



# LESSON 5: THE WILDERNESS PERIOD

## *Discovering the Heart of the Old Testament*

"The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.'" Genesis 12:1-2

### IN EGYPT GOD **DEVELOPED** THE NATION OF ISRAEL

- A. God promised Abram (Abraham) that he would make him into a great nation (Gen. 12:1-2).
- B. Abraham's grandson was Jacob whose name was changed to "Israel" (Gen. 32:28).
- C. One of Jacob's son's was Joseph whose brothers sold him into slavery.
- D. Joseph was taken to Egypt where he rose to a position of power under the Pharaoh.
- E. In the meantime, Jacob and his other sons were experiencing a sever famine in Canaan and had to go to Egypt for food.
- F. Jacob and his family consisted of about 70 people who entered Egypt at that time and gradually increased in number so great that they were viewed as a threat to Pharaoh's kingdom and subsequently enslaved.



- G. Because of their enslavement, the number of Hebrews were effectively isolated from the Egyptians and their pagan culture, resulting in their becoming a "pure" nation.
- H. Why did God allow the children of Israel to be enslaved in Egypt for 430 years? It was because he was *developing* a great nation just as he promised to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-2)

### IN THE EXODUS GOD **DELIVERED** THE NATION OF ISRAEL

- A. The Exodus is the departure of the Israelites from captivity in Egypt under the leadership of Moses, covering a very crucial period in Israel's history as a nation.
- B. The Exodus occurred after the rise of a new king who "did not know about Joseph," or who refused to recognize Joseph's achievements (Exod. 1:8).
- C. Most scholars believe the Hebrews left Egypt about 1446 B.C.
- D. There were about 600,000 men on foot, besides women and children—the total number of people in the Exodus is estimated to be about 2 million (Exod. 12:37-38)

### AT SINAI GOD **DEFINED** THE NATION OF ISRAEL

- A. It was when Israel was in the Sinai Peninsula wilderness that God gave them the Law, *defining* the conditions for a special relationship between him and the nation of Israel.

## DISCOVERING THE HEART OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

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- B. Old Testament Law = Mosaic Covenant = Mosaic Law.
- C. The Mosaic Covenant was bilateral (Exod. 19:5-6; Deut. 28).
  - 1. A bilateral covenant is a binding agreement between two parties...both have an obligation spelled out in the contract.
  - 2. Covenant conditions: If Israel obeyed God they would be blessed materially; if they disobeyed, they would be cursed materially (Deut. 28:1-6, 15-19).
  - 3. The covenant was in the form of a suzerain-vassal contract.
- D. The Mosaic Covenant was codified into 613 laws (mitzvot), including the 10 Commandments. Sixty percent are negative (*don't do this...*) and 40% are positive (*do this...*).
- E. Four purposes of the Mosaic Law:



- 1. Purpose #1: To elect and define Israel as the "great nation" (part of the Abrahamic Covenant).
- 2. Purpose #2: To give the world a true understanding of who God is (i.e., to correct the Babel misconception of God).
- 3. Purpose #3: To contrast the sinfulness of man to God's holiness.
- 4. Purpose #4: To show man's need for a Redeemer.

- F. Three categories of OT Laws:
  - 1. Ceremonial Laws: Involved worship, offering, and feast practices.
  - 2. Civil laws: Involved regulations for daily living and punishments for crimes.
  - 3. Moral Laws: The Ten Commandments based on loving God (Exod. 20:3-11; Mark 12:30), and loving others (Exod. 20:12-17, Mark 12:31)

### IN THE WILDERNESS GOD **DISCIPLINED** THE NATION OF ISRAEL

- A. Under Moses' leadership, the Israelites approached the Promised Land (Canaan) when 12 spies were sent to explore the land (Numbers 13:1-16).
- B. After hearing the report of the powerful people (Nephilim) living in Canaan, the majority of Israel became afraid and refused to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 13:30-33).
- C. Of the 12 spies sent into Canaan, only 2 (Joshua and Caleb) trusted God to give the victory (Numbers 14:6-9).
- D. Because of Israel's disobedience, God disciplined them by making them wander in the wilderness for 40 years-- none except Joshua and Caleb would ever enter the land at the end of the 40-year period (Numbers 14:28-35).

**In spite of human opposition, God always achieves his purposes.**