

# Exodus – Lesson 25

## God Renews the Covenant

### Read Exodus 34:1-35

- (a) When did Moses *break* the first set of commandments (see v. 1)? Why would God want to “rewrite” these tablets?

Moses broke the first set of commandments when he came down from the mountain and saw the golden calf (see Exodus 32:19); he broke them in anger as a response to the disobedience and rebellion of the people to his extended visit with God. The reason for God to rewrite the tablets would seem obvious: they were written by God himself in the first place and contained his law for the people. They were the *tangible* expression of God’s word to the people and the people needed them in order to know God’s will for them *as a people*.

- (b) From verses 6-7, list the various *attributes* of God presented in his description of Himself.

God expresses himself as: 1) the LORD, the LORD (note the uppercase); the name of God which expresses his entire nature as Yahweh, 2) merciful; willing to bypass the normal punishments due those who violate his commands, 3) gracious; the character of God whereby he exhibits mercy and kindness to his people, 4) slow to anger; the patience of God with those who rebel against him, 5) abounding in steadfast love (x2); God’s character of continual love to those he has drawn to himself, 6) faithfulness; the character of God where he keeps the promises that he makes, 7) forgiving; the nature of God where he willingly accepts the repentance of those who sin against him, and 8) just (not clearing the guilty); God’s willingness to apply the rules of justice to those who deserve it by not repenting.

- (c) What *contrast* is presented in what Moses does in response to this statement (see vv. 8-9)?

Moses “*bowed his head,*” in contrast to the nature of the Israelites as “*stiff-necked.*” Moses is willing to submit himself in humility before the Lord, whereas the people had demonstrated a sense of *self-exaltation*. By constructing a golden calf and worshiping it, by *assuming* for themselves a place of importance (in their own eyes), and by ignoring the clear signs of God’s power and majesty, the people had exalted *themselves* and refused to bow down before God in fear and reverence (i.e. stiff-necked). They “held their heads high” in spite of the clear demonstrations of God glory before them. Moses, however, was willing to humble *himself* before God and worship him; he was not “stiff-necked” in contrast to the people he was leading.

- (a) What is the *intention* of the command of God in verses 11-17? How does this fit with the *recent* events of the Israelites?

God intends to *expand* his command to the Israelites about their involvement with other peoples (especially spiritually or economically). God had originally given them a command in Exodus 22:20 not to sacrifice to any god other than him, and in Exodus 23:23-24 had commanded them not to even get involved with any of their practices. Now God *expands* on these commands by instructing them 1) to not make any sort of covenant with them, 2) to destroy any vestiges of their worship practices from the land after they take it over and 3) to avoid any sort of intermarriage with their people in order to prevent them from falling into the worship of pagan gods. This is necessary *at this point*, given the ease by which the people had built the calf as an example of Egyptian worship practices.

(b) What is the relationship of the “*firstborn*” and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (see v. 18)?

The Feast of Unleavened Bread (which contains the Passover meal) is *reminiscent* of the work of God to redeem the people from Egypt by killing the firstborn of Egypt. The firstborn, then, becomes significant in *remembering* and *commemorating* this work of God. The dedication of the firstborn to God is *symbolic* of this work of God, and serves as a permanent reminder.

(c) From verses 23-25, why would God *command* that all males must appear before the Lord three times every year?

The appearance of the male population before the Lord would *enforce* the theocracy under the Lordship of God. By forcing the male population to come before God, God would be *forced* to the center of attention within the life of the people; three times a year, every male would have to appear before God. Thus, the people would have a *conscious* reminder of their place before God and their need to worship him. It is also conceivable that God intended this *for males* in order to keep the worship of God firmly planted in the *male hierarchy* of the society. Men would be responsible for the spiritual nurturing of their families, and this would force them to keep that responsibility.

(d) Why do *you* think God repeats these specific commands (vv. 11-26) again at this point?

These commands build on the original commands given by God (see 2b and 2c above), but they serve as *detailed* reminders of what God desires from his people. This is a consistent *teaching* method: by constant repetition, the people would learn what it meant to be the people of God and how to obey him. This is a pattern of Scripture: by repeating again and again the nature and plans of God, people come to understand them, to believe them, and then to live in accordance with them. This is why preaching (for example) must consistently and *repeatedly* counsel the People of God with the truths of Scripture and theological concepts.

3. (a) From verses 29-31, *why* does Moses' face shine as he comes down from the mountain?

Moses has been in the presence of God, and some of the glory of God has “rubbed off” on him. In essence, the magnificence and majesty of God have “overpowered” Moses in such a way that he is *physically* altered by it, and it appears as a light shining from his face. This is a “reflection” of God's glory through Moses: the beauty and wonder of God appears *visibly* on Moses because he is forever changed by an encounter with God. This is what happens to *everyone* who comes into the presence of God: an encounter with God “changes” people permanently. While those who encounter God in Jesus Christ *now* do not necessarily have a *physical* change, it is certain that such changes are real, and they come to us in other ways.

(b) From verses 32-35, *why* would Moses put a “*veil*” over his face after he comes out from speaking with God?

The most significant reason that Moses would put such a veil over his face (see also 3c below) is to make sure that the people understood that this “radiance” was from God, and not a natural phenomenon or something associated with *him*. In other words, Moses would speak to the people about the things of God with his face fully visible and radiant, but he would put the veil back on when done so that the people would realize that the conversation with God was over.

(c) Connect this event to Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 3:12-18. What does the veil *represent* to the people of Israel in Moses' day? What does the veil *represent* in our day?

**To the Israelites, the veil represented a “closing” of their minds and hearts to the word of God. Moses, according to Paul, wore this veil symbolically to represent the fact that the people were unable (and/or unwilling) to come *directly* into the presence of God and to receive a word *directly* from God. Their eyes were “veiled” to the entirety of who God was and what God was doing in their presence. Paul says that this same sort of “veil” exists over the eyes of people today: those who are “blinded” by the god of this age have “hardened” minds and hearts to the law of God, and they are unable to “see” the glory of God. However, for those who (today) are brought to the Lord by faith, their “eyes” have been opened to “see” the glory of God, and that glory is changing *them* little by little into the image and glory of Jesus Christ.**