unpunished anyone who takes his name in vain.

—<sup>8</sup>Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>For six days you will labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a sabbath for Yahweh your God. Do not work that day, neither you, nor your son, nor your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your animals, nor the stranger who is staying with you. <sup>11</sup>For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, but on the seventh day he rested; that is why Yahweh has blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

—<sup>12</sup>Honor your father and your mother that you may have a long life in the land that Yahweh has given you.

—<sup>13</sup>Do not kill.

—<sup>14</sup>Do not commit adultery.

—<sup>15</sup>Do not steal.

—<sup>16</sup>Do not give false witness against your neighbor.

—<sup>17</sup>Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, or his servant, man or woman, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is his.

<sup>18</sup>In the meantime, all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning and heard the blast of the trumpet and saw the mountain smoking. They trembled with fear and kept at a distance.

<sup>19</sup>Then they said to Moses:

—You yourself speak to us and we shall listen. But do not have God speak to us, lest we die.

<sup>20</sup>Moses answered the people:

—Do not be afraid, for God has come to test you, so that the fear of God may be with you, and that you may not sin again.

<sup>21</sup>So the people kept at a distance while Moses went forward to the cloud where God was.

## **Rite of the Covenant**

**24** <sup>12</sup>Yahweh said to Moses:

—Come up to me on the mountain and stay there. I will give you the slabs of stone, the Teaching and commandment which I have written for their instruction.

<sup>13</sup>So Moses arose with his servant, Joshua, and before going up the mountain of God, <sup>14</sup>Moses said to the elders:

—Remain here until we come back to you.

## **SIN AND PARDON**

### **The golden calf**

**32** <sup>1</sup>When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain they assembled around Aaron and said to him:

—Come, make us gods to walk ahead of us; as for this Moses who brought us out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.

<sup>2</sup>And Aaron said to them:

—Take the gold earrings from your wives, your sons and daughters and bring them to me.

<sup>3</sup>So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. <sup>4</sup>He took what they gave him and with a graving tool made the gold into a molten calf.

They then said:

—These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt.

<sup>5</sup>Now, when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before the molten calf and cried out:

—Tomorrow will be a feast day for Yahweh.

<sup>6</sup>So next day they rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. They then sat down to eat and drink and got up to make merry.

<sup>7</sup>Then Yahweh said to Moses:

—Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. <sup>8</sup>They have quickly turned from the way I commanded them and have made for themselves a molten calf; they have bowed down before it and sacrificed to it and said: ‘These are your gods, Israel, who brought you out of Egypt.’

<sup>9</sup>And Yahweh said to Moses:

—I see that these people are a stiff-necked people. <sup>10</sup>Now just leave me that my anger may blaze against them. I will destroy them, but of you I will make a great nation.

<sup>11</sup>But Moses calmed the anger of Yahweh, his God, and said:

—Why, O Yahweh, should your anger burst against your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with such great power and with a mighty hand? <sup>12</sup>Let not the Egyptians say: ‘Yahweh brought them out with evil intent, for he wanted to kill them in the mountains and wipe them from the face of the earth.’ Turn away from the heat of your anger and do not bring disaster on your people. <sup>13</sup>Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the promise you yourself swore: I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land I spoke about I will give to them as an everlasting inheritance.

<sup>14</sup>Yahweh then changed his mind and would not yet harm his people.

## **Punishment**

<sup>15</sup>Moses then returned and came down from the mountain carrying in his hand the two slabs of the Statement, slabs written on both sides, back and front. <sup>16</sup>These slabs were the work of God and the writing graven on the slabs was the writing of God.

<sup>17</sup>When Joshua heard the noise of the people who were shouting he said to Moses:

—There is a sound of war in the camp.

<sup>18</sup>But Moses answered:

—It is not a victory song, nor the cry of defeat that I hear, but the sound of singing.

<sup>19</sup>When he drew near to the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burst forth and he threw the slabs from his hands and shattered them against the base of the mountain. <sup>20</sup>Then he seized the calf they had made and burned it in the fire, grinding it into a powder that he scattered over the surface of the water, and this he made the Israelites drink.

## **Intercession**

<sup>30</sup>The next day Moses said to the people:

—You have committed a very grave sin, but now I am going up to Yahweh; perhaps I will obtain pardon for your sin.

<sup>31</sup>So Moses went towards Yahweh and said:

—Ah! This people has committed a very great sin; they made a god out of gold. <sup>32</sup>And now please forgive their sin... if not, blot me out of the book you have written.

<sup>33</sup>Yahweh said to Moses:

—Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot him out from my book. <sup>34</sup>Go now! Lead the people where I told you. My Angel will walk before you and on the day of punishment I will punish them for their sin.

## The glory of the Lord

**33** <sup>18</sup>Moses said:

—Then let me see your Glory.

<sup>19</sup>And He said:

—I will make all my goodness pass before you and proclaim the name of Yahweh before you. For I am gracious to whom I want to be gracious and I am merciful to whom I want to be merciful.

<sup>20</sup>Then Yahweh said:

—You cannot see my face because man cannot see me and live.

<sup>21</sup>And he added:

—See this place near me; you shall stand on the rock <sup>22</sup>and when my Glory passes I will put you in a hollow of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup>Then I will take away my hand and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.

## New covenant. The passing of glory

**34** <sup>1</sup>Yahweh said to Moses:

—Cut two slabs of stone like the first, and I will write on the slabs the words that were on the former slabs that you broke.

<sup>2</sup>Be ready in the morning and come up to Mount Sinai and wait for me on the top of the mountain. <sup>3</sup>No one will go up with you and no one is to be seen anywhere on the mountain. Even the sheep and the cattle are not to graze near the mountain.

<sup>4</sup>So Moses cut two slabs of stone like the first. Then he rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai as Yahweh had commanded, taking in his hands the two slabs of stone. <sup>5</sup>And Yahweh came down in a cloud and stood there with him, and Moses called on the name of Yahweh.

<sup>6</sup>Then Yahweh passed in front of him and cried out:

—Yahweh, Yahweh is a God full of pity and mercy, slow to anger and abounding in truth and loving-kindness. <sup>7</sup>He shows loving-kindness to the thousandth generation and forgives wickedness, rebellion and sin; yet he does not leave the guilty without punishment, even punishing the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.

<sup>8</sup>Moses hastened to bow down to the ground and worshiped.

<sup>9</sup>He then said:

—If you really look kindly on me, my Lord, please come and walk in our midst and even though we are a stiff-necked people, pardon our wickedness and our sin and make us yours.

<sup>10</sup>Yahweh said:

—I am making a covenant with you; in the presence of all the people I will do marvels never yet done in any land or nation so that all the people among whom you live may see how awesome is the work of Yahweh that I will do for you. <sup>11</sup>Obey what I command you today.

<sup>28</sup>Moses remained there with Yahweh forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. He wrote on the slabs the words of the Covenant—the Ten Commandments.

*In Deuteronomy Moses will compile again all Israel's history. The crossing of the Red Sea will be the beginning of its history as chosen people, and the Covenant the final document of its faith.*

***You can see:***

*Psalms 105 and 106. These are two meditations: the first one about the fundamental events of salvation; and the second about the capital sins of the chosen people in the desert.*