



## EXODUS MATINS

*Sarah Hinlicky Wilson*

A few years ago I spent some weeks at a Lutheran camp, which shall remain nameless. There was an expectation that you would attend Vespers every evening—not a requirement, of course; social pressure and disappointment were preferred to outright law—so I went. After some time I found myself “lonely for the Bible” (those were the words that kept popping into my head), despite the reading from and preaching on the Bible every day. I attribute this to how the biblical text was treated in the preaching most of the time. As a remedy for the loneliness, I started playing around with the idea of a liturgy drawn chiefly from one book of the Bible.

The seed of the idea, sprouted by those specific circumstances, came from another kind of “loneliness for the Bible” that I have often experienced in church. The usual Sunday liturgy does cover extensive biblical ground, from the confession of sin based on 1 John 1 to Simeon’s and Revelation’s hymns of praise to the synoptic words of institution to the Aaronic benediction, so giving worshipers a good sampling of what the Holy Writ has to say. On the other hand, this approach is necessarily broad rather than deep and omits a great deal. Our weekly liturgy does not include, for instance, the Ten Commandments, that most beautiful of all gospel summaries in John 3:16, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, Romans on justification by faith, Jesus’ instructions for reconciliation in Matthew 18 or the Great Commission in Matthew 28. In fact, a staggering lot is left out of the liturgy that we hear week after week.

The lectionary is some help but not much. It also omits a huge amount, each text gets heard only once every three years, and pastors rarely preach on all four lessons anyway. That leaves all the rest to Bible studies, which tend to attract the usual suspects (both in choice of books and people attending) anyway. For myself, I confess that the liturgy, as my chief experience of church as a child, gave me

no idea how exciting the Bible actually was. I suspect widespread boredom at an ecclesially tamed Scripture accounts for a lot of the empty seats in our churches.

I’ve also pondered the fact that—unlike religious traditions such as Islam, Baha’i, Taoism, and Confucianism—Christianity and Judaism have canonical Scriptures written by many authors across a significant span of time. What we confess as revealed truth was not given only to one single scribal mediator but to many authors, collectors, and redactors. Some have taken this as reason to decenter Scripture altogether, exalting its heterogeneity; this is just as bad as piously flattening out the sixty-six books into an easily summarized set of propositions. For me, the spiritual interest lies in discovering how each of the different authors and books struggled with the same God of Israel and of Jesus Christ, all in their own distinctive way.

Well, my Exodus Matins might not be much of a solution to our scriptural problems, but it’s what came out of my desire to experience the Bible in a deeper liturgical way. Based on the conventional order of Matins, this version draws its two hymns, its imagery, and nearly all of its spoken texts from the book of Exodus. Since this is a Christian liturgy, the God of Israel is also confessed as the Holy Trinity. The Ten Commandments hymn should be sung somberly, in keeping with its dire Advent tune, but Moses and Miriam’s song should be sung exultingly, ideally accompanied by tambourines—as was the original (Exodus 15:20). The tune for the second hymn is attributed to me, but as I have never composed anything before in my life, I worry that I may be half-remembering someone else’s song. If you recognize it from another source, please let me know.

Meanwhile, I’m attempting a Vespers based on 11 Corinthians and a communion service from Matthew. I’d be delighted to hear of other creative proposals for deepening our liturgical relationship to the Scriptures. *LH*

*All stand.*

## LITANY

Let us pray: From bloodshed and violence,

**Good LORD, deliver us.**

From pestilence and plague,

**Good LORD, deliver us.**

From oppression and famine,

**Good LORD, deliver us.**

From accident and disease,

**Good LORD, deliver us.**

From earthquake and flood,

**Good LORD, deliver us.**

From hail and drought,

**Good LORD, deliver us.**

From darkness of spirit,

**Good LORD, deliver us.**

From hardness of heart,

**Good LORD, deliver us.**

From the angel of death,

**Good LORD, deliver us.**

By Your only-begotten Son,

**Good LORD, deliver us.**

*The Lord's Prayer is said.*

## BLESSING AND DISMISSAL (Ex. 3-4)

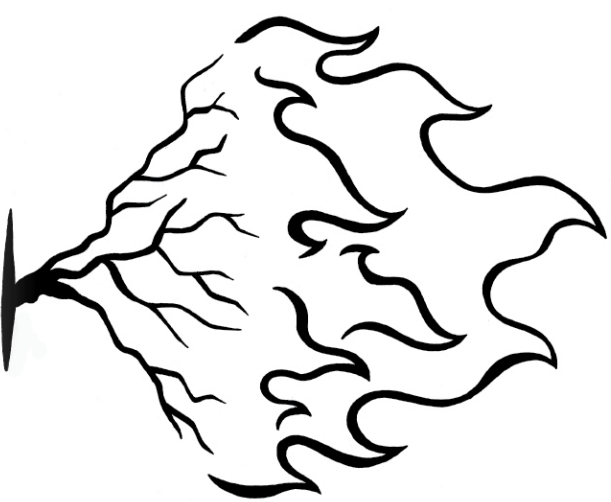
Go out and say to the people, "The LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has sent me to you."

**Who are we, that we should speak for the LORD?**

The LORD says, "I will be your mouth and teach you what you shall speak. Therefore say to the people, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

**This is God's name forever, and thus He is to be remembered throughout all generations. Amen.**

# Exodus Matins



*A candle is lit.*

*All stand.*

## OPENING SENTENCES WITH DOXOLOGY (Ex. 3)

The LORD has said, "I have seen the affliction of My people."

**The LORD has heard our cry and knows our sufferings.**

The LORD has said, "I will deliver Israel from the hand of Pharaoh."

**The LORD will bring us to a land flowing with milk and honey.**

Glory to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.**

# The Ten Commandments

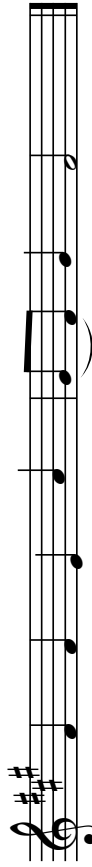
Exodus 20, versification by Sarah Himlicky Wilson NUN KOMM, DER HEIDEN HEIL-AND



1 Mos - es climbed to Si - nai's height, Saw God's glo - ry



and God's might. He re - ceived in won - d'ring awe



The two tab - lets of \_\_\_\_\_ the Law.

2. "Lo, I am the LORD your God. You shall have no other God. From Egypt I set you free. Therefore worship only Me."
3. "My name is a holy name; Do not take My name in vain. Rest upon the sabbath day, Gladly hear My word, and pray."
4. "Give your parents honor due That it may go well with you.
5. "Do not steal. And do not say Words that harm in any way. Covet not your neighbor's house. Covet not your neighbor's spouse."
6. Moses said: You shall not fear Though God's glory has drawn near. God will test your hearts within. Trust the LORD and do not sin.

## RESPONSE TO THE LAW (Ex. 34:6-7)

The LORD our God by no means clears the guilty, but visits the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation.

**Yet the LORD our God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness to the thousandth generation.**

*All sit.*

*Another hymn may be sung*

*One of the following Psalm selections is chanted or read responsively:*

*Psalm 77: 99; 105:1-2, 23-45; 106:1-23; 114; or 136:1-3, 10-16.*

*A Scripture lesson is read.*

## ACCLAMATION OF SCRIPTURE (Ex. 24:17)

Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire, **On the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.**

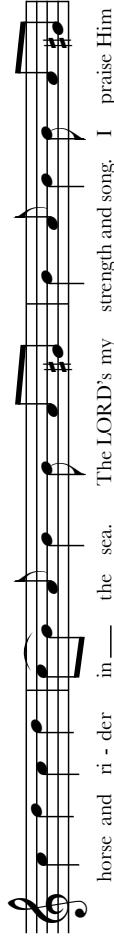
## Moses and Miriam's Song

Exodus 15, versification by Sarah Himlicky Wilson

MIRIAM  
Sarah Himlicky Wilson



Our God the great I AM has tri-umphed glor - ious - ly. He tossed both



horse and ri - der in \_\_\_\_\_ the sea. The LORD's my strength and song. I praise Him



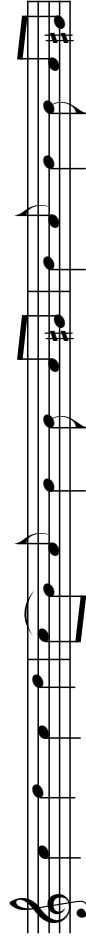
all day long. He o - ver - came my en - e - my.

### Verses



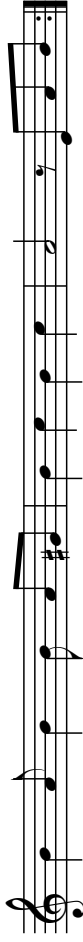
1 My en - e - my had said, "I shall draw out my sword, I shall pur -

2 We walked a - cross dry land and heard the wa - ters roar While You re -



sue and strike you"; but \_\_\_\_\_ the LORD Per - formed His wondrous deeds: blew on the de -

ceded and brought us to \_\_\_\_\_ the shore. With cloud and fire You showed the way to



Sea of Reeds And swal - lowed up the Pharaoh's horde. Our God the

Your a - bo - de. The LORD shall reign for - e - ver - more.