

LEVITICUS

Key Verse: “I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people” (26:12).

Message of the book: Living with a holy God requires careful adherence to laws of cultic practice and personal purity.

GOING FURTHER

The tabernacle provides God with a way to live with his people. Trace God’s presence with his people through Scripture, including these passages and their contexts: 1 Sam 4:22; 1 Kgs 8:10; Ezek 8-11; Isa 7:14; 60:20; Zech 2:10; Matt 1:23; John 1:14; 2:21; Rev 21.

All of the detailed laws concerning the construction of the tabernacle, the sacrifices, dietary restrictions, and personal purity reflect the holiness of God and the holiness necessary to approach him. Is this still true today? What has changed and what has not?

PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT STUDY

In Numbers, read at least chapters 13-14, 22, 24. This book describes judgment on the first generation and raising up of a new one.

In Deuteronomy, read at least chapters 1-13, 29-34. Jesus quoted this book so much, he probably had memorized it. Why would he do that? (Hint: this book is *amazing!*) How is it clear that God’s demand is first *faith* and then obedience? What does it mean to “circumcise your heart”?

SOURCES CITED

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R. W. L. Moberly, “Exodus, Book of.” Pages 211–16 in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, 2005.
Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*. New American Commentary, 2006.
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GOD’S PRESENCE WITH HIS PEOPLE (EXOD 25-LEV 27)

PREPARATION FOR THIS STUDY

Read Exodus 25–40. You may skim some of the details. Read Leviticus 8–10. You may also read/skim the rest of the book of Leviticus, as time permits.

What is the point of Exodus 25–40? How does it relate to Exodus 1–18 and 19–24? Why does Exodus 35–40 largely “repeat” Exodus 25–31? What is the significance of the “interruption” in chapters 32–34? How does it relate to Exodus 19–24? What is God’s ultimate response and how does he express his character? (Don’t miss this.) Finally, how is chapter 40 an absolutely fitting climax to the book?

OUTLINE OF EXODUS 25-40

- III. Israel is validated as God’s people by the indwelling of the tabernacle (25:1–40:38).
 - A. The Lord gives instructions for building the tabernacle (25:1–31:18).
 - B. The covenant is threatened by the idolatry of the nation (32:1–34:35).
 - 1. Aaron leads the people in worshipping a golden calf (32:1–6).
 - 2. Moses appeals to the Lord to forgive the people (32:7–14).
 - 3. Moses confronts the people with their sin (32:15–30).
 - 4. The Lord punishes the people for their sin (32:31–33:6).
 - 5. The Lord agrees to send his presence with his people (33:7–17).
 - 6. The Lord reveals his glory to Moses (33:18–34:35).
 - C. The tabernacle is constructed according to the revealed plans (35:1–40:33).
 - D. The tabernacle is filled by the glory of the Lord (40:34–38).

TABERNACLE INSTRUCTIONS (EXODUS 25-31)

“In Israel’s idolatrous world, the design and construction of a temple would be the responsibility of knowledgeable priests, who would not only oversee the temple’s construction, but would also make, dress, and consecrate the idol in a special ceremony. In the present unit this expectation is turned on its head. It is Israel’s God, not its priests, who oversees the design and construction of his temple” (Dorsey 1999: 75).

“The tabernacle resembled a royal palace with its throne room, the holy of holies right at the heart of the structure. It thus expressed the idea that the LORD was Israel’s king dwelling among his people” (Wenham 2003: 75).

“The center of the camp was an appropriate place for the structure that represents God’s dwelling since in the ancient Near East the king or war leader’s tent would occupy the central location, surrounded by his bodyguard (the Levites) and then the rest of the army” (Longman 2009: 134).

“The reason for the two tablets has nothing to do with the length of the commandments as opposed to the size of the tablets (as if it were necessary to employ two tablets to fit all the commandments onto them, half on one and half on the other). The full text of the Ten Words/Commandments was written on each tablet, one copy being God’s and one copy being Israel’s. This reflects the standard ancient Near Eastern treaty covenant practice of providing a copy of the covenant both to the vassal and to the sovereign” (Stuart 2006: 656).

NATIONAL TREASON—THE GOLDEN CALF (EXODUS 32-34)

Israel’s sin with the golden calf “is rather like committing adultery on one’s wedding night” (Moberly 2005: 214).

“Apparently they wanted God to look like the familiar gods of Egypt and Canaan. So, while Yahweh was creating a nation that would reflect his moral likeness, the Israelites were trying to create God in their image” (Arnold and Beyer 2008: 107).

“Moses’ shattering the tablets represented the breaking of relationship between God and Israel” (Longman 2009: 133).

33:19–34:8 “The reader would be mistaken to assume that what Moses actually saw would be significantly revelatory; it was rather what he *learned* through God’s words that would most help him to understand that his request to be taught God’s ways (33:13) and to

be shown God’s glory (33:18) had indeed been granted” (Stuart 2006: 705).

“There is little room for mysticism in biblical religion; we do not know God by having some sort of inexplicable ethereal communion with him, in which our feelings are used as the evidence for our closeness to him. We know him by learning his ways (i.e., his revealed standards, revealed methods, and revealed benefits)—in other words by objective, rather than subjective, emotional, means” (Stuart 2006: 701).

TABERNACLE BUILT (EXODUS 35-40)

“The sin of the golden calf could have led to the nation’s destruction, had it not been for Moses’ intercession. Even then they might have had to enter the land unaccompanied by symbols of God’s presence. The creation of the tabernacle showed that the divine programme had been reinstated. Israel’s divine king was willing to dwell among them. The Garden of Eden had been brought back to earth. The LORD was going to walk among his people as he had in Eden” (Wenham 2003: 79).

40:34-38 “In essence, the book of Exodus has been driving to this point, and thus the narrative concludes with a strong sense of closure. The people are freed from bondage. They have entered into a covenant with God that establishes them as a nation. Now the tabernacle is fully constructed and God has made his presence known by covering the tabernacle with the cloud” (Longman 2009: 141).

40:36-38 “Once built, the tabernacle became the symbol of Yahweh’s presence among his people; and his glory cloud atop the tabernacle, a further symbol of his presence and also of his guidance. The book of Exodus comes to an end here, with the reader implicitly invited to appreciate that a new grand chapter in the history of the Israelites was about to get underway—their travels toward Sinai as their God would lead them” (Stuart 2006: 793-94).