

Exodus Chapter 34 Continued

Exodus 34:19 "All that openeth the matrix [is] mine; and every firstling among thy cattle, [whether] ox or sheep, [that is male]."

Or "the womb": And therefore to be sanctified and set apart for His use. This also was declared, and the law concerning it was given, at the time of their coming out of Egypt, and here repeated (see notes on Exodus 13:2, 13:12).

Whatsoever": To wit, of the male kind, including both ox and sheep.

In this verse above "matrix" means womb. We see by this that all people belong to God. We are all alive because of the breath of life He breathed into our bodies. The firstborn son of people was to be the Lord's. As we said before, God purchased them with the blood of the lamb over the doorpost, when the firstborn of Egypt were killed as the tenth plague. We see here, that the firstborn of the animals were to be sacrificed to God.

Exodus 34:20 "But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem [him] not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty."

This goes along with the former (see notes on Exodus 13:2; 13:13).

"And none shall appear before me empty": At the grand festivals, the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (see note on Exodus 13:15).

We will find that the child was to be purchased back from God with silver (redemption). The amount established later was five shekels of the sanctuary. The "ass" was never one of the sacrificial animals and would not have been suitable for sacrifice, so it had to be redeemed with a substitute acceptable unto God. The lamb was the substitute.

Exodus 34:21 "Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest."

This is repeated from the "Book of the Covenant" (Exodus 23:12), but with a remarkable addition; "in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest".

"Earing time": is "ploughing time". To "ear" being to "plough" in Old English. And the command to rest both then and at harvest time is a command not to break the Sabbath rest at the seasons when it might seem most necessary so to do. The temptation to "save the harvest" is readily intelligible to Englishmen. To appreciate the other temptation, we are required to know the peculiar circumstances of the East. It is necessary there to complete the ploughing before the spring rains are over which last but a short time. And when they are once past, no rain can be looked for till the autumn.

This was a further explanation of the "Sabbath of rest". Just because it was time to harvest or earing, was no excuse to work on the Sabbath. God established this Sabbath of rest for mankind. "Earing" means ploughing. So it was forbidden to plough or harvest on the Sabbath (See note on 20:8).

Exodus 34:22 "And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end."

Called (in Exodus 23:16), "the feast of harvest," and in the New Testament "the day of Pentecost". Seven weeks after the first day of unleavened bread (see note on Exodus 23:16). The special offering to be made at the feast consisted of "two wave loaves of fine flour, baked with leaven" (Lev. 23:17), which were "the first-fruits of the wheat harvest."

"And the feast of ingathering": Called also "the feast of tabernacles" (Lev. 23:34; Deut. 16:13; 16:16; 31:10). On account of the command to "dwell in booths seven days" during its continuance (Lev. 23:42). On the character of the festival (see note on Exodus 23:16).

We discussed these celebrations earlier in this series of lessons. Firstfruits occur in the early spring around April on our calendar and ingathering occurs at the end of the summer somewhere around October first on our calendar. This did not mean a 365 day year but rather was speaking of the crop year.

Exodus 34:23 "Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel."

At the three above mentioned feasts (see Exodus 23:17).

"The God of Israel": Who had chosen them to be his special people, had redeemed them out of Egypt, and done great things for them since. He had made a covenant with them, and had now renewed that covenant with them, and was their covenant God, and they his people. And so were under great obligations to present themselves unto him at the times appointed by him.

These were the three celebrations that could not be overlooked by the men in the family. We dealt with this in chapter 23:17.

Exodus 34:24 "For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year."

Who are particularly mentioned (Exodus 34:11), and therefore they need not be in any fear of them. When they should go up to the appointed place, and appear before the Lord. For to this they were not obliged, until they were come into the land of Canaan, and the inhabitants driven out before them.

"And enlarge thy borders": So that as they should have no enemies within them, to hinder and molest them, or discourage and deter them from attendance on the Lord at such set times. So

they would be set at a great distance from them, that they should have nothing to fear from them. And should it be objected that at such times, when only women and children were left at home, and their borders were defenseless. It would be a proper opportunity for their enemies to invade them, it is further promised.

"Neither, shall any man desire thy land": Though it is a desirable land. And their neighbors, and especially the old inhabitants of it, envied the happiness of the Israelites, and could not but wish it was in their possession. Yet God, who has the hearts of all men in his hands, and can direct their thoughts, and turn the inclinations of their minds, and influence their affections, and engage them with other objects. Promises that they should not think of an invasion of them. Or have their minds, and the desires and affections of their hearts, in the least turned that way at these seasons, whatever they might have at other times.

"When thou shall go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in a year": This would be at the feasts before mentioned, which was a most wonderful display of the power and providence of God.

We read throughout the Bible, that if we follow the Lord in all His ways, God will cause even our enemies to be at peace with us. God fights our battles for us. We see that not only Canaan would be theirs as originally promised, but the land between the Nile and the Euphrates as well. We see that the people would not try to come against them and take their land. They knew that God was with them.

Exodus 34:25 "Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning."

That is, not kill the passover, while there was any leaven in their houses; so the Targum of Jonathan (see note on Exodus 23:18).

"Neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of passover be left unto the morning": Neither any of the flesh, nor of the fat of the passover lamb: if any were left, it was to be burnt (see Exodus 12:10).

Exodus 34:26 "The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk."

Thou shalt not delay to do this, but shalt bring the very first of them. Or, the first-fruits, even the first-fruits of thy land. Which limitation seems here conveniently added, because they were not bound to bring thither all their first-fruits, to wit, those of their own bodies, their children.

This and another law in this verse, concerning not seething a kid in his mother's milk, are repeated (see note on Exodus 23:19).

This was just a repetition of what was given and explained (in Chapters 18 and 19), of this study. I believe the repeating of this, just shows how very important God felt this was.

Exodus 34:27 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel."

Write for thee these words, meaning to put them in writing for thine own use and the use of thy people. This express command accounts for the assignment of so much space to what is mainly repetition. The requirement of the repetition can only be explained by the importance of the laws laid down under the circumstances of the Hebrew nation, and the power of repetition to enforce upon the conscience what is pressed upon it by reiteration.

"After the tenor of these words": The summary of positive laws contained in this chapter (Exodus 34:12-26), was not intended to supersede the "Book of the Covenant," but rather to confirm and reinforce it. The covenant was renewed not upon these words only, but "after the tenor," i.e., after their general aspect or bearing.

Moses was instructed to write these instructions for God's people down for all time, just as this statement was made. The agreement with Israel was conditional. It was good if they followed the ways of the Lord. The covenant that God had made sounded like a very good deal but was only as good as it sounded, if Israel kept their part of the bargain.

Exodus 34:28 "And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."

As on his former ascent in (Exodus 24:18). The long time is, at first sight, surprising, since there were now no instructions to be given. But we learn from Deuteronomy (Exodus 9:18-19), that it was required for an earnest and prolonged intercession by Moses on behalf of his nation, which ultimately prevailed with God, and induced Him to put away His "anger and hot displeasure."

"He did neither eat bread, nor drink water": A similar fast had been kept on the previous occasion (Deut. 9:9), though it is not mentioned in Exodus. Fasts of this extraordinary duration are only recorded of Moses, Elijah (1 Kings 19:8), and of our Lord (Matt. 4:2). They are absolutely miraculous, and modern attempts to rival them are viewed by scientific men as deriving such apparent success as may have attended them from imposture.

"He wrote upon the tables": It has been concluded from this statement that Moses engraved the words upon the second tables; and the passage, if it stood alone, would certainly admit, and, indeed, naturally suggest, this meaning. But the Hebrew idiom allows us to regard Jehovah as the nominative to the verb "wrote;" and it is necessary so to do in order to bring the passage into agreement with (Exodus 34:1, and with Deut. 10:2; 10:4). Thus the second tables are to be viewed as "written with the finger of God" no less than the first (Exodus 31:18; 32:16).

We see here, very different tables of stones. The first two stones were provided by God. Moses made these. "Forty", as I have said so many times in these teachings, is a time of testing. These forty days that Moses was away from the children of Israel would certainly test them. The first time that Moses was gone for an extended time, they fell into idolatry. This time they must not fail this test. This time they did not decide Moses was not coming back.

We see here, that Moses went forty days and nights without food and water. Only Moses, Elijah and Jesus accomplished this length of fasting. The Lord is the Bread and Water of life and Moses was in His presence. We can see that he (Moses), was miraculously sustained, because he was in His presence. Jesus had told the disciples "I have bread you know not of". The Bible (Word of God), is spoken of as Bread as well. Whatever was the case, we know that God was fully able to take care of Moses.

This "he wrote upon the tables" is a little deceiving. In (verse 1), we read that the Lord said He would write upon them. I believe there is a definite break between the "he did neither eat" and the "he that wrote the commandments on the stones". We see a verification that the Lord wrote on the second stones (in Deut. 10:2). The Ten Commandments were also called the Decalogue and the covenant.

Verses 29-35: The experience of the Holy had so transformed Moses that he wore a veil so no one could look upon him. In one sense, when we spend time communing with God, we too "shine" with His glory (2 Cor. 3:7, 18).

The first time on the mount (24:12-32:14), unlike the second, had not left Moses with a face which was reflecting some radiance associated with being in the presence of the Lord for an extended period of time. On the first occasion, mere mention was made of Moses being gone 40 days and nights (24:18). On the second, mention was made of the 40 day and night absence but adding that Moses had been there with the Lord, neither eating nor drinking (verse 28), appears to draw attention to the different nature of the second visit. It, in comparison with the first, was not interrupted by the Lord's sending Moses away because of sin in the camp (32:7-10).

A compliant and not defiant people feared the evidence of God's presence. When not speaking to the Lord or authoritatively on His behalf to the people, Moses veiled his face. The Apostle Paul advised that the veil prevented the people from seeing a fading glory and related it to the inadequacy of the old covenant and the blindness of the Jews in his day (see notes on 2 Cor. 3:7-18).

Exodus 34:29 "And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him."

Compare (Exodus 31:18).

"The skin of his face shone": Compare (Matthew 17:2). The brightness of the Eternal Glory, though Moses had witnessed it only in a modified manner (Exodus 33:22-23), was so reflected in his face, that Aaron and the people were stricken with awe. And feared to approach him until he gave them words of encouragement.

The word translated "shine" is closely connected with a word translated "horn". And hence, the Latin version and others have rendered the verb "to be horned." From this rendering of the word

has arisen the popular representation of Moses with horns on his forehead; e. g. in Michelangelo's statue at Rome.

Jesus said that He was the Light of the world. In our lessons on Genesis, we dealt with Jesus being the source of all light.

John 1:9: "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

You see, Moses had been in the presence of the source of all Light for forty days and nights. The belief that Moses wrote Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy makes me believe that Moses' head was filled with the knowledge to write those books, while he was in the Lord's presence. Moses would bring the tables of stone down with him and this time he would not break them.

Exodus 34:30 "And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him."

This would certainly be frightening to see. This had to be so bright that they perhaps thought that this wasn't Moses, but his spirit. When a person gets a really good dose of Christianity, you can see a shine in his face. This is just a small version of what Moses had. Moses had spent a great deal of time in the very near presence of God and the glory of God was shining in Moses' face.

Exodus 34:31 "And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them."

Who, as it appears by what follows, on sight of him were so terrified, that they did not proceed on to meet him, but went back, and therefore he called unto them to return and come forward.

"And Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him": Knowing him by his voice, and encouraged by his call of them, who before might take him to be something more than human. Some glorious form, one of the heavenly angels appearing in this manner.

"And Moses talked with them": After he had put a vail on his face, of which there is an account in the following verses. He talked with them friendly, and told them all that had happened to him in the mount. What a glorious sight he had been indulged with. What a proclamation of the grace and goodness of God had been made to him; and what laws and ordinances God had enjoined him and them the observance of.

When Moses called out to them, they recognized his voice and realized it was really Moses. He reassured them that they should not fear him and that he was still a man. Aaron and these rulers had known before that Moses had something special with God. God had not allowed them to come as close to Him as He had Moses. It seems as though even Aaron and the rulers had feared Moses, but after he called out to them, they came close to him and Moses talked with them.

Exodus 34:32 "And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai."

That is, after Aaron and the rulers had had a conversation with Moses, then the whole body of the people by turns was admitted to come before him, and hear the laws of God from him.

"And he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai": Besides the two tables of stone, and the testimony written on them, he gave them all the other commands he was ordered to write in a book, and which are recorded in this chapter. He kept back nothing from them, but enjoined them to keep all the Lord had commanded.

This was not just the Ten Commandments, but also, the rules for living that God expected of them. Especially about the Sabbath and the three feasts that God expected them to observe each year. This certainly was not all that God had given Moses in these forty days, but was the messages that directly pertained to them.

Exodus 34:33 "And [till] Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face."

"And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face": From this time onward the veil became part of his ordinary dress. Only two occasions were exceptions:

- (1) When he was alone with God, and
- (2) When he had a message for the people from God.

According (to Paul in 2 Cor. 3:13), the reason for this veil was so that the Israelites could not see "the end of that which is abolished," or "the end of what was passing away." Three important truths are taught by the veil:

- (1) The veil typified the veiled glory of the Old Covenant in contrast to the unveiled and abiding glory of the New Covenant. The full and majestic revelation of God's glory was to be witnessed in the New Testament period (2 Cor. 3:13).
- (2) It represented the veil that was on the heart of the Hebrews of his day, symbolizing their spiritual blindness (2 Cor. 3:14-16).
- (3) The final reference to the veil is found (in 2 Cor. 3:18), and applies to the unveiled vision given to the believer by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Every believer is in the process of being changed into the image of his Lord as a result of the new life within him.

This "veil" was so they would not be so overwhelmed by the light of Moses' face.

2 Corinthians 3:13-16 "And not as Moses, [which] put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:" "But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which [veil] is done away in Christ." "But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart." "Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away."

All of this bears out the fact that the Lord Jesus is the source of all light, knowledge and understanding.

Exodus 34:34 "But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel [that] which he was commanded."

Went into the tabernacle to converse with him, to pray unto him, and inquire about any matter of difficulty respecting the people of Israel he was concerned for, which he often did.

"He put a veil on his face": That veil was with the greatest propriety removed when speaking with the Lord, for every one appears unveiled to the eye of Omniscience. But it was replaced on returning to the people, and this was emblematic of the dark and shadowy character of that dispensation (2 Cor. 3:13-14).

"And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded": This respects not the present time of his coming down from the mount, or out of the tabernacle with the law and commands now given, for these he had already declared. But after times and all such times, when he went in to the Lord to inquire of him regarding his mind and will concerning certain things. In which the people wanted information, when, upon his return, he acquainted them with whatsoever the Lord ordered to be done.

When Moses went back into the presence of the Lord, God took the veil off, so that Moses might see and understand clearly everything the Lord gave him for the people.

Exodus 34:35 "And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him."

That is, not only when he came down from the mount, but whenever he came out of the tabernacle, where he had been inquiring of God, and conversing with him.

"And Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him": This he did from time to time, when he came out from the Lord he put on his veil, and when he went in again, he put it off. How long this brightness on his countenance remained, cannot be said with any certainty. Saadiah Gaon says, it did not remove from him to the day of his death. Hence it is said, "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deut. 34:7). And Aben Ezra seems to approve of it; and it is the opinion of many great and learned men, that it continued as long as he lived.

The message that God gave Moses was not veiled to Moses, but it was partly veiled from Moses to the people, until the fullness of the Lord was revealed at the cross.

Exodus Chapter 34 Continued Questions

1. Which one of the cattle, or ox, or sheep belongs to God?
2. Which people belong to God?

3. What does "matrix" mean?
4. What was the firstborn son to be bought back from the Lord with?
5. What was the price?
6. The firstling of an ass was to be redeemed with what?
7. If not redeemed, what was to be done with it?
8. Why did God specifically mention "earring" and "harvest"?
9. Who did God establish Sabbath for?
10. What does "earring" mean?
11. What feasts did the Lord say specifically not to forget?
12. Who was to appear before the Lord these three times a year?
13. When these three times were observed by the people, what blessings were promised?
14. Not only Canaan would belong to the Israelites, but where?
15. What was to be done with the firstfruits of the land?
16. Why did God repeat this here, if He already said the same thing in chapter 23?
17. Why was Moses to write these rules for living down?
18. What one word covers the kind of agreement God made with these Israelites?
19. How long was Moses with the Lord this time to receive the new tablets of stone?
20. What did Moses do then that seems almost impossible for us to do?
21. Who wrote on the stones?
22. What does the number forty mean in Scripture?
23. Did the children fall into idolatry this time while Moses was gone?
24. Who is the Bread and the Water of life?
25. What is the Bible?
26. Deuteronomy 10:2 verifies what?
27. What had happened to Moses while he was on the mountain, that he was unaware of?

28. Why does the author believe that Moses' head shone?
29. What effect did this have on Aaron?
30. What convinced Aaron and the rulers to come back close?
31. What did Moses do when he was near the congregation?
32. When Moses went in to speak with the Lord, what did he do differently than when speaking to the people?
33. Where in the New Testament do we read about the veil of Moses?
34. Explain what you think this shining of Moses' face was caused by.