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I. Introduction to the Tabernacle - Ex 25:1-9

It is helpful to understand that this text has a specific structure. There are 7 separate times where the phrase, "The Lord said to Moses", occurs. This phrase then divides this text into 7 sections. This number 7 should be a clue to us that there will be some significant ties back to Creation theology in this section.

This section is the introduction to the instructions for the Tabernacle - verse 1,

Exodus 25:1-2 "Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak with the sons of Israel so that they take a contribution for Me; from **every man whose heart is willing you shall take My contribution.**"

Every person was to be asked to contribute materials for the Tabernacle and their giving was to be done as their heart moved them. See that in this, each person had the opportunity to participate in making the dwelling place of God *in their midst*. Lastly in verse 8, notice that God is going to *show* Moses the *pattern* for the tabernacle,

Exodus 25:8–9 “And let them make a sanctuary for Me, **that I may dwell among them**. “According to all that I am going to show you, **as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall make it.**”

From this language of pattern some commentators believe the tabernacle is to be a replica, or a mirror, of the heavenly dwelling place of God.

II. The Light in the Tabernacle - Ex 25:10-40

God begins by instructing Moses on the construction of the Ark - verse 10,

Exodus 25:10–11 “And they shall make an ark of acacia wood two and a half cubits long, and one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high.

“You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and you shall make a gold molding around it.”

The Ark was to be the very seat of God’s presence and glory. It was covered in gold, because gold would have reflected the light that emanates from God’s glory. Throughout these instructions it is important to establish the connection between the glory of God’s presence with the material of gold.

On top of the ark was to be built what was called the Mercy Seat - verse 21

Exodus 25:21–23 “You shall put the **mercy seat** on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. “There **I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all which I will command you for the sons of Israel**. “You shall make a table of acacia wood, two cubits long and one cubit wide and one and a half cubits high.”

The word used for mercy is the same word used for atonement. As we will see in Leviticus, the only time that the Mercy Seat is used in the sacrificial system is on

the **Day of Atonement**. See how on each end there will be two cherubim of gold.

As we will see in later OT visions of God's heavenly throne room, the Cherubim are the angels who attend God by His throne and praise Him unceasingly. In verse 22 we see that it is above the Mercy Seat, between the Cherubim, that God will meet Moses and provide commandment and rule over the people of Israel. The theology of this is clear: **God will dwell with man and rule over Israel from His tabernacle which is a replica of His heavenly throne room. However, there must be atonement for sins for this to work.**

If you read verse 31-33 you will see how the lampstand was to have engravings of branches and flowers and fruit. This is done to remind the people of the garden of Eden. This clues us in to the fact that the tabernacle inherently points back to God's dwelling with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden

III. The Sky in the Tabernacle - Ex 26:1-30

In chapter 26, we see that the Tabernacle is to be a tent. The sides of this tent are to be made of fine linen that is dyed with blue and purple hues. The blue is to remind the people of the sky and sea that God created on Day 2 of creation. Notice that there is to be gold interwoven with the blue curtains representing God's glory filling the sky. This is further accentuated by the gold covered acacia wood beams that hold up the curtains.

IV. How the Tabernacle works on the Earth - 26:31-30:10

a. The Veil & The Outer Court (26:31-27:21)

This final subsection deals with the Tabernacle's function on earth. God instructs Moses to fashion a veil of separation - verse 31

Exodus 26:31-34 "You shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen; **it shall be made with cherubim**, the work of a skillful designer. "You shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, their hooks also being of gold, on four bases of silver. "You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and **you shall bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil; and the veil shall separate for you the holy place and the Holy of Holies.** "You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the Holy of Holies."

This veil created a division inside the Tabernacle between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies). This separation must exist because mankind is not perfectly holy and therefore cannot be *fully* in the presence of the most Holy God.

This is further accentuated in 27:9-10, where God gives instructions for the court outside the tabernacle. This is the area where the Israelites were to gather before the Lord at the tabernacle. Surely, all Israel was invited to participate in worshipping God at the Tabernacle. However, there must be a mediator between the people in the outer court and God in the Holy Place. In verse 21 we see that Aaron and his sons are to be these mediators,

Exodus 27:21 “In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, **Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before Yahweh**; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel.”

This court also serves as a visible teaching lesson for Israel on how they are to be a kingdom of priests. Just as the priests stand before them, between the outer court and the holy place, so too does Israel act as the mediator between the nations and God.

b. Clothing the Priests - 28:1-43

This section deals with the clothing that the priests are to wear. It is important to realize that each article of clothing has a theological purpose. It is in this section that the function and role of the priest in the worship of God is established.

The garments that the priests wear are to be for glory and beauty. When stated together, the two terms, glory, and beauty, are the two major terms describing the Majesty of God in the OT. From this we learn that the priest is to magnify and point to the Majesty of God. The garments are to be made from the same colors as the linen in the tabernacle. Ultimately, they are made to look like miniature versions of the Tabernacle to highlight the glorious truth that God dwells amongst His people.

Verse 9-14 deal with the two shoulder pieces that the priest is to wear,

Exodus 28:9–12 “You shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them **the**

names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on the one stone and the names of the remaining six on the second stone, according to their birth. “As a jeweler engraves a signet, you shall engrave the two stones according to the names of the sons of Israel; you shall set them all around in filigree settings of gold. “You shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel, and **Aaron shall bear their names before Yahweh on his two shoulders for remembrance.**”

Each shoulder piece is to have a stone on which is carved the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, 6 tribes on one stone and 6 tribes on the other stone. This highlights the priest’s role as a representative of all the people of Israel before God in the Holy Place. He is to figuratively bear them on his shoulders.

This role of mediation is further established with the breastpiece of Judgement. This breastpiece holds the 12 names of Israel as well and it is to be worn over the heart. The judgement here relates to Divine decrees and decisions that are revealed to the priest. Just as the shoulder pieces represent the priest’s mediation between man and God, the breastpiece represents the priest’s mediation between God and man. This breastpiece is to be worn over the priest’s heart, signifying that God’s judgements and decrees should rule over the hearts of the people of Israel.

Lastly the robe of the priestly garment (ephod), was to have designs of a pomegranate. Most scholars and commentators hold that this most likely represents the fruit of the Tree of Life found in Eden. The robe was also to have a bell attached to it. This bell would make noise with every movement that the priest performed in the Tabernacle, serving as an audible reminder to him of the caution, care, and holiness that he must have in the presence of God.

c. Ordination of the Priests (29:1-46)

In verses 10-30 we have the description of the ordination ceremony of the priests. This ceremony consisted of three separate sacrifices that were performed to consecrate the priest for his service in the tabernacle. The first offering involved killing one bull. This is called the **sin offering** and it is performed to cleanse the priest from sin. The next offering involved killing one ram and burning the entire ram on the altar. This is called the **burnt offering** which was a demonstration of total consecration and dedication to God. The last offering to take place requires

the killing of one ram and then the taking of parts of the ram and placing it on the altar and then taking the breast of the ram and eating it as a meal between the priest and God. This is called the **peace offering** and it was done as a celebration of the fellowship that exists between YHWH and man.

This section ends with instructions for twice daily sacrifices which were a vital part of the priests' duties. After this instruction we find a declaration from God,

Exodus 29:43-46 "I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be set apart as holy by My glory. "I will set the tent of meeting and the altar apart as holy; I will also set Aaron and his sons apart as holy to minister as priests to Me. "I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. **"They shall know that I am Yahweh their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am Yahweh their God."**

He has delivered them to be His people, to be their God and to dwell among them.

d. The Altar for Incense - 30:1-10

The final passage in this subsection describes the altar for incense inside the tabernacle. It was to be made with the same materials as the Ark and it was to be placed in front of the veil that was between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. It created another physical barrier of smoke between the High Priest and God which further represented that even the priest can't perfectly mediate this relationship between God and man because he too is a sinful man. This ends the first section where the Lord speaks to Moses.

B. God Speaks to Moses Parts 2-5 - 30:11-38

God addresses Moses a second time in vs 11-16 to provide instructions regarding the taking of a census. This was to be done so that every person in Israel was to have contribution to the maintenance of the tabernacle. This was different from the free-will offerings that were requested in 25:1-2. Every Israelite was to be involved with the Tabernacle.

God speaks to Moses a third time in vs 17-21 regarding basins of bronze that the priests were to use to wash themselves before they entered the Tabernacle. This was to highlight the holiness and consecration that was required to be in the presence of God.

God speaks to Moses a fourth time in verse 22-33 in order provide the recipe for the anointing oil to be used in sanctifying everything in the Tabernacle as well as the priests. This was a special oil and it was not allowed to be used on any ordinary person or ordinary purpose. This highlighted the sacred nature of the tabernacle and the priesthood.

God speaks to Moses a fifth time in verses 34-38 to provide a recipe for the incense that is to be burned in the Tabernacle. No one was allowed to burn incense made with this recipe which highlighted the fact that there was to be one place where man and God would commune together - at the Tabernacle.

C. God Speaks to Moses Parts 6 & 7

God speaks to Moses a sixth time in 31:1-11 in order to tell him that God has filled certain individuals with the Spirit of God,

Exodus 31:1-6 “And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, “See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. **“And I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in discernment, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, in order for him to work in all kinds of craftsmanship.** “And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are wise at heart I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded you:”

This filling of the Spirit of God is a divine enablement and empowerment to perform the good works that He prepared beforehand. God chose two men and gifted them with the Holy Spirit and the creative ability to construct the Tabernacle just as God designed.

God concludes by speaking to Moses a 7th time in verses 12-17,

Exodus 31:12-13 “Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, “But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely keep My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, **that you may know that I am Yahweh who makes you holy.**”

The tie to creation here is clear. The 7th word from God correlates with the 7th day of creation for this 7th word is a command from God to honor the Sabbath

Day. The climax of creation theology is sabbath rest. Remember that this was a day in which God rested from His labor to perfectly enjoy all that He had created. It was on this day that all that God had made existed in a state of perfection. This sabbath rest that God enjoyed with His creation before the Fall is what the Tabernacle is pointing back to. This is the purpose for this entire system of worship so then it is highly important that Israel keep the Sabbath holy.

6. The Golden Calf (Exod 32:1-33:6)

A. The Golden Calf Event (32:1-6)

It is important to consider the timing of Exodus 32. After Aaron and the Elders returned from Sinai where they shared a meal with YHWH, Moses stayed behind to receive further instruction about the Tabernacle - this is what we see in verse 1,

Exodus 32:1 “Then the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain. So the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, “**Arise, make us gods who will go before us**; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”

The people were filled with doubt because Moses didn't come down with the rest of the Elders. He was on the Mountain with God learning of how God was to dwell with His people and exist in a beautiful and holy relationship in their midst. They had just ***gathered together*** to hear Moses reveal the 10 commandments. They had just pledged full obedience to all the Words of God and had just performed a covenant ceremony in order to make the covenant official. But here, just a few moments later they ***gathered together*** to break the 10 commandments and make an idol out of a golden calf.

They approach Aaron, the representative of Moses, the mouthpiece of YHWH, and they demand that he make them gods to **go before** them. Remember that this phrase was first used by God when He declared that He would go before them as they left Egypt. What they want to do here is replace YHWH with paganism like what they had in Egypt. They also declare that it was Moses who brought them out of Egypt, not YHWH. In a sense they have declared that they are atheists when it comes to YHWH. They don't just reject Him. They refuse to acknowledge His existence. Remember that God's presence was right there before them in the form of a thick, dark cloud. His presence was causing the rocks

at Sinai to burn and the Mountain itself to shake. This is accentuated by their statement that they have no clue what happened to Moses. They had just heard God audibly call Him and the other Elders up to Sinai for the meal they shared with YHWH. Their willful blindness is absolutely delusional. In saying this they broke the 1st commandment - you shall have no other gods before me

In verse 2 we see how Aaron, the High Priest of God respond to the people's sinful request,

Exodus 32:2-5 "And Aaron said to them, "Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he took this from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "**These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.**" And Aaron looked and built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to Yahweh."

Aaron doesn't even put up a fight. He takes all their gold that they received when they left Egypt and he made a golden calf for them. He then declares to them the this idol was what brought them out of Egypt, not YHWH. In making this idol and worshipping it, Israel broke the 2nd commandment - you shall not make a carved image. Moreover, when they gave Aaron their gold jewelry they were giving him that which was supposed to be set aside for the construction of the tabernacle. In doing this they broke the 8th commandment for they stole from that which belonged to God and His tabernacle. After fashioning the golden calf, Aaron declares that the next day would be a feast in the name of YHWH. Even though Aaron had not completely rejected the existence of YHWH, his proclamation was a blatant violation of the 3rd command of taking YHWH's name in vain. This celebration was in complete contradiction to the name of YHWH. Aaron declared that they would be worshipping YHWH but in reality they were sacrificing on an altar to the golden calf. This was also a violation of the 4th Command, where God instructed them to follow His worship schedule of celebrating the sabbath and the other regular feasts according to His instruction.

In verse 6 we read of this feast,

Exodus 32:6 "So the next day they rose early and offered **burnt offerings and brought peace offerings**; and the people **sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play.**"

Notice that they performed burnt offerings, signifying total dedication to this golden calf and peace offerings which celebrated the relationship and fellowship that they had with this false god. These were the exact same sacrifices they had performed in the covenant ceremony with YHWH after they heard the 10 commandments. The text then says they sat down to eat, drink, and rose up to play. Earlier the elders, the priests and Moses ate and drank with God. Now the people are eating and drinking with this idol. The phrase play is a euphemism for sexually perverse activity. By doing this the Israelites violated the commandments against adultery, stealing and covetousness (7, 8 and 10). An argument can be made that in using his authority to organize this pagan feast, Aaron violated the essence of commandment 5, to honor God given authority for he used that authority that God gave him to organize a sinful worship feast. When we pause and think about how disgusting this feast was and then we step back and we see this moment within the context of the covenant ceremony where all the people pledged to follow God's law, within the context of the fellowship meal with God Himself on Mt. Sinai and within the context of God instructing Moses on how to build His dwelling place where He would exist among the people this moment is heart breaking. It's appalling. It's horrifying. They traded all the sweet riches of a relationship with God for this one moment of worshiping a dead idol and engaging in sinful activity. This is what sin looks like. This is how disgusting it is. This is how illogical and stupid it is.

Later in the chapter, when Moses comes down and sees the situation and confronts Aaron, Aaron lies and bears false witness against the Israelites in order to claim innocence, thus breaking Commandment 9. Lastly, there is an argument to be made that the 6th Commandment was violated as well. Since most pagan feasts included infant sacrifice, and it appears that this feast followed the pattern seen in the ancient near east could have also included murder.

B. God's Wrath (32:7-14)

The scene then shifts away from this idolatrous scene to God and Moses on the Mountain - verse 7,

Exodus 32:7 "Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, "Go! Go down at once, **for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt**, have corrupted themselves."

See that God demanded immediate action for Israel's idolatry. Justice must be

executed. Moreover, see how God calls them “your people”. They declared that it was Moses who brought them out of Egypt, and God responds by declaring that they are no longer His people. The covenant relationship was violated by their sin and here God is indicating that the just punishment is to go give them what their actions demanded - a divorce. The punishment for violating just *one* of the commandments was judgement and wrath from God. They broke all the commandments and God’s justice and holiness demanded that His wrath be poured out on them. And God makes this known to Moses in verse 10,

Exodus 32:10 “Now then let Me alone, that **My anger may burn against them and that I may consume them**; and I will make you a great nation.”

Now we must ask, why did God tell Moses this? Did God have to reveal what His justice required? Did Moses have to know what the people had done and were doing while he was on the mountain? In verse 11, we see Moses’ response after being made privy to this information,

Exodus 32:11–14 “Then **Moses entreated the favor of Yahweh his God** and said, “O Yahweh, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a strong hand? “**Why should the Egyptians speak**, saying, ‘With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your burning anger and relent concerning doing harm to Your people. “**Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself**, and You said to them, ‘I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.’” So **Yahweh relented** concerning the harm which He said He would do to His people.”

God is here revealing to Moses the actions that His just wrath should take, so that Moses will be set up in the role of a *mediator*. God is all-knowing and He is all sovereign, so He was not caught off guard by the idolatrous sin of Israel. He knew it was going to happen just as He knew that Adam and Eve were going to sin in the garden. God didn’t just randomly let Moses in on some inside information and then willy nilly change His mind after Moses makes his plea. No, in His sovereignty He planned for Moses to respond the way that he did to lay the foundation for how His wrath against sin can be appeased by a mediator.

Let's look at Moses' mediation. He pleads with God for mercy based on God's ultimate plan for displaying His maximum glory to the world and His unending faithfulness to His promises. If God carried out His just wrath, His name would not be exalted amongst the nations and the promises that He made to the forefathers of Israel would not be completely fulfilled. Ultimately, Moses is pleading for God's mercy based on God's will for the world and for Israel that He has revealed in the book of Genesis and in bringing the people out of Egypt in the Exodus.

The English translators translate verse 14 with terms like God relented, or repented from His plan. However this does not capture the essence of what is said in the Hebrew. The word translated here "relented" comes from the Hebrew stem *nahum* which means "comfort". The idea here is that through the intercession of Moses, the all consuming calamity that was the proper expression of God's just wrath was no longer an impending certainty. It was through the sovereignly ordained mediation of Moses that God's burning anger was calmed and comforted. *The question is: how can God not do this and still remain just and holy? How is this just?*

C. Moses' Confrontation of the People (32:15-29)

After humbly pleading for mercy for the people of Israel, Moses goes down from Sinai - verse 15,

Exodus 32:15-16, 19: "Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain. And the two tablets of the testimony were in his hand, tablets which were written on both sides; they were written on one side and the other. **Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets...**Now it happened, as soon as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and **Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.**"

Moses is filled with righteous anger when he comes down from the Mountain and sees the terrible sin that the people are committing. By breaking the two tablets Moses was symbolizing how Israel had broken the commandments and thereby broken the covenant. They had violated the intimate relationship that God had established and in breaking the two tablets Moses was demonstrating that this relationship was over. In essence, this was an act of divorce.

Moses then forces the people to experience the pain and grief that their idolatry had caused,

Exodus 32:20 “Then he took the calf which they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it over the surface of the water and **made the sons of Israel drink it.**”

This would have caused terrible stomach pain and violent vomiting and defecation. Moses then confronts Aaron for leading the people in their rebellion. As I mentioned earlier, Moses then interrogated Aaron, and he responds with a bold faced lie,

Exodus 32:21–24 “Then Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you, that you have brought such great sin upon them?” And Aaron said, “**Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil. “Indeed they said to me, ‘Make gods for us who will go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ “And I said to them, ‘Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.**”

Notice that he stated that he really didn't fashion it either, but that it just appeared out of the fire.

Even though God did not consume the entire nation with His wrath, blood still had to be spilled for breaking the covenant - verse 25,

Exodus 32:25–28 “Now Moses saw that the people were out of control—for Aaron had let them get out of control to be a derision among their enemies— so Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, “**Whoever is for Yahweh, come to me!**” **And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him.** And he said to them, “Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, ‘Every man among you put his sword upon his thigh and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother and every man his friend and every man his neighbor.’” So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day.”

This act of loyalty on behalf of the Levites led to their implementation as the priestly tribe who were to be ordained for service to God

Exodus 32:29 “Then Moses said, “**Be ordained today to Yahweh**—for every man has been against his son and against his brother—in order that He may bestow a blessing upon you today.”

6. Moses’ Intercession (32:30-33:16)

A. Moses Mediation and God’s Verdict (32:30-33:6)

Moses returned to the Lord to attempt to make **atonement** for their sin verse 30,

Exodus 32:30–32 “Now it happened on the next day, that Moses said to the people, “You yourselves have committed a great sin; but now I am going up to Yahweh, **perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.**” Then Moses returned to Yahweh and said, “Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made gods of gold for themselves. **“But now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!”**

Moses proposes a substitution. He pleads with God to punish him by taking his life so that the people of Israel would be spared and forgiven. But Moses isn’t the right mediator for this type of sacrifice. He can’t substitute his life for theirs because he is a sinner too. God refuses to blot him out but what He does do is forgive His people - verse 33,

Exodus 32:33–34 “And Yahweh said to Moses, “**Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.** “But now go, guide the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I punish, **I will punish them for their sin.**””

The killing is to stop and they shall go on and be led to the promised land. However as we see in 33:3, God will not go up with them,

Exodus 33:3 “Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for **I will not go up in your midst** because you are a stiff-necked people, lest I consume you on the way.””

Their sin was forgiven but the relationship was not restored. God will remain true to the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but that does not mean that He is bound to restore the relationship that was promised in the Mosaic covenant. This news devastated the people, causing them to mourn over their sin.

Moses' mediation is insufficient...

B. Moses Outside the Camp (33:7-16)

Now even though God no longer dwelt in their midst, He continued to meet with Moses **outside the camp - verse 7,**

Exodus 33:7-11 "Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it **outside the camp**, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought Yahweh would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp. **And it happened whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. And it happened whenever Moses entered the tent, that the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent;** and Yahweh would speak with Moses. And all the people would see the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent. And all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent. **Thus Yahweh used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.** Then Moses would return to the camp, and his attendant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent."

See here that God had not completely left them even though He did not dwell in their midst. In verse 13 we see that Moses longs for the relationship to be restored between God and His people,

Exodus 33:13 ""So now, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, **let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight.** See also, that this nation is Your people.""

See how he intercedes with God to make the nation His people once more and dwell with them. And in verse 14, we see God's answer,

Exodus 33:14 "And He said, "My presence shall go with you, and **I will give you rest.**"

Not only did God forgive them, He restored them to the relationship that they had before. Moreover, He promises to give them rest, a reference back to the Edenic/Sabbath rest that God is returning the world too. He is restoring His relationship with Israel and He is restoring Israel's role in God's redemptive plan. And remember, God sovereignly orchestrated for this restoration and

reconciliation to occur through the actions of a mediator between God and man.

7. God's Presence Revealed (Exod 33:17-34:9)

This act of marvelous mercy and grace seems too good to be true and Moses pleads with God to authenticate His promise - verse 18,

Exodus 33:18 "Then Moses said, "I pray You, **show me Your glory!**""

He longs for God to reveal who He is so that He knows that His merciful actions are true. No other god in the other gentile religions would act like YHWH has acted and Moses wants to know that these actions are based in who YHWH is. God doesn't have to grant Moses request but He does - verse 19,

Exodus 33:19–23 "And He said, "**I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you;** and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." But He said, "**You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!**" Then Yahweh said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. **"Then I will remove My hand, and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."**"

Before in Exodus 3, God only revealed His name, YHWH, to Moses in the burning bush. Here YHWH will reveal the fullness of who He is as YHWH to Moses. This revelation will be a form of security for Israel's forgiveness and restoration. God declares that after showing Moses His glory He will write the commandments on Two Tablets again, symbolizing that the relationship established by the Mosaic Covenant has been officially restored. We see this moment begin in verse 4,

Exodus 34:4–8 "So he carved out two stone tablets like the former ones, and Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as Yahweh had commanded him, and he took two stone tablets in his hand. Then Yahweh descended in the cloud and stood there with him, and He called upon the name of Yahweh. Then Yahweh passed by in front of him and called out, "Yahweh, Yahweh God, compassionate and gracious, **slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty**

unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.” And Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship.”

Again, notice how it is the Angel of the Lord in the Cloud that appears. He is the, “He” who calls on the name of the Lord and reveals YHWH’s character in verse 5. Understand that in this moment, the Ultimate Mediator, the Pre-incarnate Christ, is the one who is interceding between YHWH in Heaven and Moses and Israel on earth. He stood there with Moses.

In verse 6, YHWH declares the attributes of His character. He is merciful and compassionate. This carries the idea of a loving mother who cares deeply, and intimately for her child with unending empathy. He is gracious in a way that is a proactive outpouring of divine power for His people’s ultimate good. He is slow to anger which means that He is extremely patient in expressing His displeasure, wrath and judgement. Lastly He is abounding in lovingkindness and truth. He never runs out of these. The idea of lovingkindness is that God is filled a loyal love that leads Him to powerfully intervene on the behalf of His people for their good. This word lovingkindness is *hesed* and it is the OT equivalent of grace. God abounds in truth for everything that He does is right, pure, real and genuine. There is nothing that is fake, or false or faulty in who God is.

In verse 7, YHWH declares the perpetual actions that flow from His character. First, He is one who *keeps* lovingkindness. God is actively seeking to pour out His grace on His people. Moreover, His lovingkindness does not fade or diminish. He is a God who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin. The idea of the word for forgive is to lift your sins off of you so that He no longer sees your sin anymore. A transgression is a deliberate and willful violation of a command. The word for sin carries the idea of a breach of contract or standard where you either do something that violates the contract or you do not act how the contract demands. Iniquity is the legal guilt that is placed on those who transgress and sin. Here we see that God forgives it all. He forgives the transgression and sin and He forgives the guilt that comes with those.

Christ Connection

Lastly we see that God does not clear the guilty. There is a tension here. He forgives sin and iniquity, but He does not forgive unjustly. God is just and He must

punish sin. Someone will be judged for sin. This is what we just saw. 3000 people were killed as punishment for their sin. But God forgave the rest of the nation of Israel and here restored the relationship. So then who bore their sin? Moses tried to be that substitutionary sacrifice, but God turned him down. *So then, who is punished? How is God just in forgiving Israel and restoring a relationship to them?* This is the tension that Exodus sets up for the rest of the Bible to answer. Paul says it like this in Romans 5,

Romans 5:6–10 “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **For one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** Much more then, having now been **justified by His blood**, we shall be **saved from the wrath of God through Him**. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, **having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**”

Jesus is that perfect mediator. He is the substitute for sin that Moses could never be. It is through His atonement that God is both just and the justifier of us who have faith in Jesus.

As I previously stated, there is no other deity in any other religion who acts like this. This is what distinguishes God. As Micah puts it in Micah 7,

Micah 7:18–19 “**Who is a God like You, who forgives iniquity And passes over the transgression of the remnant of His inheritance?** He does not hold fast to His anger forever Because He delights in lovingkindness. He will again have compassion on us; He will subdue our iniquities. And **You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea.**”

Israel must depend on God alone to intervene in order that they might live and also experience a reconciliation with God. This is the nature of God’s love, justice, mercy and grace.

8. God’s Covenant Renewed (Exod 34:10-35)

As previously stated, God covenants again with Israel and He wrote these covenants on two tablets just as before. God’s forgiveness and His reconciliation is so powerful it is as if the golden calf incident has been erased from memory. This is the covering nature of God’s love and His grace.

Notice that when Moses returns from witnessing God's glory, his appearance changed,

Exodus 34:29–30 “Now it happened when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that **Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him.** Then Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.”

The people are terrified at this for they knew that they are sinful. Even though all is restored and forgiven, there is still a separation that exists. God's glory can not be beheld by unholy people. So Moses veiled His face, much like the veil that was described in the holy of holies.

New Testament Connection

However, there is another layer to this. By communing with God, Moses was being transformed. This is what Paul picks up on in 2 Corinthians 3

2 Corinthians 3:16–18 “but **WHENEVER a person TURNS TO THE LORD, THE VEIL IS TAKEN AWAY.** Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. **But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.**”

We who live in the New Covenant can be filled with the Holy Spirit of God, and this indwelling transforms us from one degree of glory to another on a level that is even greater than what Moses experienced.

9. Sabbath and Tabernacle (Exod 35:1-40:33)

A. Sabbath Reinstated (35:1-3)

After this, Moses assembled all the congregation together, just as He did when He inaugurated the covenant the first time,

Exodus 35:1–2 “Then Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel and said to them, “These are the things that Yahweh has commanded you to do:

“Six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy day, a sabbath of complete rest to Yahweh; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death.”

He declares that they are to again keep the Sabbath holy thus demonstrating that Israel is still allowed to keep their role as a kingdom of priests to the nation showing that the Sabbath rest experienced in Eden is possible through worshipping YHWH.

B. Tabernacle Construction (35:4-39:44)

In Chapter 35 we see that Israel is called to contribute with a willing heart,

Exodus 35:5–10 **“Take from among you a contribution to Yahweh; **whoever is of a willing heart**, let him bring it as a contribution to Yahweh: gold, silver, and bronze, and blue, purple, and scarlet material, fine linen, goats’ hair, and rams’ skins dyed red, and porpoise skins, and acacia wood, and oil for lighting, and spices for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense, and onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece. **‘And let everyone wise at heart among you come and make all that Yahweh has commanded:’**”**

In verse 29, we see the response,

Exodus 35:29 **“The sons of Israel—**all the men and women whose heart was willing** to bring material for all the work, which Yahweh had commanded through the hand of Moses to do—brought a freewill offering to Yahweh.”**

See that they are all allowed to have a personal involvement in the building of the tabernacle, both men and women. They contribute both their things and their skilled labor. They are so willing to worship God in this way that they give more than what is needed. In this account we see that the people follow God’s instructions from chapters 25-28 in exact detail. They are willing, they are giving above and beyond and they are obeying God in every detail. This is the proper response to God’s forgiveness and reconciliation - perfect and willful obedience.

It is important to notice here that they build the Tabernacle from the inside out. They start in the Holy of Holies and eventually finish in the outer court. This is symbolic of the nature of their relationship with God. God dwells among them, however, because of their sin, they must remain separate from God’s holy presence. They dwell with God, but at a distance. In 39:42-43 we see echos back to Genesis 1-2.

Exodus 39:42–43 “Thus, **according to all that Yahweh had commanded Moses**, so the sons of Israel did in all their service. And **Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it**; just as Yahweh had commanded, so they had done. **Then Moses blessed them.**”

In Genesis, God made the world and saw all that He had made and blessed it. Remember that the Tabernacle is a microcosm of the world. After the Tabernacle was finished, Moses saw all that had been done and he blessed the people. Even though there is separation in the Tabernacle between God and man because of their sin, ultimately the Tabernacle brings hope that things will return to how they were before sin entered the world.

10. The Presence of God Amongst His People (Exod 40:34-38)

After the Tabernacle is completed the glory of God’s presence enters the Holy of Holies,

Exodus 40:34–38 “**Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle.** And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had dwelt on it, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle. Now throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. **For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of Yahweh was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night**, in the sight of all the house of Israel.”

God had every right to terminate His covenant with His people. He had every right to no longer dwell with them but He does because He is a God who is gracious, and compassionate, abounding in lovingkindness, and forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin. In this moment we also see His plan for redemption continue. The Tabernacle is a microcosm for the world, so when His glory fills the Tabernacle it looks forward to that day when His glory will fill the entire earth.

The book ends by revealing that even Moses couldn’t even enter the tent that day. There is a tension. God dwells with man, but even the most righteous man is unable to stand before Him because he too is a sinner. *The question is, how can sinful man dwell with a holy God? How can God justly forgive sin and reconcile with sinners? How can the relationship that Adam had with God in the garden be restored?* These are the questions that Exodus sets up for the rest of the Bible to answer.