

A Daily Devotional on the Book of Exodus

By Ken Miller

WEEK 11 READING



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Move-In Day

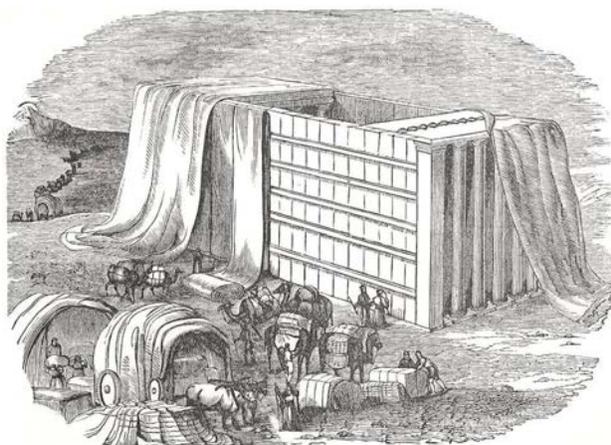
¹ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² “On the first day of the first month you shall erect the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. ³ And you shall put in it the ark of the testimony, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. ⁴ And you shall bring in the table and arrange it, and you shall bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps. ⁵ And you shall put the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony, and set up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. ⁶ You shall set the altar of burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, ⁷ and place the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. ⁸ And you shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen for the gate of the court.

⁹ “Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and consecrate it and all its furniture, so that it may become holy. ¹⁰ You shall also anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, so that the altar may become most holy. ¹¹ You shall also anoint the basin and its stand, and consecrate it. ¹² Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and shall wash them with water ¹³ and put on Aaron the holy garments. And you shall anoint him and consecrate him, that he may serve me as priest. ¹⁴ You shall bring his sons also and put coats on them, ¹⁵ and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve me as priests. And their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations.”

¹⁶ This Moses did; according to all that the Lord commanded him, so he did. ¹⁷ In the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected. ¹⁸ Moses erected the tabernacle. He laid its bases, and set up its frames, and put in its poles, and raised up its pillars. ¹⁹ And he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent over it, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ²⁰ He took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above on the ark. ²¹ And he brought the ark into the tabernacle and set up the veil of the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ²² He put the table in the tent of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil, ²³ and arranged the bread on it before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ²⁴ He put the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle, ²⁵ and set up the lamps before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ²⁶ He put the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the veil, ²⁷ and burned fragrant incense on it, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ²⁸ He put in place the screen for the door of the tabernacle. ²⁹ And he set the altar of burnt offering at the entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the grain offering, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ³⁰ He set the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing, ³¹ with which Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet. ³² When they went into the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, as the Lord commanded Moses. ³³ And he erected the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work. – Exodus 40:1-33 ESV

To say that the roughly nine months the Israelites spent at Mount Sinai had been eventful would be an understatement. During their stay in the shadow of Sinai's peak, they received a divine visit from Yahweh, as He displayed His glory on the mountaintop. Lightning, thunder, smoke, and earthquakes accompanied His presence. And on multiple occasions, they watched as their intrepid leader, Moses, ascended the mountain to speak with God. During those encounters, he received the Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant. God gave him the plans for the Tabernacle and the sacrificial system.

But during one of his more lengthy sessions with the Almighty, the people became impatient and doubtful of his return. So, they demanded that Aaron, his brother and temporary proxy, take over leadership and begin by finding them a new god to worship. Sadly, Aaron had agreed with their demands. This led to a strong rebuke from Moses and the deaths of thousands of Israelites. But God continued to extend grace and mercy to the people of Israel, assuring them of His continued care and protection. But to guarantee His ongoing presence among them, they would have to build the Tabernacle He had designed.



Now, on the first day of the first month, almost exactly one year after the Israelites left Egypt, Moses oversaw the construction of God's house. After months of laborious work and painstaking craftsmanship, the people were able to see the Tabernacle rise up from the valley floor. This beautiful structure, designed by God Himself, gradually took form before their eyes. From its vantage point in the middle of the Israelite camp, the building site would have been hard to miss, and the people must have watched the project's

progress with eager anticipation. Slowly and with great care, the timber framework was erected. Then, the two heavy layers of the animal-skin outer covering were put in place. Next, the various pieces of furniture that Bezalel had crafted were moved into their proper positions within the inner recesses of the Tabernacle. The Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies. The Table of Shewbread, the Golden Candlestick, and the Altar of Incense were carefully situated in the Holy Place. And everything was done according to the plan given to Moses by God.

This Moses did; according to all that the Lord commanded him, so he did. – Exodus 40:16 ESV

At this point, God was taking no chances. He provided Moses with detailed instructions that outlined the exact order of the entire construction and move-in process. There was a proper sequence for everything, and Moses followed God's instructions to the letter. And his obedient fulfillment of God's plan was key to ensuring God's presence. The Tabernacle was intended to

be God's house and, therefore, it must be perfect and up to His exacting standards. Built by human hands, it was to be the earthly dwelling place of the God of the Universe.

One can only imagine the stress that Moses felt as he oversaw the build-out and move-in process. He must have second-guessed himself a thousand times and questioned whether he had left anything out. And during his inspections of all the various elements that made up the Tabernacle, he must have had a great deal of concern that everything would meet God's expectations. There was a great deal riding on this project. If anything was unacceptable or incomplete, it could end up postponing or permanently canceling God's move-in plans. And that would be catastrophic.

But Moses proved to be a worthy project manager. Eight different times the text states that Moses followed God's instructions flawlessly, doing everything "just as the Lord had commanded him" (16, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32). He took his responsibilities seriously because he knew that any failure to meet God's expectations would be catastrophic. The Tabernacle was meant to illustrate the holiness of God. Everything about it was designed to reflect God's glory and greatness. The flawless God of the universe required a residence worthy of His glorious status.

And after careful oversight of the entire project, the day came when the last piece of the puzzle was put in place and the Tabernacle stood completed. Moses and the rest of the Israelites must have stood back and viewed their work with awe and admiration. They had put a great deal of time, effort, and personal resources into this project. Now, it stood complete, but there was still one thing missing: The presence of God. His house was done, but if He failed to move in, the Tabernacle would end up being just another tent in the wilderness. Moses knew that there was one more vital step for the entire process to be deemed a success. God must take up residence in the Tabernacle. But would He be satisfied with their work? Would He give His Good Housekeeping seal of approval?

As the Israelites prepared to begin their second year since leaving Egypt, they were forced to wait on pins and needles to see if God would grace the Tabernacle with His divine presence. But they wouldn't have to wait long.

The Glory of the Lord

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

³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. ³⁷ But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys. – Exodus 40:34-38 ESV

The book of Exodus ends with a somewhat small but highly significant section of verses that provide the conclusion to the Israelite's Sinai experience. They had been camped at this location for more than a year and, during that time, much had taken place. And this region had a special significance to Moses because it was at this same spot that he had received his commission from God to serve as the deliverer of Israel. Long before he had taken on this formidable responsibility to lead the Israelites from captivity in Egypt to the land of Canaan, Moses had been shepherding his father-in-law's sheep near Mount Sinai. On one occasion, Moses' attention was drawn to a strange and inexplicable sight.

He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" – Exodus 3:2-4 ESV

Much to Moses' surprise, the bush spoke to him, and little did he know at the moment that the voice he heard was that of Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

"Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." – Exodus 3:5 ESV

Moses had entered a holy place because God Almighty had graced it with His presence. His divine glory appeared in tongues of flame that engulfed an ordinary bush but left it fully intact and unharmed. In a sense, that bush had become an earthly sanctuary for God – if just for a moment. Its original purpose had been dramatically altered as it was transformed into a temporary repository for God's holy presence.

For a brief moment in time, God had turned a common and otherwise insignificant bush into a sanctuary in which Moses might commune with Him. By God's grace, that remote desert location had become a place of worship and intimate fellowship with Him. It was holy ground and, from that spot, God spoke to Moses.

"I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good

and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.” – Exodus 3:7-8 ESV

Yahweh revealed His glory and His will to Moses. And now, more than a year later, God was going to reenact this divine encounter yet again. But this time, the place of meeting would be the newly erected Tabernacle and not a burning bush. With the Tabernacle now complete, it was time for God to fulfill His promise and take up residence within it. During his initial encounter with Yahweh at the burning bush, Moses had received the following promise.

“I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.” – Exodus 3:12 ESV

God had kept His word. Moses had served God on Mount Sinai. It was there, on the top of the mountain, that God had revealed His glory once again.

All of Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord had descended on it in the form of fire. The smoke billowed into the sky like smoke from a brick kiln, and the whole mountain shook violently. – Exodus 19:18 NLT

The Lord came down on the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses climbed the mountain. – Exodus 19:20 NLT

God called and Moses obeyed. He climbed to the top of the mountain and entered into God’s presence, where he received God’s laws and His plans for the Tabernacle.

“Have the people of Israel build me a holy sanctuary so I can live among them. You must build this Tabernacle and its furnishings exactly according to the pattern I will show you.” – Exodus 25:8-9 NLT



Moses had kept his end of the agreement, having successfully overseen the fashioning and erecting of the Tabernacle. He had inspected every facet of the project and given it his approval. But now, it was up to God to give His Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval by blessing the Tabernacle with His presence. And Moses rather matter-of-factly records, “the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34 ESV).

It was as if the glory of God had descended from the top of Mount Sinai and settled upon the Tabernacle. The same manifestation of His divine presence that had guided the Israelites ever since they left Egypt had now come to rest over the Tabernacle. The pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire would appear over the top of the Tabernacle, providing the Israelites with a visual reminder that God was home and dwelling in their midst. Moses states that “the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:35 ESV). He was unable to provide an explanation as to how this glory manifested itself, because he was not allowed to enter the Holy of Holies where God’s glory rested above the Mercy Seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant. But all the people were given a clear and unmistakable sign of God’s presence in the Tabernacle. As long as the pillar of cloud or the pillar of fire appeared over the Tabernacle, they would know that their God was near. He had not left or forsaken them.

But as soon as the pillar lifted up from the Tabernacle, they knew it was time to pack up and prepare to go.

Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. – Exodus 40:36-37 ESV

The Tabernacle had been designed and constructed to ensure its portability. It was to be a temporary and transportable structure that could be moved from place to place. But once God’s glory settled at a new location, the people were to stop and immediately reassemble the Tabernacle. God’s house was to be their highest priority because God’s presence was their greatest need. Without Him, they were hopeless, helpless, directionless, and powerless. Any hopes they had of making it to the land of promise and conquering the nations that lived there would be dashed if the Lord ever left them. His presence wasn’t a pleasant perk but a life-or-death necessity. The only thing that set them apart from the other nations was the presence and power of God. Without Him, they were no different than the many pagan people groups that occupied the land of Canaan.

The book of Exodus ends with the Tabernacle completed, the law given, the priesthood established, the sacrificial system inaugurated, and God’s presence in place. Everything was just as God had planned it. His will had been obeyed and He had blessed His people with the reality of His divine presence among them. Now, it was time to complete the rest of their journey to the promised land. The Tabernacle and Sinai were not their final destination. God had more in store for them, and the best was yet to come.