

COMMANDMENTS

What new thing did you learn from this week's reading?

What stood out the most to you from the reading?

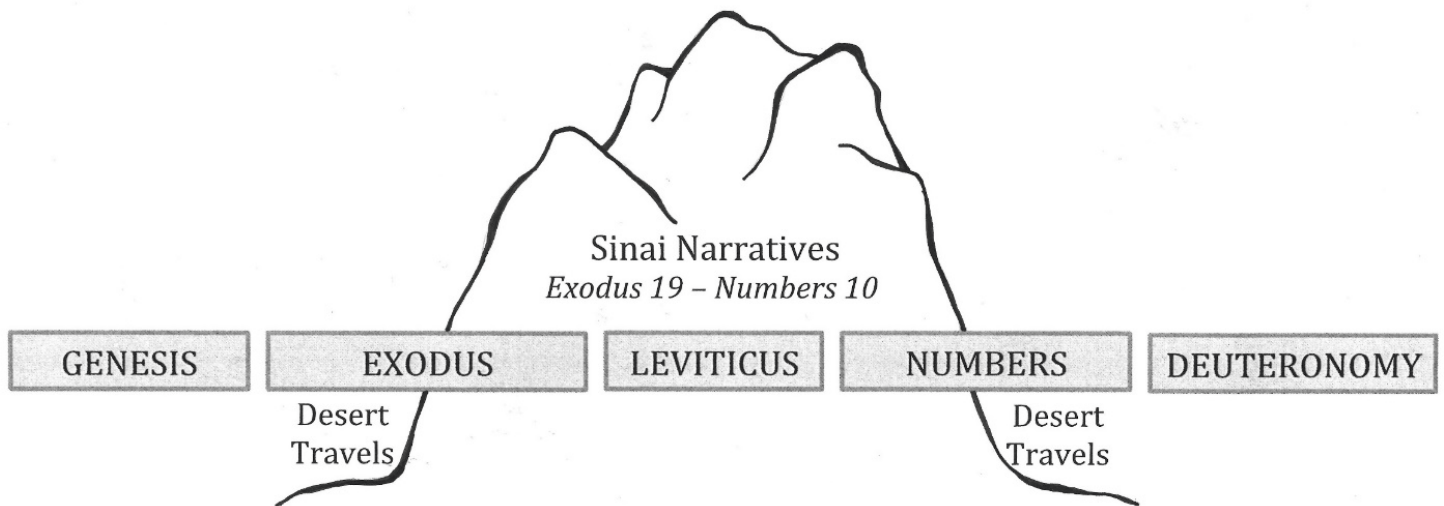
Take a moment to read & reflect upon favorite passages from this week's part of the story?

THE STORY CONTINUES

Exodus 19-20; Deuteronomy 6, 28



SINAI NARRATIVES



Imes, Carmen Joy (2019). *Bearing God's Name: Why Sinai Still Matters*. IVP Academic. 14.

KEY TERMS

- Theophany: visible manifestation of God's presence
- Covenant: formal, permanent agreement between two parties
- Decalogue: Ten Commandments
- Stipulations: requirements of the covenant to which both parties agree
- Ratification: official ritual by which a covenant takes effect
- Tabernacle: authorized place of God's holy presence (tent)
- Priesthood: official tabernacle service by authorized men from Levi
- Ordination: official ritual in which someone becomes a priest
- Consecrate: set apart, make holy
- Cult: entire system of worship (tabernacle, priests, sacrifices)

TREASURED POSSESSION

“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my **treasured possession**. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a **kingdom of priests** and a **holy nation**.” These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.

Exodus 19:4-6

What Does It Mean To Be God’s Treasured Possession?

Hebrew: *segullah*

- Concrete uses: personal treasury of a king (1 Chron. 29:3 and Ecc. 2:8)
- Metaphorical uses: covenant partner with special responsibility to represent the sovereign (Exod. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps. 135:4; Mal. 3:17)
- Cf. Ugaritic (*sgl*) and Akkadian (*sikiltu*) also use the word in these two ways.

Who Is YHWH’s Treasured Possession?

- Usually, Israel is the treasured possession because of the Sinai covenant (Exod. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps. 135:4).
- But Malachi 3:17 envisions a future day in which YHWH will select a new *segullah*. That new acquisition prompted Greek translators to choose a slightly different phrase.
- περιούσιος » περιποίησις

But you are a chosen people, a **royal priesthood**, a **holy nation**, **God’s special possession** (*περιποίησις*), that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2:9-10

- Peter applies covenant titles from Sinai to a mixed audience of Jews and Gentiles. He sees the Church as the fulfillment of Malachi 3:17—God’s acquisition of a new *segullah*.

Historical Context: How Did the Israelites Feel About the “Law”?

⁵ See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. ⁶ Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” ⁷ What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? ⁸ And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

Deuteronomy 4:5-8

The Textual Unity of Exodus 20:2-6

I am YHWH, your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, from the house of slaves. Do not have (for yourself) other gods before me. Do not make for yourself a statue of any figure that is in the heavens above or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth. Do not bow down to them and do not serve them because I am YHWH your God, El Qanna (Impassioned God), who attends to (the) iniquities of the fathers upon the children even upon the third and upon the fourth (generation) of those hating me, and acts in covenant faithfulness to thousands who love me and obey my commands.

Exodus 20:2-6

How many commands are in this passage?

- A (motive): I am Yahweh your God (verse 2)
 - B (prohibition): You are not to have any other gods (verse 3)
 - C (prohibition): You are not to make a carved-image (verse 4)
 - B (prohibition): You are not to bow down to or serve them (verse 5a)
- A (motive): I am Yahweh your God (verse 5b-6)

Adapted from Greenstein, Edward. “Rhetoric of the Ten Commandments.” *The Decalogue in Jewish and Christian Tradition*. T & T Clark. 2011.

The Point of the First Command

Exclusive loyalty to YHWH means that the people will serve only YHWH.

The Consequences of Idolatry

In the BibleProject video on the image of God, Tim says that the temple doesn’t have an image or idol of God in it because God has already made humans as his image. When we show allegiance to anything other than God, we not only rob God of the praise he deserves, we also diminish ourselves as those made to represent God.

THE SABBATH COMMAND

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Exodus 20:8-11

What is the Sabbath for?

- A day of rest
- Stopping

Who is the Sabbath for?

- Everyone in the community
- Rich or poor
- Native born or foreigner
- Male or female
- Human or animal
- Everyone gets a rest

Why should we keep the Sabbath?

- God set this pattern at creation when he finished his work and rested.
- Note: Deuteronomy 5 offers a different rationale.

A Tale of Two Sabbaths

Exodus 20:8-11	Deuteronomy 5:12-15
<p>⁸ Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work,</p> <p>¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.</p> <p>¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.</p> <p>Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.</p>	<p>¹² Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work,¹⁴ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. ¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.</p>

TABERNACLE

Creation Echoes in the Tabernacle Texts

- Culminates in consecration (Gen. 2:13; Exod. 40:9-13)
- Cherubim as guardians of sacred space (Gen. 3:24; Exod. 25:18; 26:1)
- Tree of life // lampstand with seven branches (Gen. 2:9; Exod. 25:31-37)
- Gold and onyx stones (Gen. 2:12; Exod. 26:37; 28:5-6, 9, 17-19)
- “Evening” and then “morning” (Gen. 3:5; Exod. 27:21)
- Prescribed food and proscribed food (Gen. 2:16-17; Exod. 29:31-34)
- God’s spirit, knowledge, and skill in creation (Gen. 1:2; 2:2-3, 7, 17; Exod. 31:3)
- Seven-day process (Gen. 1; Exod. 29:30; Lev. 8:33)
- Clothing the “priests” (Gen. 3:21; Exod. 28:41)

Narrative Space in the Tabernacle Texts

Focus on two items:

- Ark of the covenant
- Breastpiece of the high priest

Sacred Space in the Tabernacle Texts

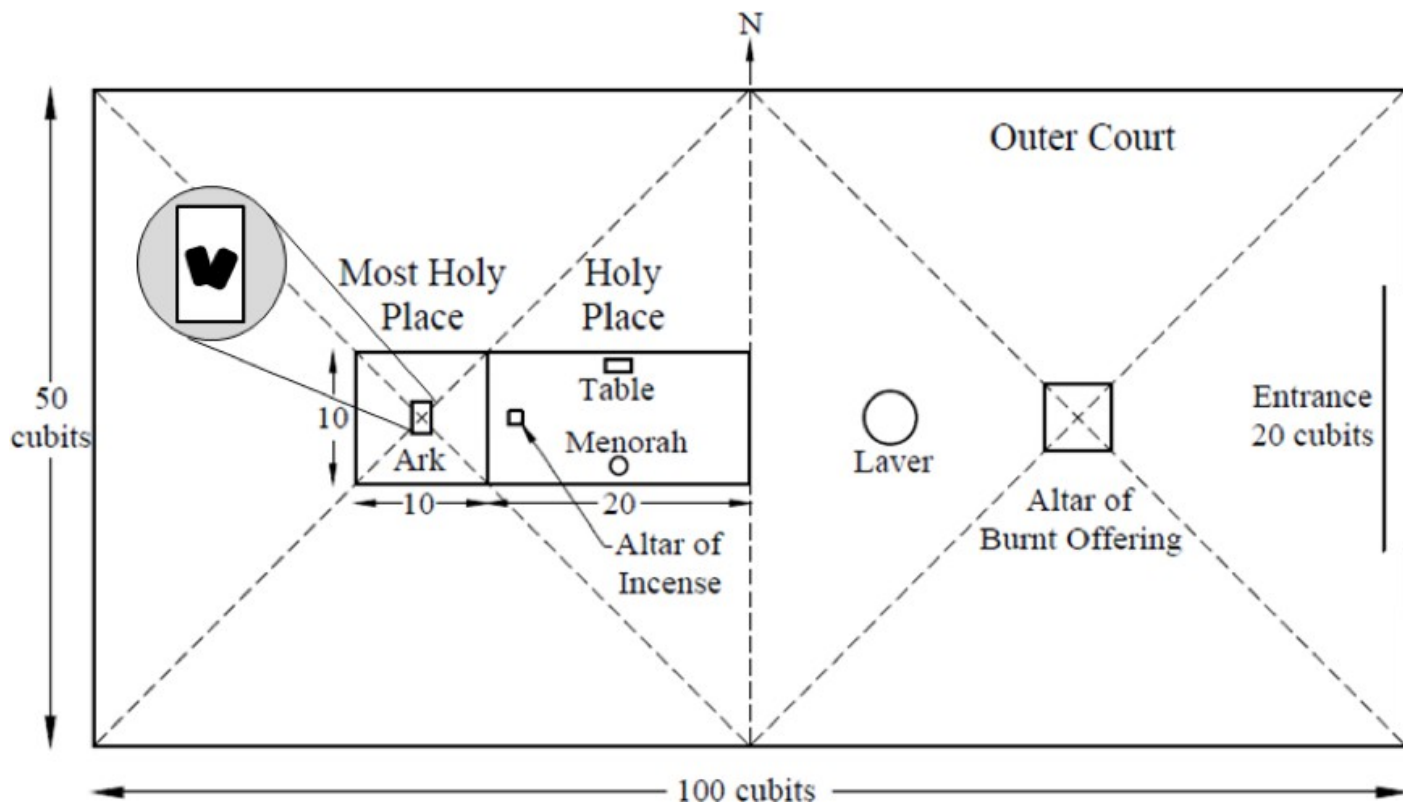


Diagram by Danny Imes from Imes, Carmen Joy. *Bearing YHWH's Name at Sinai*. Eisenbrauns. 2018.

The outside curtains are white, with the east-west axis using the most elaborate fabrics. The expense and beauty of materials increases as you approach the most holy place.

GOLD CALF

The Theological Function of the Gold Calf Incident

“Since idolatry diminishes the glory of God, and since humans are made in the image of God, it follows that idolatry is also detrimental to the very essence of our humanity. ... Idolatry is radical self-harm. It is also radically, terribly ironic. In trying to be as God (in the original temptation and rebellion), we have ended up becoming less human. ... If you worship that which is not God, you reduce the image of God in yourself. If you worship that which is not even human, you reduce your humanity still further.”

Wright, Christopher J.H. (2020). *“Here Are Your Gods”: Faithful Discipleship in Idolatrous Times.* IVP Academic.

Image on right source: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010120231>



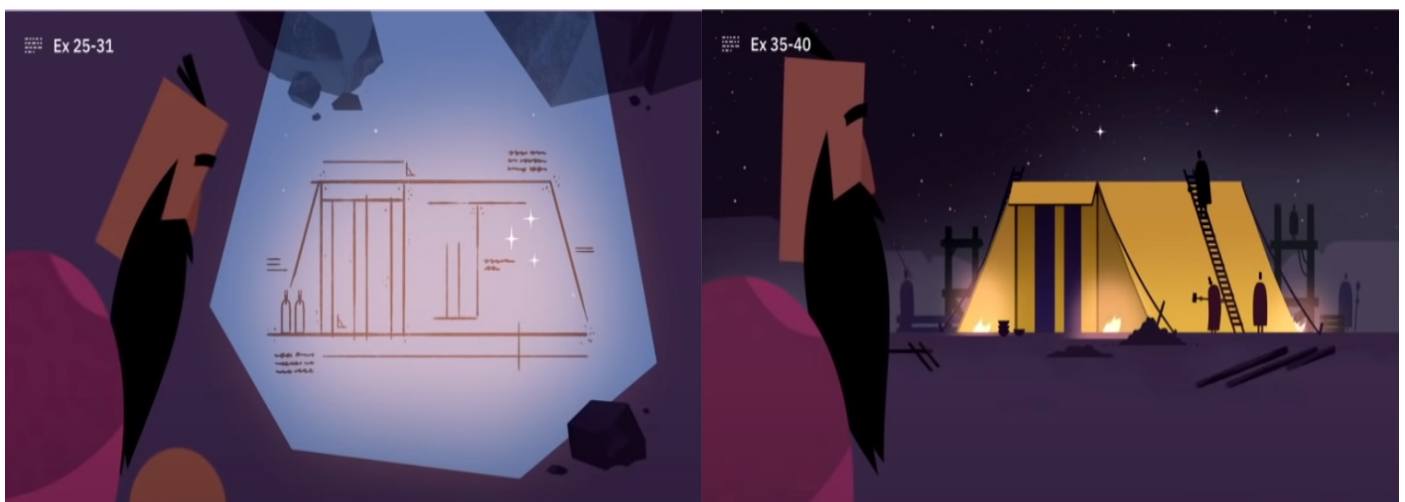
The Theological Function of the Gold Calf Incident

- Idolatry betrays a desire to domesticate the divine and approach God on our terms.
- As God’s “image” (Hebrew: *tselem*), we are God’s concrete representatives in the world. By worshiping idols, we abdicate our God-given role. Idolatry is the inverse of our creation purpose. Rather than subduing creation, we submit to it and are subdued.
- We become like what we worship (Ps. 115:1-8; 135:15-18). And Israel becomes “stiff-necked” just like the metal calf they worship (32:9; 33:5).

The Literary Function of the Gold Calf Incident

Exodus 25-31	Exodus 32-34	Exodus 35-40
Tabernacle Instructions Given		Tabernacle Instructions Carried Out

YHWH anticipates the need for a sacrificial system that can deal with the effects of sin in the community. Before the incident occurs, he has already given Moses the tabernacle blueprints.



Did Moses Have a Temper Tantrum? (Exod. 32:19-20)

Moses’ burning anger is justified, and it mirrors God’s (32:10). Breaking the tablets demonstrated that the people had broken the covenant stipulations.

PRESENCE

Eden Restored

The purpose of the tabernacle was the restoration of divine presence (Exod. 25:8: “Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them”). However, Israel’s idolatry jeopardized this plan (Exod. 33:1-6).

The Most Important Thing (Exod. 33:12-17)

YHWH: “My presence will go and I will give you (Moses) rest.” Moses: “If your presence doesn’t go, do not send us up from here.” The presence of God is the mark of his favor and the sign of Israel’s distinctiveness.

“The rainbow is the sign of the lasting covenant that God made with all life on earth (Gen 9:12–17). Circumcision is the sign of the lasting covenant that God made with Abraham (Gen 17:1–14). The story of God moves forward by such signposts. God commits himself to all creation (Noah). God commits himself to the blessing of all nations in and through the people of Abraham. And God commits himself to Israel through the covenant at Sinai, through his tabernacling presence among them and their observance of Sabbath as the sign of that relationship.”

Wright, Christopher J. H. *Exodus: The Story of God Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition. Pg 535.

YHWH’s Self-Revelation (Exod. 34:6-7)

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 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 the parents to the third and fourth generation.”
Exodus 34:6-7

This is arguably the most important passage in the Hebrew Bible—the passage most often quoted or alluded to in all of Scripture (20+ times). We may think of compassion and judgment as opposites, but YHWH’s character is holistic and non-contradictory. God’s patience and justice are held in tension.

If we neglect any of these attributes, we end up with a god we’ve made in our image.

PARTICIPATION

(Exodus 35-40)

Literary Function of Exodus 35-40

- Fulfillment of YHWH's instructions to Moses in chapters 25-31
- Frames the golden calf incident
- Leads up to the climax of the book, God's presence in the community

Building a Tent for God

These chapters present three speeches from Moses to the community:

1. Sabbath reminder (35:1-3)
 - Doing God's work does not cancel the Sabbath
 - God's work must be done in God's way
2. Commands about community participation in construction (35:4-29)
 - "Everyone who is willing."
 - Offerings were voluntary, but specific (25:1-9; 35:1-9)
 - Both men and women responded (35:22-24, 29)
 - Leaders contributed gemstones and ingredients for oil and incense (35:27-28)
 - The people gave more than enough (36:3-7)
 - "All who are skilled."
 - Skilled women spun yarn (35:25-26)
3. Appointment of Bezalel and Oholiab to design and teach (35:30-36:7)
 - Spirit of God, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, skills
 - Metalwork
 - Engraving gemstones
 - Woodworking
 - Artistic crafts
 - Embroidery
 - Weaving

Obedience to God's Instructions at Sinai

The Israelites had done all the work just as the LORD had commanded Moses. Moses inspected the work and saw that they had done it just as the LORD had commanded. So Moses blessed them.

Exodus 39:42-43

Theological Function of Exodus 35-40

- Resolves the alienation from God of Genesis 3
- Marks Israel as the community where YHWH has chosen to dwell
- Ensures the success of Israel's future, as long as they maintain proper worship and live in obedience to covenant stipulations

More Creation Echoes in the Tabernacle Texts

- Moses “finished” the work (31:18; 40:33; cf. Gen. 1:31-2:1).
- Moses “saw” the work and approved (39:43; Gen 1:31).
- Moses gave a “blessing” (39:43; cf. Gen. 1:28).
- Moses “consecrated” the result (40:9; cf. Gen 2:3).

See Mann, Thomas W. *The Book of the Torah: The Narrative Integrity of the Pentateuch*. Westminster John Knox Press. 1988.

What Are the Implications of God’s Presence Among Them?

- Danger—sin is taken seriously
- Guidance on their travels
- Reassurance day and night
- Israel has a new master

Exodus as a Creation Story

The creation of a new nation:

- From disorder to order
- From oppression to love of neighbor
- From serving Pharaoh to serving

YHWH A new society shaped by:

- Sacred time (a new calendar)
- Sacred space (YHWH’s presence in their midst)
- Obedience to covenant stipulations

PRACTICE THE STORY

CREATION

COVENANT

CALLING OUT

COMMANDMENTS

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

When was the last time you remember being in God's presence? How can you be in God's presence this week?

Do you know who you are, who God has created you to be? How can you embrace the truth of being a child of God and walking obediently in that role this week and the weeks ahead?

God gave us the commandments because He wants us to know Him and walk with Him and we can only do that by being obedient and faithful both to Him and to others. What ways do you need to work on your relationship with the Lord (commandments 1-4)? Are you struggling to put God first? What idols might you have created?

What ways do you need to work on your relationship with others (commandments 5-10)? Are you coveting a friend's life or possessions? Are you not being truthful at home or work?

How do you need to Sabbath this week?

HOMework

OPTIONAL

Memorize

- Joshua 1.8

Biblical Text

- Joshua 1-7
- Judges 1-2; 13-16; 19-21

Read

- Duvall/ Hays, *Living God's Word* - Chapter 5 - pg. 47-57

Watch

- Danny Hays Conquest Video

Memorize

- 1 Samuel 16.7b –
“The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Biblical Text

- Ruth 1-4
- 1 Samuel 8-10; 17-19
- 2 Samuel 7, 11-12
- 1 Kings 11

Read

- Duvall/ Hays, *Living God's Word* – Chapter 6 – pg 59-73

Complete

- One Assignment on pg 73.
- Reflection Questions