

Ki Thissa Exodus - Shemoth (30.11-34.35)

Moses is with God on Mount Sinai for forty days receiving God's instructions about building a moveable Sanctuary. God said to Moses, "Take a Census and count the Israelites. Count each man over 20. Each man, rich or poor, shall give a half-shekel for the Sanctuary and to atone to God for life. For outside the Communion Tent, make a copper washstand and fill it with water. Aaron and his son's must wash their hands and feet before making a fire offering. Also, combine the finest fragrances and oil to make sacred anointing oil. Sprinkle everything to make holy all that pertains Divine service, including the Tabernacle Tent, the Ark of God's Testimony, and the priests. Have a master perfumer make a holy incense to place before the Ark where we communicate. It shall be holy of holies. I have selected Bezazel and filled him with Divine spirit, wisdom, understanding, knowledge and talent. He will oversee the building and be assisted by Oholiav. I have placed wisdom in the hearts of talented people. Six days you may work but the seventh is My Sabbath, a holy day of rest.

At the same time, the Israelites began to be fear Moses wouldn't return. The people gathered against Aaron saying "Make us a god since we do not know what happened to Moses." Aaron told the people to give him their gold earrings. He melted the earrings and the gold molded into a golden calf. The Israelites said, "This is the god, O Israel, which brought us out of the land of Egypt."

God was furious at the Israelites. "Quick Moses. Go to the people. They have turned against Me and become corrupted and made a golden calf to be their god. I will destroy them." Moses pleaded for God to withdraw his anger and God relented so he ran down the mountain. When Moses saw the golden calf, he threw the Tablets down in anger and shattered them. Then he took their golden calf, burned it into a powder, put it in water and made the Israelites drink it.

Moses asked Aaron what happened, and Aaron said, "Please do not be angry. You know the evil tendencies of the people. They were afraid you wouldn't return and wanted a leader. I responded with 'Who has gold?' They took jewelry off, gave it to me and I threw it into the fire. Out came this calf." Moses realized the people had been restrained by Aaron and shouted, "Whoever is for God come outside the camp." The Levites gathered around Moses and did as God said and faithfully killed over 30,000 idolaters.

Outside the camp, Moses said to the Israelites, "You have sinned a great sin and I must ask God for forgiveness." After listening to Moses, God said, "I will blot out from My book whoever has sinned against Me!" God then struck the people with a plague. God said to Moses, "Now take the remaining Israelites to the land I promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I will send an angel to lead you and drive out your enemies. You will go to this land flowing with milk and honey but I will not go with you for you are a stubborn people and I may destroy you along the way." Learning this, the people mourned and took off their jewelry.

Moses set up his tent outside the camp and called it the Meeting Tent. Later, whoever sought God would go there. Whenever Moses went out to the Tent, all the people would rise and each person would stand near his own tent, gazing at Moses entered. Then as a pillar of cloud would descend and God would speak to Moses, the people would rise and bow down at the entrance of the tent.

Moses asked God, "Please let me see You." God answered, "I have singled you out by Name but you cannot see My face for no human may see Me and live. Now carve two stone tablets, just like the first ones. I will write on them the same words as on the ones you broke." Moses does and goes up the mountain.

With Moses protected in a crevice, God passed by and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, God, Merciful and Gracious, Slow to Anger, and Abundant in Goodness and Truth, extending Mercy unto the thousandth generation, Forgiving Wrongdoing, Transgression and Sin, but that will by no means clear the guilty, but keeps in mind the sins of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and unto the fourth generation."

Moses bowed deeply and "This nation is stubborn but forgive our sins and errors and make us Your own." God said, "I will make a Covenant with the people and have them do miracles before the nations. Do not make treaties with the nations of the land. Shatter their altars. Do not bow down any other god, for God demands exclusive worship. Do not accept invitations to practice their religion or eat their sacrifices, lest it lead to intermarriage. Make no molten gods. You shall keep the Passover Festival of Matzah for seven days in the spring. You shall redeem your firstborn and give your first produce to God. Do not appear before Me empty-handed. Work six days but on the seventh stop working. Keep the Festival of Shavout and Sukkot. These three times a year all your males must present themselves before God. Make sure there is no leaven at Passover. Bring the first fruits of the land to the Temple of God. Do not cook a kid in its mother's milk."

Moses then stays with God for 40 days and 40 nights without eating or drinking while God wrote the Words of the Covenant, the Ten Commandments on the Tablets. T

Moses returns to the people with the two Tablets of Testimony and his face radiates so brightly that the people are afraid. Moses tells the people all that God commanded. Afterwards Moses put a veil to cover his face. Whenever Moses came before God, Moses would remove his veil until he was ready to leave. When he went to tell the Israelites what God had said, they saw his face glowing brilliantly before he covered it again.

Questions: 1) What does it mean for God to demand exclusive worship? 2) Why is it important to never appear empty-handed before God? 3) God is 'slow to anger'. Are you?

Illustration ideas: Moses on Mt. Sinai...the stone tablets...the golden calf... Moses asking forgiveness, Moses telling the Israelites Gods Words, Moses' face radiating