

Pentateuch 15

Tabernacle, life with God Part 1: Exodus 25-40

Constructing the House of God

- I. “How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, And the swallow a nest for herself, Where she may lay her young— Even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, My King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; They will still be praising You. Selah” (Psalm 84:1–4, NKJV)
 - A. Revelation 21:9
 1. Purpose of these descriptions?
 2. Modern Sensibilities?
- II. Reminder of Goal
 - A. (Exod. 25:8; 29:45–46)
- III. The Tabernacle as Portable Mountain
 - A. Sinai has been shown to be the major emphasis in the narrative.
 1. Up through the waters to the dwelling place of God.
 2. Encamp to Sinai, Encamp after Sinai
 - B. However, notice how much attention is simultaneously given to the tabernacle.
 1. virtually every law and commandment listed from Exodus 25 until the consecration of the tabernacle in Leviticus 10 pertain directly to the sanctuary.
 2. Exodus 25–31 is taken up entirely with the instructions for the tabernacle,
 3. chapters 35–40 with the construction of the tabernacle
 4. Numbers 1–10 may be summed up adequately within the context of preparations for dismantling the tabernacle before marching onward
 - C. Transition from Mountaintop to Tent
 1. While God’s arrival at Sinai had been consistently described by the verb ‘descended’ (yārad) throughout chapter 19, in 24:16 we read rather that God’s glory ‘dwelled’ (from šākan) upon the mountain, precisely the mode of divine Presence that will be continued through the tabernacle, as emphasized by its name: miškān. This key verb is then employed to frame the section on tabernacle instructions, transforming Exodus 24:16 into something of a preface to the tabernacle cultus:
 - a) Let them make for me a sanctuary so I may dwell [šākantî] among them. (Exod. 25:8)
 - b) I will dwell [šākantî] among the sons of Israel, and will be their God. They shall know that I am YHWH their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt for the purpose that I may dwell [lēšākēnî] among them. I am YHWH their God. (Exod. 29:45–46) The purpose of the tabernacle, then, will be to perpetuate the Sinai experience of engagement with God—YHWH’s dwelling in the midst of Israel being the very essence of the covenant ((L. Michael Morales, 96).

D. Links between Tabernacle and Mountain

1. first in relation to their tripartite divisions whereby the holy of holies (and the high priest's sole access) corresponds to the summit, the holy place (accessed by the priesthood) corresponds to the second zone partway up the mountain, and the outer court with the altar (accessed by the people) corresponds to the base of the mountain, also with an altar.
2. Secondly, aside from the districts of holiness common to both Sinai and the tabernacle, each one also becomes the locus of divine speech:
 - a) And YHWH called to him [Moses] from the mountain [min-hāhār], saying ... (Exod. 19:3)
 - b) And YHWH called to Moses ... from the tent of meeting [mē'ōhel mō'ēd], saying ... (Lev. 1:1)
 - c) Relevant to this point, the entire book of Leviticus is woven together by divine speeches proceeding from within the veil of the holy of holies.
3. A third similarity shared by Sinai and the tabernacle is in relation to the tablets of the law, which are given from the summit of Sinai and are then stored in the ark within the holy of holies—the summit's typological counterpart.
4. Fourthly, both the mountain and the tabernacle have altars, so that God is approached through the cultic means of sacrifice. (L. Michael Morales, 96–97).
5. Fifthly, the presence of YHWH Himself.
 - a) Exodus 24:15-16
 - b) Exodus 40:34

E. Reliving the Mountain

1. Ark–Exodus 25:21–22:
2. Altar of Incense–
 - a) Exod. 24:15–18 [cloud=anan]
 - b) Exod. 30:6; Lev. 16:12–13 [smoke=anan]
3. Altar of Burnt Offerings
 - a) Exodus 24:17
 - b) Within the context of the covenant ceremony this description of YHWH's glory would naturally correspond to the fire of sacrifice since the ritual entailed Moses setting up twelve pillars around an altar to symbolize the twelve tribes surrounding Sinai—that is, verse 17 conveys that Mount Sinai appeared as a huge altar, with YHWH's Presence on the summit corresponding to the consuming fire. Again, however, the reverse is more to the point: the altar represents the mountain of God ablaze with his fiery Presence. (L. Michael Morales, 100).