



Idolatry and True Worship

Exodus 32:1 - 40:38

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Structure of Exodus¹²

- II. Israel's liberation chs. 1—18
 - A. Israel's affliction (Israel is Egypt's possession) 1:1—2:14
 - B. Deliverance 2:15—18:27
 - A Midian: Moses' commission 2:15—4:28
 - B Enemy: Egypt defeated 4:29—15:21
 - C Water: bitter to sweet and 12 springs 15:22-27
 - D Food: manna and quail ch. 16**
 - C' Water: out of rock 17:1-7
 - B' Enemy: Amalek defeated 17:8-16
 - A' Midian: Moses accepts wisdom ch. 18
- II. Israel's adoption chs. 19—40
 - A Covenant delivered 19:1—24:11
 - B Tabernacle planned 24:12—27:21
 - C Priestly instructions chs. 28—30
 - D Craftsmen's direction 31:1-11
 - E Sabbath instructions 31:12-18
 - F Covenant broken ch. 32**
 - F' Covenant renewed chs. 33—34**
 - E' Sabbath reminded 35:1-3
 - D' Craftsmen and construction 35:4—38:31
 - C' Priests prepared ch. 39
 - B' Tabernacle completed 40:1-33
 - A' Covenant sealed 40:34-38

Covenant Broken-Covenant Renewed

Main theme of the first 18 chapters of Exodus, was to teach Israel to know and trust YHWH to be their redeemer, deliverer, healer and provider. The second half was to teach Israel to trust YHWH's covenant. The fundamental issue is true and false worship. Will Israel be faithful to the first four of the Ten Words: You shall have no other gods before me. (20:1-11) They break them all.

The instructions on tabernacle and priesthood are to be contrasted with the idolatrous worship of the golden-calf.

¹² Constable, Thomas, Notes on Exodus: 2013 Edition (Sonic Light Publishing, 2013) pgs. 4-5.



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How to Build the Tabernacle

The Ark of the Covenant and its Cover

“There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.”

—Exodus 25:22

The Ark of the Covenant is the most sacred and central piece of furniture for the Tabernacle. It was about 3 ½ feet long, 2 ½ feet in both width and height. It had poles to enable it to be transported without being touched lest a person die (see 2 Sam. 6, 1 Chron. 13). The inside of the ark will contain the covenant.



The cover of the ark (Heb. kapporet) has two cherubim made of gold who will shield the cover with their wings. The lid is sometimes called the mercy seat, or atonement cover because of the Blood it will receive on the day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). The word is also similar to the Egyptian word pronounced “kappuriet” which means “the sole of the foot”. The cover is the divine footstool of God--the place to meet YHWH. (1 Chronicles 28:2, Pss. 99:5, 132:7; Isa.60:13 “I will glorify the place of my feet”)

Later an incredible “new covenant” promise in the Book of Jeremiah 3:16-17, all of Jerusalem becomes the place of meeting:

And when you have multiplied and been fruitful in the land, in those days, declares the LORD, they shall no more say, “The ark of the covenant of the LORD.” It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed; it shall not be made again. ¹⁷ At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart.



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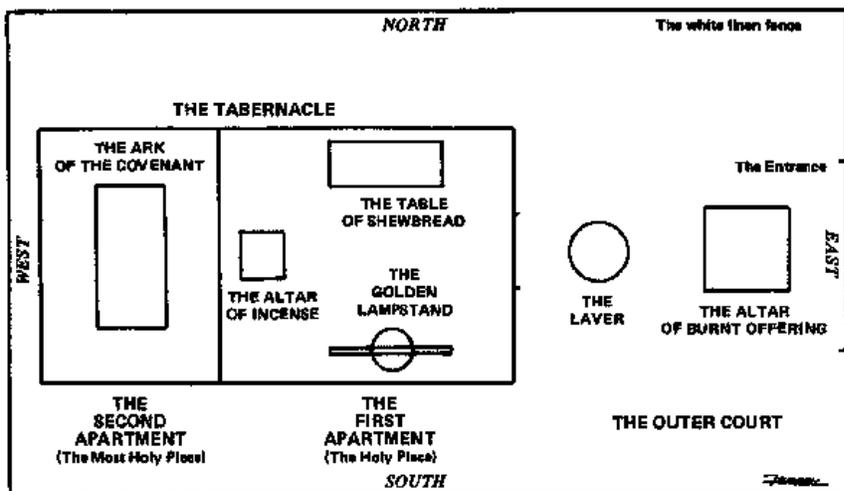
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Other Furniture

- The Table
- The Lampstand
- The Altar of Burnt Offering
- The Altar of Incense
- The Bronze Laver

The Structure

Detailed instructions are given for: The Veil and Curtain before the Holy Place, The Curtains of the Tabernacle, The Framework, The Courtyard.



Vestments

Specific instructions are given for Priestly Vestments: Ephod, Breast pieces, Other Vestments

Tabernacle Artisans

The first place in the Scriptures that it says that someone was “filled” with the Holy Spirit is in reference to the artisans of the Tabernacle. The men were specifically called by YHWH and vested with unique wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and ability for the task of designing and building the Tabernacle and all of its instruments. (31:1-11)



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Instructions for Worship

God provides detailed instructions for the ordination of the priests to serve at the altar. Everything has clear and specific instructions such as: Oil for the Lamps, Atonement Money, The Anointing Oil, Recipe for Incense, and Guarding the Sabbath.

The overarching concern with all of these instructions is “covenant faithfulness” in worship of YHWH. God is setting apart his people to be a “Holy Nation” and his worship as their Holy, Holy, Holy God: You shall keep my Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death.” (31:14)

The covenant given to Moses on Mount Sinai was signed and sealed by YHWH himself:

And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.—Exodus 31:18

Covenant Broken

Golden Calf Story Literary Structure¹³

- A People act, and Aaron (YHWH's High Priest) reacts. (32:1-6)
- B YHWH's two utterances: YHWH spoke, YHWH said (32:7-10)
- C Moses intercedes (32:11-14)
 - D Moses goes down the mountain (32:15-20)
 - E Judgment: investigative phase (32:21-25)
 - F Opportunity for repentance (32:26a)
 - E'. Judgment: executive phase (32:26b-29)
 - D'. Moses goes up the mountain (32:30)
 - C'. Moses intercedes (32:31-32)
- B'. YHWH's two utterances: YHWH said, YHWH spoke (32:33-33:3)
- A'. YHWH acts, and People react. (33:4-6)

¹³ Hendrix, Ralph E. “A Literary Structural Analysis of the Golden-Calf Episode in Exodus 32:1-33:6”, Andrews University Seminary Studies. Autumn 1990. Vol. 28, No. 3, 211-217



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Impatience

The reason the narrative gives for the people's action in fashioning of a Golden-Calf idol is that "Moses delayed to come down from the mountain" (32:1) Indeed, the people are often impatient with YHWH's timing and provision of Manna, Quail and Water. Here they grow impatient with YHWH and his appointed mediator, Moses.

When Moses confronts Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?" He hears:

32:22 "Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. ²³ For they said to me, 'Make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' ²⁴ So I said to them, 'Let any who have gold take it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."



Adoration of the Golden Calf
-- Nicolas Poussin, National Gallery, London

"And out came this calf"... Hmm. Aaron paints himself as a passive victim of the people's whims rather than a responsible leader who in 32:2-6 was the one who "said "take off your gold", received the gold, fashioned the gold into a calf with a "graving tool", built an altar, and made a proclamation to feast!

The Intercession of Moses

The response of YHWH to the golden calf is indignation. He purposes to Moses a desire to entirely "consume" the Israelites in burning hot wrath with Moses alone left to reconstitute a faithful nation.

Like Abraham's plea for mercy for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, Moses appeals to the reputation of YHWH in the world and the remembrance of his covenant. Moses understands the heart of YHWH: he wants to be gloriously known by the peoples of the world and he keeps his covenant promises.

With Moses intercession, YHWH relents. How should this episode instruct us on how to pray and interceded for others?



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Indictment and Judgment

While the Lord relented from “the disaster he had spoken of bringing on his people”, there was still to be a grave consequence for the violation. Moses faithfully represented the wrath of God, by breaking the two stone tablets of the Covenant.

He then destroyed and crushed the calf and made the people drink it. He interrogated Aaron and then gave the people an opportunity to return to the Lord with the key turning point question at the center of this narrative:

“Who is on the Lord’s side? Come to me.”
—Exodus 32:26

“But now if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.”

—Exodus 32:32

Those who came would be the “sons of Levi”. They then became the executors of judgment on their “brothers, companions and neighbors.” 3,000 men of the people fell that day at the swords of the sons of Levi.

Moses again made intercession for the people, offering his own life in substitution for the lives of his people. The judgment would be complete after the Lord’s visitation of his people. Only the day of his visitation would be a day of judgment: “I will visit my sin upon them. Then the LORD sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one Aaron made.” (32:34-35)

Repentance and Mercy

The Lord commands Moses to lead the people to the Promised land without him. One of the tensions throughout the story is “to whom does the nation of Israel belong”. For time it seemed that YHWH was prepared to give them to Moses!

The repentance of the Israelites in “stripping themselves” of their ornaments was helpful for reconciling the relationship with God. However, the key was in the relationship between YHWH and Moses.

At the “tent of meeting” YHWH would speak to Moses “face to face as a man speaks to his friend”. (33:11) This relationship proves to be the heart of the reconciliation between YHWH and his People



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The Presence and the Face

Would YHWH lead his people and dwell in their midst? The golden-calf was a severe setback. Moses is persistent in preserving the relationship with the Lord.

Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.” –Exodus 33:13

Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

--2 Cor. 3:15-18

The humble intercession would be met with a glorious moment for Moses. YHWH would reveal his glory not in its fullness but in its “goodness”. (33:19) Glory is the visible manifestation of the nature and attributes of God. As YHWH passes before YHWH his nature and attributes are revealed:

⁵ The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. ⁶ The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” –Exodus 34:6-7

God renews his covenant with Israel and a new set of Tablets inscribed with the Ten Words are given. Moses made the tablets, YHWH inscribed the Words. (34:28)

From that point forward, whenever Moses would come out from the Tent of Meeting his face would shine with the reflected Glory of the Lord. It was so bright that a veil had to be placed over it so they he could speak the word of the Lord to the people without their fear of coming near him. (34:29-35)



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And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. —John 1:14

The Offering of the Tabernacle

The tabernacle construction was truly a labor of love for the Lord—it was called a “freewill offering”. The people contributed all of the gold, jewels and other materials, as their “hearts stirred them” and the “spirit moved them” and they had a “willing heart”. The offering was so bounteous that the craftsmen were overwhelmed with abundance of materials. The people literally had to be “restrained from bringing” (36:6) any more material “for they had what was sufficient to do the work, and more.” (36:7)

The Glory of the Lord

The Book of Exodus ends on a glorious note! With the faithful completion of all of YHWH’s instructions for building and assembly of the Tabernacle, “Moses finished the work.” (40:33) Israel would now be on the march toward the Promise Land—with the Presence and Glory of the Lord leading them and dwelling in their midst. They had learned that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. They had learned to trust the Word of the Lord as it was given through Moses. They had learned to be humble and wait on the Lord.

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. ³⁷ But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys. —Exodus 40:34-38
