

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

This book is a lightly edited collation of the many articles written by Rev. Woudenberg first published in the *Standard Bearer* concerning the history, life and most significantly, the ministry of Moses as a typical mediator of the old covenant.

Written with a keen focus on the mediatorial work of Moses, it sets forth, in a chronological order and with lively detail, the historical events that took place during the life and times of Moses from birth to death.

The first chapter of the book begins with the people of God suffering cruel bondage in the land of Egypt long after the death of Joseph. The very first sentence sets the tone for the liveliness of the language that is found throughout the book:

“The book of Exodus opens amid the roaring flames that heated the brick kilns of Egypt. Blood, mixed with tears and sweat, tinted the new mortar under the cruel lashes of the taskmasters. Slowly the walls of Pithom and Raamses rose from the desert floor, troves for the treasures of Egypt (Ex. 1:11).”

The slavery and suffering of the people introduces their need for a deliverer and mediator, whom God graciously provides. The next chapters record the preservation, upbringing and early years of the life of Moses, concluding with his rejection by his own brethren in chapter four.

Chapters five through seven gives the account of Moses' life spent in Midian before his return to Egypt as deliverer finally to lead the people of God out of Egypt. Chapters eight through sixteen sets forth the deliverance of God's people out of Egypt through the judgment of the Ten Plagues, with chapter seventeen setting forth the circumstances for and concise exposition of the song of Moses.

The rest of the book, chapters eighteen through forty six, covers the wilderness wanderings in which Moses led the people as God's mediator, and ends with the death of Moses outside of the land of Canaan.

PART TWO: ROBUST MEDITATIVE FLAVOR & GREAT SPIRITUAL VALUE

Woven into the unique, lively and historical narrative of the life and ministry of Moses are concise biblical expositions and spiritual insights that will help the reader appreciate the spiritual challenges Moses faced, the sinfulness of God's people, and the greatness of God's wisdom, love, mercy and faithfulness to His covenant and His people in Jesus Christ. Accordingly, the book has a robust meditative flavor and is of great spiritual value.

We see this from the very first chapter. Shortly after calling attention to the grievous afflictions and slavery of God's people in Egypt, the question is asked: “*Why was it even necessary for Israel to be in Egypt?*”. The author is not content with giving just one clear reason from Scripture. He gives three: beginning with the most immediate and obvious reason which was to save the Israelites from a devastating famine and concluding with the deepest one:

“God was planning to reveal his gospel more clearly than ever before through many marvelous demonstrations of his grace and power. For this the scene was being set when God sent his people into Egypt.”

He was going to deliver His people out of Egypt in the way of many marvelous demonstrations of his grace and power. What needed to happen first, though, was that the people themselves must see the need for and then cry out to God for such a deliverance. But how were they going to do that when they were enjoying a comfortable life in Egypt? Their spiritual decadence is set forth in a pithy manner:

“This very ease of life, however, eventually became for them a temptation in itself. The

children of Israel became attached to the land of Egypt. Life was pleasant, and they enjoyed Egypt's rare and delicious foods, its fish, its cucumbers and melons, its garlic and leeks. Seldom did they think anymore of the promised land of Canaan as something as to be desired. They had little longing to return. Joseph's coffin was still with them, but its testimony they neglected. In effect, they disdained the covenant promises of God because of their love for the fleshpots of Egypt.”

Does not this description of their spiritual state give pause for all we who are living in earthly abundance and cause us to reflect upon our own spiritual state? How greatly do we value the testimony and heritage of our biblical, Reformed faith?

Because God is faithful and loves his people, He would take action.

“But God... saw the complacency of his people. He also knew what should be the cure. He set on the throne of Egypt a new king “which knew not Joseph” (Ex. 1:8)... He felt no real appreciation for Joseph and no obligation to his heirs. He looked upon the Israelites as aliens, intruders in his land. He hated them and determined that they should be enslaved. He had been given over unto a reprobate mind by God.”

Through the cruel slavery of Pharaoh, the people would cry out to God for deliverance out of Egypt. In that way, God would provide a deliverer for them who would deliver them out of Egypt. That deliverer and mediator would be Moses, the typical mediator of the old covenant.

Much of the rest of the book has the same flavor as what is set forth in the first chapter.

For example, as the people of God left Egypt under the leadership of Moses and guided by God, they were led on an apparently impossible escape route. Behind them was Pharaoh and his pursuing army, surrounding them on all sides were mountains, and before them was the Red Sea. How were they going to escape? Reflecting on this, the author writes:

“This was the way of salvation: to follow the guidance of the Lord even when it led into the very depths of the sea. The Lord would provide salvation for his people, but only through the way that he had determined, not by bringing them along an easy road, which was the carnal expectation of many in Israel, not by engaging the Egyptians in open battle as Moses had evidently expected, but by leading them through the depths of the sea.”

Have we today not also experienced God leading us *“into the very depths of the sea”*?

While we may not know the reason that God has for leading us this way, there was a reason for this being God's way for His people then. The author explains:

“That way, we are told in the New Testament, was a symbol of baptism in the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 10:1–2). In the cloud was the Angel of Jehovah, Jesus Christ in his Old Testament form. Israel must follow the cloud in faith, and following it must pass under it even by passing through the depths of the sea, which sea was a symbol of death. The gospel was being unfolded, that the believing children of Israel might see and learn of the only way of salvation. Although in the shadow of Old Testament type, the chosen people of God had to learn the same truth that was later set forth by the apostle Paul when he said... (Romans 6:3-5).”

Because God is unchanging, we today may take to heart that even though we may not know exactly the reasons for God leading us in a difficult and seemingly impossible way, we know that He only purposes good for us and that somehow, those seemingly impossible circumstances we find ourselves in serve our salvation. This is of great comfort!

PART THREE: NEGATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

The book is not without its blemishes. There are times when the author's lively

imagination goes quite beyond the biblical narrative. On occasion, he even takes some unwarranted liberties in his narration of how certain activities took place when Scripture is silent.

One example of this is the author's overly-positive description of the learning attitude and capacity of the child Moses in relation to the instruction given to him by his parents.

*“From his earliest years Moses had shown an unusual interest in all that his parents sought to teach him. Eagerly he listened as they told him over and over again of all that had been passed on from the fathers before them. He memorized and retained **all** that was known about their God and his gracious covenant promises. He **never** neglected the opportunity to learn, seeming to understand that for him it was of special importance. It was evident to the parents that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. In this they found comfort and gave God thanks. Their prayers never ceased to ascend unto heaven in Moses’ behalf.”(emphasis mine)*

Yet another example is the author's treatment of the sin and fall of Moses. Once again, the author goes quite beyond the Bible. This is what he writes:

*"Finally they decided, **after deliberating together**, that Moses would have to **add the warning** for which the Lord had not provided. The people could not be left off so easy. Moses would have to let them know that they were walking in a way of rebellion and sin. ...Through **conscious deliberation** he had decided to go beyond the command of God to say and do what he thought was best.... Entrusted with the word of God, they had changed and perverted it according to their own discretion. In doing this, they had actually substituted their word, the word of man, for the gospel of God. The rock was, in type and in figure, a picture of the promised redemption, a picture of the Christ to come. There had been a day when God desired to reveal to Israel that the Christ would bear the*

*stripes of their sin. Thus Moses had been commanded to strike the rock at Rephidim. But now it was the will of God to reveal that just a word spoken sincerely in prayer would bring forth God's blessing upon his people. When Moses refused to speak to the rock but instead struck it, he was thereby denying that the prayer of a righteous man could be effective enough. He was denying the validity of the gospel." **(emphasis mine)***

Did Moses and Aaron consciously deliberate together on how Moses was to add a warning to the command given by God in relation to giving the people water from rock? Scripture bears no such record – explicit or implicit – of such a conscious deliberation between Moses and Aaron, suggesting that there was no collaboration or conscious deliberation on the part of Moses but rather that Moses struck the rock and said what he did in rash and sinful anger.

PART FOUR – CONCLUSION

Nevertheless, the book as a whole, being richly laden with precious meditative thoughts and keen practical insights, is worth reading. Undoubtedly, much godly wisdom can be gleaned from reading it. In addition, because the book is very readable and non-technical, it is an enjoyable read and especially suited for (though not limited to) use as a daily devotional. If one chapter, comprising just several pages, is read daily, the book can be finished in about six weeks – with much food for thought and profit for the soul – for both young and old.