

way, Moses was protected by God from God. It is important to see this because people often think of 'being under the shadow of God's hand' as an image of comfort for the trials of life. Certainly, the Bible uses the image this way. However, here in Exodus 33, the protection which God affords is protection from the greatness of His own glory. In the Bible we see God working out a way of salvation that allows us to know Him without being destroyed. We need His protection not because of any deficiency in God, but because of His absolute perfection. The glory of God is more than any mortal can bear." (Ryken, p. 1035)



"I Will Cover You With My Hand" - Larson

The verb *"passes by"* further emphasizes the limited, transitory nature of the encounter. This verb occurs twice in the Book of Exodus. In the first instance, God had warned Moses that He *"will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn - both men and animals - and I will bring judgement on all the land of Egypt. I am the Lord."* (Exodus 12:12) His passing by was an act of judgement, after Pharaoh had hardened his heart and refused to allow the Children of Israel to leave his country. In this case, God's passing by Moses upon the mountain will be an act of gracious condescension to strengthen and renew the faith of His prophet for the task ahead. The same verb is used in 1 Kings 19:11 to describe the prophet Elijah's encounter with the Lord upon Mount Sinai in similar circumstances: *"The Lord said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord for the Lord is about to pass by.'" The renown medieval rabbi Maimonides particularly noted the covenant significance of God's language in the aftermath of the radical disruption of that covenant by the people's flagrant idolatry. The passing by of the severed sacrificial animals was the ritual seal of the commitment between the parties to the covenant. Thus, when God proclaimed the impending destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, He specifically referred to this ancient ritual to emphasize the unfaithfulness and deceit of His apostate nation:*

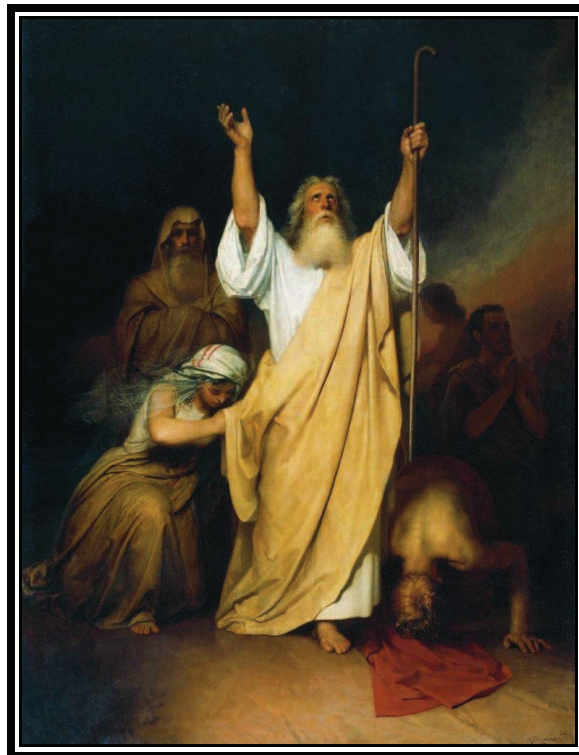
"The men who have violated My covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before Me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces. The leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the court officials, the priests and all the

people of the land who walked between the pieces of the calf, I will hand over to their enemies who seek their lives. Their dead bodies will become food for the birds of the air and beasts of the earth.” (Jeremiah 34:18-20; cf. Genesis 15:17)

In this context the manifestation of God and his passing before the figure of Moses as the representative of the people was actually a ceremony which signaled the renewal of the covenant between God and Israel.

“Then I will remove My hand and you will see My back, but My face must not be seen.” -The use of language which describes human physiology continued with God’s indication that as He passed by the prophet in the cleft of the rock He would allow Moses to view ***“My back.”*** Gregory of Nazianzus, 4th Century orthodox bishop and theologian, an ardent defender of the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity and the divine and human natures of Christ, explains the distinction between the face and the back in this imagery as an allusion the essential mysteries of God’s nature and that which God has revealed to us about Himself in His works, most prominently in the incarnation of Jesus Christ:

“What is this that has happened to me, O friends and initiates and fellow lovers of the Truth? I was running to lay hold on God, and thus I went up into the mount and drew aside the curtain of the cloud, and entered away from matter and material things. And, as far as I could, I withdrew within myself. And then, when I looked up, I scarce saw the back parts of God, although I was sheltered by the Rock, the Word that was made flesh for us. And when I looked a little closer, I saw not the first and unmingled nature known to itself - to the Trinity, I mean; not that which abides within the first veil and is hidden by the cherubim; but only that nature which, at last, reaches only to us. And that is, as far as I can learn, the majesty, or as holy David calls it, the glory which is manifested among the creatures, which it produced and governs. For these are the back parts of God which He leaves behind Him as tokens of Himself; like the shadows and reflection of the sun in the water, which show the sun to our weak eyes, because He is too strong for our power of perception.” (Lienhardt, p. 152)



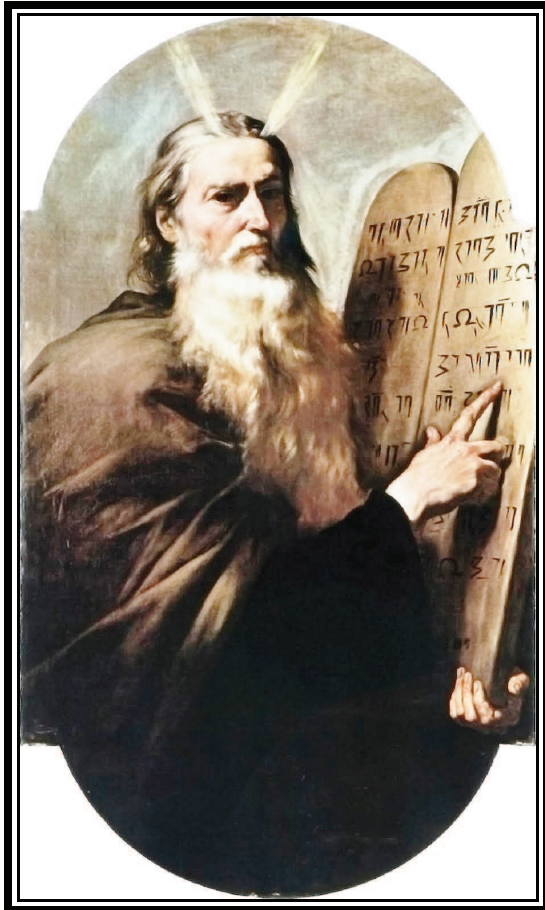
“Moses Interceding For The People



“Moses Receiving the Restored Ten Commandments”

Exodus Chapter 34

(1) The Lord said to Moses: “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets that you broke.” (2) Be readu in the morning, and come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to Me there on top of the mountain. (3) No one is to come with you or be seen anywhere on the mountain; not even the flocks and herds may graze in front of the mountain.” (4) So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning as the Lord had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. (5) Then the Lord came down in the cloud, and stood there with him, and proclaimed His Name, the LORD. (6) And He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, (7) maintaining loves to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin; yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.” (8) Moses bowed down to the ground and worshiped. (9) “O Lord, if I have found favor in Your eyes,” he said, “then let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin and take us as Your inheritance.” (10) Then the Lord said, “I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all



“The Radiant Moses With The Restored Ten Commandments”

the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the LORD, will do for you. (11) Obey what I command you today. I will drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perrizites, Hivites and Jebusites. (12) Be careful not to make a treaty with those in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you. (13) Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles. (14) Do not worship any other gods, for the LORD whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (15) Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land, for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices. (16) And when you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons, and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same. (17) Do not make cast idols. (18) Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days eat bread made without yeast as I commanded you. Do this in the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in that month you came out of Egypt. (19) The first offspring of every womb

belongs to Me, including the firstborn males of your livestock, whether from herd or flock. (20) Redeem the firstborn donkey with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem all your firstborn sons. No one is to appear before me empty-handed. (21) Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the plowing season and the harvest, you must rest. (22) Celebrate the Feast of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering and the turn of the year. (23) Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel. (24) I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your territory, and no one will covet your land when you go up three times each year to appear before the LORD your God. (25) Do not offer a sacrifice to Me with anything containing yeast, and do not let anything of the sacrifice from the Passover Feast remain until the morning. (26) Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the House of the LORD your God. Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.” (27) Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.” (28) Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant - the Ten Commandments. (29) When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the

LORD. (30) *When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant and they were afraid to come near him. (31) But Moses called to them, so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. (32) Afterwards, all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai. (33) When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. (34) But whenever he entered the LORD's presence to speak with Him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, (35) they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak to the LORD.*

Verses 1-3

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words which were on the first tablets, which you broke. Be ready in the morning and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to Me on top of the mountain. No one is to come with you or be seen anywhere on the mountain; not even the flocks and herds may graze in front of the mountain.’”

“The Lord said to Moses...” - The Lord's agreement with Moses' requests for an affirmation of his leadership of the people and increased knowledge of the Lord and His will in Chapter 33 had indicated His willingness to forgive the sins of the people and restore the covenant which their idolatry had broken. That consent assumes the genuine contrition and repentance of a chastened and fearful Israel for their sins.

“Since complete forgiveness had been attained, it is now possible to renew the covenant that had been broken by the peoples' guilt; and together with the renewal of the covenant there would take place the revelation promised to Moses - the revelation of God's attributes insofar as a human being could comprehend them.” (Cassutto, p. 437)

God now proceeds to carry out the actions which will implement His decision. The first and most obvious of those actions is the replacement of the tablets of the Ten Commandments, thereby reaffirming and reinstating the His covenant with the Children of Israel.

“The sin of the people has been forgiven and Yahweh has promised that His presence shall go with them. More than this Israel could not need...A covenant having been formed and based upon laws given earlier in the book, and then having been broken by sin, all that can conceivably be required is repentance and forgiveness. The originally given covenant laws must unalterably hold good.” (Houtmann, p. 216)

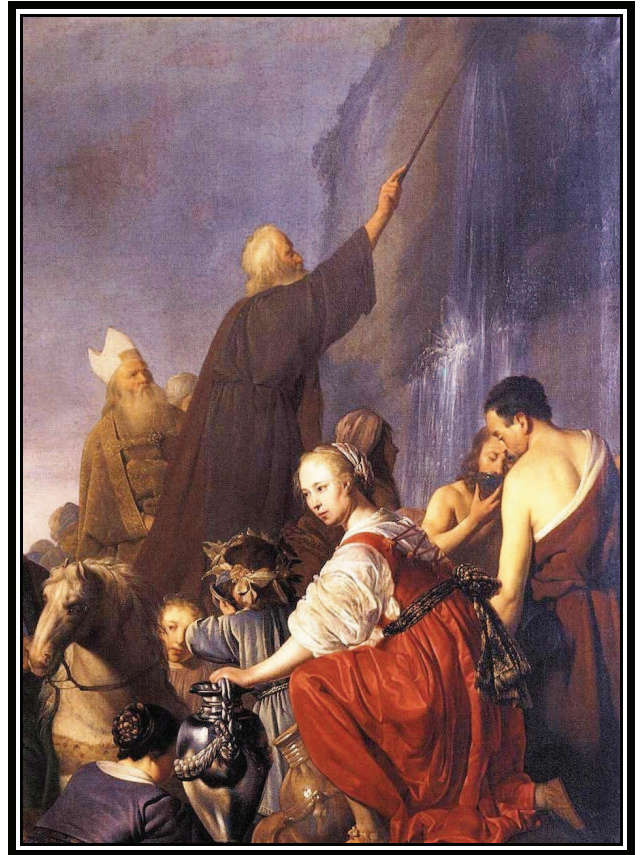
As had been the case with the original stone tablets, the commandments would be engraved into the stone by God Himself, thereby insuring their accuracy and authenticity. The

presumption is that once again, in accordance with typical Near Eastern practice, there are two tablets each of which contain all ten of the commandments - one copy for each of the two parties to the covenant.

“As logic dictates from our understanding of how covenants worked, the tablets were again both complete copies of the Ten Words/Commandments (not five on one tablet and five on the other), with one tablet representing the sovereign’s copy (God’s) and the other representing the vassal’s (Israel’s) copy.” (Stuart, p. 712)

Both the Lord’s copy and Israel’s copy of the covenant document will be kept in the sacred Ark of the Covenant, within the Tabernacle’s Holy of Holies. This crucial role for the Ark also explains its designation as the Ark *“of the Covenant”* in that the official covenant documents were stored within it.

God’s specific reference to Moses’ action in smashing the original tablets when he had come upon the idolatry of the Golden Calf - *“the first tablets which you broke”* - is in no way to be viewed as a reprimand of Moses’ action. Rather God’s words here are an affirmation of His prophet’s angry response to the people’s idolatry. The inclusion of these words is designed to emphasize that the covenant had not merely been violated in some limited way. Turning to the worship of another god had actually broken the covenant, severing the relationship between God and the people at the very moment when that relationship was being formalized. These events will actually constitute *“the reinstatement of the covenant.”* The details which follow in this introductory segment are designed to emphasize that fact and the gravity of the moment. Nahum Sarna notes the deliberate parallels in the language of Chapters 19-20 which narrated the original establishment of the covenant and that of Chapter 34 which now describes the re-institution of the covenant which Israel had destroyed. These parallels are meticulously designed to teach the significance of Israel’s sin and the grace of God in permitting the covenant to be restored in the aftermath of that sin:



“Moses Carving Out The Tablets of Stone”



***“Moses The Mediator Between God And Israel
Foreshadowing The Messiah As The Ultimate
Mediator between God and Mankind”***

“Having been assured of a private manifestation of the Divine Presence, Moses is instructed to prepare for the experience which actually constitutes the reinstatement of the covenant. This is underscored by several points of contact between this narrative and the account of the original theophany at Sinai: the shattered tablets which once testified to the reality of the covenant are to be replaced; the original text to be incised upon them is to be reproduced; Moses is told to ‘be ready’ by morning, just as the people had been ordered to ‘be ready’ for the occasion (19:11,15); access to the mountain is severely restricted in both experiences (34:3; 19:11,35); the Lord again ‘comes down’ upon Sinai (34:5; 19:9,18,20); and the event evokes such fear that the people back away (34:30; 20:15-18).” (Sarna, p. 215)

In this setting, Moses’ action in destroying the covenant documents - as he gazed in rage upon the revelries of Israel before their new God - ***“These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt!”*** (Exodus 32:8) - were not only appropriate but absolutely necessary. He responded as he should have to the flagrant repudiation of God’s gracious love in establishing a covenant with this nation of stiff-necked ungrateful sinners.

There is a difference this time, however, in that God Himself provided the original tablets (cf. Exodus 24:12; 32:16), while in this case Moses is instructed to carve out the tablets himself. The most common assumption among commentators is that this shift is designed to enhance the status of Moses in the process. *“Here He delegates the carving to Moses while He reserves the inscribing for Himself. That*



“Moses Destroying The Tablets Of The Law Before the Golden Calf”

Moses is invited to participate in such a task is a testimony to his invaluable role and ministry in leading Israel through these uncertain times.” (Hamilton, p. 575)

“Be ready in the morning and then come up on Mount Sinai.” - The Lord’s instruction that Moses is to delay his approach to the mountain until the following day serves the practical purpose of providing time for him to carve out the tablets upon which the Ten Commandments will be incised. At the same time, as noted above, it parallels the instruction of the original institution of the covenant, and gives Moses the opportunity for his own spiritual preparation in fasting and prayer, to stand in the holy presence of the Lord. This is not a task to be undertaken casually!

“Present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain.” - The wording of the Lord’s command suggests a pattern of activity with which Moses is already familiar. Its intent, no doubt, is to signal that the prophet is to return to the same place on Sinai’s crest where he had previously encountered the Lord: *“Moses was to go where he usually went and wait for the cloud of Yahweh’s glory to appear to him and envelop him as it had done in the past, and would do again.”* (Stuart, p. 713)

“No one is to come with you or be seen anywhere....” - The requirement of maintaining the holiness of Mount Sinai is significantly more stringent in this instance. In the previous instance Aaron had accompanied his brother onto the mountain (Exodus 19:24). This time he is not included, most probably as a rebuke for his despicable involvement in the apostasy of the Golden Calf. To lend particular emphasis to the holiness of God’s presence, the Lord also requires that none of the flocks and herds are to be allowed anywhere in the vicinity of Sinai lest they wander onto sacred ground. The NIV’s translation **“in front of the mountain”** would more accurately be translated as *“in the vicinity of the mountain.”* In the aftermath of the people’s sin, this strong emphasis on the holiness of God is most appropriate and necessary.



“The Glory of the Lord Upon Mount Sinai” by Jean Gerome

Verses 4-7

“So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones, and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning as the LORD had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed His name, the LORD, and He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The LORD, the LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet, He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children and their children for the sin of their fathers to the third and fourth generation.’”

“So Moses chiseled out the two stone tablets like the first ones...” - Moses carefully complied with the instructions which the Lord had given. The stone tablets were prepared and as the sun rose the following day he approached the mountain with the tablets in his hands and began his ascent. No doubt, the eyes of the Children of Israel throughout the vast encampment followed his every movement as their leader approach the swirling cloud of fire which enveloped the crest of the mountain. As these events unfolded before them, the Hebrews were learning a profoundly important lesson about the nature of the God who had chosen them to be His own. He was a holy and righteous God. His furious reaction to their sin had demonstrated that righteousness. The blood of thousands of their kinsmen which stained the ground where the idol had stood demonstrated that righteousness. The necessity of the impassioned pleas for forgiveness which Moses their leader had prayed before Him demonstrated that righteousness. But at the same time, He was also a God of gracious love. He had forgiven their sin although they did not deserve that forgiveness. Justice would have resulted in the extermination of the entire nation. But Yahweh had forgiven them! Now He was graciously re-establishing His covenant of love with them and they would be His people once again. Law and Gospel - the core message of Holy Scripture, was demonstrated here at Mount Sinai with unmistakable and wonderful clarity!



Thus the tablets could now be restored. The Lubavitcher Rebbe's Exodus Commentary sums up Orthodox Judaism's perversion of the text in this way:

“God said to Moses, ‘You shattered the original tablets because you assumed that the people were an unfaithful wife, and you wanted to destroy the marriage contract. I commend you for doing this. But now that it has been found that the fault was with the mixed multitude, rather than the wife, it is time to restore the tablets’... God commended Moses for shattering the tablets because Moses understood them to be the wedding contract that implicated

the Israelites in being unfaithful to their husband, God. Moses surely appreciated the tablets awesome spiritual value ... Moses had himself received them directly from God's hand. Yet when he saw that they posed a danger to the Jewish people, he did not hesitate to take action. Only a small minority, the most depraved among them had sinned. ... This ultimate act of self-sacrifice expresses the depth of Moses' love for each and every Jew." (Lubavitcher Rebbe, p. 259)

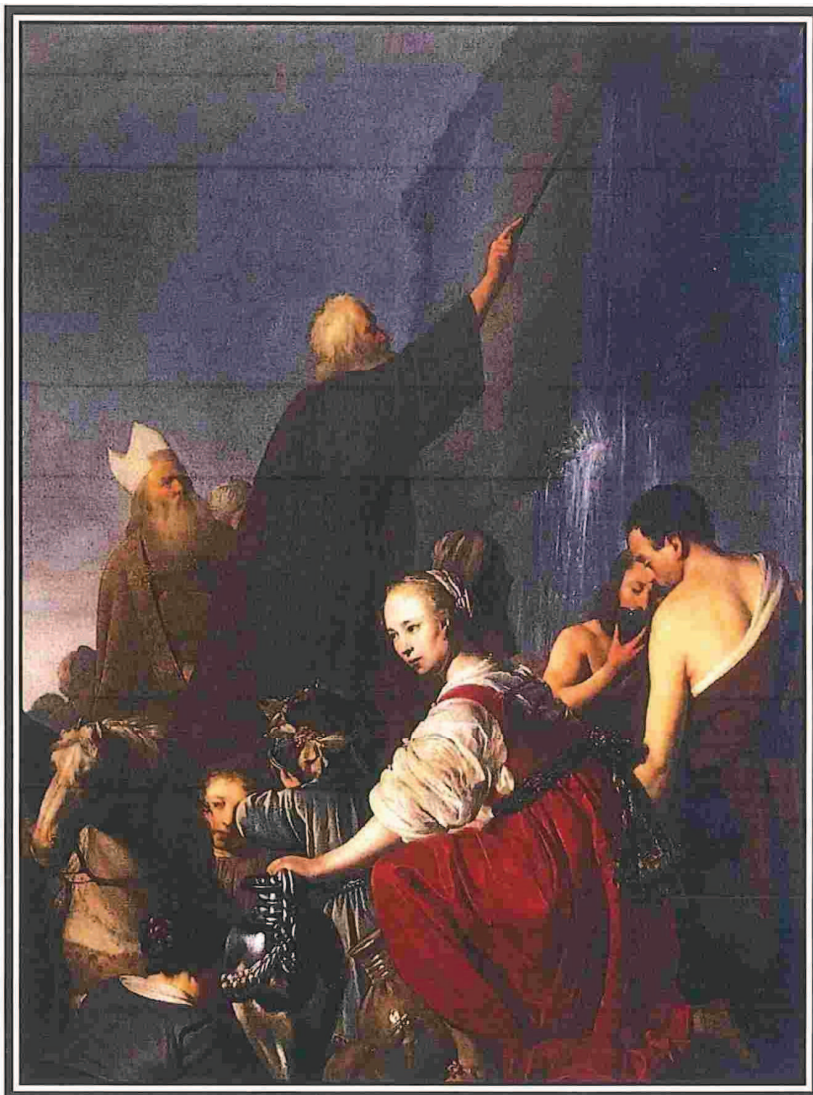
The Orthodox further teach that Moses' tent outside the camp had been pitched over a lode of priceless sapphire. God instructed him to carve the new tablets from the sapphire and keep whatever was left over for himself. Thus did the family of Moses become fabulously wealthy as the reward for his zeal in protecting the nation of Israel. *"The physical wealth Moses accrued from the lode of sapphire under his tent is referred to as the 'leftovers' of the tablets."* (Lubavitcher Rebbe, p. 259)

While there are many similarities between the two accounts, there is, however, one significant difference in the preparation of the tablets the second time. God Himself had provided the original tablets (cf. Exodus 24:12; 32:16), while in this case, Moses is instructed to carve out the tablets himself. The most common conclusion among commentators is that this digression was intended to enhance the status of Moses as God's personal representative in the process of covenant establishment. *"Here, He delegates the carving to Moses, while He reserves the inscribing for Himself. That Moses is invited to participate in such a task is a testimony to his invaluable role and ministry in leading Israel through these uncertain times."* (Hamilton, p. 575)

"Be ready in the morning and then come up on Mount Sinai." - The Lord's instruction that Moses is to delay his approach to the mountain until the following day serves the practical purpose of providing time for him to carve out the two tablets upon which the Ten Commandments will be incised. At the same time, as previously noted, it parallels the instruction of the original institution of the covenant and allows Moses the opportunity for his own spiritual preparation in fasting and prayer to stand in the holy presence of the Lord. This is not a task to be undertaken casually. As Israel observed this careful sequence of events, the profound importance of that which was taking place would be impressed upon them.

"Present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain." - The wording of the Lord's command suggests a pattern of activity with which Moses is already familiar. Its intent, no doubt, is to signal that the prophet is to return to the same location on Sinai's crest where he had previously encountered the Lord. "Moses was to go where he usually went and wait for the cloud of Yahweh's glory to appear to him and envelop him as it had done in the past, and would do again." (Stuart, p. 713) This deliberate repetition would also serve as a signal to anxious Israel that their relationship with the Lord had indeed been restored to that which it had been before their idolatry.

“No one is to come with you or be seen anywhere ...” - The divine requirement of maintaining the holiness of Mount Sinai is significantly more stringent in this instance. In the previous episode, Aaron had accompanied his brother onto the mountain (Exodus 19:24). This time Aaron is not included, most probably as a rebuke for his despicable involvement as a leader in the apostasy of the Golden Calf. To lend particular emphasis to the sanctity of God’s presence upon the mountain, the Lord also requires that none of the flocks or herds are to allowed to graze anywhere in the vicinity of Sinai lest they wander onto sacred ground. The NIV’s translation ***“in front of the mountain”*** restricts the sense of the Hebrew and should more accurately be translated “anywhere near the mountain.” In the aftermath of the people’s sin, this strong emphasis upon the holiness of God is most appropriate and necessary.



***“Moses Carving The Stone Tablets”
by Grebber***

Verses 4-7

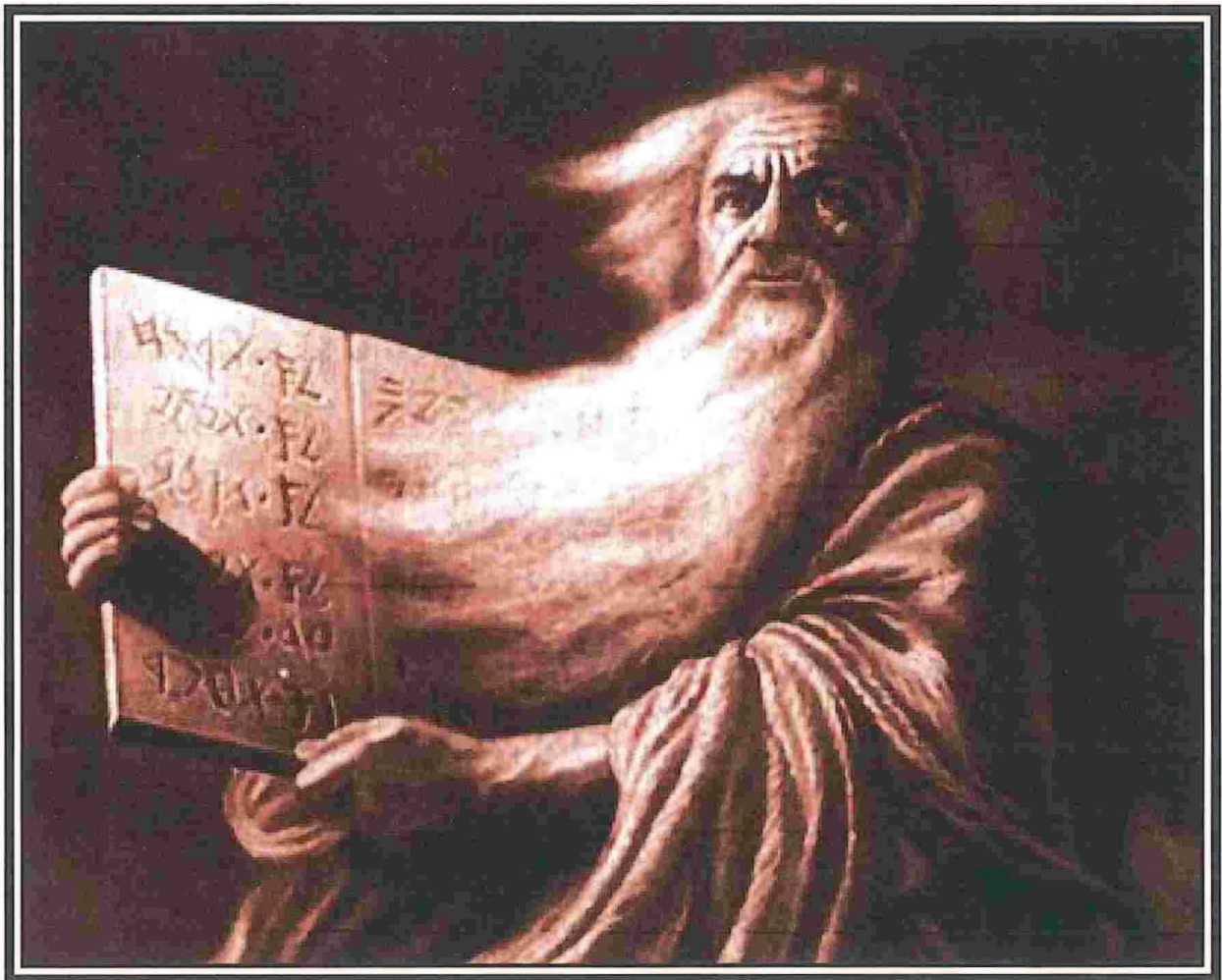
“So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones, and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning as the Lord had commanded him; and he carried to two stone tablets in his hands. Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed His Name, the LORD, and He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children and their children for the sin of their fathers to the third and fourth generation.’”



“Moses And Aaron With the Tablets Of The Law”

“So Moses chiseled out the two stone tablets like the first ones ...” - Moses carefully complied with the instructions which the Lord had given. The stone tablets were prepared. No details are provided as to the type of stone that was chosen or the size and shape of the tablets. They must, however, have been large enough for the Ten Commandments to have been chiseled upon them and small enough for one man to carry. As the sun rose on the following day, Moses approached the Mountain with the tablets in his hands and began his ascent. No doubt, the eyes of the Children of Israel throughout the vast encampment followed his every movement as the man who would represent them before God approached the swirling cloud of fire which enveloped the crest of Sinai and then disappeared into the fiery cloud. As these events unfolded before them, the Hebrews were learning a profoundly important lesson about the nature of the God who had chosen them to be His own. He was a holy and righteous God. His furious reaction to their sin had demonstrated that righteousness. The blood of thousands of their kinsmen which stained the dark ground where the idol had stood demonstrated that righteousness. But at the same time, He was a God of gracious love. He had forgiven their sin although they did not deserve that forgiveness. Justice would have resulted in the extermination of the entire nation. But Yahweh had forgiven them! Now He was graciously re-establishing His covenant of love with them, and they would be His people once again. Law and Gospel - the core message of Holy Scripture was revealed here at Mount Sinai with unmistakable and wonderful clarity.

“Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed His Name ...” - The visible presence of the Lord upon the mountain prepares for the theophany which Moses had requested and makes the encounter visible to those in the camp below. Three verbs express the actions of the Lord – *“came down,” “stood there”* and *“proclaimed.”* The presence of the fiery cloud had also characterized Moses previous visit to the mountain top. In this instance the fact that *“The Lord came down in the cloud”* would appear to suggest a more local presence at the place previously designated where Moses would be concealed within the cleft in the rock. That impression is reinforced by the second phrase *“and stood there with him”* which clearly indicates that these words are describing the fulfillment of the Lord’s promised self-disclosure. The specific method of His manifestation is difficult to define.



“Moses With the Restored Tablets of the Law”

“The language ‘came down. ... and stood’ represents a standard way of describing what otherwise is not easily comprehended by humans, that is, that God manifested Himself specially and personally in Moses’ presence. Thereby Moses could perceive that a real personal being had come to him, and not just a concept, or a feeling, or a numinous impression. As before, He employed a cloud (not just any but the cloud of His glory) as the visible part of the manifestation.” (Stuart, p. 714)



“The Devout Jew Praying In a Tallit And Wearing Tefillin On His Arms And

The rabbis are much more specific in their characterization of the appearance of God before Moses upon Mount Sinai. He appeared, they insist in the traditional garb of Judaism: *“God passed by before him as an image of a man cloaked in a tallit and wearing tefillin.”* The *“tallit”* is the white prayer shawl with black stripes with elaborate fringe. The *“tefillin”* are the small boxes containing texts from the Torah which are attached by leather stripes to the arms and the forehead of the orthodox during prayer. In this way the rabbis depict God as a devout practitioner of their own religion. It would be comparable, for example, for the Roman Catholic to argue that God appeared to Moses in the vestments of the pope.

“And proclaimed the Name of the LORD.” - These verses constitute God’s response to Moses’ prayers that he be allowed to *“know”* God’s ways and *“behold”* His presence (Exodus 33:13,18). In his classic (1908)

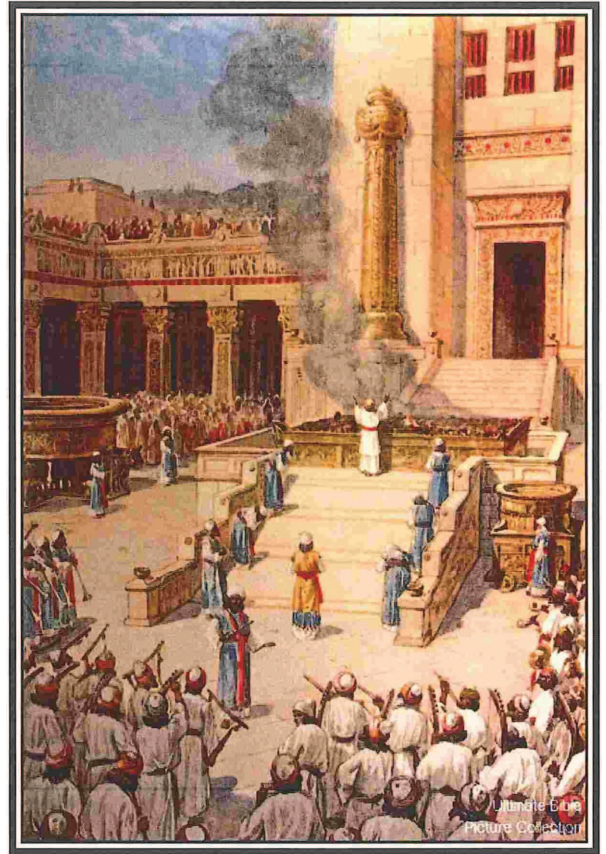
commentary on the Book of Exodus, A.H. McNeile declares that these words constitute the foremost expression of the nature of God which has ever been written, either in Holy Scripture or the entirety of human literature. *“This description of the divine character and its correlation of mercy and justice is unsurpassed in literature.”* (McNeile, p. 217) The echoes of these majestic words reverberate throughout the Old Testament. Moses repeats them almost verbatim in Numbers 14 as he pleads with the Lord yet again to spare rebellious Israel after their panicked response to the spies report of the strength of the Canaanites:

“Now may the Lord’s strength be displayed, just as You have declared: ‘The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion.’

Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.’ In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.”
(Numbers 14:17-19)

When good King Hezekiah cleansed and rededicated the Temple in Jerusalem, he also recalled the words of God’s self-disclosure to Moses:

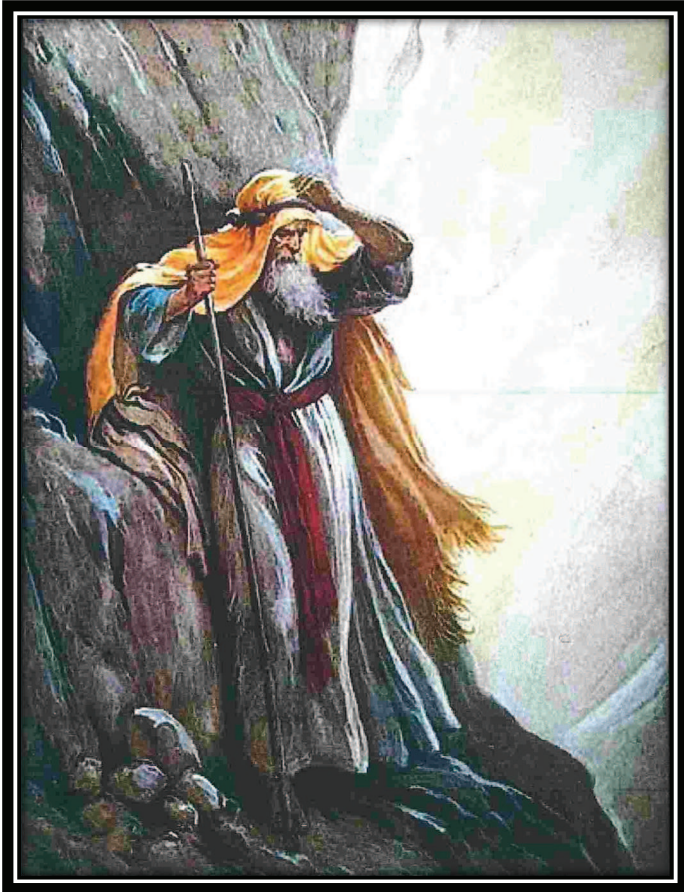
“People of Israel, return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that He may return to those of you who are left, who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. Do not be like your fathers and brothers, who were unfaithful to the Lord, the God of their fathers, so that he made them an object of horror, as you see. Do not be stiff-necked as your fathers were. Return to the Lord. Come to the sanctuary which He has consecrated forever. Serve the Lord your God so that His fierce anger will turn away from you. If you return to the Lord, then your brothers and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will come back to this land, for the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn His face from you if you return to Him.” (2 Chronicles 30:6-9)



“King Hezekiah Rededicating The Temple”

Nehemiah made effective use of these words when he called his people to dedicate themselves to the reconstruction of Jerusalem after their return from the Babylonian captivity:

“Stand up and praise the Lord your God who is from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be Your glorious Name and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry hosts, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything and the multitudes of heaven worship you. You are the Lord God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, and named him Abraham. You found his heart faithful to You, and You made a covenant with him to give his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizites, Jebusites, and Grigashites. You have kept Your promise because You are



“The Lord Passing By Moses Upon The Mountain”

righteous... But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked and did not obey Your commands. They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles You performed among them. They became stiff-necked and, in their rebellion, appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore, You did not desert them, even when they cast for themselves the image of a calf.” (Nehemiah 9:5-8, 16-18)

The Psalmists frequently repeated this language in their characterizations of God and His divine nature as they sing His praises and rejoice in His wondrous mercy and grace. *“But You, O Lord, are a compassionate and a gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness.”* (Psalm 86:15)

“The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His deed to the people of Israel. The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever; He does not treat us as our sins deserve, or repay us according to our iniquities.” (Psalm 103:6-12)

“Great are the works of the Lord. Glorious and majestic are His deeds, and His righteousness endures forever. He has caused His wonders to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and compassionate ... The works of His hands are faithful and just; all His precepts are trustworthy. They are steadfast forever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness.” (Psalm 111:2-8)

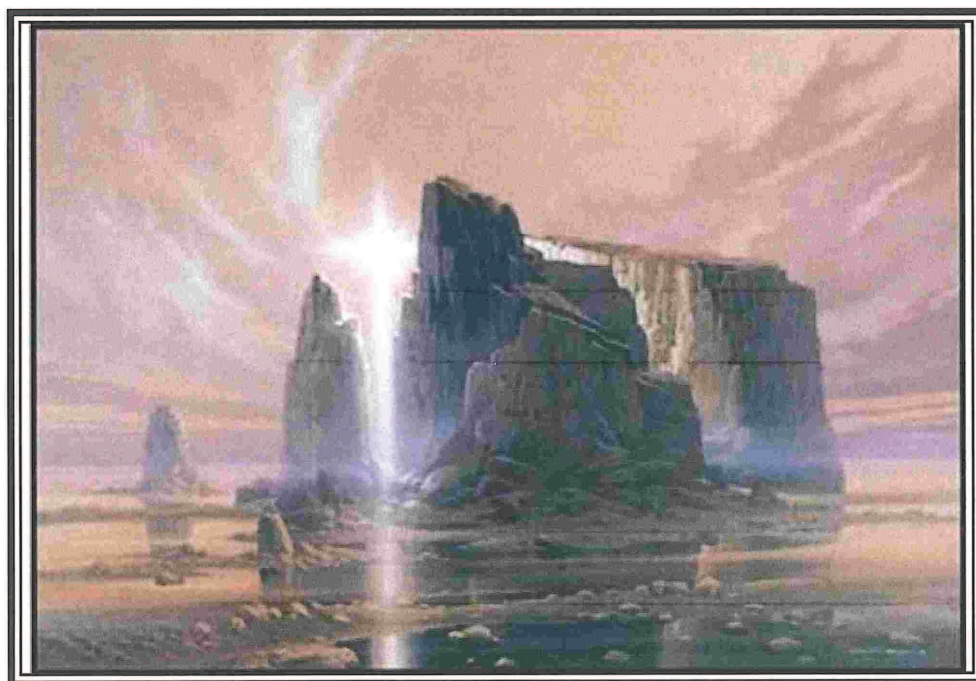
“I know that the Lord is great, that our Lord is greater than all gods. The Lord does whatever pleases Him in the heavens and on the earth ... The Name of the Lord endures forever, Your renown, O Lord, through all generations. For the Lord will vindicate His people, and have compassion on His servants.” (Psalm 135:6, 13-14)

The same theme continues throughout the writings of the prophets as they rejoice in both the justice and the compassion of God:

“Rend your hearts, not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity. Who knows! He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing... Spare Your people, O Lord, do not make Your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations... Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other, never again will My people be ashamed.” (Joel 2:13 ff.)

When the Prophet Jonah was sent to proclaim God’s judgement upon the wicked city of Nineveh, he tried to evade his calling because he feared that God’s mercy and compassion would result in His pardoning the Gentile town: ***“O Lord, was this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee Tarshish. I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.”*** (Jonah 4:2) The prophet Nahum used the same language, derived from God’s self-revelation to Moses upon Sinai, in the introduction to his prophecy:

“The Lord is a jealous and avenging God, the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The Lord takes vengeance on His foes and is filled with wrath. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished. He is in the whirlwind and the storm... The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble, He cares for those who trust in Him.” (Nahum 1:1-3,7)



“The Cleft In The Rock” by Bill Wallace



“Bringing Forth the Torah On Yom Kippur In An Orthodox Synagogue”

The profound significance of this declaration to Moses is further indicated by the defining influence where this text has had in the liturgical worship of Judaism throughout its history. The rabbis identify these words as the enumeration of “the Thirteen Attributes” of God. They have shaped the prayer of the Hebrews for thousands of years around the world.

“In Jewish tradition, these verse are called ‘The Thirteen Attributes of God’ (Hebrew – ‘shelosh ‘esreh middot’). They play a prominent role in the Jewish liturgy where they are recited aloud in the synagogue on festivals and other holy days - except Sabbaths - when the Ark is opened for the taking out of the Torah scroll in readiness for the appropriate Torah reading. They are also chanted aloud during the Torah readings on Fast Days and in Selihot – the penitential prayers recited on those occasions as well as during the High Holy Day period. The practice is based on Rabbi Johanan’s comment in Rosh Ha-Shanahd 17b that God’s recital of His moral qualities was intended to set the pattern for Israel’s future petitions to God. There is evidence that Israel’s liturgical use of these verses preceded Second Temple times, and had a long history in Israel, for they are frequently quoted in one form or another in the Bible. Such persistent and widespread popularity could only have derived from the forms of institutional worship.” (Sarna, p. 216)

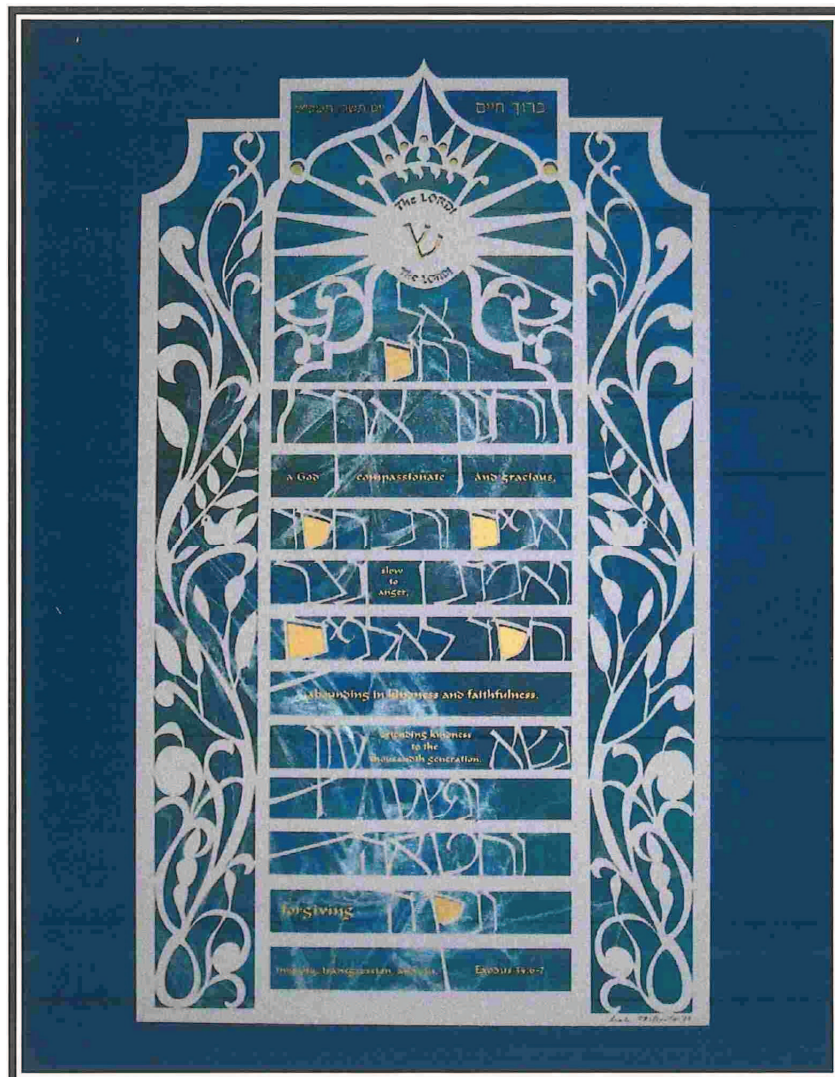
The specific thirteen attributes of God which are identified in this text are based upon the same number of Hebrew words which appear in Verses 6-17:

“Adonai - compassion before a person sins; Adonai - compassion after a person sins; El - mighty in compassion to give to all creatures according to their need; Rachum - merciful, that humankind might not be distressed; Chanun - gracious if humanity is already in distress; Erech appayim - slow to

anger; Rav chesed- plenteous in mercy; Emet- truth; Notzer chesed laalafim- keeping mercy unto thousands; Noseh avon- forgiving iniquity; Noseh peshah - forgiving in transgression; Noseh chatah - forgiving sin; Venakeh - pardoning” (Wikipedia: “Thirteen Attributes of Mercy”)

The Lubavitcher Rebbe more specifically defined God’s Thirteen Attributes in this way:

- (1) God has mercy on the prospective sinner, helping him to resist temptation;*
- (2) God has mercy on the actual sinner, allowing him to repent;*
- (3) He is a benevolent God;*
- (4) He is compassionate;*
- (5) He is gracious;*
- (6) He is slow to demonstrate His anger by inflicting punishment, waiting instead for the sinner to repent;*
- (7) He is abounding in undeserved kindness toward those who do not have enough merits of their own;*
- (8) He abounds also in Truth, faithfully rewarding those who obey Him;*
- (9) He preserves the merits of acts of kindness a person does for 2,000 generations, adding them to the merits of*



Artistic Display Of God’s Thirteen Attributes Around the Hebrew Letters of the Exodus Text

his descendants; (10) He forgives premeditated sins; (11) He forgives rebellious sins; (12) He forgives unintentional sins; and (13) He acquits sinners from immediate punishment, but does not acquit them altogether, punishing them instead, little by little, unless the sinner repents - for He acquits those who repent properly and does not acquit those who do not. He remembers the premeditated sins of the fathers, adding their demerits to those of the children and the children's children, but only if they follow in their father's misguided footsteps and only up to the third and fourth generation. Thus, God's attribution of reward is 500 times greater than His attribution of punishment, since He preserves merit for 2,000 generations but demerit for only four.” (Lubavitcher Rebbe, p. 260)

Although previous descriptions of the prospective encounter between Moses and his God had been discussed in visual terms it is evident here that the substance of their meeting would, in fact be verbal. The Lord, while taking on a visible appearance of some sort, would, in keeping with His identity as an invisible Spirit, convey His nature to His servant not in terms of how He looked but by what He would say. The Lord announced His presence before Moses with the proclamation of the sacred name “YHWH.” The use of the holy name of Yahweh - in distinction for the more ordinary title “Adonai” is signaled in the English text by the use of four capital letters – **“LORD.”** *“‘Proclaimed His Name’ indicates that He set out what He is and what He does.” (Mackay, p. 562)* Moses had desired a deeper and more profound understanding of God. Given the nature of Hebrew

names as indicative of the identity of the one who bears that name, the introductory assertion that God **“proclaimed His Name, the LORD”** indicates that is exactly what took place upon the mountain that day.

“And He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The LORD, the LORD’” – The initial repetition of the sacred Name of Yahweh at the outset of God’s self-disclosure has been the topic of considerable discussion among commentators. It echoes the initial revelation of God’s personal Name to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14) where the Lord had declared to His prophet to be: “God said to Moses, ‘I AM who I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” The Scriptural definition of God identifies the Creator as the



“Moses With The Tablets of the Law”

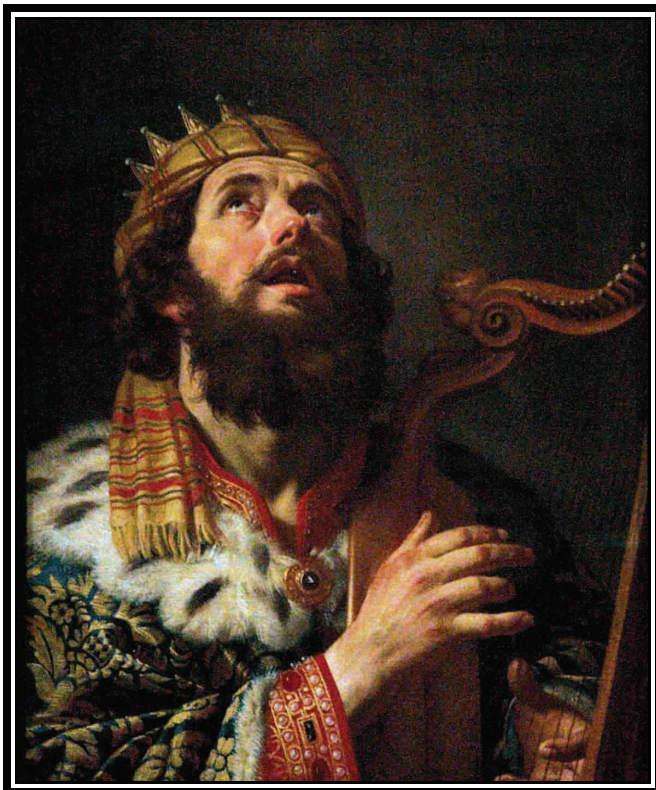
only independent existence. All other reality has a source to which it owes its existence. All other reality has a point of origin, a time at which it began. **“The LORD”** does not have a source. He is the source of everything else that is. The Hebrew word here translated as **“the LORD”** is a first person verb in the future tense. It denotes continuous, ongoing action which is taking place now and will go on forever. A literal translation of this wondrous, most majestic, divine Name simply means **“I AM.”** This small word of four Hebrew consonants encapsulates the entirety of the nature and the attributes of God to the extent that they can be comprehended by finite human minds. **“I Am”** exists outside of the fundamental categories of time and space without which the human mind cannot conceive reality. God has always been and will always be. He has no starting point nor will He ever cease to exist. But more basically time does not apply to God. His existence is neither defined nor limited by its passing - no before, now, or after. The same must be said of space. The traditional divine attribute of **“omnipresence”** necessarily falls far short of the mind-boggling truth. God is not merely present everywhere. The category of presence does not apply to God. He does not require space or place. His existence transcends such things. Aside from the miraculous incarnation of Jesus Christ during the course of His existence as a human being upon this earth, space words like here, there, or where are completely irrelevant to **“I AM.”** King David humbly acknowledged the incomprehensibility of God while at the same time affirming God’s unfailing love and care for His people:



“The Sacred Tetragrammaton - YHWH - Above The Altar Crucifix In The Church Of San Michel - Paris”

“O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and my uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasseth my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, Thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain unto it. Wither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or wither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light

about me.’ Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee. For Thou hast possessed my reins, Thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from Thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them. How precious are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with Thee!” (Psalm 139: 1-18)



“King David The Psalmist” by Rodi

“The writer seems to express the thought that the divine name revealed to Moses was a summing up of the entire divine character and attributes. These could not be fully understood by any one generation of Israelites, and so God would continually manifest all that He would be to His people. The name contains infinite possibilities of adaptation. He shewed himself to be a deliverer in Egypt, a protector in the desert, all the acts of providential mercy by which He made it possible for them to enter Canaan and take firm root there, all His guidance of their national development, all His discipline and punishments were so many fresh revelations of the meaning of His name - occasions on which ‘He caused His name to be remembered.’” (McNeile,p.18)

The comprehensive nature of the sacred name of God as the summary of His identity is reflected by the various combinations in which it appears. For example: “YHWH- Rophe” - “*the LORD Who Heals You*” (Exodus 15:26); “YHWH - Nissi” - “*the Lord Is My Banner*” (Exodus 17:15); “YHWH - Meqaddesh” - “*the LORD Who Makes You Holy*” (Exodus 31:13).

“Merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth.” - In announcing to Moses that He would indeed reveal Himself to His prophet, God had already mentioned two of the attributes cited here: **“I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will**

be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.” (Exodus 33:19) The essential character of God is His undeserved love, demonstrated toward fallen mankind despite man’s disobedience and rejection of that love. The Apostle John offers Scripture’s definitive assertion of this truth in his first letter as he urged Christians to demonstrate the gracious love which they had received from God in Christ by loving one another:

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” (1 John 4:7-11)

John’s comments are profoundly instructive. *“God is love,”* that is to say, love is not merely a characteristic of God, but that the character of God defines the meaning of love. God does not love us because we loved Him. God loves us because He is love and He has demonstrated that love most decisively in His willingness to give up His only Son to pay the price for our sin. God initiated love, first in His act of creation, and then, in the aftermath of man’s fall into sin, in His act of redemption. Everything that the sinner can know of love must be learned from God who is love.

The two specific terms used here to describe the love of God express a particularly intense combination of unconditional tenderness and concern. The language draws upon the experience of the most intimate and loving of human relationships as inadequate illustrations of the love of God.

“Compassionate recalls a mother’s love for her child, with deep understanding of its weaknesses and need, keeping looking after it whatever its behavior or thanklessness. This is not a response to human merit, but a display of divine sympathy which shows favor when punishment might well have been expected. Gracious is usually paired with merciful. It denotes a disposition to show favor beyond any human calculation.” (Mackay, p. 563)



“The Apostle John”

The verb is derived from the noun “womb” and the love of a mother for a child which she had carried within her own body, the most passionate and intense of all human emotions.

“The term carries with it the picture of the tender care bestowed upon an infant when it is most vulnerable...The root of the word refers to deep love (usually that of a superior for an inferior) rooted in some natural bond...When the word refers to God, it refers to the strong relationship that God has with his people. It refers to a mother’s feeling for her children who she carries and feels in her womb, and then carries in her arms and nurses at her breast, and afterward continues in faithful compassion toward them.” (Tsai-Yun-Lin, p. 232)

The relevance of these two descriptions of God’s unique love is painfully obvious in the current situation. If this gracious compassionate love did not characterize the nature of God, Israel’s most blatant apostasy at the very moment the covenant was being established would most certainly have resulted in the destruction of the nation. *“In this verse, God cited five attributes that characterize him - all of which would be welcome to Moses and the Israelites, who needed very much to count on his compassion toward them in light of their having previously anger him by their behavior.” (Stuart, p. 715)*

“Longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth.” - The intriguing etymology of the Hebrew term translated as **“longsuffering”** is derived from a root which literally means **“long nosed.”** Linguists speculate that its connection to the concept of anger is related to the practice of many animals to snort and flare their nostrils when they are enraged or about



“This Is Your God, O Israel” - 18th Century Bible Engraving

to attack. The derivative word refers to patient endurance under extreme provocation. God does not “*fly off the handle*” or lose His temper as is so often the case among the gods and goddesses of pagan mythology. Judgement and wrath are always the alternatives of last resort for the God who is love and who would always prefer that the sinner turn from his wicked ways and repent.

“Slow to anger does not present the Lord as a frustrated deity who eventually loses patience and strikes out against those who have thwarted Him. It rather acknowledges that the Lord is reluctant to act against His creation, even when it is in rebellion against Him. He waits long to give the sinner opportunity to return in repentance. But He is not forgetful and will not condone sin. At the time of His choosing, He will act decisively against it.” (Mackay, p. 563)

God hates sin because He loves people. Sin is inherently destructive. Sin harms people. Therefore the reaction of a loving God to sin is righteous wrath.

“God’s anger is based upon His holy character. Since He is holy He reacts with anger towards sin and must judge sin. His righteousness requires that He must judge wickedness. The term longsuffering appears ten times in Scripture to denote God’s patience in treating those who sin and arouse His anger. God’s wrath is modified and conditioned by His love. God not only represses His anger until the right time to punish, but also gives warnings and time and opportunity to repent before punishment. God is longsuffering with sinners. Although He is slow to anger, He will not restrain His just wrath forever.” (Tsai-Yun Lin, p. 236)

The Apostle Peter warned people not to confuse the patience of God with permissiveness. ***“The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*** (2 Peter 3: 9)

The combination which follows - ***“abundant in goodness and truth”*** - pertains to the reliability of God. It is a common description of God, occurring thirteen times in the Old Testament. God is said to be ***“abundant”*** in the two qualities listed. The adjective literally

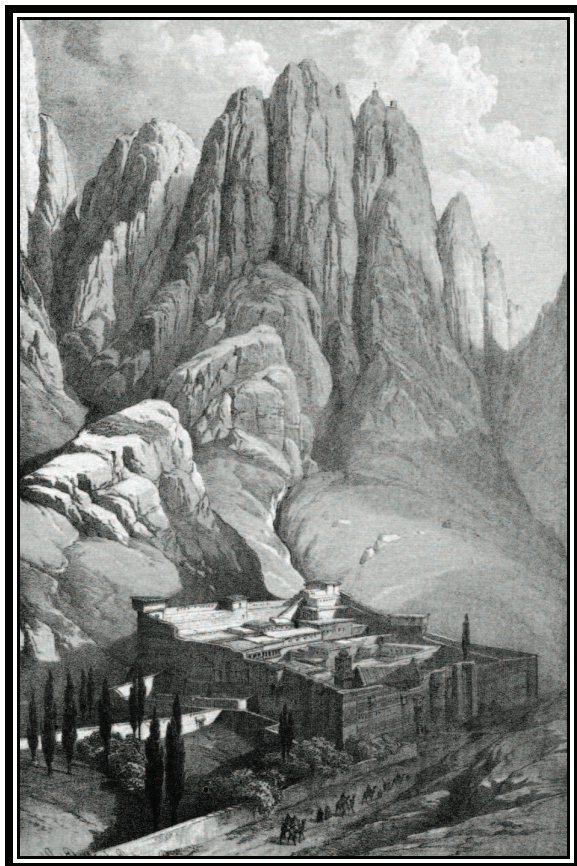


“The Worship Of the Calf”

means “great” and suggests an overflowing, inexhaustible supply. *“Abounding does not try to set any limits upon the Lord. What He is and does far exceeds what we could anticipate in regard to love and faithfulness.”* (Mackay, p. 563) **“Goodness”** is the Hebrew word *“hesed”* - often translated as *“love.”* But this is a particular kind of love with the connotation of commitment.

“It connotes long term reliable loyalty of one member of a covenant relationship to another. However fickle and unreliable human beings may be in their relationship to God, He is nothing of the sort, but can be counted on in every situation and at all times to be completely faithful to His promises to His people.” (Stuart, p. 716)

Under the circumstances, this attribute of God stands in stark contrast to the unreliability of His people and their immediate violation of the covenant to which they had committed themselves with the Lord. The second attribute - **“truth”** - also applies to the area of reliability and trustworthiness. God can always be taken at His Word. *“Whatever He says is correct and reliable and may be trusted even to the extent of life and death issues, or indeed, eternal life and death issues.”* (Stuart, p. 716) God is faithful because faithfulness is of crucial importance to the love which is the essence of His nature. St. Paul would later declare this most comforting truth in his second epistle to Timothy: **“If we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself.”** (2 Timothy 2:13)



“Mount Sinai”

“Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” - The extent of the Lord’s goodness and truth reaches far beyond the present moment to stretch out across the generations. The Hebrew term translated as **“thousands”** typically refers to thousands of generations, thus promising that the covenant which is established here will be a blessing to the most distant descendants of those now encamped at the foot of the mountain. God will maintain his covenant love and fulfill the commitments which He has made to the nation of Israel. But in order for that to happen with these sinful people, it will be necessary for an ongoing pattern of forgiveness to be set in place - **“forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.”** Their sin cannot be overlooked. That would be unjust and would contradict the righteousness and holiness of God. Their sin must be forgiven. Thus God will institute



“Moses At Mount Sinai”

the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, which anticipates and will be fulfilled by the once for all sacrifice of the Messiah upon the cross. The three nouns used here to characterize man’s disobedience are basically synonyms, each with a slightly different perspective on the nature of sin. **“Iniquity”** means to turn away from the straight path to follow a course of one’s own choosing. **“Transgression”** refers to crossing the forbidden line which separates obedience from disobedience and thereby indulging in rebellious disobedience against God. **“Sin,”** the most general of the three words, simply means to miss the mark. The same term is used in a non-moral context to describe the 700 left-handed slingers of the tribe of Benjamin who never failed to strike down their targets in battle. They were so accurate that even if their target was a single strand of hair they would never miss. (Judges 20:16) It would seem that the use of all three terms here is not intended to specify three different categories of sinfulness but rather *“to mention various synonyms to cover the entire range of wrongdoing. It also directs our attention to the completeness of God’s attention to those who repent.”* (Cassutto, p. 440) The point of the text’s deliberate repetitiveness is to stress the fact that God’s willingness to forgive sin in the expression of His nature as a God of love.

“Forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin refers to the forgiveness of evils and sins of all sorts, something God alone can accomplish and indicates that it is a characteristic of His nature to do so. Thus, the New Testament doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, on which the promise of eternal life so decidedly depends, flows from the very nature of God. He does not reluctantly forgive

sins against Himself and others; He does so eagerly as the manifestation of His character, by which He delights in doing so.” (Stuart, p. 716)

“And that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation.” - Man’s natural tendency has always been to misconstrue the mercy of God as permissiveness. Lest the assertion of His mercy here lead to that fatal misunderstanding, the Lord proceeded to specify His stern judgement upon impenitent sinners who persist in willful deliberate sin - ***“the guilty.”*** Penitence is the crucial issue. The Talmud correctly notes at this point: *“He remits punishment for the penitent but not for the impenitent.”* (Sarna, p. 216) The verb ***“clear”*** refers to acquittal in a court of law. The verb appears forty-four times in the Old

Testament in a variety of contexts. It means the release from an obligation, guilt, or punishment. God is the one to whom the repentant sinner turns for acquittal and forgiveness confident in His mercy. Thus, the psalmist rejoices:

“The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of God is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgements of the Lord and true and righteous, altogether. More to be desired are they than gold; yea, more than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey in the honeycomb. Moreover by them is Thy servant warned; and in keeping them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright.” (Psalm 19:7-13)

The grim litany previously intoned with the original presentation of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, narrating the ghastly consequences of sin stretching down across the generations is repeated in Verse 7. The ugly truth it expresses is once again that the malignant damage and fatal destruction of sin is not limited to the individual sinner. My choices and my actions do not merely effect me. They impact everyone in my life, particularly those who are most near and dear to



“The Final Judgement: - Tintoretto

me. Who I am and how I live influences and helps to shape all the people around. My self-destructive mistakes will be imprinted upon and repeated by the people who observe and are impacted by them. *“Children can expect to experience the consequences of the sinful behavior of their parents. While God is willing to forgive and pardon, He does not interrupt the certain and natural consequences of sinful behavior. And some of these consequences are experienced by children and grandchildren. When a parent goes to prison, the children suffer loss. Sadly, many children have suffered the tragic consequences of growing up in a family with an abusive or alcoholic parent.”* (Laney, p. 50) As the English poet John Donne correctly noted: *“No man is an island, entire of itself...And therefore never send to ask for whom the bell tolls: it tolls for thee.”* Those who reject these words as an unjust condemnation by a capricious God of one man for sins which he did not commit, have completely missed the point of the text. Sin, like a deadly pestilence of the spirit, is contagious. It spreads and grows through one man’s life into the lives of others bringing pain and destruction to all whom it touches. Only the grace of God and the forgiveness which it brings can cure the disease and halt the course of this pestilence.



***“Death Rode Out As A Conqueror”
Gustav Dore***

The Bible specifically and emphatically rejects the concept of punishing someone for sins committed by another. In the days of the Babylonian Captivity the exiles complained that they were being punished for the sins of their fathers. Through His prophet Ezekiel the Lord responded:

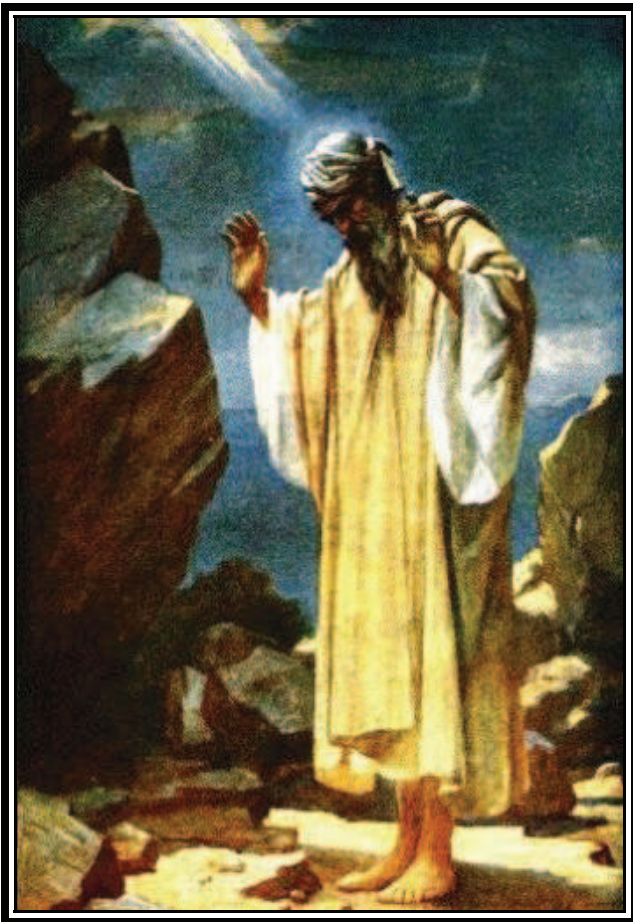
“What mean ye that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: ‘The father eat sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine. The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:2-4)

Moses had enunciated the same principle of divine justice in the Book of Deuteronomy: ***“The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.”*** (Deuteronomy

24:16)

The contrast between **“unto the third and to the fourth generation”** here and the thousand generations to whom the extends mercy and forgiveness is designed, once again, to stress God’s character as a God of love. However the justice and holiness of God dare not be overlooked or ignored. Permissiveness of self-destructive sin is the opposite of genuine love and compassion.

“God is a God of holiness and justice as well as a God of compassion and grace. Our knowledge of God is incomplete unless it includes God’s divine holiness and justice. ‘It is only in the context of God’s justice that some of His other attributes comes into fullest expression.’ As C.S. Lewis points out, ‘Mercy, detached from Justice grows unmerciful. That is an important paradox. There are plants which will flourish only in mountain soil, so it appears that Mercy will only flower only when it grows in the crannies of the rock of Justice.’ God is just and does punish sin. Yet, His wrath is limited and His lovingkindness is extended to the thousandth generation.” (Tsai-Yun Lin, p. 251)



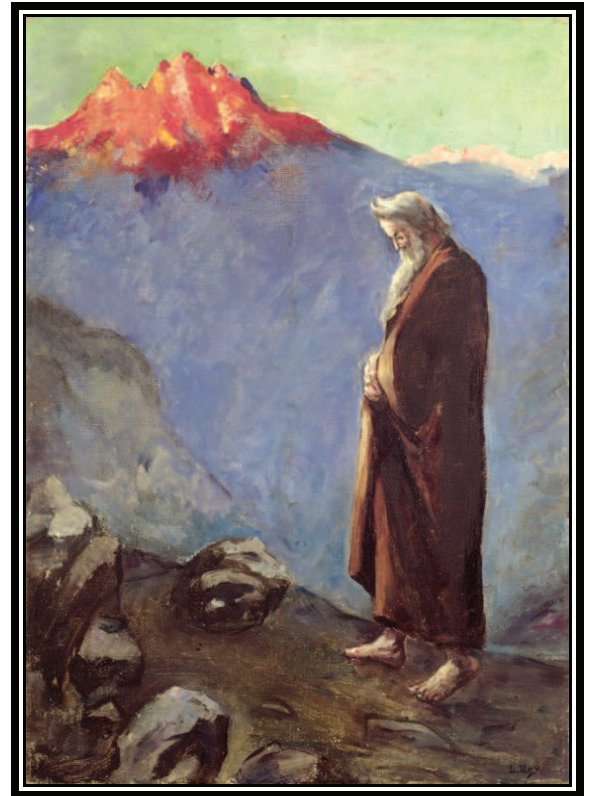
“Moses Upon Mount Sinai”

Verses 8-9

And Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. And he said, “If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray Thee, go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance.”

“And Moses made haste and bowed his head...” In His self-disclosure to Moses God has provided a basis for His prophet now to come before Him and pray forgiveness for the sins of His unfaithful people. He is a God of steadfast love and faithfulness, abounding grace and mercy who keeps His love to the thousandth generation who is patient with sinners and slow to anger, but who will not

acquit the impenitent sinner nor erase the consequences of sin. The difference between the affirmation of the covenant here and its establishment in Exodus 20 is an expanded emphasis on the grace and mercy of God in aftermath of the apostasy of the Golden Calf. Moses' immediate response is reverent worship and prayer before the Lord who has graciously revealed Himself to him. The act of worship preceded the prayer for blessing. This is exactly as it should be, adoration coming before supplication. Note also the deliberate humility of Moses' posture - ***“bowed his head toward the earth.”*** *“Worship is an act that exalts the one being worshiped, but seeks to draw no favorable attention to the worshiper. Moses bowed to the ground following the standard was of his culture; reducing his profile and placing himself at the mercy of the one above him, that is, indicating his unworthiness and submission. Worship that draws attention to self, in either the Old or the New Covenant is flawed.”* (Stuart, p.



“Moses Before The Lord”

718) This perspective of humble reverence in the presence of God is all too often absent in contemporary worship where the focus is primarily or exclusively upon the satisfaction of entertainment of the worshiper rather than awe and adoration of the Lord. The text emphasizes the haste with which Moses proceeded to prayer. The Hebrew text literally says *“In a hurry, Moses bowed...”* What is the urgency? Most likely, as the saying goes, *“to strike while the iron is hot.”* While this wondrous moment still endures and the gracious promises of YHWH are still resonated in the air of Sinai, the prophet wishes to insure God's continued presence in the midst of Israel. He knew full well that when he descended to the encampment he would be besieged with questions and he wanted to be able to provide the most specific and decisive answers possible. Since the crisis had begun, the Lord had responded favorably to Moses each time he had prayed, for greater certainty of God's presence. Moses addressed the Lord as *“Adonai”* the customary expression for addressing God, avoiding the presumption of expressing the sacred name YHWH with God had identified Himself. In view of the warning which had concluded God's self-disclosure Moses' prayer is most appropriate:

“Looking back, it can be noted the YHWH by baring Himself to Moses as much as possible gave the guarantee that He would really journey along with Israel. With that guarantee comes the restoration of YHWH's bond with Israel. However, the dark tones with which YHWH ends His proclamation, make that guarantee seem less than completely certain. Hence, Moses does not yet see



“Moses’ Prayer Upon Mount Sinai” by Larson

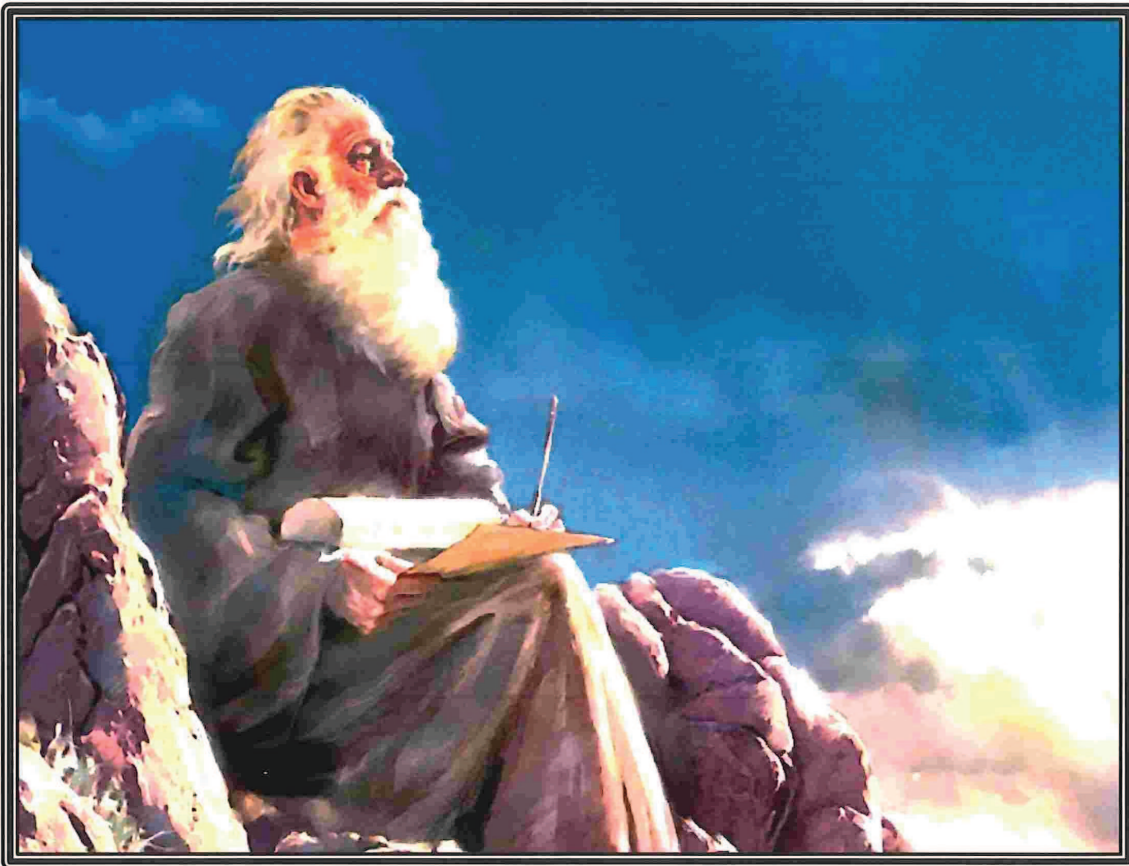
his task as intercessor as finished.” (Houtman, p. 709)

“And he said, ‘If now I have found grace in Thy sight...’ - Moses’ prayer is profoundly personal. He acknowledges the undeserved love which he has already experienced from God and offers his petition on the basis of that grace. There is no pretense of worthiness or entitlement here, only a reliance upon the love which is the nature and essence of God as has just be revealed upon the mountain. The prophet acknowledges the absolute dependance of the nation upon the ongoing presence of God in their midst: *“O Lord, let my Lord, I pray Thee go among us.”* As the prophet confessed the sinfulness of the nation, he included himself among them. *“Moses, out of love for his people, associates himself with the collective deeds of the Children of Israel, and includes himself among the transgressors.”* (Cassutto, p. 441) The presence of God is essential because Israel *“is a stiff-necked people”* which will require that God continuously *“pardon our iniquity and our sin.”* Only because of God’s forgiving nature, His undeserved love, and patient longsuffering could this relationship possibly be maintained. Not because of Israel’s worthiness, but because of God’s grace Moses is bold to pray that the Lord would *“Take us for Thine inheritance.”* In light of what has occurred, Moses’ prayer is remarkably bold, based upon God’s revelation of Himself and His nature as a God of love. In the chapters which follow God will define the manner of His presence with Israel in the design and the service of the Tabernacle. The Golden Calf had been Israel’s attempt to manipulate God on their own terms in a manner similar to the idolatry of the heathen nations around them. They had tried to forge their own link to God in the golden figure which they had fashioned for themselves. That presumptuous effort had very nearly resulted in their destruction.

Verses 10-11

“And He said, ‘Behold I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth or in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee. Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I will drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite and the Hittite, and the Perrizite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.’”

“And He said, ‘Behold, I make a covenant ...’” -A new beginning is made in response to Moses’ prayer. However, this is not merely a covenant renewal, similar to those which would take place repeatedly throughout the history of Israel. This is not a new covenant. Its content is identical to that of the original covenant agreement established in Chapters 20-23. Rather it is a restoration of that covenant which Israel had abrogated by its apostasy with the Golden Calf.



“Mercifully, God agreed to full covenant restoration by means of a remaking of the Sinai covenant – a restitution, not a revision. This was decidedly not a new covenant ... This was rather a divine restoration of a broken covenant, one that had been made temporarily null and void by Israel’s corporate return to idolatry (and therefore, automatically, polytheism, since there was no monotheistic idolatry in the ancient world) ... The covenant needed to be

reinstated if it was to be of help to Israel, and Yahweh showed His merciful and patient nature as described by Himself so magisterially in vs. 6-7 by taking responsibility upon Himself to reinstitute it for the benefit of His once and now again covenant people ... He was making the same Sinai covenant once again, but He was indeed making it anew, remaking it, not just reminding the people of the content of it” (Stuart, pp. 719-720)

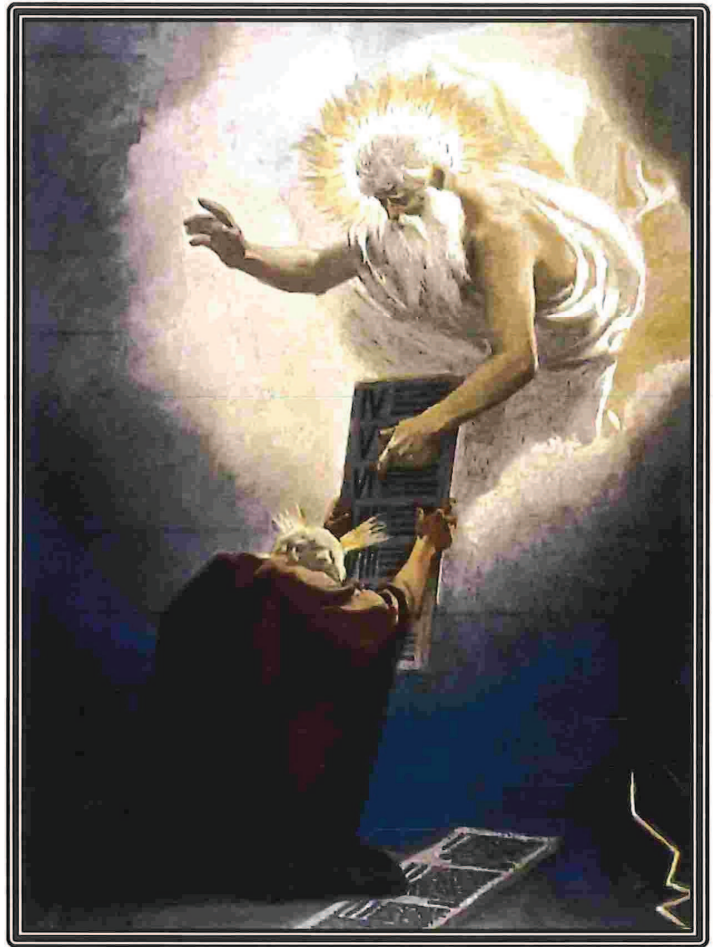
The repetition of the events and elements of the original covenant ceremony are meticulously repeated. Moses records the laws which Yahweh decrees. Yahweh inscribes the Ten Commandments upon the stone tablets and Moses remains in the presence of the Lord for forty days and forty nights while fasting upon the crest of the mountain. *“History repeats itself in the interest of the restoration of Yahweh’s bond with Israel. So the new covenant is entirely identical to the bond that was broken.”* (Houtman, p. 214)

The traditional Hebrew idiom “kerit berith” literally “to cut a covenant” is used here in reference to the sacrificial animals whose bodies were severed so that the parties to the covenant could pass between them, thus ceremonially invoking a curse upon themselves if they violated the terms of the covenant agreement.

“Before all thy people I shall do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth ... – The Lord will demonstrate the reality of His presence among His people by the ***“marvels”*** which He shall accomplish on their behalf. The term ***“marvels”*** refers to wonders which surpass human comprehension and will leave men overwhelmed in awe and adoration. The verb ***“I shall do”*** lends further emphasis to the remarkable nature of these wonders. It literally means “to create” as though God through His choosing and deliverance of Israel



was bringing a new world into being. *“All the power and inventiveness of God will be displayed when He acts on behalf of His people. These events will be unprecedented and awe inspiring for all Israel and for her neighbors.”* (Mackay, p. 566) In this way God’s care of Israel will serve to display His greatness before all the nations. The Lord had made a similar assertion in the prologue to the earlier covenant statement as He called the nation of Israel to be His own among all the nations of the earth. For that reason He had delivered them from bondage in Egypt, carrying them to freedom as on the wings of an eagle:

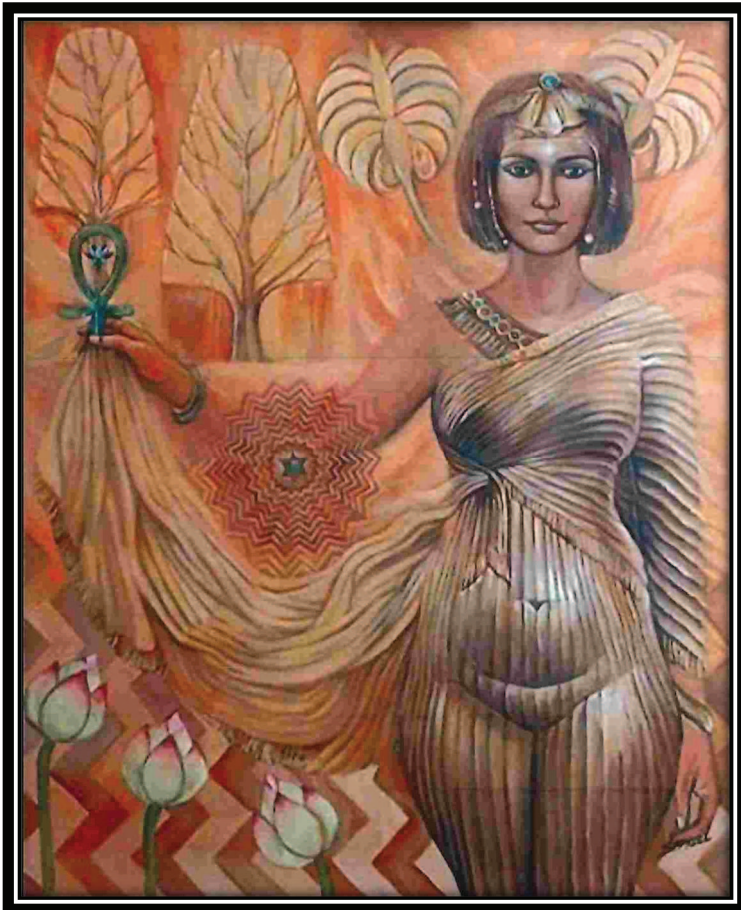


“Thus shalt thou say to the House of Jacob and tell the Children of Israel, ‘Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles wings and brought you unto Myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.’ These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the Children of Israel.” (Exodus 19:3-6)

The text is careful to avoid any suggestion that the unique selection of Israel is based upon any special qualification or innate superiority of their own. It is God’s gracious choosing, and nothing more that sets them apart from other nations. *“The people could not, however, find a ground for self-confidence in this promise; what God would do was honor Himself through the great things that He did for Israel, rather than through the great things that Israel did by which other people were impressed.”* (Stuart, p. 721)

“Observe thou that which I command thee this day.” – The bilateral nature of the national covenant with Israel is clearly indicated. God promised His presence, His wonders, His protection from their enemies, and possession of the Land of Promise. But all of this was contingent upon covenant obedience by the Israelites.

“Behold, I will drive about before thee the Ammonite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite and the Jebusite.” - The conquest of the land of Canaan by the Israelites, a relatively small and insignificant nation, will be among the foremost of



the wonders that God will perform on behalf of His people. A similar listing of kingdoms and peoples is found in Exodus 23: “For Mine Angel shall go before thee and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I will cut them off.” (Exodus 23 :23)

Verses 12-17

“Take heed to thyself lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land wither thou goest, lest it be a snare in the midst of thee; But ye shall destroy their altars, break down their images, and cut down their groves; For thou shalt worship no other god; for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God; Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they go a whoring after their

gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee and thou eat of his sacrifice; and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.”

“Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant ...” – The Israelites almost instinctive response to the absence of Moses upon the mountain was to revert to the idolatry of the heathen cultures which surrounded them. They found the almost universal conviction of their neighbors that divine power could be localized and manipulated through the creation and consecration of a cultic image to be irresistibly attractive. In that context, the covenant warning against cultural entrapment by the Canaanites and Israelite involvement in the idolatry of the indigenous population of the land becomes more detailed and emphatic in this repetition. (cf. Exodus 23 :32-33) This word of warning is introduced with the imperative verb – *“Take heed to yourself.”* The stem term literally means *“to beware”* and serve to highlight the profound significance of the danger which is being warned against. The prominent placement of this warning immediately following the establishment of the covenant signals that the idolatry of the Canaanite tribes will pose a primary threat to Israel throughout its presence in the land. Israel must constantly be on its guard against this danger if they are to maintain their covenant relationship with Yahweh. The balance of Old Testament history would demonstrate the sad accuracy of this urgent word of warning as again and again the Children of Israel succumb to the lure of Canaanite idolatry and cultural

accommodation to the ways and worship of their pagan neighbors. Israel's *"covenant"* was with the Lord. If this covenant was to be maintain they could not enter into covenant relationship with anyone else – *"lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land wither thou goest."* Their exclusive relationship with the Lord, defined by the covenant agreement here established, must remain the source of their identity and the basis for their convictions and their actions. The concept here is not so much the idea of a political or military treaty – although such arrangements are probably included – but the broader idea of cultural and social accommodation which would focus in the areas of religious co-operation and inter-marriage leading to social integration. Such cozy co-operation assumes the equal validity of all religious viewpoints and encourages the intermingling of those religions in a tolerant synergism which would be a repudiation of the exclusive truth claims of Yahweh as the one and only true God. Such co-operation would in fact be *"a snare in the midst of thee."* The word *"snare"* describes the net used by hunters to trap flying birds and drag them down to death and destruction.



"But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves." – Israel is instructed to destroy the cult objects at Canaanite places of worship - and thereby the practice of Canaanite idolatry - throughout the land. The worship of Baal and Asherah, the two most prominent Canaanite deities, was essentially a fertility cult. Baal is the god of the thunderstorm, the bringer of the rain which enables the crops to grow. At the same time, he enabled procreation among both farm animals and humans. Baal's consort was his sister Asherah. She is the earth goddess, the fertile soil which receives the seed and the rain from Baal. The worship of these idols was overtly sexual, in effect acting out the process of procreation which the worshipers desired the god and goddess to emulate and bless.

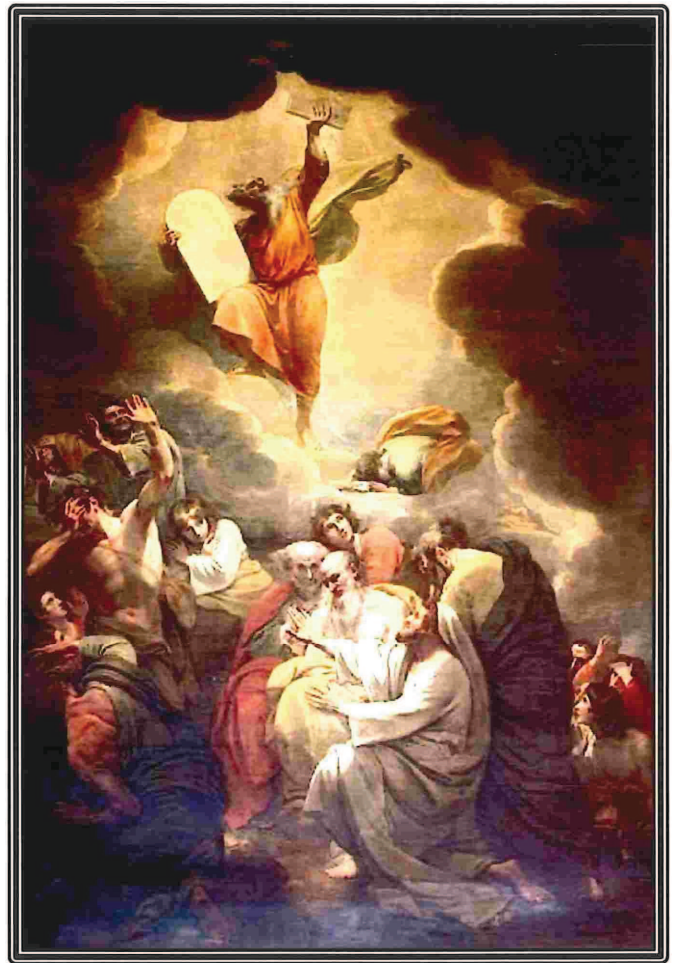


Canaanite worship was characteristically conducted on “*high places*,” that is, hilltops or mounds which afforded proximity to the heavenly dwelling places of the gods, or in fertile groves of trees adjoining springs or waterways, thus embodying the fertility which was the object of the worship. The idol figures themselves – “*their images*” - are to be smashed. The altars upon which the pagan blood sacrifices were offered were to be destroyed. The “*Asherah Poles*” - the living trees of the groves which surrounded the worship sites as emblems of the goddess’s fertility, or free-standing wooden posts erected around the altars as phallic symbols to signify the potency of Baal, are all to be cut down. There is to be no co-existence or toleration. If the cult is allowed to survive the conquest of the land and continue while Israel dwells in Canaan, this false worship will remain a constant temptation, threatening to lure Israel away from the worship of the true God.

“For thou shalt worship no other god; for the LORD whose Name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” - The language of the text here echoes that of the Ten Commandments, specifically the First of the Ten Commandments (cf. Exodus 20:6). This stem declaration highlights the fundamental difference between polytheism and monotheism. Polytheism is syncretistic, willing to acknowledge the existence of other gods and tolerate their worship, or accepting the gods of other polytheistic religions which represent the various forces of nature as identical to their own while being designated by a different name. Monotheism, in sharp contrast, is inherently exclusive, insisting that there can be one god and one god alone, and that the one true God can only be known on the basis of His self-revelation. Any deviation from the self-revelation of the one God is necessarily false and must be completely rejected. This blunt reassertion of the First Commandment –

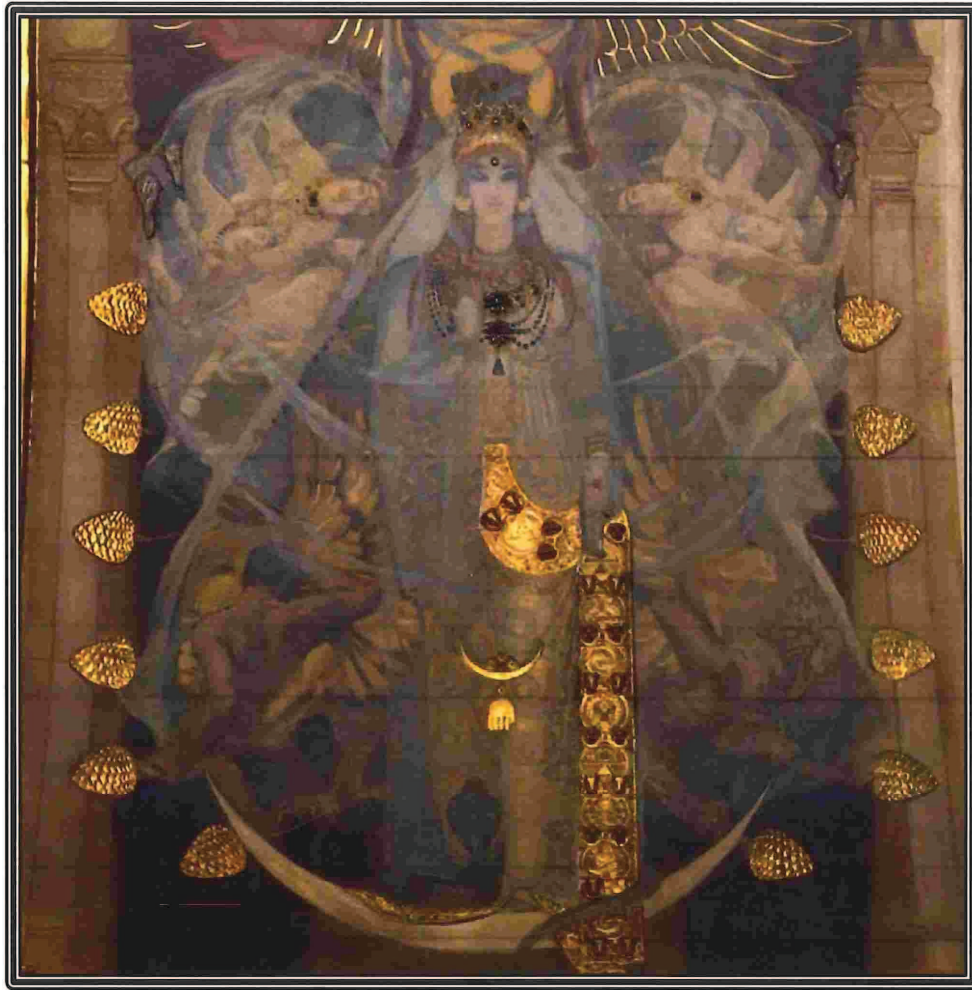
“Thou shalt have no other gods before Me ... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them; for I, the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate Me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.” (Exodus 20:3,5-6)

The one true God cannot tolerate the acknowledgement of worship of other gods because these gods are false. They are delusions and deceptions from the devil and those who are misled by them are doomed to eternal damnation. The traditional translation of “*jealous*” which appears in most English versions carries the unfortunate connotation of an insecure human lover who is threatened by his beloved’s attention to another. That is obviously not the case here. Classic Hebrew scholar Umberto Cassuto offers the more appropriate translation “*impassioned*.” God’s jealousy is the expression of the burning intensity of His love for His people and all people. He does not want any man to be damned and would have all men experience the authentic life which can only be experienced in relationship with the Creator who fashioned us in the beginning to live forever with Him. The sad fact that sin has severed that relationship and doomed humanity to a brief, empty existence here on earth, enslaved to selfishness which can never be satisfied, followed by unnatural death which condemns sinners to everlasting torment, is the ultimate tragedy for the God who is love.



“We should especially remind the reader that God’s jealousy, including the demand that He be exclusively worshiped does not arise from petty motives but from beneficent ones. The problem with idols is not that they make God feel bad, but that they cannot save, thus keeping salvation from those He wants to see gain eternal life. His hatred of idols reflects His love for us, not any insecurity with regard to Himself.” (Stuart, p. 724)

The significance of this jealousy as the direct correlate and expression of His love is uniquely expressed by the phrase “*the LORD whose name is Jealous is a jealous God.*”



As previously noted, names in the Old Testament express the character of those who bear the name. Thus, to declare ***“the LORD whose name is Jealous”*** is to assert that this passionate concern that His people not be misled and condemned by false God is of the essence of His divine being.

“Divine jealousy springs from the desire to keep pure the relationship between Himself and His people. Theirs is to be an exclusive relationship with Him, and nothing and no one else is to interfere with their loyalty to Him. Such a demand was alien to the polytheistic thinking of the ancient world where each of many gods was considered to have his or her own particular sphere of influence. It was therefore possible for an individual, while claiming to have one patron god, to acknowledge the existence of others and worship them as appropriate. As Israel worshiped the only God, they were debarred from such mixed worship. Compromise and disloyalty could not be tolerated since there was only one true God and all others were damnable lies.” (Mackay, 567)

“Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they go a whoring after their gods ...” – The religion of the Canaanites, like any system of genuine beliefs, was woven into the fabric of their everyday lives. It permeated politics and business, social life

and family. The arbitrary distinctions between sacred and secular concocted by contemporary culture would have been inscrutable and alien in the ancient world. Their simple -and accurate -assumption was that your religion should permeate every dimension of your life. The Israelites are therefore warned to avoid any and all contact with the remnants of the indigenous Canaanite population after the conquest. The harsh characterization of idol worship as *“whoring after their gods”* is based upon the perception of the covenant between Israel and the Lord as a marriage. This language becomes all the more apt given the overtly sexual nature of Canaanite worship and the widespread use of temple prostitutes in connection with this worship. This terminology occurs frequently in the Old Testament to characterize idol worship.

“And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they shall have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute forever and ever unto them throughout their generations.” (Leviticus 17 :7)

“And if the people of the land do any ways hide their face from the man, when he giveth his seed unto Molech and killeth him not: then I will set My face against that man and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people. And that soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards to go a whoring after them, I will even set My face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.” (Leviticus 20:5-6)

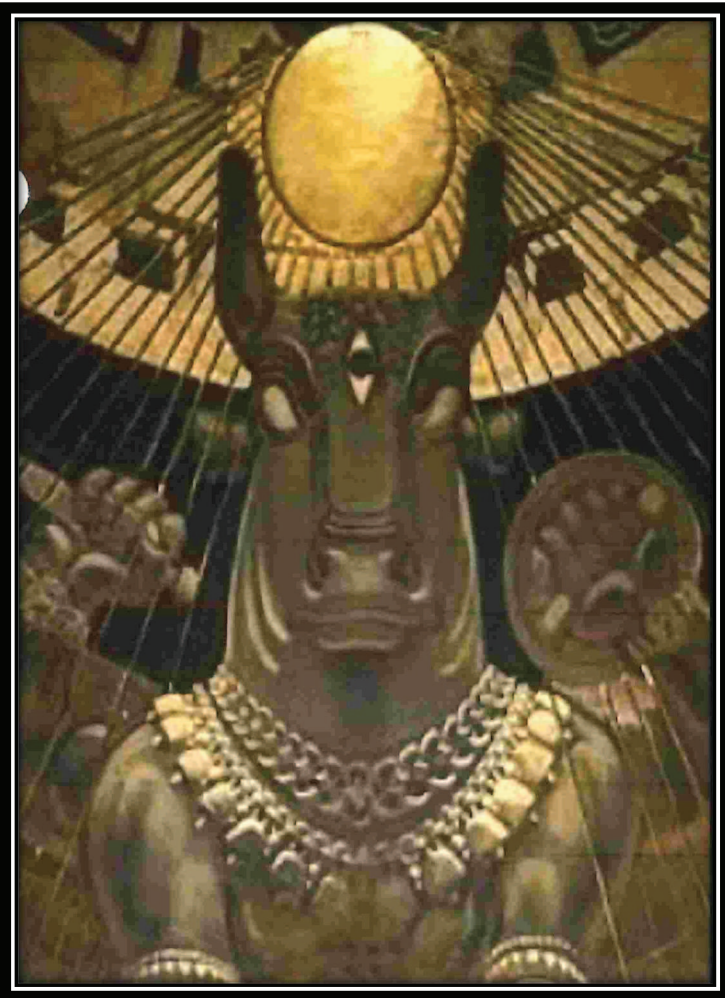
“And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-Peor; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against them.” (Numbers 25:1-3)

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people shall rise up and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, wither they go to be among them, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them.” (Deuteronomy 31:16)

“And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them; they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord, but they did not do so.” (Judges 2:17)

“And the weight of the golden earrings which he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; besides ornaments and collars and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels’ necks. And Gideon made an ephod thereof and put it in his city, even in Ophrah, and all Israel went thither a whoring after it; which thing became a snare unto Gideon and to his house.” (Judges 8:26-27)

“But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playest the harlot, because of thy renown, and pourest out thy fornications on everyone that passeth by; his it was. And of thy garments thou didst take and deckest thy high places with diverse colors, and playest the harlot thereupon; the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so. Thou hast also taken the fair jewels of My gold and of My silver, which I had given thee; and madest to thyself images of men and didst commit whoredom with them.” (Ezekiel 16:15-17)



“Moloch Devourer of Children”

“For they shall eat and not have enough, they shall commit whoredom and shall not increase because they have left off to take heed to the Lord. Whoredom and wine and new wine shall take away the heart. My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staffs give counsel unto them, for the spirit of whoredom hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God. They shall offer sacrifice upon the tops of mountains, and burn incense upon the tops of hills under the oaks, the poplars, and elms, because the shadow thereof is good; therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom and your spouses shall commit adultery. I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom nor your spouses when they commit adultery; for themselves are separated with whores and they sacrifice with harlots; therefore

the people that doth not understand shall fall. Though thou, Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend.” (Hosea 4:10-14)

“Worship of other gods is here called prostitution, a metaphorical way of describing infidelity to God’s covenant. Since prostitutes are by definition flagrantly unfaithful to any one person, but sell themselves to various people for gain, a people that seeks blessing through various gods is not religiously pure and devoted to one God and can be likened to a prostitute. The Scripture often employs this metaphor for covenant infidelity through idolatry and/or the various practices associated with idolatry.” (Stuart, p. 725)

The image of idolatry as harlotry is also consistent in this context with the characterization of Yahweh as a *“jealous”* God, a term also borrowed from the concept of faithfulness or unfaithfulness in marriage.

“And do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee and thou do eat of his sacrifice.”

The pagan feasts and revelries which surrounded the sacrifices for special occasions, the passing of the seasons of planting and harvest, marriages and the birth of children, were the hallmarks of the Canaanite annual calendar. These celebrations proved to be chronically alluring to the Israelites as they co-existed in the land with their Canaanite neighbors. The religious nature of the celebrations tended to blur the distinction between the exclusive worship of Yahweh and the more flexible polytheistic worship of the gods in general. Peaceful co-existence leads to social interaction, economic cooperation, and eventually to intermingling and intermarriage.



“A Gift For Baal”

“And thou take of their daughters

unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.” The process of cultural assimilation would inevitably lead to religious compromise and contradiction of the covenant with Yahweh which is, of course, the pattern which was to predominate throughout the balance of the Old Testament, leading to the corruption and downfall of the Israelite nation. The pattern of spiritual degeneration here described is appropriately summarized in a series of seven verbs to signify its complete and conclusive nature.

*“The evil results of the making of a covenant with the inhabitants of the land was liable to bring about are described here in consecutive stages, like links in a chain. The first phrase is **and when they** – the inhabitants of the land - **play the harlot after their gods and slaughter sacrifices to their gods** and someone from among them **calls you**- that is, invites you to partake of the flesh of his sacrifice at his sacred meal, and **you eat of his sacrifice**. Such eating may be the beginning of an extremely dangerous process, for as a result of the habit of eating with aliens you may become friendly with them, and the friendliness may lead to the second stage, namely intermarriage, **and you take of their daughters for your sons**. This stage, in turn, may engender the third: **and their daughters play the harlot after their gods and make your sons play the harlot after their gods**. The verbs used in the Hebrew to picture this development are seven in number: **play the harlot – calls – eat – take – play the harlot – make play the harlot.**” (Cassutto, p. 444)*



“The Gods And Their Makers” By Edwin Long

“Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.” - This broad summary statement, prohibiting the production or worship of idols concludes the segment on idolatry.

“Yet another warning against dangerous action You shall make for yourself no molten gods. - no likeness whatsoever, even to symbolize the Lord God, for this may have evil consequences, as you have seen in the case of the golden calf. Needless to say, not only molten gods, in the precise sense of the term, are included in this prohibition, but all images,

of every kind of material are intended, only Scripture refers to the most common type.” (Cassutto, p. 445)

Verses 18-21

“The Feast of Unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month of Abib: for the month of Abib thou camest out of Egypt. All that openeth the matrix is Mine; and every firstling among thy cattle, whether ox or sheep, that it male. But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then thou shalt break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons, thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before Me empty. Six days shalt thou work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest; in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest.”

“The Feast of Unleavened Bread shalt thou keep.” - Much of the remainder of the Book of Exodus is simply a restatement of laws and commands previously given in the establishment of the original covenant (Chapters 13, 20-23). In many instances the texts here are identical, word for word, with God’s earlier revelation.

“The previous verses have focused on what was incompatible with true devotion to the Lord of the covenant. Now there follows a list of positive actions that should characterize Israel as a community devoted to the service of the Lord. This is centered around the main Israelite religious festivals, and what is stated about them is substantively similar to material found earlier in the Book of the Covenant (especially 23:12-19) and also in Exodus 13:11-16. This reflects the situation of Israel when restored to divine favor after their apostasy. It is not new requirements that are imposed on them, but rather they are given renewed opportunity to live out their divine calling as a people set apart to the Lord...The parallel structure of the passages is early and deliberate. The repetition of the covenant demands occurred because of the need to emphasize that Israel’s obligations remained the same, and particularly in the area of worship where they had already demonstrated their weakness and rebellion.” (Mackay, p. 569)

The Lord is, in effect, patiently but firmly, reminding the Israelites that what they did with the Golden Calf was an unacceptable aberration which could not be repeated. The prevalence of the bull calf as a universal symbol of virility and power throughout the Near East, and the profound impression which the worship of the Golden Calf had made on the historical consciousness of the Israelite nation would later be dramatically demonstrated at the time of the division of the kingdom. Jeroboam I, the first monarch of the ten northern tribes which had rejected the dynasty of David to form their own nation, choose two ***“calves of gold”*** for the new national sanctuaries which he constructed at Bethel and Dan. The text of 1 Kings further indicates that he did so deliberately as a repetition of the historical precedent of the Golden Calf at Sinai:



“King Jeroboam And His Golden Calf” by Eckert

“Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them. It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people which were not of the sons of Levi...And this thing became sin unto the House of Jeroboam, even to cut it off and destroy it from off the face of the earth.”
(1 Kings 12:28-31, 13:34)

“All that openeth the matrix is mine...” – These directives restate and expand instructions given in the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 13:13). For the chosen people, it is crucially significant to recognize that all life comes from the Lord and therefore belongs to the Lord. *“All that openeth the matrix”* – that is everything new life that comes forth from the womb – *“is Mine.”* The particular citation of donkeys reflect the fact that they were not sacrificial animals and therefore could not be used in the activities of the tabernacle. Ordinarily a farmer would only need one male donkey to maintain his herd, thus the provision for the elimination of others. The text also explicitly prohibits human sacrifice which was commonly a prominent feature of Canaanite idolatry.

“Six days shalt thou work, but on the seventh day...” – The repetition of the Sabbath command here adds the provision that Sabbath observance shall continue even at the busiest times of the agricultural years when the fields are being plowed and seeded in the Spring and later harvested in the Fall – ***“thou shalt rest in the earing time and in the harvest thou shalt rest.”*** This specification is not included in the other Sabbath commands. The worship of the Lord is the most urgent priority, even when the demands of worldly things are most pressing.

“Plowing/planting and harvesting/reaping are the two most intense times in a farmer’s life. The temptation to work seven day weeks is very strong during these seasons since plowing and harvesting at the right time can be essential to crop productivity, and ‘beating the weather’ can seem to necessitate taking no time off during these crucial periods, that is, working through Sabbath days. But the combination of worship and rest provided by the Sabbath was more important to God – and should have been more important to the worshiper – than farm productivity...In the life of the New Covenant believer worship, prayer, Scripture study and Christian service must likewise take precedence over making money, lest gaining the temporal world result in losing one’s eternal soul. (Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25)” (Stuart, p. 730)



“Contemporary Celebration of Sukkot by Pilchowski

Verses 22-26

“And thou shalt observe the Feast of Weeks, of the first-fruits of the wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year’s end. Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee and enlarge thy borders; neither shall any man desire thy land when thou shalt go up to

appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year. Thou shalt not offer the blood of thy sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left unto the morning. The first of the first-fruits of the land thou shalt bring unto the House of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk."



"Pilgrims Traveling to Jerusalem For Shavuot - The Feast of Weeks"

"And thou shalt observe the Feast of Weeks..." - The remaining two major festivals of the Israelite year – *"the Feast of Weeks, of the first-fruits of the wheat harvest"* (Pentecost *"Shavuot"*) – so-called because it was fifty days after Passover) and *"the feast of ingathering at the years end"* (the Feast of Tabernacles *"Sukkot"* commemorating the forty years of wandering in the wilderness) are reiterated here. The participation of at least all the men of Israel was required in Jerusalem three times a year for these festivals. Women and children were also welcome to participate, but the presence of the men, as the representative heads of their households, was required. God insured the protection of the nation while the men gathered at the Temple, recalling the conquest of the land as proof of His ability to provide such protection. The text also includes a series of ritual requirements pertaining to the festivals which had originally been presented in Exodus 23:18.

Verses 27-28

"And the Lord said unto Moses, write thou these words, for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water. And He wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments."

“And the Lord said unto Moses...” – The formal command to record the details of the covenant in writing is a characteristic of covenant establishment ceremonies in the ancient Near East. It offers the assurance that the terms of the treaty have been specifically approved by both parties and will be accurately maintained. Moses is instructed to create the written documents of all that which the Lord has instructed. Once again, the prophet had remained upon the mountaintop for forty days and forty nights during which time he was supernaturally sustained by the Lord so that it was not necessary for him to eat or drink. The final phrase of the paragraph reaffirms that the tablets of the Ten Commandments were not inscribed by Moses but by the Lord Himself, thus indicated their unique importance as the core statement of the most basic moral principles that will define God’s relationship with His people.

Verses 29-35

“And it came to pass that when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of Testimony, when he came down from the Mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. And when Aaron and all the Children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him; and Moses talked with them. And afterwards, all the Children of Israel came nigh; and he talked with them and gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face. But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he took the vail off until he came out. And he came out and spake unto the Children of Israel what he was commanded. And the Children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.”



“Moses’ Shining Face Upon His Return From Sinai” By Tissot

“And it came to pass that when Moses came down...” – The radiance of Moses’

face in the aftermath of his personal experience of God' glory upon the mountain serves to demonstrate the unique intimacy which he enjoyed with the Lord and thereby to affirm his role as God's chosen leader of the Children of Israel on their journey to the Promised Land. In the aftermath of the apostasy of the Golden Calf the importance strengthening Moses' leadership was most urgent. The event had demonstrated the fickle and unreliable character of the Israelites in a dramatic fashion. The need for strong leadership which could deal with this stiff-necked and rebellious people was clearly evident. At the same time, the residual glory which still radiated from the prophet's face demonstrated irrefutably the authenticity of his divine encounter upon the mountain. God was present among them and the covenant had been restored. The glory streaming from Moses' face proved that that the words which Moses conveyed were truly from God and that despite their sin the Lord had forgiven them and would continue to dwell among them. The smoke and fire which had enveloped the crest of Sinai had demonstrated the glorious power of God in a manner which had overwhelmed the people. The fact that Moses had returned from the mountain with his face still aglow with the majesty of God's glory was a visible demonstration – offered in a most direct and personal way – of the wondrous majesty of the God who had chosen them to be His own people.



“Moses' Descent From Mount Sinai” By Gustav Dore



“Moses Descent From Sinai With Gleaming Countenance” by Larson

“And it came to pass when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of the Testimony in Moses’ hand” - The text stresses that as Moses descended from the mountain he did so as the messenger of God, bearing in his hands the covenant documents, one copy for the Lord and one copy for the people, which had been inscribed by the hand of God Himself. They had watched Moses carve out the tablets before he climbed the mountain. At that point they had, no doubt, been anxious about the outcome of his journey. Would the Lord forgive them? Could the Lord forgive their egregious act of rebellion against Him? Was it possible for the covenant which they had broken to be restored again? I’m sure they many of them apprehensively recalled that the last time Moses had come down the mountain with the sacred tablets he had furiously destroyed them when he had seen the worship of the calf idol. But this time it was entirely different. The holy tablets had been re-created. But even more than that the face of their leader gleamed with the light of heavenly glory. God had forgiven them! The record of His covenant agreement with them would be placed within the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle’s Holy of Holies where the Lord would graciously dwell in the midst of His people. In Hebrew tradition, this most sacred event took place took place on the 10th day of *“Tishrei*, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. As the foremost demonstration of God’s forgiveness in the history of the nation of Israel, this date was chosen for the ultimate forgiveness festival of the Hebrew liturgical calendar, *“Yom Kippur*,” the Day of Atonement. The appropriateness of this connection, its historical accuracy notwithstanding, is nothing less than magnificent and clearly indicates the central significance of the restoration of the covenant after the sin of the Golden Calf.



“Moses” by Michelangelo

“When he came down from the mountain, Moses wist not that his face shown while he talked with Him.” - It is amazing that Moses was not even aware of the transformation of his countenance. The implication is that if he had been he would have done something to mitigate the fearful impact of his appearance upon the people. Obviously, the glory of the Lord shining from his face was not painful or harmful in any way. The specific nature of the brightness which shined forth from Moses is impossible to define. The Hebrew text literally says: *“the skin of his face sent out horns.”* This Hebrew idiom for the bright beams of light extending from Moses was carried over literally into the Latin Vulgate by St. Jerome and resulted in the traditional depiction in Western art of horns protruding from both sides of Moses’ forehead. St Jerome explained that the horns on the forehead were to be

understood metaphorically to signify the power which God had bestowed upon His prophet to rule over the nation of Israel and to overcome and destroy all the forces of evil and the enemies of the people of God. These horns, in Jerome’s view, were the symbol of the unique status of Moses as the foremost prophet of the Old Testament under whose leadership the nation of Israel first came into being.

“The prophet was incandescent. He had been in the glorious presence of God, and as a result of the exposure to the divine radiance, his face was glowing. Moses was luminous. His countenance was radiant. His skin was shining with a supernatural light. It was the afterglow of God’s glory, what John Currid calls ‘the effulgent splendor of Almighty God...As a result of his face to face encounter with God, Moses had a halo of glory. Dazzling beams of light were shining forth from his face.’” (Ryken, p. 1070)

The use of a term for the magnificent rays of divine glory streaming from the countenance of Moses which is etymologically based on horns would also have served as a not too subtle reminder to the Israelites of their ridiculous choice of a horned bull calf, an impotent and helpless idol, as their replacement for the true God whose power and majesty far exceeds human comprehension.

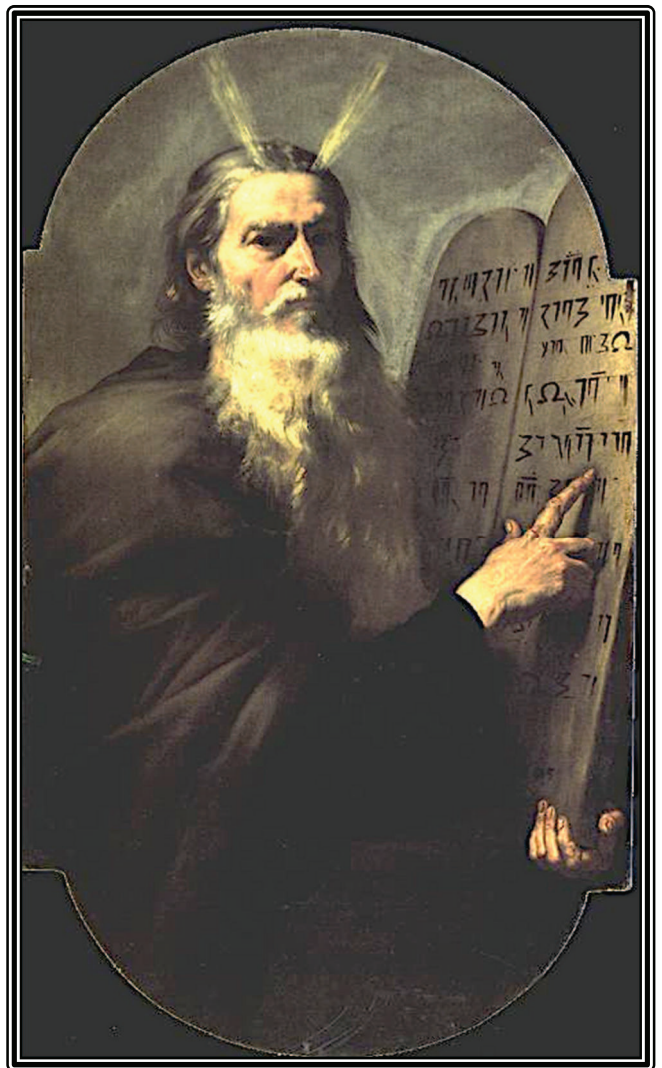
The halo of divine glory radiating from Moses' face would have dispelled any and all doubts as to God's personal sanction of his leadership and the authority which God had entrusted to him to lead the Children of Israel. *"The awe inspiring radiance emitted by Moses' face may be understood as the afterglow of the refulgent splendor of the Lord's Divine Presence. It functions to reaffirm and legitimate the prophet's role as the peerless intimate of God, the sole and singular mediator between God and His people."* (Sarna, p. 221)

Douglas Stuart offers this cogent explanation of the importance of this affirmation in the context of what has taken place in connection with the Golden Calf:

"To this point it could certainly be said that the covenant had been reaffirmed and God's presence among His people re-established, but what about Moses' authority among the people? He had been rejected as their leader during his first long absence (32:1). Though they increasingly showed him respect (as in their posture of worship whenever he would go to the little tent of meeting (33:7-11), they had not yet otherwise formally acknowledged their mistake in rejecting him as leader and as Yahweh's representative among them. Yahweh took care of all that by giving Moses an unmistakable credential; radiant glory, residual to an obvious divine encounter, that no one could doubt established him as the favorite of God." (Stuart, p. 737)

Nor does the text define the duration of the halo of glory around the face of the prophet. It was clearly not permanent. Rabbinic tradition holds that the radiance remained until the time of Moses' death. This would seem to be unlikely in the absence of any further reference to the phenomenon in the balance of the Torah. In 2 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul uses the temporary glory accorded to Moses as a contrast to emphasize the superior everlasting glory which has been accorded to believers in Christ.

"But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones was glorious, so that the Children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of



"Moses With The Horns Of Power" By Ribera

Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away with, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious...And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the Children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished. But their minds were blinded for to this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ.”
(2 Corinthians 3:7-8; 13-14)

Exodus commentator Victor Hamilton surmises that the radiance of Moses' face and the veil which would be used to conceal that radiance was supplanted by the radiance of the shekinah over the Tabernacle's Holy of Holies and the veil which separated and concealed the Holy of Holies from the view of the people:

“The veiling of Moses takes place while he and Israel are still at Sinai. Moses will be around for almost forty more years after their leave Sinai. How many times will Moses meet with God and subsequently mingle with his people during those several decades? And yet there is not a single reference to his veil after Exodus 34 either by Moses himself or by anyone contemporary with Moses, or by anyone else throughout Old Testament history. The veil that prevents anyone from gazing upon Moses seems to be replaced by the veil which separates the Holy Place from the Holiest Place lest anyone gaze upon the Holy One.” (Hamilton, p. 589)

“And when Aaron and all the Children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him.” - The re-action of Israel and her leaders – including even Aaron himself – to the manifestation of glory upon the face of Moses is fear. The rabbis teach that in their guilty remorse over the Golden Calf they recognized their unworthiness to stand in the holy presence of God, even in a secondary sense as the glorious presence radiated from the shining face of Moses. *“Because they had sinned and descended to a lower spiritual level, they were awed by Moses' shining face and they were afraid to approach him. In contrast, before they had sinned, they had been able to gaze on the glory of God Himself and not be afraid.”* (Lubbavitcher Rebbe, p. 264) The specific inclusion of Aaron among those who were frightened by the glory of Moses face is significant. Aaron had been the leader of the people at the time of their rebellion. He had used the skills he acquired in Egypt fashion the calf idol, creating a false god for them to worship. He had proclaimed the lies which called upon the people to bow down before this idol:

“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron and said unto him; ‘Up! Make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.’ ...And he received it at their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool; after he had made it a molten calf, and they said; ‘These be thy gods,

O Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’ And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it, and Aaron made proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow is a feast for the LORD.’” (Exodus 32:1, 4-5)

Historians have long speculated the fraternal rivalry may have been a factor in Aaron’s willingness to step forward and assume the evidently vacant leadership position of his younger brother. If that were the case the response of Aaron to Moses’ return now with a new vindication of his leadership by God would have been particularly important.

“And Moses called to them and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him and Moses talked with them.” – Moses responded immediately to the fear of the people and their leaders. He called Aaron and the tribal elders to his side and quickly reassured them that he had returned from his encounter with the LORD as a messenger of grace and not of judgment. Moses informed them that the LORD had agreed to forgive their transgression, to re-establish His covenant with them, and to dwell among them as His chosen people once again. No doubt this news was greeted with overwhelming relief. In the context of this good news, Moses’ radiant countenance was transformed in a certification of the good news he carried, rather than a sign of impending judgment.

“Moses called to all of them in love and humility, to draw near to him, and first Aaron, his brother and the chieftains of the congregation went back to him, and Moses spoke to them as he did every day, for the man Moses was very humble and did not act proudly on account of the honour that he had been vouchsafed.”
(Cassutto, p. 449)



“The Radiant Moses Presenting The New Tablets Of The Law”

“And afterward, all the Children of Israel came nigh, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoke with him in Mount Sinai.” – Once Moses had shared with the tribal elders the wondrous events which had taken place upon the mountain, and God’s revelation of Himself as a God of love and mercy who was prepared to forgive their transgression, the elders promptly moved through the encampment and gathered the people before Moses. The scene at the foot of Mount Sinai with their prophet’s aglow with the glory of God must have filled the people’s hearts with holy awe.

“Consequently, all the people eventually gathered around Moses to listen to him formally preach the them the instructions that he had received for them in his most recent forty day stay on the mountain. At this time, they still were all looking at his radiating face, which must have continued to terrify and amaze them, even though it actually bore no danger for them. Here was God’s prophet speaking the very words of God to them, with a face so terrifyingly glorious that few could manage to doubt that what he was relaying to them was absolutely true and that he had been personally sent by God to them to make sure they knew it.” (Stuart, p. 740)

“And till Moses was done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face. But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he took the vail off until he came out. And he came out and spake unto the Children of Israel of that which he was commanded. And the Children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone; and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.” – It would seem that the radiant face of the prophet remained the cause of uneasiness and fear on the part of the Children of Israel. To minimize that discomfort, Moses covered his face with a veil during ordinary everyday activity. However, the text notes that he would deliberately remove the veil when he entered the Tabernacle to commune with the Lord. Furthermore, when he came forth to convey to the people that which the Lord had said, his face remained uncovered as an unmistakable visual demonstration that Moses was functioning as the spokesman for God. Remaining veiled the rest of time distinguished between Moses as a private individual, and Moses functioning in his official capacity as the chosen prophet of God.



“Moses Meeting With Aaron And The Elders At Sinai”

Exodus Chapter 35

(1) *And Moses gathered all the congregation of the Children of Israel together, and said unto them, These are the words that the LORD hath commanded that ye should do them. (2) Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. (3) Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath Day. (4) And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the Children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying, (5) Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD; whosesoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD, gold, and silver, and brass. (6) and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, goats' hair, (7) and rams' skins dyed red, and badger skins, and shittim wood, (8) and oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, (9) and onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate. (10) And every wise hearted among you shall come and make all that the LORD hath commanded; (11) the tabernacle, his tent, and his covering, his taches and his boards, his bars, and his pillars, and his sockets, (12) the ark and the staves thereof with the mercy seat, and the vail of the covering, (13) the table, and his staves, and all his vessels, and the shewbread, (14) the candlestick also for the light, and his furniture, and his lamps with the oil for the light, (15) and the incense altar, and his staves and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the hanging for the door at the entrance in of the tabernacle, (16) the altar of burnt offering with His brazen grate, his staves and all his vessels, the laver, and his foot, (17) the hangings of the court, his pillars, and their sockets, and the hanging for the door of the court, (18) the pins of the tabernacle, and the pins of the court, and their cords, (19) the cloths of service to do service in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron, the priest, and the garments of his sons to minister in the priest's office. (20) And all the congregation of the Children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. (21) And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him up, and everyone whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for all the holy garments. (22) And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered, offered an offering of gold unto the LORD. (23) And every man with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and red skins of rams' and badgers' skins, brought them. (24) Everyone that did offer an offering of silver and brass, brought the LORD's offering; and every man with whom was found shittim wood, for any work of the service, brought it. (25) And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. (26) And all the women whose heart the LORD stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair. (27) And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate; (28) and spice and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense. (29) The Children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman whose heart made them willing to*

EXOD. XXXIII. 1^o - 2^o
Godt geeft andere Tafels door Moïſe.
Dieu redonne d'autres Tables par Moïſe.



EXOD. XXXV. 1^o - 2^o
Het Volk brengt Moïſe offer toe het oprigten der Tabernakel.
Le Peuple apporte à Moïſe des offes pour construire la Tabernacle.



“The Return Of Moses From Sinai And The Gifts For The Tabernacle” by Mortier

bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses. (30) And Moses said unto the Children of Israel, See, the Lord hath called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; (31) And He hath filled him with the spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; (32) and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, (33) and in the cutting of stones to set them, and in carving of wood to make any manner of cunning work. (34) And He hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. (35) Them hath He filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.

Verse 1

And Moses gathered all the congregation of Israel together, and said unto them, These are the words which the LORD hath commanded, that ye should do them. – Here, and in the subsequent chapters, the recreation of the covenant continues with the repetition of material, the great majority of which had already been provided in the Lord's initial interaction with Moses upon Sinai. The repetition serves not only to stress the radical disruption of God's relationship with Israel as the consequence of the apostasy of the Golden Calf, but also to describe the implementation and fulfillment of that which God had earlier commanded. In many instances throughout this segment, the order and sequence of the material is different in its restatement and often that which had been described in detail originally is summarized in the repetition and vice versa. Douglas Stuart offers this explanation for the pattern of the two texts in comparison to one another:

“The fulfillment section (chaps. 35-40) is intended to complement, not merely to repeat, the first without differentiation (chaps 25-31). It reinforces and builds upon what has already been stated and does this by variations that, although modest in number and scope compared to the repetitions, are still welcome as ‘fresh.’ Psychologically, the hearer/reader recognizes that this new material is not just prior material but information that has been reshaped and repackaged so that it comes across with sufficient novelty as to be of interest and seem worthy of careful attention. Another way to put it is this: the bits and pieces of different material keep the hearer/reader attentive and willing to listen to the repetitions of the bulk of the same material once again.”
(Stuart, p. 745)

This can be more clearly placed in perspective by the following chart, which provides a summary of the parallels between chapters 25-31 and 35-40. References to the same commands which occur later in Leviticus and Numbers are also included. The modern reader must keep in mind that this material was originally conveyed orally and that repetition has always been the mother of learning.

Command	Subject	Fulfillment
25:1-7	<i>call for offerings of materials</i>	35:4-9, 35:21-29
25:10-22	<i>the ark</i>	37:1-9
25:23-30	<i>the shewbread table</i>	37:10-16
25:31-39	<i>the lampstand</i>	37:17-24
26:1-37	<i>the tabernacle itself</i>	36:8-38
27:1-8	<i>the bronze altar of burnt offerings</i>	38:1-7
27:20-21	<i>oil for the lampstand</i>	<i>Command Renewed Leviticus 24:1-3</i>
28:1-5	<i>summary of priestly robes</i>	35:19; 39:1,41; 40:13-14; Lev.8:7-8
28:6-14	<i>ephod</i>	39:2-7
28:15-13	<i>breastpiece</i>	39:8-21; Lev. 8:8
28:31-43	<i>remaining priestly vestments</i>	39:22-31
29: 1-37	<i>consecrating the priests</i>	Lev. 8:1-36
29:38-43	<i>daily offerings</i>	<i>Command Renewed Numbers 28:1-8</i>
29:44	<i>consecration of the tabernacle and the altar</i>	40:9; 40:10; Lev. 8:11
29:44	<i>consecration of the priests</i>	40:13
30:1-5	<i>the incense altar</i>	37:25-28
30:6	<i>placement of the incense altar</i>	40:6,26
30:7-9	<i>rules for incense burning</i>	40:27
30:10	<i>atonement for incense altar</i>	Lev. 4:7
30:17-21	<i>bronze laver</i>	38:8; 40:30
30:22-33	<i>anointing oil for priest and furnishings</i>	35:28; 37:29; 40:9; Lev. 8:10-12,30
30:34-38	<i>incense</i>	35:28; 37:29; 39:38; 40:27
31:1-11	<i>Bezalel & Oholiab Job Description</i>	35:30-35; 36:1-7
31:12-17	<i>Sabbath</i>	35: 1-3; Lev. 23:3; Num.15: 32-36; Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Everything is now in place for the re-establishment of the covenant relationship between God and His people. Moses has returned to the mountain top. His leadership has been affirmed by His personal encounter with the Lord reflecting in the brilliant heavenly glory which illuminates his face. The two tablets of the Ten Commandments have been recreated and inscribed by the finger of God. Those who refused to repent of the idolatry of the Golden Calf have been destroyed, thus cleansing the nation and preparing it for the construction of the Tabernacle as the dwelling place of God within it. Accordingly, at this point, the implementation of command to build the Tabernacle is described.

Verses 2-3

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord: whoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day.

“Six days shall work be done ...” - The original instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle had concluded with the Sabbath admonition. In this instance the report of the actual construction begins with the same admonition to refrain from work on the seventh day. The implication of its placement appears to be that the Sabbath takes precedent even over the construction of the holy Tabernacle and that its enforcement must remain in effect during this most important building project. Work on the Tabernacle must be suspended on the Sabbath to observe the Lord's day of rest. Sabbath observance was one of the most primary hallmarks of Israel's religious life, a tangible sign of the covenant constantly reflected in their weekly schedule. At the same time, Sabbath observance was the most obvious indication of their commitment to the covenant. It set them apart from all other nations and made it obvious whether or not they were committed to keeping God's covenant. *“Keeping the Sabbath was an openly visible essential - a sine qua non – of covenant loyalty. Not to keep it would be to say publicly to the world ‘I am not in covenant relationship with the Lord of the Sabbath.’”* (Stuart, p. 748) At the same time, the Sabbath was an ongoing reminder of creation and the foundational reality that God is the Creator of all things. This fact defines His identity and establishes the basis for His relationship with Israel and the authority upon which His commands are based. Accordingly, the previous Sabbath command concludes with this observation: ***“It is a sign between Me and the Children of Israel forever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.”*** (Ex. 31:17) Sadly, most of Christendom in our day has bowed to the presumptuous fantasies of contemporary culture and abandoned the



***“God Created The Heavens And The Earth” 19th Century Bible Illustration
by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld***



“God Rested On The Seventh Day God Rested” by Jan Bruegel II

Biblical doctrine of creation as non-essential. They fail to recognize that the creation account in the opening chapters of Genesis is the foundation upon which everything else in Scripture is based. Built upon this foundation the plan of salvation which unfolds from Genesis 3 is coherent and compelling. Disconnected from it, none of the remainder of the Bible makes any sense whatsoever. For Israel, the observance of the Sabbath provided an ongoing reminder of the creation week during which the great I AM had fashioned all things out of nothing.

The instruction here adds a specific admonition in regard to kindling fires- ***“Ye shall kindle no fires throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day.”*** The injunction specifically references the dwelling places of the people. Fire for warmth or protection from cold weather would not have been relevant in the desert climate of the Sinai Peninsula. The point is that there was to be no cooking in the households on the Sabbath. Food would have to have been prepared on Friday and eaten cold on Saturday. Thus the women and servants would also be enabled to take part in the sacred rest of the Lord’s holy day. The same concern had previously been evidenced in the provision of two days’ worth of manna on Friday, so that it would not be necessary to gather manna on the Sabbath day (cf. Ex. 16:14-35). The specific application of the command to ***“your habitations”*** excludes the fires upon the altars of the Tabernacle, thus enabling the sacrifices and rituals of the worship services to continue throughout the week, including the seventh day. The importance of the Sabbath command in the religious life of Israel is indicated by the fact that the punishment for labor as mundane as merely gathering firewood on the Sabbath was death (cf. Numbers 15:32-36).



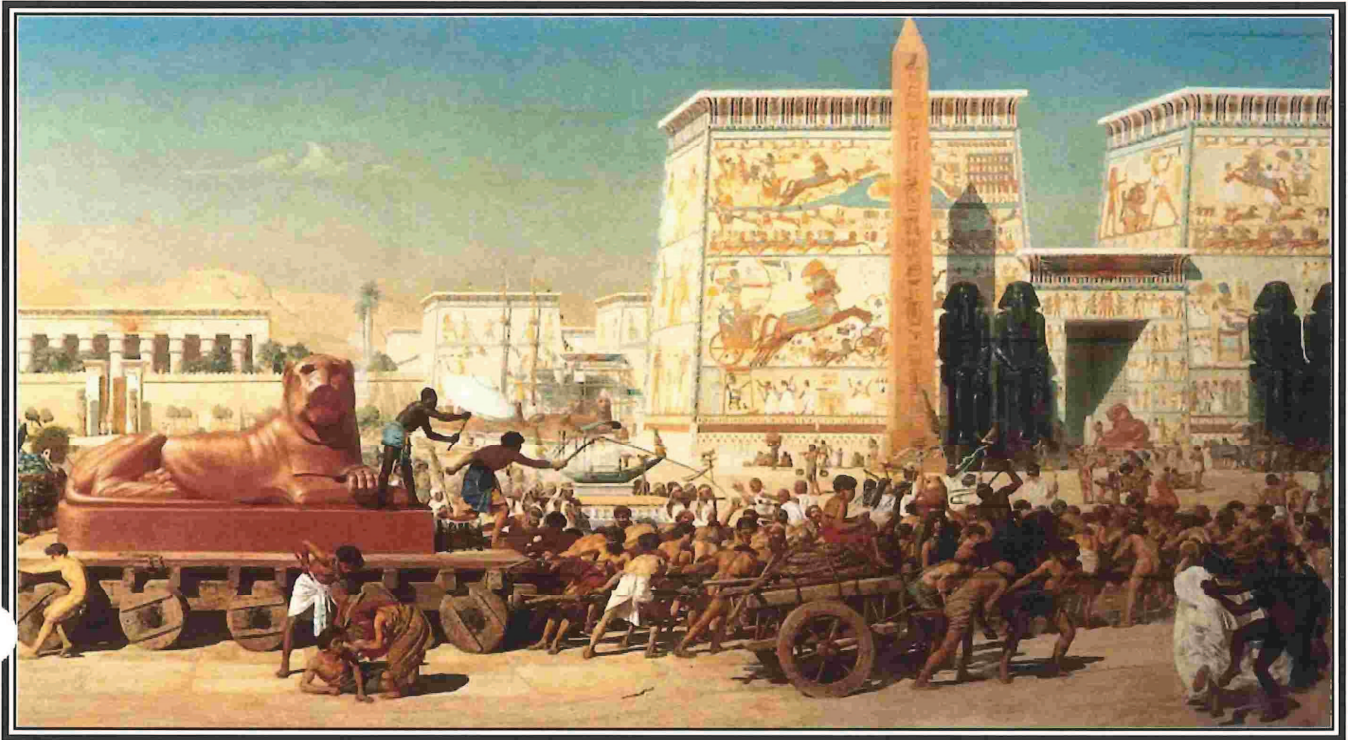
*“The People Bring Their Gifts For The Tabernacle”
by Tony Sarg*

Verses 4-9

“And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the Children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD, gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats’ hair, and rams’ skins dyed red, and badgers’ skins, and shittim wood, and oil for the light and spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, and onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate.”

“And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the Children of Israel, saying” – The words of Moses here repeat, almost verbatim, the instructions which the Lord had given him upon the mountain in reference to the material gifts which were required for the construction of the Tabernacle and the conduct of its services and rituals. Both texts emphasize the gifts of the people are to be free will offerings which are given by those who choose to do so without coercion of any kind – ***“whosoever is of a willing heart, let him***

bring it, an offering to the Lord.” The detailed enumeration of material and the specificity of the design stresses the divinely determined nature of Israel’s sanctuary and her worship. As Exodus 31 had affirmed, the Tabernacle would conform precisely to the heavenly pattern: ***“And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the Tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.”*** (Ex. 25:8-9)



“Hebrew Slaves Building The Treasure Cities Of Pharaoh”

Verses 10-19

“And every wise-hearted among you shall come and make all that the Lord hath commanded; the Tabernacle, his tent, and his covering, his taches, (“clasps”) and his boards, his bars, his pillars, and his sockets, the ark, and the staves thereof with the mercy seat, and the vail of the covering, the table, and his staves, and all his vessels, and the shew bread, the candlesticks also for the light, and his furniture, and his lamps with the oil for the light, and the incense altar, and his staves, and the anointing oil, and his sweet incense, and the hanging for the door at the entering in of the Tabernacle, the altar of burnt offering with his brazen grate, his staves, and all his vessels, the laver, and his foot. The hangings of the court, his pillars, and their sockets, and the hanging/or the door of the court, the pins of the Tabernacle, and the pins of the court, and their cords, the cloths of service, to do service in the Holy Place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office.”

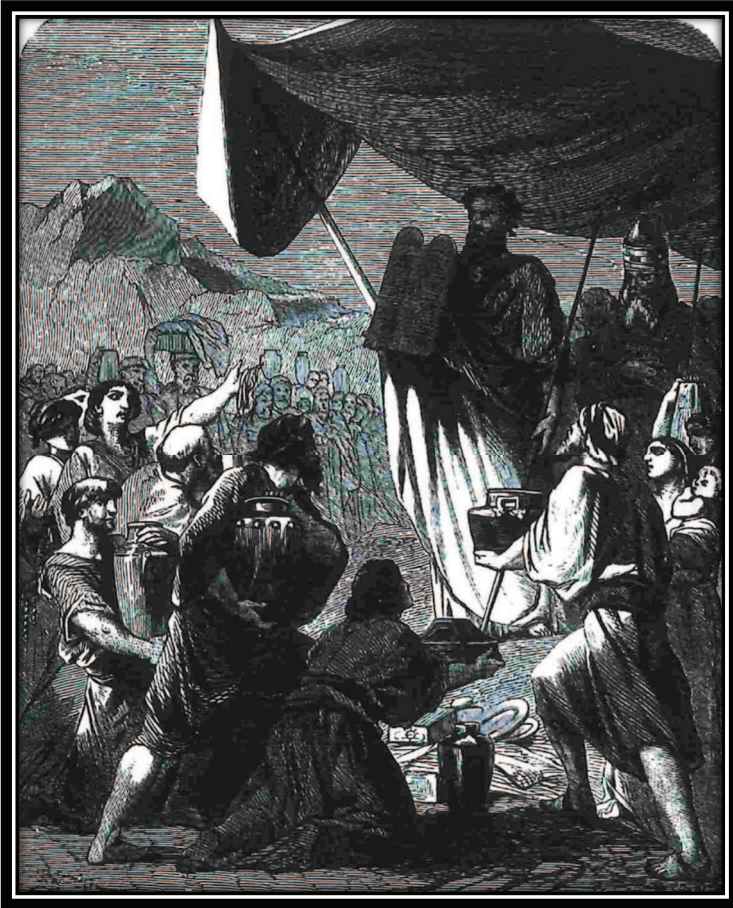
“And every wise-hearted among you shall come ...” - The list of materials is followed by a call for skilled workers – ***“every wise-hearted among you”*** - who will actually carry out

the construction project. The Lord had promised that He would provide the skills necessary to carry out the task which He was about to assign to them: ***“And in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee.”*** (Ex. 31:7) The detailed listing of the various components of the structure and its furnishings stresses the intricacy of the work to be done and the variety of talents and skills which will be necessary. In the providence of God the unsophisticated shepherd herdsmen who had come out of Canaan with Jacob four hundred years earlier had been trained in the most advanced culture of the ancient Near East to be the builders of the treasure cities of Pharaoh. They had constructed temples and palaces adorned with exquisite artwork. Now they would have the opportunity to utilize those skills to the glory of the one true God as they erected His chosen dwelling place on earth.

Verses 20-29

“And all the congregation of the Children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord’s offering to the work of the Tabernacle of the LORD’s offering to the Tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for all the holy garments. And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold; and every man that offered, offered an offering of gold unto the Lord. And every man with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats’ hair, and red skins of rams, and badgers’ skins, brought them. Every one that did offer and offering of silver and brass brought the Lord’s offering: and every man with whom was found shittim wood for any work of the service, brought it. And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose hearts stirred them up in wisdom spun goats’ hair. And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate; and spice, and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense. The Children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.”

“And all the congregation of the Children of Israel departed ...” - The significance of this announcement is indicated by the fact that Moses had chosen to communicate his instructions from the Lord not merely with the tribal elders - as was ordinarily his custom - but with a mass assembly of the entire nation. The Hebrew text emphasizes the inclusiveness of the group, literally *“the whole Israelite community.”* Estimates of the size of the encampment before Sinai range from 2.5 to 3.5 million people. One can only imagine how communication was conducted within the gathering of millions of people. Having heard, the Lord’s invitation to participate in the construction of His dwelling place among them by their free will gifts, the great assembly dispersed, each to their own tents, to consider what their response to this great honor would be. The inclusive language of the



*“The People Bring Their Gifts For The Tabernacle” -
19th Century German Bible Engraving*

text continues with the emphasis that both men and women took part both in the family decisions that were made and the specific contributions which were gathered: “The Children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.” (Vs. 29) The scope of this massive project is emphasized by the repetition of the specific categories of rare and costly materials which would be required. For the modern reader all of this repetition seems tedious and unnecessary. However, in the original context, where most of this was communicated orally, the repetition would become a virtual litany of the vast wealth which was required and eagerly provided to construct and provide for God’s dwelling place amid His chosen people. The most talented

weavers and seamstresses immediately went to work to create the intricately crafted cloth which would be necessary for the task.

Verses 30-34

“And Moses said unto the Children of Israel, See, the LORD hath called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and He hath filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in the cutting of stones to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work. And He hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. Them hath He filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraving, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.”

“And Moses said unto the Children of Israel ...” -The report of the overflowing response to the appeal for materials from the people is followed by the appointment and divine endorsement of the two master craftsmen who oversee and train the workers for the construction of the Tabernacle. As is the case with the rest of the material in this segment,



“Bezaleel And Aholiab Building The Ark Of The Covenant” – 16th Century Woodcut

this is not new information but a re-affirmation of appointments which had previously been announced. Not only are the two men chosen master-craftsmen in their own right but they have been endowed by God with unique ability to impart their own skills to their apprentices as superb teachers. The other unique characteristic of Bezaleel and Aholiab is that their skills include every area of craftsmanship which will be required for the completion of the task. They are simultaneously metalworkers and woodcarvers, embroiders and weavers, jewelers and goldsmiths. Certainly these two men have been called and equipped by God to exert their artistry in every dimension of the dwelling place of God. *“No part of the Tabernacle would be the work of mere amateurs, but that all would be the best that human beings could make it, operating under divine design and giftedness.”* (Stuart, p. 759)

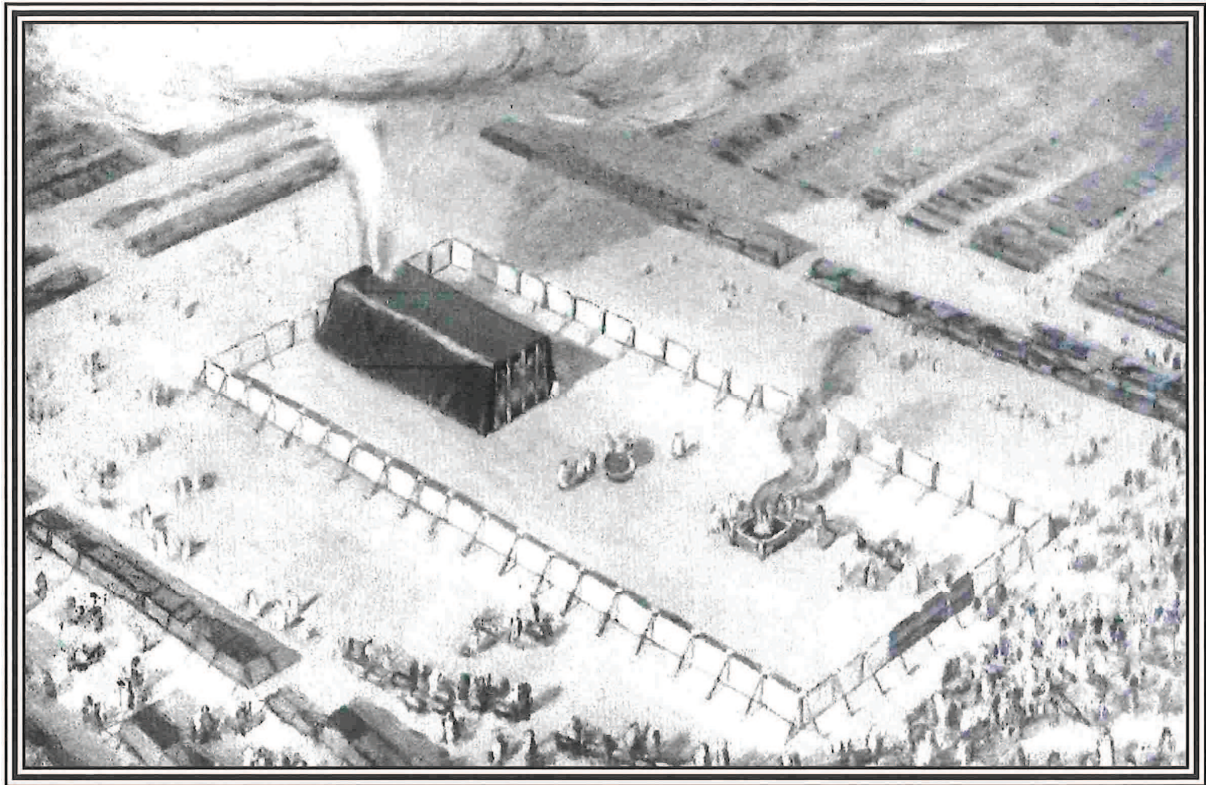
Exodus Chapter 36

(1) Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all the Lord had commanded. (2) And Moses called Bezazeel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man in whom the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it. (3) And they received of Moses every offering which the Children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning. (4) And all the wise men that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made; (5) And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make. (6) And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman

make any more work for the offering for the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. (7) For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much. (8) And every wise-hearted man among them that wrought the work of the Tabernacle made ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet; with cherubims of cunning work made he them. (9) The length of one curtain was twenty and eight cubits; and the breadth of one curtain was four cubits; the curtains were all of one size. (10) And he coupled the five curtains, one unto another; and the other five curtains he coupled one unto another. (11) And he made loops of blue on the edge of one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling; likewise he made in the uttermost side of another curtain, the coupling of the second. (12) Fifty loops made he in one curtain and fifty loops made he in the edge of the curtain which was in the coupling of the second: the loops held one curtain to another. (13) And he made fifty taches of gold, and coupled the curtains one unto another with the taches, so it became one Tabernacle. (14) And he made the curtains of goats' hair for the tent over the Tabernacle; eleven curtains he made them. (15) The length of one curtain was thirty cubits, and four cubits was the breadth of one curtain; the eleven curtains were of one size. (16) And he coupled five curtains by themselves and six curtains by themselves. (17) And he made fifty loops upon



“Exodus 36 - The Construction of the Tabernacle” by Mortier



“The Tabernacle Within The Camp” – 19th Century Bible Illustration

the uppermost edge of the curtain in the coupling; and fifty loops made he upon the edge of the curtain which coupleth the second. (18) And he made fifty taches of brass to couple the tent together, that it might be one. (19) And he made a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of badger skins above that. (20) And he made the boards for the Tabernacle of shittim wood standing up. (21) The length of a board was ten cubits, and the breadth of a board, one cubit and a half. (22) One board had two tenons, equally distant from one another: thus did he make for all the boards of the Tabernacle. (23) And he made boards for the Tabernacle, twenty boards for the south side, southward. (24) And forty sockets of silver he made under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons. (25) And for the other side of the Tabernacle, which is toward the north corner, he made twenty boards. (26) And their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. (27) And for the sides of the Tabernacle westward he made six boards. (28) And two boards made he for the corners of the Tabernacle in the two sides. (29) And they were coupled beneath, and they were coupled together at the head thereof, to one ring; thus he did to both of them in both the corners. (30) And there were eight boards; and their sockets were sixteen sockets of silver, under every board, two sockets. (31) And he made bars of shittim wood; five for the boards of the one side of the Tabernacle, (32) and five bars for the boards of the other side of the Tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the Tabernacle of the sides westward. (33) And he made the middle bar to shoot through the boards from the one end to the other. (34) And he overlaid the boards with gold, and made their rings of gold to be places for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold. (35) And he made a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and

fine twisted linen, with cherubims made he it of cunning work. (36) And he made thereunto four pillars of shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold; their hooks were of gold, and he cast for them four sockets of silver. (37) And he made a hanging for the Tabernacle door of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twisted linen, of needlework. (38) And the five pillars of it with their hooks; and he overlaid their chapiters and their fillets with gold; but their five sockets were of brass.



*“Bezaleel - Builder Of The Tabernacle”
by James Tissot*

Verse 1

“Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the Lord had commanded.”

“Then wrought Bealeel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man ...” - The divine commissioning and equipping of the masters and their craftsmen from the preceding chapter is concluded here. The chapter division obscures the fact that this verse is the summary conclusion of Moses’ address to the nation. The text takes particular note of the fact that these highly skilled workers were given their abilities as a unique gift of God – *“in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary.”* The Hebrew word for *“wisdom”* occurs eighteen times in the Book of Exodus. Sixteen of those occurrences are here in reference to the masters and craftsmen of the Tabernacle. The other two are in the opening chapters of the book where Pharaoh seeks to act wisely by enslaving the Children of Israel before they overrun his

country and later when Pharaoh summons his wise men to replicate the miracles of Moses (Ex. 1:10; 7:11). Victor Hamilton offers this intriguing suggestion as to the significance of the contrast:

“Maybe, instead, there is a contrast between the employment of a wisdom which leads to the death and oppression of others, and a wisdom that leads one to use gratefully and artistically the skills that God has given for the sake

of the larger community. The first is a wisdom from below. The second is a wisdom from above.” (Hamilton, p. 601)

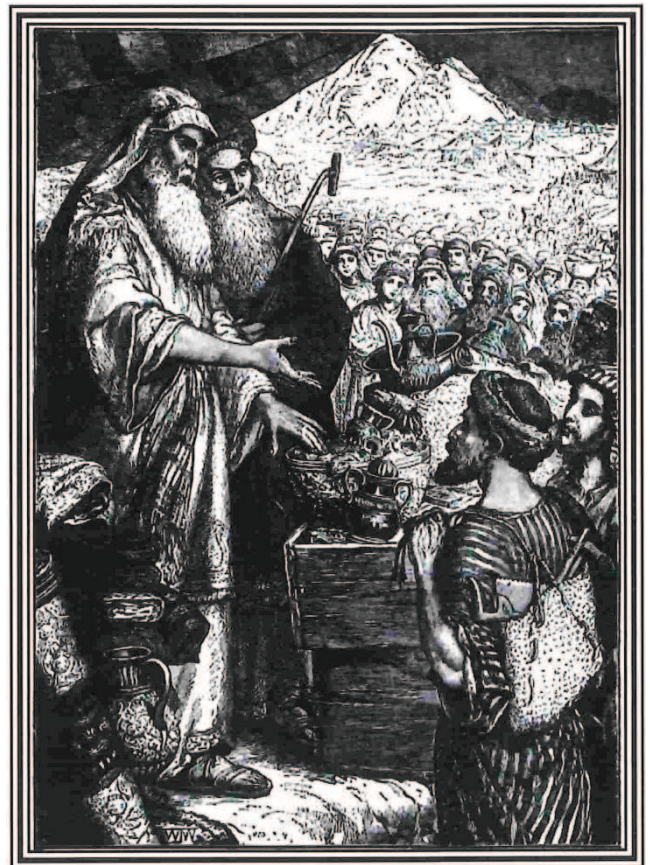
This verse further re-emphasizes the fact that what is to be built must be strictly in accordance with God’s design – **“according to all that the Lord had commanded.”** Bezaleel, Aholiab and their craftsmen were the builders of the Tabernacle, but God was its architect. Nothing in this sanctuary is to be designed by man.

Verses 2-7

“And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it. And they received of Moses all the offering, which the Children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning. And every wise man, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made: And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.”

“And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab....” - The work commenced immediately as Bezaleel and Aholiab organized their craftsmen and set them to their various tasks. The process of receiving the free-will offerings of the people was such that the gifts were to be brought to Moses. As the Lord’s personal representative, whose face was still agleam with heavenly light, this would have reinforced the fact that their gifts were being given to God Himself. This also gave Moses the opportunity to inspect and evaluate the gifts presented to ensure that they were of the highest quality and suitable for use in the construction of the Tabernacle.

“And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning.” - The people’s response to the appeal is overwhelming. The amounts appear to have been so abundant that they actually hampered the progress of the work to the point that the craftsmen all came to Moses with an



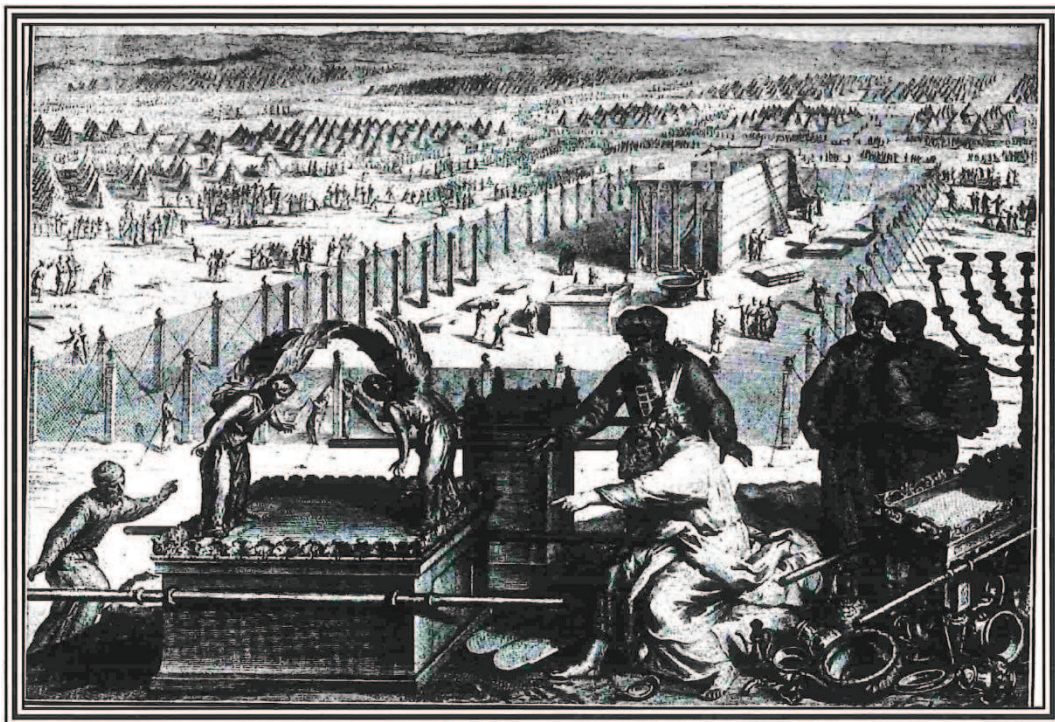
“Moses Receives The Tabernacle Offering”

appeal to make the people stop giving. One commentator dryly observes:

“It is not frequent that leaders of congregations must order their congregants to cease giving for the treasury is overloaded and bursting. It is not a crisis most pastors, priests or rabbis ever encounter. But here was a problem and an embarrassment stemming from too liberal amounts of donations.”
(Hamilton, p. 603)

A prompt forceful effort was required to stem the flood of gifts which was flowing in from the people. ***“So Moses gave commandment and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing.”*** The announcement which was sent out was a ***“commandment”*** not a request or a suggestion. It was couched in no uncertain terms. The language suggests that the people wanted to give more but ***“were restrained from bringing.”*** Appropriately, this same Hebrew word is used in Genesis 8:2 to describe God’s action in putting an end to the downpour which had brought about the great flood – ***“and the rain from heaven was restrained.”***

The ability of the people to give in such abundance is indicative of the abundance which had been showered upon them when they left Egypt. In the aftermath of the death of the firstborn the people of Egypt had been desperate to be rid of the Hebrews and had showered upon them the great wealth of their ancient land to speed them on their way (cf. Ex. 12:35-36). The treasures which had been created in the service of pagan idols was now to be transformed for use in the service of the true God.



“The Construction Of The Tabernacle” – 19th Century Bible Illustration



“Bezaleel - The Master Builder Of The Tabernacle”

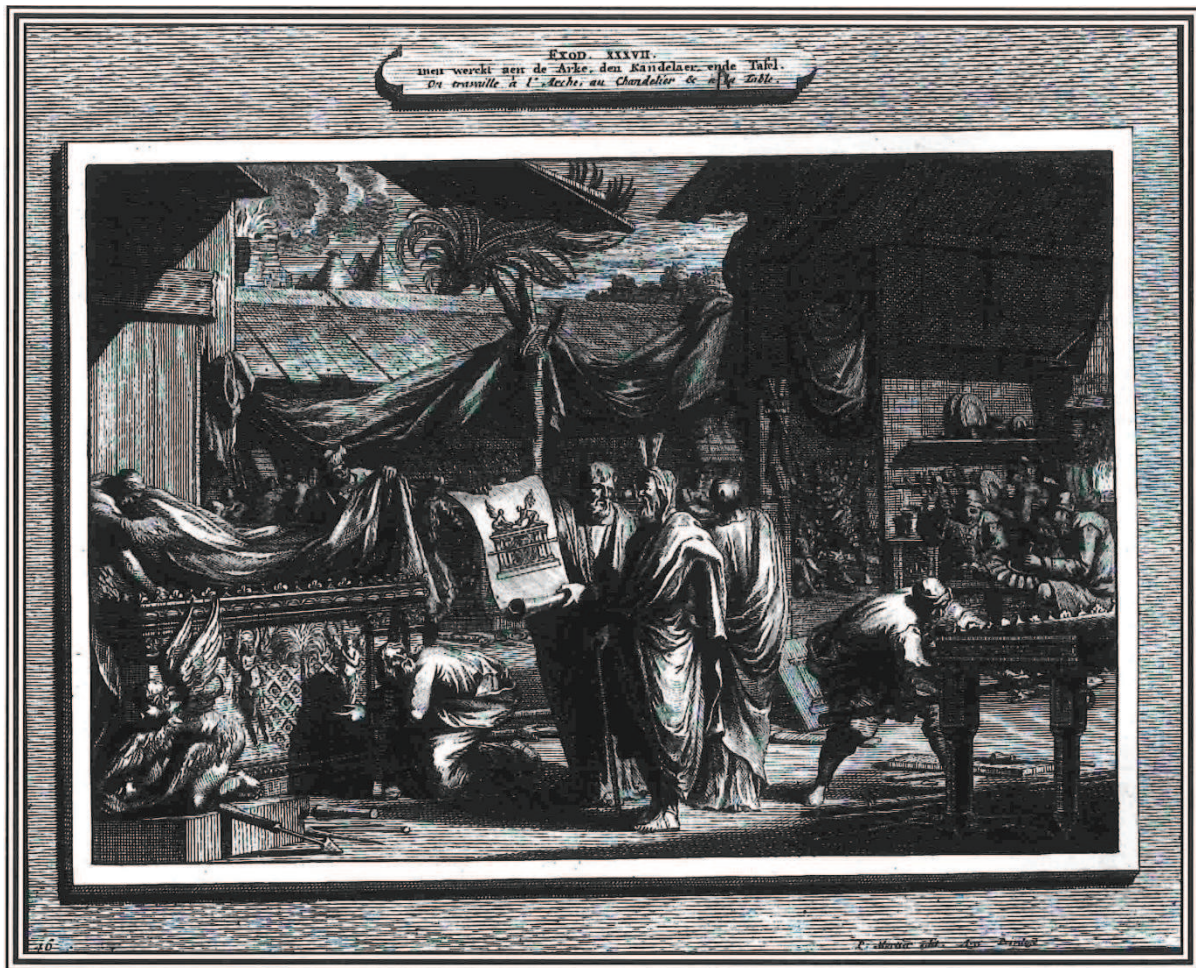
Verses 8-38

“And every wise-hearted man among them that wrought the work of the Tabernacle made ten curtains of fine twisted linen, and blue and purple and scarlet; with cherubims of cunning work made he them. The length of one curtain was twenty and eight cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits; the curtains were all of one size. And he coupled the five curtains one unto another; and the other five curtains he coupled one unto another. And he made loops of blue on one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling: likewise he made in the uttermost side of another curtain, in the coupling of the second. Fifty loops made he in one curtain, and fifty loops made he in the edge of the curtain which was in the coupling of the second: the loops held one curtain to another. And he made fifty taches of gold, and coupled the curtains one unto another with the taches: so it became one tabernacle. And he made curtains of goats' hair for the curtain over the Tabernacle; eleven curtains he made them. The length of one curtain was thirty cubits, and four cubits was the breadth of one curtain: the eleven curtains were of one size. And he coupled five curtains by themselves and six curtains by themselves. And he made fifty loops in the uttermost edge of the curtain in the coupling, and fifty loops made he upon the edge of the curtain, which coupleth the second. And he made fifty taches of brass to couple the tent together, that it might be one. And he made a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of badger skins above that. And he made boards for the Tabernacle of shittim wood standing up. The length of a board was ten cubits, and the breadth of a board one cubit and a half. One board had two tenons, equally distant from one another: thus did he make for all the boards of the Tabernacle. And he made boards for the Tabernacle; twenty boards for the south side southward: and forty sockets of silver he made under the twenty boards, two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons. And for the other side of the Tabernacle which is toward the north corner, he made twenty boards,

and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. And for the sides of the Tabernacle westward he made six boards. And two boards made he for the corners of the Tabernacle in the two sides. And they were coupled beneath, and coupled together at the head thereof to one ring: thus he did to both of them in both of the corners. And there were eight boards; and their sockets were sixteen sockets of silver, under every board two sockets. And he made bars of shittim wood; five for the boards of the one side of the Tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the other side of the Tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the Tabernacle for the sides westward. And he made the middle bar to shoot through the boards from one end to the other. And he overlaid the boards with gold, and made their rings of gold to he places for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold. And he made a vail of blue, and scarlet, and purple, and fine twisted linen; with cherubims he made it of cunning work. And he made thereunto four pillars of shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold; their hooks were of gold and he cast for them four sockets of silver. And he made a hanging of the Tabernacle door of blue, and of scarlet, and of purple, and of fine twined linen, of needlework; and the five pillars of it with their hooks; and he overlaid their chapiters (“capitals”) and their fillets (ornamental bands) with gold; hut their five sockets were of brass.”

“And every wise-hearted man among them ...” - The description of the Tabernacle's actual construction begins with the four layers of curtains which constituted the tent itself. The language of the text follows the original command of God verbatim to indicate that God's instructions were followed in every detail. The innermost curtain was woven of the finest material in beautiful colors, itself a wondrous work of art befitting the dwelling place of the LORD. The next layer was made of woven goats' hair followed by two outer curtains made of animal hides. The first of ram skins dyed red and the second of *“tahash.”* The identity of this beast is impossible to conclusively determine, given the obscurity of the Hebrew term. The KJV reflects the traditional understanding of the word as badger skins. Most modern scholars that it was more likely an aquatic animal, either a porpoise or a manatee, either of whose hides would have been particularly water repellent. In this way the Tabernacle would have been protected from the elements. There is no reference to any roof beams or rafters extending above the walls, nor to the manner in which the covering curtains may have been anchored to the ground. This being the case, the general assumption is that the four curtains were simply stretched tightly over the wooden frame of the walls and anchored with pegs in the ground all the way around the Tabernacle. Thus, the interior ceiling of the tent would have been the colored innermost curtain, slightly sagging in between the walls. This view is consistent with the typical construction of bedouin tents today.

The frame of the structure consisted of upright boards mounted plated with gold and mounted with pegs in silver bases. The boards were then fastened together with gold plated wooden bars running the entire length of the structure. A thorough discussion of the construction is included in the notes on the original commands given in Exodus Chapter 26.

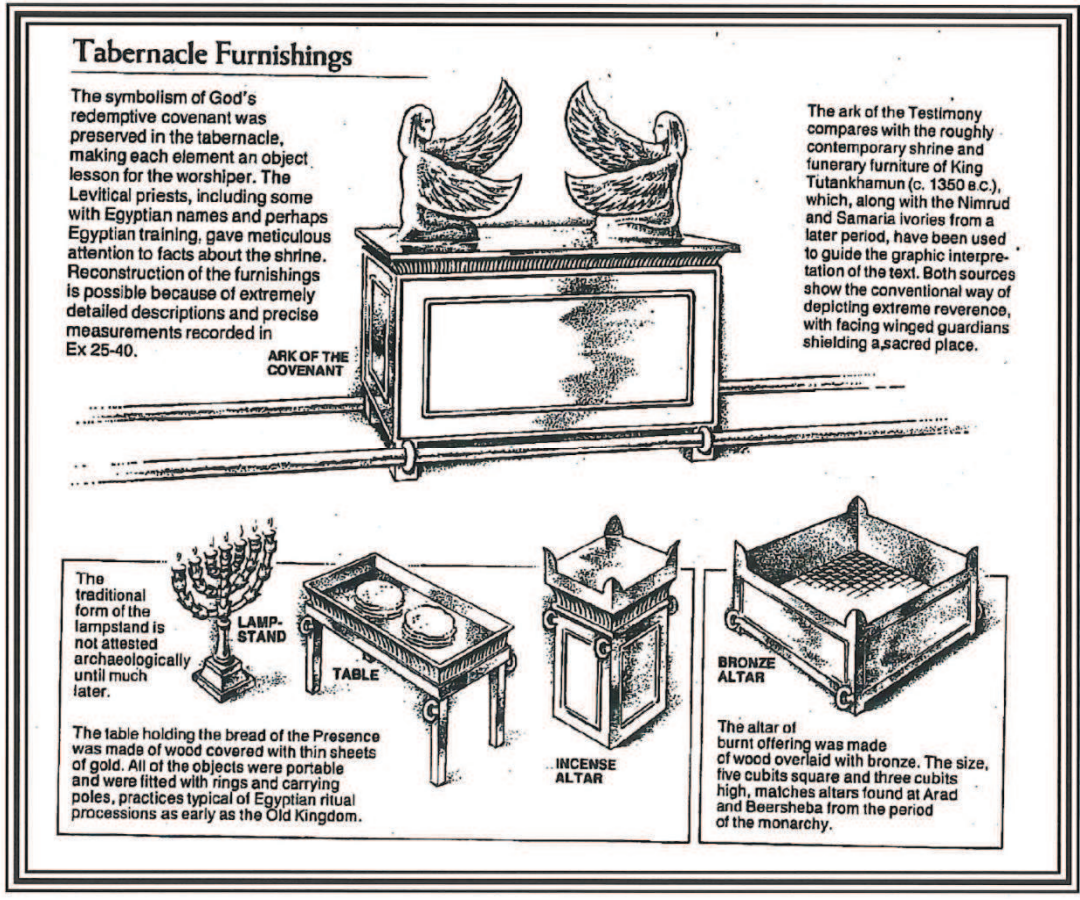


“Exodus 37- The Construction Of The Ark Of The Covenant” by Mortier

Exodus Chapter 37

(1) And Bezaleel made the ark of shittim wood: two cubits was the length of it, and a cubit and a half the breadth of it, and a cubit and a half the height of it; (2) And he overlaid it with pure gold, within and without, and made a crown of gold to it round about. (3) And he cast for it four rings of gold, to be set by the four corners of it; even two rings upon the one side of it, and two rings upon the other side of it. (4) And he made staves of shittim wood and overlaid them with gold. (5) And he put the staves into the rings by the side of the ark to bear the ark. (6) And he made the mercy seat of pure gold, two cubits and half was the length thereof, and one cubit and a half the breadth thereof. (7) And he made two cherubims of gold, beaten out of one piece made he them, on the two ends of the mercy seat; (8) One cherub on the end of this side, and one cherub on the other end on that side: out of the mercy seat made he the two cherubs on the ends thereof. (9) And the cherubims spread out their wings on high, and covered with their wings over the mercy seat, with their faces one to another, even to the mercy seatward were the faces of the cherubims. (10) And he made the table of shittim wood: two cubits was the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof: (11) And he overlaid it with pure gold, and made thereunto a crown of gold

round about. (12) Also he made thereunto a border of a hand breadth round about; and made a crown of gold for the border thereof round about. (13) And he cast for it four rings of gold, and put the rings upon the four corners that were in the four feet thereof. (14) Over against the border were the rings, the places for the staves to hear the table. (15) And he made the staves with shittim wood and overlaid them with gold to hear the table. (16) And he made the vessels which were upon the table, his dishes, and his spoons, and his bowls, and his covers to cover withal, of pure gold. (17) And he made the candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work made he the candlestick; his shaft, and his branch, his howls, and his knops, ("flower buds") were of the same. (18) And six branches going out of the sides thereof: three branches of the candlestick out of the one side thereof; and three branches out of the other side thereof: (19) Three howls made after the fashion of almonds in one branch, a knop and a flower: so throughout the six branches going out of the candlestick. (20) And in the candlestick were four bowls made like almonds, his knops, and his flowers; (21) and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches going out of it. (22) Their knops and their branches were of the same; all of it was one beaten work of pure gold. (23) And he made his seven lamps, and his snuffers, and his snuff dishes, of pure gold. (24) Of a talent of pure gold made he it, and all the vessels thereof. (25) And he made the incense altar of shittim wood; the length of it was a cubit, and the breadth of it a cubit; it was foursquare; and two cubits was the height of it; the horns thereof were of the same. (26) And he



"The Furnishings Of The Tabernacle"

overlaid it with pure gold, both the top of it, and the sides thereof, round about, and the horns of it; also he made unto it a crown of gold round about. (27) And he made two rings of gold for it under the crown thereof, by the two corners of it, upon the two sides thereof, to be places for the staves to bear it withal. (28) And he made the staves of shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold. (29) And he made the holy anointing oil, and the pure incense of sweet spices, according to the work of the apothecary.

“And Bezaleel made the ark” - The sacred Ark of the Covenant is appropriately given the place of preeminence in the description of the furnishings of the Tabernacle. In the preceding account of Chapters 25-26 the Ark is commanded before the Tabernacle itself. In this instance, however, as the actual construction takes place, the Tent and its curtains are fashioned first. This makes perfect sense in that the curtains of the Tabernacle were used to protect and cover the Ark when it was not in its ordinary location within the



“The Serephim”

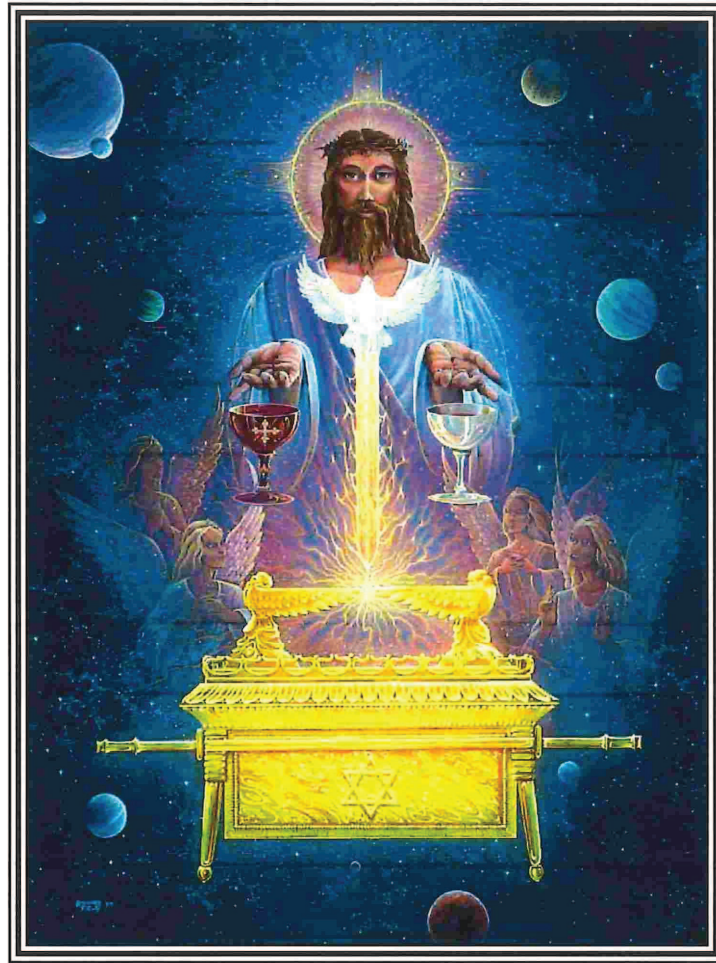
Holy of Holies. The significance of the Ark of the Covenant in Old Testament Judaism cannot be overstated. Until its disappearance at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C. it was the most tangible indication of God's presence among His covenant people and the key to the validity of all of the other ceremonial services and sacrifices of Temple worship. The Ark is mentioned at least 185 times in the Old Testament using a variety of names and titles, all of which refer to the presence and attributes of God. We will include at this point two pertinent commentaries on the Ark of the Covenant. The first is oriented more toward history and archaeology by Dr. Nahum Sama:

“The directions for constructing a Tabernacle commence with the order to fashion an Ark. This takes up the point that Moses is to ascend up the mountain in order to receive the two stone tablets on which the Decalogue is incised. The Ark will permanently house them and it is therefore the focus of the entire enterprise ... It is the Ark and its contents, the symbol of the covenant between God and Israel, that gives meaning to the Tabernacle, for the religio-moral imperatives of the Decalogue constitute the foundation of Israelite society ... The sole function of the Ark is to house the tablets of stone ... The practice of housing legal documents in a sacred place was quite widespread in the ancient Near East. It symbolically underscored the importance of the document and projected the idea that the presiding deity witnessed and guarded it and

oversaw its implementation ... Thus, when Moses deposits in the Ark the tablets of stone that contained the fundamentals of the covenant between God and Israel, he is following an ancient and widespread Near Eastern legal tradition. His action also carries implications for the symbolic meaning of the Ark. God is never said to reside in it or to speak from it, only to communicate with Moses from above it. It is therefore likely that the Ark represented the footstool of God's throne, which was imagined to be situated above it ... The footstool, like the throne itself, was an important prerogative of royalty in the Near East, a token of dignity and power ... A slab of pure gold is to be placed above the Ark, which was open on top. The object is called in Hebrew 'kapporet,' a word that has traditionally been rendered 'mercy seat' in the English versions ... At either end of the kapporet, a cherub was hammered out. The two cherubim faced each other with their heads slightly downward. Their fully outstretched wings were turned upward, sheltering the main body of the lid and the Ark below it .. Just as the Ark may poetically be the footstool, the kapporet with its cherubim would support the invisible throne of God. This explains the frequently employed epithet of God as 'the One Who Is Enthroned On the Cherubim.'... The cherubim of the Tabernacle certainly communicate some concepts of God that are fundamental to the religion of Israel. As bearers of the celestial throne, they evoke belief in divine, transcendent sovereignty. Their permanent place above the Ark expresses God's immanence - His enduring presence within the covenanted community of



"Moses And Aaron Before the Ark" by James Jacques Tissot



“The Ark Fulfilled In Christ”

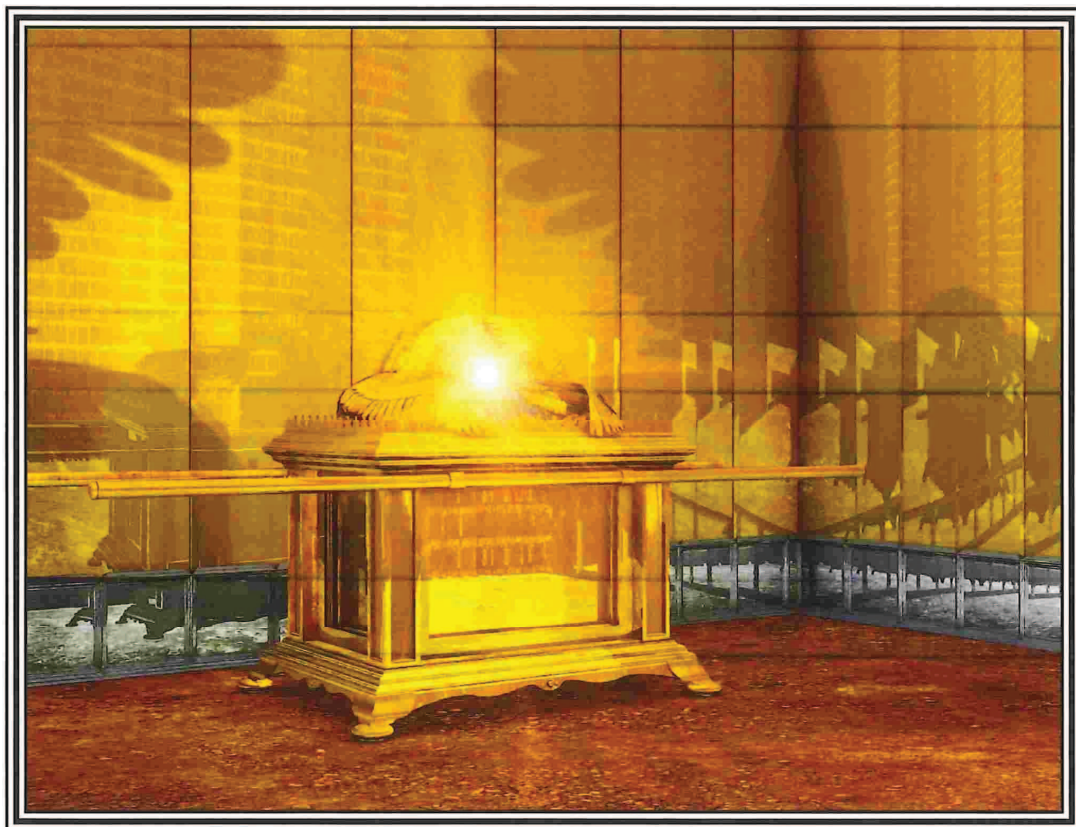
Israel. Their outstretched wings represent the idea of consummate mobility, that is, God’s omnipresence.” (Sama, pp. 159ff.)

In his classic study *The Theology of the Older Testament*, Dr. J. Barton Payne assessed the doctrinal significance of the Ark of the Covenant and its fulfillment in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The following is a portion of that assessment:

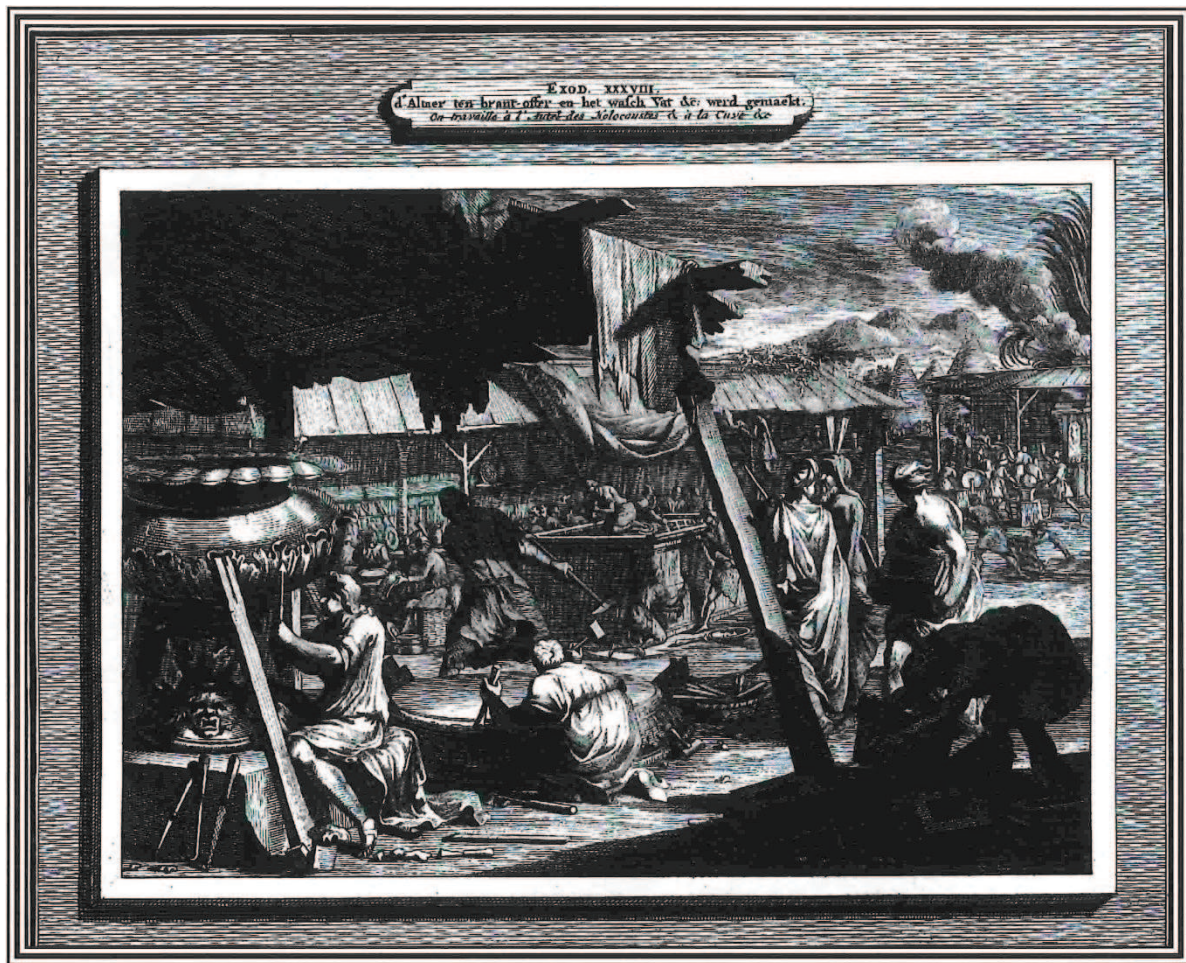
“The veil that divided the two chambers of the pre-Christian sanctuary had the function of sealing off the way into ‘the most holy place.’ It was thus emblematic of the truth that the way of access to God was not yet clear (Heb.9:8), and would not be until the Messianic High Priest should come and take out of the way the anticipatory forms of the older testament (Matt. 27:51). The central object of the whole Tabernacle was the ark, which served first of all as a chest for containing the two inscribed stones of the Decalogue (ex. 25:21), as well as a pot of the wilderness manna (16:33), and Aaron’s rod that budded (Num. 17:7). By its side was placed Moses’ Book of the Law (Deu. 31:26). Since these written documents were what constituted the objective basis for Israel’s testament, the ark itself came to receive the title, ‘the ark of the testament’ (Num. 10:33). The cover of solid gold that rested on the ark

was given the special title of the 'kapporeth', the Mercy Seat or Atonement Cover; the basic thought of the kapporet was that of grace (the blood of the testament) intervening between the holiness of God and the inalterable verdict of divine justice upon the conduct of men (the Decalogue underneath). But the ark constituted more than a symbol; it was an authentic sacrament, conveying the real presence of God to Israel, for the cloud of God's Glory (Ex. 13:21) came to reside over its golden cover (40:34). Now, in this New Testament age, the real presence of the Shekinah has been transmuted into the believers' invisible and inward fellowship with the presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but its observance still conveys the real presence of our Lord, 'the communion of His blood' (1 Cor. 10:16). Finally, the ark constitutes a type of the presence of God in heaven itself (Ps. 11:4); for heaven is the pattern from which the whole earthly sanctuary was copied, and to which the saints will yet go marching home (Heb. 9:24). With this connotation of heavenly glory may be compared the ark's ceremonial continuation in the form of the Lord's Supper, which also serves as a type of that eschatological kingdom, when the saved shall feast in the presence of the Redeemer (Mark 14:24; 1 Cor. 11:26)." (Payne, p. 363)

The unique importance of the Ark of the Covenant among the furnishings of the Tabernacle is further indicated by this text in the fact that the Ark and its Atonement Cover are personally fashioned by Bezaleel himself – ***“And Bezaleel made the ark of shittim wood.”***



“The Ark With The Shekinah Within the Holy Of Holies” by Larson



“Exodus 38 - The Preparation of the Courtyard Furnishings And Curtain” by Mortier

Exodus Chapter 38

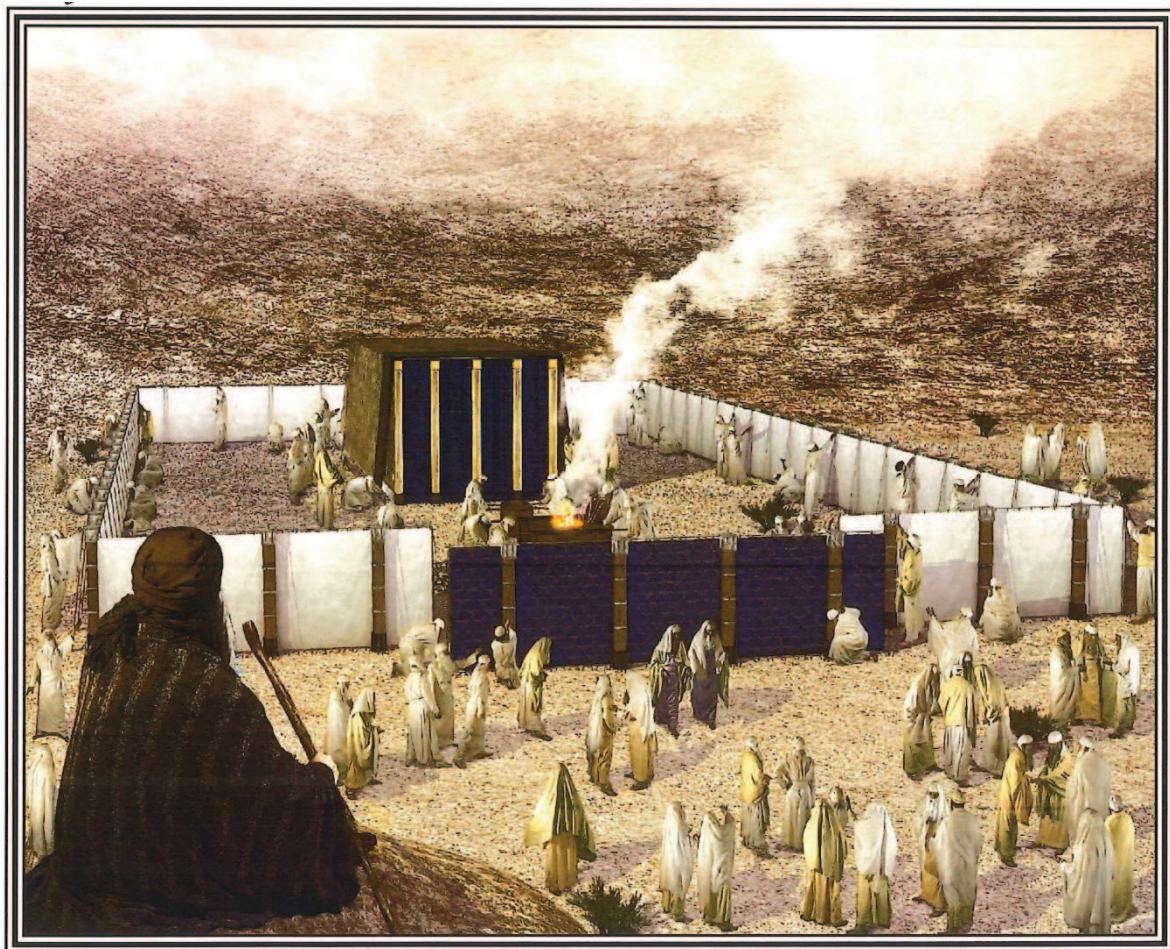
(1) And he made the altar of burnt offering of shittim wood: five cubits was the length thereof, and five cubits the breadth thereof, it was foursquare; and three cubits the height thereof. (2) And he made the horns thereof on the four corners of it; the horns thereof were the same, and he overlaid it with brass. (3) And he made all the vessels of the altar, the pots, and the shovels, and the basins, and the flesh hooks, and the fire pans: all the vessels thereof made he with brass. (4) And he made for the altar a brazen grate of network under the compass thereof beneath unto the midst of it. (5) And he cast four rings for the four ends of the grate of brass, to be places for the staves. (6) And he made the staves of shittim wood, and overlaid them with brass. (7) And he put the staves into the rings on the sides of the altar, to bear it withal; he made the altar hollow with boards. (8) And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the looking glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation. (9) And he made the court: on the south side southward, the hangings of the court were of fine twisted linen, an hundred cubits: (10) Their pillars were twenty, and their brazen sockets twenty; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver. (11) And for the north side, their hangings were an hundred cubits: their pillars were twenty, and their sockets of brass twenty; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets of silver.



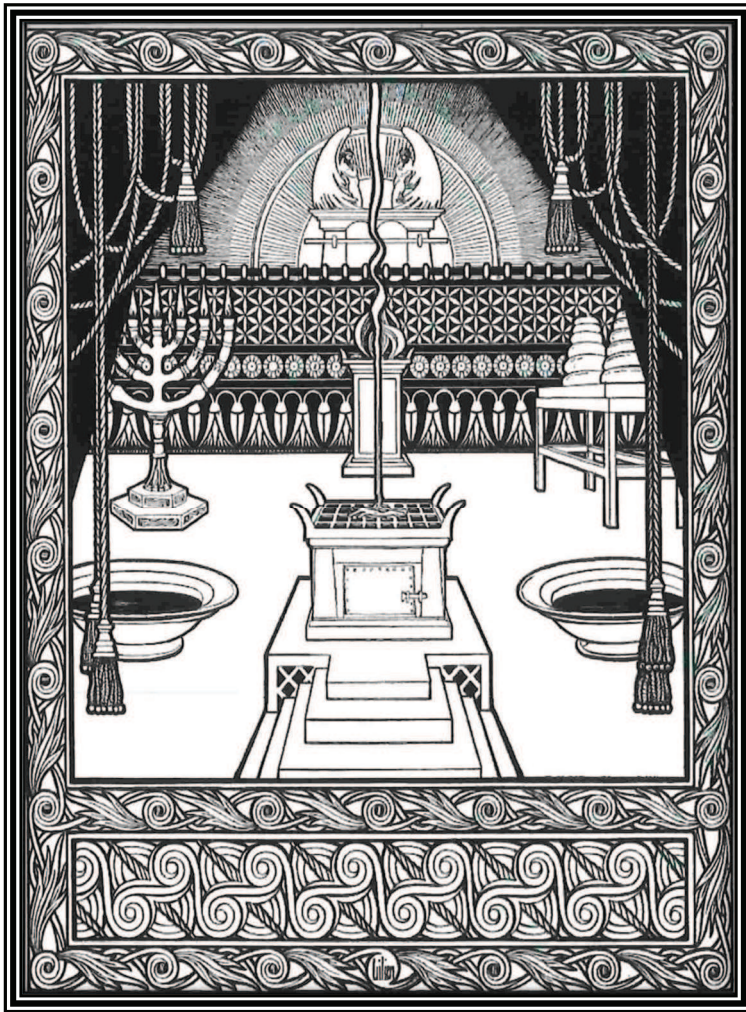
*“The Courtyard of The Tabernacle At The Heart of the Israelite Encampment”
18th Century Dutch Bible Engraving*

(12) And for the west side were the hangings of fifty cubits, their pillars ten and their sockets ten; the hooks of the pillars and their sockets of silver. (13) And for the east side, fifty cubits. (14) The hangings of the one side of the gate were fifteen cubits; their pillars three and their sockets three. (15) And for the other side of the court gate, on this hand and that hand, were hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillar three and their sockets three. (16) All the hangings of the court round about were of fine twisted linen. (17) And the sockets of the pillars were of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets of silver; and the overlaying of their chapiters of silver; and all the pillars of the court were filleted with silver. (18) And the hanging for the gateway of the court was needlework of blue, of purple, and of scarlet, and fine twisted linen: and twenty cubits was the length, and the height in breadth was five cubits, answerable to the hangings of the court. (19) And their pillars were four, and their sockets of brass four; their hooks of silver, and the overlaying of their chapiters and their fillets of silver, (20) And all the pins of the Tabernacle, and of the court round about were of brass. (21) This is the sum of the Tabernacle, even the Tabernacle of Testimony, as it was counted according to the commandment of Moses, for the service of the Levites by the hand of Ithamar, son to Aaron, the priest. (22) And Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the Lord

commanded to Moses. (23) And with him was Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver, and a cunning workman, and an embroiderer in blue, and in purple, and in scarlet, and fine linen. (24) All the gold that was occupied for the work in all the work of the holy place, even the gold of the offering, was twenty and nine talents, and seven hundred and thirty shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary. (25) And the silver of them that were numbered after the silver of the congregation, was an hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred, and three score and fifteen shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: (26) A bekah for every man, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for everyone that went to be numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men. (27) And of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the vail; an hundred sockets of the hundred talents, a talent for a socket. (28) And of the thousand seven hundred and seventy and five shekels, he made hooks for the pillars and overlaid their chapiters, and filleted them. (29) And the brass of the offering was seventy talents, and two thousand and four hundred shekels. (30) And therewith he made the sockets to the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation, and the brazen altar, and the brazen grate for it, and all the vessels of the altar. (31) And the sockets of the court round about, and the sockets of the court gate, and all the pins of the Tabernacle, and all the pins of the court round about.



“The Pillars And Hangings Of The Tabernacle Courtyard” by Larson



“The Interior Of the Tabernacle With Its Golden Furnishings” by E. M. Lillien

“And he made the altar of burnt offering of shittim wood...” - The text proceeds to describe the fenced courtyard which would surround the Tabernacle and its furnishings, the altar of burnt offering and the laver. The establishment of the courtyard served to set the Tabernacle apart from the encampment which surrounded it and emphasize its sanctity. The Tabernacle had only one courtyard unlike the subsequent temples which would have a succession of courtyards becoming gradually more exclusive. The temples’ courtyards began the Court of the Gentiles, which was open to all. Next came the Court of Israel, open only to Jews; followed by the Court of the Men of Israel, open to male Jews. The Court of the Priests surrounded the Sanctuary. The detailed description here is very similar to the original instructions. One intriguing new detail is the reference to the brass for the laver having been provided by *“the women assembling which assembled at the door of the Tabernacle.”* There

is no further identification of these women or their function. The only other reference to this group comes in 1 Samuel 2:22 which indicates that they remained a part of the operation of the Tabernacle throughout its history: *“Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel, and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.”* Scholars speculate that these women served the sanctuary by cleaning the altar of burnt offerings and its utensils and perhaps assisted the priests by maintaining the cleanliness of the court busy courtyard itself.

The text also offers a summary accounting of the amounts of precious metal utilized in the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. The enumeration of these costs and the amounts of the most costly metals used in the Tabernacle demonstrate how sacred it was as the dwelling place of God. Obviously for such an edifice no cost was too great and the fact that even with these fantastic quantities the people gifts had far exceeded the needs becomes all the more impressive. The conversion of the ancient measures into contemporary equivalents is somewhat difficult and in consequence the estimates presented vary significantly. The New Living Bible offers this impressive estimate: “Gold- 2,193 pounds; silver - 7,545 pounds; bronze - 5, 310 pounds.” (Hamilton, p. 609) At its current

price the gold would have been worth nearly \$4 70 million and the silver worth \$2,656,000. It is clear that the construction spared no expense and that the contributions of the people had been overwhelmingly generous.



“The Weaving Of The Priestly Vestments” by Merian

Exodus Chapter 39

(1) And of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, they made the cloths of service, to do service in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron; as the LORD commanded Moses. (2) And he made the ephod of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twisted linen. (3) And they did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet, and in the fine linen, with cunning work. (4) They made shoulder pieces for it, to couple it together; by the two edges was it coupled together. (5) And the curious girdle of his ephod, that was upon it, was of the same, according to the work thereof; of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, as the LORD commanded Moses. (6) And they wrought onyx stones, enclosed in ouches (a mounting or socket in which a jewel is set) of gold, graven as signets are graven, with



“The Vestments Of The High Priest”

the names of the Children of Israel. (7) And he put them on the shoulders of the ephod, that they should be stones for a memorial to the Children of Israel, as the LORD had commanded to Moses. (8) And he made the breast plate of cunning work, like the work of the ephod; of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet and fine twined linen. (9) It was foursquare; they made the breast plate double; a span was the length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof, being doubled. (10) And they set in it four rows of stones; the first row was a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle; this was the first row. (11) And the second row, an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. (12) And the third row, a figure, an agate, and an amethyst. (13) And the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper; they were enclosed in ouches of gold in their enclosings. (14) And the stones were according to the names of the Children of Israel, twelve according to their

names, like the engravings of a signet, every one with his name, according to the twelve tribes. (15) And they made upon the breast plate chains upon the ends, of wreathen work of pure gold. (16) And they made two ouches of gold, and two gold rings; and put the two rings in the two ends of the breast plate. (17) And they put the two wreathed chains of gold in the two rings on the ends of the breast plate. (18) And the two ends of the wreathen chains, they fastened in the two ouches, and put them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, before it. (19) And they made two rings of gold, and put them on the two ends of the breast plate, upon the border of it, which was on the side of the ephod, inward. (20) And they made the two other golden rings, and put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, toward the forepart of it, over against the other coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod. (21) And they did bind the breast plate by his rings unto the rings of the ephod, with a lace of blue, that it might be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breast plate might not be loosed from the ephod, as the LORD commanded Moses. (22) And he made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue. (23) And there was a hole in the midst of the robe, as the hole of a habergeon (“a knight's coat of chain mail”) with a band around the hole that it should not rend. (24) And they made around the hem of the robe, pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and twined linen. (25) And they made hells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates upon the hem of the robe, round about between the pomegranates; (26) A

hell and a pomegranate, a hell and a pomegranate, round about the hem of the robe to minister in, as the LORD had commanded Moses. (27) And they made coats of fine linen to minister in, for Aaron, and for his sons. (28) And a mitre of fine linen, and goodly bonnets of fine linen, and linen breeches of fine twined linen, (29) And a girdle of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, of needlework, as the LORD had commanded Moses. (30) And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like to the engravings of a signet' HOLINESS TO THE LORD. (31) And they tied unto it a lace of blue to fasten it on high upon the mitre, as the LORD had commanded Moses. (32) Thus was all the work of the tent of the Tabernacle of the congregation finished; and the Children of Israel did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so did they. (33) And they brought the Tabernacle unto Moses, the tent and all his furniture, his taches, his hoards, his bars, and his pillars, and his sockets. (34) And the coverings of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of badger skins, and the vail of the covering, (35) the ark of the testimony and the staves thereof, and the mercy seat, (36) the table, and all the vessels thereof, and the shewbread, (37) the pure candlestick with the lamps thereof, even with the lamps to be set in order, and all the vessels thereof, and the oil for light. (38) and the golden altar, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the hanging for the Tabernacle door, (39) the brazen altar, and his grate of brass, his staves, and all his vessels, the Laver and his foot, (40) the hangings of the court, his pillars, and his sockets, and the hanging for the court gate, his cords



“Exodus 39 - The Glory Of The Lord Over the Ark” by Mortier



“The Vestments Of The High Priest”

and his pins, and all the vessels of the service of the Tabernacle, for the tent of the congregation, (41) the cloths of service to do service in the Holy Place, and the holy garments for Aaron, the priest, and his son’s garments to minister in the priests’ office. (42) According to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the Children of Israel made all the work. (43) And Moses did look upon all the work, and behold, they had done it as the LORD had commanded, even so had they done it; and Moses blessed them.

“And of the blue, and purple, and scarlet ...” - Exodus Chapter 39 begins with a detailed description of the fulfillment of the command to fashion the vestments of the high priest and the priesthood and concludes with the summary assertion of the complete fulfillment of all that which the Lord had commanded in regard to the Tabernacle, its furnishings, and its vestments. The phrase with which the segment opens *“and of the blue, and purple, and scarlet”* has recurred throughout these chapters and will continually resound in again in this chapter. These are the colors of sovereign majesty, typically worn by the most powerful rulers and kings of the earth. The dyes which produced them were costly and rare. It is most fitting that they should be the

characteristic hues of the Tabernacle of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and of those who had been called to serve within His royal dwelling. The New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews informs us that the earthly Tabernacle and its high priesthood which merely imperfect shadows which prefigured the perfect eternal high priest who came in the person of Jesus Christ:

“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself is also compassed with infirmity. And by reasons thereof, he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ, glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, “Thou are my Son, today have I begotten thee.” As he said also in another place, “Thou are a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec.”

Who in the days of his flesh, when he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of salvation unto all them that obey him; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec ... If, therefore, perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the Law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is also made of necessity a change also of the Law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident; for that after the similitude of Mechisidec there ariseth another priest; who is made not after the law of carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth: "Thou are a priest forever after the order of Melchisdec." For there is verily a disannulment of the commandment going before for the weakness and the unprofitableness thereof. For the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by which we draw nigh unto God ... By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they are not suffered to continue because of death; but this man, because he continueth forever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore, he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest because us, who is holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens. Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the peoples';



"The Priest/King Melchisedec Blessing Abraham at Salem As A Prototype Of Christ The True High Priest - Looking Down From Heaven With The Cross" by Moretto



“Christ Our Great High Priest”

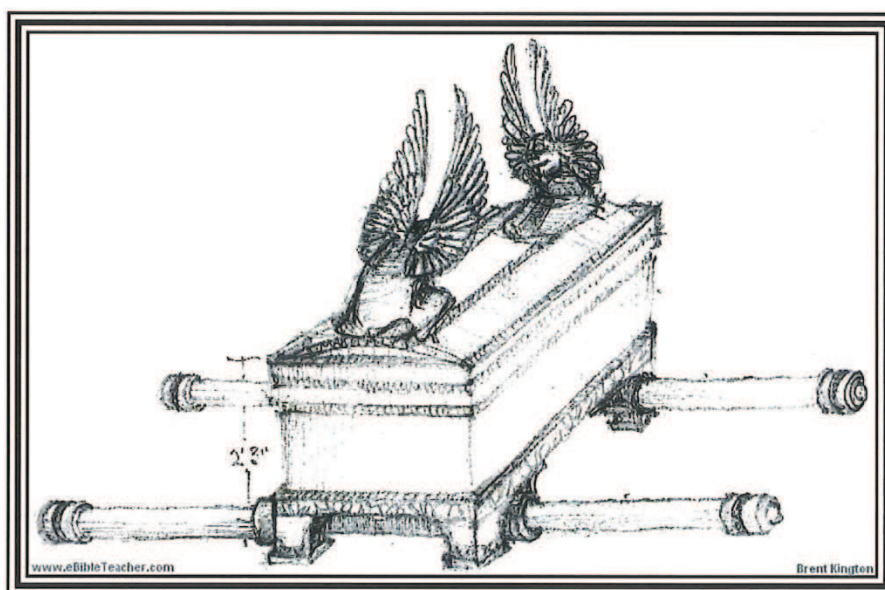
for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the Law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath which was since the Law, maketh the Son who is consecrated forevermore. Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: we have such an high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. A minister of the sanctuary and of the true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man also have somewhat to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the Law, who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the Tabernacle; for “See,” saith he, “that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.” (Hebrews 5:1-10; 7:11-20; 8:1-6)

The repetition of the meticulous care with which the vestments of the high priest were designed and construction demonstrate the importance of this office as a prototype of the role of the coming Messiah. Although the office of high priest was occupied by flawed and imperfect men throughout its long history, culminating the corrupt figure of Caiaphas who conspired with the Romans to send Jesus to the cross, the office itself remained as a powerful demonstration of the role of the coming Savior who would be the perfect intercessor for his people, based upon the once for all sacrifice of himself upon the cross. Thus, once again, we stand in awe of the way in which God accomplished His plan of salvation despite the imperfections and corruption of sinful men.

“Thus was all the work of the tent of the Tabernacle of the congregation finished...” - The text does not specify the time that was needed to complete the building of the Tabernacle. Given the amount and complexity of the work there is no doubt that it must have been a protracted time period.

“The text contains no indication of how much time it took for the Israelites to construct all of the Tabernacle components. Since the Israelites were at Sinai slightly less than a year (comparing Ex. 19:1 with Num. 10:11 and observing that the Tabernacle was finished at the turn of the year according to 40:17) and Moses gave the people the Tabernacle instructions after a variety of events, including the golden young bull idolatry, the forty days on Mount Sinai, the earlier sojourns on the mountain, and teaching the populace after those sojourns, we can estimate that not more than seven or eight months, at most, were available for the construction of the Tabernacle. But this was not important for Moses to relay: what he cared about was the quality of the product, not the time it took to produce it. Indeed, the story gives the impression that the Israelites were under no time pressure at all to produce the Tabernacle, but rather were expected to take all the time they would need to be sure that it fully met the design which God had revealed to Moses. Timing did not matter, as much as did precise conformity to design.” (Stuart, p. 781)

Under ordinary circumstances one might have expected that the Children of Israel would have begun to use portions of the sanctuary as soon as possible while the detail work continued. That was not the case. God had instructed that everything be perfectly finished before the sanctuary and its furnishings were consecrated and Tabernacle worship began. ***“According to all that the Lord had commanded Moses, so the Children of Israel made all the work. And Moses did look upon all the work, and behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it. And Moses blessed them.”***





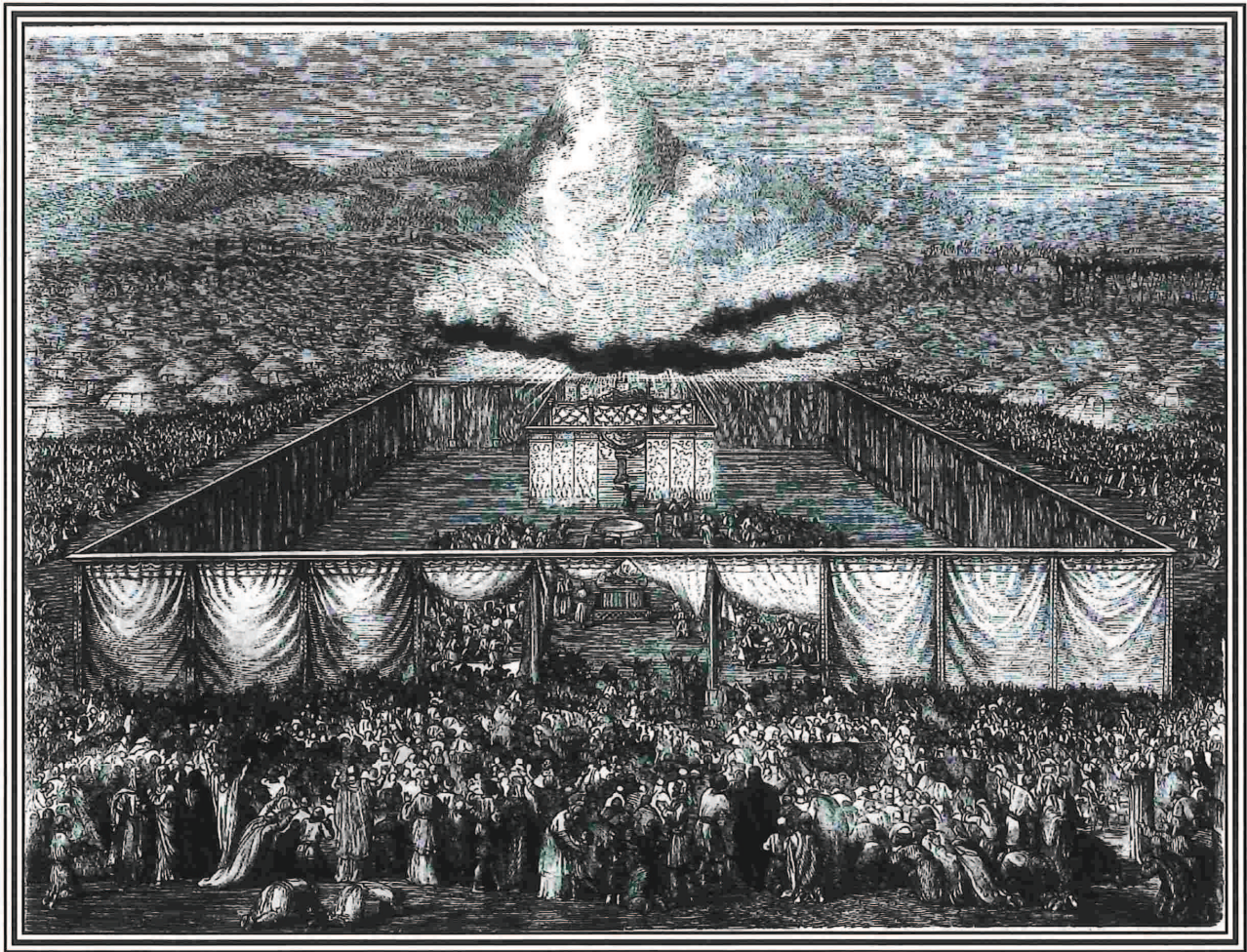
“Exodus 40 - The Erection of the Tabernacle” by Mortier

Exodus Chapter 40

(1) And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, (2) On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the Tabernacle of the congregation. (3) And thou shalt put therein the Ark of the Testimony, and cover the Ark with the vail. (4) And thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps thereof. (5) And thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense before the Ark of the Testimony, and put the hanging of the door to the Tabernacle. (6) And thou shalt set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the Tabernacle of the tent of the congregation. (7) And thou shalt set the Laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and shalt put water therein. (8) And thou shalt set up the court round about, and hang up the hanging at the court gate. (9) And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the Tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof; and it shall be holy. (10) And thou shalt anoint the altar of burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify the altar; and it shall be an altar most holy. (11) And thou shalt anoint the Laver and his foot and sanctify it. (12) And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water. (13) And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office. (14) And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats; (15) And thou shalt anoint them, as

thou didst their father, that they may minister unto Me in the priest's office: and their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations. (16) Thus did Moses according to all the LORD commanded him, so did he. (17) And it came to pass in the first month, in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the Tabernacle was reared up. (18) And Moses reared up the Tabernacle, and fastened the sockets, and set up the boards thereof, and put in the bars thereof, and reared up his pillars. (19) And he spread abroad the tent over the Tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent above upon it; as the LORD had commanded Moses. (20) And he took and put the testimony into the Ark, and set the staves on the Ark, and put the mercy seat above upon the Ark: (21) And he brought the Ark into the Tabernacle, and set up the vail of the covering, and covered the Ark of the Testimony, as the LORD commanded Moses. (22) And he put the table in the tent of the congregation, upon the side of the Tabernacle northward, without the vail. (23) And he set the bread in order upon before the LORD as the LORD had commanded Moses. (24) And he put the candlestick in the tent of the congregation, over against the table, on the side of the Tabernacle southward. (25) And he lighted the lamps before the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses. (26) And he put the golden altar in the tent of the congregation before the vail: (27) And he burned sweet incense thereon, as the LORD commanded Moses. (28) And he set up the hanging at the door of the Tabernacle. (29) And he put the altar of burnt offering by the door of the Tabernacle of the tent of the congregation, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the meat offering; as the LORD had commanded Moses. (30) And he set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and put water there, to wash withal. (31) And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat: (32) When they went into the tent of the congregation, and when they went near unto the altar, they washed as the LORD commanded Moses. (33) And he reared up the court round about the Tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. (34) Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle. (35) And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle. (36) And when the cloud was taken up from over the Tabernacle, the Children of Israel went onward in all their journeys. (37) But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day it was taken up. (38) For the cloud of the LORD was upon the Tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying...” - After Moses careful inspection and blessing of the Tabernacle and all of its furnishings, the LORD gave command for the initial erection of the sacred sanctuary. The text notes that this took place *“on the first day of the first month.”* The calendar of ancient Israel, like that of many nations in the ancient Near East, began at the end of the winter with the coming of spring, to coincide with the planting of crops and the start of the agricultural cycle. Thus the first Hebrew month ran from mid-March to mid-April in our calendar. The placement of this momentous event on New Year's Day appropriately signified the beginning of a new era for the Children of Israel and at the same time linked the calendar to the worship cycle of the Tabernacle.



“The Consecration Of The Tabernacle” – 19th Century German Bible Engraving

The pattern of the process follows the design of enhanced sanctity in reverse. First, the structure itself was erected, then the Ark of the Covenant was placed within the Holy of Holies, the curtain installed to separate the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place, etc. The process continued outward to the altar of burnt offering and the laver in the courtyard. The wording of the phrase – “on the first day of the first month” - further suggests that the task could be completed in one day’s time. The words – “So Moses finished the work” (Verse 33) echo the language of Genesis 2 which affirm that God the Creator also completed the work of the six days of creation – “By the seventh day God had finished the work.” (Genesis 2:2). The Tabernacle is a crucial element in the fashioning of the new creation which will be the result of God’s plan of salvation. Commentator Victor Hamilton also appropriates notes the language of the other great Finisher in Scripture:

“There is, however, another great ‘Finisher’ in Scripture, maybe two. Near the end of His ministry, Jesus is able to say ‘I have finished the work You gave Me to do’ (John 17:4), or, ‘Knowing that all was now finished... Jesus said, “It is finished.”’ (John 19:28,30) One may also add Paul’s ‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race.’ (2 Timothy 4:7) Neither God nor Moses

nor Jesus nor Paul is like the tower builder of whom Jesus speaks as a sorry example of one who ‘began to build but was not able to finish.’ (Luke 14:28-30)” (Hamilton, p. 618)

The command to assemble the Tabernacle is given specifically to Moses as the only man who had received a vision of the heavenly tabernacle after which this earthly replica was to be modeled:

“Moses receives divine instructions to set up the Tabernacle and put each item in its assigned place. He personally is charged with this task because the entire enterprise is said to be based upon a celestial image or prototype that had been shown to him on Mount Sinai. Hence, he alone, possesses a mental picture of the completed whole.” (Sarna, p. 23 5)

The phrase – **“Thus did Moses according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so did he.”** recurs seven times in this Chapter to clearly emphasize the perfect conformity of the finished structure to the heavenly model which Moses had seen.

“And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the Tabernacle and all that is therein, and thou shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof; and it shall be holy.” – The Tabernacle and its vessels are set apart and consecrated for their work as the dwelling place



“The Anointing Of Solomon” by Cornelius Devoss



“Exodus 40 - The Arrangement Of The Holy Place Of The Tabernacle” - Mortier

of God by means of the ancient ritual of anointing. This too foreshadows the coming of the Anointed One, the Messiah Christ. The sacred ground of the Tabernacle is set apart from the rest of the earth by the oil which covers it and dedicates it to God. Anointing played a prominent role in Old Testament theology in regard to both the Tabernacle/Temple and the authentication of the king as a servant of God:

*“In the Ancient Near East both objects and persons were consecrated to cultic service by the rite of anointment... By the rite of anointment these objects were consecrated to cultic service and separated from secular use- ‘**And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment after the art of the apothecary; it shall be an holy anointing oil. And thou shalt anoint the Tabernacle of the congregation therewith and the Ark of the Testimony... And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy; whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy.**’ (Ex. 30:26-29) ... The anointing of a king was of primary importance. The anointment of the king was originally done by a prophet. (1 Samuel 10:1, Kings 19:16; 2 Kings 9:6) It appears that the prophet Nathan also had an active role in the anointment of Solomon (1 Kings 1:45) Later, the right to anoint the king apparently became the exclusive privilege of the priests (1 Kings 1:39; 2 Kings 11:12)... The theocratic character of the anointment is also exemplified by the fact that the king was the Lord’s anointed (1 Samuel 24:6,10; 2 Samuel 6:21) The title ‘the Lord’s Anointed’ was later shortened*

to 'the Anointed' 'Messiah' translated into Greek as 'Christos.' Jesus was also anointed by God 'with the Holy Spirit and with power' (Acts 10:38).” (IDB, I, p. 139)

“Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.” - The purpose of the Tabernacle had been to create an appropriate dwelling place for the presence of God amid the Children of Israel. The glory/cloud, “*shekinah*” had first appeared at the exodus and had guided and guarded them from their departure from Egypt to their encampment at Mount Sinai.

“And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire; to give them light to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night from before the people.” (Exodus 13:21-22)

At the Red Sea the Shekinah had moved behind the Israelites to protect them from the hosts of Egypt while they crossed safely through the waters of the sea:

“And the Angel of God which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud went from before their face and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and it was a cloud and darkness to them; but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night.” (Exodus 14:19-20)



“The Shekinah Upon Mount Sinai”

When Israel arrived at Mount Sinai, the glory/cloud settled over the crest of the mountain and remained there.

“And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceedingly loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled ... And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly... And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount.” (Exodus 19:16, 18, 20)

The removal of the Shekinah from the mountain’s crest and its descent upon the finished Tabernacle signals God’s acceptance of the sanctuary and His readiness to fulfill the renewed covenant to remain in the midst of Israel wherever they went and to lead them to the promised land. *“The Book of Exodus, which opened with a tale of misery and oppression, closes on an auspicious note. Israel is assured that day and night, the Divine Spirit hovers over it, guiding and controlling its destiny.”* (Sama, p. 23 7)



“The Shekinah Leading The Children Of Israel Through The Wilderness”