Discovering Exodus: Finding prayer points, testimonies, reflection and journaling questions that will engage your heart with the Father.

Chapter 39: God’s Glory Dwelling with His People

**□ The Invitation**: Invite the Holy Spirit to show you something new as you read through the chapter. The Father desires to meet with you and share something with you today. You may find it in the reading or you may hear His Voice speaking to Your Spirit in the quiet of this moment.

**□ The Reading:** Read Exodus Chapter 39. Record any thoughts from the chapter, questions you have or verses that the Holy Spirit highlighted to you while reading.

**□ The Focus**: Today’s focus is a few study questions. Write your thoughts as you meet with the Father.

The first reference that I had personally to the Ark of the Covenant was from the Indiana Jones movie, “Raiders of the Lost Ark”. The Ark of the Covenant is found in an archeological site, a battle ensues between the good guys and the bad guys, the bad guys win, tie up the good guys, the Ark is opened and its power is released. Eventually after the bad guys are destroyed by its power, the Ark is put in a wooden box and stored in an American government building. Harrison Ford’s character, Indy, makes the comment about the Ark, “They don’t know what they’ve got there.”

Power, all consuming power was present in the original Ark of the Covenant. But it is the power of Almighty God who dwelt on the atonement cover, the mercy seat, between the Cherubim. Power was not contained in the Ark itself. Constructed of acacia wood and covered inside and out with pure gold, there was no super power in the materials. God Himself dwelt here and this was His desire, to live among His people. This was the sole purpose for the Tabernacle: to have a place where His Glory would dwell. “*Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.” (Exodus 25:8)* And Moses, following the Divine pattern given to him by God had the Tabernacle and all its furnishings constructed. The Ark was in the shape of a rectangular box. The atonement cover fit on the top of the box like a lid. Two Cherubim were carved into the lid with their wings spread upward facing each other with their faces looking down to the cover. The lid and Cherubim were carved from one piece of gold.

God longed to dwell with His people and He pursued them and made a way for communication and intimacy. This was God’s idea, not man’s idea. The Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies. This was the only vessel in the Holy of Holies. None of the priests could enter the Holy of Holies. The closest they came to the Shekinah Glory of God, His manifest presence, was ministering at the Golden Altar of Incense in the Holy Place. Imagine standing at the Golden Altar, burning incense and offering prayers on behalf of the Israelite community, knowing that on the other side of the veil was the presence of the Almighty One. If I had been one of the priests performing my duties, I would want to reach out and touch the veil. Would one touch cause my heart to stop? Could one touch draw me nearer to the Holy One? Would the power seep through the veil?

The High Priest was allowed access to the Holy of Holies one day a year, on the Day of Atonement. Moses was the only one who had direct access to God. He would meet with God on a regular basis to gain wisdom on how to lead the Israelites. “*There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.” (Exodus 25:22).*

God established the Tabernacle in the wilderness, where the Israelites spent 40 years. In this wilderness time, God met with His people, trained His people, revealed who He was to His people, consecrated His people, showed His Glory to His people. He began this new, covenant relationship with the Israelites in the wilderness. Hosea 2:14 says, “*Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her.”* God brought the Israelites into the wilderness to speak tenderly to her and to show His love to His people and also to break the bondage of idolatry. Hosea 2:17 continues, “*I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked.”* The wilderness was God’s Divine choice for the Tabernacle. God was using the physical manifestation of the Tabernacle structure itself to show the Israelites and all other nations that they were a set-apart people. They were a chosen nation. At the center of Israel’s worship was the Ark of the Covenant, where the presence of the Living God dwelt.

The Israelites had experienced the Shekinah Glory of God before the establishment of the Tabernacle. After their release from Egypt, the Egyptian army pursued the Israelites to destroy them and God, who had been leading the Israelites by a pillar of fire, moved behind them in a pillar of cloud, coming between the army of Egypt and the Israelites (Exodus 14:24-25). And the pillar of fire or cloud led them through the wilderness.

At Mount Sinai, the Glory of God settled on the mountain when Moses had gone up to meet with God. “*To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain,”* Exodus 24:17. At that meeting, the Glory of the Lord enveloped Moses in a cloud. “*Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant--the Ten Commandments.” (Exodus 34:27)* Being in the presence of Almighty God was fulfillment of all needs: physical, emotional, spiritual. Moses experienced communion with the Bread of Life and the Living Water. Moses was changed in the presence of God. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, his face was radiant (the effects of being with God). Others noticed and were afraid to come near Moses. The light of God, which is part of His Shekinah Glory was radiating on Moses’ face. The Israelite community was in awe and reverence and Moses had to invite them to draw near to him, so he could speak with them about the commands that God had given them. Moses placed a veil over his face when he was with the people, but would remove the veil when he went to commune with the Lord.

When Moses would meet with the Lord in the Holy of Holies, a “*pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses. Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to his tent* (Exodus 33:9-10). At the completion of the Tabernacle, the glory of the Lord filled the temple (a cloud covered the Tabernacle). Moses could not enter the Tabernacle because the weight of the Lord had settled upon it (Exodus 40). What a sight!

During the forty years wandering in the desert, the Israelites would settle in a place, then when the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, they would set out again until the cloud stopped. The cloud settled over the Tabernacle by day and by night there was fire in the cloud that rested over the Tabernacle. The power and majesty of the Living God affected the whole community.

Under the Old Covenant, only a select few were able to meet with God, as one meets with a friend. That covenant was fulfilled in the cross. Jesus became our sin offering, gave Himself up willingly on the cross, so that a new covenant would be established. At His death, the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was turn from top to bottom. The way was made that we can enter the Holy of Holies. God’s presence, in all His Glory is available to all of His children. We are His chosen ones and His desire is to be in relationship with us. This is the most intimate relationship. God invites us to come into His presence. Seek Him out. James 4:8 says, “*Come near to God and he will come near to you.”* This was the cry of David’s heart. Psalm 27:4 we hear this cry, “*One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.”* To be a “one thing” person--that is my desire!

The last reference of the Ark of the Covenant in the Bible is in Revelation 11:19, “*Then God’s temple in heaven was opened and within his temple was seen the Ark of His Covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.”* When the Ark of the Covenant is exposed to the people of earth in the last days, power and authority will be released, as seen in the movie, “Raiders of the Lost Ark”.

We can know, in an intimate way, this God who has All power, All authority, All knowledge, who has always been and always will be.

Study questions: Hebrews 9: 4 tells us what was inside the Ark. “*This Ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant.*” Let’s take a look at each of these three items in the Ark of the Covenant to see how Jesus is the fulfillment of each or them.

**Gold jar of manna:**  The miracle food--Manna was the food that God fed the Israelites for the forty years that they wandered in the wilderness. Exodus 16:12 tells us what God will give the Israelites to eat. The word “bread” or “manna” in Hebrew means “whatness” or “what is it”. There is no translation for the word. Manna was the “bread from heaven”. It was a small, thin, white, coriander-like seed, which tasted like wafers with honey (Exodus 16:31), a daily provision from the Lord. Each person gathered what he or she needed and were filled. Manna appeared every morning like frost on the ground (Exodus 16:14). On the sixth day, they collected twice as much for the Sabbath. Aaron was commanded to *“take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Place it before the Lord to be kept for the generations to come.” (Exodus 16:33)* God showed that He was the one who provided for the physical and spiritual needs of His people.

1. Jesus refers to Himself as:
   * John 6:32
   * John 6:33
   * John 6:48
   * John 6:51

Jesus is the true manna and is able to meet all of our physical and spiritual needs.

**Aaron’s staff that budded:** Aaron’s staff budded in the light of Numbers 16 & 17. There was a revolt against Moses and Aaron by Korah, Dathan and Abiram. They questioned the authority of Moses and Aaron. (Numbers 16:2) These men had gathered 250 Israelite men (well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council) and they came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron. God dealt with their opposition by “*the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah’s men and all their possessions…and fire came out from the Lord and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense,”* Numbers 16:32 & 35.

The next day the Lord told Moses to have the Israelites bring 12 staffs (one from each tribe with the name of each man on his staff). On the staff of Levi, write Aaron’s name, for there must be one staff for each of the tribes. Then Moses placed them in the Tabernacle, in front of the Ark. Whichever staff budded is the name that God chooses to be the high priest. *“The next day Moses entered the Tent of the Testimony and saw that Aaron’s staff, which represented the house of Levi, had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed and produced almonds…the Lord said to Moses, ‘Put back Aaron’s staff in front of the Testimony, to be kept as a sign to the rebellious,” Numbers 17:8 & 10.* Aaron was the chosen one. This would be a sign for generations to come, that the line of Aaron was to be the priesthood.

Aaron’s staff which was a dead branch budded, blossomed and produced fruit. Something that is dead cannot come to life again. But this is a picture of Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus overcame death and we will too if we believe in Him.

1. John 11:25 says what?

**The stone tablets:** Deuteronomy 10:2 tells us “*I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Then you are to put them in the chest.”* This was the second set of tablets that God wrote upon. Moses threw the first set out of his hands and they broke to pieces (Deut. 9:17). The “book of the law” was to be set inside the Ark as a witness against the Israelites (Deut. 31:26). “*For I know how rebellious and stiff-necked you are. If you have been rebellious against the Lord while I am still alive and with you, how much more will you rebel after I die!” (Deut. 31:27).* Moses certainly knew the nation of Israel!

1. What does Matthew 5:17 say about Jesus & the Law?
2. Galatians 3:13. How did Jesus fulfill the law?
3. What will happen when Jesus abolishes the Old Covenant? (Hebrews 10:16)

On the diagram: Draw the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle diagram.

Your diagram should be complete: The posts around the outer court, the Bronze Altar, the Bronze Basin, the veil leading into the Holy Place, the Golden Lampstand, the Table of Showbread and the Altar of Incense in the Holy Place, then the veil leading into the Most Holy Place & the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place.