

Come Follow Me April 25-May 1

Exodus 24; 31–34

“My Presence Shall Go with Thee”

Not every meaningful principle in the scriptures can be highlighted in these outlines. Listen to the Spirit to help you focus on the truths you need.

Record Your Impressions

There was reason to be hopeful that the children of Israel would remain true to God after He revealed His law to them (see [Exodus 20–23](#)). Even though they had murmured and wavered in the past, when Moses read the law at the foot of Mount Sinai, they made this covenant: “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient” ([Exodus 24:7](#)). God then called Moses onto the mountain, telling him to build a tabernacle so “that I may dwell among them” ([Exodus 25:8](#); see [chapters 25–30](#)).

But while Moses was at the top of the mountain learning how the Israelites could have God’s presence among them, the Israelites were at the bottom of the mountain making a golden idol to worship instead. They had just promised to “have no other gods,” yet they “turned aside quickly” from God’s commandments ([Exodus 20:3](#); [32:8](#); see also [Exodus 24:3](#)). It was a surprising turn, but we know from experience that faith and commitment can sometimes be overcome by impatience, fear, or doubt. As we seek the Lord’s presence in our lives, it is encouraging to know that the Lord did not give up on ancient Israel and He will not give up on us—for He is “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” ([Exodus 34:6](#)).

(12-1) Introduction

We saw in [last week’s chapters] how the Lord began the revelation of the law for Israel with the ten principles that summarized the way in which men are to deal with God, with their families, and with their fellow men. Immediately after the Ten

Commandments, the Lord revealed a whole series of laws and commandments which we now call the Mosaic law.

It is unfortunate that many people, some even in the Church, think of the Mosaic law as a substitute for the higher law of the gospel. We call it a lesser law, and so it was, if the word *lesser* is used in the sense of progressive steps. But some people assume that *lesser* means of lower importance and significance, or of a lesser level of truth and righteousness. Such is not the case. Note what other scriptures teach about the law:

D&C 84:23–27

The law of Moses was a “preparatory gospel” that included the principles of repentance, baptism, remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments.

Mosiah 13:29–30

It was a “very strict law” of “performances and ordinances” designed to keep the Israelites “in remembrance of God and their duty towards him.”

Jarom 1:11; Mosiah 3:14–15; 13:31; 16:14; Alma 25:15; 34:14

The law of Moses was highly symbolic, being filled with types and shadows, all of which pointed toward Christ and His future Atonement.

JST, Galatians 3:8, 19

The law of Moses was added to the gospel, not given as a substitute for it.

Galatians 3:23–24

The law of Moses was given as a schoolmaster or tutor to bring Israel to Christ.

Alma 25:16; Revelation 19:10

The law of Moses is understood through the “spirit of prophecy” or “a testimony of Jesus.”

In summary, when you study the law of Moses you can expect to find (1) a witness of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice and (2) gospel principles illustrated in the laws given. Many of the laws may no longer be required of the Saints, but the principles taught are eternal and will never be set aside. For example, the practice of blood sacrifice was fulfilled when Jesus came and the tokens of the sacrament were given in place of the old law. But the principle was as true when the tokens were animals offered on the altar as it is now when the tokens are bread and water blessed by the priesthood. The eternal principle is that only in the partaking of the Lamb’s atoning sacrifice are we able to overcome and receive a forgiveness for our sins.

Two other characteristics of the Mosaic law are important for your understanding before you begin to study the actual laws. First, much of the Mosaic code is *case law*. One scholar explained that the law does two things:

“In order to understand Biblical law, it is necessary to understand also certain basic characteristics of that law. *First*, certain broad premises or principles are declared. These are declarations of basic law. The Ten Commandments give us such declarations. The Ten Commandments are not therefore laws among laws, but are the basic laws, of which the various laws are specific examples. An example of such a basic law is Exodus 20:15 (Deut. 5:19), ‘Thou shalt not steal.’ ...

“With this in mind, that the law, *first*, lays down broad and basic principles, let us examine a *second* characteristic of Biblical law, namely, that the major portion of the law is *case law*, i.e., the illustration of the basic principle in terms of specific cases. These specific cases are often illustrations of the extent of the application of the law; that is, by citing a minimal type of case, the necessary jurisdictions of the law are revealed. ...

“The law, then, *first* asserts principles, *second*, it cites cases to develop the implications of those principles, and, *third*, the law has as its purpose and direction *the restitution of God’s order.*” (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 10–12.)

We shall see numerous examples of case law as we study the Mosaic code.

Second, the law is primarily negative. Eight of the Ten Commandments and many of the other laws deal with what ought *not* to be done rather than with what should be done. Many today view negative laws with distaste. They feel they are very restrictive, and they often prefer positive laws which, by assuring our rights, appear to grant freedom. The appearance, however, is false. God gave the laws to Israel not to shackle them but to guarantee the greatest individual freedom. Explaining how this is so, one scholar stated:

“A *negative* concept of law confers a double benefit: first, it is practical, in that a negative concept of law deals realistically with a particular evil. It states, ‘Thou shalt not steal,’ or, ‘Thou shalt not bear false witness.’ A negative statement thus deals with a particular evil directly and plainly: it prohibits it, makes it illegal. The law thus has a *modest* function; *the law is limited, and therefore the state is limited.* The state, as the enforcing agency, is limited to dealing with evil, not controlling all men.

“*Second*, and directly related to this first point, a *negative concept of law insures liberty*: except for the prohibited areas, all of man’s life is beyond the law, and the law is of necessity indifferent to it. If the commandment says, ‘Thou shalt not steal,’ it means that the law can only govern theft: it cannot govern or control honestly acquired property. When the law prohibits blasphemy and false witness, it guarantees that all other forms of speech have their liberty. *The negativity of the law is the preservation of the positive life and freedom of man.*” (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 101–2.)

Remember that in God’s preface to the Ten Commandments He said, “I am the Lord thy God, *which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*” (Exodus 20:2; emphasis added). In saying this, Jehovah reminded Israel that the very purpose of the law was to make them free and keep them free.

EXODUS CHAPTER 24

Israel accepts the word of the Lord by covenant—Moses sprinkles the blood of the covenant—He, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel see God—The Lord calls Moses on to the mount to receive the tables of stone and commandments.

1 And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, ^aNadab, and Abihu, and ^bseventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.

2 And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him.

3 ¶ And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the ^judgments: and all the people answered with one ^voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.

4 And Moses ^wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an ^altar ^under the hill, and twelve ^pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

5 And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed ^peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD.

6 And Moses took half of the ^blood, and put *it* in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

7 And he took the book of the ^covenant, and ^read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be ^obedient.

8 And Moses took the ^blood, and ^sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the ^blood of the ^covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

(12-13) Exodus 24:1–8. Before Moses Ever Went into the Mount, Israel Was Instructed in the Law and Covenanted to Obey It

“The people, in anticipation of having Moses and the seventy special witnesses go into the presence of the Lord, were instructed in the laws. They accepted them with a covenant to keep them, accepted a copy of them as binding, and their covenants were sanctified by a sacrifice. Notice the promise the people made: ‘All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.’” (Rasmussen, Introduction to the Old Testament, 1:88–89.)

The instructions Israel received before Moses went up to Mount Sinai were kept in the “book of the covenant” (v. 7):

“But as no covenant was considered to be ratified and *binding* til a sacrifice had been offered on the occasion, hence the necessity of the sacrifices mentioned here.

“*Half of the blood being sprinkled on the altar, and half of it sprinkled on the people, showed that both God and they were mutually bound by this covenant. God was bound to the*

people to support, defend, and save them; the people were bound to God to fear, love, and serve him.” (Clarke, Bible Commentary, 1:425.)

The instructions given to Israel ensured that she would not be forced into a relationship she did not understand or want. Once Israel expressed her willingness to receive the law and covenanted to live it, Moses was free to act for Israel in the presence of the Lord.

9 ¶ Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel:

10 And they saw the God of Israel: and *there was* under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in *his* clearness.

11 And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

Exodus 24:1–11

My covenants show my willingness to obey God’s law.

As you read in [Exodus 24:3–8](#) about the Israelites covenanting to obey God’s law, your thoughts may turn to the covenants you have made with God. Israel’s covenant included rituals that are different from what God requires today, but you may notice some similarities, especially if you consider the eternal truths symbolized by these rituals.

For example, [verses 4, 5, and 8](#) mention an altar, animal sacrifices, and blood. What could these things represent, and how do they relate to your covenants? How can your covenants help you do “all that the Lord hath said”? ([verse 7](#)).

See also [Moses 5:4–9](#); Becky Craven, “[Careful versus Casual](#),” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2019, 9–11.

12 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.

13 And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God.

14 And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur *are* with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.

15 And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.

16 And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

17 And the sight of the glory of the LORD *was* like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

18 And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount ⁴forty days and forty nights.

EXODUS CHAPTER 31

Artisans are inspired in building and furnishing the tabernacle — Israel is commanded to keep the Lord's Sabbaths — The death penalty is decreed for Sabbath desecration — Moses receives the stone tablets.

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 See, I have called by name ⁴Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:

3 And I have filled him with the ⁴spirit of God, in ⁴wisdom, and in understanding, and in ⁴knowledge, and in all manner of ⁴workmanship,

4 To devise ⁴cunning works, to work in ⁴gold, and in silver, and in brass,

5 And in ⁴cutting of stones, to set *them*, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.

6 And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are ⁴wise hearted I have put ⁴wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee;

(12-16) Exodus 31

The Lord works through talented individuals to bring about His purposes (see [vv. 1-6](#)).

7 The ⁴tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that *is* thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle,

8 And the table and ⁴his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense,

9 And the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot,

10 And the ⁴cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office,

11 And the ⁴anointing oil, and sweet ⁴incense for the holy *place*: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.

12 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my ⁴sabbaths ye shall keep: for it *is* a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that *ye* may know that *I am* the LORD that doth sanctify you.

14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it *is* ⁴holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to ⁴death: for whosoever doeth *any* work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh *is* the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth *any* work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, *for* a perpetual covenant.

17 It *is* a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

18 ¶ And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

Exodus 32–34

Sin is turning away from God, but He offers a way back.

By pondering how the Israelites so quickly “corrupted themselves” (Exodus 32:7) by breaking their covenants, we can avoid similar mistakes. As you read Exodus 32:1–8, try to put yourself in the Israelites’ place—you’re in the wilderness, Moses has been gone for 40 days, you don’t know if or when he will come back, and a confrontation with the Canaanites over the promised land is in your future (see also Exodus 23:22–31). Why do you think the Israelites wanted a golden idol? Why was the Israelites’ sin so serious? These verses might prompt you to ponder ways you might be tempted to put your trust in someone or something other than the Savior. Is there anything you feel inspired to do so that you can more completely put God first in your life? What inspires you about Moses’s plea to the Lord in Exodus 33:11–17?

While the Israelites’ sin was serious, this story also includes a message of God’s mercy and forgiveness. What does Exodus 34:1–10 teach you about the Savior? How do Moses’s actions on behalf of the Israelites remind you of what Jesus Christ did for all people? (see Exodus 32:30–32; Mosiah 14:4–8; 15:9; Doctrine and Covenants 45:3–5).

EXODUS CHAPTER 32

Aaron makes a golden calf, which Israel worships—Moses serves as a mediator between God and rebellious Israel—Moses breaks the tablets of stone—The Levites slay about 3,000 rebels—Moses pleads and intercedes for the people.

1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* unto me.

3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* unto Aaron.

4 And he received *them* at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

5 And when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To-morrow *is* a feast to the LORD.

6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

(12-17) Exodus 32:1–6. Why Did the Israelites Desire to Worship a Gold Calf?

“The whole of this is a most strange and unaccountable transaction. Was it possible that the people could have so soon lost sight of the wonderful manifestations of God upon the mount? Was it possible that Aaron could have imagined that he could make any god that could help them? And yet it does not appear that he ever remonstrated with the people! Possibly he only intended to make them some *symbolical* representation of the Divine power and energy, that might be as evident to them as the pillar of cloud and fire had been, and to which God might attach an always present energy and influence; or in requiring them to sacrifice their *ornaments*, he might have supposed they would have desisted from urging their request: but all this is mere conjecture, with very little probability to support it. It must however be granted that Aaron does not appear to have even designed a worship that should *supersede* the worship of the Most High; hence we find him making proclamation, *To-morrow is a feast to the LORD* [Jehovah], and we find farther that some of the proper rites of the true worship were observed on this occasion, for they brought *burnt-offerings* and *peace-offerings*, ver. 6, 7: hence it is evident he intended that the true God should be the *object* of their worship, though he permitted and even encouraged them to offer this worship through an idolatrous medium, *the molten calf*.” (Clarke, Bible Commentary, 1:463–64.)

7 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*:

8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people:

10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

11 And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit *it* for ever.

14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

(12-18) Exodus 32:9–14. Was God Really Going to Destroy the Israelites, and Did He “Repent of the Evil”?

The Joseph Smith Translation corrects this verse to show that Moses said: “Turn from thy fierce wrath. *Thy people will repent of this evil; therefore come thou not out against them.*” Then the Prophet corrected verse 14 to clearly show the condition for the Lord’s sparing the people: “And the Lord said unto Moses, if they will repent of the evil which they have done, I will spare them, and turn away my fierce wrath; but, behold, thou shalt execute judgment upon all that will not repent of this evil this day. Therefore, see thou do this thing that I have commanded thee, or I will execute all that which I had thought to do unto my people.”

15 ¶ And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony *were* in his hand: the tables *were* written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other *were* they written.

16 And the tables *were* the work of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, *There is* a noise of war in the camp.

18 And he said, *It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.*

19 ¶ And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

20 And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder, and strawed *it* upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink *of it*.

21 And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

22 And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they *are* set on mischief.

23 For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

24 And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break *it* off. So they gave *it* me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

25 ¶ And when Moses saw that the people *were* naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto *their* shame among their enemies:)

26 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who *is* on the LORD's side? *let him come* unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

27 And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, *and* go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

28 And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

29 For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

30 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

(12-20) Exodus 32:25–30

“Moses sought out those who were ‘on the Lord’s side’ from those whom Aaron had made ‘naked.’ (The Hebrew word used here may mean either ‘bare, uncovered’ or ‘unruly, broken loose.’) ‘Naked’ can be understood in the same sense as when Adam was ashamed and hid himself from God because he was naked. The expression can also mean ‘exposed in guilt before God’s wrath.’ Compare the feeling of Alma as he described such exposure, in [Alma 36:14–22](#). On the other hand, that Israel had ‘broken loose’ and become ‘unruly’ under Aaron’s lead was obviously true. Both conditions would be to the shame of a people who were supposed to be religious.” (Rasmussen, Introduction to the Old Testament, 1:93.)

Some have wondered why Aaron, who played a key role in the golden calf episode, came out with no condemnation. Though it is not recorded in Exodus, Moses later indicated that Aaron also was nearly destroyed and was saved only through Moses’ intercession in his behalf (see [Deuteronomy 9:20](#)).

31 And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

33 And the LORD said unto Moses, “Whosoever hath ^bsinned against me, him will I ^cblot out of my ^abook.

34 Therefore now go, ^alead the people unto *the place* of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine ^bAngel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

35 And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

(12-19) Exodus 32:15–35. Moses, the Mediator

Moses’ role in the whole event is significant. In his great vision of the Lord, Moses was told that he was “in the similitude” of the Only Begotten Son (Moses 1:6). That similitude is shown clearly here. As the people faced destruction because of their wickedness, Moses became their mediator with God. He pleaded their cause and even offered his own life to appease the divine justice (see Exodus 32:31–32). After the constant murmuring and rebellion of the people, any usual leader would likely have said, “Yes, they are a wicked people. Go ahead and destroy them.” But Moses, like Christ whom he emulated, loved his people in spite of their hardheartedness and wickedness. He interceded in their behalf and saved them, but only on the condition of their repentance.

EXODUS CHAPTER 33

The Lord promises to be with Israel and drive out the people of the land—The tabernacle of the congregation is moved away from the camp—The Lord speaks to Moses face to face in the tabernacle—Later, Moses sees the glory of God but not His face.

1 And the LORD said unto Moses, “Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy ^bseed will I give it:

2 And I will send an ^aangel before thee; and I will drive out the ^bCanaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite:

3 Unto a land ^aflowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou *art* a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way.

(12-21) Exodus 33:1–3

For a modern parallel to this rebuke, see Doctrine and Covenants 103:15–20.

D&C 103:15-20

15 Behold, I say unto you, the “redemption of Zion must needs come by power;

16 Therefore, I will raise up unto my people a man, who shall ^alead them like as Moses led the children of Israel.

17 For ye are the children of Israel, and of the ^aseed of Abraham, and ye must needs be ^bled out of ^bbondage by power, and with a stretched-out arm.

18 And as your fathers were ^aled at the first, even so shall the redemption of Zion be.

19 Therefore, let not your hearts faint, for I say not unto you as I said unto your fathers: Mine ^aangel shall go up before you, but not my ^bpresence.

20 But I say unto you: Mine ^aangels shall go up before you, and also my ^bpresence, and in time ye shall ^cpossess the goodly land.

4 ¶ And when the people heard these evil tidings, they ^amourned: and no man did put on him his ^bornaments.

5 For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel,

Ye *are* a ^astiffnecked people: ^aI will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.

6 And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.

7 And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the ^aTabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, *that* every one which sought the LORD went out unto the ^btabernacle of the congregation, which *was* without the camp.

(12-22) Exodus 33:4–7. What Was the Tabernacle That Moses Pitched outside the Camp?

“Moses then took a tent, and pitched it outside the camp, at some distance off, and called it ‘*tent of meeting*.’ The ‘tent’ is neither the sanctuary of the tabernacle described in [Exodus 25–30], which was not made till after the perfect restoration of the covenant [Exodus 35–40], nor another sanctuary that had come down from their forefathers and was used before the tabernacle was built, ... but a tent belonging to Moses, which was made into a temporary sanctuary by the fact that the pillar of cloud came down upon it, and Jehovah talked with Moses there, and which was called by the same name as the tabernacle, ... because Jehovah revealed Himself there, and every one who sought Him had to go to this tent outside the camp.” (Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary, 1:2:233–34.)

8 And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, *that* all the people rose up, and stood every man *at* his ^atent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle.

9 And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the ^acloudy pillar descended, and stood *at* the door of the tabernacle, and *the LORD* talked with Moses.

10 And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand *at* the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man *in* his tent door.

11 And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

12 ¶ And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.

13 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation *is* thy people.

14 And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest.

15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence.

16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? *is it* not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that *are* upon the face of the earth.

17 And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

21 And the LORD said, Behold, *there is* a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

22 And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:

23 And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

(12-23) Exodus 33:19–23. Is It Possible for Anyone to See the Face of God and Live?

There is obviously something wrong with Exodus 33:20, for verse 11 of this same chapter clearly says, “The Lord spake unto Moses *face to face*, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (emphasis added). Also, Exodus 24:9–11 records that Moses and seventy of the elders of Israel saw God. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith commented on the problem in Exodus 33:20 and in John 1:18 in this way:

“There are too many passages which declare very definitely that God did appear, ‘face to face,’ with his ancient servants. Therefore, passages which declare that no man has seen him, must be in error. For instance, the passage in John 1:18, ... is likely due to the fact that a translator in more recent years did not believe that God was a Personage and

therefore could not be seen. This notion has come down to us since the introduction of the Athanasian Creed in 325 A.D. The Prophet Joseph Smith has given us a correction of this passage as follows:

“And no man hath seen God at any time, except he hath borne record of the Son; for except it is through him no man can be saved’ [JST, John 1:19].

“Again in 1 John 4:12, the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith the following correction:

“No man hath seen God at any time, except them who believe. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfect in us.’

“Now let us consider other verses from John’s Gospel ... :

“It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

“Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.’ [John 6:45–46].

“If we were not aware of the fact that mistranslations exist, it would appear that our Savior contradicted himself. The latter verse (John 6:46) does not harmonize with John 1:18.

“We read that Abraham talked with God face to face, and he also talked with Enoch and others. The modern world, however, will have none of it and have rejected the living God for one who cannot be seen or heard.” (Answers to Gospel Questions, 2:162–63.)

Thus, it is clear that Joseph Smith was inspired when he corrected this verse to read:

“And he said unto Moses, Thou canst not see my face at this time, lest mine anger be kindled against thee also, and I destroy thee, and thy people; for there shall no man among them see me at this time, and live, for they are exceeding sinful. And no sinful man hath at any time, neither shall there be any sinful man at any time, that shall see my face and live.” (JST, Exodus 33:20.)

EXODUS CHAPTER 34

Moses hews new tables of stone—He goes up into Mount Sinai for forty days—The Lord proclaims His name and attributes and reveals His law—He makes another covenant with Israel—The skin of Moses’ face shines, and he wears a veil.

1 And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon *these* tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.
2 And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount.

Joseph Smith Translation, Exodus 34:1–2 (in the Bible appendix)

What was the difference between the two sets of stone tables Moses made?

When Moses came down from the mountain, he brought the law written on stone tables. After finding that the Israelites had broken their covenant, Moses broke the tables (see [Exodus 31:18](#); [32:19](#)). Later, God commanded Moses to make another set of stone tables and take them back to the mountain (see [Exodus 34:1–4](#)). [Joseph Smith Translation, Exodus 34:1–2 \(in the Bible appendix\)](#) clarifies that the first set of stone tables included the ordinances of God’s “holy order,” or the Melchizedek Priesthood. The second set included “the law of a carnal commandment.” This was a lesser law administered by the “lesser priesthood” (see [Doctrine and Covenants 84:17–27](#)), which was meant to prepare the Israelites for the higher law and higher priesthood so they could more fully enter into God’s presence.

3 And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.

4 ¶ And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.

(12-24) Exodus 34:1–4. Did Both Sets of Tablets Contain the Same Material?

Before this question can be fully answered, one must carefully examine what was on the first plates. One Bible scholar offered this analysis:

“The following is a general view of this subject. In [[Exodus 20](#)] the ten commandments are given; and at the same time various *political* and *ecclesiastical statutes*, which are detailed in chapters [[21–23](#)]. To receive these, Moses had *drawn near unto the thick darkness where God was*, [[20:21](#)], and having received them he came again with them to the people, according to their request before expressed, [ver. 19](#): *Speak thou with us— but let not the Lord speak with us, lest we die*, for they had been terrified by the manner in which God had uttered the ten commandments; see [ver. 18](#). After this Moses, with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and the seventy elders, went up to the mountain; and on his return he announced all these laws unto the people, [[24:1](#)], &c., and they promised obedience. Still there is no word of the *tables of stone*. Then he wrote all in a book, [[24:4](#)], which was called the book of the covenant, [ver. 7](#). After this there was a second going up of Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders, [[24:9](#)], when that glorious discovery of God mentioned in [verses 10 and 11](#) of the same chapter took place. After *their* coming down Moses is again commanded to go up; and God promises to give him tables of stone, containing a *law* and *precepts*, [ver. 12](#). This is the first place these tables of stone are mentioned; and thus it appears that the *ten commandments*, and several other precepts, were given to and accepted by the people, and the covenant

sacrifice offered, [24:5], before the *tables of stone* were either written or mentioned.' It is very likely that the commandments, laws, &c., were first published by the Lord in the hearing of the people; repeated afterwards by Moses; and the *ten words* or *commandments*, containing the sum and substance of the whole, afterwards written on the first tables of stone, to be kept for a record in the ark." (Clarke, Bible Commentary, 1:474.)

This analysis would answer a frequently asked question, How did the Lord put the whole law of Moses on two tablets? The tablets, it seems, contained only the divine summary called the Ten Commandments. Joseph Smith added additional information when he reworked the first two verses of this chapter:

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two other tables of stone, like unto the first, and I will write upon them also, the words of the law, according as they were written at the first on the tables which thou brakest; but it shall not be according to the first, for I will take away the priesthood out of their midst; therefore my holy order, and the ordinances thereof, shall not go before them; for my presence shall not go up in their midst, lest I destroy them.

"But I will give unto them the law as at the first, but it shall be after the law of a carnal commandment; for I have sworn in my wrath, that they shall not enter into my presence, into my rest, in the days of their pilgrimage. Therefore do as I have commanded thee, and be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me, in the top of the mount." (JST, Exodus 34:1-2.)

At first reading, this passage may sound contradictory. The Lord says He will write on the second tablets "according as they were written at the first on the tables which thou brakest" (v. 1) but then He says, "but *it* shall not be according to the first" (v. 1; emphasis added). The problem lies in determining what "it" refers to: the writing on the tablets, or the new order of things introduced because of the rebellion of Israel. The information following the "it" seems to refer to the new order and not the new writings. But the Joseph Smith Translation of Deuteronomy 10:2 makes it clear that the two sets of plates contained the same thing, with one exception:

And I will write on the tables the words that were on the first tables, which thou brakest, *save the words of the everlasting covenant of the holy priesthood*, and thou shalt put them in the ark" (JST, Deuteronomy 10:2; emphasis added).

5 And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD,
The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and
truth,
7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and
that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the
children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*.
8 And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.
9 And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee,
go among us; for it *is* a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and
take us for thine inheritance.
10 ¶ And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels,
such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among
which thou *art* shall see the work of the LORD: for it *is* a terrible thing that I will do with
thee.
11 Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee
the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and
the Jebusite.
12 Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land
whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:
13 But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:
14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose
name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God:
15 Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go
a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and
thou eat of his sacrifice;
16 And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring
after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.
17 Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.
18 ¶ The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat
unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in
the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt.
19 All that openeth the matrix *is* mine; and every firstling among thy cattle, *whether* ox
or sheep, *that is male*.
20 But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem *him* not,
then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And
none shall appear before me empty.
21 ¶ Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time
and in harvest thou shalt rest.
22 ¶ And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and
the feast of ingathering at the year's end.

23 ¶ Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.

24 For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year.

25 Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning.

26 The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

27 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.

28 And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

29 ¶ And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.

30 And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.

31 And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them.

32 And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai.

33 And *till* Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

34 But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel *that* which he was commanded.

35 And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

(12-25) Exodus 34:29–35. What Is the Significance of the Radiance Moses Exhibited or the Veil He Wore?

“After such prolonged time and such experiences in God's presence, it is no wonder that Moses' face shone with divine glory when he returned, and the people fell back in fear of him. This phenomenon of light radiating from heavenly beings and earthly beings who are under heavenly influence is not unique here. Compare the descriptions of the Apostles on the day of pentecost, when 'tongues of cloven fire' radiated from them (Acts 2:3).

“The Hebrew word here rendered 'shone' is *qaran*, a denominative verb from a noun meaning 'horn,' denominating radial beams of light, like the 'horns' or rays of morning

seen over the horizon before the sun rises. From this phenomenon, the Arabs call the sun at its rising a 'gazelle.' (A mistranslation from Hebrew to Latin caused Michelangelo to put actual horns on the head of his heroic statue of Moses!)” (Rasmussen, Introduction to the Old Testament, 1:95.)

Points to Ponder

(12-26) Ancient Israel was made to understand clearly that the earth was the Lord's. He is its Sovereign and King. As such, He not only can dictate its laws but establish peoples on its lands. The Book of Mormon joins with the Bible in witnessing this fact. Pause for a moment to consider these scriptures: [1 Nephi 17:36–39](#); [2 Nephi 1:7](#); [Deuteronomy 4:20, 37–38](#).

From these scriptures you can see that a nation's right to land is guaranteed only by obedience to the laws of Him whose land it is. Though man was given dominion over the earth through Adam, that dominion was under God. Therefore, man is responsible to set up God's laws and establish His order. Since that is the case, consider these questions: Over whom do God's laws extend? Is anyone excluded? Does violation of God's laws between consenting adults (a popular phrase in today's world) nullify the law? Is there such a thing as a sin that hurts only the individual? How is any sin a violation of God's order? How are all sins against God even if they seem to hurt no one else? How should we answer the person who says, "It's my life; I can live it as I choose"?

(12-27) Read again carefully [Doctrine and Covenants 84:23–27](#); [Mosiah 13:29–30](#); [JST, Exodus 34:1–2](#) (see Reading 12-24); and [Alma 25:15–16](#). Now answer the following questions:

1. Why were the ancient Israelites given this stricter law?
2. What could they have enjoyed if it had not been for their wickedness?
3. If they had been obedient to the law given them, what would have been the results?
4. Are there any members of the Church today who are in a condition similar to that of the ancient Israelites?
5. Of what value, then, is a study of the law of Moses to a modern Latter-day Saint?

Ideas for Family Scripture Study and Home Evening

[Exodus 31:12–13, 16–17](#).

After reading these verses, perhaps your family could discuss President Russell M. Nelson’s question about our behavior on the Sabbath: “What sign will you give to the Lord to show your love for Him?” (“[The Sabbath Is a Delight](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 130). Your family could make some signs to place around your home to remind you how you will show love for the Lord on the Sabbath. (See also the video collection “[Sabbath Day—At Home](#)” [ChurchofJesusChrist.org].)

To help your family discuss how the Israelites turned away from God, consider creating a path on the floor (or find one near your home). While walking on the path, family members could talk about temptations we face to turn aside “out of the way which [the Lord] commanded.” How can we remain on the path? If we have strayed, how can we return to it? How does the Savior help us?

[Exodus 32:26.](#)

After the Israelites were found worshipping an idol, Moses asked, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” How do we show we are on the Lord’s side?

[Exodus 33:14–15.](#)

Family members could share experiences when they have felt what God promised Moses: “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” You could sing a hymn about our dependence on God, such as “[Abide with Me!](#)” (*Hymns*, no. 166).

For more ideas for teaching children, see [this week’s outline](#) in *Come, Follow Me—For Primary*.

Suggested song: “[Who’s on the Lord’s Side?](#)” *Hymns*, no. 260.



Worship of the Calf, by W. C. Simmonds