

## Reading Through the Bible Week 6: Exodus Part 2 "Exodus: Departure, Identity, Redemption"

### Overview:

Exodus is a Greek word which is composed of two parts: *ek* "out" and *hodos* "road." The Book of Exodus describes the departure of the nation of Israel from their bondage in Egypt. Centuries before the Patriarch, Jacob brought his extended family to Egypt to avoid starvation (Gen. 46:1-27). Because of a shift in political power, the descendants of Joseph and his brothers fell into slavery, but they became quite numerous. The emphasis in Genesis upon one family has given way to a focus upon the nation of Israel in the Book of Exodus. They are slowly shaped into a people who are in a covenant relationship with Jehovah God.

It is notable the Hebrew name for Egypt, *Mizraim* (or *Mitzraim*), directly connects the nation to this son of Ham. This name is still reflected in the modern Arabic name for Egypt, *Miṣr*. The Bible often refers to Egypt as the "Land of Ham" (Psalm 105:23, 106:22), highlighting the ancestral link to Ham. Mizraim was the progenitor of the Egyptian people, who developed into a major civilization by the time of Abraham (Genesis 12), but Cush – a son of Ham and brother to Mizraim – historically corresponds to the region south of Egypt, known as Nubia or Ethiopia.

Egypt (Mizraim) generally dominated the region during the New Kingdom (circa 16th century BC), and Nubia (Cush/Kush) was an Egyptian colony governed by an "Egyptian Viceroy of Kush." Kushites adopted many cultural practices, religious beliefs (like the worship of Amun), and architectural styles (pyramids) from Egypt. As the Egyptian New Kingdom disintegrated around 1070 BC, Kush gained independence and power with the Cushites/Kushites being the first to unite the Upper and Lower Nile (land of Cush/Kush) and their influence is seen on the earliest dynasties of Egypt.

Based on biblical genealogy and ancient history, the transition from Mizraim to Cush describes the relationship between the ancestral founders of Egypt (Mizraim) and Nubia/Sudan (Cush), who were siblings (sons of Ham). While they are distinct, neighboring regions, the historical transition involves a reversal of power where the Kingdom of Kush eventually conquered and ruled Egypt during the 25th Dynasty. Between 746–653 BC, rulers from Kush (including Piye and Taharqa) conquered Egypt, creating the 25th Dynasty, often called the "Kushite Pharaohs," who were known for their darker skin tone and sometimes ruled Egypt as the "black pharaohs." After being pushed out of Egypt by the Assyrians, the Kingdom of Kush moved its capital further south to Meroë, developing a distinct culture that combined Egyptian traditions with indigenous African influences. Today, a major branch of the Afroasiatic language family (spoken in the Horn of Africa, including Oromo and Somali) is named "Cushitic" after the biblical figure.

The biblical significance is that the relationship shifts from familial to political, with both nations sometimes aligned and other times opposing (e.g., Zerah the Cushite fighting against Judah found in 2 Chronicles 14:9-15), and Moses is described in Numbers 12:1 as having married a "Cushite woman," which led to criticism from his siblings Miriam and Aaron. Prophetically, despite their history of conflict, passages like Isaiah 18 and Psalm 68:3 points to a future where both Egypt and Cush are acknowledged by God, symbolizing the inclusion of distant nations.



## Theme:

The overarching theme of the Book of Exodus is redemption from bondage, specifically how God delivered the Israelites from slavery to make them His own special people. This foundational narrative establishes the identity of Israel and reveals the character and power of God. All people may have hope, no matter how desperate the situation. God will send a deliverer to display His awesome power, and deliverance will come through blood.

## Key biblical themes in the Book of Exodus includes:

- **Redemption and Deliverance:** The central event is God hearing the cries of the oppressed Israelites and acting with sovereign power through the plagues and the parting of the Red Sea to rescue them from physical bondage.
- **The Covenant:** At Mount Sinai, God formalizes a relationship with Israel through the **Mosaic Covenant**. This binding agreement stipulates that Israel will be God's "treasured possession" and a "holy nation" in exchange for their obedience to His laws.
- **God's Presence and Theophany:** God reveals Himself in dramatic manifestations, such as the burning bush and the pillar of cloud and fire. The second half of the book focuses on the **Tabernacle**, a portable sanctuary designed so that God's holy presence could dwell in the midst of His people.
- **The Law:** The giving of the **Ten Commandments** and subsequent regulations provides a moral and ethical framework for the community. The Law is presented as a gift to guide the people in reflecting God's character.
- **Holiness:** Exodus emphasizes that God is uniquely holy, and His people are called to share in that holiness through their worship, conduct, and use of sacrifices to atone for sin.
- **Knowledge of God (Self-Revelation):** A recurring purpose for God's actions (especially the plagues) is "that they may know that I am the LORD." This highlights God's supremacy over false gods and His faithful commitment to His promises.
- **Mediators:** The role of Moses as a go-between for God and the people is vital. Moses intercedes, delivers God's word, and even pleads for mercy on behalf of the rebellious Israelites.

## Narrative Arc of Exodus:

- **Slavery and Call (Chapters 1–6):** The Israelites are enslaved in Egypt; God commissions Moses to liberate them.
- **Plagues and Exodus (Chapters 7–13):** God sends ten plagues, leading to the Passover and the departure from Egypt.
- **The Sea and Wilderness (Chapters 14–18):** God parts the Red Sea for the Israelites, destroys the Egyptian army, and provides water and manna in the wilderness.
- **Covenant and Law (Chapters 19–24):** At Mount Sinai, God gives the Ten Commandments and the "Book of the Covenant," establishing a legal and spiritual framework for the people.
- **Tabernacle and Presence (Chapters 25–40):** Detailed instructions and construction of the Tabernacle occur, ending with God's glory dwelling among the people.

## Key Study Points: Part 2

- **Arrival at Mt. Sinai and Covenant Invitation (Chapters 19–20)**
- **The Law and Covenant Code (Chapters 21–24)**
- **Tabernacle Instructions (Chapters 25–31)**
- **Rebellion and Renewal (Chapters 32–34)**
- **Construction and Dedication of the Tabernacle (Chapters 35–39)**
- **God's Glory Enters the Tabernacle (Chapter 40)**



## Study Points & Commentary

Exodus chapters 19–40 transition from the narrative of deliverance to the establishment of Israel as a "kingdom of priests" under God's law that focuses on the establishment of the covenant at Mount Sinai that involves detailing the giving of the Law and the Covenant Code (ch. 19-24), instructions on the Tabernacle components (ch. 25-31), the idolatry of the golden calf (ch. 32-34), and finally putting it all together (ch. 35-40).

The book of Exodus spans a time of roughly one year from the departure from Egypt to the setup of the Tabernacle; however, the specific narrative from the arrival at Sinai (Ch. 19) to its completion (Ch. 40) occurs within roughly a 10-month timeframe. The Israelites arrived at Sinai in the third month after leaving Egypt (Exodus 19:1), and the Tabernacle was erected on the first day of the second year (Exodus 40:17), which is roughly 10 months later. The Hebrews stayed at Mount Sinai for just over 11 months.

### 1. Arrival at Mt. Sinai and Covenant Invitation (Chapters 19)

This foundational section marks the formal agreement between God and the Israelites who prepare to meet God. God brings Israel to Mount Sinai where God's presence descends in a cloud of smoke, thunder, and fire resulting in the audible proclamation of the Ten Commandments and proposing a covenant to make them a "kingdom of priests."

- **Historical Note:** Three months after the exodus, the Israelites arrive at the Wilderness of Sinai, pitching camp directly in front of the mountain. This marks the fulfillment of God's promise to Moses at the burning bush that they would serve God on this mountain (Exodus 3:12).
- **Grace Before Duty (Exodus 19:1-4)**
  - **Context of Grace (19:4):** Before God gives any laws, He provides the "historical prologue" of the covenant – "I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself."
  - **"Brought you to myself":** The goal of salvation is fellowship and intimacy with God (relational), not just freedom from bondage.
- **Arrival:** In the third month after leaving Egypt, Israel camps in the "wilderness of Sinai... before the mount" (Ex. 19:1-2).
  - **Significance of Space:** The barren, desolate, and silent desert forces an exclusive focus on God, removing distractions.
  - **Significance of Time:** The arrival is around the time of Pentecost, roughly 50 days after the Passover, foreshadowing the giving of the Spirit on Pentecost in the New Testament. In biblical numerology, the number 50 represents liberation, restoration, and the completion of a cycle, most notably through the Year of Jubilee and Pentecost.
- **The Covenant Initiation (19:5-8):** Israel arrives at Mt. Sinai, where God proposes a covenant to make them a covenant nation.
  - **"If you will" (19:5-6):** God offers a conditional covenant. The conditional language - "If you will obey my voice... then you shall be a special treasure" denotes that while redemption is by grace. Maintenance of the covenant relationship requires obedient faithfulness.
  - **"Kingdom of Priests" (Mamleket Kohanim):** Israel is tasked with a mediatorial role—standing between God and the nations, representing God to the world. God promises to make Israel a "a kingdom of priests." In the ancient world, priests were intermediaries. God is calling the entire nation, not just a small group, to represent Him to the world—a missionary vocation.



- **“Holy Nation”** (Goy Kadosh): Not only does God promise to make Israel “a treasured possession” and “a kingdom of priests” but also “a holy nation.” A nation set apart for God’s purposes, necessitating moral and ritual purity.
- **Restoration of Purpose:** At Mount Sinai, God invites Israel to be a “kingdom of priests,” restoring the human vocation lost in the Garden of Eden to represent God to the world. This vocation restores the human mission from Genesis, where humanity was meant to represent God’s rule and image on earth.
- **The Response (19:8):** The people enthusiastically accept: “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” This establishes the covenant as a mutual, though unequal, agreement.
- **Preparation (Exodus 19:9–25):** The encounter with God is not casual; it requires strict consecration.
  - **Consecration (19:10-11):** The people must wash their clothes and set boundaries, emphasizing that the Holy God is fundamentally different and dangerous to the unholy.
  - **The Divine Descent (19:16-19):** God descends in a theophany—a visible, terrifying manifestation of glory (cloud, smoke, fire, trumpet sound)—to prove His presence and validate the law.
  - **The Mediator (19:20):** Moses acts as the mediator, bridging the gap between a holy God and a fearful, imperfect people.
- **Hermeneutics:** Before any commands are given, God establishes the relationship based on grace. The “eagles’ wings” imagery signifies divine power and tender protection, lifting Israel out of bondage.
- **Theological Importance:** This establishes that the covenant is a response to love already shown, not a way to earn God’s love: Redemption (grace) precedes legislation (duty). God’s redemption is unconditional. The covenant is a *response* to love already shown, not a means to earn love. The phrase “brought you to myself” indicates that the goal of the Exodus was intimacy with God, not merely freedom from labor.
 

In addition, the mountain functions as a temporary “temple” or “Eden,” a meeting place between God and humanity. The restrictions mirror the exclusion of Adam and Eve from Eden, yet now, through God’s initiative, a way is opened for restricted interaction.
- **Theophany (Presence):** The bounds set around the mountain highlight the danger of approaching a holy God without proper sanctification. Thus, the mountain becomes a forbidden, holy zone, surrounded by boundaries, signaling that the Divine Presence is too holy for sinful humans to approach without divine authorization (19:12).

## 2. The Law and Covenant Code (Chapters 20-24)

Exodus 20-24 constitutes the “Book of the Covenant,” a foundational legal and theological framework establishing Israel as God’s holy nation, distinct from surrounding cultures. It moves from the Ten Commandments (moral law) to specific, actionable civil laws (case law) focused on justice, protection of the vulnerable, and proper worship. Ratified by blood in Chapter 24, this covenant binds God and Israel in a relationship of grace-based obedience. God gives the Ten Commandments (Decalogue: the “Ten Words”) and subsequently the laws (Book of the Covenant). These chapters demonstrate that the Law was intended to guide life, not to be a crushing burden, but a structure for living in freedom and covenant loyalty to God.



- **The Ten Commandments (20:1-21):** The Ten Commandments are not as a means to earn salvation, but as a gracious, relational guide for a redeemed people to live in covenant with God. Delivered after delivering Israel from Egypt, these commandments protect, foster a holy community, and reveal God's character, centering on love for God and neighbor rather than merely restricting freedom.
    - **The Prologue (20:2):** "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt..."—The Commandments are rooted in God's grace.
    - **The First Table (v. 3–11): Loving God**  
These define the vertical relationship:
      - 1) **No other gods (v. 3):** Exclusivity in worship. In a polytheistic world, this demands absolute allegiance to YHWH.
      - 2) **No idols (v. 4-6):** Prohibits making images of God, ensuring He is not controlled or manipulated. It affirms God as Spirit, requiring worship in truth rather than through material substitutes.
      - 3) **No misuse of God's name (v. 7):** Commands profound reverence for the Divine name, forbidding perjury, triviality, or using God's authority to validate selfish actions.
      - 4) **Sabbath rest (v. 8-11):** A weekly rhythm of ceasing and abiding, signifying trust in God's provision rather than human hustle.
    - **The Second Table (v.12–17): Loving Neighbor**  
These define the horizontal relationship:
      - 5) **Honor parents (v. 12):** This command is the foundation of social order, establishing authority and facilitating the passing down of faith to future generations. It treats parents with weight and respect, bridging the gap between duties to God and duties to humans. Preserves social order and continuity of faith.
      - 6) **Do not murder (v. 13):** Prohibits the unlawful taking of human life, protecting the sanctity of life as a gift from God. It extends to preserving the dignity of others and forbids unjust anger or violence. Sanctity of human life.
      - 7) **No adultery (v. 14):** Protects the sanctity of the marriage covenant, ensuring faithfulness and stability in the fundamental unit of society. It calls for purity in heart, thought, and action. Sanctity of marriage covenant.
      - 8) **No stealing (v. 15):** Protects personal property, possessions, and the fruits of honest labor. It demands integrity in business and daily dealings.
      - 9) **No false witness (v.16):** Protects the reputation of neighbors and ensures justice in community life. It forbids lying, slander, and gossip, promoting truthfulness. Protection of reputation and justice.
      - 10) **No coveting (v. 17):** Addresses the root of interpersonal sin by targeting the heart's desire. It prohibits discontentment and forbidden desires for what belongs to another, addressing the internal cause of the external sins listed above.
    - **In biblical numerology:** The number 10 signifies divine order, completion, testimony, and responsibility, representing a full cycle or the perfection of divine rule. Appearing 242 times, it often bridges the gap between human responsibility and divine authority.
- Core Orientations:**
- **Divine Completeness & Order:** The most prominent example is the Ten Commandments, which represent the complete moral code given by God to humanity..



- **Testimony and Law:** God used the phrase "God said" 10 times in Genesis 1. The 10 plagues in Egypt served as a testament to God's authority. The Passover is on the 10th day of the first month (Exodus 12:3).
- **Responsibility & Stewardship:** The tithe (10% of earnings) represents 10 being used as a sign of faith and responsibility.
- **Humanity/Community:** It relates to human wholeness (10 fingers/toes) and is used for a *minyan* (a quorum of 10 men for Jewish prayer).
- **Prophetic Fulfillment:** The 10 horns/toes in Daniel and Revelation represent worldly kingdoms under judgment.
- **Parables:** Jesus used the number 10 in parables, including the 10 virgins and 10 minas. The number 10 acts as a symbol of God's complete, orderly, and governing authority over humanity.

In numerical composition, some scholars break down the number 10 into its components:

**4 + 6 =** The sum of 4 (representing the physical creation/earth) and 6 (representing man), signifying God's authority over mankind.

**7 + 3 =** The combination of 7 (spiritual perfection) and 3 (divine perfection), leading to a state of total completion.

- **The Book of the Covenant (Exodus 20:22–23):** Following the Ten Commandments, God gives specific, practical laws. These are detailed in civil and social laws regarding property, justice, festivals, social justice, and treatment of servants are given (often called the Book of the Covenant). The covenant is formally ratified with blood, and Moses ascends the mountain for 40 days.
  - **Worship (20:24-26):** Altars are to be made of earth or unhewn stone, emphasizing simplicity and forbidding the ornate, idolatrous altars of surrounding nations.
  - **Social Justice (21:1-11):** Laws governing servants (often indentured rather than chattel slavery) provide for mandatory release in the seventh year, protecting human dignity.
  - **Lex Talionis - Latin for "law of retaliation" (21:23-25):** "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth" originates in ancient Babylon (Hammurabi) (c. 1900 BC – 600 BC) and Biblical law (c. 1446 BC – 1270 BC), it aimed to limit excessive vengeance by restricting retaliation to the exact equivalent of the injury.
  - **Community Focus & The Vulnerable (22:21-27):** The laws protect the marginalized—widows, orphans, and foreigners—reflecting God's compassion and preventing the oppression they experienced in Egypt.
  - **Reflecting God's Character (23:4-5, 8):** The law demands high ethical standards, such as not taking bribes (23:8) and even helping an enemy with their fallen animal (23:4-5), anticipating Jesus' teaching to love enemies.
  - **Ratification (ch. 24):** The covenant is formally sealed through a blood sacrifice and a communal meal on the mountain confirming Israel as God's set-apart people.
    - **The Procedure (24:1-8):** Moses mediates between God and the people. He builds an altar (representing God) and twelve pillars (representing the tribes).
    - **Blood and Meal (24:6-11):** Sacrifices are offered, and the blood is dashed against the altar and sprinkled on the people, sealing the covenant. This gruesome act shows that the covenant is based on atonement.



- **The Covenant Meal (24:11):** The leaders of Israel see a vision of God (the sapphire pavement) and eat a meal in His presence, signaling reconciliation and communion. This scene parallels the New Covenant, where Jesus, as the Mediator, offers His own blood to reconcile humanity to God.
- **40 Days on the Mountain (24:12-18):** Moses ascends into the "devouring fire" of God's presence, where he remains for 40 days to receive further instructions, confirming his role as the mediator of the Law.
- **Hermeneutics:** In the giving of the Ten Commandment, Jesus later summarized the two tables as loving God and loving neighbor, showing they are essentially a call to "love" as God defines it.
- **Theology of the Law:** The law is not a burden, but a "gift" (a *Torah* or instruction) defining holy living and protecting community life.
  - **The Vertical (1-4/5):** The first commandments regulate the relationship with God, forbidding idols and establishing the exclusivity of Yahweh (the "No other gods" command), prohibiting any substitute for the True God.
  - **The Horizontal (5-10):** The remaining commandments regulate human relationships (murder, adultery, theft, perjury, coveting) to establish a just, covenant community.
- **Theophany:** The giving of the Law is marked by a terrifying theophany— God descends in fire, smoke, thunder, and a trembling mountain that emphasizes His transcendence holiness and representing the awesome power of God.
 

God descends in fire to reveal his holiness, inducing fear in the people, who rightfully feel separated from such majesty. This underscores that the Law comes directly from God's authority.

### 3. Tabernacle Instructions (Chapters 25–31)

While Moses is on the mountain for 40 days, God provides blueprints for a portable sanctuary. God provides intricate instructions for the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle (dwelling place), its furniture, and the priestly garments for Aaron. This section emphasizes holiness and God's desire to dwell among his people.

- **Instructions for the Tabernacle (25:1-31:18):** Detailed plans are given for a portable sanctuary, designed to mimic the Edenic state of God dwelling with humanity.
- **Sacred Furnishings:** Detailed plans for the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of Showbread, and the Golden Lampstand.
  - **The Ark of the Covenant (25:10–22):** The box, overlaid with gold, housed the law (testimony).
  - **The Table of Showbread (25:23–30):** Represents God's provision and the "Bread of the Presence."
  - **The Golden Lampstand (25:31–40):** A solid gold, hammered, almond-tree-shaped lamp (not the traditional menorah).
- **The Tent Structure:** Specifics for the curtains, frames, and the **Holy of Holies**.
  - **The Curtains (26:1-14):** Four layers (fine linen with cherubim, goat hair, red-dyed ram skins, and badger/dolphin skins). The inner, ornate layer shows the splendor visible only to priests inside, while the outside was plain.
  - **The Veil (26:31–35):** Separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.
  - **The Boards and Bases (26:15–30):** Acacia wood overlaid with gold, resting on silver bases.
- **Priesthood:** Instructions for the ordination of Aaron and his sons, including their sacred garments.
  - **The Ephod and Breastpiece:** The High Priest carried the names of the 12 tribes on his shoulders (strength) and heart (love).



- **The Urim and Thummim:** Inside the breastpiece, used to discern God's will.
- **The Turban:** A gold plate engraved with "Holy to the Lord," bearing the guilt of the people so they might be accepted.
- **Concluding Instructions (Exodus 30–31)**
  - **The Altar of Incense (30:1–10):** Located just outside the veil.
  - **The Sabbath (31:12–17):** Placed at the end of the instructions to emphasize that *time* is as sacred as *space*. The work of building the Tabernacle must not violate abiding with God.
  - **Craftsmen Filled with Spirit (31:1–11):** Bezalel and Oholiab are filled with the Spirit of God to perform artistic work, showing that secular skills are consecrated for sacred service.

#### 4. The Golden Calf Rebellion and Renewal (Chapters 32–34)

Exodus 32–34 serves as a pivotal, dramatic narrative of salvation history, detailing the immediate breakdown of the Sinai covenant through the Golden Calf incident and its subsequent, miraculous restoration. This section explores the tension between human frailty (rebellion) and divine grace (mercy), providing a foundation for understanding biblical atonement, intercession, and the nature of God's glory.

- **The Sin (32:1-6):** The narrative takes a dark turn when the people grow impatient for Moses' return. While Moses is on the mountain, Israel lapses into idolatry by worshipping a golden calf. Impatient for Moses' return, the people demand a visible god. Aaron fashions a golden calf, likely a syncretistic attempt to represent Yahweh, mimicking Egyptian Apis bull worship. They declare, "These are your gods... who brought you up from the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:4).
  - **God's Reaction (32:7-10):** God tells Moses to go down because "*your* people, whom *you* brought out... have corrupted themselves" (32:7). In Exodus 32:10, God says, "'let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may **destroy** them, ...'" and start over with Moses (a second Noah) as a replacement of the current ethnic and covenantal body, a new nation.
 

While many English versions translate God's response as "destroy" in Ex. 32:10, note the contrast between Exodus 32 where God threatens to consume/devour (*'ākal*) them with wrath. In the Genesis Flood, God destroys/ruins (shachat) the earth with a flood in Gen. 6:13, in Genesis 6:7 and 7:4, God "wipes out" or "blots out" (*machah*).

There is a connection in intent between both narratives (the Golden Calf and the Flood) which involve God expressing intense anger, considering the total destruction of a corrupted humanity, and a mediator (Noah then/Moses later) pleading for them.
  - **The Broken Law (32:15-19):** Moses descends, sees the revelry, and intercedes on their behalf to God, but breaks the tablets of the law in the process. This is a dramatic act signifying that the covenant is already broken by the people's actions but later receives new tablets, revealing God's character as merciful and gracious.
  - **Judgment and Consequence (32:20-35):** Moses crushes the idol, burns it, grinds it into dust, and throws it into the water, forcing the Israelites to drink it. This act acts as a symbolic, miniature "flood" judgment, where the people swallow the consequences of their sin. In addition, Moses commands the Levites to execute 3,000 men who were the worst of the rebellion leadership. This indicates that while forgiven, the sin has fatal consequences. Ultimately, the generation that committed this sin was barred from entering the Promised Land, dying instead during the 40-year wandering.



- **Moses' Intercession:** Moses pleads with God to spare the nation, reminding Him of the covenant with Abraham.
  - **Intercession 1: The Reputation of God (32:11-14):** Moses argues that if God destroys Israel, the Egyptians will mock Him. He appeals to the covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
  - **Intercession 2: Self-Sacrifice (32:30-34):** Moses tells the people he will go up to make atonement, offering to have his own name blotted out of God's book if God will not forgive them. This foreshadows Christ's substitutionary atonement.
  - **Intercession 3: The Need for Presence (33:12-17):** God refuses to go with the people, promising only an angel (33:2-3). Moses refuses to move without God's presence, arguing that Presence is what distinguishes them from other nations. God concedes to Moses' intercession.
- **Restoration:** The stone tablets are remade, and the covenant is renewed, revealing God's character as "compassionate and gracious".
  - **New Tablets:** God commands Moses to cut new stone tablets, indicating a renewal rather than a creation of a *new* legal code, but a resumption of the old one.
  - **The "Ritual Decalogue":** The renewed covenant (34:11-26) emphasizes the prohibition of idolatry and reinforces the, sabbath, and agricultural festivals, focusing on maintaining holiness in the promised land.
  - **Moses' Shining Face:** After his encounter with God, Moses' face shines, which terrifies the people. This indicates the intense holiness of the presence of God. Moses wears a veil, a detail Paul later interprets in 2 Corinthians 3 as the fading glory of the Old Covenant compared to the permanent glory of the New.
- **Hermeneutics: Understanding the Structure**
  - **The Structure:** The unit operates as a, ABA' structure—32 (Rebellion), 33 (Intercession and Tent of Meeting), 34 (Renewal).
  - **Literary Context:** These chapters appear immediately after God gives instructions for the Tabernacle, highlighting the irony that while God was preparing a place to dwell with them, they were making a place to worship a false god.
  - **Interpretation of the Calf (Exodus 32:4):** Scholars debate if this was idolatry of a foreign god or an attempt to worship Yahweh through a forbidden image (syncretism). Aaron's announcement, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD [YHWH]," suggests a perverted, syncretistic attempt to domesticate God.
  - **The Function of the Narrative:** The story explains why the Levites were chosen for priesthood (32:26-29) and establishes that while sin brings consequences, God's grace initiates restoration.
- **Theology:**

In Exodus 32, the description of God's "burning" wrath and His subsequent decision to "relent" from destroying the Israelites are widely interpreted through the lens of anthropomorphism (attributing human form/traits to God) and anthropopathism (attributing human emotions to God). The anthropomorphic "rage" highlights that idolatry is a capital offense under the covenant, requiring a mediator to "stand in the breach" to prevent total annihilation. And the Hebrew word *nacham* (translated as "relented" or "repented") is used anthropomorphically to show that God is responsive to human intercession, even though His core character remains immutable.



- **The Necessity of a Mediator:** Moses represents the type of intercessor (Christ) needed to stand between a holy God and a sinful people.
- **Grace Precedes Law:** The covenant is not renewed because Israel became obedient; it is renewed because God is compassionate and gracious.
- **Divine Impassibility vs. Relenting:** When Scripture says God "repented" or "relented" (32:14), it is an anthropomorphism describing God changing his actions in response to prayer, while his character remains constant.
- **The "Book" (Exodus 32:32-33):** Moses offers to be blotted out, a sign of vicarious love. God rejects this, stating that each must answer for their own sin—pointing to the need for a final, spotless mediator (Jesus).
- **The Theophany: Revelation of Character**
  - **The Crisis of Presence (Exodus 33:1-6):** God refuses to go with the people, saying they are "stiff-necked" and would be consumed.
  - **The Tent of Meeting (Exodus 33:7-11):** Moses sets up a temporary tent outside the camp, signifying that God's presence is distant due to sin, yet still accessible to the mediator.
  - **The Request to See Glory (Exodus 33:18-23):** Moses asks to see God's glory, which God grants by allowing him to see His "back" while hiding him in the cleft of the rock.
  - **The Proclamation (Exodus 34:6-7):** The core theophany, God reveals His name and character: *"The LORD, the LORD, a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loyal love and faithfulness, a keeper of loyal love for thousands, forgiver of iniquity, transgression, and sin..."*
  - **The Nuance of Justice:** The passage concludes with a reminder that God will not leave the guilty unpunished, showing a balance of grace and justice.

## 5. Construction and Dedication of the Tabernacle (Chapters 35–39)

Exodus 35–39 details the construction of the Tabernacle, showing Israel's transition from idolatry to obedience, mirroring the plans given in chapters 25–31. The text emphasizes voluntary giving (ch. 35), Spirit-filled craftsmanship by Bezalel and Aholiab (ch. 36-38), and meticulous execution of priestly garments (ch. 39), all fulfilling God's commands.

The Israelites willingly contribute materials, and skilled craftsmen build the Tabernacle exactly according to the pattern shown to Moses. The book concludes with the completion of the work, and the glory of God fills the Tabernacle.

### ● Exodus 35: The Call to Contribution and Sabbath

- **Sabbath Reiteration (35:1-3):** Before building God's house, the people are reminded to rest. This emphasizes that obedience to God's time is as crucial as obedience in work. Lighting fires was prohibited, emphasizing the strictness of the Sabbath. The Hebrew phrase used for "rest" or "complete rest" is *Shabbat Shabbaton* (שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן). This phrase, appearing in verse 2, is fundamentally understood in Jewish tradition as more than just a cessation of labor; it is a spiritual, intentional "abiding in God" or "resting in" the divine. Distinguish this from other Hebrew words for rest that do not appear in this specific verse:
  - Nuach** (נוח): This word implies "settling down," "quiet," or "repose". While the Sabbath is a time of *nuach*, Exodus 35:2 focuses on the **legal cessation** (*shabbat*) of labor.
  - Menuchah** (מְנוּחָה): A state of rest or a resting place (often used for the Promised Land). While *Shabbat Shabbaton* mandates stopping creative work (*melacha*), it also serves as a day to recalibrate, connect with the Divine, and acknowledge God as the creator and sustainer of the world.



- **Voluntary Offerings (35:4-29):** Moses invites the people to bring a "contribution to the Lord." The text repeatedly highlights that only those with a "**willing heart**" gave, showing that God desires cheerful, uncoerced generosity over a mandatory tax. The focus shifts from the earlier golden calf idolatry to using those same resources for the worship of Jehovah.
- **Skilled Craftsmen (35:30-35):** Bezalel and Aholiab are filled with the Spirit of God, possessing wisdom, understanding, and knowledge for artistic, high-quality workmanship.
- **Completion:** Every element is built "just as the Lord commanded".
- **Exodus 36: Construction Begins and Offerings Stop**
  - **Generosity Surpassed (36:1-7):** The craftsmen, led by Bezalel and Aholiab, begin, but the people bring so many contributions that Moses has to command them to stop. This highlights the transformation of the people's hearts from greed to joyful generosity.
  - **Building the Tent (36:8-38):** Construction begins, starting with the curtains of fine linen, blue, purple, and scarlet, and the goatskin coverings.
- **Exodus 37: Furnishing the Holy Place**
  - **The Ark and Mercy Seat (37:1-9):** Bezalel constructs the Ark of the Covenant, covering it in pure gold and shaping the two cherubim for the mercy seat.
  - **Table and Lampstand (37:10-24):** The table for showbread and the golden lampstand are crafted.
  - **Altar of Incense and Anointing Oil (37:25-29):** The incense altar and sacred oil are prepared, finalizing the interior items for the Holy Place.
- **Exodus 38: The Outer Court and Inventory**
  - **Altar of Burnt Offering (38:1-7):** The bronze altar for sacrifices is built.
  - **Bronze Laver (38:8):** The basin for washing is made from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the tent.
  - **Court and Materials (38:9-20):** The court, curtains, pillars, and sockets are created.
  - **Inventory of Materials (38:21-31):** A detailed account of the gold, silver, and bronze used is given, highlighting the transparency and proper use of the materials.
- **Exodus 39: Priestly Garments and Completion**
  - **The Ephod and Breastplate (39:1-21):** The priestly garments are made with exquisite detail, including the breastplate with twelve stones representing the tribes.
  - **Other Garments and Final Assembly (39:22-31):** The robe, tunics, turban, and sash are created, ensuring the priest is holy before the Lord.
  - **Approval of Work (39:32-43):** The work is finished, and all items are brought to Moses. The phrase "as the LORD commanded Moses" is repeated multiple times, highlighting perfect obedience to the divine pattern. Moses blesses them, having seen the work completed.
- **Hermeneutics: The Meaning of Repetition**

The "massive repetition" of details from Exodus 25–31 in chapters 35–39 serves critical interpretive purposes

  - **Exact Obedience:** The text repeatedly uses the phrase "just as the Lord commanded" (e.g., Exodus 39:32, 42) to emphasize that Israel had abandoned "doing it their way" (as seen with the Golden Calf) and was now operating strictly by God's pattern..
  - **Microcosm of Creation:** Modern scholarship often views the Tabernacle as a "new creation". Just as God created the world in seven days, the construction follows a divine blueprint to create a sacred space where the cosmic order is mirrored on earth.



- **Human Agency:** While chapters 25–31 focus on God's instructions (the "heavenly temple"), chapters 35–39 focus on the work of the people (the "earthly realization"), transforming them into "new creators" under the influence of the Holy Spirit.
- **Theology: Presence, Grace, and Stewardship**
  - **The Theology of Presence:** The Tabernacle is the physical expression of God's desire to  **dwell among His people** (Exodus 25:8). It overturns the idea that God's holiness keeps Him away from sin; instead, God "moves into the region of sin" to redeem it through His presence.
  - **Willingness and Stewardship:** Unlike a tax, the materials were **freewill offerings** (Exodus 35:21, 29). This teaches that acceptable service must stem from a "stirred heart" and a "willing spirit," illustrating that God values the attitude of the giver as much as the gift.
  - **Spirit-Empowered Work:** The call of Bezalel and Oholiab (Exod 35:30-35) provides the first biblical instance of someone being "filled with the Spirit of God" for artistic and manual labor, signifying that all skills—not just "spiritual" ones—are gifts intended for God's glory.
- **Theophany: Glory in the Structure**

While the *dedication* occurs in chapter 40, chapters 35-39 set the stage for the theophany. Upon completion of the construction and the cloud of glory (Shekinah) descending to fill the Tabernacle.

  - **The Tabernacle as "Tent of Meeting":** The structure itself represents a permanent, albeit portable, theophany—a place where God promises to meet with Israel.
  - **Luminous Presence:** Historically, Israelite theophanies (like the burning bush) were characterized by light. The use of pure gold and the lampstand (Exodus 37:17-24) ensured the Tabernacle would best display this **divine glory**. The lampstand is highlighted, representing the constant presence of God (light) amidst His people (Exodus 35:14).
  - **The High Priest's Garments (39:1–31):** The detailed, glorious clothing of the high priest, including the breastpiece and ephod, indicates that the priests were to represent the glory of God before the people. The stones on the shoulders and breastpiece (39:6, 14) represent the tribes, symbolizing that God carries His people.
  - **The Bridge to Dedication:** The detailed assembly in Chapter 39 concludes with Moses inspecting and blessing the work (Exodus 39:43), a human parallel to God's evaluation of creation ("it was very good"). This sets the stage for the **Cloud and Glory** that eventually fill the space, signifying God's official move-in.
  - **Divine Approval:** The successful completion and subsequent cloud manifestation (40:34) validates that God accepts the worship and obedience of the people.
  - **Guidance:** The cloud over the tabernacle serves as a visible guide, representing God's presence directing their journey.

## 6. God's Glory Enters the Tabernacle (Chapter 40)

The book concludes with the completion of the sanctuary and God's glory filling the tent, though Moses is initially unable to enter due to the intensity of the divine presence. The chapter details the assembly, consecration, and the immediate descent of God's *Shekina* glory (cloud) to fill the tent, symbolizing His presence dwelling among Israel to guide their journey. The tabernacle is designed with "seven acts of speech" mirroring the seven days of creation. It serves as a "portable Eden" where God can again dwell among His people.

### ● **Instructions for Assembly and Consecration (v. 1-15)**

- **The Setting (v. 1-2):** On the first day of the first month, the tabernacle is to be erected. This signifies a new beginning for Israel.



- **Placement of Furniture (v. 3-8):** Moses is instructed to place the Ark of the Testimony inside the Holy of Holies, set up the veil, table, lampstand, altar of incense, and the court.
- **Consecration (v. 9-15):** The Tabernacle, its furniture, and the priests (Aaron and his sons) are to be anointed with oil to make them holy (set apart for God).
- **Obedience in Execution (v. 16-33)**
  - **Consistent Obedience (v. 16):** "Thus Moses did; according to all that the Lord commanded him, so he did." This phrase is repeated in various forms throughout the chapter.
  - **The Assembly (v. 17-30):** Moses sets up the structure, placing the Ark, table, lampstand, and altars in their precise, commanded positions.
  - **Final Touches (v. 31-33):** The laver is placed for washing, and the surrounding courtyard is finished, finalizing the "Tent of Meeting."
- **The Glory of God Fills the Tabernacle (v. 34-38)**
  - **The Cloud of Presence (v. 34-35):** The cloud covers the tent, and the *shekinah* glory of the Lord fills the tabernacle, so much so that Moses cannot enter. This shows God taking possession of His home.
  - **Guidance and Protection (v. 36-38):** The cloud becomes a divine signal. If the cloud lifts, Israel moves; if it rests, they stay. The cloud represents God's constant presence—by day a cloud, by night fire—throughout all their journeys.
- **Hermeneutics: Interpretation and Structure**
  - **The "As the Lord Commanded" Refrain:** The chapter repeatedly emphasizes that Moses obeyed all commands (repeated 19+ times in ch. 36-40), demonstrating that holy work must follow the divine pattern, not human innovation.
  - **Contextual Timing:** Set on the first day of the first month (v. 2), this date marks a new beginning, paralleling the creation of a new, sacred, ordered space.
  - **Typological Significance:** The Tabernacle is a "type" or shadow of Christ, representing God dwelling among humanity (Emmanuel—God with us).
  - **Literary Structure:** The chapter flows from the command to erect (vv. 1-11) to the execution by Moses (vv. 12-33) and finally to the divine endorsement of the cloud of glory (vv. 34-38).
- **Theology: Key Themes**
  - **The Dwelling of God (*Mishkan*):** The central theme is that God desires to live in the midst of His people, not just in the high heavens.
  - **Holiness and Consecration:** The Tabernacle and priests are anointed with oil, separating them from the profane to the sacred, enabling sinful humanity to approach a holy God.
  - **Worship and Service:** The arrangement highlights that worship is structured around God's presence (the Ark) and that service requires proper preparation (washing at the laver).
  - **Divine Guidance:** The cloud and fire demonstrate that Yahweh is both the protector and leader, managing the community's movements.
- **Theophany: The Manifestation of God**
  - **The Cloud of Glory (*Shekinah*):** A visible cloud covers the tent, and the *kavod* (glory/heavy weight) of the Lord fills the Tabernacle.
  - **Unapproachable Holiness:** The glory was so intense that even Moses could not enter the tent, highlighting the necessary mediation of the high priest and the holiness of the space.
  - **Continuous Presence:** The cloud by day and fire by night provided constant, visible reassurance and direction throughout their journey.

