

Chapter 13

Verses 1–16

The first 16 verses of chapter 13 reiterate previous instruction. The focus is on keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread which followed the Passover. The paragraph begins with instruction about dedication of the firstborn. This is reasonable, for both men and animals, since they were spared by the Passover, and it emphasizes remembering the occasion. Many Jews still observe this by a ritual of redeeming the first-born son on the 13th day after birth. The redemption of unclean beasts, like the donkey, by sacrificing a clean animal, is an example of God's principle for the clean redeeming the unclean. The unclean could only be redeemed, not improved. That's why we need the cross of Christ. We need redemption, not improvement.

The paragraph ends with a display of remembrance with a *sign on your hand* and *phylacteries on your forehead*. The word *phylacteries* has the idea of prayer or a prayer box. Because of verse 16, with Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18, some Jews still wear such leather pouches, with passages of the Law inside, on their forehead or left arm.

Verses 17–22

This paragraph tells us that God led the Israelites, with a *cloud* and a *pillar of fire by night* (vv. 21–22) through the *wilderness to the Red Sea* Gulf of Aqaba (Numbers 14:25; Acts 7:36; Hebrews 11:29). The paragraph also tells us *Moses took the bones of Joseph with him* because of a previous promise to Joseph.

Application: Never think you can fix your sins by doing good. Like the donkey in this chapter, we are all unclean (Romans 5) and require a clean lamb to redeem us. Our good deeds will not offset our sin. When the clean is mixed with the unclean, it only soils the clean. Cleansing our sin can only be as specified by God, who does not mix our sin with good deeds, but takes away our sin. *Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* (John 1:29).

Before I comment on chapter 14, we should discuss:

The Route of the Exodus

There are two main places to investigate. One is the site of Horeb, Mount Sinai. The other is the place where the Israelites crossed the sea. The smaller locations of encampments are all a guess which depend on the location of these two main places.

The Position of Horeb, Mount Sinai

Here are seven basic arguments [some of which are also mentioned in the chapter 3 notes] that demonstrate that Mount Sinai was not the traditional site (Jebel Musa—the so-named “Mountain of Moses” at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula), but rather a mountain in today's Saudi Arabia.

1. Moses saw the burning bush, at the base of Mount Sinai, when he *was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian* (Exodus 3:1). The Sinai Peninsula was never part of Midian.
2. *The mountain of God* was on the *west side*, of the wilderness, which is the east side of the Gulf of Aqaba. It is unreasonable to suppose Moses would go all the way around the Gulf of Aqaba and take his sheep to a sandy desert area at the tip of the Sinai Peninsula.

3. After killing the Egyptian, Exodus 2:15 tells us Moses fled from Egypt to Midian. But the Sinai Peninsula was still Egypt.
4. The Bible has multiple references about Moses being told to *go back to Egypt* (4:19) from Midian. If the traditional site were true, Moses would already be in Egypt.
5. The Apostle Paul made the comment, *Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia* (Galatians 4:25). Paul's understanding of Arabia would be consistent with the Old Testament references to Arabia, which is the region east of the Gulf of Aqaba (2 Chronicles 9:14; Isaiah 21:13; Jeremiah 25:24; and Ezekiel 27:21). This was not a barren desert land, as is the Sinai Peninsula, but an area from which *all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon* (2 Chronicles 9:14).
6. The traditional site is in a sand desert. It would be impossible for two million Israelites to live there for any length of time. Even if you assume the people ate manna, there is no possibility of feeding the livestock. Sheep and cattle need a source of vegetation, which was available surrounding Sinai of Arabia.
7. To quote gotquestions.org

Today, most people are unaware that little or no evidence has surfaced that supports the traditional site called "Mount Sinai" in the south central Sinai Peninsula. In fact, it seems the only reason that the traditional site is designated "Mount Sinai" is that Helena, mother of Constantine I, decreed it as such in the early 300s A.D.



Jabal al-Lawz, in today's Saudi Arabia near the Jordan border, has been suggested as another possible site of Mt. Horeb.

The Body of Water the Israelites Crossed

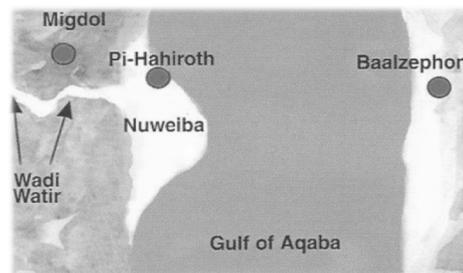
Next, we shall demonstrate that it is very likely the Israelites crossed near the center of the Gulf of Aqaba of the Red Sea.

Exodus 13:8 says, *God led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea* [יַם־סוּף (*yam Suph*)]. Liberal scholars claim יַם־סוּף (*yam Suph*) is to be translated "Reed Sea," not "Red Sea," and hence refers to a marshy area or some small lake near Goshen. So, they claim, a wind dried up a marshy area for the Israelites to cross. If that is true, the Bible contains exaggerations and lies, does not record actual history or God's miraculous intervention, and therefore cannot be trusted. Which is, of course, the whole reason for the "Reed Sea" theory. The word יַם־סוּף (*Suph*) can mean either "red" or "reed," so only the context can determine the meaning. Here are seven observations from the context.

1. The sea the Israelites crossed was a large body of water (Exodus 14:21–22), large enough to drown the Egyptian Army (v. 28). Josephus estimated the Egyptian army to be about 250,000 soldiers. How reasonable is it to suppose all those soldiers plus their

horses and chariots were drowned in a marsh of reeds? Moses said, *The deeps cover them, they went down into the depths like a stone (15:5). The flowing waters stood up like a heap; the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea (v. 8).* So, the immediate context describes a deep body of water. The Bible calls it *the great deep (Isaiah 51:10), the mighty waters (Isaiah 43:16-17), the depths have covered them (Exodus 15:5, 8), and into the deeps (Nehemiah 9:11).*

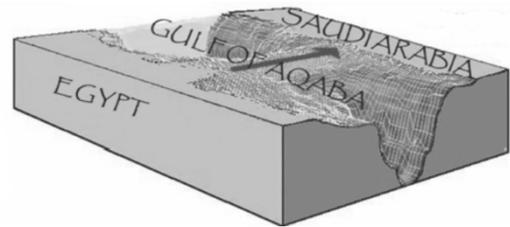
2. In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament in c. 250 B.C.) and in the New Testament, the Hebrew יַם־סוּף (*yam Suph*) is translated into ἐρυθρὰ θαλάσση (*eruthra thalasse*) and ἐρυθρα (*eruthre*) only means “red,” never “reed” (Acts 7:36; Hebrews 11:29). There is no evidence that anyone in Biblical times considered it to be anything but the Red Sea.
3. 1 Kings 9:26 says, *King Solomon also built a fleet of ships in Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea [יַם־סוּף (*yam Suph*)], in the land of Edom.* Are we to believe that Solomon built a fleet of ships in a marshy area known as a Reed Sea? Clearly, Solomon built his ship near today’s Eliat on the north edge of the Gulf of Aqaba of the Red Sea.
4. Josephus, commenting on the Red Sea crossing, said it occurred, “between the inaccessible precipices and the sea; for there was (on each side) a range of mountains that terminated at the sea, which was impassable by reason of their roughness, and obstructed their flight... where (the ridges of) the mountains were closed with the sea” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, book II, ch. XV). In Exodus 14:3, God told Moses, *Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, “They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.”* Both Josephus and Moses describe an area where they were shut in. This describes the wadi that leads to Nuweiba, but certainly not an area of reeds north of either the Gulf of Suez or the Gulf of Aqaba.
5. Some suggest the distance to Nuweiba is too far for the Israelites to travel. But we do not know exactly how long they walked to get to the Red Sea crossing. They traveled by day and night, led by God to the exact location for the crossing. The distance from the Suez Canal to Nuweiba is 210 miles (336 km). In 1967, Moshe Dayan marched his army that distance



only walking during the daytime and reached it in 6 days. Speaking of the march in Exodus 19:4, God said, *I bore you on eagles wings and brought you to myself*. Clearly, there is a work of God involved, nonetheless, such a journey is not unreasonable. But it is unreasonable to assume that from the time they left Pharaoh until he caught up with them, they only reach a marshy area near the Suez.

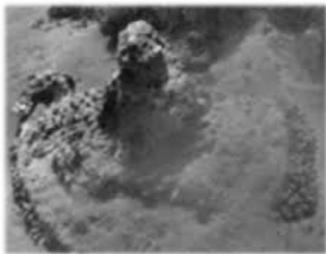
6. Some suggest the Red Sea Gulf of Aqaba is too deep with canyon-like slopes too steep for the Israelites to cross. In most places, yes. It can be as deep as 5,000 feet (1,600 meters) with a canyon slope of 45 degrees.

However, at Nuweiba there is an underwater land bridge only 300 feet (100 meters) deep at its center, allowing an adequate slope for crossing.



7. What appears to be parts of chariots have been discovered in the Gulf of Aqaba across from Nuweiba. The **website preteristarchive.com** reports the following, with the included pictures, of the discovery of Ron Wyatt beginning in 1978.

...carefully following the Biblical and historical records of the Exodus brings you to Nuweiba, a large beach in the Gulf of Aqaba, as Ron Wyatt discovered in 1978. Repeated dives in depths ranging from 60 to 200 feet deep (18m to 60m), over a stretch of almost 2.5 km [1.5 miles], has shown that the chariot parts are



scattered across the sea bed. Artifacts found include wheels, chariot bodies as well as human and horse bones. Divers have located wreckage on the Saudi coastline opposite Nuweiba as well. Since 1987, Ron Wyatt found three 4-spoke gilded chariot wheels. Coral does not grow on gold, hence the shape has remained very distinct, although the wood inside the gold veneer has disintegrated making them too fragile to move.



Chariot wheel discovered in 1978 - in the sea bed of the "Red Sea"

Delivered from Egypt: Chapters 14–19

Chapter 14

Verses 1–9

God led Israel for several days through an area known as *the wilderness*, an accurate description of the Sinai Peninsula, to the western edge of the Red Sea Gulf of Aqaba. There He told Moses to turn back and camp *by the sea* (v. 2). Pharaoh would see this as *wandering aimlessly* as they followed God's cloud and pillar of fire through the Sinai, which was *in the land of Egypt* (v. 3). God told Moses He would do this to *harden Pharaoh's heart* one last time. The purpose being that, *the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord* (v. 4).

Sure enough, Pharaoh *had a change of heart* and *he took six hundred select chariots, and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them*. The Egyptian army *reached them camping by the [Red] Sea*, which would be near Nuweiba.

Verses 10–14

When the Israelites saw the Egyptians, they complained to Moses saying, “*Have you brought us here because there are no graves in Egypt?*” But Moses said, “*Do not fear [the Egyptians]! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD.*” The word *salvation* is יְשׁוּעָה (*yeshuah*), the word for Joshua and Jesus. The word is used twice to describe this deliverance (14:13; 15:2). Then we have Moses’ battle cry, “*The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.*”

Verses 15–22

Then God told Moses what He was about to do, and what Moses was to do. That night, the cloud which Israel had been following, directed by *the angel of the Lord* (possibly a theophany of Christ or some designated angel), moved behind them, between them and the Egyptians, and became a light (a pillar of fire, v. 24) that kept the Egyptians away while Moses stretched out his hand and the sea parted with a wind, drying the sea floor, allowing the Israelites to cross on dry land (Psalm 66:6), even though the water on either side of them was deep (Psalm 106:9), standing in a heap (v. 22; Psalm 76:13).

Verses 23–29

Apparently, not only Pharaoh’s heart but his head was hardened. With all that had happened, it would seem ill-advised to pursue Israel through that narrows with water on each side. Apparently, Pharaoh himself stayed on the shore and sent his army after them. Before they could catch the Israelites, God intervened in two ways:

1. *He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty.* At this, the army began to panic and tried to flee back to the Sinai.
2. God commanded Moses, who stretched out his hand over the sea again, and *The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh’s entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained* (v. 28). Yet Israel passed through safely on dry land.



Verses 30–31

When the Israelites saw the Egyptian bodies washing up on the shore, *the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.* It was now impossible for the people not to believe in God and fear Him and Moses.

Application: We should base our understanding on a rational evaluation of the evidence God has given us. This inevitably creates our faith. Crossing the Red Sea is one of the most significant miracles of history. It created undeniable faith in those who saw it and provided evidence for those who heard of it. Forty years later in Jericho, Rahab told Joshua’s spies, *For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt* (Joshua 2:10).

Chapter 15

Verses 1–21

The first 21 verses of chapter 15 are the song of Moses after the crossing of the Red Sea, followed by a chorus sung by Moses’ sister Miriam. Both reflect the theme, and probable refrain, *Sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea* (vv.

1, 21). Apparently, Moses wrote the song. Assuming Moses was probably not a musician, the music was probably a familiar tune they had sung in Egypt. [For example, many of Martin Luther's songs were put to the music of secular tunes of his day.] The song lists at least ten characteristics of God:

1. Strong as in Mighty (v. 2)
2. Savior (v. 2)
3. Warrior
4. Majestic or glorious [literally, prideful in power] (vv. 6–7)
5. Holiness (v. 11)
6. Lovingkindness [or loyal love] (v. 13)
7. Redeemer (v. 13)
8. One who causes fear (vv. 14–16)
9. One who keeps His promises (v. 17)
10. Eternal king (v. 18)



Verses 22–27

On their way to the first encampment at Elim, after three days' journey, they ran out of water. Then they found water, but the water was undrinkable, called *bitter*. So, the people grumbled at Moses saying, "What shall we drink?" This is the **first of three grumbings** listed in Exodus (15:24; 16:2; 17:3). In response, God showed Moses a tree to throw in the water to make it *sweet*, i.e., drinkable. There was no magic in the tree. It was God who sweetened the water. But God made Moses go through the obedient act of putting the tree in the water. Moses then gave them the formula for good health:

If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer (15:26).

Notice, this has nothing to do with eating or not eating certain foods. It has only to do with God keeping them healthy if they *give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes*. The chapter ends with their arrival at the first place of encampment, the oasis of *Elim*.

Application: The Bible tells us how to please God, not how to be healthy and prosperous. There is a book titled, "None of These Diseases," published in 1963, which claimed if we eat the food God prescribed for Israel in the Law, we would be healthy. But God is not giving us suggestions or formulas to be healthy and wealthy. The Bible is not a self-help manual for a successful life. Living, teaching and dying, like the patriarchs, prophets, Jesus, and the apostles did, is not a path to health, wealth, and prosperity—on earth.

Chapter 16

Verse 1

Chapter 16 catalogues two events which took place a month and a half after leaving Egypt: the Israelites being fed by manna and the establishment of the Sabbath. The location of these events, *the wilderness of Sin*, as with all of the encampment locations, depends upon where the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. There is no absolute location to pinpoint these areas. If the crossing was on the shallow area across from Nuweiba, as



claimed here, and the quail that came up were near the sea (v. 13), then the wilderness of Sin would be the desert area south of Elim.

Verses 2–30

Verses 2 and 3 record the **second of three grumbings** listed in Exodus (15:24; 16:2; 17:3). This time they accuse Moses of bringing *us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger*. In response, God issued two events together.

He explained the coming of manna in the context of observing the Sabbath. This (v. 23) is the first use of the word *sabbath* [שַׁבָּת (*shabbath*), meaning to *stop* or *cease*] although a Saturday rest was set apart by God in Genesis 2:2–3.

Manna (a Hebrew word meaning “What?” as in “*What is it?*” – v. 15) *was like coriander seed, white, and its taste was like wafers with honey* (v. 31). They were only to gather enough for each day. It was to be eaten during the day with none kept over for the next day. When some Israelites tried to keep it until morning, it *bred worms and became foul*. But there was one exception. On Friday, and only on Friday, they were to gather twice as much, because they were not to gather any on Saturday, which was to be a *sabbath to the Lord* (vv. 5, 25, 26).



Verse 13 also mentions briefly that *quails came up and covered the camp*. [This is not the same quail event listed in Numbers 11:31-34.] Kaiser comments on the quail:

In the fall this small game bird, similar to pheasant and grouse, migrates south from Palestine and Arabia to Central Africa, and in the spring it returns. Egyptian art depicts people catching the birds in hand nets (“Bible Knowledge Commentary”).

Verses 16–21 describe the manna gathering. The exact amount of manna to be gathered was *an omer apiece*. We don’t know exactly what an omer was, but most estimate it at about 2 quarts (or 2 liters). It seems they were to pool the manna collected so that each person ended up with an omer (v. 18). The manna appeared between the early dew and when the sun heated the ground and melted the manna.

Verses 22–36 tell how these instructions were carried out. The sabbath is further explained: “*Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.*” *So the people rested on the seventh day*. Apparently, at the instruction of the Lord, *Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar [which was made out of gold – Hebrews 9:4] and put an omerful of manna in it and place it before the LORD [later put in the Ark of the Covenant—Hebrews 9:4] to be kept throughout your generations”* (v. 33).

Application: *Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own* (Matthew 6:34). They were only to gather enough manna for each day. This is not about reasonable planning. It’s about trusting God for the needs of today. We are reminded of the phrase in Christ’s model prayer, “*Give us this day our daily bread*” (Matthew 6:11), and when He said, “*I am the living bread that comes down out of heaven*” (John 6:51). When you are concerned about an issue, ask yourself: “Is there any more I can do about this today?” Anger is about the past and worry is about the future. Most of our suffering is not about what is happening today.

Chapter 17

Verses 1–7

Chapter 17 catalogues two events. Unlike chapter 16 where the two (manna giving and sabbath keeping) flow together, the events of chapter 17 are separate and distinct. The only thing they have in common is they both happened at a place call *Rephidim*, apparently, very near Mount *Horeb*/Mount Sinai of Arabia (v. 6).

Verses 1–7 are about the **third of three grumbling** of the Israelites (15:24; 16:2; 17:3). Again, it's about not having water. This seems to be the most severe grumbling. They were about to stone Moses (v. 4), and Moses said they were testing the Lord (v. 2). This time, God told Moses, “Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it” (v. 6).

Verses 8–16

The second incident at Rephidim is an attack by the Amalekites, who were apparently trying to keep the Israelites out of Arabia. The Amalekites (descendants of Esau through a concubine—Genesis 36:12) never seem to be located in one territory but were a continual menace to Israel (Numbers 14:45; Judges 6:33; 1 Samuel 14:48; 15:7; 27:8) until David defeated them (1 Samuel 30).

Moses said to Joshua, “Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek” (v. 9). This is the first time we hear about Joshua and without any introduction to who he is. Once again, God does something unique to win the battle. Victory depended on Moses holding up his hand with the *staff of God* (4:20). But it did not depend on Moses' strength, because when his arm became tired, two other men helped keep his arm up. One was his brother Aaron and the other was Hur, an otherwise unknown leader mentioned twice with Aaron in Exodus (17:12; 24:14). Tradition claims that Hur was married to Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron.



There is another first in this paragraph, the first mention of Moses keeping a written record. *The Lord said to Moses, “Write this in a book.”* Numbers 33:2 also tells us *Moses recorded their starting places according to their journeys by the command of the LORD.*

This is also the first time we read that *Moses built an altar* to God (v. 15).

Application: Don't test God by complaining about your life situation. It's good when God tests us (16:4), it is not good when we test God (17:2). We might ask, “Would we have done anything different if we left the food and water of Egypt and were led into a desert with no food or water?” The sin of the Israelites was not asking God, or Moses as His prophet, to provide for them. The sin was in the grumbling which Moses saw as testing the Lord (v. 2).

Chapter 18

Verses 1–12

Chapter 18 is about a visit from Moses' father-in-law Jethro (also known as Reuel – 2:18), the priest of Midian. There are two events described: the return of Moses' wife with his two sons, and Jethro's advice for judging the people.



Verses 1-12 tell us about the return of Moses' family.

Jethro somehow knew Moses had left Egypt and was camped at Rephidim near Sinai or Horeb *the mountain of God* (18:5; see also 3:1; 4:27; 24:13). Moses received Jethro, his wife Zipporah, with his sons Gershom and Eliezer. He had sent them away (v. 2), apparently, after the circumcision of his sons before Moses returned to Egypt. This is the last we hear of Moses' family.

Verses 11 and 12 tell us, from his comments and his sacrifice, that Jethro was a true priest and believer in the God of Israel.

Verses 13–27

Jethro observed Moses judging the people from morning to evening, because they rightly understood him to be a prophet of God (Deuteronomy 34:10). Moses gave his reason for his procedure in three steps.

1. *The people come to me to inquire of God*
2. *I judge between a man and his neighbor and*
3. *I make known the statutes of God and His laws*

Jethro argued that this would only wear out Moses and the people. His assessment was that these three things could be accomplished by other people, if Moses, as God's representative (v. 19), became a teacher rather than a judge (v. 16). The majority of the judgment could be carried out by other men who were *able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain*.

Jethro further suggested these men could be placed over 1000s, 100s, 50s, and 10s. So, Moses did as Jethro advised and heard only the most difficult cases. This obviously took some time because those men had to be carefully selected and Moses was about to receive the Law. It seems that this was not fully in place until after the Law was given to Moses at Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 1:5–15).

Application: It's better to teach than to judge. Moses was able to do more by becoming a teacher. We are not prophets like Moses, but we do have God's Word from His prophets. Teaching God's Word is foundational, judging is secondary and based on that teaching. If you try to judge all the matters around you, say, in your extended family, it will wear you out.

Chapter 19

Verses 1–6

The chapter begins telling us it's the third month after the Exodus, making it May-June.

Tom Constable writes:

Without a doubt, Exodus 19:4–6 is the most theologically significant text in the book of Exodus, for it is the linchpin between the patriarchal promises and the sonship of Israel and the Sinaitic Covenant whereby Israel became the servant nation of Yahweh...Here begins the fifth dispensation, the dispensation of the Law ["The Constable Commentary – notes for Exodus 19"].

In **verses 4–6**, God made three promises with Israel, conditioned on their obedience. Unlike the Abrahamic Covenant, which was unconditional (God’s commitment to sustain the seed of Abraham genealogically), the Mosaic Covenant was a conditional covenant. God said, “*If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, **then** you shall be:*

1. *My own possession among all the peoples* (v. 5). This is followed by an anthropologically significant statement. In the context of choosing a people for Himself, God said, “*all the earth is Mine.*”
2. *A kingdom of priests* (v. 6). This is the first use in the Bible of the word *kingdom*. God’s kingdom is the realm of God and His followers—believing humans + good angels + the four living beings. Priests are intermediaries between God and people. Israel was designed to be:
 - A nation to bring other nations to God.
 - Ruled by God, rather than politics and the wit of men.
3. *A holy nation* (v. 6). Holiness is separation from evil. Israel would have been separated from the defilement of sin, a major source of suffering for all nations, all over the earth, all through the ages.

Verses 7–15

The people agreed, thus ratifying the covenant, although they soon and frequently broke it. God said He would come to them at the mountain but gave them three requirements to be accomplished over three days of preparation:

1. Wash their garments.
2. Set a boundary, so the people would not touch the mountain.
3. Not to go near (to have sexual relations with) a woman/wife.

Verses 16–25

On the third day of the preparation, God descended on the mountain. The people experienced crashing thunder, a loud blast of a trumpet, flashes of lightning, fire, smoke so dense it made the sky dark, and the mountain shake as from an earthquake. Only Moses and Aaron were permitted on the mountain, the priests and all the people were to stand near the mountain, but not touch it. It should be noted that Levitical priests had not been established yet. Apparently, the elders established some of the young men as priests (24:5).

Application: We should see our salvation as an unconditional covenant with God, like the Abrahamic Covenant, but our spiritual life (our experiential sanctification) as a matter of obedience. Like Israel at Mount Sinai, we have an opportunity to be God’s possession, His priests, and His holy people. We can avoid much of the world’s suffering on this earth by obedient to His Word.

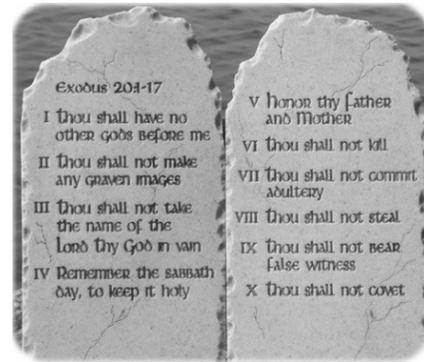
Laws: Chapters 20–40

Commandments: Chapter 20

Chapter 20

Verses 1-17

The chapter begins with the Ten Commandments. Because these have been a major item of discussion through the years, we will give them some emphasis here with a suggested application for each commandment.



Numbering the Ten Commandments

The numbering differs between the Jews, the Roman Catholics and the Protestants.

- The Jews are the only ones who believe that verse 2 (*I am the Lord your God...*) is the first commandment and verses 3–6 are the second commandment.
- Roman Catholics hold verses 3–6 (*You shall have no other gods before me...not make for yourself an idol*) to all be the first commandment. Then they divide verse 17 (the *not covet* command) into two commandments to get 10.
- Most Protestants believe verse 3 (*You shall have no other gods before me*) to be the first commandment, verses 4–6 (*You shall not make for yourself an idol...*) the second commandment, and verse 17 to be all one (the 10th) commandment.

They are called Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 4:13. We know there were originally 10, but they are not called by that title in Exodus until 34:28. I shall follow the Protestant model, since verse 2 gives no command (*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery*). Rather, it seems to be an introduction and a reason why the ten are imperative.

Two more small things: though they were on two tablets of stone (Exodus 31:18; 32:15; 34:29), we don't actually know which ones were on which tablet, and it is unlikely that all the comments and explanations given in Exodus 20 were on the two tablets.

Understanding and Applying the Ten Commandments

Commandment #1

You shall have no other gods before Me — verse 3

The first command forbids thinking of anything else as sovereign. Literally, *there shall not be any other אֱלֹהִים (Elohim), sovereign*. The phrase *before Me* is literally, *upon (over or above) my face*. It includes, the idea of “in opposition to Me” and “in addition to me.”

Application: Reject all forms of mysticism. We should not accept the thinking that Allah, Krishna, Brahma, a universal Force, Mother Nature, the Native American Spirit, or any of the other gods of our world's religions, are legitimate in any way. They are all just thoughts conjured up by people or placed in the minds of people by *the god of this world [who] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God* (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Commandment #2

You shall not make for yourself an idol — verses 4–6

The second command forbids the making of any material item that you might be tempted to worship or use in worship of a false god. This is a command against making any visual representation, using any material substance, in the context of *worshipping any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth*. This does not forbid using material objects to worship the true God, as in the artistry used in building the tabernacle (Exodus 25:17–22; 1 Kings 6:23–26). But to make an image for worship of something God created is to *exchange the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator* (Romans 1:25). The reason given is tied to the character of God. He is a *jealous God* (v. 5; also Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 5:9; 6:15; 32:16, 21; Joshua 24:19). The concept of *visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations* is repeated in the context of the character of God in Exodus 34:7. This may refer to the temptations of the next generation, but it does not mean the children are judged for the sins of the parents (Ezekiel 18).

Application: Never put spiritual significance in any material object. There is nothing wrong with using crosses or something like the Ichthus fish symbol as jewelry. But it is idolatry to make or use things like dream catchers or hanging crystals to communicate with some sort of mystical spiritual forces. Christian icons and prayer beads should never be seen as having spiritual significance in themselves.



Commandment #3

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain — verse 7

The third command forbids treating the Lord’s name lightly or irreverently. This is a command against using God’s name to make false oaths or false promises, or to use the Lord’s name for evil or selfish purposes. This would also include blasphemy as a vain use of the Lord’s name.

Application: Don’t make claims based on the Lord’s name, like saying “as God is my witness” or some such thing, and don’t use blasphemy or “casual blasphemy.” In court, most judges will allow a simple declaration that you will tell the truth and nothing but the truth. The biggest violation of the third commandment today is not just blasphemy but what is called “casual blasphemy.” Declarations such as “Oh my…” should never be followed by a reference to God. Casual or not, it’s just blasphemy. It’s interesting that swearing and profanity, all over the world, is not done in the name of Buddha, Mohammed, Krishna, or any other god or prophet, even by people in cultures following those religions. Jews don’t blaspheme in the name of Abraham. Muslims don’t blaspheme in the name of Mohammed. Swearing and profanity is always blaspheming the name of God or Jesus Christ, the Son of God. There is no power in those other names. It’s *at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow* (Philippians 2:10).

Commandment #4

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy — verse 8

The fourth command is to set aside Saturday, the last day of the week, as a day of rest. This is a command against doing any work on Saturday. It includes *your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you*. The reason given for the command is, *For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day*. It assures us that Moses believed in a six, 24-hour day creation or this command would be meaningless. Since the fourth command gets more attention than the others, I shall add some additional comments.

Should we keep a Sabbath day?

The idea of, say, the Seventh Day Adventist and the Hebrew Roots Ministries, that we should be keeping the Sabbath today, is full of problems.

- Exodus 16:29 commands, *Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.* A *Sabbath day's journey* is defined by Luke in Acts 1:12 as *to Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet.* That's a little more than a half mile (about one kilometer). So, anyone traveling more than a half mile (1 km) to get to their church or synagogue, is violating the Sabbath.
- All the work one has to do, to get to a church or synagogue (especially the work of mothers who get the children ready and the work of those who preform duties to put on the meetings), violates the Sabbath.
- Turning on lights, heating, air conditioning, or other electronic equipment, in our homes on Saturday, violates the Sabbath.
- The weekly Sabbath for Israel was about physical rest, not about worshiping or going to a meeting.
- If keeping the Sabbath meant gathering on Saturday, why did Paul not reprimand the church in Troas for gathering on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7)?
- Both in Exodus 20 and in Deuteronomy 5, the Ten Commandments are addressed to those who God *brought..out of the land of Egypt.* In Exodus 31:16–18, God said the sabbath was specifically for *a sign between Me and the sons of Israel.* The sabbath was never given as a basis for God's relationship with the church, or anybody else. There is no evidence that Adam, Noah, or Abraham kept a Sabbath day.
- At the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), the elders and the apostles gave four directives for Gentile Christians (keep from idols, fornication, blood, and things strangled). They made no mention of Sabbath-keeping, but rather they determined to *lay on you no greater burden than these essentials.* Apparently, Sabbath-keeping is not an essential.

Application: Do not let anyone act as your judge in regard to keeping a Sabbath day. It is unrealistic to suppose God was telling Israel to just pick any day of the week to rest. Clearly, the Sabbath for Israel was the day we call Saturday. But the Sabbath command, as a directive, ended at the cross and was never given to the church. The Apostle Paul wrote:

- *Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day* (Colossians 2:16).
- *One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind* (Romans 14:5).

We should not accuse someone of, or imply a person is, sinning if they choose to not take a Sabbath. But I do suggest the fourth commandment should be applied, as a weekly day of rest, though not with all the particular details or of the Old Testament specified day. I have two reasons for my suggestion:

1. The Genesis creation rest is given as a reason for a Sabbath rest, without any particulars of what God did when He rested. God did not need to rest, but we do.
2. Though the specific day was designated specifically for Israel, not for the church, the idea of a day of not working is the main emphasis in the explanations of the command (Exodus 23:12).

Commandment #5

Honor your father and your mother – verse 12

At this point we should note a change in the commands. The first four are like what Jesus summarized as *the first and great commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* Some suggest these were on the first stone tablet.

The next six commands focus on our relations with other people. This would be like when Jesus said, *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* (Matthew 22:37–39 KJV)

The fifth command is about caring for our parents while giving them respect. This is the only command that does not have a negative aspect. Israelites are promised *that your days may be prolonged in the land*. The word for honor is כָּבֵד (*kabed*) meaning to be *heavy, grievous, hard, rich, honorable, glorious*. It has the idea of doing hard work which results in glory (declared value) and financial well-being.

Application: We are responsible to financially care for our parents, to make sure they have adequate food, clothing, and needed care.

Commandment #6

You shall not murder — verse 13

The sixth command forbids premeditated murder of another human being. This is a command forbidding intentionally personally taking the life of some human person. It is not about capital punishment carried out by a government, which was commanded by the Mosaic Law for murder and numerous other offenses (21:12–17, 29). This was also not about killing during war as a command of the official military of an official government. This is not about manslaughter, killing in self-defense, accidental death or the killing of animals. The reason for the command is that people are created in God's image (Genesis 9:6).

Application: Never premeditatively kill anyone or be thinking about it (Matthew 5:22).

Commandment #7

You shall not commit adultery — verse 14

The seventh command forbids voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person who is not his or her spouse. The word נֶאֱפָח (*naaph*) refers to physical sexual infidelity on the part of both husbands and wives (Leviticus 20:10; Hebrews 13:4). This is not about polygamy or fornication. In the Bible, sexual relations are approved only for a man and a woman who are married to each other (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:1–12; Hebrews 13:4).

Application: Never have sexual relations with anyone other than your spouse or be thinking about it (Matthew 5:28).

Commandment #8

You shall not steal — verse 15

The eighth command forbids taking anything that does not legally belong to you without the permission of the one it belongs to. This command focuses on respecting the property of others. But stealing is not restricted to the property of a person. It would include taking what is not legally yours from a corporation or government (such as embezzlement). If a person or agency officially indicates that they no longer consider themselves the owner of the property, such as placing something in a dumpster, then taking the merchandise is not stealing.

Application: Never take any object or merchandise that legally belongs to someone else. If an owner discards it, then it no longer belongs to them.

Commandment #9

***You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor* — verse 16**

The ninth command forbids lying. This is a command about giving a false testimony in court or other situation, where a person would receive unjustifiable negative consequences. Examples would include: perjury in court, personal gossip, and would extend to all types of lying.

Application: Never lie to anyone about anything. The Biblical examples which include deception are so rare (to save a life, military deception, a government undercover agent), you can assume you will never be in such a situation. Lying is a unique sin in that it not only stands by itself, but it usually accompanies other sins as well. Actually, if you find yourself thinking about lying, you are probably thinking about covering up some other sin.

Commandment #10

***You shall not covet* — verse 17**

The tenth command forbids yearning to possess *anything that belongs to your neighbor*. Six examples are given: *your neighbor's house, wife, male servant, female servant, ox or donkey*. This is a command about yearning for what God did not give you. It assumes God did not have your best interest in mind when He gave you what you have. As lying follows many other sins, coveting leads to many other sins. Israelites were forbidden to long for, desire earnestly, or lust after what legitimately belonged to someone else.

Application: Do not desire anything you perceive as a physical asset, by yearning for what someone else has. This is not about desiring wisdom, righteousness, and holiness observed in mature people. What is interesting about this sin is that it is a thinking sin. We commit this sin without any action. The tenth commandment would also apply to thinking about violating one of the other commandments, as a desire. The tenth commandment makes keeping the Decalogue impossible by mechanical obedience (Matthew 19:16–22).

Verses 18–21

The response of the people was fear, primarily because of *the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking...and a thick cloud upon the mountain* (vv. 18; 19:16). In verses 19 and 21 we hear the people ask to not communicate directly with God. And that's how it has been all through history. God speaks to His messenger, patriarch, or prophet, who then delivers God's Word to the people. There is no evidence that God ever said He would speak in verbal messages to anyone else, and He always spoke in verbal messages, never "leading" or "calling" anyone by feelings, inclinations or messages from friends that people were supposed to figure out.

In verse 20 we learn that God tested them. God never tempts people to sin (James 1:13), but He does test His own people (James 1:3, 12). In this case, the test was to see if they would obey the command to not touch the mountain.

Verses 22–26

Here God elaborates on the second commandment, *You shall not make...gods of silver or gods of gold*. He then told them how to build an altar for worshiping Him. It could be made of earth, or stones but not cut stones. Also, it was to be without steps in order to prevent indecent exposure while climbing up to the altar. We can conclude that God does not like nudity (Genesis 9:22–23; Leviticus 18).

Application: We are to keep the commandments of God given to us, His church, during this age. We are not assigned Ten Commandments but are under the *Law of Christ* (1 Corinthians 9:21), which is the teaching of Christ and the apostles. And nine of the Ten Commandments were essentially repeated for us in the *Law of Christ*. Only the sabbath command is not repeated for the church.

Ordinances: Chapters 21–34

Chapter 21

Verses 1–11

This paragraph is about dealing with Hebrew slaves (for foreign slaves see Leviticus 25:44–46). Usually, a fellow Hebrew was sold/bought as a slave because of extreme poverty, an unpayable debt (Leviticus 25:39; Amos 2:6; 8:6) or pay back for a crime (22:3). Israel had no prison system as a means of punishment or correction. Hebrew slaves were basically an indentured servant, with a six-year contract. After six years, he could go free. But if he acquired a wife or family, he could choose to stay. The ceremony for the voluntary permanent slave seems to be piercing his ear to a door with something like an ice pick. In the case where the slave is a daughter sold with the idea of her becoming a wife, then she could marry the buyer, or his son, or be sold back to her father. If the buyer married someone else the slave girl had to be provided for and she could not be sold to a Gentile.



Verses 12–25

This paragraph gives six of the many reasons for the death penalty:

1. Premeditated murder, not for unintended death or a non-fatal injury during a quarrel.
2. *He who strikes his father or mother.*
3. Kidnapping
4. Cursing his father or his mother
5. Beating that caused the death of a slave (the *vengeance* in vv. 20–21), but not if the slave survives.
6. When a pregnant woman delivers and dies, or her baby dies, due to a struggle between two men.

The last example (vv. 22–25) requires some discussion. *The situation is where men struggle with each other* and a pregnant woman, possibly coming to the defense of her husband during the struggle, is injured in such a way that she gives birth prematurely. In this case, as no doubt in many cases, the court gets involved. If both the woman and the child are uninjured, the woman's husband and the judge determine a fine. If there is further injury, there must be payment according to the rule of justice, *an eye for an eye*. Two things should be noted here:

1. This is an exception to the principle of no death penalty for accidental death.
2. The birth is described as (literally) *her children* [יָלָדָּהּ (yalad)] masculine plural of the word for *child*] *go out*. This indicates that the unborn fetus is [יָלָדָּהּ (yalad)] a *child* before he goes out of the womb.

Verses 26–27

If a man causes permanent injury to a slave, so that he loses an eye or tooth, the slave is legally free.

Verses 28–36

Here we are given three cases of judgment for injury due to negligence:

- **Case #1** is about injury inflicted by animals (vv. 28–32). If a bull gores someone to death, then only the bull is killed, unless he has a habit of goring and the owner has done nothing about it, then the owner is also put to death, unless he can work out a financial payment to the relatives of the diseased. If it was a slave that was killed, the owner of the bull was to pay the slave owner 30 pieces of silver, probably the price of the slave.
- **Case #2** is about a man who digs a pit and an animal falls into it because he didn't cover it (vv. 33–34). This involves two of Israel's necessities. Pits, mainly for collecting water, and animals were both essential for life. Responsibility was essential. The one who dug the pit was to buy the dead animal from its owner.
- **Case #3** is about someone's ox killing someone else's ox (vv. 35–36). In that case, the live ox is sold and the dead one divided, unless the ox had gored before, then the owner had to buy the dead ox from its owner.

Application: Consider yourself responsible for your actions and the consequences of your actions. Intended consequences are more significant, but even unintended consequences are our responsibility. We need to think ahead about our actions and ask ourselves what are the possible, or likely, consequences if we do this or that. Whether it's legal or not, God will hold us responsible for whatever damage we do to others, intended or not. It's the damage, not just the intention, that God judges.

Chapter 22

Verses 1–6

The first paragraph of the chapter is about those who steal or destroy another person's property. The text assumes he is caught, and then he is forced to make restitution above the value of what he took. So the thief had to make restitution for the act of stealing, not just the items he stole. If the thief is killed while breaking in, then there is no bloodguiltiness assigned. Once again notice, not only is there no prison system, but the thief owes payment to the one who is wronged, he does not have a debt to society.



Verses 7–13

This paragraph is about loss of property that has been put under someone's care for safe keeping. In the ancient near east, there were no banks and no rapid transportation. If you had to go on a trip you would have to leave your possession in the care of a neighbor, friend, or family member, probably for some time. If those goods, property, or animals were lost or damaged, the burden was on the caretaker to prove, before a judge, that he did not take, consume, or lose the property.

Verses 14–15

If one man uses another man's property and the property is damaged:

- If the owner is not with it, the borrower pays for the property.
- If the owner is with it, no payment is made.
- If the property is rented, the rent covers the loss.

Verses 16–17

If a man seduces (entices into a sexual relationship, not rapes) an un-betrothed virgin then either:

- He pays the father's demanded dowry and marries her, or

- If the father refuses to give her in marriage, the seducer pays the father's demanded dowry anyway.

Notice, unlike adultery, fornication was not condemned, as it was in the New Testament (Acts 15:20, 29). It was simply to be followed by marriage or payment of money to the father.

Verses 18–20

Three more crimes that required the death penalty:

- Sorcery—(black) magic, witchcraft, wizardry, astrology, enchantment, spells, incantations.
- Bestiality
- Sacrifice to any other god

Verses 21–27

Concerning the poor or needy:

- Foreigners were to be treated well.
- Widows and orphans were not to be afflicted (humiliated or oppressed), or God would take vengeance.
- Money lent to the poor should have no interest attached and no long-term accountability.

Verse 28

You shall not curse God nor curse a ruler of your people. But these are different words for curse. *Curse God* is the word “to revile” or “make light of.” *Curse a ruler* is the word for a curse, like a condemnation or an evil spell. An example of the first would be blasphemy. An example of the second would be what Paul said to the high priest, *God is going to strike you down, you white-washed wall* (Acts 23:4–5).

Verses 29–30

The firstborn and the first of the harvest belonged to God. That was to be recognized by sacrificing firstborn animals and redeeming firstborn children with money (13:2, 12–13; Numbers 3:46–48).

Verse 31

This verse connects holiness with not eating animals that have been killed by beasts *in the field*. The blood would not have been drained from mangled animals who could have been killed by unclean animals. But the fascinating part is that God's idea of holiness extended to these external actions.

Application: We need to understand that both our actions and our intentions are judged by God. God holds us accountable for what we do irrespective of the consequences. A thief was punished, not just in that he had to return the value of what he stole, but from two to five times more that, because of the sin of the act of stealing. If you violate God's law (say, stealing from the rich, consensual fornication or lying to your children about Santa Claus) and think, “Well, nobody got hurt,” that does not mean God will overlook it. Violating God's law usually has adverse consequences, but it's a sin, whatever the consequences.

Chapter 23

Verses 1–9

This paragraph expands the ninth commandment, *you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor* (20:16). The focus is on legal matters. Israelites were not to pervert justice by:

- Following a mob. Judges, not a majority of the people, were to make legal decisions.
- Being partial to someone just because they are poor
- Oppressing someone because they are a stranger
- Taking a bribe
- Participating in a false charge against the innocent or righteous (presumably because you didn't like what they said, even though it was true and right).



The paragraph also has a (seemingly unrelated) command to return and/or help an enemy's donkey when it is lost or overburdened.

Verses 10–19

This paragraph is a list of the festivals, days of special activity, Israel was to observe.

- The Sabbatical Year (vv. 10–11)
- The Sabbath Day (v. 12)
- The Unleavened bread which included Passover, in the spring (vv. 14–15)
- The Harvest, or Pentecost, in the spring 50 days later (v. 16a)
- The Ingathering or Booths, in the fall (v. 16b)

The first two involved every Israelite. All adult men were required to attend the last three (v. 17).

The festivals were a time of worship which included several warnings:

- *Do not mention the name of other gods, nor let them be heard from your mouth* (v. 13)
- Do not use unleavened bread
- Do not allow (the fat of) a sacrifice to remain overnight
- Bring the choice fruits into the house of the Lord
- *You are not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother.* Ryrie says, “Boiling a young goat in the milk of its mother was a common Canaanite ritual involving magic spells” (“Ryrie Study Bible”).

Verses 20–33

This is an epilogue to the laws just given. The giving of commandments (20:1–17) and ordinances (from 20:22 to 23:19) is now followed by a promise of a conquest of the land. God said:

Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared (v. 20).

Some suggest that this was special guardian angel for Israel (Daniel 12:1). But, remember *angel* is literally *messenger* and this messenger can forgive sins (v. 21). So, it is more likely a reference to God the Son (see Genesis 16:9). Humanly speaking, this guidance would be administered through Moses, Aaron, and then Joshua. If the Israelites obeyed, God would drive out their enemies and make them productive in the land.

As to the borders of the land, God said:

I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea [Gulf of Aqaba] to the sea of the Philistines [the Mediterranean Sea], and from the wilderness to the River Euphrates.

But God also gave another specific command concerning *the inhabitation of the land*:

They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against Me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”

Application: Do not adopt a strictly democratic or congregational rule in your churches, missions, or nations. Democracy can easily become the lunatics running the asylum. For example, Benjamin Franklin said,

“When the people find that they can vote themselves money, that will be the end of the republic.”

Notice, Franklin did not, nor did any of its founders, see America as a democracy (where every citizen has an equal vote). The United States of America was founded as a republic (when representatives of the people vote). When this gets perverted to the point that it becomes a democracy, then lunatics run the country and people just vote themselves other people’s money forcibly collected by the government. Franklin recognized that as “the end of the republic.” The Bible does not specify a form of government, per se. But clearly Israel was to be governed by selected leaders not the masses.

You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice (v. 2).

Chapter 24

Verses 1-2

This chapter is about the confirmation of God’s Mosaic Covenant with Israel, a conditional covenant with a promise based on their obedience. The first two verses record God directing Moses and 73 men (Aaron, his two sons Nadab and Abihu, who were later killed by God, and 70 elders) to come up toward the mountain. God’s directive carried the stipulation that only Moses was to *come near to the Lord*.

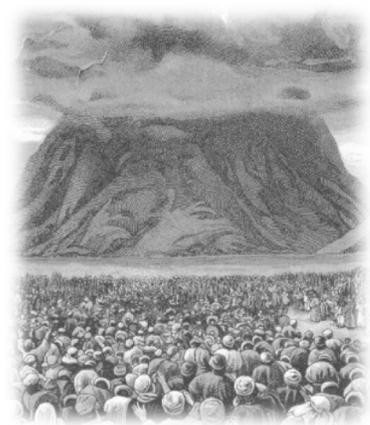
Verses 3-8

When Moses told the people what God had said, they responded, saying, “*All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!*” So Moses did five things. He:

1. *Wrote down all the words of the Lord*
2. *Built an altar...with twelve pillars*
3. *Sent young men to kill and offer sacrifices*
4. *Read the book of the covenant to the people*
5. *Sprinkled some of the blood of the sacrifices on the altar and the people.*

Verses 9-11

Moses and the 73 men mentioned in verse 1 came up to the mountain and *saw the God of Israel*. The only description of the revelation is *under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself*. This seems to be a revelation of God the Father, but we are also told that no one can see God’s face and live (33:20; John 1:18). We can therefore conclude they did not see God’s face but they did see a vague figure, who Paul said *dwells in unapproachable light* (1 Timothy 6:16), on a throne which sat on a clear pavement, similar to the visions in Ezekiel 1, Isaiah 6, and Revelation 4 and 5.



Verses 12-18

Next, God called Moses to come, not just to the mountain, but up on the mountain, with a promise of receiving the tables with the Ten Commandments. After telling the other 73 to wait for him and leaving them under the leadership of Aaron and Hur (traditionally believed to be Miriam's husband), Moses went up on the mountain for 40 days. Moses was in a cloud which appeared to the others as *a consuming fire*, for 6 days before God called to him.

Application: The lordship of Christ is not a commitment, it's a lifestyle. When Moses told the people what God had said, they responded saying, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!" But they didn't. Their disobedience did not terminate them as God's people (Romans 11:1). Our disobedience does not result in a loss of salvation. But Israel's disobedience did result in their losing their reward. So will ours.

Chapter 25

Verses 1-9

Here we have a good pattern about asking for a contribution. God told Moses to:

1. Announce that a contribution could be made.
2. Make it clear that it was a voluntary contribution *from every man whose heart moves him*.
3. Let people know the specific need, and how it is to be used.

God doesn't need anything. But Moses did, in order to do what God asked him to do, here on earth.

Why so much emphasis on the tabernacle? Ryrie reports,

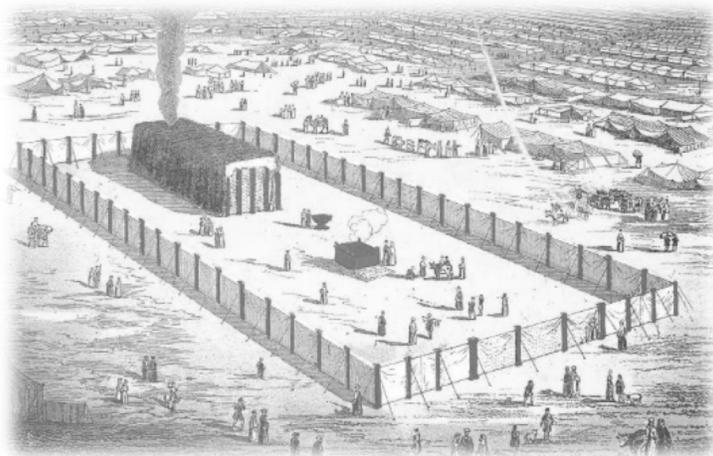
"Fifty chapters in the Bible report instructions concerning the Tabernacle: 13 in Exodus, 18 in Leviticus, 13 in Numbers, 2 in Deuteronomy, and 4 in Hebrews."

Three things can be noted:

1. The tabernacle Moses built was a model on earth of a *temple of the tabernacle* in heaven. *After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple* (Revelation 15:5-6).
2. It centralized Israel's worship so that they would not have local independent places of worship (Deuteronomy 12:5; 14:23)
3. It pictured what would become the *new and living way* to approach God, through the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:1-20).

Verses 10-22

This paragraph is a command to build *an ark of acacia wood* and *overlay it with pure gold*. The ark was a box measuring 3.75 x 2.25 x 2.25 feet (1 x .7 x .7 meters). It would hold the tables of the Ten Commandments, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod (Hebrews 9:4). It was called *the ark of the Testimony* (v. 22), *the ark of the covenant* (Numbers 10:33; Deuteronomy 10:8; 31:9, 26), and *the ark of God* (1 Chronicles 13:6). The ark was to have gold rings on



the side with gold covered poles permanently slid through them for carrying it. It was to be covered by a gold *mercy seat* with the statue of a cherub at each end with their wings spread out over the mercy seat. I suppose, what a cherub looked like was revealed to the craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiab (31:2–6). Cherubim are mentioned 93 times in the Old Testament, 16 of them in Exodus. Then God told Moses, “*There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat*” (v. 22).

Verses 23–30

Next is the command to build a table of showbread. It was to be built like the ark, of acacia wood covered with gold, having gold rings on the side and poles for carrying it. It measured 3 x 1.5 feet (.9 x .45 meters) and was to hold 12 flat cakes of bread called *the bread of the Presence* arranged in two piles, at all times (v. 30; Leviticus 24:6).



Verses 31–40

Next there is a command to build a lampstand [מְנֹרָה (*menorah*)] of hammered out gold. It was to have decorative cups and flower blossoms of hammered out gold. On either side of a central post was to be *three branches* curving upward. Each branch would have *three cups shaped like almond blossoms...and in the lampstand four cups shaped like almond blossoms, its bulbs and its flowers* (v. 34). It would also have a lamp on the center post making seven lamps in all (v. 37).



Application: When your church, charity, or missionary organization requires contributions:

1. **Announce that a contribution is needed.**
2. **Make it clear that it is a voluntary contribution *from every man whose heart moves him*, not a tithe, a vow, a pledge, or a commitment.**
3. **Let people know the real need and how it is to be used.**

Chapter 26

Verses 1–37

Chapter 26 contains the commands for the building the tabernacle tent, a structure about 15 x 45 feet (4.4 x 13.7 meters), that housed the three pieces of furniture described in chapter 25.



Verses 1–6 describe the inside curtains that covered the wooden frame of the tent. God told Moses, *you shall make them with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman.*

Verses 7–13 are instructions about the inner colorful curtains that formed the walls and ceiling with a tapestry of 11 curtains made of goat hair.

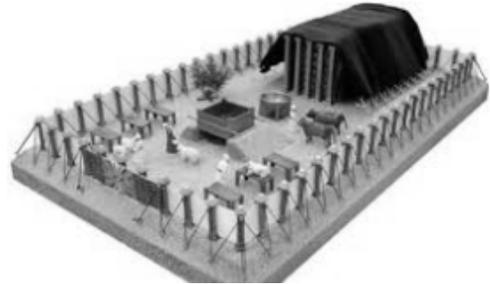
Verse 14 describes two more coverings, one of *rams' skins dyed red and [the other] a covering of porpoise skins.*

Verses 15–30 tell us the walls of the tabernacle seem to not be solid but trellises over which the curtains were draped. This allowed the beauty of the linen curtains to be visible



from the inside. Actually, most of the beauty of the tabernacle tent was never seen by anyone except God and the priests.

Verses 31–35 describe making a veil which was to separate the outer Holy Place, which contained the altar of incense, the lampstand and the table of showbread, from the inner Most Holy Place containing the Ark of the Covenant. As with the curtains of verse 1, God said they shall be *made with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman*. Ryrie says, “Josephus reported that the veil was four inches thick, was renewed every year, and that horses tied to each side could not pull it apart” (“Ryrie Study Bible”). We don’t know if the veil of the tabernacle was the same as in the temple, but Mark 15:38 tells us that when Jesus died, *the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom*. This indicated that *we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus* (Hebrews 10:19).



Verses 36–37 describe the outer eastern door of the tent. It was to be a hanging veil made of *blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen, the work of a weaver*. It was to be hung on five pillars with bronze sockets.

Application: An interesting question is, “What do we learn about God from all these instructions for building the tabernacle?” Why all the detail, all the color, the gold, and the separation of the Ark into a secluded holy place? And why are angels (cherubim) depicted in three places – the mercy seat of the Ark, the curtains and the veil? The detail, the beauty, and the cherubim are probably depicted because they are in the real *temple of the tabernacle* in heaven. But why represent that with this depiction on earth? That may not be something we can know. But **we can conclude God likes:**

- **Beauty**
- **Quality**
- **Attention to details**
- **Separation from evil and**
- **A heavenly focus**

Chapter 27

Verses 1-8

The instruction for building the tabernacle began with the inside and moved toward the outside. First the ark, which would sit in the holy of holies, then the table of showbread and the menorah in the holy place, and now construction outside the curtain in the outer court. The main implement in the courtyard was the brazen or bronze altar for sacrificing animals. The altar was made of acacia wood covered in bronze, making it fire proof. The altar had horns for binding the sacrifice (Psalm

