



“Let My people go, so that they may worship Me”

God saves his children from slavery (after he heard their crying and suffering). He confronts the malicious pharaoh and defeats him with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm... through Moses his servant, 10 plagues of Egypt, a miraculous crossing of the sea and the redemption of the shed blood of Passover lamb... God then invites his people to enter an eternal covenant with him and to be his people by whom he will bless the whole world.

+ **Number of chapters:** 40 chapters.

+ **The author:**

- Moses the prophet wrote this book during the journey from Egypt to the promised land. He then followed it by writing Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

+ **Historical background:**

- The events of this book started after the end of the book of Genesis; Jacob and his family (70 people) came to Egypt to accept Pharaoh's invitation for them to stay, for Joseph, the prime minister has saved the whole world from famine.

- Jacob died. Then, Joseph, his brothers, and all this generation died.

- After 400 years (around 1500 BC.), the book of Exodus started with the family of Israel turning into a huge people in Egypt.

+ **Purpose of the Book:**

- It is the story of God with humanity throughout time: God offers his free salvation to stubborn people and all that he demands from them is to show repentance and faith in him. However, people fall short, and God shows tolerance -until a certain time.

- The book offers deep spiritual symbolizations for: e.g., the incarnation, the Virgin Mary (The tabernacle, The ark of the covenant, The censer of Aaron, and the jar of Manna.)

- The book shows us God's work in our personal lives through the character of Moses; How he was transformed from being impulsive to a forgotten shepherd, and then he became one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament.

- The book gives us clear indications of the holy sacraments (Baptism, Holy Communion, Priesthood, etc.), As we will see later.

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+ Key concepts of the book:

- Genesis is the book of beginnings (Adam, the promised fruitfulness, fall, etc.) It communicates the message of "God is my creator". The book of Exodus, however, conveys a clear message: "God is my Savior!" even if I messed up my life with sin, he will save me.
- This book narrates the events of the first year and month after the Exodus of the land of Egypt (Al Sharqiyah governorate) to Sinai (Mount Horeb).

+ The book order:

- The book is divided into 2 main parts: In the first part (Chapters 1 to 18), God sets his people free from the land of Egypt through Moses and Aaron in a battle when good conquers Evil... In the second part (Chapters 19 to 40), God leads his people from Egypt to the mountain of Sinai where He delivers them the Commandments.

CHAPTERS 1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pharaoh tries to destroy the Israelites. - Pharaoh feels insecure about the rapid growth of the people of Israel and he tries to get rid of them.
CHAPTERS 5-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God defeats Pharaoh and releases his people from slavery. - Pharaoh refuses to let the people go so God glorifies himself with the plagues of Egypt in order to free his people.
CHAPTERS 16-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Israelites in the wilderness. - The journey begins, between God's blessings and people's complaints.
CHAPTERS 19-31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai. - The beginning of the covenant between God and his people (the commandments and laws).
CHAPTERS 32-34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Israelites break the covenant. - The Israelites worship the Golden Calf, and Moses Intercedes for them, and then God responds.
CHAPTERS 35-40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anointing the tabernacle. - Moses sets up the tabernacle but he couldn't enter it.



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+ The book summary:

1: Pharaoh tries to destroy Israel (Chapters 1-4)

+ Chapter 1: Pharaoh enslaves the Israelites:

- The new pharaoh and his people have forgotten Joseph's favor on them. He started thinking of the Israelites (who turned into a big people after 400 years) as a serious threat, instead of regarding them as a source of blessings (for God has blessed them and they were multiplying and fruitful.) Pharaoh feared that if any enemies conquered Egypt, the Israelites would turn against them and ally with the enemy.
- Therefore, he forced them to do hard labor and enslaved them. However, God blessed them even more! so he began to be violent with them and ordered the two midwives who were helping the Hebrew women during childbirth, to kill the boys and keep the girls. Subsequently, this order became a duty for all the Egyptians in order to stop the growth of Israel.

+ Chapter 2: Moses' birth and fleeing:

- The first part talks about Moses' birth, and how Jochebed, his mother (from the tribe of Levites), hid him in a basket on the riverbank, while Miriam, his sister, was watching him. God's provision was that the daughter of Pharaoh would pity him and decide to adopt him. Miriam suggested wittingly to Pharaoh's daughter to bring a nurser for him (his actual mother), then “Moses” (An Egyptian name that means: the drawn out of water) became the son of the pharaoh's daughter. His mother, however, instilled faith and belonging in him.
- When he grew up (turned 40), he tried to help his people with his own strength. He killed an Egyptian man because the Egyptian killed a Hebrew. Yet, neither his people nor the pharaoh appreciated him for that, and when Pharaoh heard the news, he decided to kill Moses. So, he fled to Midian and lived as a shepherd for another 40 years. He married the daughter of a priest of Midian (Zipporah), and she gave birth to his son (Gershom). However, he never forgot that he is a Hebrew and a foreigner in this land.



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+ Chapter 3: The Burning Bush and Moses’ call

- Pharaoh died and another Pharaoh came, but the people of Israel were suffering even more. So, they cried to the Lord and he heard them. He manifested to Moses in a burning bush on Mount Horeb. He identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and told Moses that He had (seen, heard, known, and come down) to rescue his people and bring them up to the good land of Canaan.
- God told Moses to go to tell Pharaoh to let the people out. And God told him beforehand that Pharaoh wouldn't accept this, that He will gain honor through the wonders in front of Pharaoh, and finally, he will let them go. And God said: “I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them...” (Exodus 3: 7-8).
- Moses heard the most wonderful news in God's talk through the bush: The slavery is to end, the pain is to finish, and there will be no more suffering to endure. I (God) will rescue my people and be their savior from injustice and evil.
- Through the New Testament's bush, our mother and the pride of our race Virgin Mary, God the word incarnated and became a human like us. He suffered and endured pain and felt all our feelings and emotions. Not only He spoke with us and taught us, but He also delivered us from the devil's enslavement and passed us through the darkness of the evil world to the light of His kingdom. From the distress of life to the spacious place of eternity. He said: “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10: 10).

We thank you our king, who united with our nature to sanctify it. We thank you for your great salvation and your indescribable love.

Father/ Dawoud Hanna
Priest of St. Mark and St. Thomas
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+ Station 1 in the journey of salvation: (Pi Hahiroth):

- Pi Hahiroth = Baptism
- People were looking at Moses who held his rod high (a symbol for the Christ on the cross) as St Paul explained (1 Corinthians 10: 2).
- Then, they praised singing the First Canticle (Exodus 15).
- They began their journey in the Sinai wilderness for 3 days. When they reached Marah which had bitter water, Moses cast a tree into the waters and it became sweet. Then they came to Elim, where there were 12 wells of water and 70 palm trees.

+ Station 2 in the journey of salvation: (Marah):

- Marah = Repentance. The cross sweetened our bitter life of sin.

+ Station 3 in the journey of salvation: (Elim):

- Elim = The Church. 12 disciples and 70 apostles.

THE FIRST COMPLAINT:

- People began complaining when they ran out of water and couldn't find fresh water to drink.

+ Keynotes:

- Pharaoh's hardness of heart:

In the first fifth plagues, we read that Pharaoh had hardened his heart, while in the last 5, we read that God hardened his heart. As if God gave Pharaoh 5 chances for repentance, but when he ignored them, God used the hardness of Pharaoh's heart to reveal His mightiness to His people and the Egyptians.

- Moses' growth in faith and trust:

After his first encounter with Pharaoh, he was very hesitated, but God encouraged him. In the few first plagues, God spoke to him and to Aron who spoke with Pharaoh and used his rod in the miracle. After a little, God attributed more tasks to Moses until the last plague, He spoke only to Moses and Moses spoke with Pharaoh by himself.



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“The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” (Exodus 14: 14)

“But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them” (Exodus 8: 15)

- We must be cautious of the hardness of heart, for it may lead to destruction.

+ What can we learn?

- Through these plagues, despairs and many rounds before Exodus, God was elevating His people's faith in Him and making Himself known to the Gentiles (Egyptians who had a chance for salvation if they believed in Him). It's essential that God's chosen people who will have a covenant with Him, experience how mighty God is and He is capable of saving His people. So, if they went through trials later, they would have faith to rely on.

O Lord, though Moses was living in a crushing defeat and deep despair after his first meeting with Pharaoh, you have strengthened his faith and turned him into a strong believer who said to the people that God will save them while the sea was ahead of them and the Egyptians were behind. Please, God, change me as well... Strengthen my faith and trust in you and let me have more experience with you.



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3: Israel in the wilderness (Chapters 16-18)

+ Chapter 16: Bread from heaven

- After 45 days from Exodus, they ran out of food. So, they were murmuring about God and Moses.
- God sent them manna (waffle-like bread) and quail and said to them that they shouldn't store it till the next day (except on the 6th day), for He will send what satisfies their needs every day.
- God wanted to teach them the life of (Give us day by day our daily bread). This means they will wake up every day without any food and trust that God will send it.
- God commanded Moses to keep a pot of this manna.
- The manna was sent every day for 40 years until they reached the river of Jordan.

+ Station 4 in the journey of salvation: (The Wilderness of Sin):

- (The Wilderness of Sin) = Eucharist, this is what our Lord spoke about in John 6.

THE SECOND COMPLAINT:

- Again, when they ran out of food, they rebelled against God and Moses.

+ Chapter (17): Water from the Rock and war with Amalekites:

- After they had left the Wilderness of Sin, they reached Rephidim and didn't find any water to drink. Instead of remembering what happened in Marah, they were badly complaining about God and Moses! And when Moses cried to God, He told him: You shall strike the rock with your rod, and water will come out of it.
- Then came the Amalekites and fought with Israel (targeting rear ranks as written in the book of Deuteronomy). However, thanks to Joshua's leadership and Moses' prayer -who stretched his arms in the form of a cross-, Israel defeated Amalek.
- Moses understood the meaning and called this place "The Lord Is My Banner", and he said “Because hands were lifted up against the throne of the Lord” This means that we reached heaven through the cross.



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+ Station 5 in the journey of salvation: (Rephidim):

- Filling up of the Holy Spirit. This is what our Lord Jesus spoke about in John 7.
- Spiritual striving and holding to the cross. This is what the church teaches us in Friday Psali.

THE THIRD COMPLAINT:

- Because of lack of water (again!). There was so violent rebellion that they were about to stone Moses!

+ Chapter (18): Jethro believes and advises Moses:

- Jethro (Father of Zipporah, Moses' wife) heard about the wonders that God made with His people. He knew that Moses and the people were at Horeb near Midian, so he took Zipporah and Moses' two sons (Gershom and Eliezer) and visited Moses.
- Moses told him everything in detail, so Jethro believed in God.
- Jethro offered Moses a piece of wise advice after he saw him judging between the people all by himself all day long. He advised him to assign servants with him (rulers of thousands, hundreds, tens) so that he will be able to solve difficult matters and people who need simple things won't have to wait for Moses all day, so Moses accepted his advice.

+ **What can we learn?**

- God tolerates our foolishness, stubbornness, rebellion, and nagging about Him, however, He stays beneficent and showers us with miracles each day of our lives.



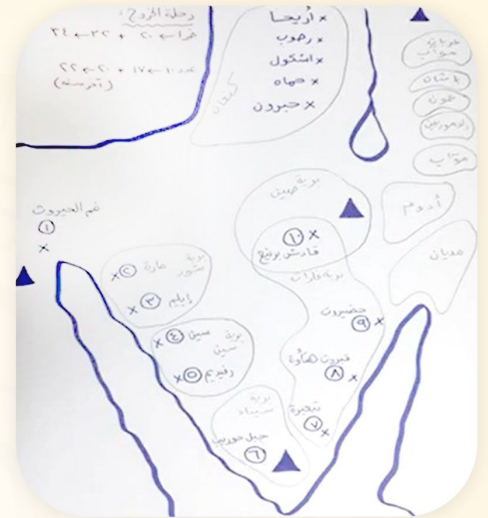
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4- Receiving the law on Mount Sinai (Chapters 19-31)

+ Chapters (19,20): Receiving the Ten Commandments:

- Three months after the Exodus, people reached the wilderness of Sinai at Mount Horeb. God offered them to enter an eternal covenant with Him there. They would keep His commandments to be His own sanctified people And He will bless other nations through them (according to His promise to Abraham). Then, all the people accepted that after they witnessed God's miracles and care for them.



- God told Moses to consecrate the people, for He will reveal Himself on the Mount after three days. There were thundering and lightning, and a thick cloud. Only Moses (and sometimes Aaron as well) came up to speak with the Lord, and the rest of the people were standing at the foot of the mountain in fear and reverence while watching the glory of the Lord and hearing the sound.

- God gave Moses the 10 Commandments; You shall have no other gods before Me; You shall not make for yourself a carved image; You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy; Honor your father and your mother; You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall



not bear false witness against your neighbor; You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.



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+ Chapters (21-23): Receiving the laws:

- Then, God gave Moses various laws that explain in practical detail the Ten Commandments. And they were considered as the constitution of this new people:
- * Mercy on male and female slaves (Chapter 21).
- * Punishments against anyone who hurts others, either intentionally or with carelessness (Chapter 21).
- * Punishments against theft and adultery (Chapter 22).
- * Mercy for needy people: widows, orphans, strangers, poor people, and even enemies (Chapters 22 and 23).
- * Sabbaths and annual feasts (Chapter 23).

+ Chapter (24): Affirming the covenant

- Then, Moses read the laws to the people (he already wrote them down when God spoke to him). And the people said that they would do all this and enter the covenant.
- Moses offered sacrifices on behalf of the people and sprinkled their blood on them (the blood of the covenant).
- Then, Moses went up the mountain again. This time he fasted for 40 days and 40 nights in order to receive the Tablets of the covenant.

+ Chapters (25-31): The Tabernacle and consecrating priests:

- Then, God dictated to Moses the specific details of the Tabernacle (the holy place where God meets His people), and it contained:
- * The Most Holy Place: contains the Ark of the Covenant (made from acacia wood and overlaid with gold). The Ark contained the Tablets of the Covenant that were written by the finger of God. And God would speak between the cherubim on the Ark's cover.
- * The Holy Place: The altar of incense, the table of the showbread, the lampstand -which was always lightened with pure olive oil.
- * The outside court: The altar of burnt offerings which was covered with bronze (it was for animal sacrifices), the laver (for priests to wash before serving in the Holy place).

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- God told Moses the specific details of the garments of priests. They have a beautiful symbolization and they needed a wise maker to make them (as we sing in the hymn of "Ni Savev Tiro"). Then, God guided Moses to the 2 wise men who will make the Tabernacle and the garments of priests: Bezalel of the tribe of Judah and Aholiab of the tribe of Dan.
- Then, we see consecrating priests (Aaron and his sons) with the holy anointing oil, the 5 types of sacrifices, the features of the anointing oil -which will be for consecrating everything in the Tabernacle-, and the incense.
- God commanded them to offer a sacrifice in the morning and another one in the twilight on the altar. The same goes for the altar of incense and the lampstand. Finally, God commanded them to keep the Sabbath.





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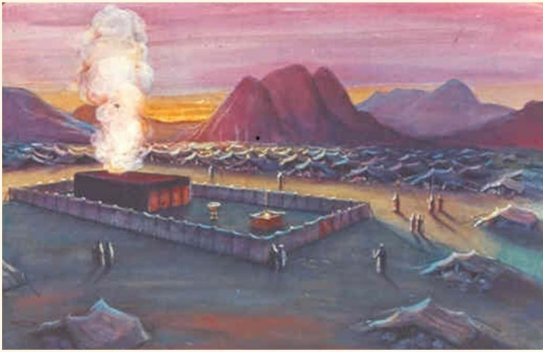
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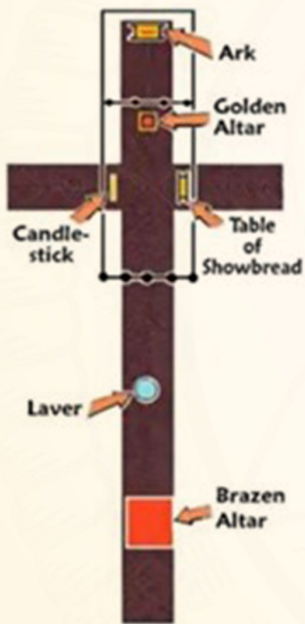
“Let My people go, so that they may worship Me”



THE TABERNACLE FROM OUTSIDE



THE HOLY PLACE:
CONTAINS THE ALTAR OF INCENSE,
THE TABLE OF SHOWBREAD AND
THE LAMPSTAND.

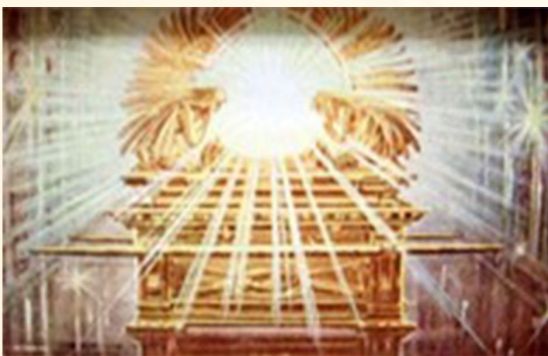


COMPONENTS
OF THE
TABERNACLE
IN THE
SHAPE OF
A CROSS



THE GARMENTS OF THE HIGH PRIEST:

- + The ephod (blue) on tunic and trousers made of white linen.
- + The breastplate that has the Urim and the Thummim and precious stones hung on it.
- + The robe that has the writing: "HOLINESS TO THE LORD".



THE ARK OF THE COVENANT AND
THE MERCY SEAT



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+ Station 6 in the journey of salvation: (Horeb):

- Horeb = The Word of God (The Bible).

“And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has said we will do.” (Exodus 24: 3)

- It's important to thoughtfully speak so that it won't be a hollow talk.

“For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting[c] the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me” (Exodus 20: 5).

- We should understand this verse in order to grasp God's justice and mercy.

“But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Exodus 21: 23-24)

- It was a very good law for their time and situation.

“Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.”
(Exodus 24: 9-11)

- This is one of the strongest and most confusing verses in The Old Testament. The Lord Jesus Christ revealed Himself in His human form to the elders of Israel. They saw Him and didn't die -He didn't lay His hand on them. They saw Him, ate, and drank in His presence -The Eucharist-. They could do so as long as they entered the covenant with Him.

+ **What can we learn?**

- God gave His children 2 important things to enter a covenant with Him: His words and commandments. They also had a specific tradition to follow while worshipping Him.

O Lord, let your words and commandments be my law in my life. Let me offer an appropriate and satisfying worship for You.



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5- Israel breaks the covenant (Chapters 32-34)

+ People's Sin:

- At that time, Moses was up the mountain speaking with God and receiving the law. The mountain was covered with smoke and clouds in a glorious scene. And the Manna was sent every day to feed the people.
- Shortly, people broke the first 2 commandments. They asked Aaron to make them gods that shall go before them. Although it was only 40 days earlier when they said: All the words the Lord has said, we will do. (Chapter 24)
- The worst and oddest thing is that Aaron also helped and advised them with a horrible idea instead of forbidding them. He asked them to bring their golden earrings and fashioned them with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. He made an altar for the golden calf and offered burnt offerings on it (they belittled God's command totally).
- They also said: "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" As if they forgot about God totally!
- Another commandment people broke is that they committed adultery in idol worshipping rituals.

+ Moses' reaction:

- God told Moses that these people deserve to perish (that was a clear fact). And He told Moses that He could make him a great people instead of them.
- Moses (the interceder), with all love, humility, and wisdom, appeased God to cease His rage for His people. His wonderful prayer consisted of
 - Reminder that this people is God's, not Moses's.
 - He told God that His enemies would gloat over them.
 - He reminded God of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their seeds will inherit the promised land. And God is faithful in His promises.
- When Moses went down and saw the horrendous scene, he broke the tablets, burned the calf in the fire, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, and made the children of Israel drink it. He reproached Aaron intensely.
- He gathered the sons of Levi and ordered them to kill anyone who insisted on sinning.



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- He ascended to the mountain again to intercede for the people before the Lord. He trustfully asked God to lead them and God accepted. Then, Moses said to God: teach me Your way... Show me Your glory.

+ God's reaction:

- God responded with all love and mercy, even before Moses' intercession for the people.
- However, with all justice, He said to him that this deed wouldn't go without punishment.
- God told the people that He wouldn't be with them as long as they were too evil and sinful.
- He told Moses: The Lord, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty. We can understand this through the sermon of "The grace of justification, the mercy, and justice of God".

+ Chapter (35): Moses went up and took other tablets:

- Then, Moses went up the mountain with the tablets he carved this time. He fasted for another 40 days and received the law again from God, who wrote the 10 commandments on the tablets again for him.
- God told Moses that He would drive out the peoples of Canaan from before them with wondrous miracles.
- He warned Moses not to make a covenant with these peoples, and He clarified to him that the reason was that they would drive people to idolatry.
- Moses descended from the mountain with his face so shining that he needed to cover it with a veil while talking to the children of Israel.
- There was a beautiful part of Chapter 33 about Moses when he went to the Tabernacle (after God's reconciliation with people). This happened a little afterward, as we will understand later.



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“For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth.” (Exodus 33: 16)

- How lovely and deep is this prayer!

+ **What can we learn?**

- This heartbreaking fall after the covenant showed us two things: People need the grace that enables them to keep the commandment. They need a merciful and compassionate God to forgive their sins.

O Lord, we thank You for You forgive iniquity and transgressions. We thank You for the grace of Your Holy Spirit that strengthens and drives us to keep Your life-giving commandments.





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6- Anointing the Tabernacle (Chapters 35-40)

+ Chapters (35-39): Building the Tabernacle:

- We notice a wonderful thing: The materials for building the Tabernacle were offered by the people, and they even gave more than what was needed. This participation is essential in our churches. As members of the church, we need to be blessed by contributing to its needs.
- With the leadership of Bezalel and Aholiab, the wise men left their jobs and began to build the Tabernacle according to what God commanded Moses. Finally, they finished the Tabernacle with its components and the priests' garments.

+ Chapter (40): Anointing the Tabernacle:

- Then, at the beginning of the second year, Moses anointed the Tabernacle as God said. He anointed all its utensils (in the outside court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place). He also anointed Aaron and his priest sons with the holy anointing oil (as we do in Chrismation).
- Then, the cloud covered the Tabernacle (a symbol of God's glory), and Moses couldn't enter.
- Then, the children of Israel realized that they should follow the cloud whenever it was taken up and stay when it was above the Tabernacle.
- They were camping around the Tabernacle (3 tribes in each direction).
- What happened later that enabled Moses to enter the Tabernacle before God? This is what we will learn in the Book of Leviticus.

+ What can we learn?

- Sin is exceedingly sinful! Because of the sin of these people and their breaking of the covenant, even Moses became unable to enter the Tabernacle. People needed to be reconciled and consecrated by God first.

O Lord, forgive my sins that separated me from You. Cleanse me with the blood of Your only begotten son. And forgive me according to Your mercy and not according to my sins.