

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

breathed strong and steadfast upon them and said *Take Holy Spirit*; and they, the disciples, received their Master's sensible breath, and with it an instalment of His own Godman's Spirit.

T. S. EVANS.

---

THE SECOND BOOK OF MOSES.

A CONTINUOUS perusal of the book of Exodus from end to end leaves upon my mind the impression that there is in it the protoplasm of the whole action of God in the complete sphere of human history; in other words, I have not met with any phase of Divine revelation or ministry which is not to be traced in at least dawning outline in this second book of Moses. Emphasis is to be laid upon the continuousness of the reading, for it is quite conceivable that a casual glance would discover a ruggedness amounting almost to chaos in the distribution of the infinite materials—a ruggedness not to be subdued and smoothed into the general music but by a mood of soul at once ardent and devout.

Take, first of all, the personal revelation of God, the abruptest of all the miracles, and yet the most suppressed; a flame in a wilderness, barred in and made intense by branches that the wind might have broken—and a Name as mysteriously human as the bush is mysteriously equal to the solemn occasion; then another Name not human at all, in its first impression on the mind; a Verb whose conjugation cannot go beyond a line, an I AM that doubles back upon itself and waits with mysterious patience to “become flesh and dwell among us.” Meanwhile it will leap like a spirit into the shepherd-wanderer and find in him a rude and temporary incarnation. But the first Name is the human one, and truly most unexpected and

startling when we consider its import. "I am the God of ——." Given such a beginning, to find what the end will be? Where does the speaker begin his historical Godhood? Surely Adam and Eve will be recovered from their unaccountable obscurity, and in the bloom of Edenic beauty will be to Moses an almost rival revelation—or Abel who died at the altar—or Enoch who never tasted death—or Noah who began the new world: all these surmises, so obvious because so natural, are contradicted by the fact. Abraham is the head of the new race; the larger Adam; the living Faith. God did not date Himself so far back in history as to bewilder the solitary and overpowered inquirer, but placed Himself within domestic associations and in living relation to names that made the very earth and sky of the lone man's little world. Thus was God quite near to Moses, yet in a moment He withdrew into Eternity and spoke as the I AM, without angel, or child, or spirit, to break His awful solitude. For what purpose is He so revealed? That He may bring to pass the most terrific collision yet known in human history. A battle is being arranged within the sanctuary of the burning bush. Egypt is the pride of the world, and her power is to be broken. No doubt her arm is mighty, but the bones of that mean strength shall be melted like wax by the fire that spares the frail bush. Chariot against chariot shall dash in war; the lightning of heaven against the iron of Egypt; so now we shall see whether the Lord's thunder or Pharaoh's noise conceals the heavier bolt.

And why this trial of arms? Will the Lord set Himself in array of battle against a candle which a breath might extinguish? For one reason only, viz. that He may deliver and redeem and sanctify a people; that His strength may make a way for His love; that the education of the world may be moved one battle-field nearer the temple of wisdom. If God fought for victory He need never fight; He fights

that He may teach ; He lengthens the day of battle that He may enlarge all human conceptions of His purpose, and sway with infinite persuasion every human will in the direction of holiness and truth.

The details of the mortal contest must be separately studied. How it ended may be known from the song and the dance, the passionate refrain and the clanging timbrel, the harmonious shout and the ordered rapture, which in all their ecstasy but dimly typify the apocalyptic music whose storms shall welcome the completion of the purposes of God. To the Revelation, the Battle, the Song, many an addition must be made if Exodus is as complete as it has just been supposed to be. A little wandering and chiding, a miracle or two, and then comes the first magnificent addition, the LAW! The moral universe begins to take shape. Instincts, habitudes, wordless motions, aspirations which cannot fall immediately into fit speech, now undergo crystallisation and stand out in many a strange figure as might stand the world to the open eyes of a man born blind. A greater battle than the fight with Pharaoh began with the giving of the Law—a subtler contest—a strife between darkness and light. The Law vindicates its own Divine origin, so exceeding broad is the commandment, so infinitely exquisite the infusion of mercy, a mere flush of warm colour on the neutral grey of the steel statute, a hint rather than a stain of blood-like hue, as if an atonement were not far away, yet the time of its agony not fully come. The Law will not have any man smitten with impunity, the pregnant woman shall be sacred from all injury, the eye of the slave shall be paid for with liberty, no man shall wantonly feed his beast in another man's field, no stranger shall be vexed or oppressed, no widow or fatherless child shall be afflicted, the ass or the ox of the enemy shall not be permitted to go astray, the innocent and the righteous were not to be slain—a pathos so profound brings tears of

joy to the reader's eyes, and so tenderly is the heart moved that when Israel cries in battle music, "The Lord is a man of war," we answer in a thankful hymn, "His tender mercies are over all His works." So Israel was not taken out of Egypt merely to humble the oppressor or destroy the tyrant. The purpose vindicates the means. The river must be turned into blood, frogs and lice and flies must be sent, boils and blains, and hail in blackest tempests of ice must not be spared; in themselves they would be but a display of dramatic violence, but in the purpose they were intended to express they were servants of righteousness and liberty and education. By such means, initially, were the evil effects of four centuries of servitude to be overcome; the violence is the love in adapted action. The same process is repeated in every age, with change of accidents, it may be, but the purpose is unchangeable.

Revelation, Battle, Song, and Law. What more is needed? God Himself will answer, so our invention need not disquiet itself. Perhaps the answer may be so expressed as to be its own proof of origin. This is the answer: "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." This comes after the compassionate parts of the Law with tender grace. All the way God seems to have been coming nearer as the Law softened in its tone almost into Gospel. At the beginning of the Law no man was permitted to come near; if so much as a beast touched the mountain it was to be stoned or thrust through with a dart; and so terrible was the sight that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake;" and now God says, as if His heart ached with some agony of desire, "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." The movement is thus evermore from Law to grace, from distance to nearness, from the throne to the cross. In no rhetorical sense, or sense needed to make up halting rhythm, but in a solid and historical way, exact enough in

its throb for science itself, yet sublime enough in its symbolism to throw prophecy into despair. Beginning with fire, with smoke as the smoke of a furnace, with a trumpet sounding long and waxing louder and louder, who could have foretold that the Majesty thus accompanied would desire to dwell with the sons of men? But this is the effect of all true law. At the one end it cleaves asunder, at the other it enlarges itself into new relations and looks wistfully over happier possibilities. The course of literal law is always self-vexatious. Why is the letter impotent? Because man himself is not a letter. Man is a spirit and can be ruled by spirit only. Not the law, but the lawgiver can satisfy the soul that burns in the bush of the body. The rod smites and hurts, but not until it blossoms does it fulfil even the purpose of law. So now the meaning of the burning bush begins to dawn: it meant that God wished to "dwell" with men, to set His tabernacle side by side with human habitations, and to be accounted Father by all generations. Sinai was too high, the cloud too thick, the lightning too awful, so a house must be built, and the very building of it should be to the builders a spiritual education,—a most gracious condescension, and on the one side of it a mystery profoundly adapted to human nature by permitting man to build the house whilst forbidding him to fashion the God. In view of these spiritual and transcendent revelations, all other questions drop into secondary interest. We care but little at this lustrous point whether Philitnion built the pyramids, or Rameses the oppressor of Israel was the best or worst of Theban kings; in view of Sinai the avenue of sphinxes sinks into contempt, and "the petrifications of the sunbeam" look small beside the un-hewn towers of the rock: not only Egyptian history but the history of Israel also assumes new valuations; it is now quite matter of secondary interest to trace the march from Succoth to Etham, from Etham to the encampment be-

tween Migdol and the pastures of Pi-hahiroth over against Baal-zephon, and on to the point made memorable by the passage of the Red Sea, whether in the north by Magdolon or in the south under the shadow of Jebel Attaka. The mind is in no temper for such holiday investigations; for the Lord God has Himself proposed to "dwell" with men. It is of small import at this critical moment to know that the Song of Moses is marked by the usual "parallelism of clauses," and that from a critical point of view the triplet stanzas interrupt the regular cadence with unusual frequency, for we are about to witness the setting up of the very presence-chamber of Jehovah.

The character of the book of Exodus seems to change immediately upon the announcement of the Divine purpose. Although still in the wilderness we are imaginatively amongst the treasures of Memphis, and Zoan, and Heliopolis, and Rameses, with abundance of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, and with such wealth of metal as to be able to make the very hooks of gold and the sockets of silver. The Temple of the Sun is to be extinguished by a new glory, and the consecrated calf of Ra is to give place to sacrifice charged with sublimest meanings. Is there not a subtle and suggestive harmony between what Israel had seen in Egypt and what it was about to see in the wilderness? The gods of Egypt had been well-housed, could Israel suppose that the God of Heaven would dwell in a mean habitation? For spiritual realizations men have to be long and almost severely prepared,—a wilderness requires a contrast. So this tabernacle is no fancy work. The sequence in which it follows is as severely logical as the point towards which it tends is ineffably spiritual. A strange thing is thus wrought in the earth. Invention is not invited or any form of natural cleverness; the inspired house like the inspired Book employs but willing hands to carry out the labour, the Builder and Maker is God. He

builds all houses—all lives, all books—that rest on the true foundation : at first the sacred house was outlined in cloud far up the hill ; but was not the universe itself thus outlined “ from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was, before the heavens were prepared, or a compass had been set on the face of the deep,”—was it not all wrought in mystic but palpable cloud ? Did not the cloud revolve at His touch, and wheel in gyrations infinite, and cast out sparks that held in their heat the astronomic pomp that glows like a tabernacle in the wilderness of space ? What is all that upper glory, but blue, and purple, and scarlet, with an atmosphere for a veil, and a lamp fed eternally with consecrated oil ? He that built all things is God. If He built them out of a cloud, the greater is the miracle ; if He elaborated them from a molecule He is even vaster in power than our imagination had dreamt. The nebulous tabernacle may be a hint of the nebulous universe. The most wonderful of God’s visible creations are still wrought out in cloud ; what landscapes, cities, temples, forests, minarets of snow, and palaces fit for heavenly kings, are to be found in the clouds, let them say who have watched the sky with the patience of love.

The meaning of all this had a mysterious relation to the shedding of blood ! We come upon this revelation with a shock. The sequence is shattered by a tremendous blow. Up to this point we have been conscious of more than human refinement, and in a moment we burn with shame as if we had done some deed forbidden. So long as we were working with acacia wood, and pure gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, and stones precious as sardius and topaz, ligure and jasper, we were content, for a certain elevation moved us to nobler consciousness ; but suddenly, even whilst we gaze with religious delight upon the ephod, the breast-plate, and the mitre of Aaron, the blood of a young bullock flows by the door of the



tabernacle of the congregation, and whilst the flesh of the bullock is being burned as a sin-offering without the camp, two rams without blemish are slain, and the blood of the second is put upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and their garments are sprinkled, and the altar is bathed with the red stream; thus in a moment we who had touched with reverence the Urim and the Thummim, and the robe of the ephod blue as heaven's fairest summer, must watch "the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul that is above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them," burned upon an altar whose horns dripped with the bullock's blood. The revulsion is infinite. For the explanation we must wait. Never more shall we get rid of blood. There was a mystery about its being sprinkled on the door-posts in Egypt—a mystery about the paschal lamb—that mystery will now follow us to the end, and re-appear in a heavenly anthem. It may be that the blood will become the true refinement, and that what we once accounted precious shall be less than nothing when compared with its infinite value.

JOSEPH PARKER.

---

### RECENT AMERICAN LITERATURE ON THE OLD TESTAMENT.

PRESENT STATE OF SEMITIC STUDIES.—Old Testament literature is so entirely dependent on Old Testament scholarship, that it seems desirable to show how the way is being prepared in America for a more fruitful study of the Old Covenant. It is only during the past ten years that the Hebrew language has begun to receive that attention in our theological seminaries that it deserves.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor Young in an article on *The Value of the Study of Hebrew for a Minister*, in *The Unitarian Review*, for May (Boston, 1879), shows that a great prominence was given to the study of the language until about fifty years ago.