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Moses Was There with the LORD for Forty Days

34: 10-28

Moses was there with the LORD for forty days DIG: What were the key lessons God wanted to teach His people about His nature? About worship? Obedience? Covenant relationships? Separation from other peoples and their gods? Moses was again gone forty days. What do you think the Israelites did that time around as they waited for his return?

REFLECT: What rivals does God have for your attention? What, if anything, is standing in the way of your drawing close to Him? In other words, what needs to go? Moses fasted to draw close to God. How do you get close to Him? What is God trying to protect you from? How has God blessed your faithfulness and obedience?

Periodic renewals of the Sinaitic covenant were necessary throughout **Israelite** history (see **Deuteronomy 5:2-3, 29:1; Joshua 24:25; Second Kings 23:1-27**), and the first of them had to take place soon after the golden calf incident.⁷¹¹ **Then ADONAI said: I am making a covenant with you (34:10a).** The verb translated **making** is actually the participle for the Hebrew word *cutting*. Bloodletting became such an integral part of covenant-making that the act became synonymous with making a treaty.⁷¹²

Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. This was quite a statement when we consider whom **He** is talking to. These were the **people** who saw the Nile turn into blood and the ten plagues of Egypt, who saw the Red Sea part so **they** could escape and the mightiest army on the face of the earth obliterated, and were led through the desert by a pillar of fire by night and pillar of cloud by day, and now **He** was saying that they were going to see **wonders** that they had **never** seen **before!** **The people you live among will see how awesome the work that I, ADONAI, will do for you is (34:10b).** Many of the things **He** was about to say, **He** had said earlier in **Chapters 20 through 23.** What was emphasized here was that **God's** covenant with **Moses**, broken by the golden calf incident, was then going to be renewed. It was therefore understandable that strong emphasis was placed on the wickedness of the sin of idolatry. They were to **obey what God had commanded** them that day **(34:11).** These verses were a preamble or introduction to the terms of the covenant that follow in **verses 12-18.**

ADONAI promised to **drive out the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites before** them. This is the third time **He** has mentioned this. But **He** warned them to **be careful not to make a treaty with those who lived in the Promised Land**, because they would become **a snare** to them. **Isra'el** was to **break down their altars, smash their sacred stones** (probably representing male gods) **and cut down their Asherah poles** (symbols of the Canaanite goddess **Asherah**). **Do not worship any other god, for ADONAI, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God (34:11-14)**. We think of **jealous** as a negative term. What is **He jealous** of? Everything! Our time. Our thoughts. Our heart. Or anything else that gets in between **Him** and you. But actually, the meaning here of **Him** being **jealous** is that **He** can tolerate no rivals and is zealous for your worship of **Him**. **He** does not want to share **His** honor and glory with false gods.

Political alliance and intermarriage with Canaan inhabitants was strictly forbidden. **Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the Promised Land**. This was not because of a lack of neighborliness or for ethnic or racial reasons but because **when they prostituted themselves to their gods and sacrificed to them, the Israelites** would eventually **eat their sacrifices** and accept **their gods**. **And if the Canaanites chose some of their daughters as wives for Hebrew men and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they would lead your Hebrew men to do the same (34:15-16)**. As a result, **they** would be led back into spiritual adultery. **They** were warned **not to make any cast idols**, like the golden calf, again **(34:17)**.

The land of Canaan was covered with idolatry just like a dog is covered with fleas. The land was filled with gross immorality, and **YHVH** was warning **Isra'el** to keep **herself** separate from them. **Isra'el** was either to destroy them or drive them out of the land. The critics down through the years have criticized this. Apparently, they have not investigated the reason for this extreme measure. Of course, the obvious reason is that **God** was protecting His own from the horror of idolatry. But there is another reason. It is known today that venereal disease was in epidemic proportions among the people of Canaan. **ADONAI** was attempting to protect **His** people from the ravages of disease. **Isra'el** disobeyed **God** and did not completely clear the land of those people and suffered the sad consequences. Finally, **God** had to send disobedient **Isra'el** into seventy years of Babylonian captivity.⁷¹³

After having described the forms of worship **Isra'el** was to avoid, **God** reminded her of the proper observance of **the three main annual festivals in their religious calendar**, an emphasis that appeared earlier in the Book of the Covenant **(23:14-17)**.⁷¹⁴

Pesach lasted but one day and was to be observed in **Abib** (March-April), the **month** of the

exodus (34:18). It was followed immediately by **the Feast of Unleavened Bread** for a total of seven high holy days (**Exodus 23:15; Leviticus 23:4-8; Deuteronomy 16:1-8**). Then **God** reminded **Isra'el** of **her** obligation to **rest** on the Sabbath. **He** said: **Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest**. That meant that they needed to **rest even during the** two busiest times of the year, the **plowing season and the harvest season (34:21)**.⁷¹⁵ In addition, when these two terms are used together in the TaNaKh they symbolize the entire calendar year (**Gen 45:6; 1 Sam 8:12**). Thus, they were prohibited from working on any **Sabbath** during the whole year. There were no exceptions.⁷¹⁶

Then they were to **celebrate Shavu'ot with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and lastly, the Feast of Ingathering, or Sukkot, at the turn of the year**. In order to bind the nation together in religious worship, **all males were to appear before the Lord, ADONAI, God of Isra'el three times a year at the feasts of Pentecost, Tabernacles and Passover. The Lord promised to drive out nations before them and enlarge their territory and that no one would invade their land when they went up three times each year to observe the three annual festivals (34:22-24)**. They didn't need to worry. If they were faithful, **God** would be faithful and in turn their faithfulness and obedience would lead to national unity and strength.⁷¹⁷

They were also to obey all of the festival regulations that were quoted from previous sections of **Exodus (13:12-13; 20:9-10; 23:18-19)**. Because of the tenth plague and the death of the firstborn, **the Feast of Unleavened Bread** was intricately connected with the dedication of all **the firstborn. The first offspring of every womb belonged to the Lord, including all the firstborn males of your livestock, whether from herd or flock. The firstborn donkey with a lamb was to be redeemed, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. All their firstborn sons were to be redeemed. No one was to appear before God empty handed (34:19-20)**. This practice was most appropriate because spiritually, **Isra'el was the firstborn of God** and free from the judgment of the final plague.

They were commanded **not to offer the blood of a sacrifice along with anything containing yeast during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and not to let any of the sacrifice from the Passover Feast remain until morning (34:25)**. **God** did not want the celebration of **the feast** separated from the death of the lamb. They were also to **bring the best of their firstfruits to ADONAI**, related to **the Feast of Weeks**, and were prohibited from cooking a young goat in its mother's milk (**Exodus 34:26, 23:19; Deuteronomy 14:21**).

Moses was commanded to **write down** a summary of the festival regulations that **God** had

just given him. Then **ADONAI** rewrote **the Ten Commandments** as **He** had promised **He** would (**34:1**), and as **He** had inscribed **the original tablets** in the first place (**34:27** and **28b**).⁷¹⁸ In doing so, **He** was clearly revealing what **He** expected of them.⁷¹⁹ **His** message was clear. Despite **Israel's** sin, **God** was moving ahead with the redemption of the nation.



Just as **he** had done previously (**24:18**), **Moses was there with God forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water (34:28a)**. A similar fast had been kept on the previous occasion (**Deuteronomy 9:9**), though not mentioned in the **Exodus** account. Fasts of this extraordinary length are recorded only of **Moses**, Elijah (**First Kings 19:8**), and **Jesus Himself (Matthew 4:2)**.⁷²⁰ **Moses** was on **the mountain** and **Christ** was in the desert. **Moses** was receiving the Torah from **God** and **Messiah** was being tempted by Satan to reject the Torah. We can hardly know which was the greater wonder of the two: that **Moses** was permitted to spend a season in the presence of **ADONAI**, or that **God** would come down to be a friend of **Moses** for **forty days**.⁷²¹ So after receiving **his** instructions and the rewritten **Ten Commandments**, **Moses** made **his** way back down **the mountain** for the last time **and put the tablets in the ark that Moshe had made for them (Deuteronomy 10:5)**.

Is your relationship with **God** not as close as it once was? Here is a story that will help you out. An older man and his wife went out for a drive. They came to a stop signal and while waiting for the light to turn green the wife noticed a teenage couple in the car in front of them. The boy was driving and the girl was just plastered to his side. It almost looked like one person. The wife turned to her husband and said, "Honey, I remember when we used to be like that. What happened? Her husband turned to her and said, "I haven't moved!" If you are not as close to **God** as you once were, guess who moved?