

Rediscovering the Story of the Old Testament – Session 1 Lesson 4

Heaven and Earth Joined at the Tabernacle

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Main Idea

Beginning with Abraham, seeing the development of a nation of priests and the re-establishment of a temple on earth with the creation of a tabernacle

Exercise

What principles do you lean on when you start a new project from scratch?

Core questions

1. In How many ways did Abraham express his faith?
2. How do the Sabbath and the Tabernacle point to the past and the future?

Faith and the Law: Heaven and earth joined at the Tabernacle

The Call: One man chosen from many

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Gen 15:6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

- 1) From one nation in Mesopotamia, God called one man, Abram, to go to a “land I will show you.” God would use Abraham to create a “great nation.” Through Abram that God would bless those who blessed Abram, curse those who cursed Abram and through Abram blessing all the families in the world.
- 2) By faith, Abram listened to God and did as he was told. God credited Abram’s faith as righteousness. God gave Abram a new name, Abraham, meaning “father of many nations.”
- 3) The slow forming nation:
 - a) Abraham’s son, Isaac was not born until Abraham was 100 years old.
 - i) When Abraham and Sarah found it difficult to wait for God to fulfill His promise to produce a son. Sarah “offered” her slave, Hagar, who as an Egyptian, to Abraham. It that culture, children produced through “concubines” could be considered the children of a wife. The child Ishmael was a result, who became the father of many Arab nations.
 - ii) When Hagar was pregnant, she taunted Sarah who had no children. Some consider this to be the beginning of Egypt oppressing the Israelites.
 - b) Isaac did not have twins until he was 60.
 - i) Abraham died at the age of 175. He died only seeing 2 grandchildren (of the promise).
 - c) One of the twins Jacob, had 12 sons and a daughter.
 - i) Jacob’s son, Joseph was sold by his brothers to traders headed to Egypt where he was enslaved. He eventually became 2nd in command in Egypt and invited his father and brothers down during a long famine so that he could take care of his extended family.
- 4) Neither Abraham, Isaac nor Jacob perfectly followed God. Despite Jacob’s resistance, God continued to work with Jacob and eventually gave Jacob the name, Israel (meaning wrestles with God). Israel would become the name that Jacob’s descendants would eventually be known by.

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- 5) God's apparently **slow-moving** plan had one more twist. The family, not yet a nation, would end up in Egypt for many **generations**,
- a) first as **guests** during a time of famine,
 - b) eventually becoming **slaves**
 - c) all the while strongly growing into a nation.

The Call: One nation chosen out of many

Exodus 11:4,5,7 So Moses said, "This is what the Lord says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die ... But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal.' Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

Exodus 12:3,7-8 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family ... Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast.

- 6) God raised a man, **Moses**, to lead Israel out of **Egypt** and back to the Promised Land. When the Pharaoh God caused many **plagues** on the Egyptians. The last **plague**, the one that caused the death of all the first-born Egyptians eventually caused the king to relent.
- 7) In the last plague, the **angel of death** would pass over all the families in Egypt except for the homes of the Israelites where the blood of a lamb was sprinkled on the doorframe.
- 8) The Israelites were also to bake some bread without **leavening**, because it wouldn't have time to rise. These actions would be re-enacted in the future as part of Israel's **Passover** celebrations.
- a) Many Egyptian people left with Israel. The traditional headcount of 603,000 men (plus women and children and Egyptians who went with them) would have exceeded 2,000,000 people, which would have been more than ½ the estimated population of Egypt.
 - b) If the word translated 1000 was instead translated as households or military units, there would only be a few 10's of thousands of people. The traditional numbers add up more easily but the lack of artifacts found and difficulties of Israel populating Canaan would support the smaller population.

The Law

Exodus 19:5-6 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

- 9) After God, through Moses led the people out of Egypt, God gave this **chosen** people a set of laws including the Ten Commandments that would also **mark** them as his own. These laws would prove **impossible** to keep. It was not God's intentions to simply be harsh with his chosen people, but to make their **sinful** condition clear to them and to **encourage** them to lean on him by faith.
- a) The Biblical name for what we call the Ten Commandments is the Decalogue, or 10 words (Deut 4:13). The commandments are broken up differently by different traditions. One difference is due to traditions involving "images." Traditions that emphasize not having any images in church buildings emphasize the commandment to not make any graven images. See Appendix 2.

The Tabernacle

Exodus 25:8-9 "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.

- 10) The Tabernacle was where **rituals** and **sacrifices** were carried out and would be the place where God would manifest His presence. The details of the Tabernacle were meant to provide **symbols** of

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how God's people could relate to him in a similar way that God met with his people in the **Garden** of Eden.

- a) The Tabernacle would eventually be replaced by a building, the Temple, which would be torn down, rebuilt and added to, then torn down again.
- b) See Tabernacle and Passover lesson
- c) The most prominent sacrifice would happen on the day of Atonement/Judgment when the High Priest would make a sacrifice for the sins of all the people.

The Sabbath

Exodus 16:29 Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day; no one is to go out."

- 11) The Sabbath would point back to the **7th** day of creation when God had been **resting** (settling into His creation.) On the Sabbath, the people of Israel were to **cease** from their labors so they would take time to **remember** that they do not live for their labors and there is a time to rest – to **live** into the world in which they labored.
 - a) The Sabbath 'command' in Exodus is given different reasons than in Deuteronomy. One states that the Sabbath is to help remember God's resting after creation and the other to remember their freedom from slavery.
 - b) The Sabbath command is a weekly reminder that our purpose is not to work, but to be with God.
 - c) As Christians, we are not under the law, but we need to remember our purpose is to be with God and to 'rest' with Him. That encouragement, along with encouragements to not neglect being with one another so that we may build each other up, is our incentive to regularly meet with other Christians toward that end.

Shadows

Hebrews 8:5; 10:1 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." ... The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves.

- 12) The Laws, the Tabernacle, the Sabbath not only pointed to what God had done in the **past** but were also signs of **hope** for those whose hearts were open. shadows pointing to the **future**.
- 13) The **Laws** point to the method by which God could resolve the problem of sin and were a sign of God's special **covenant** relationship with Israel.
 - a) There has been much conversation in Christendom about which laws apply and the delineation of civil, ceremonial and moral laws. However, as Christians, we are not 'under the law,' although the law gives us guidance to how we can love God and one another.
- 14) The **Tabernacle** points to the way in which God would meet with His people. The **rituals** of the Tabernacle were a reminder of God's **provision** for sin.
 - a) For more on the Tabernacle see "The Tabernacle and the Passover, Shadows of Reality" at TranscendentTouched.com.
- 15) The Sabbath points to the ultimate rest that God would provide for His people. The weekly Sabbath was a continual gift of **rest**, a **sign** of the Israel's special status as God's chosen people, and a reminder of God's **provision** for their daily needs.
 - a) It is curious, in the contortions concerning the Sabbath as one of the "10 Commandments." Such discussions have led to phenomena like the creation of the "Seventh Day Adventist" church or the thinking that Christians have their "Christian Sabbath," except we observe it on Sundays, and then, because it is called a Sabbath, there are legalistic types of debates about which rules apply. We do well to remember our limitations and need for rest, particularly how to rest in Christ. We also do well in creating habits of loving, supporting, and the mutual building up of one another as

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members of the body of Christ. Such encouragement should not feel oppressive but expansive as we grow in our abilities to love one another.

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Appendix 1: Egypt: History and Symbolism

Abraham's Sojourn - Egypt first emerges in the Bible in the narrative of Abraham, the patriarch of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Abraham and his wife, Sarah, journeyed to Egypt to escape a severe famine, marking the beginning of a pattern – Egypt as a refuge in times of hardship (Genesis 12:10).

Joseph's Exile and Rise to Power - More prominently, Genesis depicts Egypt as the land where Joseph, Jacob's favoured son, rose from being a sold slave to the rank of a vizier - the Pharaoh's second in command. This dramatic transition was not only a personal victory for Joseph but also a divinely orchestrated plan that eventually led to the survival of the entire family of Israel during another period of extreme famine.

The Israelites' Slavery and Exodus - Egypt is most thought-provoking, biblically, as both a place of shelter and as a symbol for oppression and servitude. The book of Exodus begins with the radically changed face of Egypt. From the land that saved his clan from starvation, Egypt transformed into the harsh stage where the Israelites endured centuries of brutal slavery.

The narrative of the Exodus - the liberation of the Israelites from their Egyptian servitude under Moses's leadership - is one of the pivotal events of the Old Testament that would shape a great part of Jewish history, law, and theology.

Symbolism and Significance - A Symbol of Refuge - Egypt was not only a physical refuge but also a symbol of God's providence in times of peril. It's intriguing to note that the same land where Abraham, Sarah and later Jacob's family sought refuge also turned out to be the place where the Holy Family (Jesus, Mary and Joseph) found solace when they escaped King Herod's massacre of innocents (Matthew 2:13-14).

A Symbol of Oppression - On the other hand, Egypt, the house of bondage (Exodus 20:2), becomes a powerful symbol of oppression, idolatry, and decadence in Jewish theology. Jerusalem's destruction by Babylon was seen as a judgement for their over-reliance on Egypt (Ezekiel 17:15). Isaiah the prophet warned against trusting in 'Rahab who sits still' (Isaiah 30:7), a derisive nickname for Egypt, highlighting the folly of placing trust in human powers over God.

Legacy in Biblical Tradition - For Hebrew scriptural tradition, Egypt's significance varies from being a place of refuge, an emblem of God's providence, to a symbol of oppression and spiritual degeneracy. In Christian tradition, Egypt's symbolism extends further. As Jesus spent a few years of his early life in Egypt, it becomes part of the salvation history. It's fascinating that Egypt, known for its ancient and rich civilization, played such a vibrant role across borders of cultures and faiths.

Mirror for our personal journey - In the larger biblical narrative, Egypt's historical and geographical context serves as a canvas for divine intervention and the progression of God's redemptive plan for humankind. These varied encounters with Egypt across biblical texts help us understand the dynamic relationship between humanity and divine providence, mirroring our own spiritual journeys through refuge and tribulations.

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Appendix 2: Versions of 10 “Commandments”

There are two versions of the ten commandments (Decalogue) given in the Bible. The first is contained in Exodus 20, and the second in Deuteronomy 5. Churches have tended to prefer version given in Exodus, but not all in the same way. One influence about how to divide the 10 words is the iconoclasm controversy. Those who thought it was never right to create artwork divided it differently than those who thought artwork was OK.

1. **Philonic division.** The oldest method, found in the writings of Philo and Josephus (first century), takes verse 3 as the first commandment, verses 4 through 6 as the second, and so forth. This was adopted by the Greek Church and by Protestants (except Lutherans).
2. **Talmudic division.** Later the Jewish Talmud (third century) treated the preface in verses 1 and 2 as the first of ten "sayings" and combined verses 3-6 as the second saying. This was adopted by all Jews.
3. **Augustinian division.** In the fifth century Saint Augustine listed the ten commandments by beginning with the Talmudic second saying as the first commandment; and, following the word order of Deuteronomy 5:21, making the ninth commandment a prohibition of the coveting of a neighbor's wife, and the tenth a prohibition of coveting his house and other property. The Roman Catholic church accepted Augustine's method.
4. **Lutheran division.** Luther used the Augustinian division with one modification: he preferred to follow the word order of Exodus 20, and so his ninth commandment became a prohibition against coveting the house and his tenth prohibited coveting the wife, slaves, and animals. Lutherans continue to follow this method.

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The table below shows the four different traditions of numbering: Philonic (P); Talmudic (T); Augustinian (A); and Lutheran (L).

P	T	A	L	Exodus 20
	1			2 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery;
1	2	1	1	3 you shall have no other gods before me.
2	2	1	1	4-6 You shall not make for yourself a carved image, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.
3	3	2	2	7 You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.
4	4	3	3	8-11 Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 10 But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
5	5	4	4	12 Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.
6	6	5	5	13 You shall not murder.
7	7	6	6	14 You shall not commit adultery.
8	8	7	7	15 You shall not steal.
9	9	8	8	16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10	10	9	9	17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house...
10	10	9	10	...you shall not covet your neighbor's wife...
10	10	10	10	...or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.