

## Yahweh Dwells Among Israelites

Exodus 25–40

Turn to Exodus 25 please. As soon as Yahweh had covenanted with Israel, the blood sprinkled on the people was barely dry, he began to have a tent made so that he could tent and travel with all the tenting Israelites.

Yahweh rescued Israel so that he could live with them. He says that in 29:46: “*I am Yahweh their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them.*” This Exodus series is called “Salvation and the Name.” In Exodus, salvation has three parts: rescue plus covenant plus presence. Yahweh *rescued* them from slavery, he *covenanted* with them at Mt Sinai, and then he became *present* with them in the tabernacle.

Did you know that our God has a dream home? People sometimes have a picture in their mind what their dream home would be, the kind of place that they think would be perfect for them. Our God has a dream home. That’s not the surprise. The surprise is what his dream home is. Our God’s dream home is living in the middle of his chosen people.

### 1 Yahweh Plans to Live With Israelites – Exodus 25:1-2. 8–9

*Yahweh said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil; and onyx stones and other gems...<sup>8</sup>Then have them make a holy place for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.”*

“Everyone whose heart prompts them to give.” This offering was entirely voluntary. Israelites had to tithe, but they did not have to give for the tabernacle. Don’t want to do that? Then don’t. Only those whose heart prompted them should give, everyone whose heart prompted them.

Verse 8 - *Then have them make a holy place for me, and I will dwell among them.* That’s the key line, folks. They will make me a holy place, and I will live with them. Who exactly will live with Israel? Yahweh, the God of Mt Sinai, the thunder and lightning God, the smoke and blazing fire God, the God with the indescribable Voice. That God, Yahweh, will move into a tent in Israel. So they made it exactly as he said to make it.

In the New Testament, Hebrews tells us that the tabernacle that Moses made was patterned after God’s actual dwelling in heaven. The tabernacle was a small portable replica of Almighty God’s throne room in heaven. Therefore, make it exactly like the pattern I show you.

## 2 Yahweh Will Now Meet with Israelites at the Tent of Meeting – Exodus 29:42–43

29:42 - *For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the tent of meeting, before Yahweh. There I will meet you and speak to you; there also I will meet with the Israelites, and my glory will make this place holy.*

*There also I will meet with the Israelites.* In Exodus 19:15, we read that *Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God* at the foot of the mountain. Israelites stood at the foot of the mountain and met with God. Yahweh had the tabernacle made so he could meet with the Israelites as they traveled around. He would always be there to meet with them.

## 3 I Brought Them Out to Dwell Among Them – Exodus 29:44–46

*So I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar, and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am Yahweh their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am Yahweh their God.*

“*Then the Israelites will know that I am Yahweh their God.*” We’ve read several times about knowing Yahweh, most of it in the plagues on the Egyptians. Knowing Yahweh in Exodus means seeing what Yahweh does and understanding why he did it. This first generation of Israelites did not read this story in a book, and learn about Yahweh that way. They actually saw what he did, and were told why, and in that way they got to know what kind of God Yahweh was.

*I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am Yahweh their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am Yahweh their God.*

Yahweh brought them out of Egypt **so that** he might dwell among them. That’s what it means for Yahweh to be their God. Israel longed to get out of Egypt and away from that slavery, but they were just thinking “rescue.” That’s what people want.

But Yahweh rescues us so he can covenant with us and live with us. We are getting to know Yahweh a bit better here, aren’t we. We’re getting to know what salvation is about, and we’re getting to know what his Name means. *I brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them.*

## 3 Disaster! Israel Abandons the Covenant and Worships the Golden Calf – Exodus 32–24

From Exodus 25 to 31, seven chapters, Moses was on Mt Sinai getting careful and detailed instructions on how to make the tabernacle. This took forty days (Exod 24:18). Here’s what happened during those forty days.

Exodus 32:1–4 *When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, “Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.” Aaron answered them, “Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me.” So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, “These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.”*

I plan to look at the Golden Calf story more carefully next week, but we’ll skim it now. Israel broke the covenant. Yahweh was furious with Israel, ready to destroy the whole nation. Moses pleaded with Yahweh not to do that, and he relented. He agreed to not destroy Israel.

In Exodus 33:2, Yahweh said, *“I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites and the other nations. Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.”*

“I will send an angel with you Israelites to help you, but I will not go with you.” Yahweh brought them out of Egypt so that he could live among them, and now that is over. Yahweh had spent forty days giving Moses tabernacle plans, and now that’s over. Then Yahweh relented even more. Yahweh forgave their sin and rebellion, and renewed the covenant, and they carried on with tabernacle plans. More next week.

#### **4 Israel’s Willingness and Skill to Build the Tabernacle – Exodus 35:4 – 36:7**

<sup>4</sup> *Moses said to the whole Israelite community, “This is what Yahweh has commanded: <sup>5</sup> From what you have, take an offering for Yahweh. Everyone who is willing is to bring to Yahweh an offering of gold, silver and bronze (etc.) ... <sup>10</sup> “All who are skilled among you are to come and make everything the Lord has commanded.*

<sup>20</sup> *Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses’ presence, <sup>21</sup> and everyone who was willing, and whose heart moved them, came and brought an offering to Yahweh for the work on the tent of meeting... <sup>22</sup> All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds.*

<sup>25</sup> *Every skilled woman spun with her hands, and brought what she had spun... <sup>26</sup> And all the women who were willing and had the skill spun the goat hair.*

<sup>29</sup> *All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to Yahweh freewill offerings for all the work Yahweh through Moses had commanded them to do. <sup>30</sup> Then Moses said to the Israelites, “See, Yahweh has chosen Bezalel (son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah), <sup>31</sup> and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills— <sup>32</sup> to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and*

bronze,<sup>33</sup> to cut and set stones, to work in wood and in all kinds of artistic crafts.<sup>34</sup> And he has given both him and Oholiab (son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan,) the ability to teach others.<sup>35</sup> He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work ... all of them skilled workers and designers.

**36**<sup>1</sup> [Yahweh said to Moses:] So Bezalel, Oholiab and every skilled person to whom Yahweh has given skill and ability to know how to carry out all the work of constructing the sanctuary are to do the work just as Yahweh has commanded.”<sup>2</sup> Then Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the Lord had given ability, and who was willing, to come and do the work.... And the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning.<sup>4</sup> So all the skilled workers who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left what they were doing<sup>5</sup> and said to Moses, “The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work Yahweh commanded to be done.”<sup>6</sup> Then Moses gave an order, and they sent this word throughout the camp: “No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary.” And so the people were restrained from bringing more,<sup>7</sup> because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work.

Israel at its worst, Israel at its best. These skilled and willing workers had recently worshipped the golden calf. Those whose hearts moved them to bring valuable offerings had recently worshipped the golden calf. Everything that went into the tabernacle, offerings and work, came from genuine hearts.

## **6 Yahweh Moves in, His Presence Day and Night – Exodus 40:33–38**

*Then Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and altar and put up the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. And so Moses finished the work.*

*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle.*

In 29:43, Yahweh said, [At the tent of meeting] I will meet with the Israelites, and my glory will make this place holy. “My glory will make the place holy.” We just read this twice: **The glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle.** Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, **and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle.** Now God’s glory has made the tabernacle a holy place.

*In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out—until the day it lifted. So the cloud of Yahweh was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the Israelites during all their travels.*

Think about this, people. Almighty God, Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, has moved into an ornate tent in the wilderness of the Sinai peninsula, so that he could live among his chosen people, his special treasure. Make no mistake: this is the most important event in the Old Testament. What has happened here is nearly inconceivable.

God had not lived with his people like this since Adam and Eve sinned and were put out of the garden. Yahweh moving into the tabernacle is a huge step in the Bible's long salvation story. When Israel settled in the promised land and stopped moving, Solomon's temple replaced the tabernacle.

### **7 God's Presence in the New Testament – 1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 2:20-22; 1 Pet 2:4–5**

In the New Testament, the congregation is the tabernacle, the people of the church. The people are God's temple, his dwelling place. He's not in a tent or a building, he's in the group.

Listen to what Paul writes to the Corinthian church: *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.*

“Don't you at Kleefeld Christian Community know that you yourselves are God's temple, and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.”

Here's what Paul writes to the Ephesian church: *Christ Jesus himself is the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

We the people are part of a building, Christ being the cornerstone. We are a holy temple. We are a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Peter uses much the image, beginning with Christ the cornerstone. *As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house.*

We, the people, are now the tabernacle, the temple. Yahweh of Mt Sinai now dwells in the church just as he was in that tabernacle at the end of Exodus. As his glory consecrated that place and made it holy, so his glory makes the believers holy. That's why the New Testament so often calls us “saints.” We're holy because God makes us holy.

## 8 Still Waiting – Revelation 21:3

The thing is, God's presence is still veiled. It is hidden. We don't see him. Sometimes it is only faith that convinces us that God is alive and well in our midst. *Now we see only a reflection*, writes Paul (1 Cor 13), *but then face to face*. Revelation 22 says that God's servants will see his face.

We'll end with Revelation 21:3. *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."*

This is God's dream home, and it says the same thing three times: *"Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people* (that's once) *and he will dwell with them* (that's twice). *They will be his people, and God himself will be with them* (that's three) *and be their God."*

And that began in Exodus 25:8, when Yahweh told Moses, *"have them made a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them."*

Listen! Can you hear what God is saying? "KCC, I brought you out of Egypt so that I could dwell among you. I rescued you from the authority of darkness so I could be with you, and you could be with me." That's what he's saying. Amen.

PRAYER: You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power. To you who sit on the throne, and to your Son the Lamb, be praise and honour and glory and power for ever and ever. We are so fortunate to be your people.+ Amen.

BENEDICTION (DOXOLOGY): To him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power, and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. Go in God's peace to love and serve the Lord.