

## Understanding The Old Testament Week 8: The Tabernacle, Rebellion, and the Glory of Yahweh

### Exodus 25 - The Ark of The Covenant (continued)

- Exodus 25:17: The lid is often called the "mercy seat." This English translation doesn't come from Hebrew but from tradition, starting with the resources used to write the first English translations. The Hebrew word for mercy is אָרַחֵם (arahem); the word used for the lid to the Ark is כַּפֹּרֶת (kapporet) which means atonement. The more accurate translation would be "atonement cover." (We will discuss what atonement means in this context when we get to Leviticus)
- Exodus 25:22: God will meet with His people from ABOVE the "mercy seat." The Ark does not contain God's presence; He is above it. The Ark is compared to His throne and, at times, His "footstool." The idea was that He sits on His Throne in Heaven, and His feet are on the Ark.

### Exodus 26 - The Tabernacle Instructions

- The tabernacle is decorated with Cherubim (Verse 1) and the best materials.
- The tabernacle is set up in three parts. The outer court, where all believers were invited to come and spend time with God (more on this in Leviticus). The inner court or Holy Place, where only the priests could enter and where the priests carried out their daily duties. And the Most Holy or Holy of Holies, where the glory of the Lord literally dwelt and spoke to the people from atop the Ark of The Covenant between the two Cherubim. This system is indeed not ideal. Only the High Priest and only once a year could enter the Holy of Holies, and to do so, He would need to burn incense so he could not clearly see the Lord's Glory and die. The New Covenant is superior in every way to this Old Covenant, but it was the length God was willing to go through to dwell with His people and start the plan of salvation that would culminate with the birth of Jesus, who was of the seed of Abraham.
- If you read through and lay it all out, you will see that the closer you get to the Most Holy place, the better the materials get. The outside contains bronze and animal skin; when you reach the Most Holy Place, it is all gold and the finest linen. *The closer we get to the Lord, the better the fruit produced in our lives will be—gold vs. bronze. Bronze is better than nothing, but gold is ideal.*

### Exodus 27 - The Alter and The Court Instructions

This altar stood in the court just beyond the gate. This is where most of the sacrifices would happen and be placed upon.

### Exodus 28 - The Priestly Garments

### Exodus 29 - Setting the Priests Apart

### Exodus 30 - The Alter of Incense, Supporting the Priesthood, Washing Basin, the Oil, and the Incense.

- Exodus 30:1-10: The altar of incense was in the Holy Place. God commanded the priests to keep incense burning on it day and night (24-7). The burning incense had a representative effect and practical effect. This incense represented the prayers of the people day and night before the throne continually (represented by the Ark). The incense also would have helped cover up the smell of all the other sacrifices that were taking place.
- Exodus 30:17-21: The priests had to wash before entering in to do their priestly duties. It would have been a regular thing for the priests to get dirty simply by being outside: the dirt, dust, and ashes. *It reminds us to continually come to the Lord to be cleaned of the sin that so easily entangles us.*

Exodus 31 - God provides the knowledge and skill to build the tabernacle. Command of the Sabbath reiterated.

- The Lord doesn't instruct us to do things a certain way and then leave us alone to figure it out. He gives us wisdom, knowledge, and other people to help us follow Him. This teaches us about God's grace. Grace is the unmerited gift and empowerment to live for Him.
- The Sabbath was (and could be said is today) supposed to be a time to look forward to when we get to rest with Him (for He rested on the 7th day). An attitude of "having to take a day off" is not the fulfillment of the command; if we do not enjoy His presence, we should run to Him in repentance and ask for the grace to love Him fully.
- Exodus 31:18: The Tablets were written by the "finger of God." When God is spoken of as anthropomorphic (having human qualities), it should be noted as a likely appearance of the Pre-Incarnate Jesus in the form of a man.

Paul speaks to the law being given by Jesus to Moses: **Galatians 3:19 ESV**

### **The Tabernacle and (Re)Creation**

- 6 Days of Creation "God said let there" = 6 Speeches: Exodus 25:1; 30:11, 17, 22; 31:1, 12 "The Lord said to Moses." Both end with the Sabbath.
- The 6 Days of creation followed by the 7<sup>th</sup> day of rest can be viewed as Yahweh creating His earthly tabernacle and priesthood. The Tree of Life is the Most Holy Place, the Garden is the Holy Place, and the rest of the earth is the outer court.

*See last page for more.*

### **Exodus 32 - The Golden Calf Incident**

- Exodus 32:1: Might be translated as "make us 'God' who shall go before us."
- Exodus 32:4: Again, instead of god, it might be translated as God.
- Exodus 32:5: Notice the Small Caps. Aaron says, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to Yahweh." This wasn't necessarily Israel turning to other gods, as it was Israel making God in the image they wanted because of their fear, lack of understanding, and lack of faith. The idea was: "Moses has been gone for 40 days, and we need the presence of Yahweh to lead us. Aaron make us Yahweh to lead us into the promised land" (see Exodus 20:23). *We must know who God is, what He is like, and strive never to make Him in our idea of Him. He Is Who He Is (literally what Yahweh means), and we cannot change Him because we want to. This is the importance of not only reading the Bible but studying the Bible in His Presence to know who He truly is as revealed by His Word.*
- Exodus 32:7-14: Moses intercedes on behalf of Israel, and God relents His wrath from the Israelites.
- Exodus 32:17: Joshua was up on the mountain with Moses for the 40 days and 40 nights.
- Exodus 32:19: Moses breaks the tablets that contain the laws written by the finger of God.
- Exodus 32:22-24: Aaron's excuse. When sin is revealed to us, we must admit it, receive forgiveness, and draw closer to the Lord.
- Exodus 32:27-29: Levites choose the Lord and are ordained as priests of Israel. This undoes the firstborn as the ones who were to be priests.
- Exodus 32:30-33: Moses pleading with God to forgive the Israelites. He also says He won't forgive those who rebel against Him, and they will be blotted out of His book.
- Exodus 32:34: Because of Israel's rebellion, God tells Moses, "my angel shall go before them." In context with verse 32, this is not the Angel of Yahweh, the one in whom is The Name of The Lord (which is a way of saying it is the Lord); this is just an angel, to which Moses will respond, "If your presence will not go with me, do not

bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sign, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us..." ([Exodus 33:15-16](#))

[Exodus 32](#): This is the first of multiple times Israel will commit "spiritual adultery" against the Lord. This time is especially egregious; it is the equivalent of a bride cheating on the groom the day after the wedding.

[Exodus 33](#) - Moses sees the glory of the Lord

- [Exodus 33:1-6](#): Continuing the narrative from the last chapter. God tells Israel He won't lead them Himself but will send an angel. The people realize further what they have done and humble themselves before Yahweh. Notice that Yahweh will still bring the people and fulfill His promise, but because of the evil Israel had done toward Him, He would not go with them Himself.

Something to think about: The angel Yahweh was planning to send may have been Michael. The Lord tells Daniel that Michael is Israel's Prince. This is where the idea of guardian angels comes in.

- [Exodus 33:7-11](#): This is a seemingly random section; it doesn't fit chronologically; the author likely put this here to let us know that Moses had a lifestyle of speaking with the Lord. Joshua, who would take Moses' place, did as well. Moses went from someone who didn't want to be used by God to being a bold leader for God. Meanwhile, the concession that the Lord made to get Moses to obey Him has already had ramifications in the creation of the golden calf and will continue to have adverse effects until Jesus comes. This lifestyle played a large part in why the Lord will change His mind and lead the people Himself.
- [Exodus 33:12-23](#): Moses speaks with God (likely on Mount Sinai). This is a passage we should know well, as this is a glimpse into the relationship we should have with the Lord in the New Covenant. See [2 Corinthians 13](#).
- [Exodus 33:15](#): "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here." *We must know the Lord, know His Presence and His voice.*
- [Exodus 33:16](#): The Presence of the Lord made Israel distinct. The other nations had fallen angelic beings over them and behind them ([Psalm 82](#); [Deuteronomy 32](#)). An angel that was not the Lord would not have made His people distinct. In the same way, what makes us distinct is the Presence of God, the Holy Spirit living in us.
- [Exodus 33:17](#): The Lord forgives the people of Israel and promises He will go with His people, not an angel but Him, the Angel of Yahweh, in the pillar of cloud/fire.
- [Exodus 33:18](#): Moses asks the Lord, "please show me your glory."
- [Exodus 33:19-20](#): The Lord will not show Moses his full glory because it will kill him. Instead, He tells Moses what He will do: He will reveal His glory to Him, put Moses in the cleft of the rock, and let Moses see His Glory from the back.

There can be a seeming contradiction here, but it is not so. It says in the previous few verses: "Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend ([Exodus 33:11](#))". Here, the Lord says man cannot see His face and live.

Face in both of these passages is the Hebrew word פָּנִים (panim). It means face but also means presence. Face-to-face can be a figure of speech and imply Moses spoke in the presence of God. However, it can be read literally. This still would not be a contradiction. Several times man has seen Yahweh face-to-face. Abraham had a meal with Him in [Genesis 18](#); it is unlikely Abraham brought Him a drink, washed His feet, and had a meal with Him without seeing His face. When the Lord says, "no one can see my face and live," it speaks of His unveiled glory, His 'panim,' His unveiled presence. The Lord, up to this point (and after this), would veil himself in some way so that He could be comprehended by those who see Him. If He had not,

the human mind would not only be unable to understand what they are seeing, but it would ultimately kill the person.

Exodus 33:21-23: As to which member of the trinity is this? The pre-incarnate Jesus, in His glory, passes before Moses in the form of a human. No one has ever seen the father (John 1:18, 6:46). He dwells in unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16). Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15); if we have seen Him, we have seen the Father (John 14:9).

John also makes this case and uses much of the same terminology in Exodus 33-34 in John 1 when speaking of the Word becoming flesh (John 1:14-17). (see chart from IVP NT Commentary; Craig Keener. Last page)

The Aramaic Targum for Exodus also points to the "2nd Yahweh," known in Aramaic as "the Word/the Memra":

Exodus 33:20-23 (The Aramaic Bible, Volume 7: The Targum of Onqelos to Exodus)

<sup>20</sup> Then He said, "You will not be able to see *the face of My Presence*; for no *man* may see Me and live."<sup>21</sup> And the Lord said, "Here is a place *prepared before Me*; now you are to stand on the rock.<sup>22</sup> So when My Glory passes by, I will place you in a cleft of the rock *and will shield you with My Memra* until I have passed by.<sup>23</sup> *Then I will remove the Word of My Glory*, and you will perceive *that which is behind Me, but what is in front of Me* will not be seen."

Exodus 34: The Remade Tablets, and the Lord shows His Glory to Moses

- Exodus 34:1: Moses had to cut the stones this time because Moses broke the first tables. The reason for two tablets wasn't that five were on each tablet. Exodus 32:15-16 clearly states they were written on the front and back. The two tablets were identical copies of each other. When covenants were made in the ancient world, each part would get a copy of the covenant document. The two tablets are one copy for Yahweh and one copy for the people of Israel. Both were kept in the Ark of the Covenant and were the only items in the Ark of The Covenant (see 1 Kings 8:9)

It is often told that Manna and Aaron's staff were in the Ark, but a closer reading of the text (especially in the original languages) shows that they were before the Ark, not in it. The jar of manna and Aaron's staff would have been set up in the Most Holy Place, but they were not in the Ark.

- Exodus 34:5: The Lord descended and stood with Moses. Notice the anthropomorphic language. He then proclaimed His Name to Moses: Yahweh.
- Exodus 34:6: Yahweh is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
- Exodus 34:7: "Visiting the iniquity of the father to the 3rd and 4th generation" is often taught as a verse for generational cursing. This needs to be corrected for what the Lord is trying to communicate. The idea of this passage isn't that the 4th generation somehow inherits their ancestor's sin, but it is a statement that a father's sin affects the children who live with him.
  - Families in ancient Israel often lived in the same tent or house; when a son would get married, they would add to the family dwelling. By the time a man and women were 60, they could easily have four generations living in their tent. The idea of visiting the sin to the 4th generation is a statement that their sin ends with their death; it goes no further. In modern English, this should be thought of as something like: "The Lord blesses the ones who love Him forever, and the Lord leaves the shame of the sinful to their lifetime." The Lord is quick to forgive those who turn their hearts toward Him, but He is a just judge; the actions of a rebellious father or mother will affect those who live with him, but their sin dies with them.
  - Exodus 34:10-28: The covenant is renewed.
    - Exodus 34:14: "for Yahweh, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" Jealous: Hebrew - קָנָא (qanna) means jealous, but this form of the word is only used to describe Yahweh in the entire Bible. Yahweh is

jealous for His creation, those who are made in His image; the use of this form of the word speaks to a different kind of jealousy from carnal jealousy. It is a holy and righteous jealousy.

- Exodus 34:15-16: The Bible often warns Israel not to intermarry with other nations. This is not racism, as Israel was free to intermarry with people of other nations if they believed in Yahweh. Anytime we read a warning for Israel not to marry men and women from other nations, it needs to be understood that this is the context. “lest you whore after their gods.” Many Israelites, including those in King David’s and, therefore, Jesus’ lineage, are non-Israel born. This is not a problem in the least, as they believed in Yahweh. (i.e., the book of Ruth).
- Exodus 34:28-35: Because of Moses’ closeness and beholding of the back of the Lord in His Glory Moses’ face shines. *We have unhindered access to the Presence of God; we can see him with unveiled face and behold His Glory spiritually (2 Cor 3:15-18). While we do not physically shine, we should spiritually shine as Moses did; if we aren’t, it is due to a lack of time in His Presence.*

### **Exodus 35-39 - Reiteration of the Sabbath, Tabernacle, Priesthood, etc.**

- Much of these following chapters are most a reiteration of things already stated (although there are some further details). They are stated again because of the events in Exodus 32-34. The covenant has been renewed. The repetition in this passage assures readers of this renewed covenantal promise and ends most powerfully.
- The order in which they are told is switch around: in Exodus 25-30 are told in order of “holiness” starting with the Ark of The Covenant, the representation of the Throne of God, and ending with the bronze basin and anointing oil and incense. In Exodus 35-39 they are told in the order they were made, which is done in a practical sense (i.e., if you were building a church you might plan the sanctuary and decor first, but would be the last thing to get done; the first thing to foundation and the outside of the building.)
- Notice the teaching of the Sabbath (Exodus 31:12-18 and Exodus 35:1-3) book end the Rebellion Narrative in Exodus 32-34.

### **More Tabernacle and Creation**

- Both the Genesis 1 Account and the Tabernacle Accounts (Ex. 25-31; 35-40) are about Yahweh’s imminent presence with His people. Gen 2 is the Garden where Adam and Eve walked and talked with Yahweh face-to-face. Genesis 32 is the failure of Israel because they tried to obtain the presence of God via the golden calf. Genesis 40 is the filling of the tabernacle with God’s Presence.
- There are 6 furnishings in the tabernacle: 1) Alter of burnt offering. 2) Bronze Basin. 3) Alter of Incense. 4) Table of the Bread of the Presence. 5) Golden Lampstand. 6) Ark of the Covenant.

### **Exodus 40 - The Tabernacle Is Built, Yahweh fills His earthly home with His glory.**

- Exodus 40:1-33: The Lord commands Moses to set up the tabernacle, Yahweh’s holy residence, among His people.
- Exodus 30:34-38: As promised, the Glory of the Lord, the manifestation of the very Presence of God, filled the tabernacle. The Lord promised His Presence would lead the people of Israel, and Yahweh did indeed lead them. Whenever His glory would rise, they would pack up and leave. Whenever His glory stood still, they set up camp and rebuilt the tabernacle.

**Creation and The Tabernacle Parallels.** (Compare A1 to A2; B1 to B2, C1 to C2, D1 to D2)

<b>Creation</b>	<b>Building The Tabernacle</b>
A <sup>1</sup> The heavens and the earth were finished, and all their array. On the seventh day God finished the work that he had been doing, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had done (Gen 2:1-2).	A <sup>2</sup> All the work of the Tabernacle, the Tent of Encounter, was finished. The Israelites had done everything exactly as YHWH had commanded Moses: Thus had they done it (Exod 39:32).
B <sup>1</sup> And God saw all that he had made and found it very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day (Gen 1:31).	B <sup>2+C2</sup> And Moses saw all the work and found that they had made it as YHWH had commanded: Thus had they made it. And Moses blessed them (Exod 39:43).
C <sup>1</sup> + D <sup>1</sup> And God blessed the seventh day and made it sacred, for on it God had ceased from all the work of creation which he had done (Gen 2:3).	D <sup>2</sup> You shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and you shall make it sacred, along with all its furnishings. It shall be sacred (Exod 40:9).

Eugene Carpenter, Exodus, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary. Page 193.

**Parallels Between Exodus 33-34 and John 1:14-18**

<b>Exodus 33-34</b>	<b>John 1:14-18</b>
The revelation of God’s word, the Torah	The revelation of God’s Word, Jesus
God dwelt among his people in the tabernacle (33:10); Moses pleaded that God would continue to dwell with them (33:14-16)	The Word “tabernacled” (literally, in 1:14) among people
Moses beheld God’s glory	The disciples beheld Jesus’ glory (1:14)
The glory was full of grace and truth (34:6)	The glory was full of grace and truth (1:14)
The law was given through Moses	The law was given through Moses (1:17)
No one could see all of God’s glory (33:20)	No one could see all of God’s glory (1:18a), but it is fully revealed in Jesus (1:18b)

That John had in mind one particular passage, which addresses God giving the law to Israel, is confirmed by the accumulation of multiple allusions. When God revealed his glory to Moses in Exodus 33-34, he revealed not just dramatic splendor but his *character* (Ex 33:19). Particularly relevant here, his glory was “abounding in covenant love and covenant faithfulness” (Ex 34:6), which could also be translated “full of \*grace and truth.” Like Moses of old (see 2 Cor 3:6-18), the \*disciples saw God’s glory, now revealed in Jesus. As the Gospel unfolds, Jesus’ glory is revealed in his signs (e.g., Jn 2:11) but especially in the cross, his ultimate act of love and the ultimate expression of God’s heart for people (12:23-33). The Jewish people were expecting God to reveal his glory in something like a cosmic spectacle of fireworks; but for the first coming, Jesus reveals the same side of God’s character that was emphasized to Moses: his covenant love.<sup>1</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Second Edition. Page 250.

Recommended Resources for Exodus (from least to most technical with the original languages and content):

- Faith Life Study Bible (Free, Online Only)
- Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament, John Currid
- Evangelical Exegetical Commentary: Exodus, Eugene Carpenter
- World Biblical Commentary: Exodus: John Durham

Note: recommended resources don’t mean an agreement with everything in those resources. If you have questions, feel free to ask any time!