

Week 16: Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? - Exodus Ch 40

Pre-Work



- In preparation for this week's lesson, please watch the following video from the Bible Project on the theme of "The Mountain"

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/the-mountain/>

- Please read Exodus Chapter 40 in the translation of your choice. What stands out to you in these chapters? What questions arise in your mind when you read them?

Class Notes

MOSES' PERSONAL JOURNEY → RECAPITULATED IN ISRAEL'S JOURNEY (EXODUS)
 Moses' life foreshadows Israel's story: What God did for Moses, He does for Israel.

MOSES		ISRAEL IN EXODUS
 Saved from the Nile (Exodus 2:1–10)	→	Delivered through the Red Sea (Exodus 14) 
 Called at the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:1–4:17)	→	Encounter God at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19–20) 
 Flees to the Wilderness (Exodus 2:15 – 3:1)	→	Israel Enters the Wilderness (Exodus 15:22) 
 Receives God's Call & Mission (Exodus 3–4)	→	Israel Receives the Law & Covenant (Exodus 19–24) 
 Meets God on Mt. Sinai (33:18–23) Sees God's Glory (34:29–35)	→	God Dwells with Israel at the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34–38) 

Moses = Prototype of Israel → **Israel's Journey Follows Moses' Pattern of Rescue, Calling, Covenant & Glory** 

 "These things happened to them as examples... written for our instruction." — 1 Corinthians 10:11

- How does Exodus begin? Oppression in exile under a serpentine ruler
- How does Exodus end? Let's find out!

What do you think the goal of the Exodus story is? Freedom? Land? Law?
 We find out at the end of this chapter

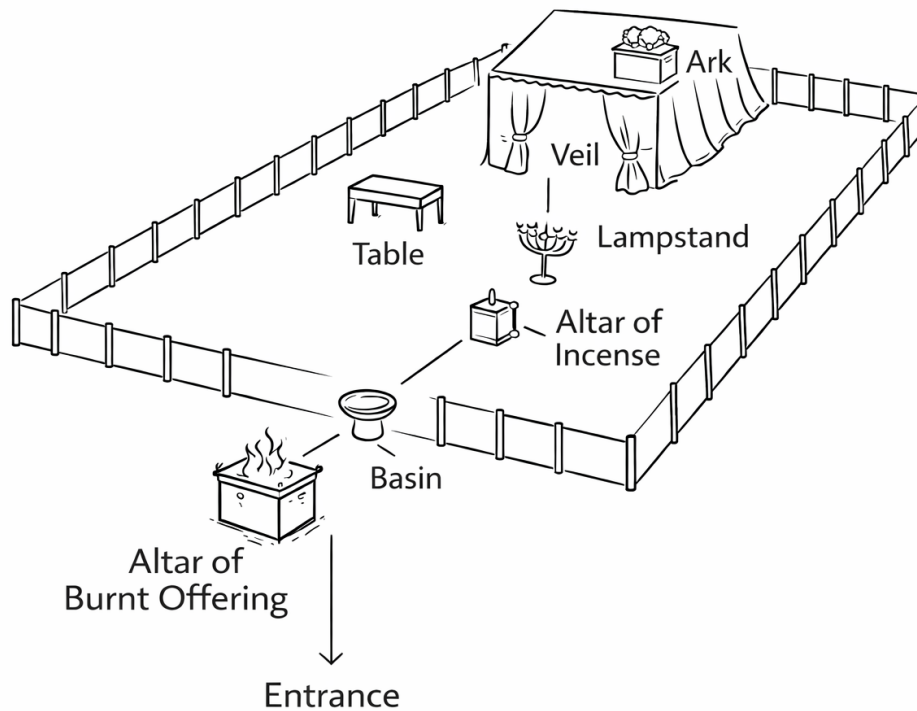
40 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. ³You shall place the ark of the testimony there, and you shall screen off the ark with the veil. ⁴Then you shall bring in the table and arrange what belongs on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and

mount its lamps. ⁵ You shall also set the gold altar of incense in front of the ark of the testimony, and set up the curtain for the doorway to the tabernacle. ⁶ And you shall set the altar of burnt offering in front of the doorway of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. ⁷ Then you shall set the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. ⁸ You shall also set up the courtyard all around and hang up the curtain for the gate of the courtyard. ⁹ Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and everything that is in it, and consecrate it and all its furnishings; and it shall be holy. ¹⁰ You shall also anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, and the altar shall be most holy. ¹¹ And you shall anoint the basin and its stand, and consecrate it. ¹² Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water. ¹³ And you shall put the holy garments on Aaron and anoint him and consecrate him, so that he may serve as a priest to Me. ¹⁴ You shall also bring his sons and put tunics on them; ¹⁵ and you shall anoint them just as you have anointed their father, so that they may serve as priests to Me; and their anointing will qualify them for a permanent priesthood throughout their generations.” ¹⁶ So Moses did *these things*; according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

- “First day of the first month” - Exactly one year after the Exodus began
- Redemption story now turns toward ordered worship and presence

The space is now ordered in this way:

1. • Ark
2. • veil
3. • table
4. • lampstand
5. • altar of incense
6. • altar of burnt offering
7. • basin



- Access to God is structured and intentional
- The tabernacle represents Sinai brought into the camp
- Why might Yahweh give such precise instructions for this ordered space?

¹⁷ Now in the first month of the second year, on the first *day* of the month, the tabernacle was erected. ¹⁸ Moses erected the tabernacle and laid its bases, and set up its boards, and inserted its bars, and erected its pillars. ¹⁹ And he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent on top of it, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. ²⁰ Then he took the testimony and put *it* into the ark, and attached the poles to the ark, and put the atoning cover on top of the ark. ²¹ He then brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up a veil for the covering, and screened off the ark of the testimony, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

The Ark is placed first. Why?

- The ark represents God's throne

The tabernacle is a miniature universe:

- Structure mirrors creation:
- Outer court → Eden
- Holy place → The Garden in Eden
- Most holy place → The center of the Garden
- The building of the tabernacle mirrors creation language in Genesis

What does it mean for Israel that God's throne is now in their camp?

²² He also put the table in the tent of meeting on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil. ²³ And he set the arrangement of bread in order on it before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. ²⁴ Then he placed the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table, on the south side of the tabernacle. ²⁵ And he lighted the lamps before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. ²⁶ Then he placed the gold altar in the tent of meeting in front of the veil; ²⁷ and he burned fragrant incense on it, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. ²⁸ Then he set up the curtain for the doorway of the tabernacle. ²⁹ And he set the altar of burnt offering *in front of* the doorway of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the meal offering, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. ³⁰ He placed the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing. ³¹ From it Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet. ³² When they entered the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Note the sequence of worship objects:

1. Ark → presence
2. Veil → angelic guard
3. Table → provision (Yahweh will "See to it" - Gen 22)
4. Lampstand → light (the Tree of Life illumines the way to Yahweh)
5. Incense → prayer (the means by which Yahweh receives intercession)
6. Altar → sacrifice (unblemished life offered up, overcomes sin's deadly effects)
7. Basin → cleansing (going through the waters, image of death to life/new creation)

³³ And he erected the courtyard all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the curtain for the gate of the courtyard. So Moses finished the work.

- “So Moses finished the work.” This phrase echoes Genesis 2:2 “God finished His work.”

Tabernacle = an image of new creation space

God is restoring Eden-like fellowship (Yet it is incomplete)

- The goal of salvation in The Exodus is *God’s presence*
- Exodus 25:8 — “Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.”
- Everything from chapter 25 onward leads to the following moment.

34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

- The glory fills the tabernacle
- “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting...”
- This is the same cloud that appeared at: the Red Sea and Mount Sinai
- The tabernacle is a portable Sinai - God’s mountain presence has moved into Israel’s camp.

“the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”

- Glory - (kavod): weight, heaviness, reputation
- God’s presence transcends goosebumps - it is intended for *tsedikah*/righteousness.

35 And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

- Profound surprise: “Moses was not able to enter.” Why not? *The problem is no longer Divine Presence; the problem is human access*
- Exodus ends with Yahweh inside the tent and Moses outside - Leviticus begins with Yahweh calling to Moses from the tent. Leviticus images “the way in”

36 Throughout their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out;**37** but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. **38** For throughout their journeys,

the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.

- When the cloud moves, Israel moves; conversely, when the cloud stays, so does Israel
- Yes, Yahweh is present, but more importantly - Yahweh is leading
- This is radically different from other ancient religions: fixed temples.

Exodus begins with Yahweh's chosen people trapped under Pharaoh. It ends with the Yahweh moving into their midst. *The goal of the Exodus story is the restoration of God's Presence*

"Israel's God now dwells, with intensity and at close range, in Israel's very midst. God actually takes up space in Israel's world. At the same time, the God who "fills" the tabernacle also "fills" the cosmos (Jer. 23:24; Isa. 6:3; Ps. 33:5; 72:19). On the one hand, this makes it clear that Israel's place of worship is not the only place in the world where God's presence can be found. God cannot be so confined; God is both near and far. Yet there is no other specific place in creation that is said to be filled up with God; the focused choice of place by God provides for an intensity of presence that is not true of the creation generally. The tabernacle may thus be said to be a kind of material "body" for God. It is no wonder that the New Testament can pick up this language of fullness and use it for God's bodily dwelling in Jesus (Col. 1:19; 2:9; Eph. 1:23; John 1:14–16). Moreover, Israel's God is not present just in isolated moments of Israel's life, or only to key leaders, but is present to the community as a whole on an ongoing basis. God continues to lead the people in all of their journeyings (see Num. 9:15–23; 10:11–13). The dwelling of God is not a static, immobile, unchanging presence. There is movement with this God, a movement that signals the comings and goings of Israel ... The people are now no longer subjected to a changeless system, to an increasingly dispiriting bondage. They are followers of a God who is on the move, in whose service true freedom and joy are to be found."

~Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus: Interpretation*

Reflections