

JOURNEY THROUGH THE

# BIBLE

BOOK 1



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*John Benz*

PENTATEUCH AND HISTORICAL BOOKS

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# Contents

*Note to Parents* ..... vi  
*Introduction* ..... vii

## UNIT 1 Genesis–Deuteronomy ..... 1

LESSON 1 *Creation (Genesis 1)* ..... 1  
 LESSON 2 *Paradise, Marriage, and the Fall of Man (Genesis 2–3)*..... 1  
 LESSON 3 *The Decline of Man (Genesis 4–6)*..... 2  
 LESSON 4 *The Flood and the Tower of Babel (Genesis 7–11)* ..... 3  
 LESSONS 5–6 *Abraham, the Man of Faith (Genesis 12–22)*..... 5  
 LESSONS 7–8 *Jacob, the Man Who Wrestles with God (Genesis 25–35)* ..... 6  
 LESSONS 9–11 *Joseph, the Man of Dreams (Genesis 37–50)*..... 7  
 LESSONS 12–13 *Moses, the Prince of Egypt (Exodus 1–6)* ..... 8  
 LESSON 14 *The Exodus (Exodus 7–14)* ..... 9  
 LESSON 15 *The Beginnings of a Nation (Exodus 15–19)* ..... 10  
 LESSON 16 *The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 20–24)*..... 11  
 LESSON 17 *The Tabernacle (Exodus 25–31)*..... 12  
 LESSON 18 *Violating the Covenant (Exodus 32–34)*..... 14  
 LESSON 19 *The Sacrificial System (Leviticus Overview)*..... 15  
 LESSONS 20–21 *Specific Offerings (Leviticus 1–7)*..... 16  
 LESSONS 22–23 *Key Distinctions in Leviticus (Leviticus 8–15)*..... 17  
 LESSONS 24–25 *Miscellaneous Laws (Leviticus 16–27)* ..... 18  
 LESSONS 26–27 *Towards the Promised Land (Numbers 1–12)* ..... 19  
 LESSON 28 *The Last Straw (Numbers 13–19)*..... 19  
 LESSON 29 *Moses, the Bronze Serpent, and Balaam (Numbers 20–26)*..... 20  
 LESSONS 30–31 *Preparations for the Next Generation (Numbers 27–36)*..... 21  
 LESSON 32 *Introduction to Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 1–3)* ..... 22  
 LESSONS 33–34 *Hear and Remember (Deuteronomy 4–11)* ..... 23  
 LESSONS 35–36 *Developing the Structure of Israel (Deuteronomy 12–18)* ..... 24  
 LESSONS 37–38 *Miscellaneous Laws (Deuteronomy 19–26)* ..... 25  
 LESSONS 39–40 *Blessings and Curses (Deuteronomy 27–34)* ..... 26

## UNIT 2 Joshua–2 Samuel ..... 29

LESSON 41 *Joshua, the Man of Courage (Joshua 1–2)* ..... 29  
 LESSON 42 *Crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3–4)*..... 29  
 LESSON 43 *And the Walls Came Down (Joshua 5–6)* ..... 30  
 LESSON 44 *The Consequences of Sin (Joshua 8–9)*..... 31  
 LESSONS 45–46 *The Conquest of the Land (Joshua 9–12)*..... 32  
 LESSONS 47–51 *The Division of the Land (Joshua 13–22)* ..... 32  
 LESSON 52 *“As For Me and My House” (Joshua 23–24)* ..... 34  
 LESSON 53 *Judges: A Time of Chaos*..... 35  
 LESSON 54 *The First Judges (Judges 3–5)*..... 36

LESSONS 55–56	<i>Gideon, the Man of Unimpressive Faith (Judges 6–9)</i> .....	36
LESSON 57	<i>Jephthah, the Man with the Foolish Vow (Judges 10–12)</i> .....	37
LESSON 58	<i>Samson, the Strong Man (Judges 13–16)</i> .....	38
LESSONS 59–60	<i>The Corrupt Priesthood (Judges 17–21)</i> .....	39
LESSONS 61–63	<i>Ruth, the Virtuous Woman (Ruth 1–4)</i> .....	40
LESSON 64	<i>Samuel, the Last Judge (1 Samuel 1–3)</i> .....	41
LESSON 65	<i>Ichabod and Ebenezer (1 Samuel 4–7)</i> .....	42
LESSON 66	<i>The First King (1 Samuel 8–11)</i> .....	43
LESSON 67	<i>Saul’s Sin and Folly (1 Samuel 12–15)</i> .....	43
LESSON 68	<i>David, a Man After God’s Own Heart (1 Samuel 16–17)</i> .....	44
LESSON 69	<i>The Rise of David and the Decline of Saul (1 Samuel 18–20)</i> .....	45
LESSONS 70–71	<i>On the Run (1 Samuel 21–26)</i> .....	46
LESSON 72	<i>Saul’s Demise (1 Samuel 27–31)</i> .....	47
LESSONS 73–74	<i>The Slow Road to the Throne (2 Samuel 1–6)</i> .....	48
LESSON 75	<i>The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7)</i> .....	48
LESSON 76	<i>David’s Kingdom Expands (2 Samuel 8–10)</i> .....	49
LESSON 77	<i>David’s Great Sins (2 Samuel 11–12)</i> .....	50
LESSONS 78–79	<i>A House Divided (2 Samuel 13–19)</i> .....	51
LESSON 80	<i>The Latter Years of David’s Reign (2 Samuel 20–24)</i> .....	52

### UNIT 3 1 Kings–2 Chronicles .....55

LESSONS 81–82	<i>A New King Emerges (1 Kings 1–4)</i> .....	55
LESSON 83	<i>The Temple Is Built (1 Kings 5–8)</i> .....	55
LESSON 84	<i>The Latter Years of Solomon’s Reign (1 Kings 9–11)</i> .....	58
LESSON 85	<i>The Kingdom Divides (1 Kings 12–14)</i> .....	58
LESSON 86	<i>A Tale of Two Kingdoms (1 Kings 15–16)</i> .....	60
LESSONS 87–88	<i>Elijah vs. Baal (1 Kings 17–22)</i> .....	63
LESSONS 89–91	<i>Elisha (2 Kings 1–8)</i> .....	64
LESSON 92	<i>The Purging in Israel (2 Kings 9–11)</i> .....	65
LESSONS 93–94	<i>The End of the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 12–17)</i> .....	66
LESSON 95	<i>Hezekiah’s Reign (2 Kings 18–20)</i> .....	67
LESSON 96	<i>Manasseh and Josiah (2 Kings 21–23)</i> .....	68
LESSON 97	<i>Judah’s Destruction (2 Kings 24–25)</i> .....	69
LESSONS 98–100	<i>Introduction to 1 and 2 Chronicles (1 Chronicles 1–7)</i> .....	70
LESSON 101	<i>Benjamin and Saul (1 Chronicles 8–10)</i> .....	71
LESSONS 102–104	<i>David’s Kingdom Is Established (1 Chronicles 11–18)</i> .....	71
LESSON 105	<i>David: The Perfect King? (1 Chronicles 19–21)</i> .....	72
LESSONS 106–108	<i>Preparations for the Temple (1 Chronicles 22–29)</i> .....	73
LESSONS 109–111	<i>The Temple Is Built (2 Chronicles 1–7)</i> .....	74
LESSON 112	<i>The Latter Years of Solomon’s Reign (2 Chronicles 8–9)</i> .....	75
LESSON 113	<i>Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 10–12)</i> .....	76
LESSONS 114–115	<i>Abijah–Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 13–20)</i> .....	76

LESSONS 116–117	<i>Jehoram–Amaziah (2 Chronicles 21–25)</i> .....	77
LESSONS 118–119	<i>Uzziah–Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 26–32)</i> .....	78
LESSON 120	<i>The Death and Rebirth of Israel (2 Chronicles 33–36)</i> .....	80

**UNIT 4 Ezra–Esther & Course Review.....83**

LESSON 121	<i>A New Beginning (Ezra 1–2)</i> .....	83
LESSON 122	<i>The Temple Is Rebuilt ... Almost (Ezra 3–4)</i> .....	83
LESSON 123	<i>The Temple Is Finished (Ezra 5–6)</i> .....	84
LESSONS 124–125	<i>The Teacher (Ezra 7–10)</i> .....	85
LESSONS 126–127	<i>Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1–4)</i> .....	86
LESSON 128	<i>The Walls Are Completed (Nehemiah 5–7)</i> .....	86
LESSONS 129–131	<i>Revival and Rebellion (Nehemiah 8–13)</i> .....	87
LESSONS 132–133	<i>Introduction to Esther (Esther 1–2)</i> .....	88
LESSON 134	<i>Haman, the Enemy of the Jews (Esther 3–4)</i> .....	89
LESSON 135	<i>An Act of Courage (Esther 5–7)</i> .....	90
LESSON 136	<i>The Feast of Purim (Esther 8–10)</i> .....	91
LESSON 137	<i>Review: Creation-Fall</i> .....	92
LESSON 138	<i>Review: The Effects of Sin (Cain &amp; Abel to the Tower of Babel)</i> .....	92
LESSON 139	<i>Review: Abraham and Isaac</i> .....	93
LESSON 140	<i>Review: Jacob</i> .....	94
LESSON 141	<i>Review: Joseph</i> .....	95
LESSON 142	<i>Review: The Exodus</i> .....	96
LESSON 143	<i>Review: The Mosaic Covenant</i> .....	96
LESSON 144	<i>Review: The Sacrificial System</i> .....	97
LESSON 145	<i>Review: Rebellion and Wandering</i> .....	98
LESSON 146	<i>Review: Joshua</i> .....	99
LESSON 147	<i>Review: Judges</i> .....	100
LESSON 148	<i>Review: Samuel</i> .....	100
LESSON 149	<i>Review: Saul</i> .....	101
LESSON 150	<i>Review: David</i> .....	102
LESSON 151	<i>Review: Solomon</i> .....	103
LESSON 152	<i>Review: The Divided Kingdom</i> .....	103
LESSON 153	<i>Review: Elijah and Elisha</i> .....	104
LESSON 154	<i>Review: The Fall of the Northern Kingdom</i> .....	105
LESSON 155	<i>Review: Manasseh and Josiah</i> .....	106
LESSON 156	<i>Review: The Fall of the Southern Kingdom</i> .....	107
LESSON 157	<i>Review: The Exile</i> .....	107
LESSON 158	<i>Review: The Return from Exile</i> .....	108
LESSON 159	<i>Review: Esther</i> .....	109
LESSON 160	<i>The Hope of the Messiah</i> .....	110
	<i>Index</i> .....	113

## *Note to Parents:*

In Deuteronomy 6:5–7, it says: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”

Scripture makes it clear that the primary responsibility for teaching children lies with the parents, particularly the fathers. This curriculum will be most effective if parents discuss each reading and lesson with the students after they do the work. The thought questions at the end of most lessons provide an excellent opportunity for discussion between parents and their students. In addition, parents are encouraged to use the daily readings for family devotionals. Although these questions are not included with the curriculum, here are some questions that can be asked after each lesson:

1. What is something that this passage teaches you about God?
2. What is something you can pray for as a result of this passage?
3. What is one question you have from this passage?

When you discuss each passage with your students, they will be far more likely to think about the passage and how to apply it to their lives.

# Introduction

*Journey Through the Bible* curriculum is designed to have the student encounter the biblical text firsthand. Many students grow up hearing Bible stories in Sunday school or from their parents or even from similar homeschooling curricula. The work that these people and programs do for children is very valuable for their growth and maturity. The goal of this curriculum is to go beyond the stories of the Bible and to have students read the Bible itself. In fact, this course, along with the eighth and ninth grade Bible courses in this series, will take the student through the entire Bible. Within these three years, if a student follows the curriculum, he or she will have read the entire Bible.

For this year, we will look at the books of Moses and the historical books of the Old Testament. The translation that we are going to use for this course is the New King James Version. We chose this version because the King James Version of the Bible is the most widely used English translation, and the New King James Version of the Bible is a little easier for students to read. While it is possible to complete this curriculum using other translations of the Bible, the questions in the workbook use the language and phrases of the NKJV. As a result, it may be difficult at times to find the answers to these questions without using the NKJV.

There are two elements to this curriculum. *First*, there is the *Student Exercises* workbook. The workbook is divided into four units, each covering forty days of reading. On the top right-hand side of each workbook page is the reading that the student should do for that day. As he or she reads, there are ten questions from the Bible reading that the student is to answer in the *Student Exercises*. The vast majority of the questions in the workbook can be answered just using the text itself, but there are a few questions that require using outside sources such as a dictionary. Many of these questions are designed to bring out some of the important points in the biblical text. On average, the student will read about four chapters of the Bible per day. Also included on each workbook page is a set of three questions that come from this textbook. A separate answer key for all workbook questions is available through Christian Liberty Press.

The *second* element to this curriculum is the *Journey Through the Bible* textbook. The lessons in this book are designed to help the student understand what he or she is reading. This is not designed to be a theology book that teaches a particular view of theology; rather, it is a lesson book designed to bring clarity to the reading that the students are doing. As the student reads through a lesson each day, there are three questions from this textbook that will show up in the *Student Exercises* workbook. This is designed to hold the student accountable to read through the textbook. Unlike the workbook, there are not forty lessons per unit. Since some Bible stories span many chapters, sometimes one lesson covers the reading for more than one day. For example, the story of Abraham spans Genesis 12–22. For the workbook, on Day 5 the student is to read Genesis 12–17 and on Day 6 the student is to read Genesis 18–24. However, there is only one textbook lesson for the story of Abraham that covers Genesis 12–22. It is recommended that students read the lesson on both days that they work on their *Student Exercises*. In fact, there are questions in the workbook for each day that the lesson covers. So for the story of Abraham, there are three questions from that lesson on Day 5 and three questions on that lesson for Day 6.

There are a couple of additional elements within the *Journey Through the Bible* textbook that are worth noting. *First*, occasionally there will be some vocabulary words that are printed in **bold type**. These are words that may either be significant or may just be words that are not commonly used in everyday speech. Often these words will appear on the questions from the lesson in the *Student Exercises* workbook. The *second* element of the textbook worth noting is the Thought Question(s) at the end of most of the lessons. These questions are designed to help the student think about the reading in a more critical manner. Some of these questions are designed to bring out the theology of the passage, some are designed to help students think about what is actually happening in the passage in greater depth, and some are designed to help the student think about applying the passage to his or her life.

Finally, a separate test packet is available through Christian Liberty Press. There is one test for every twenty lessons in the course. The tests cover material in the *Journey Through the Bible* textbook and the *Student Exercises* workbook.

John Benz

**Thought Question:**

1. Why do you think the people complain so much after they had seen God perform the miracles in Egypt?

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## The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 20-24)

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### Lesson 16

When the people come to Mount Sinai, God sends Moses up the mountain to receive the Law. There will be two types of laws that Moses will eventually give the people: **absolute laws**, which are universal; and **case laws**, which are based on specific cases that Moses judges.

At the heart of the Law stands the Ten Commandments, a set of absolute laws. The Ten Commandments are the only part of Scripture that is written by the hand of God Himself. Traditionally, the Ten Commandments have been divided into two sections: the first through the fourth commandments and the fifth through the tenth commandments. The **first four commandments** focus primarily on how the person relates to God. *First*, and most important, God is to be the only God that the people worship. *Second*, the people are not to make any idols or images to worship God through. *Third*, God's people are not to take His name in vain. God has given His people the special privilege of knowing His personal name, and they need to treat that name with the respect and reverence that God deserves. This is not a commandment against swearing, but rather a commandment to hold up God's name with the highest honor. *Fourth*, the people are to honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy. The Sabbath is to be a day for sacred assembly, to meet with other Israelites and worship God. Work is prohibited on the Sabbath because God wants His people to spend that day resting and focusing on Him.

The **next six commandments** all correspond to how the Israelites relate to one another. *First*, they are to honor and obey their parents. This commandment is much more important than we might think today. Later in the Law, we learn that children who strike their parents or excessively dishonor their parents are to be put to death. Even in the New Testament, dishonoring one's parents is put on the lists of the greatest sins. This is the only commandment with a promise. If the Israelite children honor and obey their parents, they will live long in the land. *Second*, the sixth commandment is the one that most people remember, "you shall not

murder." This means taking the life of someone who is innocent. The remaining commandments include: you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, and you shall not covet. To violate any of these commandments will greatly hinder relationships with other people.

Chapters 21–23 contain additional sets of laws as expansions of the Ten Commandments. Time and space do not permit discussion on each of these laws, yet one will merit discussion here. It is true that the Bible does allow slavery, but a slavery quite unlike the slavery in America during the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. While Israelites are allowed to have slaves, God reminds them that they themselves were slaves while they were in Egypt so they must treat their slaves well. In addition, an Israelite cannot take a fellow Israelite as a slave because God had delivered them from slavery. An Israelite who owes a debt can sell himself to another Israelite as a servant, but only for a period of time. The value of a slave is based on the amount of work that he could get done during the time of his slavery. Every seventh year, the slaves are to be set free. Matthew Henry states, "This year of release typified the grace of the gospel, in which is proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord; and by which we obtain the release of our debts, that is, the pardon of our sins." Sadly, there is no evidence in Scripture that Israel ever celebrated the year of release.

Finally, in Exodus 24, the covenant that God makes with Moses and the Israelites is ratified. Moses gathers the leaders of the people together, along with the whole assembly, to hear the words of the Law. When Moses reads to them the Law, the people reply saying, "all that the LORD has said we will do." This is similar to a wedding where a husband and wife make a covenant by saying, "I do." When the people agree to the covenant, Moses sprinkles blood from a sacrifice on the people, indicating that this covenant is ratified in blood; it is permanent. When the people are done making the covenant with God, the leaders of the people eat a meal in the presence of the Lord. Why is this? When two parties made covenants in those days, it was common to finish the covenant with a meal, symbolizing peace between the two parties involved. In the New Testament (or New Covenant) we also eat a meal symbolizing peace between us and God, communion. When we take communion, we remember the New Covenant that God made with us through the blood of Jesus on the cross; and, when we eat the food, it symbolizes that there is peace between God and us.



At this point in the story, everything is going well. God has chosen His people and delivered them from slavery and provided for them in the wilderness. God has given His people His Law, and they have agreed to obey. However, what will happen when the people disobey? In a few lessons, we will see what happens.

**absolute laws:** laws that govern human conduct, which are derived from the morals that are believed to be universal to all human beings

**case laws:** laws based on writings explaining the verdicts in various cases; most often created by judges in their rulings

### Thought Questions:

1. Why do you think God puts “you shall honor your father and mother” as one of the Ten Commandments?
2. Which of the Ten Commandments do you find tough to obey? Why?
3. People often compare the covenant that God makes with us to a marriage covenant. How might a marriage be an appropriate way to understand your relationship with God?

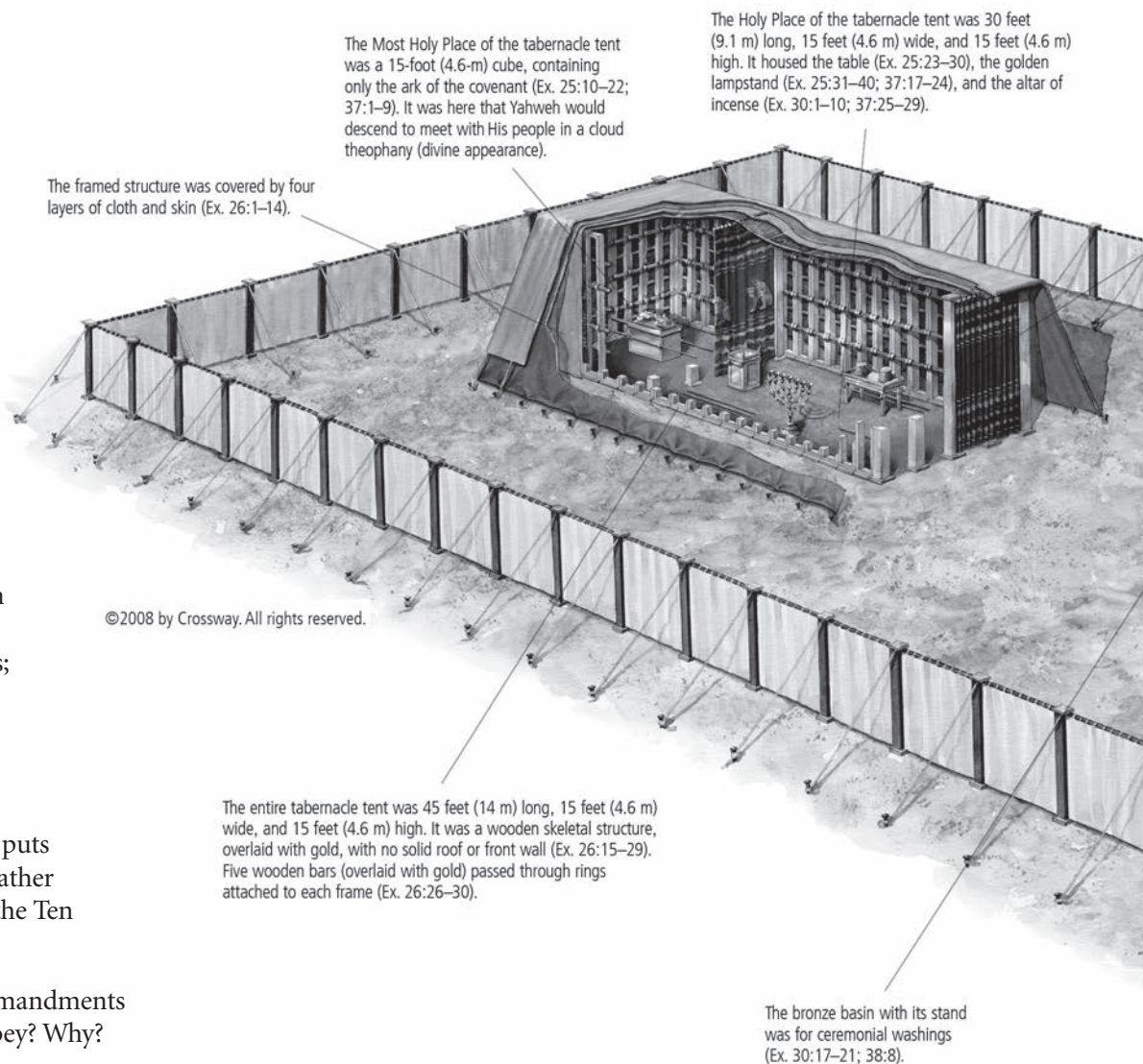
## The Tabernacle (Exodus 25–31)

### Lesson 17

In addition to the Law, God also gives Moses and the Israelites very specific instructions for the building of His tabernacle. Because God has chosen His people and delivered them out of Egypt, they need to worship God

### THE TABERNACLE AND COURT

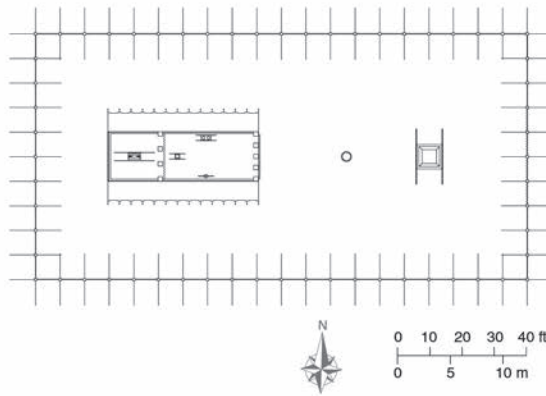
The tabernacle was a portable temple—a “tent of meeting”—within a movable courtyard (Exodus 25–31; 35–40). It was constructed after the pattern that Yahweh revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, and was assembled in the desert as Moses led the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. The tabernacle courtyard was 150 feet (46 m) long and 75 feet (23 m) wide, totaling 11,250 square feet (1,045 square meters).



in His specific way. Remember, the Israelites had lived their whole lives in a pagan society that worshiped many gods and had many temples for them. God wants His people to worship Him in His way, not in the ways of the Egyptians.

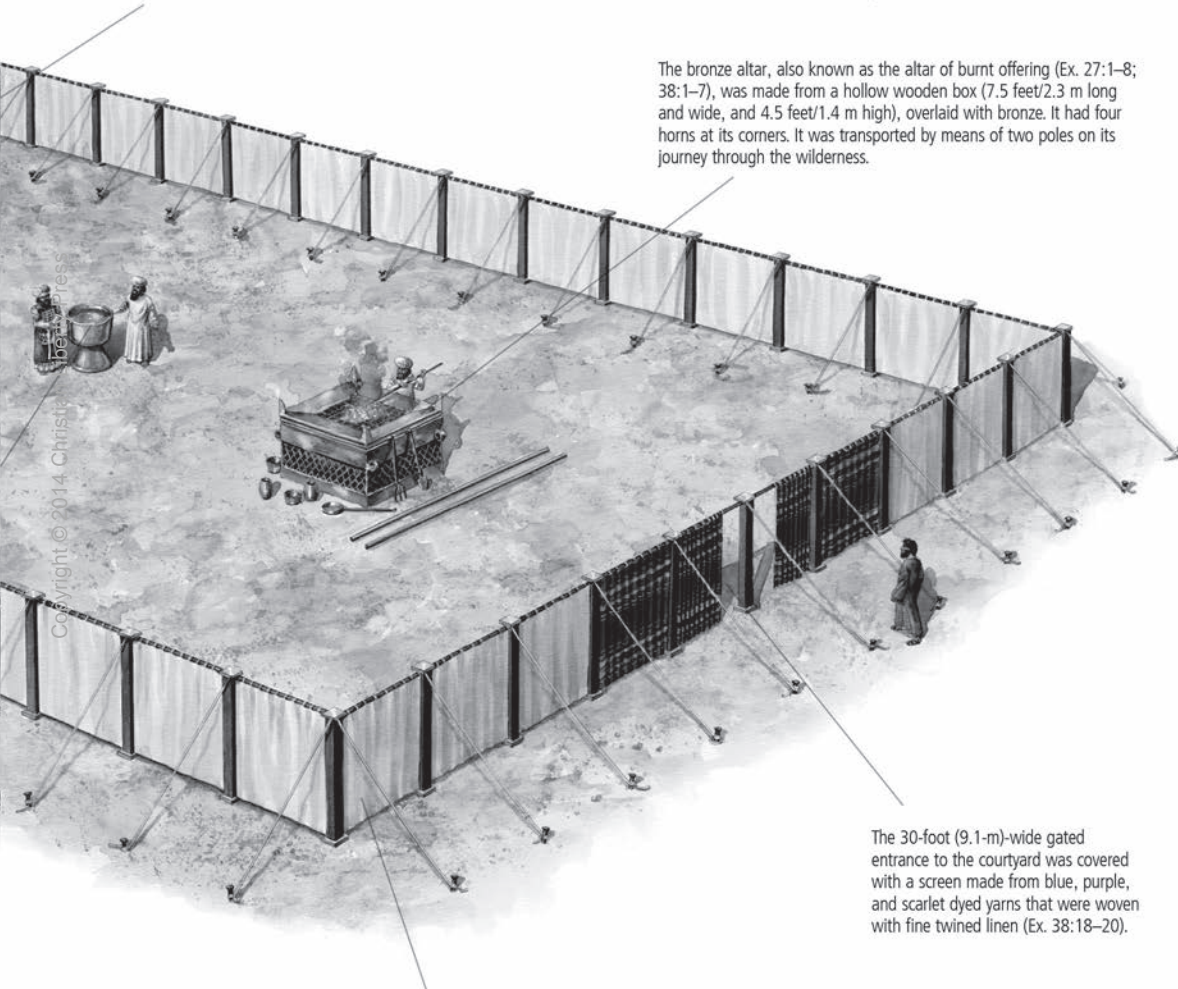
The tabernacle is composed of three main areas: the outer courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place. The outer court of the tabernacle is accessible to all Israelites who are ritually clean (more on clean

Tabernacle and Court Architectural Plan



The veil separating the Holy Place from the tabernacle courtyard was similar to the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, except that cherubim were not embroidered on it (Ex. 26:36–37). It hung on five golden pillars.

The bronze altar, also known as the altar of burnt offering (Ex. 27:1–8; 38:1–7), was made from a hollow wooden box (7.5 feet/2.3 m long and wide, and 4.5 feet/1.4 m high), overlaid with bronze. It had four horns at its corners. It was transported by means of two poles on its journey through the wilderness.



The 30-foot (9.1-m)-wide gated entrance to the courtyard was covered with a screen made from blue, purple, and scarlet dyed yarns that were woven with fine twined linen (Ex. 38:18–20).

The surrounding hangings (fine twined linen curtains connected to pillars and stabilized by guy ropes and pegs) stood about 7.5 feet (2.3 m) high. The 60 wooden pillars were overlaid with bronze, stood in copper sockets, and had capitals overlaid with silver (Ex. 27:9–19; 38:9–17).

Next, inside the tabernacle lies the Holy Place. Only priests are allowed to enter the Holy Place to perform their priestly duties. There are three pieces of furniture in the Holy Place: the table of the Presence (or showbread), the golden lampstand, and the altar of incense. On the table of the Presence there are to be placed twelve loaves of bread daily. These loaves of bread serve to symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel before the Lord. Practically speaking, the lampstand serves to provide light for the Holy Place. Finally, the altar of incense serves to provide a pleasing aroma to the Lord, and to the people who enter the tabernacle. With the blood that will later be sprinkled on the altar in the tabernacle, there will be a need for incense to prevent the tabernacle from smelling like a slaughterhouse or butcher shop.

Finally, the most important room in the tabernacle is the Most Holy Place. One helpful way to think of this room is to view it as God's throne room. God's glory settles down in the Most Holy Place,

signaling that God Himself is uniquely in this room. In the Most Holy Place is one primary piece of furniture, the ark of the covenant. The ark of the covenant in its simplest form is simply a box filled with the Ten Commandments, some manna, and Aaron's staff. Over the ark of the covenant are two massive cherubim. The cherubim and the ark put together form a sort of

vs. unclean later). In the outer court are two primary pieces of furniture: the bronze altar and the bronze laver. The bronze altar is the altar where all of the sacrifices from the people are to be cooked. One way to think of the bronze altar is like a grill. The bronze laver is simply a basin filled with water that the priests would use to wash their hands.

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throne, with the ark being the footstool of the throne. The only person who is able to enter the Most Holy Place after the tabernacle is built is the high priest, and that only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

Of all the tribes of Israel, the Levites are set aside to serve as priests in the tabernacle. We will learn in the next lesson why this tribe is given this privilege. Simply put, the role of the priest is to serve as mediator between God and humanity. They are to represent their fellow Israelites before the Lord through making sacrifices and prayers on behalf of the people. They are to represent God to their fellow Israelites by teaching the Law and by judging their cases. In many ways, the Levites serve as a microcosm of Israel as a whole; the priests represent God to their fellow Israelites, and Israel is to represent God to the surrounding nations.

The one thing that will make Israel special is that God is going to be with them. They will be able to defeat their enemies because God is with them. At the heart of God's presence is the tabernacle. The tabernacle serves as the visible presence of God among the people. Later, when we look at the types of offerings, we will see that the whole enterprise of the tabernacle and the priests is designed to maintain God's presence among the Israelites. If God is with them, Israel will be indestructible; but if God is not with them, they will be destroyed in the wilderness.

### Thought Question:

1. Why do you think God is so detailed in what He wants for the tabernacle?

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## Violating the Covenant (Exodus 32–34)

### Lesson 18

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At the end of Exodus 24, everything seems to be going quite well for God's plan. The Israelites are now free from their bondage to Egypt, the people have been given the Law and direction as a nation, and the people have ratified the Mosaic Covenant with God. God has promised to be with His people and protect them and bless them; all they need to do is obey His Law. However, what will be the consequence if the people do not obey? Sadly, we find this out in Exodus 32.

While Moses is on the mountain talking with God, the Israelites begin to grow impatient and nervous that Moses may not be returning. So the people come to Aaron and request that he make them idols that they

can worship while in the wilderness. This is before the tabernacle has been built, so the people are searching for ways to worship God to make sure that He keeps on blessing them. They specifically intend to worship Yahweh through the idol; but in doing so, they are directly breaking the second commandment. So Aaron takes some of the gold from the people and makes a golden calf and calls the people together to throw a festival to this golden calf.

God tells Moses what the people are doing, and God is furious at the Israelites for their direct violation of His commands. His divine wrath leads God to tell Moses that He is going to completely destroy the Israelites and start again through Moses, as He had done with Abraham 400 years before. What follows, however, is quite interesting. Moses begins to intercede on behalf of the people, not justifying the actions of the people but focusing on God's character and reputation. Moses' argument with God is simple. *First*, he suggests that if God destroys His people after delivering them so miraculously out of Egypt, the other nations would see this and see God as cruel. *Second*, he reminds God of the covenant that He had made with Abraham. Surprisingly, God relents from the destruction that He had spoken of concerning the Israelites.

When Moses descends from the mountain, he sees the people completely out of control in this religious festival to the golden calf. Moses is so angry from the sight that he smashes the tablets with the Ten Commandments on the ground. Then he calls out to the Israelites to see who has enough zeal for the Lord to be willing to kill their fellow Israelites until they get under control. The tribe of Levi agrees to do this and slaughters 3,000 Israelites in that day. As a result, Moses tells the Levites that their reward for their zeal for the Lord has earned them the right to be priests. This is why all the priests come from the tribe of Levi. Moses has the golden calf destroyed and the gold ground into a fine powder, which he puts in the water and forces the people to drink. God sends a plague on the people, and even more people die.

When Moses goes back up the mountain, God tells Moses to lead the people and tells him that He will send an angel ahead of him. However, God tells Moses that He will not go with the people because His wrath from their sin will destroy them on account of their stubborn (or stiff-necked) hearts. Once again, however, Moses intercedes with God and asserts that if God is not with the Israelites they are nothing. The only thing that separates the Israelites from the other nations is that God is with them. Amazingly, once again God relents

because of Moses' intervention. Moses has such an intimate relationship with God that their relationship is compared to a deep friendship. Moses is able to speak to God as one would speak to a friend. God agrees to go with the people but tells Moses to put the tent of meeting outside of the camp so that He does not destroy the people. Every time Moses goes to meet with the Lord, he goes to the tent of meeting.

Finally, Moses has an interesting request that he makes of the Lord; he requests to see God's glory. Moses wants to see God in as much splendor and glory as is possible; and God enables Moses to see His backside as He passes by. As God passes by Moses, He identifies Himself as "Yahweh, Yahweh God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth." For those who say that God in the Old Testament is a mean God who is full of wrath, looking to destroy everything, this self-description of God reminds us that God is always full of grace and mercy and slow to anger.

### Thought Questions:

1. Do you think Moses actually changes God's mind here? How does this relate to when God later says that He does not change?
2. What is it about Moses and Abraham that leads God to build such strong relationships with them?

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## The Sacrificial System (Leviticus Overview)

### Lesson 19

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Many people struggle to understand the sacrificial system set up in the book of Leviticus. The culture and language used in the book of Leviticus is so different from our experience today. Yet if we come to understand a few basic ideas about the sacrificial system, many of the details in the book of Leviticus will make more sense.

First, the whole sacrificial system is set up primarily so that God's presence will remain in the tabernacle (and later the temple) and, as a result, with the Israelites. In Hebrews 10:4, we learn that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to bring forgiveness of sins. The offerings and sacrifices are not to be offered for the sake of forgiveness, but rather to keep the tabernacle, and later the temple, holy or clean. If we understand the tabernacle, or temple, as God's house, the sacrificial system can be thought of as a form of Divine house-cleaning. When the people sin in the land of Israel, that

sin makes God's house dirty, and the sacrifices are how they clean it up.

One concept that is essential to understand in the book of Leviticus is the idea of holiness. Seven different times in the book of Leviticus the people are commanded to "be holy" as God is holy (verse 19:2). So what is this idea of holiness? At its core, to be *holy* means to be "set apart" or "sacred" for the Lord. As a nation, the people of Israel are to be holy unto the Lord. They are to be different from the other nations; and as a nation, they are to serve the Lord. Yet within Israel, God devotes the tribe of Levi as holy from the other tribes. The Levites are to be set apart for ministry in God's tabernacle. If something were to be made holy, it would have to be used in the tabernacle for the services there. One helpful way to understand holiness is to think about fine china. Many families have a special set of plates and silverware that they only use for special occasions like Christmas or Thanksgiving. Those plates and silverware are "set apart" to be used only for special occasions. So also, if something is holy it can only be used for God. The book of Leviticus devotes a lot of space to defining what precisely is to be holy for God and what it takes for something to be made holy.

It is also important to understand the process of how the offerings are made. The animals required for offerings all have to be without blemish; in other words, they need to be healthy animals. The person who makes the offering brings the animal to the tabernacle and lays his hands on the animal and then slaughters the animal. By laying hands on the animal, the person is symbolically passing his sins onto the animal and recognizing that he should be the one slaughtered for his sins. The priest then cuts open the animal, collects the blood to sprinkle on the bronze altar, and divides the animal parts to put on the altar. The altar is like a giant grill used to cook the animal. Depending on the type of offering, different parts of the animal will be given to different people. The fatty parts of the animal—the best parts—are always devoted to the Lord.

So why does God set up this intricate and highly involved system of offerings? *First*, the purpose of the offerings is to show the seriousness of sin. When the worshiper slaughters his own animal, he is reminded that he should be the one dying for his sin. Blood plays a major role in the sacrificial system. In fact, we learn in the New Testament that without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22). *Second*, the ultimate purpose of the sacrificial system is to point the way to Jesus Christ. Jesus is the ultimate