

Under The Fig Tree



WEEK 5

Introduction

This week we will continue our studies of Exodus. We begin the second month of our studies. It may be useful to review the introduction to the course from last month's notes. This will ensure that you have established disciplines for your studies so that you to get the most out of them. In particular you should consider whether you have been experiencing the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Day 1

Notes on Today's Readings

Chapter 21. One day the Kingdom of Heaven will come in fully. In that day we will no longer experience the problems of this fallen world. Those who are sons and daughters of the Living God, reborn of His Spirit through Faith in Yeshua HaMashaich, will live with Him forever in the Kingdom that is prepared for us. Meanwhile, we, like the Children of Israel, live in the world as it is now, which requires us to know what is right and wrong, good and evil. God alone can show us what pleases Him and how we should live, so He gave laws to Israel. We will find these laws in the Bible, especially in the first five books. These laws are part of God's teaching. He wants His people to live by them through the willingness of their hearts. The New Covenant brought the gift of the Holy Spirit so that now we have these same laws written on our hearts.

The Children of Israel were like pioneers of our faith. They received the laws through Moses and began learning how to live by them in the wilderness. We will learn much from this as we read the account of Israel. We will see how people like us responded to the laws of God before His Spirit was more freely given to each of us, as individuals. The laws take account of all the needs that later emerged in the community of Israel. In the reality of life, as it works out, some Israelites would become servants of other Israelites. Sometimes there will be problems involving animals and debts. Sometimes there will be disputes leading to physical harm. All these things are dealt with by God. Absolute justice and mercy underpins all God's laws. The principle of eye for eye and tooth for tooth symbolizes the justice of God. However, the principle of forgiveness to the repentant sinner is also behind all of God's laws; mercy triumphs over justice.

All this points to the sacrifice of Yeshua on the Cross. As we meditate upon the laws of God we discover that they are complete for life on this earth – how to live a life that pleases God. They require interpretation into all circumstances and that is the purpose of the elders of communities and leaders of nations. Read these chapters carefully. Behind the teaching are profound principles that apply to all nations. If nations learned to interpret these laws they would be blessed by God. Some nations have

indeed experienced these blessings over the years. Take for example the principle behind verses 22 to 25 of this chapter. If an unborn child is harmed then the principle of justice is eye for eye and tooth for tooth. Consider how this principle applies to the way governments have legalised abortion of babies in our day. Justice is being stored up regarding every one of those helpless unborn babies whose lives were taken away through the evil of abortion. This is just one principle to understand. There are many more. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you will come to realize how important God's laws are and then go on to consider the balance of law, justice and mercy in the Gospel message, which was revealed through the atoning death of Yeshua.

Chapter 22. Continue to go through the details of the laws of God in this chapter. The Children of Israel spent forty years in the wilderness learning how to live by God's instructions and then for hundreds of years in the Promised Land. They passed on the Scriptures to us that we too might seek God for interpretation in our own lives. You may find personal challenges based on some of these laws, as well as an overview of all of the details. You may find that you are challenged by something that you read. The Apostle James teaches us that the Laws of God are like a mirror to show us our inner nature. The Apostle Paul teaches us that the purpose of the Laws of God is to reveal sin. If sin is revealed then the purpose of God is that we repent of these sins, confessing them to God, turning away from them and being forgiven through faith in Yeshua's sacrifice for our sin. If you are challenged in some way by what you read in any of these chapters pray to the Lord about it. If you are not convicted of any sin then still read the chapters carefully and lay a good foundation of understanding. All leaders of God's people must be equipped for teaching of all that He has taught His people. God expects us to be mature and discerning people. Discernment is defined as the understanding of what is right and what is wrong in God's eyes.

Chapter 23. Notice that it is through Angels that God led His people. Angels are servants of God and come to us as His ambassadors and messengers. When you consider this you will realize how much we still do not understand about the unseen work of God on our behalf. Very much is being done in the unseen spiritual world all around us. Therefore, make the most of what we *do* have revealed to us by God. In this chapter we read details that were given to the Children of Israel. God revealed to them all that was sufficient for ordering their lives and for living by faith in Him. Notice how close He comes to His people as He shepherds them through their journey through life. It is the same for us. He not only comes close, but comes and lives *in* our hearts to direct our paths through life on this earth. He is altogether Holy and yet comes to dwell among His people to teach them holiness. In later chapters we come to more details on the Feasts of the Lord mentioned in this chapter. God requires order in our lives. He is to be at the centre of all we do. Therefore, as part of the laws for Israel's society they were to have special times through each day, week and year to ensure that God would be prominent at the centre of their personal, family and community lives.

Chapter 24. Moses wrote down all that God had spoken. This became the Book of the Covenant. God had already made the Covenant with Abraham. Now He was forming a community through covenant principles revealed to Moses. The Covenant with Abraham had not changed but now, within the outworking of this Covenant, God called Israel to be a Holy Nation through whom He could speak to the entire world. The laws and commandments brought conditions for blessings upon Israel as they became the prophetic people of God. Later in the Bible we learn much more about how the history of Israel

works out and how God speaks through them to us. It was not going to be easy. In fact it led to the crucifixion of Yeshua. For now, however, Israel, led by Moses, believed they *could* do all God required, and a solemn assembly was convened to confirm the Covenant with God.

Consider how close to God Moses was allowed to come when He was called up to the mountain. He and the seventy elders actually *saw* God. Later in the history of Israel other Prophets had a vision of God, including Isaiah and the Apostle John. Whenever people come this close to God they understand their own sinfulness, tremble before Him and fall on their faces before Him. In our lives we discover the grace and forgiveness of God, but we must never let that diminish our view of the most Holy God who is also totally uncompromising. All of us need the experience of a vision of God in His High exalted state, just as Moses and the seventy elders had. He is the same God today as He was then. Go with Moses and the elders on the mountain, as it were, and let God speak to you about Himself. The beginning of the instructions for the building of the Tabernacle is in the next chapter of Exodus. God would come down to be among His people in this Tabernacle. Moses spent 40 days and nights being instructed by God about the building of this Tabernacle. Once constructed, it would be an awesome sight to behold. Moses was given the precise details for its construction.

Day 2

Chapter 25. What did Moses see on the Mountain? Forty days and nights is a long time. The Great Architect of the Universe showed him details that he would remember. We can only guess whether Moses saw something more than the Tabernacle which was to be constructed when he came down from the mountain. Later in the Bible, in the Letter to the Hebrews, we read that the Tabernacle in the wilderness was an earthly representation of a heavenly reality. We do not know whether Moses saw the heavenly reality as well as being instructed on how to build the earthly representation. One day we will see this reality for ourselves. Meanwhile, we have the exact description of the meeting place God commanded should be built on earth. There are clear enough details in the Scriptures for us to picture the structure and even to make a model of it for ourselves, if we choose. The Tabernacle is full of symbolism and we must come back to these chapters time and again in the future to learn more.

The first and last parts of this chapter are particularly interesting. In the first section we read that the Israelites were to give free-will offerings for the construction. Recall that when Israel left Egypt they were given gifts of all kinds from the Egyptians. When these gifts were brought together they would turn out to be more than enough of precisely the right materials to complete the Tabernacle. God was in control even when the Egyptians chose what gifts to give, and also when the people made their choices of what they would give for their free-will offerings. It seems that “free will” is not so *free* as we sometimes think it is! The Tabernacle would be built through this free will, but God was also making sure that it would be according to what He had planned and provided for. In the last section of the chapter we are reminded that Moses was to build exactly according to the pattern shown to him. He was not asked to design something or offer his opinion: he was told exactly what to do. Here on the mountain, he was given these precise instructions from God Himself.

Chapter 26. There is something to be learned from everything that was to be used for the construction, including every material, colour and number. After all the design is an exact replica of the Tabernacle in heaven. Several useful books on the subject of the Tabernacle have been written by authors who have studied every detail very carefully. It may be instructive to see what other people have discovered. Be disciplined, however, and, before reading any of these books, ask the *Holy Spirit* to show *you* what He wants you to know as you read the details. You might read one of these books at another time but, however useful they might be, what someone else has written might spoil what God will show you personally. The same goes for all else we are studying together in the Scriptures. Read the Scriptures first for yourself. Let us consider briefly a few ideas so that you have a few prompts to help you begin your own prayerful studies.

Study each part of the Tabernacle and also take an overview of the entire structure. As far as the overall structure goes, for example, notice that there are two altars, one for sacrifice and one for service. The Altar of sacrifice is at the entrance to the first court. The Altar of Incense is at the door to the Holy of Holies. Through sacrifice we enter the presence of God. As we proceed to the Holiest Place where the Ark of the Covenant is to be found we come to the Laver, where the Priests washed. This is symbolic of the washing of the Holy Spirit for sanctification. The Priests are sanctified before approaching the innermost altar to offer up the incense and intercessory prayer.

As you consider what Moses was shown on the mountain notice the choice of materials, how they begin with bronze at the Outer Court and end in gold at the Holiest Place. Consider the colours of the curtains, red, blue and purple. Red can symbolize the earth, blue the heavens. Blue and red mixed

together make purple. Purple is symbolic of a ministry that links heaven to earth. This is the ministry of intercessory prayer. From these few things that we can begin to see that God gave Moses a pattern for the priestly ministry, which is also symbolic of the priestly calling of all believers. The challenge for all of us is to let the Holy Spirit fulfill in us, the principles of the Tabernacle, but now as Priests of the New Covenant.

Chapter 27. Detail after detail is given for the construction of the Tabernacle. Lights are to be burned continuously. Olive oil is to be pressed for the lights. Bread is to be on the table before the Holy of Holies, one loaf for each of the Tribes of Israel. Here we have the foundation of imagery used throughout the Bible and comes to its full meaning through the ministry of Yeshua. The reason is that here we have a pattern that points to Him. He is the Great Intercessor for His people. He is the One who abides in the Holiest place with the Father. He is the One whose life, death and resurrection establishes Him forever in the presence of the Father to fulfill the ministry of the Tabernacle. If you meditate on this image of the One who came from Heaven to *Tabernacle among us* you will find that foundations of understanding grow in you as to who He really is. These are shadows pointing to Him.

Chapter 28. The ministry of the High Priest is described in this chapter. Soon Moses was to go down from the mountain and inaugurate the Priesthood. The Tribe of Levi was chosen to be the representative of all Israel to minister before God and Aaron was chosen by God to be the High Priest. Again we have types and shadows that are to be fulfilled in Yeshua HaMashiach. He is the High Priest of the New Covenant fulfilling all that Aaron began, but at a higher level of calling. Year after year, through the ministry of the Tabernacle and the Priesthood, Israel was to learn lessons about the coming Messiah. We must also learn those lessons by studying what is recorded in Scripture, for we, too, are called to the Priesthood. We are not called to the Levitical Priesthood as it is described here, but with the same foundational principles, we are Priests of the New Covenant serving in and through Yeshua. These lessons begin in our Scripture readings from Exodus. Moses was given clear instructions concerning all of God's requirements for His people on the mountain.

Day 3

Chapter 29. Continue to review all the details of the Tabernacle and the Priestly ministry. If you find it difficult to picture it all because of the detail, review again what you have already read up to this point before going on. It may help to draw some diagrams, or make some lists of the various materials and parts of the structure. The overarching principle is the holiness of God. Holiness means set apart. Our Holy God is perfect in all His ways and He showed Moses what he must do to establish a place where He, the Holy God who dwells in the highest heavens, would come down to earth and be with His people. To approach Him the Priests had to be made holy too. They were to appear before Him in the garments that had been prepared for the purpose, and be set apart to minister to God and to the people. Holiness is an inner reality and cannot be achieved through external means. Israel would learn these truths over the years of their journey with God. In turn we too would have the opportunity to learn them. It was always to be faith that would please God. Moses was shown how the process was to begin through the rituals of the Priesthood, including washing for sanctification, sacrifice of animals, pouring out of their blood for atonement, and anointing with oil. The fullest interpretation of these practices was to be understood in the sacrifice of Yeshua HaMasiach (Yeshua, the anointed Saviour). Through obedience and faith the Children of Israel were to begin learning principles that were to be fulfilled in Him. This is also teaching for us as we meditate upon the Scriptures, because they lay a firm foundation for us to understand more clearly about Him.

Chapter 30. When the Children of Israel were delivered out of Egypt they were to be a very special nation. The deliverance was costly. Consider the devastations that God brought to Egypt. It would have been understandable if some of the Israelites thought how special they were and for them to become proud. But there was no place for pride. Yes, they were to be God's special treasure, but they were also to live according to His instructions. They were to be a humble, obedient people in all holiness. If they did not live by God's instructions then difficulties would result. There were precise ways that the Priests must draw near to God's Presence in the Tabernacle. The Priests were responsible to God and to the people. Every one of the Israelites was counted by God and there was a price set of half a shekel for the men for their ransom. They were to learn that there was a cost to be paid to be included among the holy people of God. If the census was not taken in the right way a plague would come upon them. All this teaching pointed to Yeshua. We are to learn that there is no other way than God's way and that membership of God's holy family comes at a price – a great price in fact, when all is accomplished and all are numbered that can be numbered. That ransom price pointed to Yeshua.

Chapter 31. In this chapter we read of both work and rest. God appoints His own workmen and trains them for their works of service. Bezalel and Uri may not have known how it was that God prepared them to oversee the construction of the Tabernacle. Just as He had made provision of materials for the construction, so, behind the scenes of their lives, He had prepared His workmen. God decided what was to be built, how it was to be built and who was to build it. We can find echoes here of what Yeshua said to His disciples many years later, "You did not choose me, but I chose you." He also said that we cannot do anything unless we abide in Him and He in us. God is still choosing and training His chosen ministers for the tasks to which He appoints them. The Living Tabernacle is Yeshua and our ministry is spiritual. The Tabernacle in the wilderness was a preparation for this fulfillment. The principles are the same, but at a spiritual level rather than a physical one. Remember, from an earlier chapter, how God gave provision of Manna for the Sabbath. He also gives provision of the Sabbath itself for rest from the work

He has set His people to do. He provided for the workers, for their work and also for their rest. Layer upon layer of Kingdom principles are to be discovered through meditating on the Tabernacle in the wilderness and comparing it, through prayer, with the teaching of the New Testament.

Chapter 32. Before Moses went on the mountain for forty days and forty nights God had spoken from the mountain in the hearing of the people. He gave them the Ten Commandments and additional teaching. Moses wrote it all down in the Book of the Covenant. He read it to the people and they all agreed that they would obey every word that God had spoken. The first principles of the instructions in the Book of the Covenant were that there must be no idols and that God was to be their only God.

Forty days and forty nights is a long time and so the Children of Israel thought that they had not understood what God had told them. Where was Moses? Aaron should have known better but even he doubted. Remember Abraham in this context. He was given the Covenant and was told that God would give him a son. Then he made the mistake of thinking he must do something about it because a long time passed before God performed His word. Thus, Ishmael was conceived. Now, many years later, Israel made a golden calf as their god because they did not understand what God had told them, and could not wait for His instructions. At the very time that Moses was being instructed about the precise way that God was to be worshipped, they made an idol!

There were devastating consequences. They are recorded for us to read. Yet, God had made preparations even for this, in the training of Moses. Moses had spent long enough in His presence to have the confidence to intercede for the people. At this time, every Israelite was under judgement and in danger of being blotted out of God's Book of Life.

Consider the principles that come in to this chapter. God's call to holiness, His way of Holiness and of knowing Him, the tendency of all God's people to idolatry, impatience, unclear understanding even of God's precise instructions, but also the principles of intercession and atonement. We cannot fail to see a picture forming of the Greater Intercessor, Yeshua HaMashiach, who came down from Heaven, to reveal to the uttermost, God's plan of redemption. He, too, came to an idolatrous and proud people. He has now gone to be with the Father with a promise to return to His people, but he seems to be taking a long time! What happened at the time of Moses can repeat itself, so let us be careful how we wait for Him. He is our means of atonement and He is interceding for us at this very moment. Let us learn from Israel's mistakes and wait patiently for Him in all obedience. Israel was instructed clearly about God's plans at their stage of covenant history. They needed to wait patiently for God's promises and plans to be made manifest in the Promised Land. We have promises and plans to wait for in our day. We are waiting for the return of Yeshua to establish His Kingdom.

He is a long time returning as the world understands it. We are warned what will happen. Just as Israel formed an idol so the world will follow the antichrist. This man will draw many people away from patiently preparing for the Lord's return. Let us take note of these things as we consider what happened in Israel's history. They are there to teach us about God and about ourselves. The Tribe of Levi stood with Moses. God had already chosen them to be Priests to minister to Him. We are the Royal Priesthood of the New Covenant. We are chosen by Him. Let us stand in Yeshua's Name before God whatever else comes upon this earth to seduce people away from Him. Let us make no "golden calves" and let us not doubt God's promises to us, but study them more carefully as the days go by.

Day 4

Chapter 33. The Israelites were humbled for a season and were sad when God told them that they had been proud and disobedient – a stiff necked people. Order then began to come to the community following the dreadful apostasy of the golden calf and its aftermath. There were moments of awe when Moses went into God’s presence in the tent of meeting that he erected for that purpose outside the camp. Each man stood by his own tent as the cloud descended on this private place where God spoke to Moses face to face. This tent was called a tabernacle as well, but this was not the Tabernacle of Meeting that was still to be built for the ministry of the Priests. It was Moses’ personal meeting place with God. Notice that Joshua, who was to become Moses’ successor always remained close to Moses and spent his time at the tabernacle. Once again there are many points of reflection for us. The New Testament speaks of Yeshua as being crucified outside the camp. It is also true that He lives with the Father outside of the “camp” of this world. We must all go outside the camp, as it were, where we abide in Him and where we take counsel with Him. This reminds us of our private prayer times where we come away with the Lord, closing the door of our rooms to be quiet with Him. We are to abide in Him. That is our meeting place with the Father.

Chapter 34. God is the God of second chances. He redeems us from our fall. He is patient as well as uncompromising. Mercy triumphs over judgement for the repentant sinner. So Moses went up the mountain again. There is an element of sadness in our second chances nevertheless. If we were able to take God fully at His Word from the start there would be no need of a fresh start. There are regrets in all our pasts. Of course, we must go forward into the new day, but there is always that thought of what might have been if we simply listened and obeyed in the first case. For all mankind, innocence was lost in the Garden of Eden, but God gave a fresh start through the Covenant He made with Noah and then with Abraham. For all of us the life of sin came before the fresh start in Yeshua. His sacrifice on the Cross took place on that day when the sun was darkened over all the earth. In His sacrifice lie our regrets. Shadows indeed! At the time of Moses, there was an element of sad reflection when he cut the new stones that God would use to write the Commandments a second time. The first stones should have been enough.

He spent a second forty days and nights with God on the mountain and was reminded of the teaching to be given to the Children of Israel. This time there was no golden calf when he returned. We do not know what Israel could have experienced with God had they been able to take all the opportunities offered the first time, but thank God for the second chance. Moses’ face shone when he had been in God’s presence. Now we are given the gift of indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is offered now to all who commit themselves to live by faith in Yeshua. This is the greater fulfillment of what Moses experienced in the presence of Israel.

Israel had much to learn. They were chosen from all mankind to learn about God and about themselves. We learn these things by reading the account in the Bible rather than having to go through all their trials in the wilderness. Let us make the most of this opportunity and privilege.

Chapter 35. Israel was at last ready to build the Tabernacle and live according to the pattern of life that was given through Moses. Moses was directly responsible to God to lead the people. They were to do everything according to God’s instructions. For disobedience there would be punishment and for some acts of disobedience there was even the death penalty. This was a most serious moment in Israel’s

history with types and shadows to be taken into our own teaching programme. Read what happened carefully, meditating upon every detail. Here, in some way, is a pattern for us too. See what the Holy Spirit shows you personally.

Chapter 36. The Children of Israel were aliens in a foreign land when they were in Egypt. They were slaves and driven to hard labour. Near the end of their time in Egypt they were not even given enough raw materials to make the bricks for their work. Yet, when God delivered them He caused the Egyptians to provide them with all the precious materials that they would need to build the Tabernacle. This provision was distributed among the people so that they might not have even realized how much God had done until they each brought their offering. Indeed, they had more than enough and so work on the glorious Tabernacle of Meeting began. God provided the materials and equipped the chosen people with the necessary skills.

Do we sometimes fail to see that God has provided all that is necessary in our generation for the building up of His Kingdom? If we bring together all our spiritual gifts, and all our material offerings, we too will also see that we have more than enough for all that He intends. The little that we have, together with the little that all His other children have, makes up the whole. It is good that the Children of Israel did not hold back what God had given them. Enough of them came forward to ensure that all could be accomplished. How sad for the ones who held back. This is like the parable of the Talents that Yeshua taught. Each one has been given something, however small it seems. Indeed, just as there were many aspects to the construction and ministries of the Tabernacle, so there are is a variety in the gifts and ministries of all of God's people today. The whole is made up of many parts.

Day 5

Chapter 37. In these chapters we read how the craftsmen did exactly what God told Moses that they must do. It gives us an opportunity to review the details again. Don't rush through the chapters, but let this be an opportunity to review the pattern and principles. The Holy Spirit may remind you of these things in various ways and at various times in the future when He is building you up in obedience and faith according to God's pattern.

Chapter 38. Continue to do two things simultaneously as you read these chapters. First, learn what Israel was told to do. Picture the various parts of the Tabernacle coming together and taking their place. Second, and parallel to this, see what the symbolism means to you in your life before God. Here, for example, is mentioned the Altar of Sacrifice, the Laver where the Priests were to wash and the Holiest Place where there was to be the Ark of the Covenant containing the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod of authority and some of the Manna. The principles of sacrifice, sanctification, obedience and intercession are to be written onto our hearts as spiritual realities. These spiritual realities come from the perfect pattern of the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

Chapter 39. Many important principles emerge from our studies in Exodus. In the limited time you have had so far, you will realize that you must come back to these chapters time and again in the coming years. There is just too much to take in at one reading. After all it took Moses forty years to be prepared to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt, and that when he had passed his fortieth birthday! Then, twice it took forty days and nights on the mountain with God to learn the patterns for Israel's community life and ministry. It took a further forty years for the Children of Israel to wander through the wilderness to the Promised Land and then hundreds of years of further learning before the appearance of Yeshua. Even then the majority of the people were not ready to accept Him as their Messiah!

Yeshua Himself spent forty days and nights fasting in the wilderness at the beginning of His earthly ministry at the age of thirty years. He taught His disciples about Himself for three and a half years and even then they did not understand as they witnessed His Crucifixion. Two thousand years later the world is still approaching a situation where most people do not understand the plans of God. Many people will accept the counterfeit and follow the antichrist. Therefore, when we consider all this we, who are determined to follow the Lord, must not be surprised if we need to spend many days and nights in prayerful study of the Scriptures to understand His ways and His promises. God gave His teaching to Israel and ensured that they were taught the two central purposes of all that God planned for them. He was to be their only God and they were to love one another as themselves. The Tabernacle was central to God's ministry to His people and of the people to God and these were the two reasons for it to be made. We are still learning from this today.

Chapter 40. Moses and the people finally achieved what God had instructed. They made the Tabernacle according to the pattern shown to Moses. As they did so, God impressed on them the reason why they had to be precise in the construction. The principle of Holiness was to be understood and practiced. Israel was set apart as the people of God, and God was going to dwell among them. He would lead them day by day and year by year by His presence in the camp. The Tabernacle was set up and God came

down among His people according to His promise. On the first Passover, Israel came out of Egypt. This took place on fourteenth day of the month of Aviv (also called Nissan). This month was, thereafter, to be the first month of the year for Israel. Now on the first day of this same month in the second year, all wonderfully timed in the purposes of God, just before the Feast of Passover, God came down to be among His people.

Day 6

James Chapter 1. Next week we will study the Letter to the Hebrews. It is appropriate to do this immediately after reading Exodus, as we shall see. To finish our readings for this week we will turn to the Book of James. James was a prominent leader in Jerusalem immediately after Yeshua was glorified to be with the Father. He was educated in the Jewish traditions of his day and understood their fulfillment through Yeshua. Therefore, he knew the balance between law and grace and between faith and obedience. In Exodus we have begun to read about the laws of God that were first written on stone. The laws of God are central to His Torah (instruction or teaching). James was among the first to experience the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit who fulfills the promise to write the Torah on our hearts. His letter, therefore, helps us to understand the balance of a disciplined life and the life of faith. Our life is to be a walk with God on this narrow road. If we turn to James now that we have read Exodus it will help us put the teaching in the perspective of the New Covenant.

Among the symbolism of the Tabernacle, in Exodus 38:8 we read how the serving women donated their mirrors for the building of the wash-basin called the Laver. Their mirrors had been previously been for the purpose of looking at their faces to ensure that their outer appearance was attractive. They had them melted down for the wash basin. The wash basin was used for washing the Priests for service and points to the principle of sanctification, being made pure by the washing of the Holy Spirit to cleanse our innermost being. Did the serving women in Moses' day have some hint about the greater importance of inner beauty compared with external beauty? They sacrificed their desire for outer beauty to the ministry of inner sanctification.

In Chapter 1 of James, he likens the Torah of God to a mirror showing us an image of our inner being. If we learn to look in a mirror and see our face we know what we look like and how beautiful we are to the human eye. The Torah of God causes our inner nature to be revealed like a mirror, telling us how beautiful we are in our inner being. James tells us, therefore, the importance of looking into the teaching of God in order to discover how we need to be cleansed and transformed by God, beginning with confession and prayer, leading to the transforming of our spirits through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. The donation of the women's mirrors points to this in a wonderful way.

The first chapter of James is also about faith in God and the importance of prayers of faith. God wants us to have a personal relationship with Him and to learn to trust Him in all things. As in the Tabernacle, trusting prayer becomes central to our walk with the Lord. Wisdom of God to live our lives is to be the precious result of our prayers. When we come to the Book of Proverbs we will find three parts of God's teaching programme. James draws reference to the third of these - wisdom. His education as a First Century Jew would have been founded on knowledge, then on understanding, finally, resulting in wisdom. Knowledge does not stand alone. One meditates upon the knowledge that comes from what we see, study and do and this leads to understanding of God, His world and His ways. The fruit of understanding is how we then live our lives. Wisdom is the outworking of God's teaching as applied to our lives. Moses taught the people the principles of Torah and settled disputes on matters that they did not understand, so that they might benefit and apply them with the wisdom of God given to Moses and the Elders. James speaks of this same wisdom now being a fruit of God's Spirit, given directly to His people. Torah, therefore, is the mirror of our inner being and how God sees us. The prayer of faith is answered by God as wisdom for our lives, if we indeed ask in faith. In other words, in answer to faithful prayer, God will direct the course of our life in all ways. This begins by knowing God and His ways.

Chapter 2. Is your greatest desire to be a friend of God? That is God's deepest desire for you. If you are saved by grace and through faith in the Lord Yeshua HaMashiach, then the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to you. Some people mistake this as being liberation from the laws of God. James sees it differently and so should we. We have become free of condemnation if we desire to be Yeshua's disciples and walk with Him. But we must remember that He is Holy and He taught Israel, through many trials, what holiness means. James compares our walk with that of Abraham, who was a friend of God and therefore our example. He lived both by faith and obedience. These two principles of our walk are really one and the same. The Hebrew word for *faith* is *emoonah*. This word also means *faithfulness*. The word is linked with the word *amen*, which is what we say when we agree with a prayer that has been made. The word is also linked to *emet*, meaning truth. Thus, through a word study, we realize that the outworking of real faith comes through faithful acts of obedience, in line with God's truth.

James spoke fluent Hebrew and it is likely that he wrote his Epistle in Hebrew. The range of meanings of the words would have been obvious to those hearing him, and he reminded them that faith and action go together. Passive "faith" is not true faith. Abraham obeyed God and so should we as we outwork our life of faith. Abraham was led directly by God according to principles that Moses was later given for the entire community - God's teaching, *Torah*. We should expect the Holy Spirit to mobilize us by the principles of this same *Torah* written onto our hearts. James refers to several of the Ten Commandments to make this point. There may have been people in the First Century Church who thought that Yeshua ushered in a new era so that they need no longer learn God's ways through the Scriptures. James tells them otherwise! We need to hear this again today and become students of all Scripture, letting it become a mirror to our inner spiritual being, and a guide to our actions.

Chapter 3. There is a form of so-called wisdom that does not come from God. It is a product of human logic and was passed on from the Greek world through philosophy, art and science. The fruit of this has mushroomed in our day and percolated western education systems. Many discoveries from science are useful and, in the right way, bring us to glorify the God of creation, but when science and philosophy become an end in themselves they are an enemy of faith. They glorify man rather than glorify God and we must beware of this. At worst we can be led away from God. Because of this, in contrast to God's gift of true wisdom, James condemns such wisdom as *earthly, sensual, demonic*. Again in this chapter James exhorts us to walk with God by His Spirit's leading in the path of true wisdom. True wisdom is spiritual and comes from God Himself. James also speaks of the great enemy of discord and the way we talk being something that can glorify God or can do the opposite and do much damage. We recall that Yeshua also taught that what we say is as much subject to judgement as all else in our lives. In this context we are warned about the seriousness of being called to teach the truths of Scripture. How careful we must be to study all that God has given us and weigh it in all understanding before passing it on to others. Again we see how faith and truth blend together in the purposes of God.

Chapter 4. We turn once more to the importance of prayer and seeking God for our path of life, not living presumptuously, but in order and discipline. We are also warned that there is a spiritual enemy whom we must resist in the full light of truth. Our walk of faith will certainly be tested!

Chapter 5. We must study the Scriptures carefully and take them to heart. In his Epistle, James is simply reminding us of what we will learn from there. If we read this Epistle without understanding James'

motive, it can seem rather stern and even judgemental, but remember that he was a Jew of the First Century. He was zealous for God's teaching and right interpretation. He, therefore, speaks to us in plain language. The plain language is needed as a guard against compromise. James knows the tendencies, even among Christians, to be careless concerning the Scriptures and the way they live their lives. This brings urgency to his voice. Behind the urgency is the love of God for His people to build them up into a Holy people waiting for the day of the Lord.

Day 7

A Day for Rest and Reflection

This week we completed our reading of the Book of Exodus. We have studied actual events in the life of the Children of Israel. This is their history and, through adoption into God's family, our history. This is where our lessons begin for the ordering of our lives as the Holy People of God. We turned to the Book of James to draw some reference to the continuity of God's programme for His people. The New Testament is not the same as the Old Testament (the *Tanach*). The Old Testament was passed on to us to establish the foundations of our faith so that we can have a framework from which our life in the Holy Spirit is built. The New Testament is not a document for finding all the answers we will need, or it would turn into a new set of rules. Instead, the New Testament nurtures us into the life of the Spirit which is the fulfillment of what God showed Moses and the Children of Israel. Spend some time considering this today in the presence of God.
