

## Day 26 Ex. 13.17 – 15.21

13.17 Pharaoh has let the Israelites go, but God knows this people well enough to know that they are not strong enough as a nation to withstand military confrontation. Although the route along the Mediterranean coast, through the territory of the Philistines, is much shorter, and although they go out prepared for battle, this is a people used to servitude, with little military training between them.

God therefore takes them further south, towards the Red Sea (or *Sea of Reeds* Heb יָם־סוּף *yam-suph*) leading them in a pillar of cloud during the day, and a pillar of fire at night, a miraculous sign of His presence defending them.

They take with them the bones of Joseph, having promised him that when they were delivered, they would return his remains to the Canaan. It's worth noting that something is attached here to the concept of burial in the land of inheritance, and respect for the wishes of the dead even after their life's end.

14.1ff The Lord reveals his plan; He can count on Pharaoh's hard heart to come looking for revenge against the Israelites, which is exactly what happens. God even knows what impression His strategy of desert travel will have on Pharaoh. God is setting the scene for decisive, divine action.

14.10 The Israelites see the approaching Egyptian forces and begin to complain, something they will hone to a fine art over the next years, and which will be this generation's downfall. 'Wasn't there enough grave-space in Egypt' they moan, 'Why bring us here to the desert just to die?'

Moses tells them not to fear- one of the most frequently repeated commands in the Scriptures! How often do we hear the Lord have to say to us 'Don't be frightened' at the very moment when that seems the natural course of action. The Lord is planning His deliverance.

14.15ff God commands Moses to stretch out his staff and divide the waters. At this point, the angel of the Lord, who has obviously been in the cloud and the fire ahead of them now moves behind them to shield them from the oncoming foe. (v.19)

14.21 Moses stretches out his staff. What follows is not the quick roll-back of the flood which Hollywood has depicted, but a slow, night-long east wind, coming from the desert, a wind-storm pushing back the waters leaving dry ground. Then Israel moved through, wondering at what was happening, looking at the walls of water at a distance which could resurge any moment.

*(I had an experience the other day, travelling by train to Aberdeen. Just beyond Dundee, where the Firth of Tay meets the North Sea, one can see how the great rollers come towards the estuary, but are kept back by the outgoing river flow. I contemplated how there was nothing between us and the breakers except the Tay keeping it back. It must have been a similar experience for the Israelites.)*

14.23 The Egyptians follow them, but the Lord releases the sea to flow back into its place. Anyone who has been in danger of being cut off by an incoming tide will know

how powerless one is to hold back the relentless wash, and the Egyptians perished in the rising sea.

14.31 When the people see the might of God's rescue, they fear Him, and trust Moses, finally.

15.1 Here is the first psalm, the first recorded song to the Lord (Heb שִׁירָה לַיהוָה *Shirah L'Adonai [YHWH]*) in Scripture, the song of Moses and Miriam.

This is a poem in Hebrew, with couplets balancing around a delicate rhythm – not rhyme, but often either repeating an idea, or developing it – so;

*Ashirah L'Adonai ki ga'oh ga'ah /*  
I will sing to the Lord, for with triumph He has triumphed /

*Sus veRokevo ramah ba-yam*  
Horse and its rider he hurled in the sea

*'Azi veZimrat Yah va-yehi li l'Yshu'a /*  
My strength and song Lord and He has been to me for Salvation (Yeshua) /

*Zeh Eli ve'aneveyhu*  
This my God and I will celebrate Him

and so forth.

15.11 More of the poem in the original metre...

*Mi kamokhah ba'Elim Adonai (YHWH) /*  
Who like You in the gods LORD /

*Mi kamokhah ne'dar be-qodesh*  
Who like You majestic in holiness

*No-rah tehillot oseh phele' /*  
Fearsome of praises, doing miracle /

*Natita yeminkha tivla'emo arets*  
You stretched your right hand swallowed them earth

15.13

*Nachita be-chasdekha am -zu ga'alta /*  
You guided in your Chesed (covenant bond), people this You redeemed /

*Neyhalta ve-azkha el- neveyh qod-shekha*  
You led in Your strength to home of your holiness

15.20 The song of triumph in God develops into a dance, with Miriam leading the women with small drums. (Heb תוף *tof*, timbrel or tambour.)

### Day 27 Ex 15.22 – 18.27

The people of Israel have now crossed into the Sinai peninsular, and are in desert conditions. The sight of such a wild stretch of wilderness would be shocking to people used to Egyptian life, even as slaves.

They come to a place called Marah (meaning in Hebrew, *bitter*.) Here they cannot drink the water – it may well have been salty – until Moses obeys the Lord’s command to throw in a piece of wood, and miraculously kit becomes fresh enough to drink – quite a necessity for what would have been about a million or more people on the move.

15.26 The Lord also promises to be the Lord your healer (Heb יְהוָה רֹפֵאֵךְ *Adonai (YHWH) rophe-kha*) keeping them free from diseases.

16.1ff Here the Israelites once again complain; even in their slavery they had food. Now they are on starvation rations. Moses again steps in and promises from the Lord divine provision in bread falling as dew, and meat in the evening with flocks of quails.

16.15 When the Jews see the bread on the ground, they say to one another *man* ? (Heb מַן ) which Strongs concordance suggests means a *what-ness* ! They are really saying, ‘What’s this then?’ and from that, the bread came to be known as manna!

The bread is miraculous, in that on the eve of Sabbath, there is enough for everyone to gather double for Sabbath. If they hoard it, it will rot overnight.

16.31 The manna was like honeyed wafers.

16.32 Some manna was put in the Ark of the Covenant as a reminder of God’s forty-year provision.

17.1 Now the Israelites, having been provided with such awesome provision, should have been aware of the God who was leading them. Yet they again rise up and demand water, and doubt God’s ability to provide. They actually doubt God’s presence with them at this point, and so the place is called *Testing*, because they put God to the test.

However, God does not leave them, and Moses strikes the rock and they have water to drink.

17.8 Israel now face their first armed combat against the Amalekites at Rephidim. There has to be a divine support for them, for a nation with no experience of battle formation previously. Thus, Moses holds up his hands, in prayer to God and the Israelites triumph.

This is the first appearance of Joshua, who will become Moses’ successor and lead the people into Canaan.

17.15 After this intervention, The Lord is called *Adonai(YHWH) Nissi* (Heb יְהוָה נִסִּי ) the Lord my banner.

18.1 Moses now meets up with Jethro again, his father-in-law, and his wife, Zipporah, who has been sent away with his children for safety. We learn that as well as Gershom, with whom Moses went to Egypt, another son, Eliezer has been born, meaning *my God a help* (Heb אֱלִיעֶזֶר )

18.10 Jethro rejoices in what God has done for Israel, and gives them his priestly blessing. There is then a meal for the elders of Israel, *in God's presence* (v.12) There seems to be quite a mentoring relationship which God has provided for Moses in this priest of the Edomites.

18.14 Jethro now gives Moses valuable counsel. Up until now, Moses is acting as judge in all the disputes of the people himself, teaching and applying God's Word to them alone, which is wearing him out. Jethro urges him to appoint leaders (able men Heb לְיָדָי אֲנָשִׁים ) God fearing, reliable, men of integrity (Heb אֱמֶת *emet*, truth.) They are to be leaders (Heb שָׂר *sar* ) over thousands, hundreds and tens, thus structuring the task of mediation in a delegated way for Moses.

Moses follows Jethro's advice, and deals with only the difficult cases. Jethro then returns to his homeland.

### Day 28 Ex 19.1 – 20.26 & 23.20 – 24.18

God now wants to reveal to Israel the whole reason behind her deliverance and calling here to the desert. Since the covenant with Abraham some six hundred years before, the Lord has been working towards this encounter with a nation who would become for the world a model of relationship with a covenant God, with the One who has promised to shape the whole earth through their experience.

How terrible, therefore, that in the unfolding story, Israel would prove such a wayward child; although there is much of joy and glory in her history, there are also many shocking and sad steps which she takes on this journey. However, through it all, God keeps on promising His commitment to her; after all, His goal is to eradicate the evil which man unleashed, so God cannot accommodate it in any way.

19.3ff God calls Moses and reveals to him His promise of covenant-based relationship, making Israel a 'treasured possession.' (Heb סְגֻלָּה *segullah*, meaning 'closed up, sealed up' – something kept hidden and treasured. ) (v.5)

19.6 And here is a key fact about Israel; although all the earth is the Lord's (echoed in Ps 24.1) Israel will be a kingdom of priests (Heb מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים *mamleket kohanim* – the word kohen (plural kohanim) is the word for priest in Hebrew, from which comes the Jewish surname Cohen. ) They will also be a holy nation (Heb גּוֹי קָדוֹשׁ *goy qadosh*)

This means they will be priests under a King; they will be mediators of the Kingdom of God to the earth, a uniquely called and commissioned nation. And holy because God has covenanted with them - they are wedded to God's purposes forever.

19.8 The people agree to be God's, and prepare themselves to hear God speak to them.

19.12 There is a boundary set – the people are to come and hear God, but they may not come up on the mountain, in case of peril.

19.16 There is something terribly experimental about this encounter of God with the people. He has not got this close to a people group before. As Mount Sinai is covered in powerful signs of the Lord's arrival, the people are terrified.

God seems then to be very concerned for the people's safety, and tells Moses to go and keep back the people. But Moses reminds the Lord that He has told them to keep back, so they won't break the boundaries.

20.1 It is often supposed that Moses was on the mountain when God spoke the covenant terms here, but it seems that Moses has come down and the Lord is speaking to all of the people through the lightning and thunder, giving them all these momentous words.

20.2-3 God is not just demanding their allegiance out of jealousy of others. God has delivered them, therefore He claims their full worship and attention.

20.4 The commandment not to make idols or images which are worshipped was a clear message that God could not be captured in a representation, as pagan gods were.

This came in time to be a prohibition on all artistic representation of created forms, an extreme length to go to. Much of that extremism also drove later iconoclasts (image-breakers) who saw the statues and pictures of the mediaeval church as objects of worship (and that may have been true in many cases.) But the prohibition here is specifically on images for the purpose of worshipping gods who are not God.

20.5 God reveals here something of His jealous nature, not rescuing people from the consequences of idolatry, and their effects even on their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who may be implicated also in their practices.

20.6 But God will not forsake His covenant, *doing chesed* (ie fulfilling His self-obligating bonded commitment) to multitudes who love Him and keep faith with Him (unlike fickle man, who breaks covenant when he pursues other gods.)

20.7 The Lord's name is not to be abused or profaned. For this reason, the Jews are extremely careful even about writing the holy name. This is why the four consonants of the Lord's name in Hebrew (YHWH Heb יהוה ) appears in written form with the vowels around it of the word *Adonai* , Lord, to prevent the name being abused.

Even Jews writing the English word will abbreviate it to G-d, and a printed version of God's name is considered sacred, and cannot be destroyed. (However, computerized versions of the name can be deleted, if not on paper!)

20.8 The people of Israel are to keep Sabbath, the seventh day, (Heb שַׁבָּת *Shabbat* = *rest*) as a day apart, a rest day. God doesn't say, as a day of worship or of services or of religious activity – those happened every day anyway in the ongoing life of Israel. But Sabbath is a stop, for the purpose of acknowledging that God rested, and that rest is part

of the healthy rhythm of life. It also prevents man from controlling all his own time as though it were his. The seventh day rest reminds him that he is dependent, and that he is created, and that he needs to recharge his batteries.

Later a whole system of taboos sprung up around Sabbath-keeping, and about what constituted Sabbath-breaking before God. It became a system predicated on keeping in God's good books, and not incurring judgement. But as we see here, and as Jesus reiterated later (Mark 2.27) , the Sabbath was made for man's good, not man to serve the Sabbath.

One of the loveliest greetings in Hebrew is heard from Friday evening to Saturday sundown - *Shabbat shalom* (Heb שְׁבֻתָּהּ-שְׁלוֹמִים ), Sabbath peace, or, literally, *the wholeness of rest* to you. Western (Ashkenazi) Jews also say *Good Shobbas* , with a different pronunciation of the first a and the last t (turned into a s ) of the Hebrew word *Shabbat*.

20.12 Family and particularly parenthood are important to God. When a nation despises its parents, it is headed for destruction. This is why long life in the land is linked to honouring parents.

20.13ff Killing, cheating on your spouse, lying, stealing and envying are all no way for God's people to demonstrate His lifestyle of faithfulness and self-sacrificial love.

20.18 Something terrible happens. The people are so afraid of the noise, and the fireworks, that they distance themselves and appeal to Moses to speak to them on God's behalf. Moses tells them not to be afraid, and that God is only showing how powerful He is to show them what an awesome God He is, to keep them from listening to the pull of evil in their lives. But from this point, the people don't have direct contact with God.

God will now deal with Israel always through messengers, through angels and prophets. Until, that is, He comes Himself in Jesus of Nazareth, and meets us face to face, and then comes and lives within all His people personally.

20.21 Moses now withdraws into the darkness, and God begins to reveal what it will be like to be His people to Moses, to be this unique nation.

20.24-26 A short regulation about building altars; they could be built, but only of earth, so as not to be the result of man's effort and therefore more about him than about God. And they are not to have steps going up to them so that all modesty is preserved, and no one is inadvertently distracted by private parts.

23.20ff God will send His messenger, who will have 'my Name in Him', to guide and destroy the nations before them, eventually establishing the nation's borders from the Red Sea in the south to the Euphrates in the north, and from the Mediterranean to the desert.

24.1ff This is the renewal of the covenant to Abraham in a national form. The Book of the Covenant is the record of how God's people will live in relationship with Him, and how they will show the world what it is to be His people. They accept it, and as with all covenants, there is cutting of flesh and spilling of blood. Because the people cannot stand

between the pieces of sacrifice themselves, they are spattered with the blood, the sign that they are bound, which they have agreed to be.

24.9ff After the ritual of sacrifice, as part of the covenant ritual, a meal is shared. This is particularly awesome, since Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, (Aaron's sons) and seventy of the Israelite leaders go up the mountain, and sit with God – they see Him, and the sapphire pavement under his feet, and yet they are not harmed. 'They saw God, and they ate and drank.'

24.12 God now calls Moses to come up and receive His own 'signature' as it were on this covenant – God-engraved stones with the covenant terms upon them. Moses and Joshua go up, while the rest of the elders remain behind with Aaron.

24.13 Moses and Joshua are away for almost six weeks in the fire of the glory of the Lord on the top of the mountain.

24.15ff The term 'glory of the Lord' in Hebrew is *kavod Adonai (YHWH)* (Heb יהוה 'כבוד') from a word meaning 'weight' or 'heaviness'. There is sense in which when God manifests Himself, there is a tangible change in the atmosphere, here shown as fire.

### **Day 29 Ex 25.1 – 27.21**

These passages give the blueprint for the tabernacle, the dwelling-place of God among His people (Heb מִשְׁכָּן *mishkan*, from the root *shakhan* Heb שָׁכַן to lodge, reside or dwell.) with its furniture. This would with be the meeting place of God with His people throughout their wanderings. This was very much a mobile affair, and everything was portable.

The fact of the mobility of the tabernacle and all its furnishings, the fact that each part could be packed up and moved on, gives an indication of the nature of this God who is on the move. It is significant that when it comes to the building of the temple, in Jerusalem, God makes it clear that He cannot be contained in buildings by human hands. God doesn't in fact command the building of the later Temple as He commands the building of the Tabernacle to Moses, although He does co-operate with its intentions, and for a while at least fills it with His glory until the sin of Israel becomes too much.

But the moveable nature of the tabernacle speaks to us of a God who is able to dismantle and reassemble things; Temples can only be demolished or rebuilt – the tabernacle always served the moving of God, rather than God serving the building.

25.1 The people are to bring offerings for the meeting place, predominantly of red (the colour of earth) blue (colour of sea and sky) and purple (the mixture of them both, and a sign of God's presence.)

25.10 The ark (box) (Heb אָרוֹן *aron*) to contain the stones of the covenant was made of acacia wood and covered over with gold, with rings and poles to carry it.

25.17 The ark was to have a cover or lid (Heb כַּפֹּרֶת *kapporeth* from root כָּפַר *kaphar*, to cover.) The word used in old translations was ‘mercy-seat’, because of the Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament of this word as ἱλαστήριον/ *hilasterion* which is the same as the word Paul uses in Romans 3.25 meaning an atonement or place of sacrifice, but the plain fact is that the Hebrew word just means a ‘lid’, although blood was sprinkled there on the day of atonement.

25.18 On top of the lid are to be *cherubim* (Heb כְּרֻבִים *kheruvim*) , carved representations of the guardians of the tree of life, which God placed to dwell there at the end of the Eden story. (Gen 3.24) It is interesting, in view of the prohibition on carved images, that God commands images of the angelic beings, pointing to the fact that God only means idols meant for worship, not images to adorn the place of His worship.

25.22 God will meet (literally, *speak* ) with them between the wings of the *cherubim* in the tabernacle, over the ark with the covenant stones in it.

25.23 Then come the instructions for the table of the ‘bread of the presence, or face’. (Heb לֶחֶם פָּנִים *lechem panim*, v.30) Again, made with acacia, gilded and portable, this was to be where the daily offering of loaves for each of the tribes, a symbol of God’s covenant with Israel were placed.

25.31ff The seven-branched, almond-topped candlestick or lampstand (Heb מְנֹרֶה *menorah*) would give light in the dark inner tent of the tabernacle. It was made of beaten gold.

26.1 Now follow detailed measurements and instructions for the tent itself, with its curtains and coverings, and then boards to form the walls and carry the hangings there.

26.15 It is worth noting that each board stood in its own sockets, so that when the tabernacle was dismantled, the boards did not fall like dominos, each being set in its own silver sockets.

26.33ff The ark was to be placed behind the curtain in the inner tent of the actual meeting place, which became called the most holy place. The table and lampstand were to be placed in the tent, called the holy place, in front of the curtain separating the holy place from the most holy.

27.1ff Here are instructions for an altar of burnt offering, made of wood, covered in bronze, with grating for the ashes.

27.9ff There is to be an outer court around the central tent, which itself will be marked off with a boundary formed of boards and hangings, with a door to enter. In this court will be the altar and the washbasin, among other things, and the tent itself at the further end.

27.20ff The lamp was never to go out in the tabernacle, and the family of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi was to guard its burning.

Here are images from the excellent 3D Bible project at <http://www3.telus.net/public/kstam/en/default.htm> where one can walk around a virtual tabernacle, temple and ark of Noah.

### 1. The outer courts

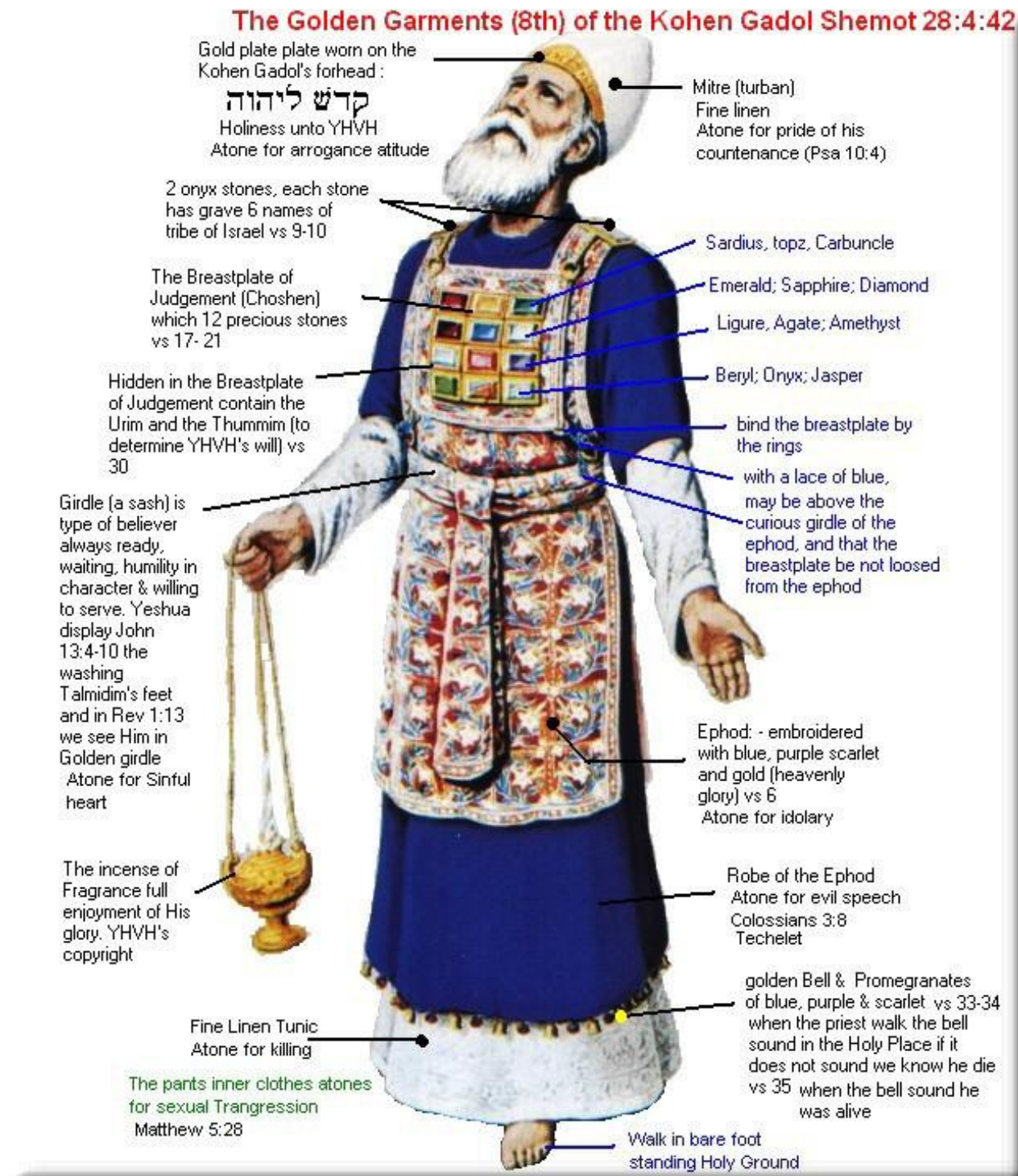


### 2. The Holy Place



### Day 30 Ex 28.1 – 31.18

28.1ff Here, in sum, is an excellent portrayal of the garments of the high priest (Heb *ha-kohen ha-gadol*) described in Ex 28. (Heb Shemot.)



28.3 The first occurrence of a very important and oft-used word in Scripture is found here in surprising yet illuminating circumstances. The word is **wisdom**, (Heb חִכְמָה *chokmah*) and God says he will fill all those who are wise in heart (Heb כָּל-חִכְמַי-לֵב *kol-chakmey-lev*) with the Spirit of wisdom (Heb רוּחַ חִכְמָה *ruach chokmah*) to make

the garments of the priest. Here is the very essence of the Hebrew understanding of wisdom – it is not an intellectual store of facts and philosophy, but a skill to live, an applied science, literally. The wise are always those who put into action with their lives, in this case, with their hands, what their minds and souls know. It is a very different concept of wisdom to later Hellenistic, classical learning, which was knowledge often for knowledge's sake.

28.30 It's unclear exactly what the Urim and Thummim were. The two words comes from *ur*, meaning flame, and *tummim* meaning perfections. They were probably the equivalent of stones or dice to cast to divine the will of God for Israel.

29.1ff Much blood was shed in the preparation of Aaron and his sons, which gives as sense of the heavy cost and the somber nature of the approach to God which they were making.

29.38ff Daily burnt offerings were to be made on the altar. Here the Lord promises to meet and to speak with Israel through His priests.

30.1ff The altar of incense (see above in the holy place picture ) stand before the veil and is used to burn the fragrant incense which can only be made by the priests.

30.11ff Regulations for taking a census. The counting of a people who belonged to the Lord was not a thing to be done lightly, since to appropriate the people to oneself as a king was to anger the Lord. (David did this with dire consequences in 2 Samuel 24) There was a payment due for each one counted of half a shekel (about 6 grams).

30.17 The bronze laver (washbasin) is described by the Lord, a place for washing before entry into the holy place. (See pictures above.)

30.22ff The instructions are given for the making of the anointing oil and the incense; as mentioned, this was only to be made by the priests, on pain of banishment or death.

31.1ff Bezalel, (his name means, *in God's shadow*) son of Uri, is the first man in the Scriptures to be described as filled with the Spirit of God (Heb נִאֲמַלְא אֶהוּ רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים *va'amale' oto ruach elohim* – I will fill him Spirit of God) and this is to empower him to make the commanded furnishings for the *mishkan*.

31.6 God has also gifted the craftsmen with him with wisdom (Heb חֵכְמָה *chokhmah* - see 28.3 above), the applied science of God's understanding .

31.18 God gives Moses the stones tablets (Heb לְחֹת הָעֵדוּת *luchot ha'edut*, stones of the testimony.) inscribed by God Himself as His own signature on the covenant He has made with the descendants of Abraham.

### Day 31 Ex. 32.1- 34.35

It is a sobering fact that democracy (rule of the people) in the Scriptures always ends in achieving less than God's will. People power always takes the easier way, because of the darkness and short-termism in the hearts of a mass. It takes courage to make the hard

decisions and to take the road less travelled, and democracy will not do that. To use a cliché, turkeys do not vote for Christmas.

32.1 Here is an example of people-power which leads to terrible consequences. The people deduce that Moses is dead up the mountain, and demand spiritual input from Aaron. ‘Who knows what happened to this guy Moses.’ It’s worth noting that the people ask Aaron to make *elohim* – the same (plural) word as they would use for the great one God, but they want Him visible. Or it could be that they want gods, plural, -after all, in Egypt, they had been used to so many different things being gods, from the Nile to beetles.

With the gold they make a calf-idol , which they would have been familiar with from the worship of Apis, the bull idol back in Egypt. (Bulls were thought to have qualities of strength.) It’s significant that in later centuries the northern breakaway kingdom of Israel under Jereboam and his descendants used a calf idol at the shrines at Dan and Bethel where the northerners were to worship instead of Jerusalem. (1 Kings 12.28)

32.4 Aaron declares the calf to be an image of God, and calls a ‘feast for the Lord’ (Heb לַיהוָה חַג *chag l’Adonai(YHWH)* ) on the next day. Almost exactly the same words are used by Jereboam in 1 Kings 12.28 of the calf-idols at Dan and Bethel.

32.6 They have ‘a laugh’ after having eaten and drunk.

32.7 The Lord tells Moses that the people he has led out of Egypt are going ‘ruin’. He is so angry that He intends to destroy them for their stubborn selfishness, and to start again with Moses. (v.10)

32.11 But Moses travails in prayer – the word in Hebrew is *yechal* from *chalah* (Heb נִחַל from חָלָה ) meaning to be in pain over. Moses struggles here in intercession to turn God’s anger away, perhaps in the same way that Abraham wrestled over Sodom and Gomorrah. What is so remarkable is that God’s heart is affected and touched by our prayer for situations of human darkness.

32.12 Moses appeals to God’s reputation; if He destroys Israel, Egypt will accuse God of great evil (Heb רָעָה *ra’ah*) in bringing the people of Israel away to just kill them in the desert. Moses prays an incredible prayer, given that He is speaking to the creator and judge of all the earth – He says

שׁוּב מִחַרְוֹן אַפַּיִךְ וְהִנָּחֵם עַל-הַרְעָה לְעַמֶּךָ

(nb Hebrew above starts from right and reads to left.)

*Shuv me-charon appekha ve-hinnachem al-ha-ra’ah le’amekha*

Turn from fire of your wrath and repent of the evil to your people

32.13 Moses appeals to the covenant, He invokes *chesed* on God’s part, and reminds Him of the promise.

32.14 As a result, God repents (Heb וַיִּנָּחֵם יְהוָה *vayyinachem Adonai (YHWH)* ) of the evil intention towards His people.

32.15 Moses goes down to the camp, and is incandescent at the people's stupidity. He has the calf idol broken up and ground down, and the powder sprinkled on water which is drunk by the people as penance for their sin. He also breaks the stones of the testimony in anger when he sees the mess the people are in.

32.22 Aaron, taken to task by Moses, blames the people and their persuasiveness.

32.25 The people have got naked in this fracas, and have behaved shamefully.

32.26 Moses now takes drastic and violent action. He calls the Levites, whom we recall had been described by Israel in his final words about his sons as 'gruesome swords' (Gen.49.5) for their part in the revenge on the Shechemites, to take arms against their fellow-Israelites. The result is the death by sword of three thousand, a terrible outcome.

32.30 Moses now returns up the mountain to plead for the people and to obtain pardon (Heb אֶכְפְּרָה *akhaprah*, I will get cover) for their great sin.

32.33 The Lord does not overlook sin, however, and there is an epidemic which breaks out because of the evil they have done. It is a terrible outcome to what should have been a story of joy and relief.

33.1ff God now says He cannot travel with them, nor dwell among them, but will send an ambassador instead. The people are distraught, and go into mourning.

33.7 The tabernacle, which had been in the centre of the Israelite camp, is now pitched away out from them, and there is this melancholy scene of Moses going out from the pitched tents of the tribes to the tabernacle, and the people watching wistfully as the pillar-cloud of God's glory comes and meets with him, while they are bereft of His presence-face.

33.11 God communes face to face with Moses. The word face (Heb פָּנִים *panim*) is also the word for presence. Where God is, His face is. When Moses returns to the camp, Joshua lingers before God's face.

33.12 Moses now appeals to the Lord to come with them Himself, since Moses doesn't know whom the Lord intends to send. If Your face doesn't go with us, says Moses, don't take us any further.(v.15).

33.17 God again hears Moses' appeal, and says He will go with them. As a sign, Moses asks to see God's face. God says that would kill him, but God will show him his back, from a hiding place in the cliffs. (v.23)

34.1 God gets Moses to come up Sinai again and prepare two stones for God to reconstitute the covenant with Israel.

34.5 God now comes to Moses, and declares His name. This is a key moment in the story of Israel. This name is the essence, the sum of all that the person is, and it is for all time God's declaration of His nature.

34.6

*Adonai, Adonai, El Rachum veChanun,  
 Erekh apayim ve-rav chesed ve-emet  
 Notser chesed le-alaphim,  
 Noseh avon vapheshah ve-chat'ah  
 Ve-naqeh lo yenaqqeh,  
 Poqed avon avot al banim ve-al b'nei vanim  
 El shileyshim ve el-revayim*

'The LORD, the LORD, compassionate and gracious,  
 Slow in anger, great in covenant-obligation and integrity,  
 Maintaining covenant-obligation to thousands,  
 Forgiving failure and sin and waywardness,  
 But not (falsely) making innocent,  
 But allowing the sins of the fathers to affect the children  
 To the third and fourth generations.

There is so much in this revelation of God's name, that it merits a book in itself.  
 Compassionate – from the same root as the word for *womb*, *rachum* in Hebrew.  
 Gracious – *chanun*, from *chen*, favour.  
 Slow to anger – *erekh apaim* , literally, *long nosed* , or slow to smoulder.  
 Great in covenant-obligation and integrity – *rav chesed ve'emet*. John would use the Greek version of these words to describe Jesus Christ in John 1.14, *full of grace and truth*. (cf the Hebrew version of the New Testament at John 1.14, using the same words as here in Ex,34.)  
 Maintaining *chesed* obligation to thousands (multitudes.) The word *maintaining* in the Hebrew Bible is one of only two words with a larger letter, a capital, the other being the first word in the Bible, *be-reshit*, In the beginning.  
 Forgiving sin, but not declaring evil to be good. Heb *ve-naqeh lo yenaqqeh* , literally, not *innocentising* the guilty, whose sin will result in effects through the generations.

34.8 In response, Moses prostrates himself before the Lord, and repeats his prayer that God will forgive them and go with them. God says He will do amazing things for them and will fulfil the vow He made.

34.12ff God reiterates the covenant terms, warning of the snare of making covenants with the Canaanites.

34.26 From this obscure reference to not boiling a kid in its mother's milk comes the orthodox Jewish practice of never eating milk and meat together. Great lengths are gone to in Jewish households to keep separate pots and implements, and never to have milk and flesh together in the same meal.

34.28 Moses goes into a supernatural fast for six weeks with God as God gives him the *torah* which will be transmitted to Israel. So intense is this communion with the LORD, that when Moses comes down, he has become the *burning man*, his face literally shining with God's reflected glory.

34.33 So afraid were they of this sign, that they have Moses put on a covering, a veil to hide the light of God upon him. (compare this with Paul's references in 2 Corinthians 4 to the glory of God upon us who follow Jesus.)

### Day 32 Ex 35.4 – 39.1

35.4 A great offering is to be taken up for the materials to make the tabernacle and all the furnishings and robes and supplies. That the people are able to raise so much is an indication of how much they received from Egyptians on leaving their land.

35.10 All those who are 'wise in heart' (חַכְמֵי לֵב *chakham lev*) are to make the tabernacle – there is something very practical and skilled in the wisdom God has in mind.

35.21 It's worth noting that this was a *freewill* offering – only those whose hearts were stirred gave materials. God forced no one.

35.22 Men and women give into the fund, of their goods and their handiwork – the skilled women (wise-hearted again) spin cloth for the offering in v.25

35.30 Bezalel (see 31.1ff) is mentioned again as filled with the Spirit for this work of God.

God blesses the work of the hands of the craftspeople, and through them displays wisdom.

Note also, the predominant colours of the tabernacle are blue, red, purple and gold.

36.1 Along with Bezalel works Aholiab (אֲהִיאֵב *Ahaliabh* = my Father's tent ) with skill and practically outworked wisdom.

36.5,6 The people are bringing so much for the tabernacle and its accoutrements, that the craftsmen appeal for no more to be brought. Moses then calls on the people to stop bringing more – there is more than enough to complete the job. What a picture of the generous heart of God's people! And under the Old Covenant, as well.

For the rest of the chapter, and through chapters 37 and 38, the craftsmen with Bezalel and Aholiab carry out the Lord's instructions for the tabernacle to the letter, hence the repetition of the detail given earlier. (Compare these with chapters 25 to 31)

38.8 Worthy of note is the fact that the bronze washbasin, or laver was made from metal produced from the melting down of the looking-glasses of the Israeli women who gathered at the door of the tent of meeting. This must have been a particular sacrifice for women who would have had precious few luxuries in the wilderness, and is a sign of their devotion to the Lord. Also, each time the priests looked into the washbasin, they would see their faces reflected back at the place of cleansing, seeing who they really were in the highly-polished surface.

38.26 There is a census taken at this time, and as God's terms require, a tax is paid for each person, thus providing the silver for the bases in which the boards around the tent and the court were held upright and the hooks for the curtaining.

38.29 From the bronze collected, the sockets are made for the tent door, and the altar and its vessels.

### Day 33 Ex 39.2 – 40.35

39.2 The inventory of the tabernacle contents made by Bezalel, Aholiab and team continues in chapter 39. In v2 the ephod is referred to (Heb אֶפֹּד *ephod*) Above, under notes for chapter 28 this unusual item, whose derivation is uncertain, is shown as a kind of apron going over the shoulders of the priest, to which the breastplate of precious stones is then attached. Certainly, it is a textile object, being woven. How it would exactly have appeared is however a matter of some debate.

39.3 This was amazingly fine work – the gold beaten and then cut into threads to be sown into the garment – what a work of art and wisdom!

39.5 A belt or strap then goes around the waist of the priest to hold it together. (See picture at ch.28 above.)

39.10 The breastplate contained twelve precious stones engraved with the names of the twelve tribes engraved upon them. Each time the priest went into the holy place, he carried the tribes of Israel over his heart. (v.14)

39.22,23 Under the ephod was worn a blue robe, which was one piece of cloth, with a hole for the head in the middle, with a band so it wouldn't tear when it was put on. This had small balls of material, called pomegranates, round the hem, spaced alternately with tiny gold bells, so that wherever the priest went, he could be heard moving about as they touched each other. The priest could never hide away without being noticed!

39.30 Across his forehead, the priest wore a gold plate inscribed *Qodesh l'Adonai* (*YHWH*) (Heb קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה ) = Holy to the Lord; his mind was set apart for God, and, inscribed for all to see, whose he was. No other claimants could compete with the Lord who claimed his allegiance.

39.43 When everything has been finished, it is brought to Moses, who sees that it is all made in accordance with the Lord's design on Sinai, and therefore Moses blesses it, consecrating it to the Lord's service.

40.1 God now commissions the setting up of the tabernacle and its inauguration by Moses on the first day of the first month (Nisan, the month in which Passover falls.) Everything is to be set up (see the layout of the tabernacle above at Ex.25ff.)

40.9 Everything is anointed with the holy oil of anointing, as a sign of God's presence. Oil is the sign of the Spirit of God's coming.

40.12 Aaron and his sons are to be washed and anointed with oil and set apart for God's service.

40.17 The tabernacle was raised up on the first of Nisan in the second year of the Exodus from Egypt.

40.23 Bread is placed upon the table of the bread of the presence.

40.31 Hands and feet of the priests were washed at the washbasin (the laver).

40.34 When all is set up, God's glory, his weighty presence which changes the atmosphere around it into cloud, (Heb כבוד ) fills the tent.

40.35 So thick and heavy is this visible manifestation of God's weighty glory, that Moses cannot go into the tent to serve.

40.36,37 When the cloud lifted from the tent, the people followed it and dismantled everything and moved. As long as it stayed, they stayed. This is a people literally dependent on the moving or staying of God's personal glory.

40.38 The cloud (or fire by night) was visible by Israel all through their time in the desert, journeying to Canaan. With this impression of God dwelling among His people, the book of Exodus ends.