

Lesson 8 - Moses: Steadfast in the Lord

Objectives

By the end of this lesson the student should know that:

- Recount the main events in the life of Moses.
- Know that God worked through Moses to fulfill the promise made to Abraham and his descendants.
- Understand that Moses did not give up serving God despite the opposition of Pharaoh and, later, of his own people.
- See the Exodus and Passover as fulfilled in the New Passover of Christ.

For the Catechist

The story of Moses and the exodus from Egypt has been told many times in the *God With Us Series*. Students may have heard of the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea and the giving of the Ten Commandments in the First and Second Grades. The Burning Bush, the miserable condition of the Israelites in Egypt, and the concept of the Old Covenant were introduced in Grade Four. This year the lesson focuses on the character of Moses, particularly his steadfast commitment to God's service despite opposition.

When called by God, Moses' first reaction was "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" But he did go; and when Pharaoh cast him out, he came back again and again. The plagues are introduced in this context: with each one Moses made his demands of Pharaoh again. He was rebuffed but came back again. When finally the Israelites were let go, Moses had to face their complaints and rejection. But here again he continued in the service God had given him.

This quality of steadfastness was one of the factors important in the choice of his successor. At the end of Moses' life, he called Joshua to be his aide and successor. God then commissioned Joshua with these words: "Be brave and steadfast, for it is you who must bring the Israelites into the land which I promised them on oath. I Myself will be with you" (Deuteronomy 31:23).

The example of Moses encourages us to constantly exert the effort to remain committed. Like Moses we will face discouragement. Our peers will urge us to forget it all - it's not worth all the effort or aggravation. Moses reminds both the students and us that serving God in the way He has called us demands continued effort and a frequent renewal of our commitment to the One who promised to be with us on our journey.

Materials Needed:

Opening Prayer: Icon corner, student texts

Introduction: Easel or wall pad, markers,

Guided Reading: Handout A

Activity A: Play Script Worksheet, Shawls or robes to suggest Biblical dress

Activity B: Exodus and the Passover Worksheet, matzoh, parsley and salt water

Activity C: *Time Travel Through the Bible video* and Leader's Guide

Activity D: Jesse Tree Worksheet, craft items

1. Opening Prayer

Pray the selection from Psalm 105 from page 37 in the student text. Remind the students that this Psalm is a prayerful retelling of the story of Abraham and Joseph whom we studied in the last sessions.

2. Review

Review the main points of the previous lesson using the pages from your wall or easel pad.

Alternate: If you used Activity A in the previous lesson, have the students who participated repeat their skit on Joseph and his brothers.

Refer to the Unit Page to show the relationship of Moses to those who preceded him in this first phase of Israelite history. Note that at this stage the Israelites were becoming tribes, whole groups of extended families.

3. Introduction

Ask the students if they have ever heard people say, "That's it! I quit!" Have they seen people quit a game they were losing, a puzzle or test they could not master, a chore they were tired of in this way. Give an example from your adult life of being tempted to quit a commitment or a job. Tell what you did and why.

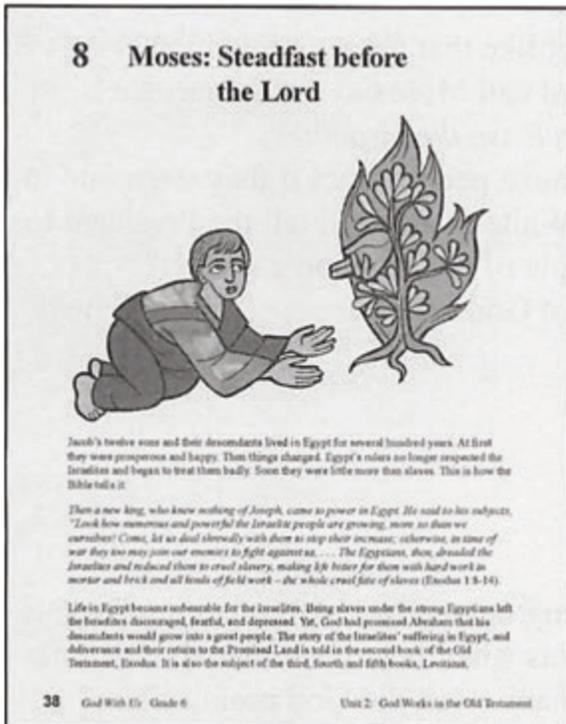
Tell the students that if God is really calling us to a certain kind of service, He will give us the strength to carry out our commitment. Today's story of Moses shows us someone who kept to his commitment despite opposition from enemies and friends alike.

Background Reading (The Source of Israelite Identity):

"Exodus, the second book of the Old Testament, picks up this story of the Israelites in Egypt some time after the death of Joseph. The dramatic change of Israel's fortunes in Egypt sets the stage for the most important event in its history. Exodus recounts how, within the span of a single generation, a group of Hebrew refugees escaped from Egypt, journeyed through the wilderness, witnessed powerful interventions by God on their behalf, accepted the gift of a divine Law and came to stand on the brink of entering their promised land.

"Exodus is, therefore, much more than the saga of the oppressed escaping their oppressors. What the Hebrew refugees really experience in their forty-year trek across the desert is something like a process of birth. Along the way, they receive three fundamental gifts: a personal God who claims them for Himself, a promised land to inhabit, and a law to order their lives. From these three gifts, the identity of Israel as a chosen nation emerges" (OT 54-55)

4. Guided Reading, Pages 38-39



Before the reading, **write the objectives of the lesson** on a wall pad or easel pad so that the page can be preserved and used for review next week.

Have the students **look up the underlined word** (*ripidia*) in the Glossary at the end of the book.

Ask the students if they remember hearing about Moses in earlier grades. They may have also seen films such as *Raiders of the Lost Ark* or *Prince of Egypt*. List their recollections on the chalkboard or newsprint pad, preferably in chronological order.

To add to their knowledge about who Moses was and what he accomplished, have the students read the first two sections of the text, page 38. Divide reading styles (aloud/silent; by one/all together). Be sure they understand that *Pharaoh* was the title of the Egyptian king, not his name.

Ask the students to refer to the time line in the previous lessons. When did Abraham and Joseph live? (c. 1850-1700 BC) How much later did Moses live? (c. 430 years - Exodus 12:40). Compare that time frame to dates in American history with which they may be familiar (Christopher Columbus to World War I?). Point out that a lot of changes have taken place in that amount of time.

Background Reading (The Name of God Revealed):

"Jewish tradition emphasizes Moses' unique intimacy with God and his frequent attempts to mediate and negotiate with Him. When Moses dared to speak up to God for the first time, it was to ask precisely which god was addressing him. We do not know who or what Jacob's descendants were worshiping in Egypt, but Moses' question makes clear that the Hebrews might not have even known the 'God of their fathers.' In response, God revealed to Moses what the Old Testament takes to be God's personal, proper name. In the original Hebrew of Exodus 3:14, God said, I am (*eHYeH*) who I am (*EHYEH*)' or 'I will be who I will be.' From this point on the Hebrew consonants *YHWH* are used by some Old Testament authors as God's personal name.

". . . Most scholars agree that the name is derived from the Hebrew verb 'to be' ? *HaYaH*. If so, later developments in Exodus will demonstrate that God is no remote, abstract being. What God went on to promise Moses is that He would be actively present in the lives of His people, leading Israel to her own land and compelling Pharaoh by demonstrating His power (3:17). Perhaps the best translation of God's name is one which captures this sense of active presence: T will be there as who I am"" (*OT* 56-57).

Numbers and Deuteronomy. So much was written about it because it was the most important event in the Old Testament. The leader of the Israelites at this time was Moses, whom the Bible calls "powerful in the words and deeds" (Acts 7:21).

The Birth of Moses

There was a decree passed in Egypt that every Israelite boy born must be killed to prevent the increase of the Israelite population. In order to save the new-born Moses, his parents hid him among the reeds in a river. When the Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe in the river, she discovered the infant. The princess was filled with compassion. She adopted Moses and named him in Pharaoh's palace. She arranged for an Israelite woman to care for him, not knowing that the woman was really Moses' own mother!

God saved Moses so that he might become the leader who would gather and unite the Israelite people once again.

Moses Called by God

Years later, Moses was living with the Midianites, nomads who camped in what is called Sinai today. There he had an amazing experience of God.

There an angel of the Lord appeared to him in the flaming out of a bush. As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed. So Moses decided, "I must go over to look at this remarkable sight and see why the bush is not burned."

When the Lord saw him coming over to look at more closely, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." God said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your fathers," he continued, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

But the Lord said, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Come, now! I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" He answered, "I will be with you, and this shall be your proof that it is I who have sent you: when you bring my people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this very mountain" (Exodus 3:2-12).



The story of Moses and the Exodus is our story. Know your history - meet your spiritual ancestors, the Israelites.

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Read the section "Moses Called by God" on page 39.

Ask the students:

- Why they think God called Moses from the burning bush.
- Would a sight like that get your attention?
- What did God call Moses to do? (*Convince Pharaoh to release the Israelites*)
- How would most people react if they were told to get into the White House and tell the President to help the people of their city on a project?
- What help did God offer Moses? (*"I will be with you."*)

5. Reading Continued Pages 40-41

Continue the reading on page 40. After reading Exodus 6:2-5, ask the students what they remember about God's covenant with Abraham: what did God promise him? (*Descendants and the land He would show them*).

We Remember Moses

Many things in our Church's life look back to the story of Moses and the Israelites. These are a few of them.

The Burning Bush - The bush that was in the fire yet not burnt has become a symbol of the Mother of God. She received the Son of God Himself in her womb and yet was not consumed by the experience.

The Exodus - The very word has come to mean a mass departure of peoples fleeing danger or seeking new opportunities.

Passover - Every year at this festival, Jews remember how death passed over their ancestors, and they were able to flee Egypt. As Christians we celebrate the New Passover (Paschal) in which Christ passed from death to life and freed His people from eternal death.

Moses Sinai - A famous and ancient sanctuary on this spot remembers how God appeared to Moses and established a covenant with the Israelites.

The Tabernacle - Many items in our churches such as the 7-branched candelstick and the golden roof items in the Tabernacle modeled after the worship of heaven.

God reminded Moses what He had promised to Abraham and his descendants. Now God was calling Moses to lead His people to the next stage of Salvation History.

Moses met to Pharaoh and told him that God wanted the Israelites to go with Moses, but Pharaoh drove him out and gave the Israelites even more work to do. God appeared to Moses

and told him, "I am the Lord. As God the Almighty I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but my name, Lord, I did not make known to them. I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they were living as foreigners. And now that I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are treating as slaves, I am mindful of my covenant" (Exodus 6:2-9).

Time and again Moses went to Pharaoh to free the Israelites, but Pharaoh always refused. Each time Egypt was hit by a plague that hit the land, its plants or animals, Pharaoh would agree to let the Israelites go to the desert and offer sacrifices to their God. Then he would change his mind and stop them. Finally, when the Egyptians themselves began dying, Pharaoh sent the Israelites away.

The Israelites began leaving Egypt, taking with them as much as they could. They did not take with them the bones of their ancestors Joseph. Two angels accompanied them, a cloud appeared in the daytime and a column of fire at night to let them know God was with them.

Once the Egyptians realized that they had lost their slaves, they set out after the Israelites to bring them back. The Egyptians caught up with Moses and his followers at the edge of the Red Sea. The Israelites got through this nearly sea at night, but when the Egyptians tried to get through their chains were stuck in the mud, the tide came back in and the Egyptians panicked. Their pursuers were defeated, and the Israelites were free.

Research these topics on the Internet -

- The Red Sea
- Sinai

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- Before continuing the reading, remind the students about your discussion on giving up. Did Moses give up when Pharaoh refused him? Why not? (*He knew God was with him.*)
- When the Israelites were finally released, what signs did they have that God was with them? (*Columns of cloud and fire*).

Refer to the maps facing page 73 of the NAB and on page 170 of the text showing the path of the exodus. Point out that since place names change over time, there is some debate about just what route the Israelites took. Most people think it was the longer route around Mount Sinai shown on this map; others believe it was the shorter route around Mount Halal.

Background Reading (Heart of the Exodus Experience):

"The book of Exodus isolates two moments of particular importance in the establishment of God's people. The first is the Passover, in which God demonstrated His power and providential presence, supplying the needs of His people and utterly destroying their enemies. The second is God's self-disclosure or theophany on Mount Sinai, when He formally bound the Israelites to Himself by a covenant (Hebrew, *berit*). The terms of this covenant are Israel's obedience to the Law {Torah}, which God dictated through Moses. In return Israel received the promise of God's abiding presence and their permanent possession of the land of Israel" (OT 55).

Note that the Israelites did not stay in the desert for 40 years because they were lost! It took that long for them to become strong and disciplined enough to defeat the enemies separating them from the Promised Land.

Refer to the drawing of the Tent of Meeting (the Tabernacle) on Handout A. Note that this plan would be used to build the permanent Temple in Jerusalem. We use elements of it in our own churches to this day (*holy of holies* = altar; *incense area* = nave; *place of sacrifice* = narthex where candles, offerings are made).

6. Activity A (Play)

Divide the class in three groups. Ask each group to study one of the three scenes in this play, then to present it before the class. You may consider working on this play in subsequent lessons and presenting it to the lower grades or to the entire parish community.

7. Activity B (Passover Seder)

Explain how Jews to this day celebrate Passover with a special meal called a *Seder*; based on the directions in Exodus 12. Have the students complete the worksheet.

The following should be available for them to see and taste:

- *Matzoh* (unleavened bread), which could be made in haste. Matzoh can be bought in some grocery stores.
- *Bitter herbs* (parsley dipped in salt water), to symbolize the bitter lives of the Israelites in Egypt

Note that Exodus 12:11 says that the first Passover was eaten "on the run." The last question suggests that today it is eaten at leisure. Ask: What might account for the change? (*The Jews are now free and can take their time.*)

The web site MessianicSeder.com presents the order of a Passover Seder connecting it to Jesus (*Yeshua*) the Messiah.

8. Activity C (Time Travel Through the Bible)

View Part One, Section Two of this video (12 minutes) which focuses on the situation of the Israelites in Egypt, the promised land and the capture of Jericho by Joshua. Use the information and questions in the Leader's Guide, pages 8-10 as you show this program.

**9. Activity D
(Jesse Tree)**

Have the students complete the ornaments on the Jesse Tree Worksheet (Moses and the Exodus).

10. Time Line

Display the time line poster. Have the students brainstorm the names of people mentioned in this lesson {Moses, Israelites) and indicate the period in which each lived. Write in the names and dates under each appropriate heading. Reemphasize the idea that the exodus was the determining event in the history of the Israelites.

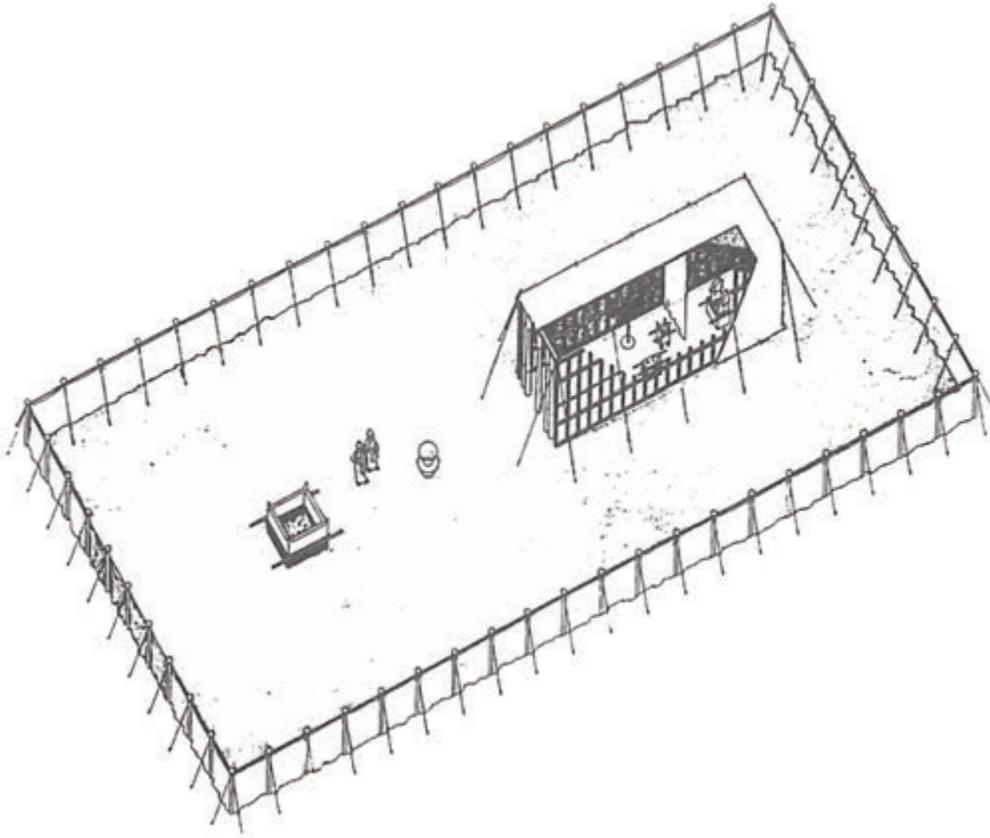
11. Summary

End the lesson by summarizing the lesson from the aims on page 143, and from the elements in the student text on which you focused, and/or from any other points raised in the lesson.

12. Closing Prayer

Conclude with the reading from Psalm 105 and/or the troparion from the Canon of Pascha on page 42 in the student text.

The Tent of Meeting



The tabernacle or the tent of meeting, was the center of Israelite worship in the desert. It had a wooden frame covered with four sets of curtains. Inside there were two rooms. The *holy of holies* could only be entered by the high priest once a year. It contained the Ark of the Covenant, with the Ten Commandments. The room nearer the door contained an altar for burning incense, a golden lampstand, and a table on which loaves were placed. In the courtyard was the altar for sacrificing animals.

When the Israelites had a permanent capital (Jerusalem) they built a "permanent tent," the temple, using the same design.

Our churches also have a three-part design: the holy place, the nave, and the narthex. What do we do in each part that is similar to or different from what the Israelites did in their tent/temple?

MOSES ON THE MOUNTAIN

Scene I: Land of Midian
Characters: Voice of God, Moses, Narrator

Narrator: While Moses was tending sheep on Mt. Horeb, he looked upon a bush that was burning and yet remained unconsumed. Moses approached the bush and heard a voice saying:

Voice of God: Moses! Moses!

Moses: Here I am.

Voice of God: Do not come any closer. Remove your sandals, for the ground on which you now stand is holy.

Moses: Who are you?

Voice of God: I am the God of your fathers; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I have heard the groaning of your people in Egypt. I am sending you, Moses, to lead my people out of Egypt and into the land I have promised.

Moses: Who am I that I should lead the Israelites out of Egypt?

Voice of God: Do not be afraid. Remember, I am with you.

Moses: But, who are you? What shall call you?

Voice of God: I Am Who Am.

Moses: But I cannot speak eloquently. I shall be mocked and scorned.

Voice of God: Take with you Aaron, your brother, and the staff in your hand, and remember always, that I am with you.

Narrator: Moses loved God and desired to obey Him. He proceeded with his brother Aaron to the palace of Pharaoh.

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Scene II: Pharaoh's Palace

Characters: Moses, Pharaoh, Aaron

- Moses: Pharaoh, God has spoken to me and brought me into your presence. It is God's wish that you permit the family of Israel to leave this country of Egypt.
- Pharaoh: What? Are you insane? Set these slaves free? Who will wait on our tables? Who will build our pyramids? Who will do the hard work for Egypt?
- Aaron: If you listen not to the pleading of my brother on behalf of the Israelites, you shall suffer greatly.
- Pharaoh: Your threats move me not!
- Moses: (striking staff to ground) One plague after another shall come to this country until you let my people go. Frogs, locusts, yes, even bloody streams shall fill this land if you hearken not to the voice of God.

(Moses and Aaron depart.)

Scene III: Moses before God

Characters: Narrator, Moses and the Voice of God

- Narrator: As Moses had predicted, the land of Egypt was filled with moaning. But Pharaoh would not relent. Moses thus prayed earnestly to God.
- Moses: My God, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob, plagues have been sent upon this land by Your strong and mighty power. Each time Pharaoh tells us, "Begone, you and your people." And yet each time the plague is removed, Pharaoh changes his mind and continues to keep our people in captivity.
- Voice of God: I have seen the afflictions and have come to rescue my people. Instruct the Israelites to pack their belongings securely. Have each family procure a lamb. Take the blood of the lamb and sprinkle it on the doorposts of their homes. The angel of death shall pass over the homes of these my people. They shall be spared, but the firstborn of all others throughout the land shall be struck dead. Houses where the blood appears will not suffer death.
- Moses: The people shall follow your command.
- Narrator: And thus it was that God saved the Israelites. When Pharaoh saw his own son dead, he gave word that the Israelites hasten from the land. They were not many miles out of Egypt, however, when Pharaoh with his troops tried to overcome the Israelites. But Moses held his staff over the waters. They spread apart and the Israelites hastened to safety. Pharaoh and his troops drowned when the parted waters joined together again. Moses with the Israelites then continued their journey to the Promised Land.

Exodus and the Passover

Exodus 12 describes the origin of the Jewish feast of the Passover. Read Exodus 12:1-20 and answer the questions below.

This feast is celebrated during the Hebrew month called Nissan. Write which two days are mentioned in Exodus and what is to be done on them.

What three foods does this passage say are to be eaten at the Passover?

At Jewish Passover meals today the youngest child asks questions like the following. How would you answer him or her?

- **On all other nights we eat any kind of bread. On this night why do we eat only unleavened bread?**
- **On all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables. On this night why do we eat only bitter herbs?**
- **On all other nights we do not dip our vegetables in salt water. Why do we do so on this night?**
- **On all other nights we eat our meals sitting or reclining. On this night why do we eat only reclining?**

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- **On all other nights we eat any kind of bread. On this night why do we eat only unleavened bread?**

The Israelites were told to eat like people in flight (Exodus 12:11). Unleavened bread takes only a minute or two to bake. It is made without yeast, without waiting for dough to rise.

- **On all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables. On this night why do we eat only bitter herbs?**

Because the Israelites had a bitter life as slaves in Egypt.

- **On all other nights we do not dip our vegetables in salt water. Why do we do so on this night?**

To remember the tears of those who lived as slaves in Egypt.

- **On all other nights we eat our meals sitting or reclining. On this night why do we eat only reclining?**

As a sign that the exodus made the Israelites a free people, able to relax and eat at leisure.

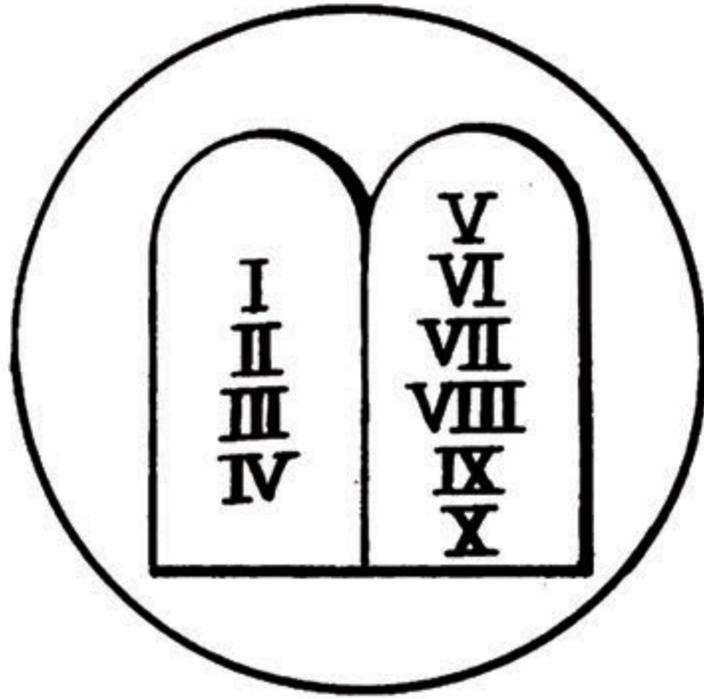
Moses and the Exodus



PILLAR OF FIRE



BURNING BUSH



TABLETS OF THE LAW