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Our Pulpit.

The Story of Moses.

No. 3

THE EXODUS.

SERMON PREACHED BY

REV. A. J. MOWATT.

In St. Paul's Church, Fredericton, Sunday
evening Feb 24th. 1889.

"And it came to pass at the end of
four hundred and thirty years, even the
self same day it came to pass, that all
the hosts of the Lord went out from the
land of Egypt."—Exodus XII. 41.

The Talmud relates, that in the one
hundred and thirtieth year after Israel
had come down to Egypt, the Pharaoh
of the day had a remarkable dream that
troubled him very much. He saw in
his dream an old man before him with
a pair of huge balances. These balances
he suspended in the presence of the
king, and prepared to weigh. He took
all the princes and rulers and officers
and great men of Egypt, and he bound
them together, and he put them on one
end of the balance. And then he took
a lamb, and put it on the other end of
the balance, and to the amazement and
horror of the king, the lamb far out-
weighed all the power and greatness of
Egypt. The king did not know what
to make of the dream he had dreamed,
but he understood that a day was com-
ing when Egypt would be weighed in
the balances and found wanting.

Now, tonight we are to see how the
Jewish lamb outweighs the might of
Egypt. A week ago we saw how the
nation was plagued. That was God's
way of working out His people's deliv-
erance from the bondage that they had
been crushed under for some four hun-
dred years. Egypt had not dealt hon-
orably by them. She had taken advan-
tage of them as a people, and for her
perfidy she was dealt with, torn to pieces
by a succession of judgments. But it
was the lamb that brought her down.

I. THE PASSOVER.

It is the beautiful spring month
Nisan, and great preparations are go-
ing on among the people of Israel to-
wards their exodus. The plagues have
at least done this much for them,—they
have broken their yoke, stopped the
public works that were being pushed
forward, and practically ended their
slavery. The people are jubilant, for
they feel that the day of their deliv-
erance is at hand. They talk of it freely
with their Egyptian neighbors, and
Egypt is not sorry they are going. She
has had enough of them, and wants
them to go. When therefore the slaves,
as directed by the Lord, go to their old
masters and mistresses, and ask—not
borrow, as it is in our version—con-
tributions of money, silver and gold
jewels, as some slight remuneration for
their long and hard service, the Egyp-
tians are generous, and give to them
most freely. Nothing they ask, hardly,
do they withhold, for they feel that the
claim they make is just.

Moses has issued full instructions,
and they are being faithfully carried
out. The people have come to have
faith in him, and in Egypt no man has
the name that Moses has. On the tenth
day of the month, each family selects a
lamb, a male of the first year, and with-
out blemish. This lamb they tie up till
the evening of the fourteenth. In the
meantime the packing up is going on,
and there is no little excitement as the
greatest moving day the world has ever
seen draws near.

By the fourteenth the preparations
are all but complete. The day passes
slowly. If you could go throughout
the land of Goshen you would find all
the houses of Israel stripped bare, and
full of bundles and boxes ready to be
carried away.

As soon as the sun is set 100,000
lamps have their throats cut. The
blood is carefully caught. Taking a
bunch of hyssop they dip it into the
warm blood, and they dash it on the
side-posts and lintels of their door.
They roast the lamb whole before the
fire, taking care not to break a bone.
It is then served with unleavened cakes,
bitter herbs, and a bottle of wine. The
doors are all shut and securely bolted,
and not a member of any family is ab-
sent. Every one is dressed for the
journey. Their sandals are bound on
their feet, and their staffs are in their
hands. It is getting late, drawing on
towards midnight, but not even the lit-
tle children are allowed to go to sleep.
They eat the passover-feast with haste;
what is left of the lamb they burn.

It is midnight, the hour when the
angel of death with drawn sword is to
pass throughout the land of Egypt to
slay the firstborn. What an hour! A
hush like the hush of death falls upon
God's people as they wait and watch till
the angel is passed. Their heads are
bowed, and a solemn awe possesses their
souls. But scarcely is the hour passed
when a wail rises on the still night-air
so weird and awful. The angel of death
has come and gone, and wherever the
blood of Israel's lamb is not, he enters,

and there is a dead firstborn. Neither
palace nor cottage escapes; neither
sheepfold nor byre is without its dead.

And instantly almost word comes to
Moses from the king and his clamorous
people for Israel to go without further
delay. They are in a great hurry now
to get them off. Everybody is urgent.
And Israel goes, goes as an army goes,
with banners flying, and God at their
head. Across the plain you hear them,
the tramp of many feet, the call of the
shepherd and the bleating of sheep and
lambs, the shout of the cattle drover and
the lowing of herds, and so out of Egypt
God's consecrated host, two million
strong, march in the early morning. It
is the fifteenth of Nisan, a day never to
be forgotten in the history of Israel and
the world, when the exodus takes place.

We have got hold of the word exodus
today, and we use it freely; but what an
exodus was that of Israel out of Egypt
thirty centuries ago, a nation with al-
most half the population of the Do-
minion of Canada, rising up, and with all
that they have, their sheep and cattle
and household effects, setting out to go
to Canaan. It was a stupendous unde-
taking, and some today are not slow to
question the fact that any such exodus
ever took place. But in the history of
last century we have something analo-
gous to it. Under cover of a single
night, 400,000 Tartars withdrew them-
selves from Russia, and made their way
over several thousand miles of steppe
from the banks of the Volga to the
confines of the Chinese Empire.

It was not merely an exodus; it was
a revolutionary and revival movement;
it was a people waking up to their priv-
ileges as God's people, and setting out
to possess and enjoy them. As we look
back to it across the broadening ages,
we wonder at it. But is there anything
too hard for God to do? We sometimes
ask if revolutions are right and neces-
sary. But yonder is a revolution with
God Himself at its head. And it was
not without blood. Egypt's veins had
to be slit and some of her best blood
spilt before Israel could be free. It was
over the slain of her homes God's peo-
ple marched out of Egypt. And yet,
seldom indeed has so great a revolution
been wrought out that cost so little
blood and treasure as that. But alas!
it is not yet wrought out, and more lives
of Egypt must be sacrificed.

II. THE CLOUD-PILLAR.

No sooner did the people set out on
the exodus than there flashed far east-
ward a great light that turned night in-
to day for them. It was an immense
cloud-pillar, and was God's visible pres-
ence among His people. The cloud-
pillar was a light by night and a shade
from the direct beams of the sun by day.
It was thus a wise and most merciful ar-
rangement both for the guidance and
comfort of the people. The people, as
we can readily understand, must have
set out from widely different points,
twenty, thirty, perhaps fifty miles apart,
and so were in danger of being scatter-
ed and disorganized at the very outset.
But the cloud-pillar was a flashing ban-
ner lifted high up which all could see,
and so they made towards it, and were
thus drawn together. Just as the cross
today is a point of convergence towards
which all branches of the christian
church draw; so the cloud-pillar drew
together the tribes of Israel, and unified
as well as led them.

Rameses was the starting-point for the
main body of the host. From Rameses
they proceeded eastward to Succoth.
Here they halted and built themselves
booths, waiting for the different parts
of the host to come forward. Succoth
was probably on the eastern boundary
of the land of Goshen. They would
reach Succoth in about three marches.
They must have travelled slowly, for
they had their flocks and herds with
them, and they were encumbered with
their families and household effects.

At Succoth they baked into cakes
dough they had brought away with
them in their bury. And here Moses
addressed the host at some length, tel-
ling them among other things to keep in
mind that eventful day in their history.
He seems to have explained also the
sacredness of the firstborn both of man
and beast.

How long they halted at Succoth we
cannot say, perhaps twenty-four or
thirty hours. From Succoth the pillar
of cloud led them to Ethan their next
halting-place. We cannot today locate
the places mentioned, but probably
Ethan was on or near the north-west
angle of Lake Timsah. So far they had
been keeping to the route usually taken
by caravans going up from Egypt to
Canaan, the route Joseph's brethren
took when they carried corn to feed
their households, and the people may
have expected that they would keep to
that way, going through the land of the
Philistines, and, in a week or so, reach-
ing their own happy country. But if
they were entertaining any such ideas,
how soon they were to be doomed to dis-
appointment. Moses knew differently,
for the Lord had told him that he and
the people would worship at Mount
Sinai, and on the strength of that word
he had led his family there. The peo-
ple as yet were without any discipline,
a mere horde of slaves. They were

utterly incapable of fighting the battles,
and coping with the difficulties, incident
to securing a settlement in Canaan.
They would fall an easy prey to any
sort of organized foe as they were.
Hence, it was the Divine purpose from
the first to lead them into the wilderness,
and there, through a long course of dis-
cipline, teach them how to be a nation,
train them in military tactics, give them
laws, instruct them in religion, ensure
them to hardships, organize them, and
thus fit them in every way to be a
nation worthy of Him, worthy too to
take their place alongside of the nations
that were, and fulfil the ends and pur-
poses of a nation.

After a brief halt at Ethan therefore,
they turned back from the northerly
course they had been pursuing, and
went southward. It would seem strange
indeed, a sort of unaccountable freak,
in the cloud-pillar, to wheel right round,
and pass from north to south. It would
look as if it was in some way fooling
with them, and I have no doubt some of
the wise ones in Israel would feel like
insisting upon taking their own course.
But Moses issued orders to follow where
the cloud led, and the host obeyed, al-
though perhaps not without some reluc-
tance and questioning. Oh it is hard to-
day, and it was no less hard in Moses's
day, to follow where the Lord leads!
We think there must be some mistake
because we are not led where we want
to go, and so often we take our own
course, and follow not the wondrous
cloud.

We cannot today trace out on the map
the way the people took, but they would
probably keep along west of lake Timsah
and the Bitter Lakes, journeying almost
due south. They would do this for per-
haps forty miles, as the crow flies, and a
strange way it must have seemed out of
Egypt, only such a way as God would
Himself choose for His people. It look-
ed as if He was leading them into inex-
tricable difficulties, to destruction not to
salvation. But the Lord makes no mis-
takes. He was teaching them to walk
by faith, not by sight. Instead of lead-
ing them north to Canaan, He led them
south to the Red Sea and the desert;
and instead of leading them round the
head of the Gulf of Suez, where Moses
himself had gone when he went to
Midian, and where everybody else went
who travelled that way, the cloud led
them to the west or Egypt-side of the
Red Sea, we would say, and they would
say, the wrong side.

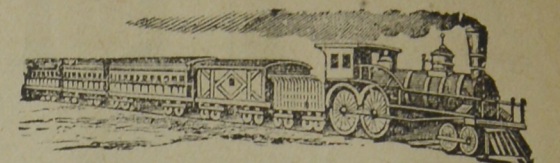
III. THE RED SEA.

The Red Sea stretches from the Indian
Ocean far inland towards the Mediter-
ranean. It is about 1500 miles long, ly-
ing north and south, and is today con-
nected with the Mediterranean by
means of the famous Suez Canal. The
Red Sea at its head divides into two
gulfs, called the gulf of Suez and that of
Akabah, the Sinaitic Peninsula lying
between them. The Gulf of Suez is an
arm of the Red Sea stretching to the
north-west, and is about 130 miles long.
The modern town of Suez stands at its
head.

Now, it was in the neighborhood of
Suez where Israel encamped, probably
to the south-west of the town. Suez, as
I understand it, stands on a low promon-
tory on the west side of the head of
the gulf. Before the town stretches a
narrow channel some four miles to the
north. This channel is about as wide as
our river. South of the town is a
beautiful bay looking down the gulf.
This bay is from seven to ten miles wide.
It is said of those who have been on the
ground that there is room for the en-
campment of Israel on the shore of this
bay, between the bay and the ridge of
mountains to the west called Atakah.
Others think that Israel must have been
led back of Atakah. But it was here-
abouts somewhere that Israel encamped
previous to their crossing the Red Sea.

How long they were encamped before
they discovered that they were pursued
by the Egyptian army we cannot say.
Perhaps they were just preparing to
encamp, when they see the enemy com-
ing over the hills away to the north,
with banners flying, and a great army.
The sight of them, as we can easily
understand, puts consternation into the
hearts of the people. They felt they
were in a tight place. Before them lay
the sea with its deep wide waters,
stretching north and south. To the
west rose Atakah's inaccessible heights,
and beyond these the desert. And be-
hind them were Egypt's 600 chosen
chariots and a great host of armed men,
tradition says, 50,000 horsemen and
20,000 footmen. What are the 2,000-
000 slaves to do? They are in great
straits. Do we wonder that they begin
murmuring at the huge blunder of which
they are the victims? They ask with
bitter words if there were no graves in
Egypt that they have been led here to
die. And Moses himself is in no little
perplexity. But he has no doubt that in
some way the Lord will come to their
deliverance, and so he tells the people
not to be swept away with a panic of
fear, but to stand still and see the salva-
tion their God will work out for them.
"And Moses said unto the people, fear ye
not, stand still, and see the salvation
of the Lord, which He will work for you

Continued on third page.



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11.35 A. M.—From Fredericton Junction,
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3.10 P. M.—From Fredericton Junction,
Vanceboro, Bangor, Portland,
Boston, and points West, St. An-
drew's, St. Stephen, Houlton Wood-
stock and points north.

6.30 P. M.—Express from St. John, and inter-
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6.50 A. M.—Mixed for Woodstock, and
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ARRIVE AT GIBSON.

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